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Citation: Lee, Soo Tian (2017) The structure of a university : a Karatanian interrogation into instrumentalism, idealism and community in postwar British higher education, 1945-2015. [Thesis] (Unpublished)

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The Structure of a University

A Karatanian Interrogation into
Instrumentalism, Idealism and Community in
Postwar British Higher Education, 1945-2015

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Spring 2017

Declaration

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Lee Soo Tian

Abstract

In this thesis, I endeavour to rethink the history of higher education in the United Kingdom after the Second World War through a framework generated using the work of Kojin Karatani. It explores three distinct perspectives – instrumentalism, idealism and community – which I argue form a triadic structure which, when grasped, opens the way to a heterodox reading of the postwar British university. This tripartite formulation draws from Karatani's work on the “triad of concepts” he locates in different spheres of philosophy, and is developed through a “trans-genealogical” methodology inspired by the historical-philosophical approaches of Michel Foucault and Karatani himself.

The thesis can be divided into three parts. In the first part the thesis' methodology is elucidated from the aforementioned work of Foucault and Karatani. In the second part, I trace the development of each of the three perspectives or “questions” in the British university in order to present a counter-narrative to popular accounts which generally divide it into two phases, each characterised by a rupture: first, a social democratic rupture oriented by a principled, idealist vision, and, second, a neoliberal rupture characterised by an economistic and instrumentalist mentality. Contrary to this “two rupture thesis,” I argue for a view which posits an underlying continuity between the two phases, in that the essence of the later phase can, in fact, be found in the earlier phase, which laid the foundations for an instrumentalist university, the first perspective in the triad. Following this, the roots of idealism, the second perspective which appears opposed to the first, are untangled and revealed to be tainted by instrumentalism and fundamentally untenable. The third perspective of community is then investigated, with a focus on its contemporary manifestations. To end this second part, an alternative vision of higher education, which I call an associationist university, is explored and found to be a productive horizon to be approached but less helpful for immediate action.

In the final part, I propose a way of dealing with the co-existence of the three questions or perspectives within the university at present. This way is founded upon the idea of vocation. Various tensions, such as that between partiality to one or more of these perspectives and attempts at integration, are interrogated. To flesh out these dynamics, the sphere of British critical legal theory is taken as a case study. The thesis concludes with a plea for a university that is grounded on the principle of transcritical oscillation.

To Frosty, Smiley, Kuda and Ivan

Acknowledgements

A PhD thesis is like a hearty pot of stew in that it manifests in physical form an infinite amount of relations between things in the world. Of these, only a select few can and must be spoken of, due to their gentle distinction within the complicated swirl of forces.

I would like to profusely thank Peter Fitzpatrick for so kindly encouraging me to begin this doctoral journey and for overseeing its development for the first six years. In particular, his passion for the academic adventure, combined with his matchless rigour and precision, was crucial in pushing me to seek for better questions and deeper answers where my initial guesses proved to be very much inadequate.

I am greatly indebted to Nathan Moore for shepherding this thesis through its final year and a half with his gracious yet penetrating examination of the working out of its main ideas. His readiness to engage with even its strangest twists and turns, sometimes reorientating the discussion by simply ignoring the most left-field elements and allowing them to drop out of the picture by themselves, was a great assistance to this mercurial writer. For all his support, I am truly more thankful than words can express.

The community of Birkbeck Law School has been an incomparable sphere to pursue the romance of intellectual-creative enquiry within the context of political engagement, and vice versa. So many of its denizens – past and present – have contributed to the making of this thesis. At key moments during troubled times, interventions from Elena Loizidou, my pastoral supervisor, and Thanos Zartaloudis were crucial in saving it from complete shipwreck. In all times and seasons, however, I have been blessed by friends and comrades such as Anastasia Tataryn, Başak Ertür, Carolina Olarte Olarte, Chris Lloyd, Enrique Prieto Rios, Erdem Erturk, Hannah Franzki, Kanika Sharma, Laura Lammasniemi, Lisa Wintersteiger, Lucy Finchett-Maddock, Marcus Matos, Mayur Suresh, Paola Pasquali, Richard Bowyer, Simon Behrman, Tara Mulqueen and Vic Ridler.

Beyond the immediate institutional context, Irina Chkhaidze has been a constant source of strength, inspiration as well as just simple fun and honest companionship. Probing comments from Malik Ajani encouraged me to reorient the thesis' direction midway through my writing when I was still in semi-denial that the line of argument I had been

pursuing was a dead end. Ayman S likewise gave me invaluable advice at a crucial moment in the final stages. In my unexpectedly-adopted home of Oxford, Marek Sullivan, Max Harris and – before she left for warmer places – Christine Hobden have been wonderful co-pilgrims on the journey of reflection, writing and argument. I am also grateful for fellow thinkers and activists whom I came to know during and after the student uprisings in 2010/2011. Moreover, this thesis would not have come into being if not for my fellow comrades in the “Save Middlesex Philosophy” campaign, and may have not survived without invigoration from friends in the effort to “Save Philosophy at Greenwich.” Special mentions are due to Isabeau D, Johann H, Malise R, Clarrie P, 'Sel' T, Lloyd D, Ellese E, Perry S, Saffron G, Jacob S, Richard B, Jacob B-R and Rory R.

Many thanks to the communities of the London Catholic Worker and Oxford Catholic Worker, where I lived for most of the period in which this thesis was written, especially Martin, Conor, Ciaron, Susan, Miriam, Mena and Clive. Muchas gracias also to Jonny and Jojo, my brothers presently in black and blue. The parish community of Cowley St John in East Oxford has been a bastion of support in both mundane and most difficult days, especially Ruth and Martin Conway, Sabina Alkire and John Hammock. At the risk of oversimplifying the story, the former two graciously provided me with a home when I was in great need of one, the latter two with hope when it seemed lost forever.

Space unfortunately does not permit me to mention by name many of the wonderful friends who have been there for me in manifold ways during this Long Walk that has often felt more like Wandering in the Wilderness. I am comforted that you folks know who you are, even as I am aggrieved by not being able to thank you more explicitly. Nevertheless, I cannot avoid mentioning Benessa Tiong, Koralie Wit and Sarah Epstein.

None of this would have been possible if not for the unflagging support of my parents, Doreen Khoo and Lee Kok Tee, as well as my sisters, Lee Sze Yuen and Lydia Lee. A thousand thanks to them, jointly and severally, for their gracious cheering on of, faithful prayers for and great patience with me, their not-always-easy-to-handle flesh and blood.

Lastly, special thanks to Hui-En, the penultimate force behind the completion of this thesis. To you, dearly beloved being of passion and compassion, unto the ages of ages.

D.G.

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Prelude: Ruins

*“Take a look around you at the world you've loved so well,
And bid the ageing empire of Man a last farewell,
It may not sound like Heaven, but at least it isn't Hell,
It's a brave new world,
With just a handful of men...
We'll start all over again.”*

(Jeff J. Wayne 1978)

*“The sight of Kobe made me think seriously... that we
might not be able to think of... any vision of the future...
without the image of ruins in mind.”*

(Kojin Karatani 1995a, 124)

In 1947, surveyors for the gargantuan Survey of London project – which continues to this day – recorded the architecture of Tottenham Court Road and its surrounding neighbourhood, producing the third of four volumes covering just the historical parish of St. Pancras. Of University College – better known today as University College London (UCL) – they observed that a significant part of its buildings were in state of ruin as a result of bombs dropped during the Blitz (Roberts and Godfrey 1949, 21:89). The damage suffered by this seat of higher learning, which the 19th century Anglican clergyman Thomas Arnold once labelled “that godless institution in Gower Street” (Crilly 2005, 18), was the result of at least two separate bombings.

A high-explosive bomb on the night of 18th September, 1940 destroyed the Great Hall – built, ironically, as a First World War memorial – as well as the physics laboratory (Roberts and Godfrey 1949, 21:89). More than 100,000 volumes in the library were also lost, including what was one of the best collections of German scholarship outside the German-speaking nations (Harte and North 1991, 181). On 15th October, 1940, incendiary bombs started a fire which burned the iconic dome which rises over the rest of the main Octagon Building, as well as damaging various other parts of the building (Harte and North 1991, 180). The surveyors of 1947 noted that the removal of the damaged outer dome in 1944 had revealed a brick cone, “a miniature imitation of the device which Wren used at St. Paul’s” (Roberts and Godfrey 1949, 21:90).

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Of course, at the point of the bombing, the operations of University College had almost entirely been evacuated to various locations outside London, primarily to Wales, but also to Hertfordshire, Yorkshire and Hampshire (Collins and Mees 1999, 350–351; Harte and North 1991, 188). The word “almost” is necessary as the eccentric scientist and Marxist J. B. S. Haldane “refused to budge, continuing his work for a time 'subject,' as he reported gleefully, 'to a certain amount of siege by the College authorities'” (Harte and North 1991, 181). A letter from Haldane to Harlow Shapley of Harvard illustrates the difficulties faced by academics even after the return to London in 1944. Half of the college, he stated, “was destroyed by bombs, and the remainder is infested with rats” (Haldane 1944).

The physical destruction wrought upon University College was far greater than most other universities. Oxford and Cambridge, most notably, had been spared from intense bombing by the Luftwaffe.¹ Nevertheless, universities across the United Kingdom experienced significant upheavals, including evacuations, shortages of all kinds and the calling up of students and staff for various forms of national service. When taken together with the intense self-questioning that Britain and the rest of the world experienced as a result of the bloodiest war in history, far greater change was wrought in the inner consciousness of the British university in this short period than would be visible by a post-war survey of its architecture. The proud spires of Oxbridge may have survived the war, but the vision and mission of university education *ante bellum* certainly did not.

1 A popular allegation, repeated by Stephen Hawking in one of his essays, is that there was an agreement between the Germans and British in which the former would not bomb Oxford and Cambridge, and in return the latter would not bomb the equally iconic university towns of Heidelberg and Göttingen (Hawking 1994, 1–2). Historical evidence for this claim is limited, and it appears to have been disproven in 2007 when an amateur fisherman discovered an unexploded Second World War bomb in the Oxford Canal (*The Oxford Student* 2007). Nevertheless, it is certainly true that both Oxford and Cambridge escaped largely unscathed from the war. It can be contended that the real reason for this was that neither were targets of any military or otherwise tactical significance. Support for this can be found in George Quester's argument that both the Allied and Axis forces set limits – some explicit but mostly implicit – on what were fair targets for aerial bombardment (Quester 1963).

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“[W]e should have the modesty to say to ourselves that, on the one hand, the time we live in is not the unique or fundamental or irruptive point in history where everything is completed and begun again. We must also have the modesty to say, on the other hand, that – even without this solemnity – the time we live in is very interesting; it needs to be analyzed and broken down, and that we would do well to ask ourselves, ‘What is the nature of our present?’”

(Foucault 1990a, 35–36)

This thesis is a historical-philosophical investigation into the British university from the end of the Second World War to the present. Its point of genesis can be traced back to the twelve-day occupation of the Mansion building at the Trent Park campus of Middlesex University in May 2010 by students and supporters as part of a campaign to save the university's philosophy department from closure. It was during the course of his involvement in this occupation that the writer of this thesis found himself asking, “What sort of higher education world are we dwelling in at present, in which a small but world-renowned department of philosophy can be shut down ostensibly for narrowly failing to meet the financial target of contributing 55% of its total income to the central administration, when in actual fact it was questionable methods of accounting by the very central administration which led to this failure on paper?”¹

As a result of this sense of amazement, befuddlement and indignation, the research project which has led to this thesis was conceptualised. Rather than simply interrogating the university at it appeared to function in the contemporary moment, it seemed more fruitful to dig further back into history in order to understand how we got

1 The campaigners arguments were as follows: “Management claims that Philosophy is 'subsidised' by other subjects, however, are not correct. In reality, the actual subsidy goes in the opposite direction. In addition to covering its portion of the management and administrative costs of its School (in our case, the School of Arts and Education), a subject group at Middlesex University is expected to make a 'contribution' to the 'centre'. The management currently demands that a subject area contribute at least 55% of its gross income to the centre (and although such contributions are often measured in different ways, this is considerably more than most other universities demand). As it stands, by what they call 'the credit count' method of calculation, the Philosophy & Religious Studies subject group already makes a 53% 'contribution' (Philosophy's contribution on its own stands at 45%). Using the figures projected for recruitment by the university's Admissions department, if our programmes had remained open then the contribution from Philosophy & Religious Studies would have risen to 59% for 2010-11 (with Philosophy on its own at 53%). From 2003-2009, moreover, a significant portion of Middlesex Philosophy's research income was actually diverted to support research in Business and Management, which performed poorly in RAE2001.” (Save Middlesex Philosophy 2014)

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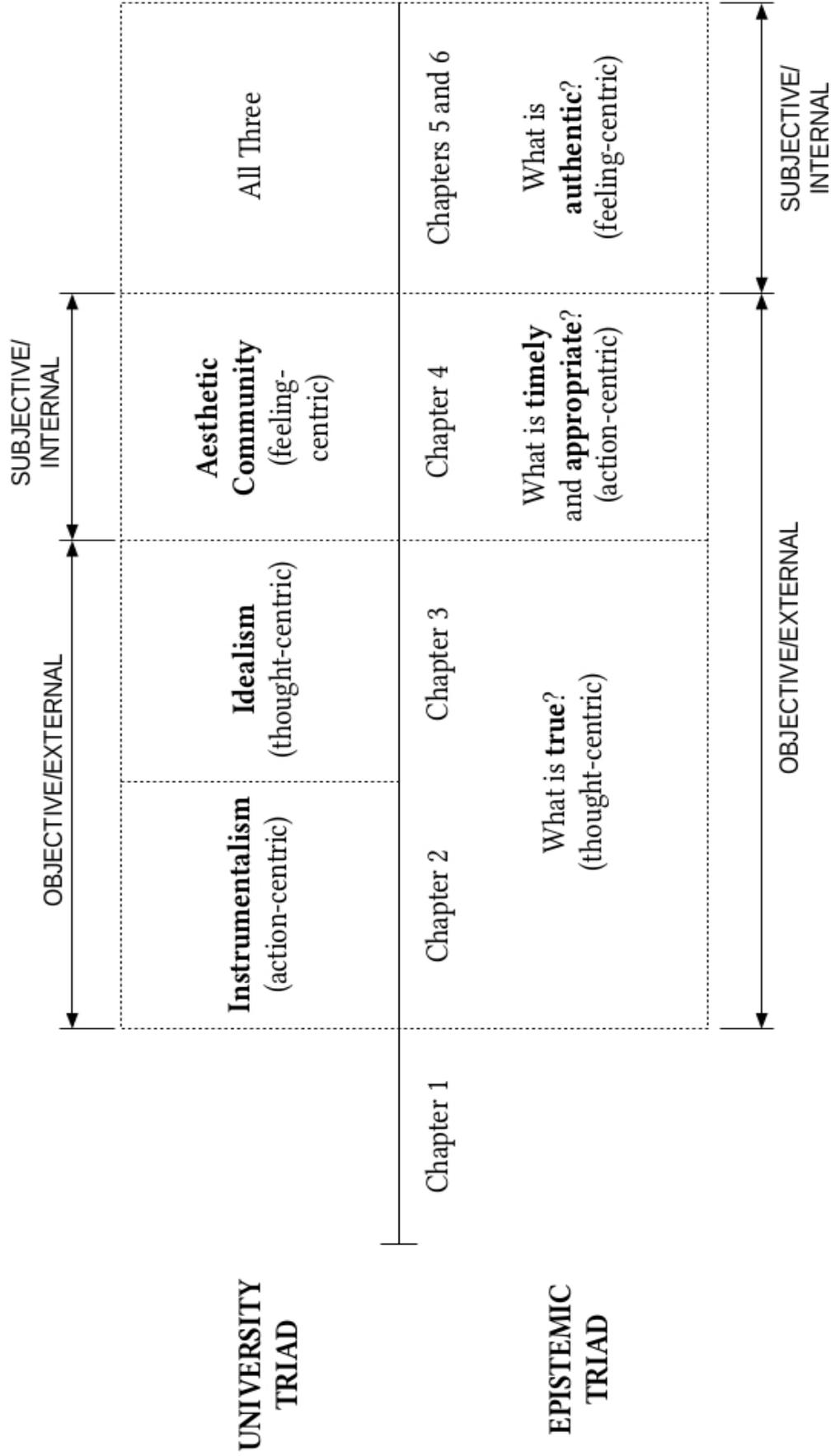
from a mythical “there” to here. As mentioned earlier and further explained in what follows, the time period which was eventually settled upon was from the post-Second World War period to the present.

However, although the subject-matter of the thesis “presented itself,” it did not come with instructions on the side of its tin. Methodologically, how was the history of the contemporary form of the university meant to be investigated? A decision was first made to adopt the approach of Foucauldian genealogy. Subsequently, however, the limits of such a method became apparent, and so it was supplemented and widened with the more overtly Kantian and idiosyncratically “transcendental” approach of the Japanese theorist Kojin Karatani. Thus, in Chapter One we explore how these two distinctive yet convergent methods can be brought together into a workable framework which forms the methodological background for the rest of the thesis.

Before we can outline the contents of the main body of the thesis, however, it is necessary for us to grasp its basic structure, which is deeply triadic due to its being inspired by the “triad of concepts” or “conceptual triad” of phenomenon, idea and thing-in-itself which Karatani distills from the writings of Kant and posits as a recurring pattern in the wider philosophical tradition. The diagram on the following page visually represents this structure. From it we can see that there are two triads in particular which are crucial for our understanding, and they are related even as they are discrete. The first consists of three distinct perspectives which, it is argued, have structured and continue to structure the postwar British university, namely Instrumentalism, Idealism and Community. We shall name this the *university triad* and can describe it as “superstructural,” given that it appears very explicitly in the argument. Its terrain is that of the discourses and practices in the university itself, and thus forms a hermeneutic and heuristic framework, for it allows us to both interpret the postwar history of the British university as well as formulate potential ways of intervening in it.

A second triad is more implicit, and can be termed the *epistemic triad*, because it is concerned with the sort of knowledge which is being sought in the various parts of the thesis. Unlike the elements of the university triad, it lies largely beneath the surface of the argument, and can thus be described as “infrastructural” or even as a “meta-structure,” for it pertains not to the postwar British university itself but rather our *analysis* of this university. In other words, it conditions the lines of argument which are pursued in each of the chapters, even while it leaves the spotlight and centre stage to

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the elements in the university triad.

The order in which the university triad is deployed is largely a result of the external constraints of the historical narrative, and thus it moves from Instrumentalism to Idealism, then to Community. The order in which the epistemic triad is deployed, on the other hand, is related to the structure of argumentation which was chosen, and thus we move from determining what is *true*, to what is *timely* and *appropriate*, and finally to what is *authentic*. What is consistent in both cases, however, is that “objective” or external issues are addressed before “subjective” or internal ones. It is important, however, to emphasise that each element in the university triad can, in theory, be subjected to all three forms of enquiry in the epistemic triad. As we shall see, the specific combinations of infrastructural questions and superstructural perspectives which occur in each chapter of the thesis – which may at first sight look like strange mix-and-matches – are the result of a chronological narrative (in the case of the university triad) meeting a structure of argument (in the case of the epistemic triad).

In Chapters Two and Three, the underlying epistemic question addressed is, “What is true?” This thought-centric *method* of enquiry is deployed to examine the two most prominent strands of discourse-practice in the university, namely Instrumentalism (which is action-centric in orientation and content) in Chapter Two and Idealism (which is thought-centric in orientation and content) in Chapter Three. Both these strands can be said to be “objective,” in the sense that they deal with matters which are supposed to be external to subjectivity, although the first focuses on calculations based on a given context while the second focuses on principles which are deemed context-independent.

Much debate and dispute within the British university at present, both in terms of formal academic debate as well as everyday conversations and grievances, is founded upon certain assumptions about its history in the postwar period. One of the most common of these divides the history of higher education since the end of the Second World War into two periods, the first characterised by the formation of an ostensibly “public” vision of the university, linked to the project of the postwar welfare state, and the second by a “neoliberal” turn in its underlying philosophy, linked to the Thatcherite era and its successors. This formulation, which we shall call the “two ruptures thesis,” will be challenged through a scrutiny of relevant documents and statements from this era when connected to a wider societal frame. The veracity of the default narrative in most “critical” circles, which charts the rise of a progressive and humanistic “public

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university” followed by a fall into a neoliberal system, will be contested by, firstly, assembling in Chapter Two an interpretation which emphasises the continuity of the instrumentalist policies of the 1980s and beyond with the immediate postwar period with which they are rarely associated. The basic argument here is that far from being a Thatcherite distortion, the “neoliberal” university of the present has in fact its point of invention in the postwar Labour government under Clement Attlee, which justified its social democratic policies, including that of higher education, in instrumentalist terms. Thus, it was suffused with what we may identify as a form of “action-centricism,” a perspective which focuses on pragmatic concerns, for what was deemed necessary and expedient took precedence over other factors.

This explication of postwar instrumentalism in British higher education will be followed by an investigation in Chapter Three into the roots of the broadly idealist vision of a “public university,” often symbolised by the the 1963 report of the Committee on Higher Education, chaired by Lord Robbins – commonly known as the Robbins Report. This vision of higher education is often posited as the principled alternative to the neoliberal university, and thus it will be taken as the representative form in the postwar period of idealism, a perspective which focuses on consistent principles as the central guiding force. Such idealism is a species of the genus of “thought-centricism,” a mode of operation which is founded upon rationalism. It will not only be argued that the Robbins Report is far from the progressive document that it is commonly taken to be, but also that the sort of idealism the “public university” ideology is grounded upon is untenable, founded as it is upon what Kant would call a “constitutive” use of reason, rather than a “regulative” one. A constitutive idea is taken to be realisable as a whole, while a regulative idea is meant to be an index to guide one's actions, but never realised in its entirety. It will be demonstrated through an engagement with Kafka that the regulative idea provides a means of practising idealism in a form which avoids the snares which the public university ideology has fallen into. Overall, the central concern of these two middle chapters is the accuracy of the tale which is normally told of this period, and thus by dispelling some of the most widespread myths through historical and theoretical analysis, we will be able to clear the way to a less straight-jacketed view of the present state of British higher education.

After redrawing some of the battle lines in the recent history of the British university, we turn in Chapter Four to a different epistemic question, namely, “What is

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timely and appropriate?” This question, which focuses on the temporal-spatial context, can be phrased more specifically as, “What strategies or interventions are called for given the present state of play in the British university?” If we now see the clash between Instrumentalism and Idealism in a somewhat different light to that of the prevalent narratives, what are we to do? What supplements can be provided to make up for what is lacking or deficient? What current trends are there which we should be wary of? These are some of the questions which we will explore, in particular by examining a third element of the university triad which does not always receive adequate attention, which we may term *community*. By this we mean the aspects of higher education which coalesce around issues of being-with as well as the sensible conceived and experienced through the aesthetics involved in encounters with otherness. This element of the university triad is feeling-centric in orientation, in the sense that it is the affective dimension of life which is most involved in its workings.

In this fourth chapter, two differing and indeed competing conceptions of community and relating to otherness, the substantialist and the non-substantialist, will be compared, using as an aid the concepts of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* as outlined by the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies. These conceptions will then be utilised to examine the role of community in recent times in three spheres of the university, namely that of students, non-academic staff and academic staff. The present challenges in this sphere will be explored before proposing an alternative to substantialist and non-substantialist community which would address these difficulties. This will be a vision of the university community which could provide a horizon for action, but will need to be supported by a structure which affirms the singular and potentially mutually-supportive vocations which denizens of the university are to live out.

This mention of vocation leads us into a consideration in Chapter Five of the third element in the epistemic triad, which is captured in the question, “What is authentic?” Here the “objective” assessments of the postwar British university's historical contours and the its present state are placed to one side, and the “subjective” matter enquired into is how various actors in the university can intervene and participate in it in a manner congruent to their personal and collective stirrings. The nature of this investigation thus involves all three elements of the university triad, and following a general treatment of the concept of vocation, its variegated expressions in the sphere of the university are mapped out in a diagram which treats Instrumentalism,

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Idealism and Community as three poles in a triangular “space.” It will be argued that vocation involves the expression of specific gifts or *charismata*, to use a term from the writings of St Paul.

This more-or-less abstract conception is then made more concrete in Chapter Six through an examination of a particular sphere of the university, namely that of the British critical legal tradition, which is then linked back into the sphere of higher education in the UK as a whole. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that this approach centred on vocation and gifts, which provides an answer to the feeling-centric epistemic question, ultimately needs to be brought into conversation with the other epistemic questions of thought-centric truths or principles and action-centric contextualisation, in the wider whole if not always within singular persons.

If, having read through the outline presented above, the lay of the territory of this thesis appears rather obscure or even confusing, rest assured that things will become clearer as the thesis progresses and its skeletal form takes on a more fleshly incarnation. However, one more thing remains to be said. Given the fact that certain areas of knowledge which this thesis deals with are, to borrow an adjective from Andrew McGettigan in his book-length assessment of the UK government reforms to universities since 2010, very much “live” ones (McGettigan 2013, ix), it is inevitable that there will be sections of it which have been left behind by further developments. Hence, to the best of the author's knowledge, this thesis is completely up-to-date with how things stood in August 2015, both in terms of the “empirical” threads of British higher education, and the “theoretical” threads of continental theory – e.g. Foucauldian and Karatanian thought – discussed throughout. In some of these empirical areas, however, it has been possible to incorporate a couple of recent developments, such as the UK Government White Paper published in May 2016, titled *Success as a Knowledge Economy*.

A Preliminary Note

This thesis draws from Kojin Karatani's writings, but – by and large – not the segments which have attracted the most attention in Anglophone academia thus far. When combined with the relative obscurity of the work of Kojin Karatani in legal academia (and indeed much of academia in the United Kingdom), it appears to the writer that a brief explanatory diversion may be of some use.

The initial discovery of Karatani's work in the English-speaking world focused on his literary and cultural criticism, which although distinctively grounded in theory and history, nevertheless took as its "main subject" works of literature and aspects of Japanese culture. It was thus unsurprising that his first monograph to be translated into English was *The Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, with translation work beginning in the late 1980s and the book appearing in print in 1993 (Karatani 1993c). Subsequently, his involvement in the ten-year series of ANY conferences on architecture from 1991 to 2000 introduced him to scholars and practitioners in the field and those working more generally with issues of space. Karatani participated in six of the ten conferences, together with thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Saskia Sassen and David Harvey as well as architects such as Rem Koolhaas, Arata Isozaki and Peter Eisenman.¹ This contributed directly to the translation and publication of *Architecture as Metaphor: Language, Number, Money* in 1995 (Karatani 1995b, xlvi).

The appearance of *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx* in 2003 expanded the breadth of Karatani's readership (Karatani 2003b). This astonishing work of philosophy, politics and political economy has become the most widely known of his books, not least of all through Slavoj Žižek's appropriation of his conceptualisation of the Kantian parallax in the Slovenian philosopher's book *The Parallax View* (Žižek 2006b). Thus, *Transcritique*, broadly-speaking, marks a turn in the reception of Karatani's work from being concentrated in the circles of literary and cultural studies to spilling over into various disciplines involving politics and philosophy. The fact that the publication of *Transcritique* in Japan followed shortly after Karatani's foray into the politics of social movements as one of the co-founders and primary theoreticians of the New Associationist Movement (NAM) certainly contributed to this turn as well (New Associationist Movement 2001). The subsequent publications of *History and Repetition* in 2012 (Karatani 2012) and *The Structure of World History* in 2014 (Karatani 2014),

¹ ANY was an acronym for Architecture New York, but also a playful reference to undecidability, with conference titles such as Anyone, Anywhere, Anything and Anybody. Collected excerpts from the proceedings of each conference were published. Karatani's papers were Karatani 1991; Karatani 1992; Karatani 1993a; Karatani 1995a; Karatani 1997a; Karatani 2000.

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alongside a number of journal articles in a similar vein (Karatani 2007; Karatani 2008a; Karatani 2008b) have contributed to the continuation of this trend.²

From *Transcritique* onwards, it can be said that the foremost concept in Karatani's work has been that of the *mode of exchange*, which he develops in order to analyse contexts from our political present (as he does in the final chapter of *Transcritique*) to those as maddeningly ambitious as the whole sweep of recorded human history (as he attempts in *The Structure of World History*). From this concept comes, for example, his diagnosis of the hegemonic trinity of Capital-Nation-State, formed from the modern amalgamation of three forms of exchange which he refers to as reciprocity (Mode A), plunder-redistribution (Mode B) and commodity exchange (Mode C), with Mode C being the dominant partner. Alongside this diagnosis also comes a suggested "cure" to the problems that we face under the system of Capital-Nation-State, namely the possibilities of going beyond it through a fourth mode of exchange, the elusive Mode D, which he sometimes terms association or simply *X*.

Hence, in the view of secondary commentators such as Yamoi Pham, the most fertile areas of Karatani's work for those who wish to apply his ideas appears to be "his unique approach to world history" through the prism of the modes of exchange, which can be extended through "further empirical studies" and developing "a more concrete vision of Mode D by exercising our sociological imagination" (Pham 2014, 330). However, although I am in agreement with Pham with regard to the significant potential of such directions of research, I have chosen to focus on two interrelated areas of his work which are, in my view, extremely promising but, thus far, have been somewhat neglected in the literature available in English. These two areas are: firstly, his historical-philosophical methodology; and, secondly, a specific segment of the theoretical foundations of his better-known work in the 2000s which were laid down in his studies on Kant in the 1990s.

Of the former, little needs to be said at this point, as it will be discussed in ample detail in the first chapter. It suffices to note that Karatani's approach to history and

² Karatani himself has described a break between his work in the 1970s and 1980s (which is, it should be noted, the period in which he wrote *The Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* and *Architecture as Metaphor*; although they appeared in English in the 1990s) and that of the 1990s and 2000s (Karatani 2000, 259). Nevertheless, to borrow a distinction made by Eduardo Mendieta in his consideration of developments in the oeuvres of Foucault and Habermas, it is argued that Karatani's shift was not one of "general orientation" but merely rather "how that orientation, or philosophical attitude, [has been] directed to a set of problems" (Mendieta 2014, 246–247). In other words, the central threads of his work have been more or less consistent.

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theory bears not a few traces of the idiosyncratic iconoclasm with regard to disciplinary boundaries for which he is well-known. His method, I venture to suggest, arises from his – perhaps deliberate – location at the margins of the disciplines that he finds himself categorised under. Although he first came to distinction as a literary critic, his work, as Sabu Kohso has observed, did not focus on the conventional “judg[ing] the value of oeuvres in a specific genre” but rather “engag[ed] ‘transcendentally’ in the mechanisms of discursive historicity, penetrating a multitude of domains” (Kohso 1995, xviii). In his introduction to *Architecture as Metaphor*, Arata Isozaki listed some of the “domains” traversed by Karatani in the book as including “philosophy, logic, political economy, cultural anthropology, sociology and urban studies” (Isozaki 1995, vi). Nevertheless, perhaps one of the best statements of his (at least partial) disciplinary “homelessness” can be found in his final paper to the series of Any conferences, where he stated, rather poignantly:

These conferences have long been considered a place of interaction between architects and philosophers. However, I do not really see myself as a philosopher, and I have no interest in discussing architecture theoretically. With a couple of exceptions, I have attended all the Any meetings over the past ten years, but who then have I been at these conferences? In effect, I have been a thing-in-itself as other. That is to say, I have not shared the same language with most of the other participants, nor did I try to do so. I refused. As a consequence, I was rejected. At Any, I have been a thing-in-itself but not a phenomenon. Indeed, many people were even unaware of my presence. Perhaps the organizers hoped that I would fulfill just such a function. But for me, this is not a pleasant position to be in. And so, in many ways, it comes as a relief to me that this role is finally over.³

The second relatively neglected strand of Karatani's thought that this thesis takes up is his writings on Kant in the 1990s. In his introduction to the English edition of *Architecture as Metaphor*, written in 1992, he writes that he began reading Kant seriously after the “collapse” of “architecture as metaphor” – that is, the dominant ideology of grand narratives of “‘constructing’ human society” – in 1989 (Karatani 1995b, xli). His most significant discovery was arguably that he had “been unwittingly engaging in a kind of Kantian critique all along” in his “interventions that critically examine architecture as metaphor in order to expose its limits” (Karatani 1995b, xl). This led to his re-evaluation of his previous work through the lens of Kantian transcendental critique, culminating in his explicit adoption of what he has termed “transcendental

3 Indeed, it is noticeable that in the published excerpts from the panels during the Any conferences, the participants addressed very few questions to Karatani, and rarely made references to his papers.

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retrospection” (Karatani 1993b). It is this methodological re-reading of his own pre-1989 work and his subsequent elaborations of such a reading which connects this second strand to the first which is intimated above and discussed further below.

However, there is one particular portion of Karatani's 1990s readings of Kant which this thesis picks up upon in a significant fashion. This is his formulation of what he termed the “triad of concepts” in Kant's writings, consisting of phenomenon, idea and the thing-in-itself.⁴ According to Karatani, these three terms form an “architectonic” (Karatani 1994) or “relational structure” in which “the name of each term is alterable... but only insofar as the relational structure is maintained” (Karatani 1993b). It is this triadic structure which Karatani distills from Kant that is employed in this thesis to think through the British university in the postwar period.

Thus, having positioned in outline the theoretical thrust of the thesis with regard to the wider body of Karatani's work, it is time to begin. At the beginning of Chapter V of Book 1 of Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*, the narrator says to the reader, “Let us strike the key-note... before pursuing our tune” (Dickens 1995, 18). To attempt to strike such a note – or, rather, a series of introductory notes that perhaps can be described as a *motif* – for the long, angular tune that is to follow, the first chapter will deal with issues of method as well as set out, in summary form, the central argument of the thesis.

4 Two essays from this period in which Karatani devotes some space to this formulation are Karatani 1993b; Karatani 1994. This triad is also discussed in *Transcritique* (Karatani 2003b, 30, 90). As far as I have been able to establish, there are only two pieces of secondary literature on Karatani in English which give some explicit attention to this aspect of his thought. The first is Klausmeyer 2010. The second is an interview with Karatani conducted by the radical geographer Joel Wainwright, in which the latter questions the former as to whether Marx's value form theory can be understood as “an explicit reiteration of Kant's triadic structure” (Karatani and Wainwright 2012, 33).

Chapter 1:

On Trans-Genealogy: Towards a Historical-Philosophical Method

"[T]he past, even the recent past, is another country..."

(Mercer 2015)

"There's only freedom in structure, my man. There's no freedom in freedom."

Branford Marsalis (Maslin 1992)

In an interview in 2006, Slavoj Žižek described how he set an exam for students at the European Graduate School in the following words:

You know, I had to be there for exams for the students so I thought how should I terrorize them. I told them: "You ask yourself a question and then you answer it." Ah, but you know, they didn't have any excuses. They couldn't have said: "Ah, sorry, I could not answer you." They had to be at their best. No excuses. (Žižek 2006a)

Patrick Dunleavy, in his book *Authoring a PhD*, sets out the task of writing a "big book" thesis, a thesis such as this one, as follows: "[T]he specific nature of the contract is that the author develops and communicates a question, and then proffers an answer to it" (Dunleavy 2003, 19). This definition is undoubtedly accurate, and has interesting parallels with Žižek's unorthodox graduate school exam. Nevertheless, what it does not touch upon, and what Žižek's difficult assignment does not involve, is the rather mundane task of setting out the methodology for the production of the book-long answer to the question asked. Some theses, particularly in certain branches of the humanities, are able to avoid or mitigate this step due to the largely self-explanatory nature of their undertaking – in other words, the method reveals itself as the thesis is read, or is relatively uncomplicated and thus can be set out in a few pages (or even a few paragraphs). In such cases, the old adage of creative writing, "Don't show; tell," applies. This thesis unfortunately does not fall under such a category. Its methodological underpinnings are not only integral to the rest of it, but are in fact a somewhat unusual harmonisation of the *modus operandi* of two historical-philosophical thinkers. As a result, a significant amount of space has to be devoted to explaining them. It is hoped,

however, that this laying of the foundations will be able to hold the reader's interest.

This chapter is divided into two parts. We shall first explore a historical-philosophical methodology developed by Michel Foucault, famously known as genealogy. Following this, an account will be provided of how Foucauldian genealogy can be brought into a productive encounter with the resonant yet distinct approach of Kojin Karatani, which he has termed “transcendental retrospection.”

1.1 On Genealogy, or a 'History of the Present'

Attempting to sketch in some detail the concept of genealogy as it was enunciated and practised by Michel Foucault is not a straightforward task. In his most detailed discussion of his approach to it – namely in the essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” (Foucault 1977b) – Foucault speaks of genealogy in a way not too dissimilar to how Buddhist scriptures traditionally speak of the concept of nirvana; that is, in Wendy Brown’s words, by elaborating not what it is but rather “what it defines itself against” (W. Brown 2001, 100).

In the article, Foucault distinguishes genealogy from conventions of progressive historiography and metaphysics by taking a route Brown sees as characteristic of genealogical practice itself in its “embattled 'emergence' [that] must fight for place, and more specifically, must displace other conventions of history in order to prevail” (W. Brown 2001, 100). This method of constant opposition to progressive historiography and metaphysics – in a style reminiscent of the fictional method of “*calculatus eliminatus*”¹ – leads to the recognition that both are “implicated in the other”, and hence genealogy enables the development of a “philosophically self-conscious historiography” and a “historically self-conscious philosophy” (W. Brown 2001, 100). Put simply, genealogy allows one to realise the mutual entanglement of both history and philosophy, and opens up the way to fresh, ignored and/or barely-treaded paths.

Gary Gutting has suggested that the widely used tripartite division of Foucault's oeuvre into archaeology, genealogy and the problemization of ethics² limits, at certain points, our appreciation of the complexity of his work. He writes, for example that

1 Modifying slightly the method propounded by the Cat in the Hat in the Dr Seuss children’s video *The Lorax*: “The way to know a certain something is to find out what it's not.” Or to quote a more distinguished source, in Oscar Wilde’s essay “The Artist as Critic,” he states that “the primary aim of the critic is to see the object as... it really is not” (Wilde 2001, 240).

2 See, for example, Flynn 2005a, 29; Davidson 1986, 221.

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“[a]rchaeology’ and ‘genealogy’ are primarily retrospective (and usually idealized) descriptions of Foucault’s complex efforts to come to terms with his historical material” (Gutting 2003, 6–7). He proposes, as an alternative, “tracking Foucaultian histories along four dimensions: histories of ideas, histories of concepts, histories of the present, and histories of experience” (Gutting 2003, 7). It must here be stressed that for our purposes this interpretive schema is not meant to replace the “traditional” one – indeed, in the next section the latter will be invoked to support a “problematizing Foucault” – but rather to supplement it by trying to understand, specifically, what the term “history of the present” means for genealogy.

For Gutting, these four dimensions are found at different points throughout Foucault’s works. They are not categories *per se*, and hence it is not the case that any single monograph falls squarely into any of them. The idea of a “history of the present,” which is a term Foucault himself uses to describe his project in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1977a, 31) is expounded upon by Gutting. He writes that they “begin from [Foucault’s] perception that something is terribly wrong in the present,” which leads him to attempt to “use an understanding of the past to understand [that thing] that is intolerable in the present” (Gutting 2003, 10). How this can be distinguished from the traditional aim of history is that “[w]hereas much traditional history tries to show that where we are is inevitable, given the historical causes revealed by its account, Foucault’s histories aim to show the contingency – and hence surpassability – of what history has given us” (Gutting 2003, 10). Hence, although the terms “genealogy” and “history of the present” are not interchangeable, both describe in slightly different ways what is attempted in the second, third and fourth chapters of this thesis.

As the old saying reminds us: carts shouldn’t be put before horses. The beast of burden which provides the power for a genealogical analysis must first be described, at least in its characteristics which are the most pertinent for this thesis. Once we have done so, it becomes far easier to get on to the actual labour of genealogy-inspired enquiry, which will follow in the next three chapters.

Where We Begin: Something Has Gone Terribly Wrong

Wendy Brown states in *Politics Out of History* that the “starting point [and] object” of genealogy is the present (W. Brown 2001, 95). This is supported by numerous statements

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Foucault made throughout the history of his work, outlined by Clare O'Farrell.³ As early as 1967 he stated that "I seek to diagnose, to carry out a diagnosis of the present. To say what we are today and what it means, today, to say what we do say" (Foucault and Carrette 1999, 91). A decade later in *Discipline and Punish* he declared he was "writing the history of the present" (Foucault 1977a, 31). And as late as 1983 he said in an interview, "the question I start off with is: what are we and what are we today? What is this instant that is ours? Therefore, if you like, it is a history that starts off from this present day actuality" (Foucault 1996, 411).

However, the relationship between the past and the present in a genealogical study is a complex, perhaps almost counter-intuitive one. The "duty" of genealogy, writes Foucault, is "not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present" (Foucault 1977b, 146). And this is because, for Foucault, there is no "predetermined form to all [the present's] vicissitudes" and hence it is impossible to "pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things" (Foucault 1977b, 146).

So, it seems clear that the present cannot be analysed by tracing an uninterrupted line from the past that leads into where we are today. In other words, the present cannot be subordinated to the past, and is not overshadowed, much less dominated, by it. However, it is also important to avoid making the reverse assumption, that is, to unduly privilege the present and view the past through the lens of our time. After all, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault distinguished "writing a history of the present" from "writing a history of the past in terms of the present" (Foucault 1977a, 31).

It appears then that the practice of genealogy requires one to take careful steps as one attempts to identify half-buried tracks that may reveal the disrupted trails, fractured by ruptures, that connect the present to the past and back again. But what drives one to begin with the present? Todd May has written that with regard to Foucault and Nietzsche:

They both target the mindless conformism that characterizes contemporary society. For Nietzsche, that conformism is a product of the dominance of reactive forces; for Foucault, it has more to do with historically grounded realities such as the emergence of capitalism and the evolution of church doctrine. However, both share a revulsion against conformity that characterizes the world each of them lives in. (May 2006, 65)

It can be said that the starting point for genealogy is a feeling of severe

³ This point and the quotes in the rest of the paragraph are drawn from O'Farrell 2005, 71–72.

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discomfort, even horrendous disgust at a present state of affairs. Andre Glucksmann has offered an interpretation of the ethic of Foucault's work as centred around a notion of "the intolerable" (Glucksmann 1992, 336–339).⁴ The choice faced by someone wishing to take this path, he writes, is not between the two Weberian ethical poles of responsibility and conviction, but rather "between, on the one hand, a morality of extreme urgency which analyses the cases of what is intolerable and, on the other, a kind of edifying, fine-thinking thought or morality aiming to resolve all problems at once and for the eternity of ages" (Glucksmann 1992, 337).

Also, as O'Farrell points out, this attempt to write a "history of the present" is "not simply a diagnosis, [but] also an intervention" (O'Farrell 2005, 72). Such an intervention gazes into the past, but its focus is to open up avenues in the present in which change becomes possible. Without attempting the former one will crash into seemingly invisible, but real "walls" that lie in the world;⁵ without the latter concern the former risks becoming mere archival work.

Hence, in the case of higher education, which is the subject of this thesis, to attempt a genealogical intervention into the present is certainly apt given the present circumstances that the world of the universities is finding itself. In the United Kingdom, the complete withdrawal of funding in the arts, humanities and social sciences for undergraduate studies beginning in 2012 has resulted in a massive upheaval in the disciplines falling under these categories. Other reforms such as the liberalisation of the rules governing the area of private providers of higher education have given rise to legitimate fears that institutions which fail as a result of the cuts will be either forced to close⁶ or taken over by for-profit education corporations such as Apollo Education Group Inc.⁷ The situation has certainly, it is submitted, become intolerable. Hence by

4 Although Glucksmann does not mention it in his piece, it is quite certain that he adopted the term "intolerable" from the language of the Group for Information on Prisons (GIP) that Foucault co-founded in 1971, declaring in a questionnaire that: "The situation in the prisons is intolerable. Prisoners are being treated like dogs" (Macey 1994, 262).

5 Once again, it must be emphasised that these "walls" are not gnostic elements of the past which secretly steer the present, but rather, as we shall see below, structural patterns which, once constructed, have a tendency to persist, and which can be identified through careful enquiry.

6 The latest White Paper, *Success as a Knowledge Economy*, includes a section on "market exit" where it is stated that "the possibility of some [higher education] institutions choosing – or needing – to exit the market... is a crucial part of a healthy, competitive and well-functioning market" (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2016).

7 Apollo Education Group, Inc. is a corporation based in Phoenix, Arizona which operates a number of for-profit educational institutions. Its most infamous institution is the University of Phoenix, which has an enrolment of about 380,000 students worldwide, its gargantuan size the result of, inter alia, very loose admission requirements and emphasis on distance learning. There have been numerous criticisms of the quality of the academic provisions, for example, Dillon 2007. In the UK, Apollo

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writing a history of the present situation, what is aimed for is an intervention which will lend towards a better contextual understanding as well as the identification – although not prescription – of some possible paths towards an-other university which may be seen, from what we shall later call an exclusivist perspective, as absolutely necessary to combat the horrors that seem to be looming in the future; and, from what will be termed a pluralist perspective, as vital supplements for a present dominated fully by the reductionist instrumentalism which drives the “reforms” just mentioned.⁸

Of Origins and Sources

Genealogy is commonly linked to the idea of the rejection of origins, or to be more precise, the rejection of the exaltation of the origin as the site where the multi-layered mire of history becomes as clear as the source of a stream. Nietzsche and Foucault obviously do not deny the fact that an institution (e.g. one linked to morality) or a practice (e.g. incarceration) came from somewhere. What they clearly distance themselves from is the search for an *origin* as the key to understanding such an institution or practice. Heidegger held that the question of Being can only be understood by returning to, in Todd May's words, “its original asking, before it was buried under the weight of the metaphysical tradition” (May 2006, 64). Foucault, on the other hand, says, quoting Nietzsche's words in *The Wanderer and His Shadow*: “The lofty origin is no more than 'a metaphysical extension which arises from the belief that things are most precious and essential at the moment of birth.’” (Foucault 1977b, 143).⁹

It is this idea that there is an actual point of emergence that where there lies a pure, untainted ideal with which all subsequent discussion of a practice must be coloured that is disputed. In the words of Foucault, genealogy “rejects the meta-historical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for 'origins'” (Foucault 1977b, 140). In a lecture delivered two years later, Foucault speaks about the distinction Nietzsche draws between “origin” (*Ursprung*) and “invention” (*Erfindung*), saying that for Nietzsche, there is no *Ursprung*, no origin of

Group are the owners of BPP Professional Education, which provide business and law degrees.

⁸ These two perspectives will be explored in Chapter Five.

⁹ Foucault's reference gives the source of the quote by Nietzsche as aphorism 3 of *The Wanderer and His Shadow*. The text is actually what is sometimes published these days as Part Two of Volume II of *Human, All Too Human*. The aphorism in the R. J. Hollingdale translation reads as follows: “*In the beginning*’. To glorify the origin – that is the metaphysical aftershoot that breaks out when we meditate on history and makes us believe that what stands at the beginning of all things is also what is most valuable and essential” (Nietzsche 1996, 302, italics in original).

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things such as religion, poetry or the ideal but only their their *Erfindung*, their invention (Foucault 2000b, 6–7).¹⁰ This insight may admittedly seem rather banal when applied to the subject matter at hand – “Of course the neoliberal university was invented,” one might say. “Of course it does not have a non-material origin. There was no doubt about this fact in the first place, unlike with, say, religion, with its complicated, mythically-and-metaphysically-bound history.”

The point, however is not so much to argue for a material invention over a metaphysical origin, but to recognise that – to repeat what has been stated above – there is no “unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things”(Foucault 1977b, 146). To return to Bologna in 1088, or to the motto *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* (Ridder-Symoens 2003, 8), is a quest that will teach us very little if we are hunting for a pure line of descent. However, what we *can* learn from examining the earlier days of the university is how seemingly bygone elements can resurface in more recent times as a matter of contingency which nevertheless appears as a (singular) repetition. We shall see this to be the case in Chapter Four when we compare certain aspects of the university at present with that of the medieval and early modern periods.

The preceding discussion on “origins” leaves various questions. One may ask, for example, what genealogy concerns itself with if not the search for a pure instance of genesis, and if the idea of a simple beginning is intrinsically problematic. Also, what would be the source material of such an inquiry? Foucault’s response is that “if [a genealogist] listens to history he finds that there is 'something altogether different behind things': not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms” (Foucault 1977b, 142). After all, as Foucault famously declares at the opening of “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”: “Genealogy is gray, meticulous and patiently

10 It should also be noted that Karatani makes a similar argument in relation to the apparent “discovery” of “landscape” in Japanese literature: “We might say that 'landscape' was not so much **discovered** within the epistemological inversion concentrated in *genbun itchi* as it was **invented**. In this book I used the term 'discovery of landscape' to connote the inversion whereby something which had never existed before came to be seen as self-evident, as an existence which in fact preceded the inversion.” (Karatani 1993c, 193, italics in original, bolded text mine) In other words, for Karatani, the notion of “discovery” confuses the history of a particular thing and is likely to result in a faulty genealogy. Therefore, Karatani’s use of the word “origin” should not be taken to mean an embrace of the obsession with origins which Foucault critiques, but rather a problematisation of the term. As Brett de Bary notes in her introduction of his *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, “As [Karatani] wrote in the afterword to the first edition of his book, each of the words of its title, 'the words “Japanese,” “modern,” “literature,” and especially “origins,” should in fact be bracketed” (Karatani 1993c, 2).

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documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times” (Foucault 1977b, 139). Although this thesis does not, in the main, deal with materials as fragmentary as this description of Foucault's, it does engage with documents which are entangled and confused in the sense of having been either largely forgotten, constantly read in particularly narrow ways, or even misread.

Further down he says, “historical beginnings are lowly: not in the sense of modest or discreet like the steps of a dove, but derisive and ironic, capable of undoing every infatuation” (Foucault 1977b, 143). And on the next page, “A genealogy of values, morality, asceticism, and knowledge... will cultivate the details and accidents that accompany every beginning; it will be scrupulously attentive to their petty malice; it will await their emergence, once unmasked, as the face of the other... . The genealogist needs history to dispel the chimeras of the origin” (Foucault 1977b, 144). This is in part a journey, as it were, into the margins of history, into what may have been largely ignored or skimmed over by previous adventurers. Even where familiar territory is trodden upon, a genealogical eye views matters at a different angle. We will see this in Chapters Two and Three where we shall examine the contradictions of certain common readings of prominent government-sponsored reports related to higher education.

Interrogating Foucault’s “Anti-Institutionalism”

At first glance it may appear that a fair number of Foucault’s projects aim to enquire into the heart of institutions. For example, his second major work was titled *The Birth of the Clinic*. The subtitle of *Discipline and Punish* was, after all, “The Birth of the Prison.” And throughout his career he constantly referred to schools, religious institutions and so on. We also cannot forget his first and most hefty monograph, *History of Madness*, which dealt with mental asylums (Foucault 2006).¹¹

Hence, when one attempts to begin writing a genealogy of particular aspects of the university, one may become quite perplexed while reading certain passages from Foucault, particularly in essays and interviews late in his life and career, where he categorically disavows any interest in institutions as subjects of analysis. For example, in “Questions of Method,” he asserts that in *Discipline and Punish*:

11 This text is an unabridged version of *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique*, which was first translated in abridged form as *Madness and Civilization* (Foucault 1964).

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the target of analysis wasn't "institutions," "theories," or "ideology" but *practices*—with the aim of grasping the conditions that make these acceptable at a given moment; the hypothesis being that these types of practice are not just governed by institutions, prescribed by ideologies, guided by pragmatic circumstances—whatever role these elements might actually play—but, up to a point, possess their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence, and "reason." It is a question of analyzing a "regime of practices"—practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken-for-granted meet and interconnect. (Foucault 2000a, 225, italics in original)

A few lines further he reiterates his point, saying that his aim was "to write a history not of the prison as an institution, but of the *practice of imprisonment*" (Foucault 2000a, 225, italics in original). Hence, if one wishes to take Foucault at his word and apply this principle to the project at hand, it appears that it would be antithetical to the Foucauldian method to attempt a genealogy of the university as an institution. In such a case, would it not be far more in line with the spirit of his genealogy to say that one is carrying out an analysis of the practice(s) of higher education?

The answer to this question depends on our understanding of what an institution is. In his 1949 work *The Concept of Mind*, the analytic philosopher Gilbert Ryle tells this made-up story:

A foreigner visiting Oxford or Cambridge for the first time is shown a number of colleges, libraries, playing fields, museums, scientific departments and administrative offices. He then asks "But where is the University? I have seen where the members of the Colleges live, where the Registrar works, where the scientists experiment and the rest. But I have not yet seen the University in which reside and work the members of your University." It has then to be explained to him that the University is not another collateral institution, some ulterior counterpart to the colleges, laboratories and offices which he has seen. The University is just the way in which all that he has already seen is organized. When they are seen and when their co-ordination is understood, the University has been seen. (Ryle 2009, 6)

Ryle tells this story in order to illustrate what he calls a "category-mistake," the placing of "the facts of mental life as if they belonged to one logical type or category (or range of types or categories), when they actually belong to another" (Ryle 2009, 6). For him, a university is an "institution" in the sense of an organisational aggregate of affiliated activities and facilities related to higher education in a particular place. Thus, it lies in a different "category" to that of halls of residence, libraries, laboratories, and so on. Following on from this, when all these individual universities are brought together, we have "the university," which is a "universal," namely an entity that is said to be

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present in various particular things. Other examples of universals include “the state,” “the people,” and “capitalism.” While not all universals are institutions, all institutions on a macro level, if understood in the usual way, are universals.

In his 1978-1979 lecture series at the Collège de France entitled *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault proposes a bold methodological starting point for his lectures: “Let’s suppose that universals do not exist” (Foucault 2010, 3). If we follow Foucault’s radical gesture and choose to not take the university as a “thing” existent in its own right, we can analyse it as an “effect” which is constituted or composed of “phenomena of coagulation, support, reciprocal reinforcement, cohesion, and integration” (Foucault 2009, 239). Viewed in this manner, it can also be apprehended as a “social relationship,” as the German anarchist theorist Gustav Landauer argued with regard to another composed effect commonly deemed an institution – that is, the state (Landauer 2010, 214).¹² Foucault himself describes the “state effect” as the result of “a thousand diverse processes” (Foucault 2009, 239); in other words, it is the cumulative, dynamic and ongoing outcome of a multitude of relations, rather than an organised and organising force in itself.

By thinking of the university in a similar fashion, that is to say, primarily as a process constituted of manifold processes rather than a substance, both the manner of one’s analysis as well as the mapping of possible trajectories of change are significantly transformed. In both cases, the value of what Nietzsche referred to as the “little unpretentious truths” which are “modest, simple, sober, [and] so apparently discouraging” increases greatly (Nietzsche 1996, para. I.3). Instead of a monolithic institution, we encounter a swirl of multiplicity. The latter conception, of course, is no less daunting than the former, although the challenges it poses are very different. If there is no object to be seized or mastered, then the strategies to be deployed in an attempt to influence the working out of higher education have to be interventions in process. To invoke a dramatised nautical metaphor, for those who would seek to work within the arguably “intolerable” spaces of higher education, the university is not a single ship which can be turned around by a mutiny which replaces the captain, but rather the sum total of seaborne traffic in which even the humblest of interventions, such as a single conversation between two like-minded sailors in a tavern, may develop

12 Among those who regarded the state as an institution was Landauer’s fellow anarchist Peter Kropotkin (Kropotkin 1946, sec. X).

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into something larger, such as the establishment of a far-flung pirate utopia, which could eventually play an important part in altering the entire sphere in question.

This approach to studying the university, drawing from what Foucault called a “nominalist method in history” (Foucault 2010, 318), is based on the principle that it does not have an existence separate to the “network of alliances, communications, and points of support” which constitutes it (Foucault 2009, 117). Thus, it becomes impossible to neatly separate out particular phenomena as “extraneous” and irrelevant for our investigation simply by their appearance as being exterior to the university as traditionally-defined. As a result of this, the spheres which this thesis enquires into are far broader than if we were to delimit the university in the usual manner, including among them postwar social democracy, conceptions of community and the history of vocation. Nevertheless, for practical purposes, the scope of our analysis is at the same time more targeted and specific. As it is impossible for us to encompass the whole scope of these manifold processes which together constitute the university, our central focus will be on those elements which are related to what we shall call the triadic structure of the postwar British university.

Having explored the terrain of Foucauldian genealogy in this first section – and made mention of “structure,” a word with mixed connotations for Foucault and his followers – we shall now turn to the task of bringing this historical-philosophical tradition into a productive conversation and intercourse with what can be loosely described as another genealogical method, namely that of Kojin Karatani.

1.2 From Genealogy and Transcendental Retrospection to Trans-Genealogy

Foucault: Genealogy

As charted in the preceding section in some detail, Foucault is commonly known as an intellectual descendent of Nietzsche and a practitioner of the genealogical tradition that the latter can be said to have begun. While this is certainly true, there is another thinker in the Western philosophical tradition whose path Foucault can be said to have walked in – even if in his own unique way – and extended. This thinker is none other than Immanuel Kant.

Over the last two decades, this somewhat controversial and yet undeniable link has been explored in significant detail by writers such as Béatrice Han, Marc Djaballah

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and Colin Koopman (Han 2002; Djaballah 2011; Koopman 2013). Nevertheless, the most telling statement with regard to this relationship comes from an entry in a French dictionary of philosophy published in the 1980s, which declares: “To the extent that Foucault fits into the philosophical tradition, it is the *critical* tradition of Kant, and his project could be called a *Critical History of Thought*” (Florence 1998, 459, italics in original). This declaration comes, in actual fact, from the proverbial horse's mouth, as the dictionary entry was “almost entirely” authored by Foucault himself, and attributed to a fictional person, “Maurice Florence” (Florence 1998, 459).

However, Foucault was certainly not a straight-forward Kantian or Neo-Kantian. As Béatrice Han points out, Foucault adopted Kant's critical project of investigating the conditions of possibility for experience; however, he did not approve of Kant's “transcendental” method due to its anthropological essence, which looks to human experience for its foundations, and hence enthrones “man and his doubles” as the centre of enquiry (Han 2002, 3; Foucault 1973, chap. 9). Foucault, as an anti-humanist, formulated the alternative concept of the “historical *a priori*,” which was “the starting-point from which it was possible to define the great checkerboard of distinct identities established against the confused, undefined, faceless, and, as it were, indifferent background of difference” (Foucault 1973, xxiv). This startling development of the Kantian concept of the *a priori* transforms it from a transhistorical starting point of knowledge to one which is “fully given in history, which transforms itself with it, and which nevertheless somehow lies beyond it in defining the conditions of possibility, themselves variable, from which the knowledge of an epoch can and must form itself” (Han 2002, 4). In other words, Foucault reintroduced history into the scene of the conditions of possibility of knowledge and human experience: he endeavoured, in his own way, to historicise Kant's transcendental critique.

Karatani: Transcendental Retrospection

Halfway around the globe, and working for some years in the same present as Foucault, the Japanese literary theorist and political philosopher Kojin Karatani distilled a method of enquiry from similar sources: Nietzsche and Kant, but also Marx and Freud. In the 1970s, he first linked together the projects of Marx and Nietzsche in an essay, “The Genealogy of Marx,” arguing that Marx's examination of classical political economy – particularly Adam Smith's understanding of exchange value – bore strong familial

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resemblances to Nietzschean genealogy in its “intent... to trace [a thing] back to the ‘vanishing mediator’” and “disclose that the cause and effect, as commonly perceived, are reversed” (Karatani and Wainwright 2012, 32). Subsequently he turned to the study of Kant and discovered that the thrust of the Nietzschean genealogical method, namely the “critique of the perspectival perversion,” could be traced back to Kant's transcendental critique (Karatani and Wainwright 2012, 32).

For Karatani, “the point of transcendental critique is to reveal that what we take for granted as object is only a composite of a certain ‘form’ that is unknown to us” (Karatani 1994). He continues: “This is a sort of retrospection, but to an origin that can be grasped only transcendentially, not one that we imagine to be the cause of the effect known to us” (Karatani 1994). Karatani's understanding of “transcendental” is significantly more expansive than Kant's, in that he takes “the ‘transcendental’ [to] not [be] confined to narrow epistemological questions” (Karatani 1993b). In his own words, the concept should be used “more broadly than [in] Kant: as an act of bracketing what we empirically take for granted as evident and natural, and scrutinizing the conditions that make such a conviction possible; because ‘transcendental,’ in this sense... has existed both before and after Kant” (Karatani 1994).¹³ In other words, *pace* Koopman (Koopman 2010, 106), we can be practitioners of transcendental critique without being strict adherents of Kant's transcendental idealism.

However, whereas Foucault's modification of Kant's *a priori* appears as a turn towards history, Karatani argues that transcendental retrospection – his favoured term – to which he cites Nietzsche's genealogy, Marx's *Capital*, and Freudian psychoanalysis as examples, “is not an *empirical* historical retrospection, but a sort of retrospection that poses radical questions about the historicist premises upon which we are always dependent, when we begin our speculations” (Karatani 1993b, italics mine). The term

13 This broadening of transcendental critique culminates with Karatani's formulation of the concept of “transcritique,” which is a method founded upon the Kantian concept of antinomy and which is concurrently *transcendental* and *transversal* in that it oscillates between seemingly contradictory positions. It is perhaps instructive that a similar widening of the Kantian antinomical method, and implicitly his critique, can be found in the writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who saw the antinomy at work far beyond the realm of cognition and into wider spheres of existence (de Lubac 1956, 145). Nevertheless, Proudhon's position arguably takes things too far by positing antinomy as “everywhere in Being, everywhere in Nature, everywhere in the physical world and the social world” (de Lubac 1956, 145). Karatani, on the other hand, has argued that “[W]hat Kant meant by ‘antinomy’ is not the kind of contradiction that exists everywhere, but the kind that can never be resolved, no matter how dialectically you treat it.” This, he emphasises, can be contrasted to a form of Hegelianism which holds that “contradictions are innumerable and everywhere, and they all can be sublated, if treated dialectically” (Karatani, Hioe, and Small 2014). Putting it differently, the antinomy is not the one and only tool with which we should use to understand the universe.

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“transcendental” should be sharply distinguished from “transcendent,” the latter being concerned with the question of “things beyond the immanence of the world, such as ‘Platonic form[s]’ and ‘unchanging essences’” (Bryant 2014). The former denotes, rather, “a questioning of the *mode of recognition* rather than a questioning of the *content*” (Karatani 1993b, italics mine). What is being questioned, in other words, is an “unconscious structure that precedes and shapes experience” (Karatani 2003b, 1). Such a structure is not transhistorical, but neither is it historicist – that is, it is not bound by an insistence upon, or even an obsession with, empiricism. This nuanced distinction is illustrated in Karatani’s description of the task he set out to complete in his latest work to be translated into English, *The Structure of World History*:

I am not trying to write here the sort of world history that is ordinarily taken up by historians. What I am aiming at is **a transcendental critique of the relationships** between the various basic modes of exchange. This means to explicate **structurally** three great *shifts* that have occurred in world history. (Karatani 2014, 28, italics in original, bolded text mine)

Another way of putting it is that transcendental retrospection and critique occurs at a meta level. Freudian psychoanalysis, for example, can be understood as a metapsychology rather than an empirical psychology in that the psychical structure of id, ego and superego advanced in it “can be spoken of only as *figure*” – which is to say that they, like the Kantian conceptions of sensibility, understanding and reason, are “functions about which we can only say that they are at work” (Karatani 2003b, 34).¹⁴ Karatani goes as far as to say that “they are *nothing*,” but “a ‘nothing’ that *exists* as a certain *function*” (Karatani 2003b, 34, italics in original). At this point, it could be asked: how exactly does one posit a transcendental structure in a realm other than human cognition, since what is being dealt with involves more than simply the process of introspection which is commonly regarded as characterising the theoretical operations of Kant or Husserl?¹⁵ Moreover, what exactly does Karatani mean by a “functional” structure? To answer these questions, we can turn to the example of Freud’s

14 For a defence of the metapsychological aspects of Freud’s work against interpretations stressing “the evidence of the couch,” see Kitcher and Wilkes 1988. Contrary to those such as Adolf Grünbaum who evaluate Freud’s work according to empirical criteria, Kitcher and Wilkes argue that metapsychology can lead to a truly interdisciplinary approach to cognition.

15 It should be noted that Karatani has argued that, even though “[p]hilosophy begins [and ends] with introspection as a mirror,” Kant’s work is not mired in “subjectivist self-scrutiny” but in fact is “haunted by the perspective of the other” (Karatani 2003b, 2). It is this haunting of the other that gave birth to his conceptions of the “pronounced parallax” and “antinomy,” whereas Husserlian phenomenology, as stated in the footnote above, can be said to extinguish the other by attempting to absorb it into the transcendental ego. This is the result of attempting to purge the “impure” element of the other in Kant’s transcendental critique (Karatani 2003b, 90).

“metapsychology.”

As already stated, Freudian structural model of the psyche, which is divided into id, ego and superego is advanced not as consisting of objects existing empirically but rather as *figure* (Karatani 2003b, 34). In *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, Laplanche and Pontalis describe metapsychology as “an ensemble of conceptual models which are more or less far removed from empirical reality” (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 249). While this definition certainly does not endear the concept to believers in positivist science, these conceptual models are, in truth, far from being false or purely imaginary constructions. They are formulated, rather, within a dialogue between empirical analysis and rational conceptualisation, but can only be posited *transcendentally* – that is, as forming a “structure” which lies outside of the bounds of empiricism, and which serves as a map to study the field of play. Freud himself defined metapsychology in his 1915 essay, “The Unconscious,” as aiming towards “describing a psychological process in its dynamic, topographical and economic aspects” (Freud 2001).

Hence, it is by analysing the *relations* between the elements at stake, both in their temporal and spatial dimensions, that a structure emerges, which then can be put forward as a *figure* that has *both* heuristic and conditioning dimensions.¹⁶ It not only enables us to categorise and comprehend the complexity of the subject-matter in question, but until it becomes conscious to us, it will inevitably condition our reality without us realising it.¹⁷ Although in his writings in the 1980s and 1990s Karatani appears to emphasise the transcendental aspect of his critique, from the publication of *Transcritique* in 2001 it becomes clear that is important to distinguish his argument from a theoretical move that is simply a reversal of the privileging of empirical datum over any hypothetical structure – that is, it is not that there is some unconscious structure pre-determining all that happens. As Karatani points out, “the revolutionary aspect of Freudian psychoanalysis was not in the idea of ‘the unconscious controlling much of human behaviour’; as presented as early as in *Interpretation of Dreams* (and this idea had

16 Once again, this is clear from Karatani's own statement of his project in *The Structure of World History*: “What I am aiming at is a transcendental critique of the *relationships* between the various basic modes of exchange. This means to explicate *structurally* three great *shifts* that have occurred in world history” (Karatani 2014, 28, italics mine). Another instance where he highlights the importance of relationality is in *Transcritique* where he states that the significance of the Copernican turn was not a “choice between geocentrism or heliocentrism, but rather in grasping the solar system as a *relational structure* – using terms such as ‘earth’ and ‘sun’” (Karatani 2003b, 31, italics in original).

17 This does not fall foul of Foucault's aforementioned objection to seeing the past as secretly animating the present, for the structure we are speaking of is, in fact, neither in the past nor “originary.”

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existed since antiquity)” (Karatani 2003b, 32). Rather, “it was [Freud’s] attempt to see what exists in the *gap* between consciousness and unconscious vis-à-vis the form of language,” and “[i]n the course of this attempt, he came to extract the unconscious qua transcendental structure” (Karatani 2003b, 32, italics mine). In other words, the antinomy can only be bridged, at strategic points, by means of constantly dwelling in the “parallax gap,” in the uncomfortable space in between two seemingly conflicting viewpoints.¹⁸ It is there where one encounters, to quote Bryan Klausmeyer, “the radical alterity of the thing-in-itself” (Klausmeyer 2010, 44).

Foucault and Karatani: Trans-Genealogy

Returning to Foucault, it is interesting to note that he too explores the links between Nietzsche, Marx and Freud in his 1967 essay, “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx,” in which he focused on the their interrelated “techniques of interpretation” (Foucault 1998, 269). There are two fairly well-known statements of Nietzsche which are often cited together: firstly, “facts are precisely what there is not, only interpretations” (Nietzsche 1968, 481); and, secondly, “this also is only interpretation” (Nietzsche 1989, sec. 22). These sayings are quite possibly what Foucault had in mind when he states in the essay, as an extension of sorts, that “[t]here is nothing absolutely primary to interpret, for after all everything is already interpretation, each sign is in itself not the thing that offers itself to interpretation but an interpretation of other signs” (Foucault 1998, 275).

Although Foucault’s genealogy appears at first glance to turn Kant’s critique in a historicist direction, his is not a naive historicism but one that is fully cognisant of the nature of doing history in the light of Nietzsche. In other words, it is not simply a matter of delving into the archive as if that would in itself provide a firm basis from which to write a “history of the present.” Instead, in “What is Critique?,” he stresses that the “historical-philosophical practice” that he advocates requires one to “make one’s own history, fabricate history, as if through fiction, in terms of how it would be traversed by the question of the relationships between structures of rationality which articulate true discourse and the mechanisms of subjugation which are linked to it” (Foucault 1997, 45).¹⁹ However, the task of genealogy is far more than merely a radical

18 It is Žižek who coins the term “parallax gap” to describe the space of Karatani’s transcritique, and extends it to various spheres of analysis (Žižek 2006b, 50).

19 It should be noted that the references to both “structures of rationality which articulate true discourse” and “mechanisms of subjugation” in this quote from a 1978 lecture indicate that the oft-repeated claim that Foucault’s genealogical method entailed an abandonment of the focus on

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hermeneutics that takes one to the boundary where the separation of “fact” and “interpretation” or “fiction” break down.²⁰ It can be described more accurately as the tricky task of “problematization.”

Colin Koopman, in his recent book *Genealogy as Critique*, boldly advances the thesis that Foucault's genealogical method can best be understood in the light of a statement he made in a 1984 interview with Francois Ewald (Koopman 2013, 17). In response to a question that appears to suggest a rupture in Foucault's thought beginning with Volume 2 of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault responds, “The notion common to all the work that I have done since *Histoire de la folie* is that of problematization” (Foucault 1990b, 257). From this, Koopman argues that “the critical inquiries Foucault developed under the auspices of the analytic and diagnostic procedures of archaeology and genealogy are best seen as problematizations of our present” (Koopman 2013, 17). In problematising the present, Foucault carries out a Kantian-inspired enquiry into the *conditions of possibility* in our contemporary situation. This attention to the conditions

discourse and knowledge in an earlier “archaeological period” in favour of an analysis centred merely on power is ill-founded. While it is clear that the work that Foucault did under the explicit heading of genealogy involve elements of power which were not prominent in previous work which he termed archaeology, Foucault's concern with the formation of knowledges continues right up to the end of his life. What can be said to have taken place was a *widening* of his analytical scope from knowledge to “power/knowledge.” This perspective, which we may refer to an “expansion thesis,” is developed by Colin Koopman in a recent book, where he also argues that the focus on rupture in Foucault's earlier work (particularly in *The Order of Things* which, although Koopman does not say exactly so, can perhaps be described as a *tour de force* of one gigantic *épisteme* after the other) develops into a more dynamic “history of continuity-with-discontinuity” (Koopman 2013, 42).

- 20 The uniqueness of Foucault's approach to Nietzsche can be seen by contrasting it with the work of Gianni Vattimo, another thinker who invokes the interpretative nature of a post-Nietzschean world, but with much greater emphasis upon this point. Vattimo situates his reading of Nietzsche within an “Italian” tradition which follows on from the publication of Heidegger's lectures on Nietzsche in 1961. His specific iteration embraces a “nihilist” and “post-metaphysical” philosophy and claims to have “a closer (and perhaps more 'ideological') relationship with political events” than “French” readings of the same period. While recognising the “political engagement... of philosophers like Foucault and Deleuze,” Vattimo characterises their interpretations of Nietzsche as “critical-suspensive,” “artistic,” and “literary” (Vattimo 2006, 195). Certainly Foucault's Nietzsche does not lend easily to mainstream representative politics of the sort that Vattimo has engaged in, but, to recall Marx's famous thesis, it can be argued that a predominantly hermeneutic Nietzsche entails one which is less likely to change the world in a significant manner. Ultimately, however, “a tree is known by its fruit,” to quote a Galilean carpenter-rabbi (Matt 12:33, NKJV). Alessia Ricciardi has charted the playing out of Vattimo's version of Nietzschean interpretation, associated with the intellectual movement of “weak thought” (*pensiero debole*) in Italy, and judges it as having absorbed dominant trends of mass culture and even neoliberalism rather than questioning them (Ricciardi 2012, 126–133). It is probably significant that over the last decade or so, Vattimo has distanced himself from his views in the 1980s and 1990s, although it can be argued that such a perspective is also in line with a current trend – that is, an increasing sense of confidence in some left-wing circles as a result of developments such as the Latin American pink tide, which Vattimo lauds in a recent book (Vattimo and Zabala 2014, 121–140). Of course, Foucault himself was not immune from being influenced by changing times, and some have even argued that he briefly became enamoured by neoliberalism in the late 1970s (Behrent 2009). The obvious point, however, should still be noted, namely that this was before neoliberalism was actually applied to Western economies such as the United States and the United Kingdom.

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of the subject-matter being interrogated, rather than mere contents and practices, is what distinguishes Foucault's genealogy from the genealogical methods practised by Bernard Williams and Nietzsche:

Whereas Williams and Nietzsche used genealogy to *cast judgments on certain concepts* (truthfulness and morality, for example) *and the practices instantiating them*, Foucault used genealogy to *critically investigate the conditions of the possibility of the practical exercise of such concepts*. The purpose of Foucault's unique conception of *genealogy as problematization* is *to make manifest the constitutive and regulative conditions of the present* as a material for thought and action that we would need to work on if we are to transform that present. If other genealogists have aimed at vindication or subversion of the problematizations at the heart of who we are, Foucault aims at a practice that would reveal our problematizations to facilitate their further transformation. (Koopman 2013, 18, italics added)

As I have previously written, for Foucault, all genealogy begins with the present. To be exact, the starting point for genealogical critique is a sense that something has gone terribly wrong – where, in the words of the founding manifesto of *Le Groupe d'information sur les prisons* (GIP) which Foucault co-initiated, “the situation... is intolerable” (Macey 1994, 261–262). As already stated above, it is not difficult to see why we may wish to designate the present landscape of higher education in the UK as being “intolerable.” Sweeping changes to the system of funding are causing a massive upheaval, leading to developments such as the closure of departments deemed “unprofitable” in universities erstwhile funded primarily by the state²¹ and the rise of for-profit higher education providers for whom the financial interests of shareholders outweigh the ostensible mission of providing and facilitating learning, leading to all sorts of questionable practices such as admitting ill-qualified students who, having received student loans, do not show up for classes (Malik, McGettigan, and Domokos 2014). Meanwhile, the conditions in which academics labour continue to worsen dramatically, through infra-legal forms of control of time and energy which lead to stress, disillusionment and cynicism (Gill 2009). To list all the elements which are alarming would require much more space than can be provided here.

Having said all this, should a sense of an intolerable thing in the present impel one to commence a genealogy, it would not be a Foucauldian genealogy if it was pre-determined to simply attack or subvert the present. It is a rather unfortunate development in the reception of Foucault's work that many of his readers have

21 The most severe case being the effective “bonfire” of courses at London Metropolitan University in 2011, where 70% of all courses previously offered were cut (Garner 2011).

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projected their normative assessments – normally negative – into the sphere of his histories. It is often tacitly assumed that when Foucault is discussing something which is commonly seen as problematic within a particular intellectual milieu, it is because such a thing is “bad.” One clear example is his 1978-1979 lectures on neoliberalism which, since their first publication a decade ago, were widely read as being a “critique” of neoliberalism before it was pointed out that Foucault himself was at the time somewhat open, if not favourably disposed, towards some of the ideas that he discussed (Foucault 2010; Behrent 2009; Patton 2013). Indeed, as Foucault said: “My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do” (Foucault 1983, 231–232). To practise a Foucauldian-inspired genealogy requires one to suspend simplistic normative assessments such as “good” or “bad” and instead enquire into the dangerous contingencies that are latent in the present formulations of the subject-matter of study, which reveal their underlying conditions. That is to say, we should read the word “dangerous” here as “pregnant with uncertain possibilities.”

Bearing in mind the proviso in the preceding paragraph, now that we have identified the “intolerable” nature of the contemporary university in the UK, it is to problematization that we turn. As Koopman points out, it is insufficient to demonstrate that our present is contingent; what is more crucial is to identify “*how* the present is contingently made up” (Koopman 2013, 21, italics in original). Once again, this is the element of genealogy which is linked to the Kantian critical project: to uncover the conditions that made it possible for our present situation to come about. In other words, to make a problem of what is generally – in the words of Karatani – “taken for granted” (Karatani 1993b). Against commentators who argue for a sequential understanding of Foucault's methodology which begins with archaeology, follows on into genealogy and finally moves into problematization,²² Koopman presents a persuasive reading of problematization as a steady current throughout Foucault's oeuvre – latent in the earlier years but increasingly explicit in his later work (Koopman 2013, 44–48). When put together with what can be termed his “expansion thesis” – that is, that genealogy is an expansion of archaeology rather than a replacement of it (Koopman 2013, 42) – what we get is a relatively cohesive and yet wide-ranging method which chimes in much greater harmony with Foucault's formidable body of work, which has constantly been found to

22 To give just two of countless examples: May 2006; Flynn 2005b.

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not comply with any strict periodisations.²³

Where Karatani's transcendental retrospection may helpfully supplement this formulation of Foucauldian genealogy is in its insistence that the “transcendental” element of critique not be jettisoned in a heady romance with the historical. To do so would be to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater, the latter being the problematic conception of the “transcendental” that is specific to the original Kantian version.²⁴ What is necessary is to hold the transcendental – understood in Karatani's terms, that is, a recognition of a figurative *structure* which escapes empirical analysis in the conditions of possibility that have led to our present – and the historical in a state of paradoxical tension, recognising that they often appear to point in different directions, but yet refusing to yield one to the other and dissolve the antinomy. Such a commitment draws from Karatani's more recent concept of “transcritique,” where one accepts the “pronounced parallax” that results from trying to avoid the optical delusion of a single standpoint, and instead oscillates transversally between the poles of the antinomy.²⁵ Putting it differently, while in its general operations Foucauldian genealogical critique moves horizontally along a seemingly immanent plane, Karatani's transcendental retrospection burrows vertically to seek out underlying structures which can be seen to be at work (Karatani 2003b, 1).²⁶

What this leads us to is a conception of Kantian-inspired “transcendental”

23 Stuart Elden, amongst many others, has constantly underlined this point in his surveys of Foucault's Collège de France lectures, in which themes which some deem surpassed return, and themes some deem to come rear their heads prematurely, e.g. Elden 2012.

24 Such is the case with Koopman, who rejects the depiction of Foucault's method as having a residual transcendental dimension by writers such as Béatrice Han-Pile, arguing instead that it is a resolutely *historical* form of Kantian critique rooted in *empiricism* (Koopman 2013, 110). Even though scholars of Foucault are divided on this point, it is not necessary for us to take a particular side, for by adopting Karatani's expansive conception of transcendental critique, the arguments adduced by Koopman which are based on a narrow reading of “transcendental” – i.e. involving universal conditions of possibility – do not apply.

25 As Karatani notes, transcritique “is *not* some kind of *stable third position*. It cannot exist without a transversal and transpositional movement” (Karatani 2003b, 4, italics mine). Koopman appears particularly wary of collapsing Foucault into a Husserlian phenomenological space where the historical and transcendental are “amalgamated” (Koopman 2013, 110). It is clear that Foucault himself rejected the phenomenological approach in the preface to the English edition of *The Order of Things*, as it “gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to act [and] which places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity” (Foucault 1973, xiv). Karatani, too, considers that the Husserlian move of bracketing “the self-evidence of the life world” in order to delve into the transcendental ego results in it subsuming all else and becoming the sole object of investigation. In not considering other egos, alterity is completely lost, and the possibility of a pronounced parallax with it (Karatani 2003b, 90). Hence, a Husserlian amalgamation of the historical and the transcendental is *not* transcritical.

26 This metaphor of horizontal and vertical methods of critical enquiry is borrowed from Arata Isozaki's introduction to Karatani's *Architecture as Metaphor* (Karatani 1995b, vii–viii).

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critique, which I would like to call *trans-cendental/critical genealogy*, or *trans-genealogy*, that is both humbler and bolder than its Kantian precursor at the same time. It is humbler because it does not claim to have discovered transhistorical conditions of all human experience. Nevertheless, and more crucially, it is bolder because by entering into both the terrains of the transcendental and the historical on its own terms, it opens itself to attack from those who strongly believe in the primacy of one or the other.²⁷ Karatani himself foreshadows this move when he says that “we [should] persist in the Kantian term, 'transcendental,' except that in order to elucidate its dynamism and function further, *transcritique* has to intervene” (Karatani 2003b, 34). It is argued that to apply Karatani's transcritique towards his earlier conception of transcendental retrospection entails bringing the latter into contact with the historical-empirical, via a conversation with Foucauldian genealogy, resulting in trans-genealogy.

To summarise this trans-genealogical approach in a nutshell, it is an endeavour to identify the conditions of possibility which have created and continue to sustain the present, through both the elucidation of the “mode of recognition” that is at work, as well as the “contents” that interact with it. The tricky task is to collapse neither into pure transcendentalism (by focusing merely on the mode of recognition) or pure historicism (by focusing on the contents, i.e. the historical specificities), but to dwell, rather, in the interstice, or parallax gap, that lies in between the two. In the specific case at hand, it involves an examination of both the “questions” that are at work in the ongoing construction of the university, as well as the “answers” that have been and are given. Empirical investigation of the latter must be carried out in tandem with transcendental (re)construction of the former. Once they are identified and analysed, these questions and answers can be shown to fit into a structure which has conditioned the development of the university in the United Kingdom from the Second World War.

Brief Interlude: Why Begin After the War?

However, before we can commence our study, which takes as its starting point the apparent rise of what may be termed “neoliberal rationality”²⁸ within the British

²⁷ The work that Jean-Luc Nancy has done on the concept of “transimmanence” has gentle resonances with what is at work here (Nancy 1996, 34–35). The transcendental element of trans-genealogy is not transcendent – that is, it is not outside the world, but yet while remaining within it contains a motion which resists closure within a radically immanentist historical vision.

²⁸ The term “neoliberal” is used here with some reluctance, as its popularity in recent academic and non-academic writing has led to it being rather amorphous and imprecise. This has led some to interrogate the variations of its deployment, e.g. Hardin 2014. Nevertheless, it has become for many

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university, it is necessary to justify the time period chosen. The obvious question that arises is: why begin at the end of the Second World War? After all, could not the instrumentalism that is very clear within the “neoliberal mode” in higher education be traced back further, to the very beginnings of the university in Europe?

Hence, it is necessary to stress that the point of temporal departure for this thesis has not been chosen arbitrarily, but arises rather from the particular nature of the neoliberal form of higher education that is at issue. Karatani, in his study of the origins of modern Japanese literature, makes an interesting point about how far back one should go:

But my own feeling is that the genealogical “return,” that is, the tracing back of origins, should not be taken too far. [For example,] [b]y contrast to many scholars who sought the origins of anti-Semitism in medieval and ancient times, for example, Hannah Arendt looked to the late-nineteenth-century consolidation of state economies. ... [With regard to modern literature,] [w]hile it might appear that a more deep-rooted origin can be traced further back, to do so would be to ignore the inversion that emerged in this time period itself; indeed, it would strengthen that very inversion. (Karatani 1993c, 194–195)

Similarly, with regard to the investigation of the phenomenon of biopolitics, a clear difference can be discerned between the approach of Foucault and that of Giorgio Agamben. The latter has posited that biopolitics is “at least as old as the sovereign exception,” and thus stretches back to “the most immemorial of the *arcana imperii*” (Agamben 1998, 6). The former, on the other hand, located its genesis in the modern era, stating that it was, among other things, “bound up with the development of capitalism” (Foucault 1978, 141–143). Commentators such as Marie-Christine Leps have pointed out that Agamben's position results in “a juridico-institutional, linguistic and transhistorical perspective” (Leps 2012, 22) rather than the resolutely historical approach of Foucault, which while not denying the possible “universal forms” in a “thought-event” (Leps 2012, 26), emphasises that – in his own words – “the setting in motion of such universal forms is itself historical” (Foucault 1994, 580). Although Agamben would vociferously deny that this is the case, his move can be seen as, to use a term of Karatani's, one of *inversion (tentō)*; that is, the projection of a particular time-bound invention – in this case, biopolitics – further into the past than necessary, to the point of making it seem

the “key term” for investigation into contemporary higher education, and thus this thesis adopts its use at strategic points, although careful distinctions will be made.

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inherent and essential to the constitution of a particular sphere – in this case, politics.²⁹

This thesis will – in a sense – take the side of Foucault against that of Agamben, and will argue that there is something distinctive about the emergence of neoliberal rationality within the university when compared to earlier forms of higher education. This claim is, of course, relatively uncontroversial, given the attention that has been given to the uniqueness of the ongoing neoliberal moment in the British university's history. However, whereas most narratives of the neoliberal university locate its beginnings in the break with the postwar consensus in the context of the wider British society and economy which took place during the 1970s or 1980s (depending on one's perspective), it will be argued that the invention of this neoliberal form of higher education should be traced back to the 1940s, to the building of the “public university” as part of the postwar Keynesian settlement.³⁰

Moreover, contrary to the position that what we see happening is completely without precedent, it will also be argued that a *structure* can be discerned within the messy play of discourses and practices within the history of British higher education in which a conceptual triad of *instrumentalism*, *idealism* and *community* constantly reveals itself.³¹ In other words, what we have is a mixture of rupture and continuity, which explains why a valid case can be made for either a thesis of newness or a thesis of sameness. Thus, in summary, it can be said that the neoliberal university is not only older than most accounts, but is also a particular manifestation of a constitutive tension between a triad of interrelated concepts.

1.3 The Questions of the University

To employ the methodology of trans-genealogy to investigate the British university of the present – a subject-matter which we have already established is ripe for such

29 One example that Karatani gives of inversion is that of Adam Smith's portrayal of commodity exchange in the past according to the shape of the modern market economy which existed in his time, i.e. as taking place between individuals (Karatani 2014, 81). In an essay published in English in 1995, Karatani emphasises this point succinctly by writing that “[w]e must be wary of tracing back to 'origins' in the all too distant past. For to do so almost always results in the projection onto the past of an inversion of recent 'origin'” (Karatani 1995c, 6). There is a clear resonance here with the Nietzschean-Foucauldian genealogical critique of “origins,” discussed above (Foucault 2000b, 6–9).

30 I am indebted here to the work of the literary theorist and political historian Michael Gardiner who has identified such a dynamic in the wider British social sphere (Gardiner 2013). Nevertheless, as will be demonstrated, it is not the case that the developments in the university merely mirrored that which were occurring in the rest of society or, even more crudely, an economic base.

31 It must be remembered, however, that this structure is posited transcendentally, as a *figure*, rather than as actually-existing (i.e. empirical) entities.

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enquiry – requires us to ask, “What is taken for granted – that is, appears self-evident to the point of being invisible – within its bounds?” It is argued that this largely unconscious “mode of recognition” is none other than the underlying foundations of discourses and practices within the university. These foundations can be ascertained by discerning from the various arguments about the direction of higher education as well as practical policies within this sphere *what exactly are the questions which these arguments and policies are trying to answer.*

It is argued, further, that the structure which is expressed by these questions and answers is not one that is completely unique to the university, but in fact mirrors the Kantian conceptual triad of phenomenon, idea and thing-in-itself that Karatani has identified and traced through other forms of transcendental critique such as Freudian metapsychology and Lacanian psychoanalysis.³² This triad, he explains, is a “relational structure” that brings traditional concepts together into a practical “architectonic” (Karatani 1993b), which, it can be said, allows us to scrutinise the state of play with a lens which brings it all into focus rather than with blurry eyes. The rest of this section, although formulated with historical aspects clearly in the picture, will focus on laying out, in outline, a structure of the university corresponding primarily to the transcendental aspect of trans-genealogy. The historical-genealogical component will be supplied in the chapters that are to come.

Instrumentalism

In the university at present, much of the debate, both ongoing and in the recent past, has been delimited by a consequentialist question, which can be phrased generally as follows: “What are the consequences of a particular university policy for the goals that we are aiming for?” It is this question which has been answered at different times in different ways, but has remained primary throughout the postwar era. Many commentators on university policy have focused on the difference between the various answers given to the question, whether the succession of those that became hegemonic (for a time) or their competitors, while neglecting to enquire into the very question being asked. In other words, much ink has been spilt comparing competing policies of

³² Karatani links the Freudian ego, super-ego and id to the Kantian categories of understanding, reason and sensibility (Karatani 1994). He also posits that the Lacanian Imaginary, Symbolic and Real correspond to the Kantian idea (that is, semblance or illusion, *Schein* in German), phenomenon (or form) and thing-in-itself (Karatani 2003b, 34). However, for the purposes of this thesis, the psychoanalytic dimension that these correlations potentially open up will not be explored.

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university policy and governance, without recognising that at the roots of many of these is a single question which, when unconsciously accepted, structures almost all the debate and action that is to follow.

To situate this question in the structure that is being (re)constructed, it is argued that it corresponds to the Kantian notion of *phenomena* within Karatani's triad. In other words, it is focused on what appears to be the “objective world” – that is, the world of *nature* – but which is, rather, the sum total of *sensible* intuitions grasped by the concepts of *understanding*. It is unsurprising that predominantly empirical studies focus on this part of the structure of the university, for when this *action-centric* approach is taken out of its relational structure, it falls on the side of the antinomy which is represented by empiricism and the historical. Those who call for pragmatism within the university thus display their obsession with this instrumentalist question, and hence with the layer of the university which is phenomenal.

It is important for us to note, at this juncture, two matters. First of all, in and of itself, the instrumentalist question is without definite content. To recapitulate, its generic form is as follows: “What are the *consequences* of a particular university policy for the *goals* that we are aiming for?” If one changes the goal(s) or *telos* that is being strived towards, the weighing up of the consequences – and hence the conclusion that is likely to be reached – changes dramatically.

Secondly, it should be noted that the nature of the Kantian conceptual triad, as Karatani formulates it, is that each of the three elements is indispensable. The rejection or abandonment of any one concept in the triad results in an imbalanced and thus faulty picture, with potentially serious consequences.³³ Thus, following on from this insight, it becomes clear that it is impossible to avoid asking the instrumentalist question at specific points. It is ultimately futile to imagine a university that does not in some way take into account the impact of its workings upon practical and “external” matters such as the training of skilled labour.

Idealism

The instrumentalist question has never been the only one animating the workings of the university. Although consequentialism has played a large role – perhaps even the

³³ One example that Karatani gives is the tossing aside of the thing-in-itself by some German idealists and romantics such as Fichte, with the result being “a loss of the position from which to view Idea as *Schein*” (Karatani 1993b).

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formative role – in higher education from its very beginnings, alongside it has existed another tradition which is focused upon *ideals* (or ideas) of the university.

The question this tradition asks is, “What overarching principle(s) should govern the university?” Among the answers to this question that have been mooted in times gone by (but also in the present) are liberal education, the pursuit of truth, and the glorification of God. At the present moment in the United Kingdom, one of the most notable answers to this question of the university is that of the vision of the “public university,” which will be investigated in greater detail in Chapter Three.

As with the instrumentalist question, the idealist question is a form without a determinate content. It is an integral part of the underlying structure of the university, but depending one's pedagogical, philosophical and political positions, the exact form of the question and the answers that are “found” will differ. Nevertheless, whether they are current or dated, popular or unpopular, hegemonic or marginal, all answers to the question of ideals correspond with the realm of the *idea* in Karatani's Kantian conceptual triad. In other words, it involves the faculties of *understanding* and *reason*, which cooperate to apprehend these ideas. This being so, when extracted from the relational structure, this *thought-centric* approach falls on the side of the antinomy which is represented by rationalism and idealism. Those who call for principles within the university display their obsession with this question of ideals.

However, this link to the Kantian idea reveals that all ideals are ultimately illusions or *Schein* (Karatani 1995b, 185).³⁴ Although pragmatists who are focused on the instrumentalist question may wish to dismiss these illusions as being impractical, it is instructive that Kant made a distinction between constitutive and regulative ideas. As we shall explore further in Chapter Three, the former claim to be realisable in fact, and so can be linked to the Marxian “*ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself” (Karatani 2003b, 217),³⁵ whereas the latter “constantly offers the ground to criticize reality” (Karatani 2003b, 217) by being “an index toward which people should gradually attempt to draw close” (Karatani 2014, 233). Regulative ideas, while being illusions, are *transcendental* (or necessary) illusions, in that they are things “we cannot do without”

34 Karatani argues, drawing from Kant, that the point of genesis of such ideals (or *Idee*) is an attempt to access the inaccessible “thing-in-itself”: “*Idee* is an imaginary representation of the 'thing-in-itself': it is that which can never be grasped and represented by any theoretical approach.” Such *Schein* are “arrogation[s] of reason” (Karatani 1995b, 185–186).

35 Karatani argues that the Hegelian idea is based on such a constitutive notion, and that many orthodox Marxists have followed in this direction in believing the utopia of communism to be realisable, with the end-result being many of the atrocities of the 20th century.

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(Karatani 2014, 233). Likewise, as has already been said, it is impossible to conceive of the university completely outside the bounds of instrumentalism.

Thus, here we find what appears to be an antinomy, such as the one Kant faced when confronted with empiricism and rationalism, and Marx with historicism and idealism. One temptation, which many succumb to, is to resolve the tension in one or the other direction, embracing one side and tossing out the other. Such a solution is, in fact, an illusion, for a formal denigration of either instrumentalism or idealism does not prevent hidden calculations or ideals from operating. In other words, as alluded to above, a militant instrumentalism inevitably produces ideals of its own, while a militant idealism cannot avoid making decisions based on instrumental goals at various points.

Another temptation, however, is to create a “Third Way” which attempts to surmount this antinomy by an aesthetic and organicist turn. As we shall see, this is arguably the path that was taken by the German Romantics and Hegel, a stance which within the sphere of the university we may term *community*.

Community

So far we have described the perspectives or questions of instrumentalism and idealism using largely Kantian terminology. There is, however, a third question which can be formulated using developments in German idealism following Kant. This can be referred to as the perspective of *community*, which is founded upon a particular conception of being-with which in its classic social-political form tends to be bound up with the idea of the nation. In *The Structure of World History*, Karatani elucidates how the conception of the nation, which is analogous in our university triad to *community*, is related to the domains or faculties which Kant also employed:

In [Hegel's] logic, as in Herder's the germ of reason is already present at the stage of sensibility, and subsequently it gradually unfolds through a process of self-realization. This means that while the nation (*Volk*) pertains to sensibility, it also belongs to the domain of reason, and hence it reaches its final realization in the form of the nation-state. (Karatani 2014, 224)

In other words, whereas the perspective of instrumentalism arises from the confluence of sensibility and understanding, and idealism from that of understanding and reason, the perspective of *community* – according to the German idealists – is a blend of *sensibility* and *reason*. This latter combination is heretical within the Kantian system, and Karatani takes great pains to disclaim its validity, arguing rather that what

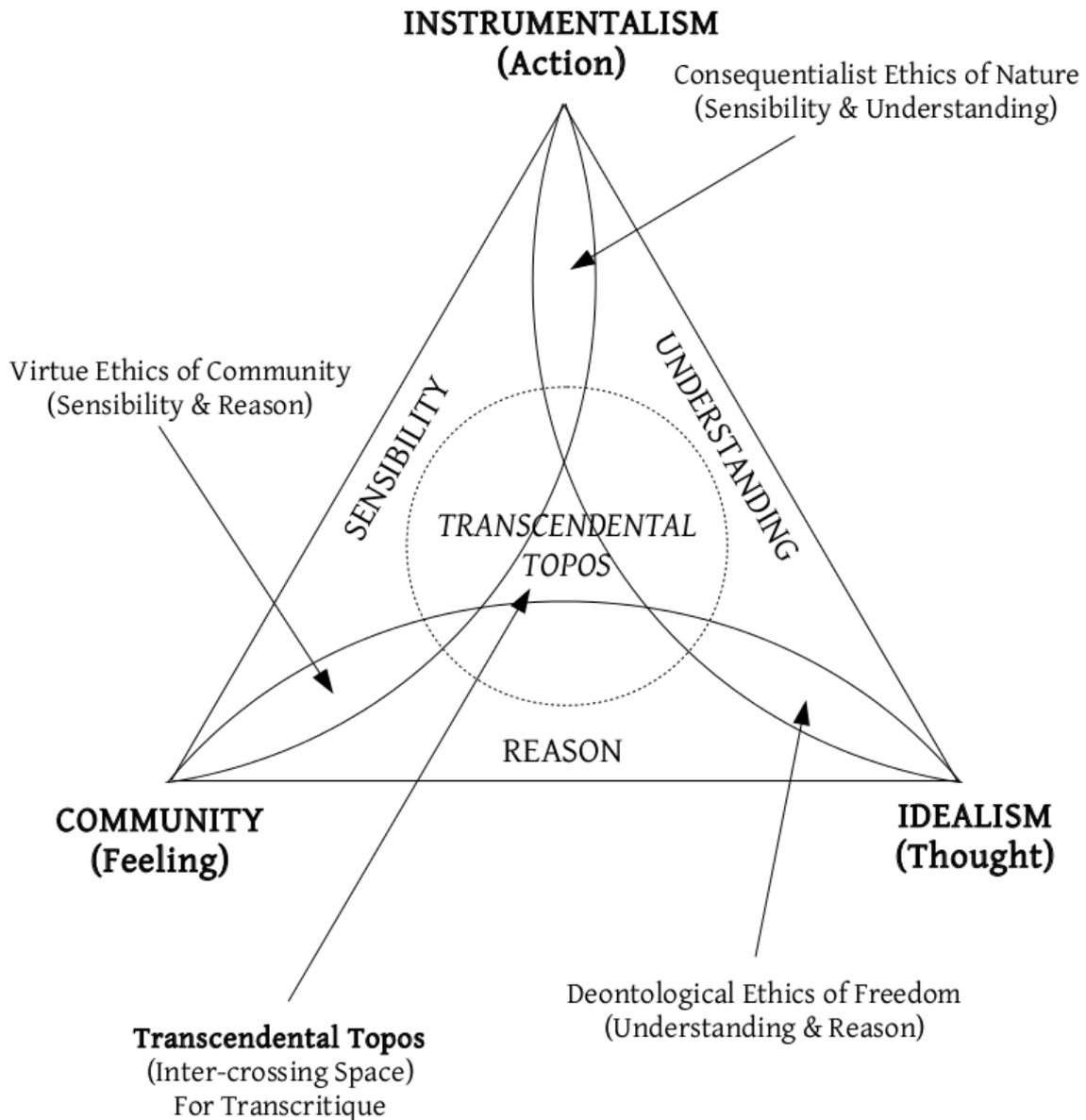
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Herder and Hegel performed was an illusory synthesis of sensibility with reason and understanding through the faculty of the imagination (Karatani 2014, 220–221).³⁶ Regardless of the orthodoxy of this argument within a broadly Kantian framework, the fact remains that such a position has been and can be staked in the wider scheme of things. Rather than simply deny it, it is better to accord it a place within our frame of discussion. What we may term the question of community is focused on the following matter: “What is the impact of a particular university policy on the university community?” This is far from a straightforward enquiry, for we shall see later, there are competing visions of community which influence the answers that are reached.

The discussion thus far can be summarised in the diagram on the following page. As the diagram demonstrates, each of the three perspectives is linked to a major category of ethical thought. Instrumentalism is solidly consequentialist, idealism is deontological, while the question of community to correspond, in its most common forms, to a rather traditional form of virtue ethics. As Ivan Illich points out, virtue in the Greek *polis* was understood as “fitting behaviour,” that is, “the *ethos*... appropriate to a certain *ethnos*, or people” (Illich 2005, 147). This ancient conception of virtue could not conceive of an ethics which was not rooted in a people and, by extension, a place or soil. Thus, the perspective of community does not actually overcome the antinomy of instrumentalism or idealism, but rather creates a third position which both competes with both of them. Thus, rather than a conflict of two laws (*anti-nomia*) we find ourselves in a tussle between three laws, for which we may coin the word *trichonomy*, from the Greek *tríkha* (divided into three parts) and *nomos* (law).

However, if we wish to practise a trans-genealogical approach, there is no easy resolution to this triadic tension. We have to persevere through it, but by utilising a transversal and transpositional movement, we can dwell in the parallax gap where we find ourselves confronted with not simply analysing phenomena nor debating ideas, but the uncomfortable space of what Karatani has termed the *transcendental topos* for transcritique, which, unlike community, is not an alternative “positionality” but a mere

36 Karatani's point is clearly inspired by the Transcendental Deduction in the first edition of Kant's First Critique, where imagination mediates between sensibility and understanding (Kant 1998a, sec. A124). It is also notable that in interpreting the theoretical moves of Herder and Hegel he conflates reason (*Vernunft*) and understanding (*Verstand*) (Karatani 2014, 221). This can be explained by the fact that Hegel's does not follow Kant's strict distinction between the two as distinct faculties of the mind with separate domains but rather assigns them separate tasks within his conception of the mind as a living, organic unity, with understanding concerned with apprehending parts and reason with grasping the whole (Berry 1982, 131–134).



interstice where there is no imaginary synthesis between or escape from the opposed forces, but only the persistence of the trichotomy in the constant confrontation between pragmatic concerns, principled ideas and communal aesthetics. To dwell in this *topos* is to accept a vocation which involves moving between the various poles, in order to find a manner of superseding the ternary of Instrumentalism-Community-Idealism.

Each Question Only Arises Through Bracketing

Having outlined the three main elements of the proposed discursive-practical structure of the university, it will nevertheless be helpful to explore what exactly it means to be a “question” within this structure. The latter’s foundation is a perspective of “pronounced

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parallax,” which allows us to view a particular thing in its multiple facets, and has been described by Karatani as a practice of *bracketing*. It is true that the term “bracketing” has a post-Kantian lineage in that it was first deployed by Husserl to refer to the phenomenological suspension of judgement about the natural world in order to focus on the contents of mental experience. However, this development of Husserl's was itself premised on Kant's distinction between *noumena* and *phenomena*.³⁷ Moreover, it certainly describes well Kant's operation in *The Critique of Judgment* where he argues that when it comes to matters of taste we have to place to one side concerns that do not pertain to the aesthetic domain. This is vividly illustrated in the following passage:

If any one asks me whether I consider that the palace I see before me is beautiful, I may, perhaps, reply that I do not care for things of that sort that are merely made to be gaped at. Or I may reply in the same strain as that Iroquois *sachem* who said that nothing in Paris pleased him better than the eating-houses. I may even go a step further and inveigh with the vigour of a *Rousseau* against the vanity of the great who spend the sweat of the people on such superfluous things. Or, in fine, I may quite easily persuade myself that if I found myself on an uninhabited island, without hope of ever again coming among men, and could conjure such a palace into existence by a mere wish, I should still not trouble to do so, so long as I had a hut there that was comfortable enough for me. All this may be admitted and approved; only it is not the point at issue. All one wants to know is whether the mere representation of the object is to my liking, no matter how indifferent I may be to the real existence of the object of this representation. (Kant 1986, 43)

In other words, an aesthetic analysis becomes clouded if one attempts to engage at the same time with matters ethical, political or idiosyncratic bordering on irrelevancy. To critique the political message of a film, for example, is a task which is separate from a judgement of the qualities of its cinematography. However, it is not the case that any of these stances “assumes priority over all other criteria. What counts here is not simply bracketing but also un-bracketing” (Karatani 2000, 258). Such is the movement of parallax: examining the contours of each domain by temporarily suspending the others.

However, bracketing is not simply investigating particular domains – such as cognition, ethics, aesthetics or economics – as if they predated the act of investigation. Instead, it is the very operation of bracketing which brings these domains into being. In the words of Karatani:

[O]ne of Kant's most crucial propositions is that domains themselves come

³⁷ Husserl describes bracketing, or what he calls the phenomenological *epoché*, as follows: “*We put out of action the general positing which belongs to the essence of the natural attitude; we parenthesize everything which that positing encompasses with respect to being*” (Husserl 1982, 61).

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into existence by way of transcendental reduction (bracketing). ... Modern science was established by bracketing moral and aesthetic judgments. Only at this moment did the “object” appear. Machiavelli came to be known as the father of modern political science precisely because he discovered the domain of politics by bracketing morality. (Karatani 2003b, 114)

How does all this apply to our investigations in this thesis? The argument I am making is that each of the three questions of the university arise when the other two are bracketed. For example, instrumentalist calculations – which are often justified by a deceptively simple phrase such as “let's be realistic here” – can only be made by pushing aside issues of ideals and community and it is this bracketing procedure which creates the instrumentalist perspective in the first place. Likewise, the idealist position is summoned into being when one insists that principles are to trump all other considerations. Finally, the perspective that privileges the community in evaluating a particular course of action has to suspend instrumentalist and idealist matters.

Of course, in actual practice, these three questions often intermingle, or at least are ordered in some hierarchy of importance: “*x* should come first, and then *y*, and finally *z*.” Although this is possible in a sense, because shuttling from one question to the next in some fixed order could be seen as a variety of the practice of transcritique, it is easy to be tempted to regard this procedure as being more stable than it is in reality. Even more tempting is the idea that we should keep the “bigger picture” always in view, a picture which encompasses all three questions as mere constituent parts. Žižek, who has employed Karatani's transcritical method to discuss economics, politics and ideology as three spheres in our contemporary understanding of the social, has argued that such an idea is a trap:

The trap to be avoided here, of course, is the naïve idea that one should keep in view the social totality, of which democratic ideology, the exercise of power and the process of economic (re)production are merely parts. If one tries to keep all these in view simultaneously, one ends up seeing nothing—their contours disappear. This bracketing is not a mere epistemological procedure, it answers to what Marx called “real abstraction”—an abstraction from power and economic relations that is inscribed into the very actuality of the democratic process, and so on. (Žižek 2004, 129)

Likewise, it is impossible to reconcile, in the sphere of higher education, the deep disjointedness between idealism, instrumentalism and community into a holistic totality of sorts. The reality of parallax means that one cannot view one's subject-matter from multiple perspectives at the same time – after all, each of us has only one pair of eyes. This limitation explains why, for example, those who privilege an instrumentalist

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perspective simply cannot see “eye-to-eye” with those who privilege an idealist perspective.

Beyond this, however, it also explains how people who consider themselves “principled” can swiftly turn into “pragmatists” when placed in a different context, as the different viewpoints can be adopted in a manner akin to switching between spectacles of various tints and lenses. It is for this reason that we come across cases of academics with clearly conflicted loyalties such as that of Craig Calhoun, the present President of the London School of Economics. In November 2011, Calhoun wrote an article for the “Possible Futures” blog of the Social Science Research Council – which he was the president of at the time – criticising the eviction of various Occupy groups by city and university authorities across the United States. In this piece, the decisions of leaders such as New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the presidents of Harvard and UC Berkeley to call in the police to dismantle protest camps were criticised as “reminiscent of the Chinese government ousting protestors from Tiananmen Square” and a “disturbing” development in “ostensibly democratic America” (Calhoun 2011).

Fast-forward a few years, and we find Calhoun, as President of the London School of Economics, supporting the eviction of student occupiers due to, among other things, the “shockupation”³⁸ disruption of a lecture which led to management having “no option but to take firm action to bring the occupation to an end” (Mancini 2015). Although Calhoun stated in a letter to the occupiers that he was “personally sorry to have reached this point” (Mancini 2015), does that alter the fact that he ended up mirroring the actions of the authorities he criticised back in 2011, who “thought it was more important to maintain public order than to allow... particular citizens to exercise public voice” (Calhoun 2011)? It can be argued that in this case, Calhoun switched from viewing protests of this sort from an idealist perspective to an instrumentalist one. Even though he had not publicly disowned his earlier statements with regards to the Occupy camps, his new job as head of the LSE meant that he had to bracket those views.

This point, however, leads on to another matter: if the questions of the university come into being through bracketing, and hence cannot be scrutinised all at once, are they hermetically sealed off from each other and unconnected? We shall return to this question in Chapter Four, for only after examining the instrumentalist and idealist

³⁸ The disruption of lectures has been a tactic of disgruntled students from time immemorial, but in some recent student mobilisations such as the LSE Occupation the rather grand title of “shockupation” has been used to describe such actions.

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questions within the historical context of postwar British higher education will we be able to address the issue of relationality between the elements of the wider picture.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have set out the methodological underpinnings of the overall thesis via a joint reading of the historical-philosophical approaches of Michel Foucault and Kojin Karatani. By bringing together the former's genealogy with the latter's transcendental retrospection through a tracing of their respective lineages back to the critical tradition of Kant, it was demonstrated that the first can be fruitfully supplemented by the second in order to prevent the transcendental element of critique from being discarded in a fit of historicism. For this combined method I proposed the name trans-genealogy, borrowing from Karatani's more recent writings on what he terms transcritique. By constantly shifting registers between the transcendental and the historical, in a ceaseless movement that is both transversal and transpositional, I will in the following chapters approach the subject matter of the postwar British university from the interstice or parallax gap that lies between the two, and thus be able to examine both the underlying "questions" that form the structure of the university as well as the "answers" that fill out this structure.

In the third part of this chapter, I outlined each of the three questions which made up the structure of the university – instrumentalism, idealism and community – before moving on in the final part to their procedural aspects. Each of these perspectives, I argued, can only be constituted in a bracketing procedure which suspends the other domains, due to the operation of the pronounced parallax. It is this condition that is at the root of the contradictions between the questions, which results in, *inter alia*, the situation of those who claim to be principled, yet end up acting in ways which can only be described as crudely pragmatic or instrumentalist.

Having sketched out our way of proceeding, and drawn a very basic map of the terrain to be covered, it is time for us to begin our journey proper. In the following chapter we begin our examination of postwar British higher education by scrutinising the structural perspective of Instrumentalism, which emerged in the immediate period after the Second World War, but is often misdated due to a seemingly obvious but ultimately erroneous association with the infamous "neoliberal" phase which many still believe we are currently in.

Chapter 2

A University Not For Itself: The Rise of Instrumentalism in Higher Education

“A cow can pretend that it exists not for itself but for man. Man can pretend that he exists for humanity. Humanity can pretend that it exists in order to sustain ontological reality. ... Thus the meaning of existence is tossed about from one level of reality to another.”

(Egon Bondy 2001, 217)

In a BBC Radio 3 programme in 2000, the intellectual historian Stefan Collini explored the awkwardness – or perhaps even the absurdity – of higher education institutions like his own University of Cambridge having glossy mission statements by imagining a hypothetical “mission statement” for a medieval monastery:

There’d no doubt be one bar graph showing the increasing number of souls prayed for per annum, and another showing the declining value of the tithe; there’d perhaps be a picture of a saintly elderly monk painstakingly illuminating a manuscript, and certainly pictures of younger monks happily planting vegetables and brewing beer; and of course there’d be a statement by the prior about the efficiency gains that had been made by starting matins earlier and ending vespers later. But wouldn’t all that leave you with just the teensiest suspicion that something rather important about monasteries was being omitted or misrepresented here? (Collini 2012, 140–141)

This quote comes from the published version of Collini's radio addresses, from a 2012 collection, released in the waning ferment of the 2010-2011 reforms under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition and titled *What Are Universities For?* The book's title poses a deceptively simple question, but, as with many such queries, a multitude of answers can be (and have been) proffered in response to it. Collini's tongue-in-cheek monastery mission statement, framed as an analogy to contemporary higher education captures an important aspect of recent developments in this age-old debate, namely the sidelining of purposes for the university which are intrinsic to the university itself. The medieval monastery, like the contemporary university, was a hive of activity, but much of it could not be properly understood without an immersion into the deep *ethos* upon which it was founded. What Collini describes is a perspective which would result from a steely-eyed corporate consultant being transported through time to this cenobitic community in the Middle Ages. Yet, without grasping the

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foundation of the contemplative community in the cycle of worship offered multiple times a day – known as the Work of God (*opus Dei*) – one would be simply distracted by the many other activities which may seem far more interesting or “useful” from the hegemonic viewpoints in our current day, but which were in fact incidental rather than essential.

However, as was set out in the previous chapter, the starting point of our genealogical enquiry is the present-day actuality of the university, and not an idealised form. We have to accept that in the case of much top-down higher education policy – whether at the level of elected government or individual institutions – the dominant framework in which decisions are made is one where the university's reason for being is found not in itself but rather its instrumental functions. This is, thus, the *instrumentalist* viewpoint, and which forms the logical starting point of our investigation in this chapter. We shall first define and outline the essence of this perspective, before exploring its surge to prominence in the postwar period, and its centrality until the present day.

2.1 The University Without (its Own) Content

An instrumentalist perspective of higher education can be defined as an approach whereby the primary measure of the value or desirability of a particular university policy or a particular set of practices in the sphere of higher education is its *consequences* for the specific goals which have been pre-determined. The crude version operates as follows: if the policy or set of practices advances these goals, then it is to be favoured; if it has minimal positive effect upon or, worse still, hinders these goals, then it is to be rejected or at least seriously called into question.¹

1 It should be noted that this definition of instrumentalism differs slightly from the more conventional formulation in social theory of what is termed *instrumental rationality* or *reason*. Instrumental reason is generally defined as a mode of thought which focuses on finding the best means to a certain end, without enquiring into the value of that end. In *Eclipse of Reason*, Max Horkheimer excoriated a particular version of this form of rationality, arguing that in it “[r]eason has become completely harnessed to the social process. Its operational value, its role in the domination of men and nature, has been made the sole criterion” (Horkheimer 2013, 13). His specific critique here can be generalised to other forms of instrumental reason by simply replacing “the social process” and “the domination of men and nature” with whatever end is chosen. The difference between this conception of instrumental reason and the definition of instrumentalism in this thesis is that the former focuses on the relationship between and relative importance of means and ends, whereas the latter is more concerned about how a particular policy or set of practices is evaluated. In other words, while a critic of instrumental reason might propose, as an alternative, a system of rationality in which both means and ends must be evaluated, or indeed (as Gandhi argued) brought into harmony, this is somewhat tangential to the nonetheless related question of *what* the *measure* of a *particular policy* should be.

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Hence, the essence of instrumentalism in higher education, in its most extreme form, is that the university is merely an instrument to further certain ends, and therefore does not have intrinsic value – that is, it exists not for itself but for whatever goals we may wish to set for it. The end-result of the purest version of this viewpoint is that the university is emptied of whatever *raison d'etre* it may have previously been seen as having, becoming a *university without (its own) content*.

In his seminal work, *The University in Ruins*, published soon after his untimely death in 1996, Bill Readings diagnosed in the university of the time a condition very similar to what we have named instrumentalism, albeit using his own terminology. According to Readings, for most of the history of the modern university, its operations had been characterised by being tied to what he called a *referent*, which was “a specific set of things or ideas” which pulsed at the heart of the institution (Readings 1996, 17). The predominant referent, whose definitive statement was made in the 19th century by Alexander von Humboldt, was that of *culture*. The university, through its activities of research and teaching, was “linked to the destiny of the nation-state by virtue of its role as producer, protector, and inculcator of an idea of national culture” (Readings 1996, 3).

However, beginning in the 1960s, Readings argues, the ideology of culture has been gradually displaced from the heart of the university, and in its place we now have a discourse of “*excellence*” (Readings 1996, 3–4). This new central idea of excellence at first appears to be something of substance, since there seems to be no shortage of methods of measuring it. However, it is precisely due to this limitless multiplicity of ways of measuring excellence that it is revealed as having no content of its own. This content-free (non-)referent is particularly slippery, for as Readings puts it:

What gets taught or researched matters less than the fact that it be excellently taught and researched. ... 'Excellence' is like the cash-nexus in that it has no *content*; it is hence neither true nor false, neither ignorant nor self-conscious. It may be unjust, but we cannot seek its injustice in terms of a regime of truth or self-knowledge. Its rule does not carry with it an automatic political or cultural orientation, for it is not determined in relation to any identifiable instance of political power. (Readings 1996, 13, italics in original)

Indeed, this non-referent of excellence is something we cannot oppose without looking very odd or at least giving the appearance of mere cynicism. Thus, “we all agree upon it because it is not an ideology, in the sense that it has no external referent or internal content” (Readings 1996, 23). If the pursuit of excellence in higher education sounds vague, even vacuous, sub-divisions of such excellence are often no less

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ambiguous, as Readings demonstrates with the following example:

Cornell University Parking Services recently received an award for “excellence in parking.” What this meant was that they had achieved a remarkable level of efficiency in *restricting* motor vehicle access. ... [E]xcellence could just as well have meant making people's lives easier by increasing the number of parking spaces available... The issue here is not the merits of either option but the fact that excellence can function equally well as an evaluative criterion on either side of the issue of what constitutes “excellence in parking,” because excellence has no content to call its own. (Readings 1996, 24, italics in original)

The underlying emptiness in the notion of excellence brings us to a deeper understanding of instrumentalism that may not be obvious in the more simplistic form that was outlined at the start of this section, namely the fact that even if one selects an apparently clear goal to be pursued in higher education policy and practice, such as the facilitation of economic growth or simply being one of the “top universities” in the country, one's progress towards that end cannot actually be determined other than through extremely crude metrics which can provide only rather inadequate or even deceptive pictures of what is supposedly being measured. *Pace* Readings, however, what he identifies as the discourse of excellence does not, in the British context, have its point of invention in the 1960s, but as we shall see later in this chapter, already arose in recognisable form in the immediate postwar period.

Hence, the irony is that even as instrumentalism attempts to evacuate the “soul” of the university in order that external and measurable considerations may take the first place, the mechanisms of measurement which are intended to steer the ship of higher education towards these goals will very likely turn out to be far less empirically-rigorous than they appear at first sight.

However, it is important to note that the absence of specific content has not prevented particular forms of content from overtaking others and muscling their way into a central position. Although it is theoretically true that “excellence” in a particular situation can be determined in multiple ways, more often than not it is instrumentalist agendas of an economistic kind which have become generalised – that is, the sort of excellence that has been pursued has been that which complies with the demands of the sources of one's funding, whether a consumer market, a bureaucratic apparatus or something else. Indeed, where there is an apparent vacuum of sorts, it is the most reductionist forms of ideology and practice which easily fill the space.

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Nevertheless, returning to the broader picture, in the history of the postwar British university, the instrumentalist perspective has never attained – or, at least, has yet to attain – such a degree of hegemony as to bring about a complete emptying of the university's inner *raison d'être* as in the hypothetical extreme we have just briefly described. Instead, it has co-existed alongside idealist perspectives of many kinds, as well as, to a less obvious extent, perspectives focused on the university community. As we have seen, however, this co-existence has as its paradoxical partner the peculiar condition in which each type of perspective can only be employed at any given moment to the exclusion of the others.

Nevertheless, it is quite clear the wind of instrumentalism has been blowing strongly in our direction for some time, and with apparently ever-increasing ferocity. Wherever we turn in the university today, we find instrumentalist concerns of all kinds: research is not only to be rated and ranked, but is rewarded if it has “impact;” teaching is measured not by any intrinsic qualities but according to student satisfaction; the funding system is designed in order to drive costs down while driving “quality” up through the operation of market rationality; and so on. Although we, to quote a bard of the 1960s, “don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows” (Dylan 1965), we nevertheless might want to know why this particular stiff gale has been howling at us so incessantly, as well as where it comes from and when it began. For this some meteorological history may be helpful, and so it is to this history that we now turn.

2.2 Postwar Keynesianism and the Dawn of Economistic Instrumentalism

According to one common narrative of postwar higher education, the period from the first Attlee government until circa 1979-1981 was one in which the vision of a “public university” reigned and government funding was provided to realise such a vision, with “public” here seen as the anti-thesis of the gradual “marketisation” or “privatisation” that followed. Various versions of this thesis can be found across the literature. To give just a few examples, A. H. Halsey wrote that the supply of public monies for university expansion were reduced “for the first time, at least in living memory” by “a monetarist, market-oriented government” (Halsey 1995, 108). Maurice Kogan and Stephen Hanney, while recognising the problems of this narrative, nevertheless identified the year 1981 as the starting point of “a period of change in which the finance, government and substantive content of higher education was subjected to... radical changes” (Kogan and

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Hanney 2000, 45–48). Finally, in a recent study triggered by the latest wave of higher education reform under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition, Roger Brown and Helen Carasso have stated that the “process of marketisation may be seen to have commenced with the Thatcher Government's announcement in November 1979 that, from the following academic year, students from overseas would no longer enjoy a fee subsidy” (R. Brown and Carasso 2013, 3).²

The picture that emerges from a reading of these texts can be described as follows: we first have a gradually expanding public university imbued with the values of the postwar consensus, brought into being by the first Attlee government but subsequently honoured by governments both Tory and Labour, which consisted of a collectivist politics whose central pillars were a welfare state and a mixed economy;³ this was however brought to an end by a rupture with this consensus during the first Thatcher government which set in train the move towards a “neoliberal university.”

Nevertheless, this relatively uncomplicated narrative of what happened and how we got here can lead to rather problematic political conclusions as to what sort of university we ought to be fighting for, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three. In brief, if there were two great breaks in the history of the postwar university, and if we find the second break the dawn of a ghastly marketised and privatised system, then it is far too easy to conclude that the solution is to return to the public values seen as exemplifying in the first break, thus overlooking – or even ignoring – what Matthew Charles has identified as “a fundamental contradiction [that] exists between capitalism (and not merely its *neoliberal* version) and a *mass*, modern and [truly] public [i.e. popular]⁴ higher education system” (Charles 2012, 56, italics in original).

Hence, in the next section of this chapter, an alternative story of the development of the contemporary university will be put forward, which contests the ostensible break between a “public university” of the postwar consensus and a “neoliberal university” of the Thatcher and post-Thatcher period that is still our present.

2 This was the logical end-point of the initial step which seriously called into question the “value of an overseas student presence,” namely the introduction by the Labour government of higher (but still partially subsidised) fees for overseas students in 1966-1967 (Lee 1998, 320).

3 Various historians of British politics have explored this postwar consensus, but its classic statement can arguably be found in Samuel H. Beer's *Modern British Politics* (Beer 1965). Other monographs which deal with the subject include Beer 1982; Kavanagh and Morris 1994; Addison 1994; Marquand 1988; K. O. Morgan 2001.

4 The words “truly” and “i.e. popular” are inserted here as a gloss to indicate some divergence from Charles' enduring faith in the concept of the public as a rallying point for a radical vision of the university.

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The narrative will show that the elements of the neoliberal university which proponents of a welfare statist public university find most abhorrent in fact originated in the immediate postwar period itself. In other words, there was no paradise followed by a fall, because the seeds of the fall were already sown in the very making of “paradise.”

Before we proceed, however, it should be noted that although state investment in higher education overlaps partially with both the welfare state and economic planning, and hence with the history and debates of those aspects of postwar reconstruction, it contains specificities which make it a *sui generis* case of sorts. While public funding of postwar higher education can be considered part of the wider effort to reduce inequality in British society through the slow but steady opening up of a hitherto elitist institution, it was not originally conceived as an essential or even a secondary element of the “cradle to the grave” welfare state that arose out of the Beveridge Report. With regards to the five “giant evils” which Beveridge diagnosed as plaguing Britain at the time, it is arguably possible to subsume the expansion of higher education as an attack upon Ignorance.⁵ Nevertheless, although Beveridge was most concerned with the form of ignorance which would prevent citizens from fully participating in the institutions of democracy, given the more pressing problems in the provision of primary and secondary education, the issue of university expansion – or, in contemporary idiom, widening participation in higher education – was clearly not seen as a priority and received no discussion (Beveridge 1942, para. 456). The primary impetus for such an expansion would come from a different source, namely the Barlow Report, discussed further below, which made the case in the language of economic competitiveness rather than welfare. Regardless of all this, the more recent and ongoing changes to university funding and regulation have been and are associated, in the eyes of many of its critics, with what is seen as the wider dismantling of the postwar welfare state.

Likewise, the injection of public funding into the university system in the postwar period was in no sense directly associated – in the minds of those in the government, the civil service or indeed the public at large – with the wider effort towards nationalisation. However, there are nevertheless certain parallels between the postwar university funding system and the policies of the first Attlee government which involved the expansion of public ownership as well as attempts to introduce elements of state planning within the British economy. It was these parallels that led to John

5 The other four “great evils” were Want, Disease, Squalor and Idleness.

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Carswell's comment that the widening of the University Grant Committee's terms of reference and accompanying changes to the composition of its personnel in 1946 could be considered a "quiet measure of nationalisation" (Carswell 1985, 14). These partial links to the welfare state and national policy complicate any discussion of developments in the British university since the Second World War, but have to be accommodated rather than dodged. Having clarified this matter, it is time to begin our alternative narrative of the postwar British university.

The Myth of the Two Ruptures

Although the focus of this thesis is on the university of postwar Britain, it is impossible to examine its development without situating it within the wider context in related and interpenetrating spheres such as the social, the economic and the political – that is, the "network of alliances, communications, and points of support" of which Foucault wrote (Foucault 2009, 117). As the historian of British higher education Michael Shattock opined in a discussion of how best to periodise the postwar university's history into a coherent narrative, "Perhaps the most reliable interpretation is that the development of British higher education closely mirrors the development of post-War British history, political, economic and social. In other words, its development should not be seen as a [specific] progression, as such, but as a reflection of wider currents of economic and social change" (Shattock 2012, 7). Having made this bold pronouncement, however, at the outset of his extremely detailed chronicle of higher education policy since 1945, Shattock restricts his engagement with the wider scene of postwar Britain to brief, calculated forays, keeping the technicalities of higher education always at the centre. This thesis, concerned as it is with conceptualising the overarching and underlying structure of the postwar university, will be less cautious and more promiscuous than the accounts that have been hitherto provided by scholars of higher education (e.g. Stewart 1989; Tight 2009).⁶ Thus, it is necessary for us to devote some space here to the broader

6 W. A. C. Stewart's *Higher Education in Postwar Britain*, published in 1989, sets out to give "an historic sequence of developments which have taken place in universities, colleges of education and institutions of technical education in [the United Kingdom] particularly since 1945" as well as offer "some reasons for the changes and the present position... and [try] in some measure to look ahead" (Stewart 1989, ix). Chapters are organised in a chronological order, considering one decade after 1945 at a time (e.g. "the 1950s," "the 1960s," etc.), and Stewart asserts in his preface that his is the first book of its kind (Stewart 1989, ix). Malcolm Tight's 2009 book, *The Development of Higher Education in the United Kingdom since 1945*, positions itself specifically as "an accessible, up-to-date, comprehensive, single-volume guide to the development of higher education in the UK since 1945," an undertaking which Tight considers to not have resulted in any publication since Stewart's 1989 monograph (Tight

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picture, before zooming back into the specific sphere of higher education.

In many ways, the strength of what we may call the dominant “two ruptures” understanding of the postwar university outlined above is that it dovetails with a wider narrative of British society which can be seen, in what is arguably one of its starkest forms, in Ken Loach's documentary *The Spirit of '45* (Loach 2013). The storytelling force of this particularly strident statement of the view of the postwar period as divided into a broadly social democratic period followed by a neoliberal long revolution was succinctly captured in a review in the *Irish Times* which pointed out that “the film allows in no dissenting voices. Forget thesis, antithesis and synthesis. This is thesis, thesis and more thesis” (D. Clarke 2013).

The film provides a visual chronicle of the policies of the Labour government led by Clement Attlee, from its 1945 landslide victory to its extension in state policy of the wartime system of centralised governance to peacetime. This resulted in, *inter alia*, the creation of the National Health Service, a vigorous programme of housing development, the expansion of social security and the nationalisation of sectors including the transportation system, the mining of resources and the provision of electricity. Through interviews with people who lived through the war and the post-war social democratic reforms, we hear stories of working class folk who felt their struggles in the preceding decades had finally borne actual fruit. From usually tough miners weeping underground when told of the results of the general election to doctors joyfully announcing to patients that they no longer had to go without medical treatment due to lack of means, the electrifying circumstances of the time for many is recalled in moving image.

The mood, however, shifts to a much bleaker tone in the last third of the film as it deals with the Thatcher period and what has followed. Following footage of Margaret Thatcher quoting St Francis of Assisi outside 10 Downing Street after her election victory, the first words of the next interviewee, consultant radiologist and public

2009, 1). In contrast to the latter, however, Tight organises his chapters according to themes, such as “policy and funding,” “research and knowledge,” and “the student experience.” This is a method clearly influenced by the four-volume *A History of the University in Europe* edited by Hilde de Ridder-Symeons and Walter Rüegg, which Tight himself praises in his *Researching Higher Education* (Malcolm 2012, 125). It would be fair to say that although the time period examined in this thesis, i.e. “since 1945,” is akin to that which was dealt with by Stewart and Tight in their respective books, the overall methodology adopted here is far less empirical and more conceptual and critical. If pushed to categorise this thesis under Tight's classifications of recent higher education research on “system policy” in *Researching Higher Education* (Malcolm 2012, 117–131), the work presented here would probably fall in between “the policy context,” “national policies” and “historical policy studies,” although its Karatanian/Foucauldian methodological foundations is a distinctive characteristic.

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healthcare campaigner Dr Jacky Davis, are, “Along came Thatcher, and suddenly it was all about the individual. You know, the important thing was let's get rich and it's all about me” (Loach 2013, 1:08:35-38). The remainder of the film tracks developments such as the privatisation of various industries, the dismantling of trade union power and identity as well as the rise of outsourcing, before ending for an impassioned plea, juxtaposing the words of interviewees with footage of Clement Attlee's first victory speech, to return to the collectivist ideals which are represented by “1945.”

The Spirit of '45 is useful to us as an example of the “two ruptures narrative” at its purest. It thus opens the way to questioning the narrative as a whole, a task which is less straight-forward with more sophisticated versions of the story. It would be a mistake, however, to consider our operation here to be erecting Loach's film as a straw man. Not only is the film, with its embodied interviews, clearly far from made of straw, in its approximation to a Weberian ideal type, it effectively represents others in its tradition.⁷

To return, now, to one of the problems of the film which was gestured towards at the beginning of the last paragraph, the straight-forward depiction of the Attlee government as enacting a socialist programme obscures the deeper reality of the changes in British society at the time. It is undoubtedly true that in the minds of many in the Labour Party of the time, as well as many of their supporters, what they were doing was nothing less than building socialism within a framework of representative democracy. In his speech at the celebration of the Labour landslide victory at Methodist Central Hall in the evening after the government had been formed, Clement Attlee declared, to loud cheers, what seemed to be an obvious fact: it was “the first time in the history of [the United Kingdom] that a Labour movement with a *socialist* policy” had been elected with a working majority (Loach 2013, 26:06-18).

Nevertheless, in actual fact, what was eventually rolled out after the election was an amalgamation of some elements of “supply-side” socialism with a broader framework that can be more accurately described as *Keynesian*. Hence, it can be said that the postwar Attlee government was in its *actual* policies closer to the *liberal socialism* of John Maynard Keynes, rather than the proletarian socialism of Karl Marx which was

7 “An ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct” (Weber 1949, 90).

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more influential even among non-Communist socialists on the Continent, the technocratic Fabian socialism of Beatrice and Sidney Webb, or even the ethical socialism of R. H. Tawney which was so beloved by early British Labour figures such as Keir Hardie. This is despite that fact that, by most accounts, Attlee himself identified with the latter tradition (Howell 2006, 130–132; Thomas-Symonds 2010, 15; Field 2009, xli). The key point for us here is that Keynes' version of socialism was far more instrumentalist than its “competitors.” Whereas the guild socialism of thinkers such as G. D. H. Cole had broader ideals such as industrial democracy and the ethical socialists were concerned with a renewal of human conscience, the liberal socialism of Keynes placed at its heart the issue of efficiency. In his 1924/1926 lecture, “The End of Laissez-Faire,” he argued that “capitalism, wisely managed, can probably be more efficient for attaining economic ends than any alternative system yet in sight” (Keynes 1926, 41).

To advance the argument that the only socialism the Attlee government brought about was one of a Keynesian variety, it is necessary for us to focus on the actual content and effects of the policies in question, rather than the more strident and purist rhetoric that preceded, accompanied and subsequently justified them. After all, the gap between intentions and results in politics is often closer to a canyon than a comfortable margin. This rather banal truism, however, may be enlightened by an interpretation of Nietzsche's famous dictum that “the deed is everything” (Nietzsche 1967, 45). A more recent translation of the passage from which the phrase comes from renders it as follows: “[T]here is no ‘being’ behind the deed, its effect and what becomes of it; ‘the doer’ is invented as an after-thought, – the doing is everything” (Nietzsche 2007, 26). According to Robert M. Pippin, “Nietzsche is not denying that *there is* a subject of the deed. He is just asserting that it is not *separate*, distinct from the activity itself; it is ‘in’ the deed. ... [As he writes in] *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: ‘I wish *your* self were in the deed like the mother is in the child.’” (Pippin 2010, 75–76). The lesson we may draw is this:

Intention formation and articulation are always temporally fluid, altering and transformable “on the go,” as it were, as events in a project unfold. I may start out engaged in a project understanding my intention as X, and over time, come to understand that this first characterization was not really an accurate or a full description of what I intended; it must have been Y, or later perhaps Z. And there is no way to confirm the certainty of one’s “real” purpose except in the deed actually performed. My subjective construal at any time before or during the deed has no privileged authority. The deed *alone* can show who one is, what one is actually committed to, despite what one sincerely avows. (Pippin 2010, 78)

Thus, the stated intentions and official sources of inspiration for the Attlee government's policies which laid the foundations of the British university after the war and the rest of the postwar consensus are less important than an analysis of their deeds and what it reveals to us regarding the vision and actuality of socialism contained within them.⁸

Keynes Contra Fabianism *et al.*: The Pattern of the Postwar Consensus

Harold Lever, the barrister and Labour Party politician, stated the following in an article in *Tribune* in 1949:

Two schools of thought are battling for the allegiance of the Labour Party. Both schools believe that Labour's political and economic aims can only be achieved by Socialist planning. One School... insists that our plans must be more or less permanently based upon direct physical control of the country's production and consumption... but the second school would rely mainly on the use of budgetary and other financial measures . . . to achieve the plans with the minimum of physical controls. (Francis 1997, 38)

Here we have, in summary, the two main strands of Labour thought upon the question of planning and nationalisation. The former can be traced back to, *inter alia*, the Fabianism of Beatrice and Sidney Webb whereas the latter finds its genesis in the liberal socialist ideas of thinkers such as James Meade, who themselves draw their strength in a large measure from the ideas of Keynes (Jackson 2012).⁹ In his survey of ideas and practices of political economy in the British Labour movement from 1884 to the 2000s, Noel Thompson argues that although senior figures in the Attlee government such as Stafford Cripps, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Attlee himself favoured a more directive, micro-economic form of planning which would take place in tandem with a strongly nationalised system of industry and other forms of state intervention, the constellation of circumstances and early decisions in which the Labour Party's 1945

8 The approach taken here is indebted to an article by Cui Zhiyuan which draws from Pippin's reading of Nietzsche to justify an analysis of the Chongqing Experiment – a novel approach to urban and rural development that was pioneered in the direct-controlled municipality of Chongqing from the mid-2000s to 2012 – according to the theories of Henry George, James Meade and Antonio Gramsci. In his words, “It does not mean that the participants have deliberately followed these theories, only that their deeds are consistent with the theories” (Cui 2011, 648).

9 It should be noted, however, that Keynes was not the Almighty fount of all that has become associated with his name. For example, David Vines has argued that Meade had a significant role in the development of Keynes' ideas in *The General Theory of Interest, Employment and Money* through the former's involvement in the circle of younger economists who were gathered around Keynes at Cambridge, known as the “Circus,” and who in the early 1930s were debating Keynes' 1930 *Treatise on Money* (Vines 2007). It is important, thus, to recognise even in early Keynesianism a school of thought originating from Keynes but not completely tied to him as a single, atomised individual.

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manifesto was to be played out – including the weak form, institutionally-speaking, of nationalisation which was chosen, an emphasis on tripartite consensus between management, trade unions and government as well as a lack of willingness by the government to pursue the deep institutional reforms required for centralised planning – resulted in the ascendancy of the macro-economic, demand management approach ultimately premised upon Keynesianism (Thompson 2006, 139–142). The end-result was that, in his evocative turn of phrase, “[i]nstead of the pure milk of socialism, [the Labour Party] had resorted to offering a semi-skimmed variety” (Thompson 2006, 4).

Most of us are familiar with nationalisation and planning of the centralised form, partly due to its relatively simple logic: egalitarian public property replaces inegalitarian private property, while rational planning replaces the irrational market. The actual intricacies of putting this logic into action are, of course, far more complicated, but the essence of the vision is clear. With regards to liberal socialism, however, complications arise even in attempting to describe it in brief. To say that the market can be employed for the achievement of socialist objectives is an interesting proposition but one which flew directly against the mainstream of left-wing thought in the nineteenth century and at least the first half of the twentieth. Yet it was this marriage of markets and social justice which was to triumph over both *laissez-faire* and state socialism in the three decades after the war. In the British scene, there were a number of writers who beginning in the 1920s onward espoused varieties of this perspective, including J. A. Hobson, John Strachey and Oswald Mosley. The specifics of their respective proposals for a liberal socialism varied to a considerable extent, which enlivened the debates on the British left in the 1920s and 1930s. However, the intellectual force of liberal socialism, when it was actually incorporated into the postwar consensus, was undoubtedly that of Keynes.¹⁰ It is for this reason that in this section we shall focus on Keynes' writings on what, in a 1924 article, he termed a “true socialism of the future;” that is, a “politico-economic evolution” grounded upon “co-operation between private

10 Although Keynes was not seen as a natural ally due to his ideological differences with the Labour Party over essential matters – we should remember that Keynes was a Bloomsbury Set elitist who had a generally negative perception of the working-class, whom he regarded as “boorish” (Dostaler 1996, 21) – it was the filtration of his ideas through more overtly left-wing writers such as Hobson that made it palatable to Labourites. In Peter Clarke's words, “[i]t was Keynes with a Hobsonian twist [which] remedied the scientific deficiencies of Hobson's analysis and the ideological deficiencies of Keynes's” (P. Clarke 1981, 274). It should, however, be noted that among the influential interventions in Labour debates in the 1930s were books written by James Meade and Douglas Jay which were very clearly Keynesian in inspiration: Meade 1936; Jay 1937.

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initiative and the public exchequer” (Keynes 1981, 219–223).

It may come to some as a surprise that Keynes ever espoused socialism, even one of a *liberal* variety, given the conventional view of him as the saviour of capitalism. This conventional view is, in part, quite correct. Keynes did not have a problem with capitalism *per se*, but only with what he saw as the problems of its *laissez-faire* variety. It is also true that he was not primarily concerned with equity in how capitalism functioned, but rather with efficiency. Faced with the bipolar disorder of boom and bust in capitalism, his primary prescription was counter-cyclical monetary and fiscal policy, which would function akin to mood stabilising drugs, “abolishing slumps” and keeping the economy “permanently in a quasi-boom” (Keynes 1936, 322).¹¹ After all, given a choice, only the most gung-ho of manic depressives prefer to retain their wild mood swings. Most, like Keynes, prefer a policy which allows for the evasion of crushing depressions, even if it means sacrificing the joyful exuberance of manic periods. After all, a steady state of “quasi boom” is, in theory and when realised in practice, more efficient than a mercurial sequence of bubbles and crashes.

However, while it is also the case that Keynes was, in some ways, concerned with issues of equity and social justice, these were always secondary to efficiency. In “The End of Laissez-Faire,” he takes his distance from “*doctrinaire State* socialism... not because it seeks to engage men's altruistic impulses in the service of society, or because it departs from laissez-faire, or because it takes away from man's natural liberty to make a million, or because it has courage for bold experiments;” indeed, he states that he *applauds* “[a]ll these things” (Keynes 1926, 40). What he took issue with was rather its irrelevance, as he saw it, to the economic problems of the time. State socialism, in his view, was “little better than a dusty survival of a plan to meet the problems of fifty years ago, based on a misunderstanding of what someone said a hundred years ago” (Keynes 1926, 40). In other words, it was incapable of achieving its aims, and thus failed the test of instrumentalist efficiency. For Keynes, visions of socialism other than his own were not to be rejected because they sacrificed a particular understanding of individual liberty, nor was *laissez-faire* to be rejected because of its economic injustice. They were both to be rejected because they were too ideological, and were thus, practically-

11 It is perhaps instructive to note that during the period of the Great Depression which Keynes wrote some of his most enduring works, a journal article in the *Psychological Review* attempted to explain the cycle of boom and bust as being akin to “a patient suffering from a manic-depressive psychosis, in which the boom period parallels the manic phase and the subsequent slump parallels the depressive phase” (J. J. B. Morgan 1935).

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speaking, ineffective instruments for the goals which they sought to bring about.

Hence, while Keynes' liberal socialism shared with other versions of the creed the general belief that the private and the public could be harmonised towards an effective realisation of socially just aims, its particularity lay in the fact that pragmatism trumped idealism at every point in which they came into conflict. An integral part of this pragmatism was a technocratic perspective, whereby persons of expertise were to oversee the workings of a complex machinery of state and quasi-state institutions. In his address to the Liberal Summer School in 1925, he spoke these words which were not included in the version originally published at the time:

I believe that in the future, more than ever, questions about the economic framework of society will be far and away the most important of political issues. I believe that the right solution will involve *intellectual and scientific elements* which must above the heads of the vast majority of more or less illiterate voters. Now, in a democracy, every party alike has to depend on this mass of ill-understanding voters, and no party will attain power unless it can win the confidence of those by persuading them in a general way that it intends to promote their interests or that it intends to gratify their passions. ... [However,] [w]ith strong leadership the *techniques*, as distinguished from the main principles of policy could still be dictated from above. (Keynes 1972, 295–296, italics added)

Here we have one of the interesting characteristics of the instrumentalist perspective, namely its association with elitism. Instrumentalism as a whole, due to its obsession with efficiency and results, often leads to top-down and indeed anti-democratic procedures for formulating and executing policy. It is important to note, however, that although Keynes' ideal system was not micro-management by state bureaucrats via directed planning, nevertheless the combination of centralised and decentralised management which he advocated could only be successfully carried out by those deemed to be experts. All this was certainly the case with the institutional model of nationalisation which the Attlee government put into place, and likewise for the structure of the postwar university, with its central organ in terms of planning and co-ordination being the technocratic University Grants Committee and its successors, and its partners being the ranks of management in each higher education institution.

The conception of nationalisation which was theorised by the Fabians was grounded on the idea that the “taking over of the great centralized industries” (Besant 1891, II.2.10) would enable “the substitution of consciously regulated co-ordination among the units of each organism for their internecine competition” (Webb 1896, 5).

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This was public ownership and planning of a decidedly statist sort. Keynes did not believe such a system was the right one, and in the interests of efficiency supported a rather different form of public enterprise founded upon the “management by public boards with statutory powers” which would be “along the lines of 'semi-autonomous' corporations” (O’Donnell 1999, 158). Although the public board or corporation is linked most notably to the Labour politician Herbert Morrison, who famously made the case for such a model of nationalisation in his 1933 book, *Socialisation and Transport* (Morrison 1933), Keynes had already been putting a similar case from the latter half of the 1920s. Keynes' conception of the “semi-autonomous corporation” was a middle way of sorts in between centralised statism and *laissez-faire*, anchored on an idea of the “public,” which, as will be discussed further below, was wider than the standard idea of the state and yet very much detached from the profit principle.¹² In a 1927 lecture entitled “The Public and the Private Concern,” Keynes argued for the management of public enterprise by boards at a distance from the political elements of the state, comprised of those “chosen solely for their business capacity” and “adequately remunerated,” thus combining “the advantages of public ownership and responsibility” with “the technical methods of management which private enterprise had evolved as the most efficient for large-scale affairs” (Our Special Correspondent 1927). It was this vision which was ultimately to prevail in the postwar consensus, rather than that of many other writers who considered themselves true socialists.

However, it has already been stated that while there were parallels between the establishment of postwar instrumentalism in the universities and wider efforts at nationalisation, there were also obvious divergences. In no sense was there the establishment of a National Universities Board under which regional boards carried out their work. However, it is instructive that in one of his earliest public pieces on the subject, Keynes identified the universities as one of the two already-existing examples of institutions in Britain that embodied his “socialism of the future” (Keynes 1925). Like

12 It should be noted that another alternative which was put forward in the 1920s to resolve the opposition between state socialism and *laissez-faire* capitalism was the guild socialism of writers such as G. D. H. Cole, who advocated a decentralised system of industry and enterprise which would be characterised by workers' control in organisation and management (Cole 1920). Keynes, of course, was not persuaded by anything of the sort due to his lack of faith in the capacities of the ordinary worker. Cole's vision, in its essence, was of a type which fell foul of Keynes general critique of socialisms other than his own, as it “preferred the mud to the fish [and] exalts the boorish proletariat above the bourgeois and the intelligentsia who, with whatever faults, are the quality in life and surely carry the seeds of all human advancement” (Keynes 1931).

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his other primary example, the Bank of England, despite their legal status as private entities, they had “immense prestige and historical tradition,” but did not “in fact [work] for private profit,” and had “no interest whatever except the public good” while being “detached from the wayward influence of politics” (Keynes 1925). It should be noted that despite Keynes' likening of the universities to the Bank of England, their respective fates were to be rather different in postwar Britain, at least in legal status. While the former remained independent, the latter was nationalised by the Attlee government in 1946.

Nevertheless, despite their status as private bodies, the universities in the postwar period became even more part of the state, according to Keynes' definition of the term. Robert Skidelsky has argued that for Keynes, the state was *not* “a synonym for the 'government of the day',” or “those institutions which are conventionally located in the 'public sector'” but rather the “network of institutions whose stake in the proper functioning of the economy and society was so deep and extensive that their corporate actions were not determined by motives of short-term profit maximization” (Skidelsky 1997, 434). How does a private institution, driven by short-term profit maximization transform into a public one, according to Keynes? To explain this, Skidelsky quotes Keynes' letter of 26 March 1925 to *The Times*, already referred to above, in which the latter argued that “when a corporation, devised by private resources, has reached a certain age and a certain size, it *socialises* itself, or falls into decay” (Keynes 1925).¹³

It is somewhat telling, however, that Skidelsky ends the quote before this comment by Keynes: “As time goes on not a few of the institutions which were individualistic experiments are socializing themselves. But none, perhaps, except the Bank of England – *and (should I add?) The Times newspaper* – has yet completed the process” (Keynes 1925, italics added). Although probably written in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek manner, and hence unequal to his other two examples of the universities and the Bank of England, Keynes' regard for *The Times* of its day as a public institution, even

13 In this Keynes was, in a sense, on the same side as the Fabians, who believed that the mergers of private enterprises into large trusts was part of a process of socialisation. The difference, of course, was that for the Fabians the creation of these large firms was merely a stepping stone to full public nationalisation – in Annie Besant's words, “centrali[sation] for us by capitalists, who thus unconsciously pave the way for their own supersession” (Besant 1891, II.2.10) – whereas for Keynes such a step was anathema as he understood socialisation in terms of *investment*, that is, in the gradual transformation in the managerial culture of large joint-stock companies from being focused on shareholder profits to a more public ethos as a result of a sense of accountability to the wider society. Neither managed to foresee the endurance and further development of the contemporary multinational and transnational corporations in the latter half of the 20th century, larger than any great centralised industry preceding it, and much further from any notion or actuality of socialisation, whether that of formal ownership in the Fabian sense or of investment in Keynes' sense.

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laying aside the elitist perspective from which it springs, nevertheless speaks to our times. For we live, after all, in the era of the British press in which the 1981 acquisition of the newspaper by Rupert Murdoch's News UK (formerly known as News International) and its subsequent deployment for not only short-term profit maximisation but also political manoeuvring has completely taken it out of Keynes' definition of what it means for an entity to have a "public" character, which, we should remember, had as its two pillars transcendence beyond the profit motive into the realm of the public good and freedom from the pernicious influence of politics.

In the tale of Keynes' third example of an institution prefiguring his "socialism of the future," we may draw a lesson which also applies to his second example and our subject of interest: the university. This lesson is that any entity which appears to transcend narrow interests can easily revert to a focus on the bottom line, especially when at risk of bankruptcy and closure. The financial difficulties which led to the Thomson Corporation selling *The Times* to Murdoch's News International mirror the present consumer-oriented turn of the British university, imperilled as many of the individual institutions of the latter are in terms of funding particularly since the latest round of reforms beginning in 2010 under the watch of former Universities Minister David Willetts. So long as we live in a social formation where capitalism predominates, an orientation towards the common can only take place in a situation of financial stability, and therefore it is of immense importance how any institution is funded. The more it is dependent on a single source – whether a private owner or the state – the more susceptible it is to being thrown into a crisis when that source begins to run dry.

Dependence on a primary external source for one's funding is also the crux of a focus on instrumentalism. In the days where money flowed from the University Grants Committee and its successors, the university, despite its officially independent status and significant degree of autonomy, had to ultimately toe the line whenever its funding was at stake. This it did quite readily so long as its broader independence was respected – for example with regards to the ear-marked grants for specific fields of study in the 1947-1952 quinquennium (Shattock 1994, 3) – but as greater pressures built up from the 1980s onwards, the character of its operations began to change. The nature of research, in particular, was transformed with the advent of the Research Assessment Exercise. With each rise in fees and concomitant decrease of state funding, instrumentalist policy has shifted to pleasing its new source of sustenance to live and move and have its being:

the student-consumer, whose most potent individual threat is to simply take its custom elsewhere and whose heftiest collective weapon is the National Student Survey, with its potential impact on choice of future consumers. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Before we can speak of the development of instrumentalism in the postwar university, we must first chronicle its emergence into the limelight.

The Beginnings of Economistic Instrumentalism in the Postwar University

It is often said that it is during times of crisis – that is, the moments characterised by extraordinary circumstances – that seismic shifts in policy are made possible. In the case of the gradually-increasing role of state funding in the sphere of higher education, it was the Second World War which provided the ideal environment for its ascendancy, as well as that of the instrumentalist ethos which both accompanied and outlived it.

Prior to the outbreak of war, only 30% of the recurrent income of universities came from government coffers, while as for capital grants, state funds channelled to universities made up only £500,000 between 1923-1929 as compared to the £3,320,000 in endowments during the same period (Owen 1981; quoted in Shattock 1994, 1). Turning to the first quinquennium after the war, we find that the sum of recurrent grants alone from the Treasury to the universities in 1950-1951 was triple the figure in 1945-1946, that is, £15,222,408 as compared to £5,149,000 (Owen 1981; quoted in Shattock 1994, 1). By the end of the 1940s, funding from the government made up 63.9% of the entire income of universities, in contrast to just 35.8% in 1938-1939 (Berdahl 1959, 201–202).

This sea-change in the higher education funding landscape was in part a somewhat unintentional product of the war, a historical period as contingent as any other. The war had led to the deterioration of university education through both damage to infrastructure from the Battle of Britain as well as the dispersal of academics and students either throughout the armed forces and other branches of national service or, in the case of those who did not serve, around the country. However, by the end of the war, the national mood had shifted significantly enough that what was to follow during the period of reconstruction could in no true sense be described as unintentional. In December 1945, the Attlee government appointed a committee and gave it the task of assessing the state of higher education, particularly in relation to the provision of “man-power” for scientific research and advancement. In May 1946, the report of the committee was released, officially titled *Scientific Man-power* but colloquially known as

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the Barlow Report after its chair, Sir Alan Barlow, who was at the time the Second Secretary to the Treasury.¹⁴ On the very first page of the report the Committee declared:

We do not think that it is necessary to preface our report by stating at length the case for developing our scientific resources. ... By way of introduction, therefore, we confine ourselves to pointing out that least of all nations can Great Britain afford to neglect whatever benefits the scientists can confer upon her. If we are to maintain our position in the world and restore and improve our standard of living, we have no alternative but to strive for that scientific achievement without which our trade will wither, our Colonial Empire will remain undeveloped and our lives and freedom will be at the mercy of a potential aggressor. (Barlow 1946, 3)

In December 1946, seven months after the Barlow Report was published, the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee – an unofficial and rather large body composed of Parliamentarians and representatives from the scientific world – published a report of its own. The document supported almost all the recommendations of the Barlow Committee, and its Summary ended with the following words in capitals:

THE REQUIRED EXPANSION OF THE UNIVERSITIES WILL ONLY BE ACHIEVED – AND ACHIEVED IN TIME – IF GOVERNMENT HELP IS FORTHCOMING ON A BOLD AND GENEROUS SCALE – AND WITHOUT DELAY. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ALONE HOWEVER WILL NOT SUFFICE UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS. ... WITHOUT SUCH HELP WE CAN NEVER SECURE THAT RAPID AND SUSTAINED INCREASE IN SCIENTIFIC MAN-POWER WHICH IS SO VITAL TO THE WELL-BEING AND PROSPERITY OF THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH IN THE YEARS THAT LIE AHEAD. (Parliamentary and Scientific Committee 1946, para. 1(13))

Returning to the Barlow Report, it argued that bold measures were necessary in order to achieve an “immediate aim” of “doubl[ing] the present output [of scientific researchers], giving us roughly 5,000 newly qualified scientists per annum at the earliest possible moment” (Barlow 1946, 8). Apart from radically expanding the already-existing universities, the Committee pressed for the establishment of “at least one new university” and for the upgrading of the five university colleges that existed at the time (Exeter, Hull, Leicester, Nottingham and Southampton) to full university status “at the earliest possible date” (Barlow 1946, 16–17).¹⁵

14 The Barlow Report was only one of several official reports commissioned and published at the time on post-secondary education, but it had by far the greatest impact upon postwar university expansion. These other reports included the 1943 Luxmore Report on agricultural education, 1944 McNair Report on teacher training, the 1944 Goodenough Report on medical education, the 1945 Percy Report on higher technical education and the 1946 Loveday Report on veterinary education.

15 The former recommendation of the Committee for at least one new university to be established was not, in the end, taken up. The latter recommendation, on the other hand, was implemented, and all five university colleges mentioned were granted university charters within just over a decade, beginning with Nottingham in 1948 and ending with Leicester in 1957.

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By what means were recommendations such as those in the Barlow Report to be implemented? With regards to the financial assistance which was to be channelled to the universities, it was the University Grants Committee (UGC) which was to preside over its disimbursement. The UGC has already been mentioned a few times thus far, but here it may be helpful to explore its origins. Unlike most of the public university systems that developed in other parts of the Western world, British higher education managed to maintain a formal separation between individual university administrations and the state. Aside from the government's role in approving the establishment of universities and university colleges through Royal Charters, the first significant link between the everyday workings of the government and the universities came with the establishment of the UGC in 1919. The UGC was essentially a top-down creation of the Liberal government in the period immediately after the end of the First World War.¹⁶ Although it was widely acknowledged that the existing resources of the universities at that historical juncture were “exhausted” (Shinn 1986) to a point which could be described as a “financial crisis” (Shinn 1980, 234), it was particular political figures in the government – most notably in the Board of Education – and not the management or academics of higher education institutions who took the lead in the chain of events that led to the formation of the Committee in 1919 (Hutchinson 1975, 587).

Impelled by the post-WWI situation, the UGC was set up to advise the government on the distribution of public monies to the various self-governing universities (University Grants Committee 1985, 1). In the words of the Barlow Committee, it “was originally intended to be a somewhat passive body whose main function was to criticise proposals put forward by the universities and which was not itself expected to make any attempt to suggest possible developments involving expenditure to university authorities” (Barlow 1946, 21). While the Barlow Committee recognised, with some pleasure, that “the [UGC] has not in fact been content to accept so passive a role,” the Committee's opinion was that, given the challenges facing post-WWII Britain, the time had come for the UGC to “increasingly concern itself with *positive university policy*” and thus it was “desirable for this purpose to revise its terms of reference and strengthen its machinery” (Barlow 1946, 21).

On July 30, 1946, Hugh Dalton, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in Parliament the new terms of reference that the UGC was to adhere to. The most

¹⁶ A detailed account of the events that led to the UGC's creation can be found in Hutchinson 1975.

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important amendment was worded as follows: the Committee was “to assist, in consultation with the universities and other bodies concerned, *the preparation and execution of such plans for the development of the universities as may from time to time be required in order to ensure that they are fully adequate to national needs*” (Dalton 1946, col. 129, italics added). However, the UGC, in its own account of the period, went at lengths to counter the view held by some that “the principles of central planning and of academic autonomy” were “irreconcilable opposites” (Committee 1948, 82).

Here we can see how a significant part of the impetus behind the UGC was a growing faith in centralisation or, at the very least, greater co-ordination or planning which we have already discussed in the previous section of this chapter. Indeed, although Keynes championed the universities as an example of his “socialism of the future,” for his vision to truly be incarnated, the individual institutions had to be augmented by the strengthening of this semi-independent state body. With this blended system of centralised and decentralised management by experts, the task that was set out by Keynes and his co-authors in Book 2 of the 1928 Liberal Party report, *Britain's Industrial Future*, could be fulfilled. This task was that “of guiding existing tendencies into a right direction and getting the best of all worlds, harmonising individual liberty with the general good, and personal initiative with a common plan” (Liberal Industrial Inquiry 1928, 64–65). Nevertheless, when faith in a common plan started to fade, or at least morphed into its neoliberal version whereby central government would set out the framework in which individual institutions would operate (and indeed, compete), the strong flavour of instrumentalism did not subside.

The most significant aspect of the expansion of the UGC's work, it is submitted, is the fact that it created a situation whereby the universities were increasingly beholden to state finance. This was fine while university-state relations were cordial, the economy was healthy and the principles of the postwar consensus held sway. However, when the British economy began to face difficulties from the 1970s onwards, it was only a matter of time before an ideological realignment would take place. The financial drivers for this shift can be linked to the circumstances surrounding the 1973-74 oil crisis and what followed (Shattock 2012, 122–124), while its ideological component was the rise of a neoliberal rationality beginning in the Thatcher period and continuing under New Labour.

If the centralisation of university funding had not taken place in the 1940s and

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1950s, the impact of the shift in state policy with regards to the welfare state and public services from the 1980s onwards may not have been as significant within the sphere of higher education as they were in actuality. In other words, the rise of state funding managed by the UGC was a necessary if not sufficient condition for the process which led to a shift in the dominant form of instrumentalism in the neoliberal period. Economic progress and the needs of society were now to be served by an extension of the consumer mentality within the sub-sphere of teaching and the mechanisms of technical measurement within the sub-sphere of research within the wider sphere of the university. Nevertheless, the form of instrumentalism was preserved, if not the content.

Nowhere within the Barlow Report, other reports of its time, nor in the records of their implementation by the Attlee government was there any mention of or even the hint of a sentiment towards the creation of a publicly-funded university system which would serve ideals such as that of Deweyan democracy by – in the words of the *Manifesto* of the UK Campaign for the Public University – “the development of a public” with “the capacity for full participation” (Campaign for the Public University 2010). Equally absent is any notion of a public university which would expand the ranks of a university-educated “middle class” which would, to quote the American academic Christopher Newfield, “have interesting work, economic security, and the ability to lead satisfying and insightful lives in which personal and collective social development advanced side by side” (Newfield 2008, 3). It is thus manifestly clear that the foundation of the postwar university was the service of an instrumentalist aim that lay outside the boundaries of higher education itself, namely, economic progress. In the eyes of the Barlow Committee, it was to do so by training scientists and other experts who were indispensable to developing the postwar economy; in other words, its task was not the fostering of citizens for democracy, the facilitation of social mobility nor even “widening participation,” but rather the training of what has more latterly become known as human capital (Becker 1975). From whence, then, came these conceptions of the public university which contemporary idealists so stridently defend, if not from its practical origins? This puzzling question is the subject of the next chapter.

However, it is important to note here that the various *raison d'être* supplied by proponents of a “public university” are themselves not devoid of instrumentalism. After all, the tasks of forming citizens or widening the net of those who are to benefit from higher education are also, strictly-speaking, exterior to the internalities of the university

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– that is, teaching and research. Indeed, it cannot be overemphasised that the three questions of instrumentalism, idealism and community are always engaged at any time, although due to the pronounced parallax it is impossible to grasp them as a harmonious whole. The essential thing to be discerned is not whether elements of these three are present – because they will always be, even if some are obscured – but rather which of the three is *dominant*. The difference between a vision of the public university and a vision of a university subordinated to economic imperatives is that the former emphasises an ideal, while the latter emphasises instrumentalist aims and calculation, necessarily bracketing other domains in order to attain these emphases.

Returning to our narrative, throughout the Conservative hold upon the reins of government in the 1950s, the system of higher education developed during the Attlee government was not tampered with nor reorientated. In actual fact, following a marked surge from £16,600,113 in 1951-52 to £20,000,000 in 1952-53, the annual recurrent grant managed by the UGC continued to rise steadily and by the end of the decade stood at £34,350,000 (1959-60) (Berdahl 1959, 201). When urged in a written question from a Labour MP in 1953 to form a Royal Commission on the role of universities, Prime Minister Winston Churchill responded that he saw “no reason to be dissatisfied with the way in which *the needs of society have been met by the universities*” (Churchill 1953, col. 96–7). Indeed, in the wider sphere of social policy the Keynesian consensus too continued to hold; however, within higher education the specific message was clear: the universities were serving the instrumental purposes for which government funding was provided, and thus the status quo was to be affirmed and perpetuated. At the end of the day, instrumentalism was and remains to this day a widely accepted framework in which much dispute occurs over its technicalities, but not the principle in itself.

Conclusion

In the chapter's first section, I defined instrumentalism as a perspective of higher education whereby the primary measure of a policy or set of practices within higher education is its consequences for the particular goals which have been pre-determined. The ultimate consequence for a radical application of this perspective is a university without (its own) content, a university which has been hollowed out of any purposes or *telos* of its own, and subordinated to exterior goals. By linking my analysis with that of Bill Readings', I put forward the view that the ambiguity of instrumentalism lies in its

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almost pathological obsession with measurements and metrics of what it deems to be excellence, an obsession which ultimately subverts its own purposes as it reveals the incapacity of its rather crude means to achieve its ends in any meaningful way.

Having defined instrumentalism in its broad contours, I then, in the second section of the chapter, explored its point of invention within the history of the postwar British university. This required a treatment of the wider terrain of British society after the Second World War, which I explained by looking at how the liberal socialist ideas of Keynes formed the nucleus of the postwar consensus, and also laid the groundwork for the development of the neoliberal society that replaced it in content while retaining its instrumentalist form. This viewpoint requires us, I argued, to abandon the “two ruptures” thesis whereby Thatcherism is considered as breaking completely with the Keynesian consensus, and understand instead the lines of continuity that connect the two despite their respective specificities. In dealing with the specific history of higher education, we took a trek around the milestones which led to postwar instrumentalism, namely the Barlow Report, the expansion of state funding managed through the reformed University Grants Committee, and the continuation of this policy by the Conservatives through the 1950s.

In the next chapter we will move on to the next temporal stage of the narrative, that is, the British university of the 1960s and 1970s. The historical elements will be balanced against the conceptual development of the perspective of idealism, particularly the dominant form which posits that the essence of postwar higher education is that of a vision of a “public university.” The aim will be to explain how this ideal arose and created a myth of its founding. This founding myth was even, in some versions, backdated to the very start of the postwar order. We will also explore the dangerous potential consequences of persisting with this myth, including a dearth of imagination leading to a desire to revive a golden age which is considered to have been lost to the rise of a putative “neoliberal university.”

Chapter 3

Self-(Mis)understanding After the Fact: The Formation of the Idealist Conception of the Public University

“If we want to spare ourselves the painful roundabout route through the misrecognition, we miss the Truth itself: only the 'working-through' of the misrecognition allows us to accede to the true nature of the other.”

(Žižek 2008, 69)

“If I wanted a market, I would go to Billingsgate, not a university!” Such was the statement written on a placard which was on display at one of the early demonstrations I attended in London against the rise of the cap for British and EU undergraduate tuition fees in late 2010. The sentiment expressed there was clearly founded on the idea that university education should be a sphere for neither profit-making market operations, such as would be appropriate at the famous Billingsgate Fish Market in the city, nor perhaps even pseudo-market-like mechanisms within a quasi-public sector. While the laconic genre of the placard did not allow its author to state what she thought higher education *should* be premised upon, the context of the protest would indicate that it was highly likely that its carrier believed in an ideal of the university as a place of learning governed by its own principles, and not those of capitalist exchange relations.

Having explored the contours of the instrumentalist perspective in the previous chapter, this chapter picks up on another trend in our present conjuncture, namely the affirmation of an approach to higher education which valiantly stands opposed to instrumentalism, particularly of the neoliberal variety. Grounded on firm principles rather than calculations of an instrumentalist sort, this approach can be called *idealism*, and it is it that drives sentiments such as the one animating the placard discussed above. The first section of this chapter is devoted to mapping out the general contours of such an idealist perspective. Following this, the chapter's second section focuses on what is arguably the most prominent of the many varieties of an idealist conception of the university in present debates here in the United Kingdom, namely the vision of the *public university*. In the final section, we examine in greater detail the place of the idealist perspective within the structure of the postwar British university.

3.1 The University with a Single, Unifying Ideal

An approach to higher education which is founded upon an idealist perspective involves the identification of an overarching ideal by which theory and practice within the university is to be judged. Speaking simplistically, any substantive policy or set of practices which conforms to or at least advances this central principle or model is to be favoured, while policies or sets of practices which detract from it are to be resisted.

Whereas the instrumentalist perspective discussed in the preceding chapter empties the university of its own content and measures higher education policy primarily by its effects upon specific, pre-determined goals, the idealist perspective is premised upon an opposing dynamic. Its supporters are firm believers in the unique place and mission of the university, even if they disagree with each other as to the specificities of such a place and mission. They are thus united in their resentment towards any enslavement of the institution to what they consider externalities, such as attempts to quantify contributions to economic growth and cost-benefit analyses grounded upon methodological individualism. This is not to say that all idealist perspectives are categorically opposed to such externalities, but they consider them to be secondary at best, and hence disapprove of the instrumentalist's constant recourse to such calculations in attempting to evaluate higher education theory and practice.

While idealist perspectives often do justify themselves, at least in part, with arguments of the university's contribution to wider society, they are often phrased in high-minded terms such as culture, collective intelligence or the common good. However, for the most pronounced idealists, even these are seen as concessions to an instrumentalist mentality focused on practicalities rather than pure principles. Hence, while the obsession of instrumentalists with empirical statistics is quite conspicuous, it should be noted that moderate idealists are not opposed in principle to quantification *per se*, but the figures they favour are those which measure the advance or retreat of their ideals, such as rates of participation in higher education for those with a democratic vision of the university. At the day's end, it can be said that the essence of the idealist approach is the belief in a *single, unifying ideal* for the university which is premised upon rational conceptualisation rather than empirical pragmatism. Indeed, it is this emphasis on rational principles which distinguishes it from perspectives grounded upon community, because although idealism and community share a certainty

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about the uniqueness of the university, their respective grounds for this belief are very distinct. Idealists focus on abstract principles, and are thus thought-centric. Conversely, those who focus on what makes the university a community unlike any other and the manner in which this specialness can be maintained are therefore feeling-centric.

There have been innumerable manifestations of the idealist perspective throughout the history of the university, even if many have drawn their sustenance from a few key sources in history, including the Greek notion of *paideia*, the Roman idea of *liberalia studia*, the *studia humanitatis* of medieval Europe, and the German conception of *Bildung*. A few classic and recent examples may be illustrative here. John Henry Newman's famous defence of a humanistic ideal of liberal education in *The Idea of a University* needs little introduction (Newman 1996).¹ More recently, Bill Readings, in *The University of Ruins*, charts a narrative of the modern university ideal from Kant's university of reason to Humboldt's university of culture (Readings 1996). Finally, Derrida, writing in one of the cyclical crises of the humanities, formulated his ideal of *the university without condition* (Derrida 2002).

What unites all these different versions of idealism is that they occupy the space of the idea or transcendental illusion in the conceptual triad that Karatani derives from Kant (Karatani 2003b, 90). Constructed upon and governed by first principles, the ideal is akin to a majestic castle raised in the domain of the rational mind.² Nevertheless, every ideal can, in the final instance, be categorised under one of two headings also derived from Kant, namely *constitutive*³ or *regulative* ideas. In Karatani's words:

1 It is worth noting, however, that many commentators sidestep a key element of Newman's argument, namely his stress upon the importance of theology to the university (Newman 1996, Discourses II-IV).

2 There are also programmatic ideals which at first glance appear to be a strand of idealism, but which are based not on rational construction but rather a conservative inclination towards what has served the institution well in times gone by, and which is then advocated for preservation. In their 1971 work, *The British Academics*, the sociologists A. H. Halsey and Martin Trow identified what they considered to be a unifying "idea of a University" in the British system of higher education. This idea or ideal consists of "certain normative criteria": "First, it should be ancient; second it should draw its students, not from a restricted regional locality, but from the nation and internationally; third, its students, whatever their origins, should be carefully selected as likely to fit into and maintain the established life and character of the university; fourth, those who enter should be offered (to use a Victorian distinction) 'education' and not merely 'training'. This end necessitates, fifth, a small-scale residential community affording close contact of teachers with taught in a shared domestic life and, sixth, a high staff-student ratio for individualised teaching" (Halsey and Trow 1971, 67). It is clear that this ostensible "idealism" is in fact an example of a community-centred approach, that is, closer to a plea for a specific form of life, albeit one which is an apologia for a former or vanishing *status quo*. Such perspectives will be addressed in greater detail in the next chapter.

3 In some translations of Karatani's work into English, most notably *The Structure of World History*, the Japanese term *kōseitēki* is mistranslated as "constructive" rather than "constitutive," the latter being the correct term given the Kantian foundation of Karatani's arguments (Lange 2015, 197).

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To explain this distinction, Kant used the difference between mathematical proportionality and philosophical analogy. In mathematics, if three terms are given, a fourth can be determined: this is an instance of the [constitutive]. In speculative [i.e. regulative] thought, on the other hand, the fourth term cannot be derived a priori. But speculative thought provides us with an index as we search through experience for something that might serve as the fourth term. ... To put this in simple terms, we see the [constitutive] use of reason at work in its classic form with Jacobinism (i.e., Robespierre): the violent remaking of society based on reason. By contrast, the regulative use of reason works to draw people ever closer to some index, even as that index always remains at some distance. (Karatani 2014, 233)

In other words, a constitutive idea is one whose adherent believes can be actualised in its purity, whereas a regulative idea is one which serves primarily as a horizon to move towards, a guide to channel its adherent's efforts. Although both involve deep commitment, the former's dogmatism lies in clear contrast to the latter's openness. Karatani makes a link between this Kantian-inspired distinction and a passage in *The German Ideology* which he attributes to Marx rather than Engels: "Communism for us is not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the now existing premise" (Marx 1998, 57, italics in original). The failure of mainstream Marxists to pay heed to this key passage led them to adopt a constitutive use of reason, a choice which has had grave consequences, particularly in the twentieth-century (Karatani 2003b, xi–xii).

On the left wing of politics, the struggle between constitutive and regulative forms of ideas has, of course, not been unique to Marxism. Anarchists, too, have grappled with this problem, especially following the gradual ebbing away of revolutionary anarchism as a mass movement in the twentieth-century. In the British context, a fiery debate raged in the pages of the anarchist journals *Freedom* and *Anarchy* from the mid 1950s to the early 1960s about the possibility of achieving a fully anarchist society. On one side were those who wished to maintain a revolutionary stance which made the establishment of such a society as the central aim – in other words, anarchism as a constitutive idea. On the other side were those such as George Molnar who proclaimed that, given the fact that the tenets of anarchism were unlikely to ever achieve universal assent, any fully anarchist society would be an imposition and thus contradictory to the essence of anarchism itself. Thus, all anarchists could and should do

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was live in “permanent opposition” to mainstream society (Molnar 1961, 125). This latter position effectively threw out the idea of an anarchist society altogether, leaving only the possibility of pockets of principled resistance in the interstices of societies indelibly opposed to anarchism.

George Woodcock took an intermediate position, arguing that since anarchism as a mass political movement in the form envisaged by Bakunin and Kropotkin appeared no longer tenable, anarchists therefore had to “abandon all social, economic and organisational dogmatism” and instead work to nurture “the various positive tendencies that emerge in society almost spontaneously” in order to “transform them into a trend towards growing liberation from the trammels of the state” (G. Woodcock 1956, 4).⁴ Building on Woodcock's argument between the two poles, Colin Ward staked out a position which resembles anarchism as a regulative idea, arguing that it should be treated “[n]ot as an aim to be realised but as a yardstick, a measurement or means of assessing reality” (Ward 1961, 3). Stuart White sees Ward's position as involving both elements of the dichotomy subsequently formulated by Murray Bookchin between social anarchism and lifestyle anarchism (Bookchin 1995), contending that Ward “refuses to choose between them” (White 2011, 102). “Beyond the episodes of ‘permanent protest,’” White writes, “in which anarchy is fleetingly grabbed and enjoyed, there is a need for a social vision: a working, always provisional conception of a different kind of society towards which the anarchist should work” (White 2011, 97). More generally, and particularly on an experiential level, it can be argued that a regulative idea arises from a transcritical oscillation between a constitutive idea and its abandonment, rather than a fixed and stable third position. Affirming a regulative idea involves a longing, however brief, for it to be actualised in a constitutive manner as well as a sense of loss, however fleeting, when such a longing is released, thus returning the idea to the status of an index to guide and evaluate one's efforts.

4 It is instructive to note that the distinction between Molnar and Woodcock's respective views mirrors that of two of the five different strategies that H. Richard Niebuhr argues Christians have taken in relation to the wider culture. Molnar's recommendation is akin to the perspective of “Christ against culture,” where “the sole authority of Christ over the Christian” is affirmed while “culture's claims to loyalty” are rejected (Niebuhr 2001, 45). Woodcock's position, on the other hand, is analogous to that of “Christ transforming culture,” whereby the Christian believes that the conversion of the culture to the Christian way is possible. This, of course, requires “a more positive and hopeful attitude” (Niebuhr 2001, 191). At the end of the day, the anarchist and the rigorously non-conformist Christian are both opposed to mainstream culture, which the tradition of the latter terms simply “the world.” For this reason, any person or movement desiring to contest elements of the hegemonic way of the world can find useful resources in both the anarchist and the radical Christian traditions, which in fact overlap at points, for example in the Christian anarchism of Leo Tolstoy and the Catholic Worker movement.

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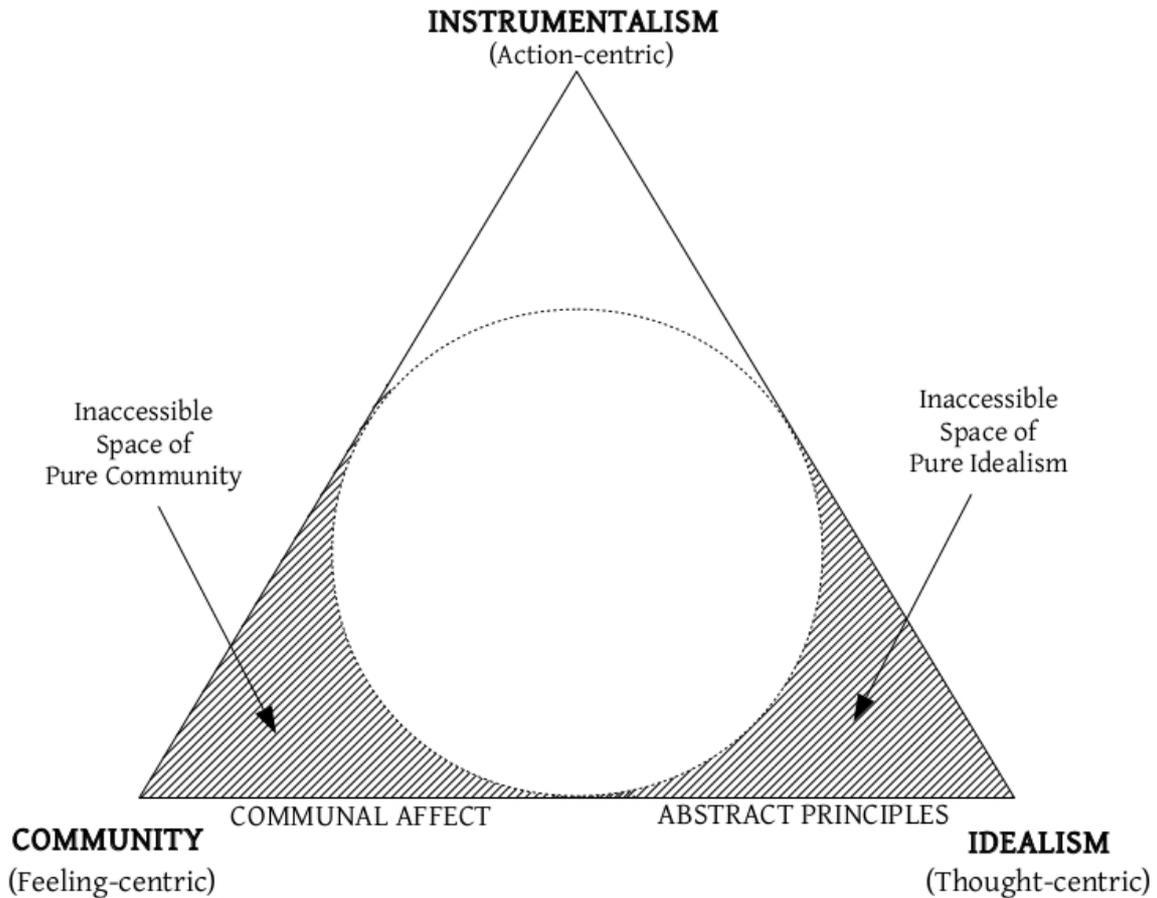
This thesis contends, however, that adopting a constitutive approach to ideas does not always mean an attempt to remake the entire world according to a radical blueprint, such as with Jacobinism and Stalinism. The various forms of totalitarianism that we have seen in history and continue to struggle with in the present certainly form one tradition of constitutive thinking. However, there is also a strand of constitutive idealism in which a more “moderate” ideal is taken up, and what seems on the surface to be a less ambitious blueprint often leads to a greater confidence that it may actually be implemented. The form of mainstream social democracy ascendent from the second half of the twentieth-century, discussed in the preceding chapter, is one instance of this tendency, but the same can be said of other non-utopian visions which attempt to realise certain ideals while accommodating themselves to the really-existing conditions of the contemporary socio-economic-political matrix, which is well-described by even if not wholly reducible to what Karatani has termed the Borromean knot of Capital-Nation-State, a system of interlocking elements which may sometimes appear to be opposed but which in reality stabilise each other (Karatani 2014, xiv).

One such constitutive idea in the sphere of higher education is that of the *public university*. In our present conjuncture where the dominant trajectory in higher education policy – at both the levels of the state as well as individual institutions – appear to be strongly leaning towards “privatised” values, affirming the public character of higher education is, in one sense, a valiant, principled response. Nevertheless, there is much that the vision of the public university does not question, such as the idea of the omnicompetent modern state, the ideology of meritocracy, the assumption that education is best carried out through large institutions and the embedding in the last instance of the university within the circuits of capital – in other words, the foundations upon which mainstream social democracy has been constructed over the past half century or so. These capitulations to the modern state appear at first glance as a further hindrance to the constitutive idea of the public university mounting a totalising challenge to the regnant instrumentalist order, but in fact illustrate the truth that pure idealism is impossible. Unlike instrumentalism, which may be expressed in near-total forms by straight-forwardly bracketing ideals and community – although, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, not without inevitably creating pseudo-ideals and pseudo-communal structures – the realisation of idealism (as well as community) is always circumscribed by the bare facts of material and practical limitations. In other

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words, even those most committed to a particular idealist approach are inevitably restricted by the necessity of unbracketing practicalities at various points.

In other words, if we return to the triangle diagram in the previous chapter, there are areas which are, in practice, near-impossible to dwell within. These inaccessible spaces of pure idealism or community are depicted in the diagram below.



Having outlined the basics of the idealist perspective in the university, we can now turn to evaluating the specific constitutive idea of the public university. The best way to begin is to trace its points of invention, and it is to that task which we now turn.

3.2 The Public University and its Founding Myth

The slow yet steady neoliberalising “reforms” to British higher education which have been taking place over the last few decades have been given various labels, but one of the most widespread is that of *privatisation*, linked as the term is to the wider Thatcherite reforms in the state and economy from the 1980s to the present. Its invocation brings us to the famous dichotomies, the old yet constantly shifting battle lines which have structured political and economic thought since the dawn of industrial

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capitalism and liberal democracy in the West: public versus private, state versus market, left versus right, “equality” versus “liberty,” and so on. In this perceived tug of war, any move towards one side is followed by clarion calls across what appears to be the great divide to reaffirm the other side, regain any lost ground, and, if possible, attempt to retake the advantage.

Hence, it is no wonder that the ascendancy of values linked to private interests over public goods in the sphere of the university have led to a counter-movement which aims to defend the vision of a “public university.” However, the dichotomy posed is problematic, not least because it all too easily traps us within the allied dualisms already mentioned, thus foreclosing alternative ways of thinking through the problem. One example of such an alternative perspective, draws from a more medieval understanding of the public/private distinction, in which the two are far from being diametrically opposed but are instead complementary due to the distinction between possession and use.⁵ Even more crucially, the nature of the historical and contemporary ideal and actuality of “the public” in the United Kingdom is left unexamined, leading to a fuzzy conception primarily premised upon a negation of forms of privatisation which introduce the profit motive and business models in thought and organisation. In other words, even if one has a strong distaste for profit-driven private initiatives in the sphere of higher education, one should be wary of such aversions driving one into the arms of “the public,” if one is not clear about what affirming such a “public” really entails.

To begin, the concept of a public university, for some, has been bound up with questions of property and ownership. In the 1960s, the educationist and later polytechnic director Eric Robinson advocated the outright nationalisation of the

5 Robert Skidelsky, writing about Keynes' ideas of the public which were discussed in the preceding chapter, argues that it “has its roots in a mediaeval past, when property was invested with both private and public functions” (Skidelsky 1997, 434). In his *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas explains the theological aspect of property through a broad distinction between “the power to procure and dispense” these external things and the power to use them (Aquinas 1920, sec. 66). Bede Jarrett OP glosses this passage by explaining that within the Christian theology of the medieval era, “the possession of property belongs to the individual, but... that the use of it is not limited to him” (Jarrett 1914, 81). It can be argued that the British university obeyed this principle up until the postwar period. Despite being private bodies which possessed private property, the use of such property was open to those outside the university. According to John Carswell, for instance, the universities were always seen as “public” given their “public” character of providing museums, parks and so on, even before they were publicly funded (Carswell 1985). By contrast, the completely publicly-funded model of higher education is, in a sense a reversal of this medieval principle. Public property in the form of taxes fall into the private “use” of individual students. This is analogous, interestingly, to the form of possession and use within the monastic tradition. Nevertheless, we should note that Jarrett argues that “[t]he economics of a religious house are hardly of such a kind, thought the mediaevalists, as to suit the ways and fancies of this workaday world” (Jarrett 1914, 82).

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universities – in contrast to the postwar “quiet measure of nationalisation” described by John Carswell and referred to in the previous chapter – as he believed that higher education could not be truly democratised so long as the universities remained in private ownership and control and thus outside the realms of rational planning on a national scale (*Times Educational Supplement* 1966). For others who wish to preserve the autonomy of the university from the state, what is more crucial is simply public funding. A third view is that a general orientation towards the public good over private interests is all that being “public” involves. As we have seen, this was the view of Keynes, who exalted the British university as a quintessential part of the public, and indeed the state as he understood it. To repeat the words of Keynesian scholar Robert Skidelsky, the state was, for Keynes, the “network of institutions whose stake in the proper functioning of the economy and society was so deep and extensive that their corporate actions were not determined by motives of short-term profit maximization” (Skidelsky 1997, 434). It is at times easy to forget that Keynes was writing about how the university embodied his vision of liberal socialism in the late 1920s, when the large-scale injections of state funding of the postwar period were still some years away. Thus, it is possible on this third account of “the public” to have a university primarily funded by private means and yet be considered a public institution.

For many contemporary advocates of the public university vision, however, this Keynesian definition of what it means for an institution have a public character will not do. For John Holmwood, inspired by John Dewey, the university's “fundamental role for culture and for public life” comes from the idea of being “an instrument for 'collective intelligence’” (Holmwood 2011, 8). A truly public university is one which is “at the service of the public” and has “social justice at its heart;” if it is not so, then it is “just another private corporation in which a corporate economy has become a corporate society” (Holmwood 2011, 14). State funding, according to this strand of thought, is crucial to maintaining the actuality of the former public-minded idea and preventing it from degenerating into the latter “corporate-dominated” model. The Robbins Report of 1963 is seen as a harbinger of mass higher education and democratisation (Holmwood 2011, 3), as well as a prophetic text to be returned to in these neoliberal times (Williams 2013). Holmwood states that “to argue for the public university and its social mission is not to look back to a 'golden age' of the university before mass higher education, but to embrace the very principles associated with the development of mass higher education”

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(Holmwood 2011, 8). This statement by Holmwood notwithstanding, it must be pointed that for many proponents of the public university, there is indeed a “golden age,” namely the period from the 1962 Education Act, which instituted compulsory local authority grants for fees and living expenses for all those obtaining a place in higher education, until 1973⁶ when the gradual rollback of funding began.⁷

This “long decade” from 1962-1973 can be analysed as the higher education component of what educationist Brian Simon termed “the breakout” in education of the 1960s (Simon 1991, chap. 5).⁸ This relatively compressed period of time saw drastic changes to the higher education landscape. No fewer than twenty new universities were created, the population of students in higher education more than doubled, from 217,000 in 1962-63 to 463,000 in 1971-72 (Simon 1991, 262 , 426), and the controversial “binary policy” separating the “autonomous” university sector from the “public” – that is, local authority-controlled – institutions was promulgated by the Labour government, leading to the establishment of thirty polytechnics (Brennan 2008, 233), hailed by socialist educationist Eric Robinson as “people’s universities” (Robinson 1968).

These practical developments were nothing short of monumental for the institutional structure of higher education in the decades to come, but their legacy is more than matched by a single report commissioned by the Tory government in 1961 and published in 1963, namely the already much-mentioned Report on Higher Education chaired by the eminent economist, Lord (Lionel) Robbins. These two elements of the breakout of the long decade, the practice and the theory, were closely interrelated yet not equivalent, for there were a number of significant divergences between the two, such as the Report’s clear preference for a “unitary system” of higher education which was negated by the aforementioned “binary policy.” But the meeting of the two streams produced a rushing river which has been immortalised in the history of supporters of

6 The turbulent economic period of the 1970s led to a series of policies which gradually reduced government expenditure on higher education, leading to a matching gradual reduction of the target for full-time and sandwich places in higher education by 1980/1981 from 750,000 in December 1972 when the White Paper “Education: A Framework for Expansion” was published (somewhat ironically by Margaret Thatcher, then Secretary of State for Education and Science) to a mere 500,000 by March 1980 (Booth 1982, 36–37).

7 A more generous interpretation of a “golden age” for “public” British higher education would date its beginning to the immediate postwar period. This is the view that was expressed, for example, by Lord Swann in his opening of the debate in the House of Lords on the Croham Review on the UGC. He opined that the “golden age for universities” lasted “from just after the war until 1973,” and in this period “[s]ociety valued them, governments of every shade valued them, new universities were founded, morale was high and it was a time of great enthusiasm and creativity” (Swann 1987).

8 Indeed, if we wanted to be generous, we could begin this “long decade” of mass higher education expansion in 1961 when Sussex, the first of the “plate-glass universities,” opened its doors.

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mass higher education according to progressive and democratic principles of a particular social democratic sort, under which those in the tradition of the “public university” ideal can be subsumed.

Here we see the various threads from which the ideal of the public university was and is knitted, which essentially draws from the side of the infamous dichotomies which favours the public over the private, the state over the market, equality over liberty, and so on. On the other side of these divides, we find, of course, the elements which dovetail more smoothly with the instrumentalist visions which we examined in the previous chapter. In our present higher education conjuncture, we could add to these binaries the Robbins Report against the Browne Report, the Alternative White Paper produced by academic critics against the government's own 2011 White Paper on Higher Education, and so on.

However, the link which a narrative such as Holmwood's asserts between a professed democratic conception of mass higher education which can be given the name “the public university” and the Robbins Report is one which is actually far more complicated than it may appear at first glance. After all, the fact that the higher education blueprint most celebrated by British social democrats in the postwar period originated from the pen of a well-known neoliberal economist and member of the Mont Pelerin Society is one that should make us pause and reflect. Thus, it is to examining this incongruous confluence of social democracy and neoliberalism, the putative (proto-)manifesto of the public university ideal, which we now turn.

Robbins: Social Democrat in Neoliberal Clothing, or Vice Versa?

In an interview with Robbins not long before he died, the educationist and historian of higher education Peter Scott enquired as to how, as a member of the establishment and a right-wing economist, he ended up endorsing the progressive cause of higher education expansion. Robbins replied that his perspective on the importance of such an expansion originated from a conversation he had on the subject with a London School of Economics colleague, the renowned ethical socialist R. H. Tawney. Tawney, who had spent some of the war years in the United States, had said to him: “You could never overestimate how much America had benefited from the fact that so many of her people had had at least the smell of a higher education” (Scott 2014).

Given that this explanation for Robbins' progressivism in higher education came

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straight from the horse's mouth, it may seem harsh to opine somewhat cynically, as philosopher-sociologist Steve Fuller did in a letter to the *Times Higher Education*, that Robbins' real motives were in fact consistent with his wider intellectual positions. According to Fuller, the true spirit of the Robbins Report was what we know today as “human capital development,”⁹ in which the ancient universities such as Oxford and Cambridge could be regarded as “intellectual protectionists that imposed artificially high barriers to student entry” (Fuller 2013). Robbins' solution, Fuller argues, was to support the establishment of competing institutions which were focused on “contemporary subjects” – that is, new products in the “market” – but without a decrease in quality (Fuller 2013).

Fuller's theory may seem uncharitable, but it is far from unsubstantiated. Placing aside his apparent repetition of the common misassumption that the Robbins Report was the driving force behind all the “plate-glass universities” of the 1960s – seven of these had in fact already been approved in the late 1950s (Simon 1991, 202) – the fact that Robbins had consistently argued against the ethical and political philosophy of the welfare state throughout his career makes it difficult for us to conclude that he had negated those views in the area of higher education policy merely from a single enlightening comment from Tawney. Another explanation must be found for the apparent about-turn of the man who argued in his influential text, *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, that “social utility” is “[i]nteresting as a development of an ethical postulate” but “entirely foreign to the assumptions of a scientific Economics” (Robbins 1932, 125).¹⁰ Fuller's brief letter is a gesture in the right direction, but we have to journey further for an answer that may fully satisfy.

A suitable place to begin our investigation is the very text of the widely-lauded Robbins Principle:

Throughout our Report we have assumed as an axiom that *courses of higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so*. What type of education they

9 It is noteworthy that Richard Layard, who was Senior Research Officer for the Robbins Committee, has stated that the emerging work on human capital by Gary Becker, “identifying education as a major factor in economic performance and showing that there were quite good returns to higher education as an investment,” was an important influence on the Report (Layard 2014, 14).

10 It is worth noting the obvious fact that the Report was a policy document on higher education rather than a work of scientific economics. Therefore it could be argued that in this context social utility was not a postulate which would be “entirely foreign” and unavailable to Robbins in writing the Report. Nevertheless, what Robbins produced clearly bears the marks of a conservative economist, and there is ultimately nothing in the Report which contradicts his neoliberal economic views.

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should get and in what kind of institution are questions we consider later on; and the criterion by which capacity is to be judged is clearly a question on which there may be a variety of opinions. But on the general principle as we have stated it we hope there will be little dispute. (Robbins 1963, sec. 31, italics added)

Robbins then goes on to say that if this axiom is challenged, there are two grounds upon which it may be vindicated. Firstly, “conceiving education as a *means*,” it is clear, Robbins says that “modern societies [cannot] achieve their aims of economic growth and higher cultural standards without making the most of the talents of their citizens,” especially “if we are to compete with other highly developed countries in an era of rapid technological and social advance” (Robbins 1963, sec. 32, italics added). Such language is redolent of the 1946 Barlow Report on *Scientific Man-Power*, discussed in Chapter Two, and thus lends an instrumentalist twist to the Robbins Principle, revealing a clear element of continuity with the economic utilitarianism¹¹ of the immediate postwar period. Nevertheless, it is the next section of the Report which may provide a backbone for an idealist reading:

But beyond that, education ministers intimately to ultimate ends, in developing man's capacity to understand, to contemplate and to create. And it is a characteristic of the aspirations of this age to feel that, where there is capacity to pursue such activities, there that capacity should be fostered. The good society desires equality of opportunity for its citizens to become not merely good producers but also good men and women. (Robbins 1963, sec. 33)

Such language certainly resounds to a certain extent with the progressive humanism contained in the words of Tawney which Robbins related to Scott. Nevertheless, there is a distinct transposition in key, for Tawney's phrase, “how much America had benefited,” still revolves around a conception of social utility similar to that which Robbins rubbished in his famous monograph, whereas Robbins' words appear to transcend – or, rather, descend from – the level of collective interest, entering the sphere of the intellectual, artistic and perhaps even spiritual development of individual human beings.

Thus we see that when we look at the actual text of Robbins' report, the collective good which Tawney spoke of takes on an unsurprisingly economic flavour,

11 The term economic utilitarianism is used here to denote the form of instrumentalism which focuses upon economic goals and aims, that is, economic utility. This can be distinguished from the classical utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill which takes the advancement of pleasure or happiness to be the measure of the utility of a particular thing. In Bentham words: “By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness” for the party concerned, whether an individual or a community (Bentham 2000, 14–15). Henceforth, whenever the term “utility” is used in this thesis, it is economic and not classical (i.e. hedonistic) utility which is being referred to.

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while the humanistic ideal is one which is focused squarely on the individual. The progressive tone with which this key portion of the report has been rehearsed in the last half century now seems to have been a creative reworking rather than an faithful representation. The explicit use of the term “equality of opportunity,” as well as the references to providing for and fostering capacity where it exists, evinces a meritocratic ideal beloved of technocrats of all political colours and many right-wing individualists.

Nonetheless, all of this provides us only with clues of Robbins' underlying loyalty to right-wing economic and social ideas. The Robbins Report was a manifesto of both continuity and rupture with the higher education policy of the postwar order up to the point of its publication. The element of continuity was in its instrumentalist concern with economic growth, but this thread was not emphasised in many later readings of the Report. The true rupture, however, did not involve the statement of a progressive vision of the public university, but rather nothing less than a marginalist or “Jevonian” revolution in higher education policy.

The term “Jevonian revolution” has become associated with the Marxist economist Maurice Dobb (Schabas 2002). In his 1973 work *Theories of Value and Distribution since Adam Smith*, Dobb employed it to analyse William Stanley Jevons' development of the marginal utility theory of value as a specifically British version of the wider “marginal revolution” also associated with the Austrian economists such as Carl Menger and the French economist Léon Walras (Dobb 1973, chap. 7). According to Dobb, the impact of Jevons' intervention was to move economic analysis away from the emphasis of the classical school on “costs incurred in *production*” – which were “rooted in conditions and circumstances of production” – and instead “toward *demand* and final *consumption*; placing the stress on the capacity of what emerged from the production-line to contribute to the satisfaction of the desires, wants, needs of consumers” (Dobb 1973, 167, italics added). It is also rather instructive for our purposes that back in 1936, Robbins himself delivered a paper to mark the centenary of Jevons' birth in which he appraised his intellectual ancestor's “great idea, the idea that the origin of the objective exchange values of the market was to be traced to the subjective valuations of individuals,” arguing that it “shifted the whole emphasis of analysis in such a way as to deserve the name of *revolution*” (Robbins 1936, 4, italics added).

The pre-existing paradigm of postwar higher education policy before the publication of the Robbins Report was based on calculations of the number of personnel

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needed for specific jobs, especially scientists. The Barlow Report and others written in the 1940s and 1950s were based on this model, whereby the number of higher education graduates required in particular fields were estimated in order to determine the number of places and amount of funding to be made available. Robbins unsurprisingly rejected this model, given its production-centric foundations which were the mainstay of central planning. In a recent article to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Report's publication, Claus Moser, the statistician who led Robbins' research team recollected, "Lionel said that all the studies there have ever been about how many people in a particular job are needed by society were always wrong" (Gibney 2013). The correct question according to this view is not, "How many scientists do we need to 'produce'?" but rather "How many people are qualified to attend university, and would like to do so?"¹² Rephrasing the latter in crude economic terms: what is the consumer demand for university education as a product, and how could it be most effectively satisfied? The answer which the Robbins Committee arrived at in 1963 was, of course, expansion.

In other words, the Jevonian revolution which the Robbins Report enacts effectively converts the position of students from being the product or commodity in question – that is, a system where graduates are the object of planned calculation by the state and its related bodies – to being the consumer of the commodity of higher education qualifications. The protagonist of university policy shifts from the top-down state which attempts to determine the demand for graduates, to the individual potential graduate whose demand for a degree is what matters. The 2011 White Paper much maligned by many in the academy and left-wing commentators turns out to have had a title firmly in the tradition of this reading of the Robbins revolution, namely, *Students at the Heart of the System* (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011).

Thus, when contemporary campaigners for the public university urge for a return to the principles of the Robbins Report, they have taken a generous reading of

12 Here it is important to note that the Barlow Committee did resort to a similar logical procedure when it relied on research on "the distribution of intelligence" to allay traditional fears that university expansion would mean a reduction in standards. Tests conducted by psychologists of the time concluded that five percent of the population possessed intelligence on a level with the upper half of Scottish and Manchester university students. Based on this research, the committee argued that the fact that the upper half of university students nation-wide constituted only one percent of the population meant that only one in five potential university graduates were being recruited (Barlow 1946, 8–9). The key difference between the Barlow Report and the Robbins Report, however, is that Robbins' argument rested completely upon supply-side calculations, while the Barlow Committee utilised such arguments merely to assert that there was sufficient talent for its proposed doubling of the number of students recruited by the universities.

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the rhetoric – bordering on misinterpretation – for the real essence. The Browne Review and the Coalition reforms to higher education in 2010 stand squarely in a more hidden, but more authentic strand of the Robbins Report, which was principally concerned with higher education as the satisfaction of a consumer demand, even if it was largely masked by accompanying discourse which could be read in liberal humanistic terms. When seen through this light, the apparent perversity of the Robbins legacy being appropriated by David Willetts, the former Minister of Universities and key antagonist of proponents of the public university, in his 2013 pamphlet *Robbins Revisited: Bigger and Better Higher Education* no longer seems so sacrilegious (Willetts 2013). Indeed, Willetts quite rightly imputes Robbins' approach to higher education expansion, which “put the aspirations of the student for more education centre stage,” to “his training as a neo-classical economist sceptical of central plans” (Willetts 2013, 67).

Some of Willetts' arguments in the pamphlet are worthy of closer analysis, not least because they tell us something of the mind of the man who oversaw the rise of the fee cap for undergraduates to £9,000, but also because they illuminate a deeper issue, which is how the tension between instrumentalism and idealism is conceived by many. In particular, with regards to Robbins' ideas on learning, which shaped the policy content of the report, Willetts states that he “achieved a perfect equipoise between utilitarian arguments and confident appeals to underlying value” (Willetts 2013, 17). Here we find the rather commonsensical belief that instrumentalism and idealism are merely conflicting tendencies which require a balance to be struck between them. However, according to the transcritical perspective that has been laid out in the preceding chapters, and particularly in the last part of Chapter One, striking such a balance is impossible due to the fact that one is unable to view the university from these two opposing perspectives at once. Thus, any apparent “equipoise” attained is in actual fact an illusion which hides either the subordination of one to the other, a frenetic transposition which allows for conflicting interpretations, or both.

It is argued that Robbins' ostensible balancing act within the dichotomy between instrumentalism and idealism is a case whereby both rhetorical transposition and effective subordination are present, but obscured. The first, Robbins' oscillation, is unsurprising due to his own subjective position as both a neoliberal economist and an academic schooled in the traditions of the British university. In a strange enactment of transcritical motion, the former role compels him at certain points to take an

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instrumentalist perspective which favours utility, productivity and other economic measurements, while the latter leads him to switch at other points to an idealist vision founded upon “ultimate ends.”¹³ It is crucial that we recognise that these perspectives, contra Willetts, do not meet elegantly in the middle or even coalesce in some form of stable synthesis, but remain incongruous and opposed. Their tension-filled cohabitation, however, is what has led to the emergence of two divergent lineages of the Robbins' legacy. Most academics and the liberal-minded have latched onto his defence of higher education as an intrinsic good, forming what may be termed an “Idealist Robbins” in no small part in their own image, while ignoring the evidence of economic utilitarianism which has provided the basis for a counter-tradition, which we may call the “Instrumentalist Robbins.”

This may lead one to ask: which of these two, then, is the “true Robbins”? Is it the high-minded rhetoric which the Report was couched in or the policy-minded reality which the Report brought about? The answer proposed in this thesis is that *both* could be said to be true, because if we are to dig beneath the surface where economic utilitarianism and humanistic education appear antinomically opposed in the British university, we will find that their roots are actually intertwined. In other words, what is a real contradiction on one level turns out to be connected at a deeper level. However, like most marriages throughout human history, this hidden matrimony is not one of equals, but involves a relationship of subordination. In this case, the ultimate supremacy of instrumentalism within the knot can be traced to the fact that mainstream twentieth-century British socialism – the tradition which the supporters of the “public university”

13 In her biography of Robbins, Susan Howson writes that the first lecture that Robbins attended at the London School of Economics was very likely that of the director, Sir William Beveridge, “opening the session on the first day of the Michaelmas term, Monday 4 October 1920,” in which the latter “expatiated on the virtues of ‘Economics as a liberal education.’” Beveridge “defined the objects of a liberal education as twofold – ‘The training of the mind’ and ‘The understanding of one’s environment so as to be in harmony with it’ – both of which the study of economics and the other social sciences, especially in the form of a broad degree such as the BSc(Econ), could easily provide” (Howson 2011, 69). She goes on to say that “Robbins was involved in several future reforms of the BSc(Econ) and tended to look back on the degree he took as a model to be preserved or recreated” (Howson 2011, 69). With this knowledge, it is unsurprising that Robbins continued to believe wholeheartedly in the value of a liberal education, and expressed such sentiments in the Report he wrote, even if they did not sit easily with the strongly instrumentalist tenor of his economic and political views. Here we have a classic case of the tension in British conservatism between radical neoliberalism and older forms, e.g. that of Disraeli and the One Nation Toryism which descends from him. The latter strand, while still believing in the free market, is less ebullient about its virtues due to a greater emphasis on “preserving and safeguarding the old, the familiar, the beloved, the well-tried” (Hearnshaw 1933, 7). This often leads to a conservatism which is marginally less instrumentalist in the economic sense which we are most concerned with.

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consciously and unconsciously draw their sustenance from – chose to set its philosophical foundations upon the very Benthamite individualism which nourished the market liberalism it attempted to displace in the economic and political sphere.

This latter insight is one that David Marquand discussed at some length in his 1987 essay, “Beyond Social Democracy.” After pointing out the Benthamite essence in the mainstream of British socialist thought in the twentieth century – with the honourable exception, among the central figures, of Tawney – he goes on to write:

As Karl Polanyi showed, the “great transformation” from agrarian to industrial society followed a parabola rather than a straight line. In the first, market-liberal, phase, the laws and customs which impeded the growth of a market economy were repealed or done away with. But before that phase had run its course, a reaction had set in; and in the second, interventionist, phase, new laws and customs were introduced to protect society from the consequences of the previous one. *In Britain, however, the reaction against full-blooded market liberalism took place under the same philosophical aegis – and, more importantly, in the same cultural framework – as had the movement towards it. ... State intervention was tentative, hesitant and reactive; and although it was sometimes justified in other terms, the logic behind it was essentially utilitarian.* (Marquand 1987, 246–247, italics added)

This capitulation to the utilitarian framework of British social thought has greatly hobbled the development of alternatives to the market liberal position by demarcating the boundaries where thought and practice are allowed to operate according to an instrumentalist orthodoxy. In the sphere of the university which we are concerned with in this thesis, it is easy to see the playing out of this early decision to justify public expenditure on higher education primarily on economic terms. In the previous chapter we saw how the reforms to the British higher education system in the immediate postwar period originated in instrumentalist calculations to promote economic growth rather than any firmly-held and/or rationally-formulated ideals, thus disproving any claim that the British university of the immediate postwar period was founded upon a solidly humanistic or principled vision. Now our closer reading of the Robbins Report reveals an underlying instrumentalism which in the end overpowers its idealist outer shell. This discovery too goes against the grain of many dominant narratives of the postwar university which place the Report on a towering pedestal.

At this point, a committed proponent of an resolutely idealist approach to higher education might declare, even object, slightly paraphrasing G. K. Chesterton, “The ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Chesterton's original statement concerned “the *Christian* ideal” (Chesterton 2011, 19).

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There is a sense in which this is true. A university founded upon a single, unified ideal has never come into actuality, due to the practical and constant subordination of the ideal to the instrumental.¹⁵ However, in the history of the postwar university the coexistence of idealist discourse with instrumentalist reality created an illusion that the former was in the driving seat, particularly in the minds of those predisposed towards it such as academics and others of a progressive bent. It was thus possible to formulate the constitutive idea of the public university, even though it did not correspond to reality. Of course, from the perspective of the politicians and civil servants who formulated higher education policy in Whitehall, the instrumentalist underpinnings of postwar university policy were never obscured, as a cursory glance through any White Paper or equivalent official document in the postwar period would demonstrate.

This phenomenon of observing a single chain of events and yet arriving at very different interpretations of what was and is going on can be explained by the failure of academics and bureaucrats to fully practise transcritical oscillation. The choice to persist in viewing the development of British higher education from a single perspective, even after becoming aware of other perspectives, has brought about the mutual self-deception on all sides. The degree of self-deception has been greater, however, on the side of the idealists, culminating in the Robbins Report-thumping we have seen as of late in reaction to the overt neoliberal tone presently being employed by the government and those supporting its policies. However, if we wish to be precise, the idealists of the public university have not only deceived themselves, but have actually carried out an act of *misrecognition*, to use a term of Žižek's. Žižek explores the concept of misrecognition throughout his oeuvre, drawing from, *inter alia*, Lacan, Althusser and Spinoza, but fairly concise statements and examples can be found in Chapter 2 of *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Žižek 2008, 60–77). It should be pointed out, however, that a large portion of his work on misrecognition involves the individual misrecognising an element of herself, whereas what we are dealing with here is the idealist misrecognising of the nature of the postwar university, that is, something (largely) *outside* herself. If traditional false consciousness is doing one thing while believing one is doing another, and contemporary self-deception or ideology is apparently seeing or doing one thing while tacitly knowing one is seeing or doing another, then misrecognition, in the

15 Once again, it should be noted that the conservative pattern of Oxbridge described by Halsey and Trow, although put forward as a unified ideal, in fact developed incrementally rather than according to a “rational” blueprint, and should be treated as a species of community (Halsey and Trow 1971, 67).

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instance we are dealing with here, is seeing one thing and giving it another name, only to realise at the end that what one understood by that other name is in fact the thing as it really is. Moreover, at the end of the process, one comes to realise that one's misrecognition has also contributed to producing the truth of the thing that one thought was present.

In the case of proponents of the public university, what they beheld was the expansion of British higher education for instrumentalist purposes from the end of the war until the early 1970s, but in their eyes what was being constructed was a system of democratic mass higher education. Since 1973, expansion has continued even as public funding has gradually ebbed away, and, in response, these adherents to the public university ideology have been critical of government policy, believing it to be a betrayal the ideals of the public university. It is argued here that although the enlightening moment of *kenshō* has not yet arrived for many of these idealists, the deeper truth is that the public university was never anything more than the sunny side of instrumentalist university policy – that is, it is not that they saw a public university where one did not exist at all; rather, the public university was in fact the primarily ideological but also partially real counterpart to the hegemonic instrumentalism in the postwar higher education order.

Ideals such as the public university thus operate in a manner somewhat akin to the Tower of Babel in Frank Kafka's short story, "The City Coat of Arms." In this adaptation of the Biblical tale, a group of people gather as a community in order to build "a tower that will reach to heaven" (Kafka 1992, 433).¹⁶ The grand project of a tower stretching to the heavens is what brings this community together, but various factors including fears of making errors as well as a cheery optimism about the progress of human knowledge and building technology lead to very little actual construction work on the tower taking place. However, what does result is the building of a city for the workmen, even as the project of the tower persists as a unifying ideal for the various factions among the population. In Kafka's words, "The idea, once seized in its magnitude, can never vanish again; so long as there are men on the earth there will be also the irresistible desire to complete the building" (Kafka 1992, 433).

It is also interesting that the narrator in the parable states that "the second or

16 Aside from this most basic premise of constructing a tower to the heavens, the versions in the Hebrew scriptures and Kafka differ significantly.

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third generation [of city dwellers] had already recognized the senselessness of building a heaven-reaching tower; but by that time everybody was too deeply involved to leave the city” (Kafka 1992, 434). Although the general paucity of invocations of the relatively moderate ideal of the public university in recent years may be an indication that it is regarded by many denizens of British higher education today as an unachievable project, the fact that it continues to be trotted out in times of trouble such as the ongoing reforms since 2010 shows that it continues to operate as a residual ideology that can never be completely erased from the British university unconscious.

Of course, one clear distinguishing feature of the public university ideal which sets it apart from Kafka's parable is the fact that while the Tower of Babel is an unrealised monument, there are some who argue that the public university as defined by its proponents actually existed during a putative golden age, for at least the “long decade” from 1962-1973 discussed above, if not from the immediate postwar period until 1973. For these city dwellers, the tower once stood proud and tall – or had been at least constructed sufficiently for use, even if there were still plans for further expansion – but was demolished by neoliberal saboteurs, and remains to be rebuilt once again. As argued above, this view is founded upon a misrecognition, and thus would be more accurate to say that what proponents of the public university ideal thought was a majestic tower to the heavens was, in fact, always a corporate skyscraper painted in gold, focused on instrumentalist aims even while decorated in a manner congruent with idealist propaganda. The grand vision was only attained in the imagination, and here Karatani's words are instructive:

Plato did not capriciously pose the being of the *ideal*, or the foundation of knowledge. Indeed, he failed rather miserably in his attempt to implement his idea of the philosopher-king. Instead, Plato realized the impossible in the *imaginaire*: he made Socrates a martyr to this impossible-to-achieve idea... All of this demonstrates the impossibility of the *being* of the *ideal* and yet, at the same time, it repeatedly invokes the *will to architecture* by asserting that the impossible, the *being* of the *ideal*, be realized. This *will to architecture* is the foundation of Western thought. (Karatani 1995b, xxxv)

How do we grapple with this persistent will to architecture – which can also be described as a drive towards construction and implementation – that is a daily reality? The answer is, once again, to approach ideals regulatively rather than constitutively. As was stated above, one adopts and feeds a regulative idea by oscillating transcritically between the temptation towards a constitutive idea and its abandonment. Just as the

regulative idea of communism as “the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things” only comes into being by opting against the constitutive idea of communism as “a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself” (Marx 1998, 57, italics in original), a regulative approach to an ideal of the university involves giving up the dream of implementing a blueprint or actualising a total vision, embracing instead the task of “draw[ing] people ever closer to some index, even as that index always remains at some distance” (Karatani 2014, 233). This is, after all, the insight of Kant, who believed that the transcendental illusion or *Schein* cannot be done away with, but could be transformed into a regulative form (Kant 1998a, sec. A689).

3.3. Examining the Structural Place of the Public University

In the previous section it has been demonstrated that the prime position given to the Robbins Report in the genealogy of the modern British public university as formulated by its proponents is, to say the least, highly questionable. Despite the alleged adherence of the architects of the postwar university order to a vision of higher education which is diametrically opposed to the presently hegemonic versions of instrumentalism, a closer inspection revealed that such a vision was never much more than the ideological supplement to a system that was, at its core, clearly instrumentalist from the very beginning. The place of the public university ideal within the structure of the postwar British university is nevertheless a relevant matter for our consideration, for to dismiss this ideal merely on the evidence of a flawed line of descent would be to commit what some epistemologists have termed the genetic fallacy¹⁷ and thus sidestep the issue of its contemporary significance.

As things presently stand, the ideal of the public university serves as a rallying point for those who wish to oppose the economistic forms of instrumentalism whose dominance in the sphere of higher education continues to increase. By reaffirming the broadly social democratic vision of the postwar consensus, projected onto the Robbins Report, campaigners for the public university enact a form of resistance towards the creeping neoliberalisation of the British university.

However, it is at this point that Karatani's insight into the wider context in

¹⁷ One commits the genetic fallacy when one conflates the “causal origins of a belief with its justification” (Honderich 1995, 306).

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which the social democratic impulse takes place may prove instructive. In *Transcritique* he analyses our present social formation as follows:

One often hears the prediction that, thanks to the globalization of capital, the nation-state will disappear. ... But, no matter how international relations are reorganized and intensified, the state and nation won't disappear. When individual national economies are threatened by the global market (neoliberalism), they demand the protection (redistribution) of the state and/or bloc economy, at the same time as appealing to national cultural identity. So it is that any counteraction to capital must also be one targeted against the state and nation (community). The capitalist nation-state is fearless because of its trinity. The denial of one ends up being reabsorbed in the ring of the trinity by the power of the other two. This is because each of them, though appearing to be illusory, is based upon different principles of exchange. Therefore, when we take capitalism into consideration, we always have to include nation and state. And the counteraction against capitalism also has to be against nation-state. *In this light, social democracy does nothing to overcome the capitalist economy but is the last resort for the capitalist nation-state's survival.* (Karatani 2003b, 281, italics added)

While it would be ill-advised to simply transpose the dynamics which are active in the wider social formation into the more restricted and specific sphere of the British university, we can identify an analogous tendency in the latter whereby those who are discontent with our present-day vicissitudes have turned to reasserting a social democratic vision of the university in order to counteract the accelerating developments towards a more neoliberalised system. However, if we accept Karatani's argument about the futility of attempting to re-establish social democracy given the underlying connection between capital and the state, then we have to recognise that fighting for a renewed public university is merely shifting from one articulation of an unjust university to another – with apparent victories on one side counter-balanced by losses on another – yet ultimately maintaining the overall structure. Hilaire Belloc's poem, "On a Great Election," captures this paradox in the patriarchal politics of the 1920s:

The accursed power which stands on Privilege
(And goes with Women, and Champagne and Bridge)
Broke – and Democracy resumed her reign:
(Which goes with Bridge, and Women and Champagne). (Belloc 1925, 28)

Yet our analysis here of the university has so far involved only two elements, instrumentalism and idealism, whereas the conceptual triad discussed in the previous chapters involves a third element, namely community. Investigating this third factor is a crucial step to break out of what seems on the surface like unending struggle between the two titans discussed in the preceding chapter and this one, a struggle that on one

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level looks to be a deadlock between diametrically-opposed forces, but on another level can be understood as internecine strife between components of a greater whole.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by defining the idealist approach to higher education as one which is structured by a “single, unifying ideal,” before examining the two forms of ideals in Kant, that is, the constitutive and the regulative. The drawbacks of conceiving and holding to ideals of a constitutive form were explored, and the alternative of ideals of a regulative form was put forward. I also explained how pure idealism is impossible within the structure of the university due to the fact that every expression of university life is bound up with matters of materiality and practicality, and illustrated this through another form of the triangular diagram first introduced in Chapter One.

I then proceeded on to the second section, where the constitutive ideal of the public university was analysed according to its putative sources, namely the actual breakout in higher education during the long decade of 1962-1973 and the theoretical vision put forward in the Robbins Report. However, although the former connection is unproblematic, the latter is another matter, with the hint as to its complexity arising from a realisation as to the strange confluence of neoliberal economics and seemingly progressive views on higher education within Robbins the man and Robbins the report. It was argued that a closer reading of the latter reveals that the former was ultimately true to his intellectual positions, and that if we juxtapose the Report with Robbins' expressed ideas, we will find that his underlying rationale for expansion was quite the opposite of the democratic impulse among progressives, despite the patently humanistic tenor of the Report's rhetoric.¹⁸ Having asserted that the advocates of the “public

18 It can also be argued from a radically democratic perspective that short of a system in which all are given full access to higher education should they desire it, any paean for a humanistic education is ultimately flawed. Here we should recall Gramsci's argument that the traditional schooling system is oligarchic because under it “each social group has its own type of school, intended to perpetuate a specific traditional function, ruling or subordinate” (Gramsci 1971, 40). The fact that certain children receive a humanistic education and others – the subaltern – are denied one results in the maintenance of the existing hegemony. Transposing this insight into higher education, so long as such an education is the preserve of some and not all, the system is not truly democratic but rather (at least residually oligarchic), despite numerical and proportional increases in participation. This argument, however, falters somewhat if one subscribes to a view of vocation which asserts not only that different people have different skills and callings, but that all callings are of equal worth and value. Equality does not require homogeneity. It does not follow from this, however, that the injustice and oppression involved in various spheres of work are to be downplayed or even ignored. The practical utility of a particular line of work, especially those involving manual labour, can be recognised while desiring to abolish or at least transform it; conversely, the prestige of certain white-collar occupations may mask their actual futility. In regard to the latter, see Graeber 2013.

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university” ideal have misread Robbins, I then explained how such a misreading became possible, focusing on the strange antinomical content in the Report, which oscillates from plainly radical instrumentalism of a particularly consumer-led sort to traditionalist conceptions of university education. It was put forward that such idealists have not only misled themselves but have indeed *misrecognised* the essence of the postwar university.

I then returned to a discussion of the place of idealism in the structure of the university, pointing out that the seemingly interminable dichotomy between it and instrumentalism obscures the role of a third element within the university triad, namely that of community. This third leg of the three-legged stool of the superstructural university is the subject of our next chapter.

Chapter 4

Torn Between Common Life and Individualism: The Thorny Issue of Community

“As philosophers, we search below our feet because our generation has lost its grounding in both soil and virtue. By virtue, we mean that shape, order and direction of action informed by tradition, bounded by place, and qualified by choices made within the habitual reach of the actor; we mean practice mutually recognized as being good within a shared local culture that enhances the memories of a place.”

(Groeneveld, Hoinacki, and Illich 1990)

“What is evoked by world religions – whether that of Moses or of Jesus or some other – is a repressed exteriority that worked and still works as a power to deconstruct the community and communalized religion, even though it is soon reappropriated by the community. We find such thinking from the exterior in the pre-Socratics who worked in the communicative spaces of the Mediterranean Sea, which they look on as Verkehrsraum. Unlike Socrates, they were foreigners and stood in the space between communities. ... Heidegger decries the loss of being after Plato, but he himself is, in fact, a thinker belonging to the community that expels this kind of in-between being.”

(Karatani 1992, 137)

The rustic village and the cosmopolitan city are spatial figures that represent the two extremes of our contemporary experience of human community. In the first, everyone knows everyone else, and the presence of a stranger is swiftly recognised. A tangible communal, indeed parochial sense pervades the entire place, and for those who choose to dwell there, the dominant experience of belonging is that of holding things in common. In the second, neighbours often do not even know each other, and a stranger

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can slip past unnoticed. The spaces where people congregate are hives of often disconnected activity, even if in the same “genre” such as sport or reading, and for those who opt to live in such places, belonging is ephemeral and difficult to pin down. The experience of openness, general freedom and plurality is dominant and highly valued.¹

The sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies uses the word *gemeinschaft* (often translated as “community”) to denote the first state of affairs and *gesellschaft* (often translated as “society”) to denote the second state of affairs (Tönnies 2001). The epigraphs above from Ivan Illich and Karatani likewise capture the forces which tend towards these two concepts, the former being an interiorising dynamic forming and reinforcing what is shared, and the latter a deconstructive dynamic, arising from an exterior and calling into question the inward-facing nature of its opposite. Nevertheless, as it is with almost all such conflicting forces, they often co-exist in a certain tension, rather than one reigning in an unadulterated form. In this chapter we shall explore how they shape the dynamic of the third pole of the University Triangle, namely community.

If the 1940s and 1950s formed a period whereby the instrumentalist foundations of the postwar university were laid down, and the 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of an illusory idealist conception of the public university, immortalised in the Robbins Report, the period from the 1980s until the present is particularly salient for examining the question of community. The shifts in policy during this period have resulted in a system of higher education which focuses increasingly on the individual – whether a member of the student body, academic staff or non-academic staff – as the privileged site of academic life. This individualisation of governance, and the concomitant rise of self-governance, raises in a particularly intense fashion the problem of alterity – that is, how those within the sphere of the university relate to each other, the other related spheres of society and indeed, by extension, the otherness present within themselves.

In the first section of this chapter, we shall engage in a broader enquiry into the perspective of community, which is ultimately an attempt to grapple with the question of alterity, with some help from twinned concepts such as *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*. In the second section, these ideas are put to the test within the context of the postwar

¹ In the history of modern Western philosophy, these two figures of city and village can arguably be represented by Königsberg and Todtnauberg, the favoured dwelling spaces of, respectively, Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger. Königsberg was an important port by the Baltic Sea, the multicultural capital of the Kingdom of Prussia. Todtnauberg was and is a tiny village in the Black Forest, remote and scenic. Kant was a theoretician of cosmopolitanism founded on reason, Heidegger of home (*Heimat*) and rootedness based on a certain spiritual sentiment. We find here in the correspondence of biography and thought what Steffi Richter calls a “homology’ of life and thinking” (Richter 2015).

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British university, and, in particular, since the reforms of the early 1980s. This contextualised discussion is supplemented by juxtaposing developments over the last few decades with eerily similar instances from the earlier history of the university in Europe. The recent and present conditions experienced by students, academics and non-academic staff are examined in turn, noting the impact of particular policies on the vibrancy or otherwise of community in its variegated forms. Finally, in the last section, we begin to sketch out an alternative to the forms of community which the first and second sections explore, based on the judgment that they are ultimately insufficient for the present conjecture which we face in the contemporary British university.

4.1 Community and its Discontents

The issue of community is primarily concerned with the problematic of otherness, and can be taken in two main directions, both appearing to be equally valid yet fundamentally opposed. The first form of otherness is found and experienced within the context of proximity and commonality, manifesting itself as a life in community. To illuminate what is here meant by community, we might use rather the term *gemeinschaft*, as formulated by the Tönnies in the following terms: “All kinds of social co-existence that are familiar, comfortable and exclusive are to be understood as belonging to *Gemeinschaft*. ... [For example, in] *Gemeinschaft* we are united from the moment of our birth with our own folk for better or for worse” (Tönnies 2001, 18). Here the other to be encountered is not primarily the absolute other but rather “his brother [or sister] whom he hath seen,” the love of whom is established in the First Epistle of John as the first test towards the love of the one “whom he hath not seen” (1 Jn. 4:20, KJV).² Moreover, even in a tight-knit group people are not carbon copies of each other.

Nevertheless, some may deride this conception of otherness as being insufficiently other, in that it necessarily involves a significant degree of common belonging, based upon aspects such as place, tradition, vocation and shared ideology. Such is the position held by Karatani, hostile as he is towards what he considers communal spaces where rules are shared and the other can be “interiorized within the

² The full verse runs: “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” While it may seem odd to liken the stranger or alien to God, what they share is a radical otherness which is unruly and unpredictable. Depending on one's theology and social framework, both God and the outsider may be rumoured to be good or bad (or, to use more traditional language on the theistic question, benevolent or wrathful), or even both (whether a mixture or equally at the same time), thus one or all of faith, reason and/or experience is required for an assessment to be made and a conviction to be formed.

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self” (Karatani 1994). His stance, however, can and should be understood, at least in part, as the result of his life-long struggle against inward-looking trends in his native Japan.³ However, those who favour this form of otherness, such as Ivan Illich in many of his writings, argue that what they call “vernacular” rootedness is essential in order to avoid the pitfalls of overly-abstract modern society. Such a turn towards the vernacular is, in a sense, one possible response towards the standardising, conformity-inducing aspects of modern technologised society, a response which looks back to move forward. In the 1990 “Declaration on Soil,” co-authored with Sigmar Groeneveld, Lee Hoinacki and other friends,⁴ Illich argues for a revival of virtue in order to address the ecological crises which we are still facing now. Virtue, they write, “is traditionally found in labor, craft, dwelling and suffering supported, not by an abstract earth, environment or energy system, but by the particular soil these very actions have enriched with their traces” (Groeneveld, Hoinacki, and Illich 1990).

The second form of otherness is focused on exteriority and difference, manifesting itself as an existence oriented towards spaces where alterity is central, such as cosmopolitan world society. The corresponding concept in Tönnies, opposing the aforementioned *gemeinschaft*, is that of *gesellschaft*, which he defines as follows: “*Gesellschaft* means life in the public sphere, in the outside world. ... We go out into *Gesellschaft* as if into a foreign land” (Tönnies 2001, 18). On his part, Karatani argues that “society should be clearly distinguished from community: the language spoken to the other will become social, dialogic, and polyphonic only if the other is an outsider to the community where a common set of rules is shared; the *dialogue within a 'community' is merely a monologue*” (Karatani 1995b, 140, italics added). If we are to follow this definition, the space for such dialogue – or, more expansively, for such *intercourse* or *exchange* – is necessarily at the interstices of established communities;

3 In a 1997 lecture, Karatani stated that he “felt almost suffocated in Japan during the 1980s,” during the generalised euphoria created by the triumph of Japanese capitalism (Karatani 1997b). Carl Cassegard has pointed out that during this period, Karatani’s trenchant opposition to “the closed, amorphous system of Japanese power” led him to describe “the global market in positive terms as a liberating and deconstructive tool that undermined the autonomy and closure of national communities,” although he did so “not because he saw the market as good in itself but because he hoped that the collapse of the Japanese model would liberate buried alternative traditions” (Cassegard 2007, 11). This interiority-phobic aspect of his thought has not subsided in recent years, as his 2014 conversation with Kim Uchang demonstrates. There, Karatani argues that the Japanese tradition of avoiding open discussion and dissensus is “not universal” and “cannot work outside Japan” (Kim and Karatani 2014, 179).

4 It is worth noting the centrality of the conception and practice of friendship within Illich’s thought, which has led to the use of the term “friends” for his circle of collaborators and interlocutors. A concise treatment of his understanding of friendship can be found in Illich 2005, chap. 11.

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that is, at what Karatani in his writings in the 1980s and 1990s calls a *communicative* or *inter-crossing space*, drawing from the term *Verkehrsraum* found in Marx's early writings (Karatani 1993b). In his more recent output, Karatani does not make use of the term communicative space, but the concept remains active even as it modulates, as is clear from his later discussion of the “transcendental topos” where transcritique is possible (Karatani 2003b, 134) as well as in many implicit references to similar “in-between” spaces, such as in his discussion of “intercourse and commerce” within world-empires (Karatani 2014, 105).

Before we move on, it should be noted that it would be incorrect to pit Illich and Karatani against each other. While the target of each thinker's critique appears at first glance to be exactly what the other is putting forward, a more careful reading will demonstrate that the abstract modern society which Illich lambasts is not in fact the transcendental topos of Karatani's transcritique, and neither is the inward-facing community which Karatani attacks equivalent to the form of being-together which Illich truly believes in. That is to say, Illich's apparently simple affirmation of *gemeinschaft* was in fact a tactical move which does not fully represent the radical conception of human solidarity which he developed in his late work, namely that of borderless yet embodied friendship based on Christian *agape*. Similarly, Karatani's advocacy of *gesellschaft* was a manoeuvre he performed in the 1970s and 1980s in order to outflank Japanese insularity, but in his most recent work we find a far more nuanced idea of what an intercrossing space may look like. Thus, Illich's position is in fact more complex than is apparent in most of his popular writings, even if it is undeniable that the contents of the latter display a bias towards *gemeinschaft*. Likewise, careful distinctions can and should be made between the various concepts which stress exteriority and difference in Karatani's thought. We shall turn to examine these matters in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

Nevertheless, returning to the main thread of our argument, the degree of conflict between the two conceptions of otherness is far from insignificant, as each harbours within itself a critique of the other. This two-sided critique is often latent or implicit, but can also quite easily become patent or explicit under the right conditions. At a deeper level, however, what is at stake is what we may call a meta-antinomy within the problematic of otherness, in which one is torn between belonging and withdrawal, or community and solitude. *Pace* Karatani and his withering critique, for a community

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tending towards *gemeinschaft* to be healthy and stable, it cannot smother the subjects that are part of it with demands for total belonging and community, because some degree of withdrawal and solitude is necessary for these persons to maintain their personality or, shall we say, singularity.⁵ Likewise, a community tending towards *gesellschaft* that only encourages withdrawal, solitude, dispersion and freedom will eventually turn into – if it is not already – an anti-social collection of individualistic monads. The phrase “tending towards” is important, because as Jose Harris points out, “[t]he crucial question in any 'empirical' setting [is] not whether a particular individual, institution, idea or action belong[s] to 'Gemeinschaft' or 'Gesellschaft', but where they [are] positioned on the continuum between the two,” because “a human individual... simultaneously experience[s] some degree of both *Wesenwille* [natural will] and *Kürwille* [rational will], spontaneity and calculation, 'selfhood' and 'personhood', kinship ties and market forces” (Harris 2001, xxviii).

Upon reaching this point of the argument, it is inevitable to pause, indeed to hesitate, because what is involved is an entry into or at least a skirting around the edges of very old and seemingly never-ending debates. To gesture to just one recent period of such intense academic skirmishes, towards the end of the last century, a series of books by reputable French and Italian philosophers entered, *sans* any evasion, this terrain of intellectual struggle. These texts include Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community*, Maurice Blanchot's *The Unavowable Community*, Giorgio Agamben's *The Coming Community* and Roberto Esposito's *Communitas*. Taken together, they form an approach to community which we may term *non-substantialist*, one of two matrices of interactions of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* which we will explore, the other being *substantialist* community.

The general aim of these monographs was, in the recent words of Esposito gazing back in retrospect, to be “radically deconstructive toward the way the concept-term [of community] had been used in twentieth-century philosophy as a whole – first by the German organicist sociology on *Gemeinschaft* (community), then by the various

5 Given that any sense of common belonging is necessarily inchoate and partial, it may be questioned whether the figure of community as a force of overpowering conformism is in fact a straw man erected by its critics. It is true that the ideology of identitarian community, in certain contexts, has been and continues to be a divisive, retrograde force, providing fuel for nationalist and even fascist movements. Nevertheless, to tar all forms of community with the brush of incipient fascism is to take a particular phenomenon and generalise it for a much wider category, simply by virtue of the same word being invoked. Instead of performing this elision (which can be considered a form of the “hasty generalisation” fallacy), we should carefully distinguish between different forms of community.

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ethics of communication, and finally, by American neocommunitarianism” (Esposito 2013, 83).⁶ Despite their many divergences, what united these three strands of thought and which made them ripe for deconstructive critique was “a tendency – which could be defined as metaphysical – to conceive of community in a substantialist, subjective sense” – that is, “as a *substance* that connected certain individuals to each other through the sharing of a common *identity*” (Esposito 2013, 83, italics added). For these continental philosophers, the most perverse, if not immediately noticeable, effect of positing such a substance was that, in Esposito's words, it converted community from being about the *common* to being rather about the *proper*, that is, “[w]hat its members had in common was what was proper to them – that of being *proprietors* of their commonality” (Esposito 2013, 83, italics added). Moreover, Nancy argued the sort of organic community which many long(ed) for has never in fact existed, stating that “[c]ommunity has not taken place, or rather, if it indeed certain that humanity has known (or still knows, outside of the industrial world) social ties quite different from those familiar to us [in the modern West], community has never taken place along the lines our projections of it...” (Nancy 1991, 11, italics in original).

To put it simply, what we may call the ideal type of substantialist community is a matrix in which *gemeinschaft* generally takes the lead, with its positing of organic belonging based on clear (if often invented) markers of identity such as geographical origin, language or ethnicity. Nevertheless, there are also more overtly “artificial” forms of substantialist community based on, for example, creeds and ideologies. In such cases what is shared is to a much greater extent a matter of conscious adoption, but what is constant is the idea that the community is bound together by something – a property – they hold jointly, such as their shared religious, political or philosophical persuasion. On the other hand, the ideal type of non-substantialist community can be said to be community formed under general conditions of *gesellschaft*, in that it is the unknown, suspect, unruly or even overtly hostile other – the one with whom one does not share some “thing” such as nationality, race or belief – to whom one opens oneself. In the words of Esposito, “the common is not characterized by what is proper but by what is improper, or even more drastically, by the other; by a voiding, be it partial or whole, of property into its negative; by removing what is properly one's own that invests and

⁶ In *Communitas*, Esposito makes a similar argument but includes alongside these three strands of theory “the communist tradition... despite quite a different categorical profile” (Esposito 2010, 2).

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decenters the proprietary subject, forcing him to take leave of himself, to alter himself” (Esposito 2010, 7).

It must be acknowledged that the non-substantialist conception of community – whether termed as inoperative, unavowable or coming – is particularly seductive in an age where the utter failures and indeed disasters of deploying the concept of community in the previous century are still not far from our minds. Yet, is there is a sense in which we should resist the allure of such deconstructions today? Although we have quoted Karatani as endorsing *gesellschaft* in his earlier work, in a 2003 lecture, he traces his being influenced in the 1970s and 1980s – the period in which he wrote works including *Architecture as Metaphor* – by the work of Derrida, before stating that “[d]econstruction was meaningful under the binary opposition of the Cold War regime. It may be said that when the Soviet bloc collapsed, deconstruction lost its political meaning, and more often than not resulted in rhetorical techniques for equivocating” (Karatani 2003a, 23). This argument is an explicit example of Karatani's aforementioned principle that “critique is impossible without moves.” As will be discussed further below, Karatani's shift from speaking about inter-crossing spaces to a transcendental topos is significant. Returning to the continental European expositions of non-substantialist community, it is noteworthy that the first text in this dialogue, namely Nancy's essay, “The Inoperative Community,” was written in 1983, before the fall of 20th century Really-Existing Socialism, and in fact begins with a consideration of the disappointment of “real communism” (Nancy 1991, 1–3). Thus, if we are to follow Karatani's argument, at the point of emergence of this series of related texts, the critique shared by Nancy, Blanchot, Agamben and Esposito⁷ of substantialist community had a particular relevance which we cannot assume today in the wider world, much less in the specific sphere of higher education in Britain today.

Hence, the question that befalls us is this: is the critique of substantialist community what the context of the contemporary British university requires, or at least

7 It should also be noted that although each of these texts has its own specificities and nuances, and thus it may to some seem audacious – and perhaps even ironic, given their critique of commonality as a property – to bundle them all up into a common unit, it is certainly the case that what they all share, as Marita Vyrgioti has pointed out, is an affirmation that “community does not constitute any ‘wider subjectivity’, and neither does it bear any objective, material elements, apart from one: ‘it cannot be objectified’” (Vyrgioti 2015, 2). Vyrgioti's article explores the deep resonances between the respective texts of Nancy, Agamben and Esposito, but it can also be said that underlying the divergences between Nancy and Blanchot is an agreement on the originary “absence of community” (I. James 2010, 177).

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would benefit from? Or would either an affirmation of substantialist community or an abandonment of a focus on community altogether in favour of a fully deconstructive *gesellschaft* – that is, one which does not even attempt to establish an attenuated form of community – be more appropriate? This is an action-centric question within the structure of the Epistemic Triangle, whereby the measure is not truth, which guided our investigations in Chapters Two and Three, nor authenticity, which the next chapter will focus upon, but rather *timeliness*, based on a reading of the context we are in. In the previous chapters we have caught a glimpse of how rampant instrumentalism and illusory idealism have created an environment of university education which is antithetical to any strong formation of community, and in this chapter we shall examine this question in greater detail. The general argument which will be put forward is that, at present, the concept of the university as a community is, if it appears at all, but a flimsy veneer covering some of the excesses of consequentialist, instrumentalist university policy and governance. This takes a few forms, and thus we shall selectively map out the territory according to the impact of postwar policy, in particular since the 1980s, on students, academics and non-academic staff.

However, at the risk of sounding like a music player set to repeat, we should preface our cartography by emphasising once again that the deficiencies of a particular manifestation of community do not, in and of themselves, provide sufficient reason to abandon the concept altogether. The writer and populariser of Eastern philosophy Alan Watts, in an early book meant as an immanent critique of the Christian tradition, wrote that “[t]he Church has always walked forward on extremes like a man on two legs, and you cannot walk by putting both legs forward at the same time” (Watts 1947, 8). At the day's end, it is possible to justify, in the abstract, each of the approaches to the question of community briefly explored above, and thus, on one level, the crucial task is to determine which foot is the most appropriate one to put forward at a given time. After all, if the foot one settles on is in reality already ahead of the other (or other two, for we can imagine the university better as a three-legged creature), one is likely to lose one's balance and topple over.

However, if one views the three-legged university as being akin to Karatani's Capital-Nation-State, to maintain the former's balance is a conservative rather than a revolutionary operation, and so there is a sense in which a discernment of the *untimely* may be in fact more important for those who wish to see radical change. For there are

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two divergent poles in the discernment what it is to be advanced in a particular time and place. Both involve sensing what the mood of the times is in a particular context, but the response of the first is to move along with it, while that of the second is to move against it. The first may be called a liberal approach, and the second a radical one. The Victorian theologian William Inge captured the challenge of the former approach when he said that “he who marries the spirit of the age will soon find himself a widower” (Nineham 1976, 227). The latter alternative was put forward forcefully by Nietzsche in his second *Untimely Meditation* where he counselled: “[I]f you want biographies, do not desire those which bear the legend 'Herr So-and-So and his age', but those upon whose title-page there would stand 'a fighter against his age'” (Nietzsche 1997, 95).

In both cases, however, one's stance is strongly determined by one's context, for if, in the abstract, one person has decided to say “yes” and another person to say “no” to whatever is hegemonic in the present-day, then the actual content of their stances are essentially dependent on what exactly is the dominant position in a given place and time. Some may consider both these approaches too reactive, and indeed there are positions which appear to lie between the two, such as that of the “moderate conservative” who merely reinterprets the tradition to which she has pledged herself to in order to best engage the situation at hand, but does not have a strong desire to either be for or against the current. Such an outlook, however, is radically different to the approaches which choose to affirm or negate the present state of things, for a different bracketing operation is at work. What is being privileged is no longer timeliness – which, it must be emphasised, includes also its inverted image of untimeliness – but a form of truth. Hence, in this chapter, we shall leave such cases to one side.

4.2 The Postwar British University and Community

It is now time to turn from considering in the abstract the two approaches to handling alterity, namely the ideal types of substantialist community and non-substantialist community, comprised as they are of interactions between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, to a more concrete analysis. This analysis will be carried out by addressing, in turn, the question of community as it is manifested within the distinct yet overlapping spheres in which students, non-academic staff and academics work and dwell in the contemporary British university, with reference to its more and less recent history.

Students and Community

The first thing which has to be pointed out with regards to the condition of the contemporary British student is her role within the present system of university finance which can be traced back to the 1966 decision by the Department of Education and Science (DES) under Anthony Crosland to raise international student fees from £70 to £250 (Shattock 2012, 157). The DES justified their decision as being in line with a recommendation by the Robbins Committee to broaden the income base of universities, but it was pointed out by Lionel Elvin, director of the Institute of Education a member of the committee, that the original proposal was to increase the fees of all students, and not just international students (“Increased Fees for Overseas Students” 1967, 461). J. M. Lee argues that the DES’ decision was driven by the belief, which was not backed up by any hard evidence or even sustained argument, that wealthy European and American students should not benefit from highly subsidised British higher education, rather than the Robbins Committee’s concern for creating multiple streams of income for the universities (Lee 1998, 318). The German anti-Nazi theologian Martin Niemöller’s famous phrase, “First they came for... and I did not speak out because I was not a...” thankfully did not fully describe the response of students and academics of the time, as not only did student activists occupy buildings in protest, even the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals issued a statement protesting the discriminatory effect of the decision and its negative impact on the universities’ international character (Shattock 2012, 157). Nevertheless, these acts of resistance failed to reverse the decision, which was indeed in fact “repeated” with a wider scope in the reforms under Willetts in 2010. If we use GDP per capita to measure income value, the increase of overseas students’ fees in 1966 would be an increase from £2,736 to £9,773 in today’s terms. Hence, forty-four years after a tripling of fees was imposed on international students, home students in British universities (with the partial exception of Scotland) received the same treatment, with the fee cap rising from £3,000 to £9,000.

As a result of these changes, contemporary higher education is increasingly dependent for its funding upon – and thus beholden to – student finance, while being regulated by and residually funded by the state.⁸ In this sense, what has arisen is a

⁸ In the British context, it is instructive that the state still funds the bulk of higher education by providing loans to students for fees and living costs, even if the loan portfolio or “student loanbook” may be sold, part by part, to private parties in order for the government to transfer the risk of “the growing portfolio of Income-Contingent Repayment student loans on the Government’s balance sheet” to the private sector (HM Government 2009, 68). Andrew McGettigan has examined this and

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system very much similar to the medieval universities, with the ironic twist being that it is highly unlikely that the architects of higher education reforms over the last four and a half decades consciously set out to revive elements from the university of the Middle Ages, but in their desire to create reform and progress, they have ended up producing repetitions.

Hence, it may be instructive for us to briefly examine some salient elements of the earliest days of the medieval university, relevant as they are for our time due to their particular blend of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*. Many of us in the present may be unaware of the fact that when the institutions which developed into the great ancient universities first emerged in the High Middle Ages, fees from students were the *only* source of livelihood for the doctors of the *studium* (Rashdall 1895a, 1:210). Indeed, even though the University of Bologna is said to have been officially founded in 1088, there was little to distinguish the Bolognese law schools from previously-existing private operations, run by masters for students who paid the agreed fees, until around the final two decades of the 12th century, when a key development occurred (Ridder-Symoens 2003, 48). This was the founding of the first *universitas* or guild of scholars with an elected rector by foreign *students* in the town, modelled on the other guilds which had begun to make headway into Italian cities (Rashdall 1895a, 1:163–164). It is particularly important to note that the first *universitas* or scholars guild in Europe, was founded in Bologna not by masters but rather by students. This led to the formation of a university controlled by students rather than – as developed later in Paris – by masters (Cobban 1980). Although today the word university is used to describe most institutions of higher education, the medieval teaching organisation managed by the *collegia doctorum* was in fact known as the *studium*, and in many places in Southern Europe this structure remained separate from that of the *universitates* or universities managed by students (Rashdall 1895a, 1:167).

In order to best understand this phenomenon of the student-run university, we should examine its most outstanding example, namely the university that arose in Bologna. The purpose of the *universitas*, itself a federation of smaller organisations of students from specific localities, was “to guarantee the mutual aid and protection of the students against the exactions of the local people and local authorities” (Ridder-

other intricacies of the post-2010 student finance system in detail (McGettigan 2013, chap. 13–14). A third stream of university funding comes from partnerships with profit-making (i.e. in our time, capitalist) institutions as well as some public sector bodies.

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Symoens 2003, 48). The *universitates* were set up as a necessity within a political structure which did not accord legal rights to non-citizens, a category which most of the students in Bologna and other such universities fell under due to their foreign origin (Cobban 1971, 35). Some who believe strongly in the abstract concept of “student power” may be tempted to see these forms of self-organisation as a wholly-beneficent development; however, the early history of the University of Bologna reveals a dark side to these historically-realised forms of organised student power, as we shall see below.

The institution of salaries paid by the State was a slightly later but no less significant development, and was the result of an attempt to put a brake on the emerging trend of Bologna doctors being lured to teach in other towns upon being promised a salary (Rashdall 1895a, 1:211). The first extant record of such a payment was in 1280, a sum of 150 *librae* to the Spanish canonist Garsias for a year's teaching, and here too it is important to note the power of the students, who negotiated the contract even though it was paid by the Bolognese Republic (Rashdall 1895a, 1:212). At this moment in history, with the organised power of the *universitas* at a high point, and was recognised by the magistrates of Bologna, it did not matter a great deal whether the salary was paid by the City or by the *universitas* itself. What was certain, however, was that in Bologna the students had usurped the power which in the universities of Northern Europe were held almost completely by the masters (Cobban 1980). However, in their attempt to escape or at least improve their precarious existence as resident aliens, far from being “the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors” (Freire 2003, 56), the student guild in Bologna became instead “the new boss” who was “same as the old boss” (The Who 1971). This quote from Hastings Rashdall, extended as it is, is nevertheless helpful as a vivid illustration of the extent of the domination of the organised students exercised over their professors in those years:

[T]he Doctors were compelled, under pain of a ban which would have deprived them of pupils and income, to swear obedience to the Students' Rector and to obey any other regulations which the Universities might think fit to impose upon them. While not entitled to a vote in the University Congregation, the Professor was liable to *privatio* or expulsion from a Society to whose privileges he had never been admitted. ... [A] Professor requiring leave of absence even for a single day was compelled to obtain it first from his own pupils and then from the Rectors and *Consilarii*: and if he proposed to leave the town, he was required to deposit a sum of money by way of security for his return. ... The Professor was obliged to begin his lecture when the bell of S. Peter's began to ring for mass, under a penalty of 20 *solidi* for

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each offence... Even in the actual conduct of his lectures the Doctor is regulated with the precision of a soldier on parade or a reader in a French public library. He is fined if he skips a Chapter or Decretal; he is forbidden to postpone a difficulty to the end of the Lecture lest such a liberty should be abused as a pretext for evading it altogether. ... The Law-texts were divided into portions known as puncta and the Doctor was required to have reached each punctum by a specified date. At the beginning of the academical year he was bound to deposit the sum of 10 Bologna pounds with a banker, who promised to deliver it up at the demand of the Rectors: for every day that the Doctor was behind time, a certain sum was deducted from his deposit by order of these officials. (Rashdall 1895a, 1:197–199)

It is perhaps rather ironic that the excerpt above mirrors Foucault's description of a key element of the guild apprenticeship which was the forerunner of the disciplinary apparatus known as the “manufactory,” namely “the relation of dependence on the master that is both individual and total” (Foucault 1977a, 156). The irony, of course, is that at the University of Bologna it was the masters who became for a time completely dependent upon the apprentices, a fact which resonates with the rather grim actuality of other ostensibly revolutionary regimes throughout history where an oppressed majority has gained the upper hand over the previously-dominant minority. It is clear that all these instances have been a far cry from the Marxist ideal where, to quote Paulo Freire, the “[r]esolution of the oppressor-oppressed contradiction... implies the disappearance of the oppressors as a dominant class” (Freire 2003, 56).

The humanist Marxist critique of those such as Freire holds that “[i]t is therefore essential that the oppressed wage the struggle to resolve the contradiction in which they are caught; and the contradiction will be resolved by the appearance of the new man: neither oppressor nor oppressed, but man in the process of liberation. If the goal of the oppressed is to become fully human, they will not achieve their goal by merely reversing the terms of the contradiction, by simply changing poles” (Freire 2003, 56). If we are to adopt this tenet of the humanist Marxists, then it is clear that the law students of Bologna did not set out to create and live out the existence of the new man, a figure for which some of us are still waiting, and may perhaps be doing so in vain.

The end of student power in Bologna and other universities in Southern Europe came about as a result of the communes taking on more and more of the duties of remunerating the professors via the fixed salaries which, as stated above, superseded individually-paid fees (Rashdall 1895a, 1:212–213). This gradual change was perhaps summarised best by Alan B. Cobban: “Student power, bereft of its economic teeth, fell a

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victim to communal politics. It lingered on in Italy as a movement without much substance: by 1500, it had been reduced to nullity” (Cobban 1971, 48).

At this point a clamouring voice may cry out with the question: what does this genealogical detour have to do with community in the postwar British university? The answer is simple and unsophisticated: the case of the Bolognese student *universitas* demonstrates that a university which is funded primarily by student fees can be presented as one which puts – to borrow the title from the 2011 White Paper published by the Department of Business Innovation and Skills – “students at the heart of the system” (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011), but in reality tends toward a condition where vulgar instrumentalism is the true beating heart of the institution. Such an instrumentalist core is incapable of building a just university or even creating a community which is not based on more than transient interests such as “good teaching” and “a great student experience.” Hence, the formation of a student-centred university, if lacking a wider ethical and political framework which may be part of a common pattern of life to check tendencies towards narcissistic self-service and self-enjoyment, will very likely lead not to freedom, but indeed unfreedom for all. For aside from the impact upon the conditions of academic and non-academic labour, the only freedom a student has under such an arrangement is that of the total consumer.

To return to the rebellious *universitates* of thirteenth and fourteenth century Southern Europe, it is clear that far from being idealists of the *soixante-huitard* variety, they were pragmatists whose primary reason for attending university was in order to gain the qualifications they required for career advancement. Far from being the preserve of aristocrats interested primarily in a broad, humanistic education, Cobban reminds us that “the universities [of these two centuries] were, *par excellence*, centres for vocational training, gateways to lucrative careers, [and thus] those who attended them did so primarily from a sense of social urgency, from a need to realize professional ambition” (Cobban 1971, 33). In this sense, the 21st century British university has more in common with the medieval university than many of us realise. There is nevertheless one key element in which differentiates the medieval student “at the heart of the system” from his contemporary counterpart, namely the fact that while the first exerted power over the masters and the city authorities through *collective* organisation and action, the second does so through *individualised* mechanisms like the National Student

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Survey.⁹ While such atomised forms of power have a cumulative effect which may be as formidable as the *universitates* of the Middle Ages, the central difference is that the latter promoted a more immediate and embodied sense of community than the former. The medieval scholars could still be regarded, more or less, as consumers, but they believed in banding together as associations of consumers, whereas the contemporary student-consumer primarily acts in isolation, in line with monadic liberal philosophy.

The student-controlled *universitas* may appear at first sight to have been a straight-forwardly substantialist community strongly tending towards *gemeinschaft*, as its members shared not only a common experience and identity as apprentice scholars, but lived in the same locality. Nevertheless, this apparent stability is counteracted by the fact that the strongest weapon the *universitas* wielded against one of its chief rivals, the communal authorities, was not fuzzy notions such as prestige but rather the very real threat of *secession* (Le Goff 1980, 146). Hastings Rashdall points out that this bargaining chip was unique to the *universitas* as opposed to the other guilds in the medieval commune, for the latter “were composed of citizens, who never thought of disputing the authority of the city-government, and who could not put themselves beyond its jurisdiction without losing both property and status. The Universities were composed of aliens, who refused to recognize the authority of the State in which they lived when it conflicted with the allegiance which they had sworn to their own artificial commonwealth” (Rashdall 1895a, 1:170). The essentially nomadic character of the scholars meant they could uproot themselves at any time and move the operations of the university elsewhere, leaving the commune bereft of sources of income and status. This *mobilitas loci* which actively militated against the development of deep ties to a particular place – which can be seen as evidence of *gesellschaft*-tending relations within a generally *gemeinschaft*-oriented wider environment – was largely destroyed along with the organised power of students as the university developed a “more ordered, sedentary character” in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Cobban 1971, 66).

Nevertheless, if the endowment of various chairs and construction of permanent colleges and buildings have led to definitively sedentary core of the university, the continued fact that it provides only a temporary home for most who enter as students means that a nomadic undercurrent still flows strongly beneath the seemingly solid

9 The proposed Teaching Excellence Framework would strengthen this tendency. For a cogent critique of the recent White Paper, *Success as a Knowledge Economy*, which sets out this planned development and other related mechanisms, see Woodcock and Toscano 2016.

superstructure. While the political-legal environment in which students in British universities carry out their studies no longer necessitates anything close to the student-dominated *universitates*, the return of the university to having student fees as a primary source of funding threatens to deepen the elements of self-seeking and “thin community”¹⁰ instrumentalism, the previous historical incidence of which we have briefly explored in the case of the Bolognese *universitas*, but which arguably has also been steadily growing in the postwar period. We cannot, of course, use the word “anti-social” to describe these trends, for if we understand the social through the lens of *gesellschaft* or even Karatani's earlier conception of communicative spaces, the free-flowing and weakly-bonded elements of medieval and contemporary student life is indeed constitutive of such “social” or “thin” communal connections.

Does this rise in looser *gesellschaft* bonds indicate – or at the very least create the conditions for – a growth of non-substantialist community within the university student body? It is difficult to answer this question conclusively at this point. To start with, it can be argued that the possibility of non-substantialist community tends to arise upon the failure and/or disillusionment with substantialist community, which takes place not only within the boundaries of a particular sphere such as the university but also in the wider “social imaginary,” to borrow a term from Charles Taylor.¹¹ We have already mentioned evidence of the latter in the work of Karatani and the continental theorists of non-substantialist community in the 1980s and 1990s, in which they point out the flaws of the substantialist model. The shrivelling of a substantialist conception at a particular point of space-time, however, does not automatically lead to the growth of a non-substantialist alternative, for it is equally possible that the disintegration of *gemeinschaft*-like relations leads simply to an atomised, disconnected non-community.

To the extent that a sense of community still persists in the university within the

10 Although *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* are normally translated into English as “community” and “society,” it may be also helpful to draw from a distinction the theologian and social critic Giles Fraser has made between “thick community” and “thin community.” In the former configuration of social ties “people look after each other and have a high degree of civic pride,” but are “often not good at dealing with difference, or with outsiders” (Fraser 2016b). In the latter situation, “you can be as different as you like. Nobody cares,” and so although what exists “isn’t really much of a community at all” (Fraser 2016b), it is arguably nevertheless a *variety* of community, even if a rather heterodox one.

11 Taylor defines the term in the following manner: “By social imaginary, I mean something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations” (Taylor 2004, 23).

student body, such persistence occurs in spite of rather than due to contemporary institutional arrangements. It was already pointed out by Michael Rustin in 1994 that the focus on “greater flexibility” in higher education, expressed in techniques such as modularisation and credit transfer schemes, “theoretically allow students, now redefined as autonomous interest-maximising consumers, to compile programmes at the locations and in the time-slots they prefer, rather than by compelling them to conform to the spatial and temporal organisation convenient to the university” (Rustin 1994, 190–191). Moreover, the spatial proximity which traditional forms of substantialist community depend upon has been overturned by “[t]he development of 'distance-learning techniques' promises to facilitate the physical dislocation of higher education from the university’s own territory, and make it possible for students to study whenever and wherever they want” (Rustin 1994, 191).¹² Such developments do not make community – whether substantialist or non-substantialist – impossible, but they certainly transform the manner in which any type of community can be created and sustained.

Having discussed the issue of student life and its impact upon community, it is time for us to turn to another sphere of university life, one which is often ignored in discussions about higher education. This is the sphere which is inhabited by staff members who are not academics, such as cleaners, catering staff, library staff, security personell, and so on.

Non-Academic Staff and Community

Almost completely absent in the standard histories of the university is the role of non-academic staff. The references to those who worked in the university but who did not partake in its intellectual activities, or indeed those who lived in the towns alongside the scholars, are few and far between in both Hastings Rashdall's magisterial three-volume *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages* as well as the formidable four-volume *A History of the University in Europe* edited by Hilde de Ridder-Symoens and Walter Rüegg, which stretches from the medieval period to the present. Not only that, the references that do appear are of largely of no consequence to the narrative, such as

¹² This latter development, of course, would not have been possible without technological innovations which allow for increasingly disembodied learning which can be done at any place or time, e.g. with lectures that one could watch on a tablet or smartphone on public transport. In a 1996 interview, Ivan Illich comments that “hospitality requires a threshold over which I can lead you and TV, internet, newspaper, [and] the idea of communication [has] abolished the walls and therefore also the friendship, the possibility of leading somebody over the door” (Illich 1996). It can likewise be said that communications technology has abolished the walls of the university, for both good and ill.

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Rashdall's quip that the prelates who designed the university colleges did not expect "those who accepted [their liberality] to live like labourers" (Rashdall 1895b, 3:662).

Nevertheless, what has become clear in many recent higher education struggles is the intimate connections between the respective forms of precarity endured by non-academic staff, students and academics. As a result, some of the most notable campaigns on British university campuses in the past decade have involved or even centred upon the conditions of labour for non-academic staff. Of these, the anti-privatisation campaign at Sussex University in 2012-2013 stands out, as aside from widely-deployed tactics such as the prolonged occupation of buildings which has been utilised to differing degrees of success since the "sit-ins" in the middle of the twentieth century, the campaigners carried out numerous temporary occupations which disrupted cafes, the conference centre and other university services, and hosted a national demonstration on 25 March 2013 whereby thousands of students from across the country descended upon the campus in Falmer, on the outskirts of Brighton (Various 2016). Even more innovative was the creation of the "Pop-Up Union," which was "a temporary, low-dues, trade union with the sole purpose of organising industrial action to defeat outsourcing," formed as a response to the reluctance of officials from the established unions to call for strike action (Solidarity Federation 2014). Although it proved to be a temporary rather than a permanent formation, the Pop-Up Union became the second-largest union on campus for a time, assisted by the fact that it was an industrial rather than a trade or craft union, with membership open to all workers in the university (Solidarity Federation 2014). In fact, the Pop-Up Union's membership very swiftly exceeded that of all three official unions combined in the areas of work which were due to be outsourced (Bergfeld 2013). Although the strike action which was planned was derailed by a successful technical challenge by the university authorities on legal grounds, the Pop-Up Union in its short life-span managed to pioneer a novel organisational form and win concessions from the administration, even if the wider campaign was defeated (Solidarity Federation 2014).

The historian and activist Richard Braude has pointed out that the roots of many of the recent industrial disputes involving manual labourers in white-collar workplaces, of which cleaners have formed a majority, can be traced to the novel development of a separate workforce of cleaning staff in the new clerical offices which were built as a result of "the increasing globalisation of industry [which] caused capitalists to rely more and more on vast communication networks, to facilitate everything from stock transfers

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to mail order services” (Braude 2013). Cleaning had been merely one of the jobs carried out by the general labour force in factories, but given the sedentary nature of office work, it proved more cost-effective to hire cleaners as a distinct section of labour (Braude 2013). In Braude's words, “Thus the offices became divided into two kinds of work: computing, and cleaning. An amalgamation of the great machines which have come to dominate so much of 21st century life; and beside them, a form of work which still falls outside of computerisation” (Braude 2013).

In the university, however, the division between manual labour and intellectual labour was established far before it came to exist in many other places of work. The former was, of course, not seen as being anything other than incidental to the *raison d'être* of the institution and therefore invisible in its discourse, even if it was very visible in its everyday practical reality.¹³ George Caffentzis remarks concerning the rise of white-collar labour in the late 1960s and early 1970s:

The very image of the worker seems to disintegrate before this recomposition of capital. The burly, “blue collared” line worker seems to blur in the oil crisis, diffracted into the female service worker and the abstracted computer programmer. ... And it all feels so different! Your wages go up, but they evaporate before you spend them; you confront your boss but he cries that “he has bills to pay”; and even more deeply, you don't see your exploitation any more. On the line, you could literally observe the crystallization of your labor-power into the commodity, you could see your life vanishing down the line, and you could feel the materialization of your alienation. ... In the “energy/information” sector, you seem to be engulfed by the immense fixed capital surrounding you. It feels as if you were not exploited at all, but a servant of the machine, even “privileged” to be part of the “brains of the system.” (Caffentzis 2013, 26–27)

It is rather startling to think that students and academics throughout history have no doubt experienced the feeling of privilege that arises from their sense of being, in Caffentzis' words, “part of the 'brains of the system,’” with learned treatises or at least registers of various sorts to record their existence within the university system, while a great host of manual labourers who held up the infrastructure of the institution have simply done their work faithfully for an unspecified number of years before passing into nameless oblivion. Hundreds of years before Hardt and Negri's thesis of the centrality of immaterial labour in *Empire* was to be published and critiqued for its sidelining of the

13 In the UK, the “bedders” of Cambridge (the equivalent term at Oxford being “scouts”), domestic workers who cleaned the residential rooms of students appear to have been acknowledged in a university edict in 1635 which forbade women under fifty “to make any beds or perform any other service within any scholars' chambers” (Stubblings 1995, 12).

(still-)material labour which sustains the world system, their gesture was actualised within the general perception of the workings of the *universitas* and *studium generale*.

In a sense, the problematic of otherness within the institutional space of the university is faced most acutely in the interactions between non-academic staff, on the one hand, and students as well as academics, on the other. Whereas the student may see in her professor an image of what she may someday become or at least emulate in her pursuit of knowledge, and the academic may see in her student a reflection of the proto-academic she once was, the non-academic staff member occupies a space which historically was not within the sphere of self-recognition or empathy.¹⁴ Nevertheless, with the phenomenon of increasing precariatization in the Global North, this boundary appears to be breaking down, as this statement by a student participant in the aforementioned anti-privitisation campaign at Sussex University demonstrates:

The privatization of services at Sussex has created a two-tiered staff body. Catering workers who were at Sussex pre-privatisation still have sick pay, holiday pay and a pension scheme for the meantime, while newer workers employed by outsourcing giant Chartwells have no such benefits and are on zero hour contracts. This casualization of work actively decreases job security: try to use your labour as a bargaining tool and your boss may decide they have no shifts for you next week. *If these jobs aren't already filled by students, these are precisely the kinds of jobs – and conditions – students can expect to be taking on after university.* Zero hours. Little pay. No benefits. It is in the interest of every students [sic] to campaign on issues like the living wage, sick pay and holiday pay. Now. (Al Ghussain 2014, italics added)

The reduced prospects facing the British university student at the beginning of the 21st century are evinced in a August 2015 report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) which indicates that 58.8% of UK graduates are in non-graduate jobs, a figure only exceeded in Greece and Estonia (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development 2015, 15). The strange but perhaps somewhat redemptive side-effect of this deterioration in the relative social position of graduates is the greater solidarity that is felt between the student and the non-academic staff member, and arguably between the academic and non-academic staff member as well. This increased sense of solidarity is potentially productive of perceived commonality which may lead

14 Even those in the perceived “upper tier” of non-academic staff such as senior library personnel are not exempt from being at least occasionally perceived as a structurally important yet secondary appendage of the body of the university. Although not a few academics regularly acknowledge the role of librarians in contributing to their research, the situation appears rather different among students. Research at the University of Sheffield “showed that most students were unable to distinguish different groups of staff, were unaware of their departmental librarian and did not recognise the academic role of librarians” (Bickley and Corral 2011, 223).

to *gemeinschaft*-esque ties between these groups of university denizens who have historically had little in common despite working and living in overlapping worlds. The rise of precariatization, in other words, has created a common “property” between them.

If we relate this development to the phenomenon discussed in the previous section of the rise of *gesellschaft*-tending relations within the student community, we find a strange co-occurrence of forces pulling in the both the directions of substantialist and non-substantialist community. We have already discussed the loosening of ties within the student bodies of universities. The decline of union membership since the 1980s is another instance of the diminishing of a historical forms of substantialist community (Gumbrell-McCormick 2013, 2). However, in the rise of precarity among both non-academic staff and students, a possible new conduit for a limited substantialist community has been formed between swathes of non-academic staff and students through the sharing of the *proprium* of precarious conditions of work and life. Such a potential formation would be far from comprehensive, however, as even if students and graduates are becoming subject to increasing levels of precariatization, there is still a sizable proportion of students – the 41.2% in the CIPD report, to use just one figure – who are still enjoying the benefits of their graduate qualifications, and who thus do not possess the common property of an ongoing experience of precarity which would give them potential membership of any “community of the precarious.”

Academic Staff and Community

On the subject of academics and community, we may begin by observing that the form of approaching otherness favoured by Karatani, that is, society or *gesellschaft*, fits a little too easily with the tendency in academia towards individualism and withdrawal. Indeed, it is instructive to note that in *Transcritique*, Karatani quotes with approval a passage from Descartes' *Discourse on Method* where the French philosopher speaks about his anonymous scholarly life in Amsterdam (Karatani 2003b, 134). In fact, in an earlier piece, Karatani describes the role of the city for Descartes as that of a communicative space (Karatani 1993b). In the passage itself, Descartes states his pleasure of living in a place “where amid a teeming, active, great people that shows more interest in its own affairs than curiosity for those of others, [he has] been able to live as solitary and as retiring a life as [he] would in the most remote of deserts, while lacking none of the comforts found in the most populous cities” (Descartes 2006, 27).

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More tellingly, in a letter on 5 May 1631 to his friend, Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac, he writes that “in Amsterdam he paid no more attention to the people he met than he would to the trees on his friend’s estate and the animals that browsed there” (Descartes 2006, xi).¹⁵ Nothing could be further from an endorsement of substantialist community and *gemeinschaft*.

This pseudo-monastic existence within the confines of a bustling city, by his own account, did much good for Descartes' intellectual activity. Here we have to not lose sight of the fact that academic labour, especially in the humanities, tends toward individualism – and thus operates fairly well within conditions where *gesellschaft* predominates – not primarily as a matter of principle but simply by the mechanics of the work involved, which except in certain very unique cases of intense collaboration tends to produce writing which issues from the pen of a single person or, at most, two or three people.¹⁶ However, returning to Descartes, we have to recall that he was not an academic philosopher and scientist in the modern fashion; that is, he did not teach or carry out his research within the context of a university, but rather was what we would today call an independent scholar, constantly on the move as required by the vicissitudes of his controversial career and ability to find patrons who would support his work (Smith 2013, 18). This (semi-)nomadic existence, while matching a not insignificant part of the lives of the majority of academics today who work under conditions of precarity, could not have been more different from the position of tenured or at least permanently-employed professors in our present, especially when we consider the relative fame (and infamy) Descartes achieved during his lifetime in academic circles.

Hence, the precariatization within the contemporary university may be seen as a return of academic labour to an earlier historical mode, even though only in part and with certain modulations. Gary L. Herstein has pointed out the rise of independent

15 The original French reads: “[J]e n’y confidère pas autrement les hommes que i’y voy, que je ferois les arbres qui se rencontrent en vos forests, ou les animaux qui y paissent” (Descartes 1897, 1:203).

16 A case can certainly be made that the degree to which what is created from academic activity can be attributed to a single person or small group is largely an illusion, given the many “inputs” into the process from various sources and directions. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, for example, have argued persuasively for an understanding of the “sociality” of academic labour (Harney and Moten 1998, 170–172). In a somewhat different direction, theorists of Actor-Network Theory have explored the connections between human researchers and non-human “actants” in the material environments of laboratories and other spaces of research (Latour 1979; Latour 2005). Nevertheless, the illusion is primarily an exaggeration – even if in some cases a gross exaggeration – rather than a complete fiction, for there is a sense in which even the broadest understanding of academic work cannot erase the aspects of solitary, personal labour which is involved, especially on an existential level. Moreover, as explored in greater detail below, what is certainly far from a fiction is the system of academic measurements and rewards which favour single-authored pieces, and thus less collaborative work.

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scholars in recent years resembles the situation during the early modern era in Europe, where many critical thinkers were forced to operate outside the boundaries of traditional universities due to the conformity that was required by the latter (Herstein 2016). The control of these academic institutions was intertwined with the most powerful bodies of the time, namely the state and institutional church. Indeed, the medieval writer Jordan of Osnabrück put forward the idea that the “three mysterious powers... by whose co-operation the life and health of Christendom are sustained” were *Sacerdotium*, *Imperium* and *Studium* (Rashdall 1895a, 1:4). If the monolithic strength of these institutions had been divided and weakened by the early modern period as a consequence of the Protestant Reformation and its political aftershocks, their successors continued to wield great influence within their respective jurisdictional territories. For example, as a result of teaching Descartes' physics, Henricus Regius, a professor of medicine at the University of Utrecht was condemned by the rector of the university, the Calvinist theologian Gisbertus Voetius, as a “French liar's monkey” (D. M. Clarke 2006, 218). Among the results of the rather convoluted controversy was the decree of university's academic senate on 25 March 1642 that Regius was to restrict his teaching to medicine and “traditional authors” and an enforced truce, at the height of the debate, which was executed through a prohibition of the Utrecht magistrates forbidding “very rigorously printers and booksellers in this city and within its jurisdiction to print or to have printed, to sell or to have sold, any small booklets or writings for or against Descartes, under penalties to be decided” (D. M. Clarke 2006, 229, 241).

At this mention of Descartes' followers and detractors, it should be noted that although Descartes was not in his later life an absolute hermit, Desmond Clarke, a biographer and scholar of his work, writes that in Holland he was “very much out of touch with his native country and with his family,” and only “visited infrequently by a few close friends and supporters with whom he shared the secret of his address” (D. M. Clarke 2006, 179–180). Clarke judges that he “had become a reclusive, cantankerous, and oversensitive loner” (D. M. Clarke 2006, 180). It is impossible to conceive of his situation as one evincing a radical opening up to the other in the spirit of non-substantialist community. He operated, in truth, as a solitary monad regardless of whether he was living in the busy *gesellschaft* of Amsterdam, or in a village such as Egmond aan der Hoef,¹⁷ only occasionally coming into contact with a small and select group of people.

17 The village, located on the coast of the North Sea, “was so isolated that it took eight days for letters to

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Our situation in the British university today appears somewhat different and yet is in some ways rather similar to the independent scholars of Descartes' day, and this is indeed mirrored in most other parts of the world. The precarity and lack of academic freedom which was faced by independent scholars in early modern Europe seems to resonate with our higher education present. Indeed, more sustained attention to the *longue durée* of the university, which is sadly beyond the scope of this thesis, may yet confirm the rather likely hypothesis that the period of academic security and comfort that was enjoyed during the first three decades of the postwar years in Britain was part of a longer period of exception rather than the rule.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the silver lining in this rather ominous cloud is the fact that if precarity has been the norm within the academy and wider society, then it is possible for us to draw lessons from the sourcebook of history for deactivating the individualising tendencies of contemporary academic conditions by using them in a different way, as well as perhaps even building forms of community and solidarity.

In a 1993 lecture, the American educationist Alexander W. Astin discussed the system of recruiting and rewarding academic personnel within the modern research university, pointing out that although countless books and articles had been written about the ill effects of privileging research at the expense of teaching, very little had been said about the impact of the publish-or-perish regime upon the building of a sense of academic community (Astin 1993, 8). He went on to explain:

Scholarship is, of course, a highly competitive and individualistic activity, where the most productive and visible scholars are accorded significant professional status, pay, and recognition by their universities. While it is true that some scholarly products have multiple authors (which would signify a cooperative or joint effort), such publications generally get less credit in the personnel review process than do single-authored pieces. In other words, even *within* the field of scholarship, the reward system encourages individualism and discourages community in the pursuit of knowledge. (Astin 1993, 8, italics in original)

We have here a simple and yet penetrating insight about both the academic enterprise as it has been throughout its history as well as its present configuration. It is certainly true that scholarship has by and large always been, as Astin in the quote above

reach him from Leiden” (D. M. Clarke 2006, 277). It goes without saying that Descartes would not have participated in any serious way in the elements of *gemeinschaft* which would have existed there.

18 A convincing argument has been made that such is the case in the sphere of the wider economy, where postwar Fordism and Keynesianism in the Western world has to be regarded as an exception or aberration to the more long-standing and global condition of precarity (Neilson and Rossiter 2008).

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rightly puts it, “highly competitive and individualistic.” For evidence of this, one only needs recall legendary instances of intellectual competition, such as the extended debate between Franciscan and Dominican friar-theologians in the thirteenth and fourteenth century on the Trinity and other matters (Friedman 2013), or the duel between Newton and Leibniz on the invention of calculus (Hall 1980), to say nothing of the acrimonious (if not always significant) feuds between and within the disciplines and academic tribes that we see today. However, it is also important to note that contemporary academics work within the confines of, to requote Astin once again, a “reward system” which, in an arguably much more extreme fashion than previous ages, “encourages individualism and discourages community in the pursuit of knowledge.”

The radical journalist and Marxist Bob Fitch was fond of saying that “vulgar Marxism explains 90% of what goes on in the world” (Henwood 2011). It is debatable whether Fitch got the figure correct, but it is certainly the case that the roots of the present intensification of publish-and-perish need not be found in some hidden metaphysical or even ideological register, but merely in the day-to-day management of universities and their relations to our capitalist-dominant social formation. Modern universities thrive – or, for some less notable ones, survive – on grants, donations, student fees, returns on investment and what are called “third stream activities,” such as consultancy work for and projects with private corporations, public sector agencies and so on. All of these funding streams are directly affected by the reputation of the institution and, as Astin has argued, “the only function in the job description of the university faculty member that can contribute directly to the resource base and the prestige of the university is scientific and scholarly achievement” (Astin 1993, 9).

Within the British university, the gradual withdrawal of state funding, first through the cuts from the mid-1970s – with the 1981 cuts in particular being severely-felt – and then with the introduction of fees which replaced government grants via the relevant funding bodies, when twinned with the growth in the number and size of universities, has led to more hands tussling for a goodly share of the funding pie. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the pressure to publish research has increased exponentially. To begin on the anecdotal front, this *crescendo* has even led a notable academic figure such as the physicist Peter Higgs, of Higgs boson particle fame, to opine that had he begun his academic life in an environment such as that which holds sway in the present, he would not have been able to carry out the pioneering work that he did,

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or perhaps even obtain a job, because by today's standards he would not have been considered “productive” enough (Aitkenhead 2013).

On a more empirical front, there have been numerous studies on the intensification of the demand for academics to focus on research and, most centrally, to generate measurable output from such research. One of the most interesting is perhaps Roger Burrows work on what he calls the “contemporary ‘metricization’ of the academy” and its “affective consequences” (Burrows 2012, 356). Taking as his starting point Nicholas Gane's argument that neoliberalisation in the non-privatised sector often takes the form of “simulated” markets where “real” markets cannot be enacted, Burrows posits that we have in the university reached “a point where metric assemblages begin to emerge that are of such ‘complexity’ that they take us to a point ‘beyond the audit culture’; towards a different hegemonic project where systems of ‘quantified control’ begin to possess their own specificity beyond mere auditing procedures; where there develops an ability not just to mimic, but to *enact* competitive market processes” (Burrows 2012, 357, italics in original). From an analysis of developments in the genre of campus fiction, he suggests that there was “a moment of the metrics” sometime between the 1996 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and the 2001 RAE, a “point at which academics could no longer avoid the consequences of the developing systems of measure to which they were becoming increasingly subject” (Burrows 2012, 359). After detailing the various modulations of the ongoing metricization – including research assessments, measures of teaching quality and self-assessment of one's division of labour in terms of time spent on various immaterial activities – Burrows ends with an examination of league tables, and remarks:

In many ways these ‘league tables’ epitomize many of the themes discussed here: they are the result of a whole range of other metrics generated at different levels of individual and organizational life that all become folded and nested into a common scale; they attempt to collapse heterogeneous concrete activities into supposedly commensurable value scales, allowing comparison and competition; they are, themselves, a source of commercial value – providing some sort of a shadow metric of the underlying abstract value of the neoliberal university; and, for the individual academic, they are also inescapable – to work in the academy today inevitably involves enacting intellectual life through such metrics with all of the affective consequences that follow from this. (Burrows 2012, 368)

The “affective consequences” that Burrows refers have been documented in other recent publications, with the most emotive possibly being Rosalind Gill's article,

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“Breaking the silence: The hidden injuries of neo-liberal academia” (Gill 2009). Utilising a combination of material from interviews and private conversations as well as theoretical analysis, Gill maps out the contours of contemporary academic life, peaking in the middle of the article with a statement from a younger academic's mentor in response to her complaints about an unbearable workload: “[W]elcome to modern academia. We're all working these crazy hours. I'm sorry to be blunt, but you know what you have to do: if it's too hot, get out the kitchen” (Gill 2009, 235). Gill follows this up with her own riposte:

The 'kitchen' of academia is, it would seem, too hot for almost everyone, but this has not resulted in collective action to turn down the heat, but instead to *an overheated competitive atmosphere in which acts of kindness, generosity and solidarity often seem to continue only in spite of, rather than because of, the governance of universities* Increasingly, requests to perform activities that would once have been considered part of the ‘civic’ *collegial* responsibility of being a university lecturer (such as examining PhDs, refereeing articles or reviewing grant proposals) take on a tone of pleading desperation, as journal editors or course managers find no one prepared to do the necessary work. (Gill 2009, 235, italics added).

Here we are back to Astin's assertion that a sense of community is lacking in the contemporary university due to an over-emphasis on tasks and “outputs” which require and reinforce individualism. It is clear that what emerges from this confluence of various individualising forces – institutional pressures, affectual difficulties and indeed the solitary context of significant segments of academic labour – is an environment which is, at its worst, positively prohibitive of, and, at its best, seriously detrimental to the formation of substantialist community within a university, or even a sub-unit such as a university department. When the “proper” thing to do is work alone, forgoing adequate rest and recreation, all for the sake of producing more publications, there can be very little of the commonality that is proper – that is, common property – which is required for a real (or even illusory, if we are to follow Nancy *et al.*) sense of academic *gemeinschaft* to develop. In other words, academics in general are being pushed to operate in a solitary, *gesellschaft*-oriented fashion akin to how Descartes lived in his later years in exile, regardless of whether they wish to or not.¹⁹

19 One notable exception is, of course, certain forms of research – primarily empirical, but existing in not just in the sciences, but also the social sciences and humanities – which is highly collaborative in practice, but which is still influenced by the individualistic tendencies of contemporary academia. On the other hand, Mark Olssen has argued that the present system “[n]ot only... place[s] too much emphasis on research productivity and performativity,” but “encourages dubious research tactics and strategies for maximising publications, citations and team-based research” (Olssen 2016, 135).

The (Al)lure of Non-Substantialist Community

The question that then arises is: if substantialist community is, in practice, largely closed off to us, given the present conditions of British academic labour, is it not a good idea to abandon the ideal of substantialist community and pursue instead the formation of non-substantialist communities within and beyond the institutional sphere of the university? Such a view would align itself with, for example, the para-academic medievalist Eileen A. Joy, who, quoting Bill Readings, whose work we have referred to in Chapter Two, writes in favour of “creat[ing] a collective that could cultivate and sustain such continual unsettlement, ungrounding, and abandonments, and which would be willing to dwell in a ‘university in ruins’ as a mode of ‘try[ing] to do what we can, while leaving space for what we cannot envisage to emerge’” (Joy 2015).

Joy's proposal may appear rather appealing, especially to those of us within a certain academic milieu. The British Critical Legal Conference, for example, is often considered by its participants to be an example of an inoperative community, being as it is “a broad church that exists for 3 days once a year and goes into abeyance once it is over,” with “no officers or posts, chairpersons and secretaries, committees or delegates” (Douzinas 2014, 189). Somewhat more adventurously, the BABEL Working Group, which Joy co-founded, describes itself as “non-hierarchical scholarly collective and para-institutional desiring-assemblage” which aims to “to develop new co-disciplinary, nomadic, and convivial confraternities between the humanities, sciences, social sciences, and the fine arts (both within and beyond the academy) in order to formulate and practice new critical humanisms” (BABEL Working Group 2016). It is important to note that the activities of BABEL are far more extensive than most self-organised academic collectives, and include not just the usual journal but also Punctum Books, an independent open-access publishing house, Punctum Records, an open access music label, and Studium, described on its Facebook page as a “co-disciplinary space for critical and creative inquiry” in East Austin, Texas.

However wonderful these instantiations of community which aspire toward the transgressive and horizontally-organised are, there is a sense in which it is not possible to see them as supplying the whole answer to our present woes. Joy defines the task of an inoperative community as “*thinking* community beyond its bad histories and beyond any futurizing ideologies that seek specific (utopian) ends” (Joy 2015, italics in original). Such a critique of utopia – embodied only in part due to its focus on “thinking” – is

always necessary, but it is arguably the case that these communities fail to meet the challenge raised by Costas Douzinas himself in his 2005 article, “Oubliez Critique.” If what he calls the “global biopolitical turn” has rendered “(the dominant types of) critique” in the preceding period, such as deconstruction and the ethical turn, worthy of being “forgotten” in favour of “acts of resistance” (Douzinas 2005, 66, 68–69), then surely the model of inoperative community which accompanied the rise of these dominant types of critique in Britain is one which has to itself be called into question. After all, it should be remembered that the British Critical Legal Conference began in 1985; that is, while the non-substantialist critique was emerging and gaining strength.

The most significant weakness of non-substantialist community is that in its principled opposition to substantialist community, which it rightly critiques as promising more than the latter can ever achieve, it ends up setting the bar too low. Nancy himself, in a dialogue with Esposito first published in Italian in 2001, states that “with the definition of an ‘inoperative community’ I wanted precisely to speak of a community that does not put into effect any community” (Esposito and Nancy 2010, 81). In order to avoid what he considers “the terrible germs that we know so well and that today can be used again for the flags of diverse ethnic and ethno-religious identities,” which he identifies in “[t]he communitarian and/or communal premise,” Nancy and his co-philosophers of non-substantialist community provide us with a concept which has great theoretical worth but little practical utility. At the point at which their work leaves us at an impasse, some renewed creativity is arguably necessary. Two decades down the road, having passed through a romance with substantialist community and a period of disillusionment leading to a dalliance with non-substantialist community as its opposite, could we be arguably in a place and time where a third form of community, that is neither a synthesis of the earlier two nor a stable third position, may emerge?

4.3 Prolegomena to an Associationist University

To begin our sketch towards a third form of community which may overcome the limitations of substantialist and non-substantialist forms within the sphere of the university, we shall turn to investigating the fate of a concept of Karatani's which held an important role in his work during his earlier period but which has almost silently modulated into other forms in his more recent work. This concept is that of the inter-crossing or communicative space (in Japanese, *kōtsū kūkan*). Karatani initially forged

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this idea, which he sometimes refers to as “space of intercourse” by relating it to the early Marxian idea of *Verkehrsraum*, in the fires of his own singular context but using the theoretical tools of deconstruction. Given this combination of his aversion to Japanese interiority and the deconstructive dynamic, it is unsurprising that the concept shares with non-substantialist community a preference towards *gesellschaft* over the often insular and even xenophobic tendencies of *gemeinschaft*. Nevertheless, in the 1990s Karatani's thought underwent an important shift, to the point that he stated in a 2000 paper that books from his earlier period such as *Architecture as Metaphor* no longer “reflected [his] thinking” (Karatani 2000, 259).

What did this shift entail? One way of explaining it is that in the wake of the demise of Really Existing Communism, Karatani realised that his previous strategic advocacy of the global market as a deconstructive force which could erode “the autonomy and closure of national communities” such as that of Japan (Cassegard 2007, 11), even if justified under the former state of global affairs, was no longer correct. As a result, his earlier idea of an inter-crossing space, which had political and practical elements to it, was converted into the almost entirely methodological idea of the transcendental topos where transcritique occurs. At the same time that this happened, Karatani began to articulate a new basis for counteractions within the social formations we find ourselves in in the twenty-first century. To grasp this shift, we have to turn to his most central concept since the turn of the millenium, namely the *mode of exchange*.

Beginning with the essays that formed the basis for *Transcritique*, and onwards, Karatani began to argue that the various social formations and societies throughout human history have been influenced by four modes of exchange, each of which is “grounded in its own distinct set of principles,” but which combine to constitute the particular matrix of a particular society, with one dominant mode forming the fulcrum (Karatani 2014, 3). Mode A is based on reciprocity and originates in tribal communities based on relations of gift and counter-gift (Karatani 2014, 5). Mode B is based on plunder and redistribution, and first comes onto the scene with the emergence of the state and empires (Karatani 2014, 5–6). Mode C is based on commodity exchange, which although existing for a long time emerges in its strongest form with the rise of capitalism (Karatani 2014, 8). Finally, Mode D or “X” is a Freudian “return of the repressed” in which the archaic communism of the nomadic band – which upon settlement develops into Mode A – re-emerges as a critique of the other three modes (Karatani 2014, xi–xii).

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Unlike Modes A, B, and C, Mode D has never become a dominant mode, and indeed has only intermittently stepped onto the stage in the form of universal religions and their accompanying communistic political theories (Karatani 2014, 8).

It is possible to correlate parts of Karatani's four-fold system of modes of exchange with the distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*. To return to Tönnies himself, it has been pointed out that his formulation of the two was in fact loosely inspired by Marx, with *gemeinschaft* corresponding to primitive communism and *gesellschaft* to modern capitalism (Loomis and McKinney 2003, 3). Hence, we can see that Mode A is related to the former pair, and Mode C to the latter. What about Mode B? It is historically linked to neither the substantive reciprocity of organicist community commonly found in tribes or nations, nor the dynamic of procedural reciprocity present in impersonal commodity exchange, but rather what Karatani calls the “principle of empire.” This principle allows for ethnic and religious (and sometimes even economic and political) heterogeneity beneath an overarching *imperial* political structure (Karatani 2014, 225), and remains the (often repressed) foundation of the modern state, and indeed state-centric policies such as the welfare state.

To use the language of modes of exchange, Karatani's strong distaste for Mode A led him in the 1970s and 1980s to a tactical advocacy of certain forms of Mode C. Even in *Architecture as Metaphor*, which is an updated version produced in the early 1990s – that is, after his post-Soviet “turn” – of material he wrote in this earlier period, we find a characterisation the marketplace as an example of an inter-crossing space between communities which do not share a single set of rules – such a “social space” or society being the way to escape insularity (Karatani 1995b, 146). Having said that, even at that point he recognised that the global economy constitutes a “one single gigantic community” with “a certain regularity (system of rules)” (Karatani 1995b, 146). By the time *Transcritique* was first published in 2001, he was clearly distancing himself from any perceived positive appraisal of *gesellschaft*, saying that “[i]t was when the trade with outside worlds was internalized within *Gemeinschaft* that *Gesellschaft* was formed” (Karatani 2003b, 105). This is simply another way of saying that Mode C is intrinsically tied up with Mode A in what he calls the “Borromean knot” of Capital-Nation-State, the social formation within which we presently live. Karatani summarises our difficult predicament as follows: “It is impossible to overthrow one of [the three elements] alone. If we try to overcome capitalism by means of either the state or nation, we will end up

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reinforcing the state or nation; Stalinism is the former case while Nazism is the latter” (Karatani 2008b, 585). In other words, any attempt to undermine the knot by assaulting one of the three “rings” only leads to the others taking over and stabilising the system.

When we shift our gaze from our wider social formation to the sphere of the British university, it is not difficult to see the resonances between the modes of exchange and the various “questions” of the university which we are faced with. The instrumentalist question has much in common with Mode C or commodity exchange. The idealist question tends to lead towards state-centric or Mode B-style solutions. Finally, the various theories of community which we have examined in this chapter mirror the dynamics of Mode A or reciprocity. If we transpose Karatani's insight of the ultimate barrenness of adopting an inward-facing, communal outlook within our wider historical conjuncture, then a turn toward a simple revival of *gemeinschaft* as a solution to the woes we presently face in UK higher education begins to look far less attractive.²⁰

The only way out of this bind, for Karatani, is Mode D, which he has also termed *associationism* or *X*. It can be argued that it is at the point where Karatani realises his formulation of inter-crossing spaces correlates too closely with the deconstructive dynamic of capitalism,²¹ which he later terms Mode C, that he is forced to develop the more unique alternative of associationism. What then is it? The associative Mode D is, to extend what has already been said, “the return of repressed mode of exchange A at the stages where modes of exchange B and C are dominant” (Karatani 2014, xi). However, Karatani's antipathy towards inward-facing community has not faded, for he argues that “[m]ode of exchange D is not simply the restoration of mode A— it is not, that is, the restoration of community,” because for him to restore A “in a higher

20 Equally, any attempt to return to a state of affairs where Mode B-style redistribution was more prominent simply reconfigures the parts while maintaining the deeply unjust whole. Here Karatani's observation that “[m]ore often than not, social democracy functions as chauvinistic nationalism” should be borne in mind (Karatani 2008b, 591). It should not be forgotten that British citizens (and subsequently EU citizens) enjoyed highly-subsidised higher education for forty-four years after fees were dramatically raised for non-citizens. The generality of this phenomenon can also be seen in a central video message for the unsuccessful campaign for Bernie Sanders to be the 2016 presidential nominee of the Democratic Party, which has as its background music Simon & Garfunkel's “America.” Although Sanders' definition of what America stands for was far wider than all of the other candidates seeking the nomination of the two major parties, the fact remains that in order to campaign for social democratic policies, the most effective tool was to invoke a national consciousness, in order to gain the support of the “all [who have] come to look for America” (Simon & Garfunkel 1968). Another example is British Prime Minister Theresa May's disavowal of anti-state Thatcherism in the wake of the Brexit vote, in which she stated, “It's time to remember the good that government can do,” while resurgent nationalism provided the backdrop (BBC News 2016).

21 Indeed, already in *Architecture as Metaphor* he acknowledges that “capitalism itself is deconstructive” (Karatani 1995b, 71).

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dimension, is in fact only possible with the negation of A” (Karatani 2014, xi–xii). What it really entails is “the restoration of nomadic society” (Karatani 2014, xii).

It is perhaps crucial to note that Karatani's nomadic society is very far from any form of contemporary ultra-liberalism, captured in images such as that of “the beautiful nomad” in a recent advertisement for Pullmans hotels, which Giles Fraser describes:

The music pulsates. A young man is going for a run in Shanghai, off to some high-powered meeting, then returning to his hotel. The narrator sounds sexy and enticing. “No frontiers, no borders, no limits. You are the beautiful nomads. And our world is your playground.” (Fraser 2016a)

This advertisement – and, by extension, and the wider “global” or “digital nomad” movement surrounding it²² – is in fact an expression of and propaganda piece for Mode C in the twenty-first century, and is completely antithetical to Mode D. The latter, however, remains to be fully fleshed out in practical terms, given that it is an ongoing project for Karatani, the discreet working title of which is “a study of D” (*D no kenkyū*) (Richter 2015). However, there are hints and sketches in the work that we have available to us. Most notably, he has argued that mode of exchange D has generally emerged in our historical actuality “in the form of universal religions” (Karatani 2014, 127). It can be found, to take one example from his survey of the many world religions, “in its classic form in the teachings of Jesus” (Karatani 2014, 145). Its recurring components are, first, criticism of the priestly class and state-colluding hierarchy (Mode B); second, a critique of family and community (Mode A); and, finally, resistance towards the “inequalities of wealth and class society” as a result of “the money economy and private property” (Mode C) (Karatani 2014, 145). He goes on to explain:

Jesus’s teachings can be summed up in two points: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart” and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30, 12:31). The love that Jesus speaks of is not simply a matter of the heart. It means in reality a gift without reciprocation. Jesus’s sect was, as Frederick Engels and Karl Kautsky stressed, communistic. ... All universal religions in their early stages display this tendency, which shows that they are in fact the return of the repressed, mode of exchange A. In this way, universal religion appears in the form of something that intends a reciprocal mutual community (association) that resists merchant capitalism, its community, and the state. (Karatani 2014, 145)

However, the radical core of these universal religions – that is, their going beyond the limitations of the other three modes – is lost when they degenerate into either, on the one hand, state religions by merging with the state-centric Mode B

22 For an extended discussion of this phenomenon, see Kannisto 2014.

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(plunder-redistribution), or, on the other, communal religions by merging with the inward-looking Mode A (reciprocity) (Karatani 2014, 146–147). One could reasonably extrapolate this analysis to argue that universal religions can also be co-opted by Mode C (commodity exchange) and turned into trendy consumer “products” which one can try, buy and even subsequently discard for the next new thing. As Tobias Jones has argued, Cardinal Basil Hume’s assertion that “shopping is the new religion” should today be inverted, given that in some spheres in our present, “religion is the new shopping” (T. Jones 2008, 5).

In order to illuminate this degeneration of Mode D more clearly, we can turn to the work of, perhaps surprisingly, Ivan Illich. It has already been mentioned that Illich is often seen as a champion of the traditional or “vernacular” ways of embodied *gemeinschaft*, inveighing like a prophet against the forces of abstract, isolating and impersonal *gesellschaft*. I submit that this is a reading of him as an apologist for Mode A is easy to construct from his earlier work and occasional interventions after he receded, as David Cayley narrates, from the popular limelight after the poor reception of *Gender* (1983), his last book for a major trade publisher (Cayley 2005, 24–25). Even in the text from which the quote this chapter opens with was taken, Illich seems to rather unproblematically take the side of rootedness, virtue, local culture and – perhaps most alarmingly for those of us who continue to be laden down and horrified by the history of communal conflict – *soil* (Groeneveld, Hoinacki, and Illich 1990). Esposito passionately expresses this standpoint in his 2001 dialogue with Nancy, where he says, “We need to be ever on the lookout for *every substantialist lapse* of the idea and the practice of community” (Esposito and Nancy 2010, 82, italics added).

Nevertheless, in parts of his final work, and perhaps most clearly in *The Rivers North of the Future*, a posthumous text consisting of conversations with David Cayley which were partially edited into the first-person perspective, a more nuanced view emerges. The central figures of this book are two characters from a Gospel parable, that is, the Jew wounded by robbers on a dangerous road and the Good Samaritan who stops to care for and remove him from further harm. Jews and Samaritans of that era considered each other strangers – some might even say enemies – to whom no obligation to love or even assist existed. Illich believes that this story illustrates the incredible potentials and dangers of the primitive Christian message. In his words:

[T]he Incarnation [and Jesus' teaching] makes possible a surprising and

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entirely new flowering of love and knowledge. ... A new dimension of love has opened, but this opening is highly ambiguous because of the way it explodes certain universal assumptions about the conditions under which love [is] possible. Before I was limited by the people into which I was born and the family in which I was raised. Now I can choose whom I will love and where I will love. And this deeply threatens the traditional basis for ethics, which was always an *ethnos*, an historically given “we” which precedes any pronunciation of the word “I.” (Illich 2005, 47)

If Illich's language of love seems at first glance to be too fluffy, it is worth noting that Karatani himself states in a 2014 interview that “mode D, which is the mode A's restoration on the higher dimension, also has this power of gifting in abundance, but only in the higher form. You may call it the *power of love*, if you like. Perpetual peace or the world republic will be based upon this real power, which is far stronger than other powers” (Karatani, Hioe, and Small 2014, 3). When this aspect of Mode D is taken seriously, the gulf between it and the non-substantialist community advocated by, for instance, Esposito, becomes clear. Esposito states that the *munus* or gift which is the origin of *communitas* has an element of duty or obligation (Esposito 2010, 4). In response to the potential objection that there must be “something spontaneous and therefore eminently voluntary in the notion of gift,” he invokes Marcel Mauss' work on the gift, whereby the latter thinker stresses the aspect of reciprocity of gift and counter-gift (Esposito 2010, 4). Karatani, on the other hand, places the Maussian gift solidly within the scope of Mode A, where the form of reciprocity involved takes place within a framework of obligation (Karatani 2014, 35). Hence, despite the valiant attempt of Esposito *et alia* to escape from substantialist community, the very grounding of a non-substantialist alternative in Maussian reciprocity ironically leads them back to the framework which Karatani terms Mode A, and thus a form of substantialism.

The new ethic of virtue flowing from Illich's reading of Jesus' parable is not only a negation of Mode A reciprocity, based as it is on a shared *ethnos* and thus a certain set of social rules upholding traditional-communal virtue, but also the principle of abstract and hierarchical command upon which Mode B is based. There is no categorical imperative involved, for the Samaritan's rescue of the injured other is done “in response to a call and not a category, in this case the call of the beaten-up Jew in the ditch,” and thus “cannot be reduced to a norm” (Illich 2005, 52). Finally, given that call to which one responds has a *telos* in a “*some body*” (Illich 2005, 52), the instrumentalist or consequentialist Mode C relation based on impersonal exchange is denied as well.

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Illich goes on to argue that the hospitality of the Samaritan – which is very close to what we, inspired by Karatani, are calling Mode D – is something which is presented to the believing listener as a singular person, and must thus be taken up on that horizontal and decentralised level. This non-obligatory, gift-giving form of human intercourse, however, was rapidly institutionalised in the era following the recognition of the Church under Constantine, leading to the creation of, for example, houses of hospitality funded by the organised Christian community for the homeless (Illich 2005, 54). This, Illich holds, was a corruption of the original call which Jesus issued, as the Greek Church Father John Chrysostom recognised when he argued that “[b]y assigning the duty to behave in this way to an institution... Christians would lose the habit of reserving a bed and having a piece of bread ready in every home, and their households would cease to be Christian homes” (Illich 2005, 54). In Karatani's language, this is a clear instance of a cooption of Mode D under the structures of Mode B, resulting in universal religion turning into state religion.

Indeed, it is this susceptibility of Mode D to be co-opted by the other modes which renders it a “regulative idea” which, first and foremost, “function[s] as an index for us to gradually approach, despite its not being fully realizable” (Karatani 2008b, 593). This striving towards the horizon of Mode D is connected with a practical method we can adopt. Within the dance of Instrumentalism-Idealism-Community, we can but endeavour to create and/or liberate “*space[s] for transcritique*,” that is, to bring the “transcendental *topos*” into the realm of embodiment (Karatani 2003b, 134).

Such spaces would be nuclei where expressions of Mode D could potentially emerge, forming a new “skein of relations” (Taylor 2007, 793) which we could perhaps give the name of an “associationist university.” The word “potentially” is crucial here, for as Karatani himself argues, Mode D is not something which can be engineered or brought about by will, but appears to arise spontaneously when the conditions are right. Here he contrasts its dynamics, once again with Mode A, stating for example that in the case of universal religion, it “arose in the form of an unconscious, compulsory ‘return of the repressed,’” as opposed to Mode A, which if invoked in a modern social formation, is generally enacted through “a conscious, nostalgic restoration of the past” (Karatani 2014, 259). Therefore, it is right for us to keep associationism as a regulative idea or horizon, but we must be careful not to slip into turning it into a new constitutive idea.

Conclusion

This chapter began with an exposition of two main directions in which the issue of otherness has been dealt with at various points in human history, symbolised by the terms *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* as developed by Tönnies. We highlighted the fact that Illich and Karatani may appear at first sight to each be advocates of one of these two tendencies, then pointed out how this impression is arguably mistaken. We then looked at how the manifold interactions between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* has led to the distinction between substantialist and non-substantialist community, with varied forms of the former being critiqued and the latter championed by French and Italian continental theorists in the late 1980s and early 1990s. We ended the section by posing the question which to be looked at next, namely whether either of these two matrices of community is what is called for in our present situation in the British university.

In the next section, the two approaches were then placed into a dialogue with the contemporary university in Britain, examining in turn the issue of community as it has developed in relation to students, non-academic staff and academics. Our central discovery was the extent in which a drive towards individualism has broken down whatever common ties which provided a sense of substantialist community in the past, leading to an enquiry into the possibilities afforded by a turn towards non-substantialist community. This direction was, however, found lacking, and the possibility of a third direction of pursuing community in our time was gestured towards.

In the final section, we began our search for an alternative to both substantialist and non-substantialist community by turning to examine the fate of Karatani's erstwhile key concept of inter-crossing space, tracing how it shifts to becoming part of and yet distinct from the direction of intervention which he has been championing since the early 2000s, which he has termed Mode D or associationism. By expounding briefly his idea of a quaternity of modes of exchange, we posited that Mode D offers a way out of the bind between substantialist and non-substantialist community, and examined how Illich's analysis of primitive Christianity provides an example of the arising of Mode D in a particular context, which Karatani understands as the return of a repressed nomadic tendency in the form of universal religion. By linking Mode D to the concept of the transcendental topos for transcritique, which evolved from his earlier formulation of inter-crossing spaces, we posited the possibility of spaces for transcritique within the university, which would be the nucleus of a possible associationist university.

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The notion of transcritical spaces may seem attractive yet vague. A question rings out from the aether, “What must we do for such spaces to be actualised?” For many it may seem like Karatani's writings on the elusive Mode D posit an end without any feasible means to get there. For instance, his concrete proposals for our wider political-social-economic spheres in *The Structure of World History*, such as radically reforming the United Nations via a “simultaneous world revolution” involving nations surrendering their sovereignty to engage in war (Karatani 2014, 306–307), have been criticised as outlandish and naïve (Lucas 2015, 123–124; Harootunian 2015, 104–105).²³

Thus we find ourselves in a paradoxical situation. Having abandoned the constitutive approach to ideas, we are left with a regulative idea as a somewhat distant horizon, which although providing a general direction for action, does not come with clear instructions as on a tin on what we should do in the present. Through the vision of an associationist university, we are, as it were, lifted to a lofty glimpse of what doing higher education differently may be like, and yet when we return to our practical circumstances, we realise we are still enmeshed in the workings of Instrumentalism-Community-Idealism. Moreover, we are often not entangled as an insect in a hated web, but have our own preferences and leanings among the threads that bind us. For some of us, if pressed to express a preference for one of these imperfect actualities, community seems more attractive; for others, idealism or instrumentalism may appear better.

Thus, in the following chapter we shall carry out an investigation into how a singular person is to navigate the choppy seas in which she generally feels drawn towards one or more of the well-established ports of instrumentalism, idealism and community, even if she may also concurrently experience a certain pull towards that elusive radical calling, which is the vision of an associationist university.

²³ The first practical attempt to give institutional form to Mode D, the New Associationist Movement (NAM) was founded by Karatani and others in Japan in 2000, but came to an end a mere two years later. Karatani attributes NAM's demise to the confluence of two developments, both of which called into question NAM's primarily economic strategies to counter-act Capital-Nation-State. The first was the September 11 attacks, which led to the deployment of Japanese troops in Iraq, and the second was the realisation that that the alternative economy they were engaged in building up could only be successful with “the support and regulation of national and local government” (Karatani 2006). This realisation spurred Karatani to dig deeper into understanding the dynamics behind state and nation, and his writing from the mid-2000s onwards reflect this research, most notably *The Structure of World History*. Having interrogated the histories and workings of Modes A and B more intimately, his present research project is, as was mentioned above, focused upon grasping Mode D in greater detail.

Chapter 5

Singularity, Particularity and Structural History: On Personal and Collective Vocations in a Plural University

“[S]ociality is inseparable from singularity.”

(Karatani 2003b, 106)

*“The apple tree never asks the beech how he shall
grow, nor the lion, the horse, how he shall take his
prey.”*

(Blake 2002, 167)

*“Accordingly, I use heart, head and hand
All day, I build, scheme, study, and make friends.”*

(Browning 1994, 439)

In 1926, when he was twenty years old and at “a time where virtually every young intellectual in Japan was embracing either Marxism or modernism,” the Japanese writer Sakaguchi Ango¹ began a course of studies on Indian philosophy at Toyo University, with the aim of becoming a Buddhist monk (Karatani 2010, 25). He was later to abandon this religious vocation, but during this period published a journal with fellow students of Buddhism. One issue contains a section discussing Japanese temple life and its future, and in Ango's brief contribution, which is very far from the commonplace pieties one might expect from a young aspiring monk, he downplays the virtues of asceticism and states that “a life that, as it were, follows the earthly passions also contains the power of the moral code and knowledge” (Sakaguchi 1999; quoted in Karatani 2012, 196).

In two related essays of Karatani's – one of which has been translated into English multiple times – he quotes the entire short text by Ango. In all of these translations, one elusive sentence of Ango's has produced highly divergent renditions in English. For example, in a 2010 translation by James Dorsey of the first essay, titled “The Irrational Will to Reason,” the line is translated thus: “Life is to be led according to the individual's convictions and, in short, anything goes *so long as we* do not give up on love and the ties that bind us” (Sakaguchi 1999; quoted in Karatani 2010, 25, italics added).

1 Sakaguchi Ango was the writer's pen-name, arranged in the traditional Japanese format whereby Sakaguchi is the surname and Ango the first name. Against the usual practice, however, he has come to be known by the first name of his pen-name, including in scholarly articles, and hence here we observe this irregularity.

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However, Seiji M. Lippit, in a 2012 translation of “Buddhism and Fascism,” the second essay, renders the sentence as follows: “Life is something that should follow each person’s principles and can essentially take any form, *but I* cannot abandon the bonds of sexual desire” (Sakaguchi 1999; quoted in Karatani 2012, 196, italics added).²

Both translations agree on the first half of sentence, in which Ango makes a universal statement tending towards pluralism: each person is to lead her life according to her principles. In the second half of the sentence, however, we find what for the English reader must seem to be a peculiar discrepancy. In Dorsey’s translation, Ango makes another universal statement: regardless of our different convictions, *we* must not surrender love and close ties. In Lippit’s version, however, Ango switches to the first-person and confesses that despite the diversity of personal beliefs, *he* cannot surrender the bonds involved in love and desire. This strange disparity is the result of an interesting aspect of the Japanese language, where subjects and other words in a sentence can be omitted if the writer or speaker believes they can be inferred from the context. In the case of Ango’s sentence, the latter half of the compound sentence lacks a subject, and so it is possible for the reader to interpret that he is either continuing his universal train of thought, as Dorsey does, or, conversely, transitioning to a more personal note, as Lippit appears to believe was his intention.

This ambiguity as to the subject in Ango’s statement about giving up the ties which are involved in passion and desire, however, captures in a unique form the wider uncertainty that is involved in any statement of personal conviction. When someone says, for example, that “clearly humans are social beings,” the utterance’s outward appearance as applying to all cases often obscures the fact that such clarity is only present for the speaker and those who agree with her view. On the other hand, when someone says, “I am a social being,” the apparent humility of this personal declaration hides that it often, in fact, desires to receive the affirmation of those to whom it is addressed. This, as we shall see below, is characteristic of what Karatani has called the circuit of singularity-universality, where practically every singular expression which is made actually contains a tacit universal address within it. Recognising this allows us to see that even if we were to opt for Lippit’s translation, Ango is hardly making a statement with relevance only to himself. Hence, in this chapter we shall explore the

2 Lippit translates “aiyoku” as “sexual desire,” but the word is in fact made up of the words for love (“ai” or 愛) and desire (“yoku” or 欲), and so means, literally, “desire of love.” I am indebted to Michiko Oki for this explanation, and for the other points about the Japanese language in this section.

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workings of this circuit and the other which Karatani has identified within theory and philosophy, namely that of individuality-particularity-generality. The aim of our enquiry will be to tease out what is at stake in the relations between persons and collectives.

Why should we turn to these questions? In Chapter Four it was argued that the Manichean view of the British university as being characterised by a titanic clash between instrumentalism and idealism is both misleading and disempowering, in that it limits our range of vision and action within the state that we find ourselves in. Where such a dualistic reading fails, could our triadic conception provide an alternative way forward? In order to answer this question, the chapter then proceeded to examine the third term in our conceptual triad, namely community. By the end of the chapter, however, we were able to see how both substantialist and non-substantialist community, for all their respective virtues, ultimately fall short of what appears to be needed in our present conjuncture. Moreover, our sketch of a third alternative, that of an associationist university, displayed some potential, but its status as a regulative idea or horizon means that it cannot provide us with a practical agenda. It is with this apparent failure of community to rise up to the challenge that we begin the present chapter, for if neither instrumentalism, nor idealism, nor a vision of community can “save us,” then what can?

At this point it is necessary for us to turn to a *speculative* mode of thought which, as Karatani asserts in a creative reading of Kant's wager in his First Critique that some of the planets visible to us are inhabited, it is useful to grasp in both the modern sense of a *spec* or bet as well as the similar Latin word *spes* or hope (Karatani 2003b, 51).³ In the section titled “On having opinions, knowing, and believing” in the First Critique's Doctrine of Method, Kant argues that there are three stages of being persuaded. The first is *having an opinion*, which is “taking something to be true with the consciousness that it is subjectively as well as objectively insufficient;” the second is *believing*, which is holding something to be true despite it being only “subjectively” and not “objectively” sufficient; the third is *knowing*, which is “taking something to be true [that] is both subjectively and objectively sufficient” (Kant 1998a, 686). “Subjective sufficiency” may be termed *conviction*, while “objective sufficiency” may be referred to as *certainty* (Kant 1998a, 686). For Kant, the test of someone's belief – that is, being persuaded at the

3 The etymology of *specio* (“to see”) and *spes* (“hope”), although distinct in many respects, are both united in a concern with sight. This leads to derivatives such as, from the former, *conspicere*, “to catch sight of, discern” as well as, from the latter, *sperare*, “to hope, look forward to” (Vaan 2008). In other words, the modern use of “spec” as “bet” is in harmony with its ancient root, given that any well-considered bet requires an adequate degree of *discernment* and *foresight*.

second level – is the extent to which she is willing to place a bet on it. Thus, a strong belief is one where its possessor “would wager many advantages in life” on it being correct (Kant 1998a, 687). The hopeful gamble that will be carried out here – that is, on the level of belief and conviction – is to bet *against* there being a silver bullet, one-size-fits-all solution such as “*such-and-such* community is always the answer,” and instead place “many advantages in life” on the side of there being singular and dynamic resolutions for singular persons, collectives and situations, which are themselves ever-shifting.

Such a bet can only be put to the test in the context of singularities, a level of discussion which this thesis has not so far engaged in great length upon. However, we should recall that in the Introduction to this thesis, the personal experience which led to the genesis of this research project was very briefly laid out. It was related how the author's involvement in the Save Middlesex Philosophy campaign led him to question how the present situation of British higher education came to be. In the chapters that followed this singular story faded quickly into the background even as we directed our attention to the structural history of the postwar British university.

Having moved swiftly from the singular to the structural – which can be also deemed the social – in this chapter we shall descend from the altitude which afforded us an overarching view from above, and return instead to the domain and perspective of the singular actor – whether personal or collective⁴ – from which we quietly began. This move should not be misinterpreted as an inward-facing turn, or an abandonment of the wider *universitas*, for, as we shall see, there is a keen sense in which universality is tightly bound up with singularity. In order to clarify these dynamics, the first section of this chapter explores the connections and contradictions between the seemingly similar but nevertheless distinct concepts of singularity, individuality, particularity, universality and generality. We then turn in the second and third sections to examining, respectively, the notions of vocation and gifts, using as a conceptual resource the writings of St Paul on the related and indeed foundational Greek terms of *klesis* and *charismata*, as a way of grappling with the plurality of singularities and particularities.

4 Just as linguistics recognises singular collective nouns such as “council” and “team,” by treating collective actors as singularities and not as mere aggregations of individuals (as in methodological individualism) we are affirming the concept of group personality, a key tenet of political pluralism in the English tradition as developed by thinkers such as J. N. Figgis, Harold Laski, G. D. H. Cole and F. W. Maitland. This theory of group personality holds that “social groups are real entities which have a life and being which is something more than the sum of their individual members,” and it is crucial to note that its legal consequences are not simply fictive but “rooted in social facts” (Nicholls 1994, 56).

5.1 On the Singular Person and the Specific Context

Having traversed seventy years of British higher education history at a rapid pace in the preceding chapters, a journey undertaken at the levels of structure and macro-history, it can be difficult to ascertain where to begin a discussion on intervening in the university sphere in order to have an impact upon its present manifestation and future direction. The task is truly immense, given the size and complexity of the institution as well as its entanglement in a web of other forces in contemporary society. In the preceding chapters, we have encountered a university intimately connected to not only the giant waves of postwar British history, with all the national and transnational factors which are involved, but also “local” conditions in the sphere of higher education. Faced with this gargantuan constellation, we can but ask: how could we possibly proceed?

There are a number of potential approaches that we have to eliminate before we can reach a satisfactory option. Firstly and most straightforwardly, unlike Alexandre Kojève, we cannot attempt to find a way out of the immensity of what we are concerned with by addressing ourselves solely to a single “man of action” (or “tyrant”) whom we recognise, seeking to become his personal “Hegelian” philosopher or consciousness, as Hager Weslati suggests the French philosopher attempted in his lost “letter” to Stalin.⁵ Such an appeal to individual power – that is, a specific recommendation to/for a specific person – is not only illusory and impossible, but also elitist and anti-democratic. In other words, it is objectionable on both practical and theoretical grounds, the latter being relevant due to the underlying political orientations of this thesis.

However, it would be equally misguided for us to venture to formulate a blanket strategy which could be deployed by all persons in all circumstances, given the plethora of contexts and situations which exist. Such an endeavour – which would amount to a general recommendation to/for a general audience – would either descend into banal slogans (such as “work toward a non-repressive university”), and/or fail to connect with or even take account of local or personal conditions. In the first instance it would be of limited practical use, and in the second it might lead to counter-productive attempts to

5 Weslati's daring hypothesis, drawing from the published recollections of various figures who were in close contact with Kojève at the time and her interpretation of various comments in his writings about the potential tyrant-philosopher relationship between Napoleon and Hegel which did not come to pass, is that Kojève's recently rediscovered Russian manuscript from 1940-1941, a copy of which was deposited in the Russian embassy in Paris at the time in rather shadowy circumstances, was intended as nothing less than a “letter” to Stalin which he hoped would inaugurate such a relationship between the Soviet dictator and himself (Weslati 2014).

superimpose a broad-brush sketch upon situations of greater complexity.

Thus, we shall adopt a third option: namely that of formulating an approach which can be adopted by *singular* persons, but which nevertheless contains an engagement with both a striving towards *universality* as well as the very real difficulties of *particular* contexts. This requires us to engage with both the circuits of individuality-particularity-generality and singularity-universality which Karatani has distilled from the philosophical canon, rather than dismissing one and privileging the other. This latter move is one which he himself performs in his explicit advocacy for the singularity-universality circuit (Karatani 2003b, 100–112). However, we shall resist it in the interests of being resolutely transcritical, a manoeuvre which Karatani himself appears to have taken in his more recent work. The practice of transcritique may sometimes appear on the surface as a form of prevarication, but it is in truth founded on a simple acknowledgement that the actual conditions of existence rarely allow us to affirm any one side of an antinomy in an unproblematic fashion. Nevertheless, we should also recognise that this transcritical approach is simply one of many approaches and techniques for enquiry. Indeed, the persistence of certain persons within stubbornly partisan and non-transcritical modes yields insights and perspectives which practitioners of transcritique are able to draw from. As we shall see further below, this fecundity of single-mindedness is what William James had in mind when he argued that “the one thing that has *counted* so far in philosophy is that a man should see things, see them straight in his own peculiar way, and be dissatisfied with any opposite way of seeing them” (W. James 1955, 20). However, *pace* James, the ability to see things in more than one way should not be dismissed as a mere “mixture of opposite ingredients” (W. James 1955, 20), for it too has a role to play in the whirl of consciousness, a dance we experience through a historically-shaped prism which refracts the mixed content of personal and collective existence into categories such as thought, affect and action.

Singularities Seeking Universality in a World of Particularities

To begin with a perhaps seemingly obscure and/or audacious question: what would it really mean to address the fruits of our ruminations to singularities in a fashion which can also be termed universal? Is this extended gesture merely a variation of the famous Lord Kitchener and Uncle Sam recruitment posters which, to briefly adopt Althusser's formulation, incessantly address the “I” who comes into being upon being interpellated

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by the hailing word “you” (Althusser 1998, 173–174)? The short answer is no, for although the person who answers positively to this interpellation may like to think his⁶ response is one-of-a-kind, the overall context of war through the ages, which reduces unique persons to being mere parts of the figures of those raised, trained, dispatched and killed, creates a situation whereby in the eyes of the powers that be it matters little whether it is Person A or Person B who responds to the call, for the end-result which is in fact sought is simply having two additional boots on the ground – the specific person whose feet are in those boots is secondary at best.

Thus, what we find here is not what Karatani terms the circuit of singularity-universality but rather than of individuality-particularity-generality. In the example we are presently concerned with, the person who responds to the poster is entering a space where he is not considered an irreplaceable singularity but rather a substitutable individual within a scheme of generality. That is to say, individuals are interchangeable and replaceable like parts of a machine, while singularities are not. To be blunt about it, if this volunteer soldier dies, his specific task within the larger war plans will have to be carried out by another, and conversely, if he survives certain operations, he may be moved to take on the task of another who has died. However, it should be noted that one can be both a singularity and an individual at the same time, for the lover of a fallen serviceman mourns for the one who was to her/him a singularity, even as he is simply replaced by another individual or removed from the equation in the world of warcraft.

In *Transcritique*, Karatani traces another important point of contrast between the two circuits. Whereas generality “can be abstracted from experience,” universality “cannot be attained *if not for a certain leap*” (Karatani 2003b, 100, italics in original). The circuit that leads from the individual to the general is one which is empirical, in that what is generally held to be true or correct is an adding up and harmonisation of discrete individual cases, such as in the case of the hosts of a party who conduct themselves and arrange things in a way which please their guests as a whole, but who cannot claim universality for their choices (Kant 1986, 52–53; Karatani 2003b, 38). In contrast to this, the pathway from singularity to universality involves a presumptuous, even unreasonable *demand* that what is quite clearly a subjective judgment is given the assent of all others (Karatani 2003b, 38). The sphere of aesthetics provides us with the most familiar instances of this paradoxical dynamic, for when a person declares that

⁶ The male pronoun is used throughout to remain consistent with the historical context of the example.

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King Crimson is the greatest band in the history of progressive rock, although she knows that she is making a subjective judgment of taste, nevertheless her assertion implicitly hopes to attain universal agreement from all who are concerned with the matter. Steven Shaviro in his reading of Kant and Karatani points out that what separates personal preferences such as one's favourite ice-cream flavour from judgments of taste is that in the case of the latter there is a certain reaching for the universal which thus goes “beyond the statement that things are this way 'for me'” (Shaviro 2005).

The upshot of this is that we are not proposing or even seeking to sketch a master-plan which only requires individuals to occupy the roles which we may designate. Much less are we trying to map out a single path or revolutionary road which all must traverse. Indeed, the singularity of each person can be said to matter because of – to introduce here a word which is not always invoked in this context – *vocation*. We shall discuss this concept in greater detail in the following section, but for now it suffices to say that we shall take as our starting point the theological concept of vocation as developed in the Western Judeo-Christian tradition, tracing its evolution in medieval Catholicism and the Reformation as well as under the pressure of modern and contemporary critiques, in order to work towards an integration of the singular and the universal. As shall become clear, the understanding of vocation to be explored is one that provides us primarily with a procedural rather than a substantive approach to the difficult questions we face – in other words, a *how* but not a *what*.

Returning to our discussion of the two circuits, we may ask, what is the role of the particular in the circuit individuality-particularity-generality? After all, the term is used by certain thinkers as a synonym for – or at least to occupy the place of – individuality. However, according to Karatani's reading of Hegel and the German Romantics, it in fact serves to mediate between individuality and generality, hence the order in the circuit (Karatani 2003b, 105). In his words:

“[N]ation” has always been considered the middle term (particularity) between individuality and humanity. ... For the Romantics, the idea of nation came to be privileged because of a grounding logic according to which particularity synthesizes, even originates, individuality and universality. Within this logic, it is only particularity that assumes the concrete. ... The individual becomes an individual person primarily within one's own national language (and nation). The universality of the human being – a human in general – is abstract and empty when the particularity is absent. (Karatani 2003b, 103–104)

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However, it can be said that Karatani moves too quickly from speaking of particularity as a middle term in general to criticising the nation-state as the assumed space and context of mediation. While it is true that many of the thinkers he cites, from de Maistre to Wilhelm Humboldt, considered the nation as the pathway to their conception of humanity⁷ – which, it is important to emphasise, Karatani considers as a form of generality rather than universality due to its inward-facing orientation – there are other forms of particularity that exist, as we shall see below, including some which have an at least pseudo-universal dimension.

Moreover, Karatani's sharp critique of particularity stems from his aversion towards the nation(-state) as a mediator, but there are in fact at least two main ways in which mediation and relationality take place. The philosopher Peter Hallward has pointed this out in his careful distinction between what he calls the *specified* and the *specific*. The specified, in Hallward's framework, is very much akin to the individuality-particularity-generality circuit that Karatani is suspicious of – albeit with an ambit somewhat wider than simply the nation – for it treats persons “as individuated by certain intrinsic, invariant and thus characteristic properties, innate or acquired, racial or sexual, national or cultural, physical or spiritual” and thus “reduces the universal to the status of the general or normal” (Hallward 2000, 8). Like Karatani he cites the German Romantics and other Counter-Enlightenment figures such as de Maistre as examples of this form of thought (Hallward 2000, 8). Crucially, however, Hallward underlines the fact that, as the use of the past-participle indicates, the specified is the *result* of an application of “recognized classifications,” and it matters little whether what is specified is construed narrowly, such as with a nativist or culturalist particularity, or more broadly, as with some forms of seemingly humanist and universalist visions, for in his biting words, “[m]ere appreciation of the fact that 'everyone is different and special in their own way' belongs to such sophisticated institutions as Sesame Street and McDonald's as much as to some recent postcolonial theories” (Hallward 2000, 8–9).

7 The Romantic idea that the nation is the ground and context for all being (not least of all being-with) and becoming has, of course, a much older provenance. We can find a prototype of its modern form in the Greek idea of *ethnos*, which Agamben translates elegantly as a “national collectivity based upon descent and homogeneity” (Agamben 2011, 257). Illich has explored the primitive Christian disruption of the Platonic conception of friendship. For Plato, the possibility of love or *philia* is premised upon a shared conception of virtue upon which is built an ethics or *ethos*, which is itself formulated within the context of a certain *ethnos* or people (Illich 2005, 147). This particularistic conception is challenged in the Gospels, symbolised in the Lukan parable of the Good Samaritan, which we discussed analogically in our previous chapter, whereby the Palestinian outsider “acts as a friend towards a beaten-up Jew” (Illich 2005, 147).

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Against the essentialism – whether monist or pluralist, parochial or globalist – of the specified, various thinkers have put forward philosophies of the specific, which must nevertheless be distinguished from the singular. The key difference can be explained as follows. The singular, as we have seen, simply disregards the question of mediation in its leap into the universal – it is, in Hallward's words, “beyond relationality” (Hallward 2000, 8). The specific, in contrast, chooses to persist in the realm of mediation with its surroundings and others, but in contrast to the fixity of the specified, it “presupposes an empty, transcendental universal as the necessary medium of its open-ended relational field” (Hallward 2000, 8). Relationality is not sidestepped, but radicalised by the assertion of a dynamic subjectivism, such as in Foucault's statement in a 1982 interview that “[t]he main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it? What is true for writing and for a love relationship is true also for life. The game is worthwhile insofar as we don't know what will be the end” (Foucault 1988, 9).

Furthermore, we should be aware of the limitations and blind-spots of the circuit of singularity-universality. In his seminal essay, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?”, Kant argued that the public exercise of one's reason required one to extricate oneself from one's specific responsibilities and entanglements within a particular community in order to enter the space of cosmopolitan society (*Weltbürgergesellschaft*) (Kant 2006, 19). While he certainly did not deny the necessity of engagement within one's more situated spheres of commitment – in his terms, the private exercise of one's reason – it is undeniable that he considered it an inferior, less enlightened form. Such exertions of one's reason were necessary, perhaps, for making a living and discharging one's civic duties,⁸ but it was ultimately one's activity within the cosmopolitan public which was of primary significance.

Of course, Kant could hardly have argued otherwise given his commitment to the Enlightenment and its conception of reason. We have already mentioned Counter-Enlightenment thinkers such as de Maistre who were focused on the national *polis* rather than the *kosmo-polis*. Whereas many thinkers in Kant's lineage (including Karatani) view particularistic sentiments, culture and ideas as reactionary or at least

⁸ Among the examples which Kant gives are citizens who are bound to pay their taxes, officers who are obliged to comply with the orders of their superiors and clergy who are to teach the catechism and instruct their congregations according to their respective church traditions (Kant 2006, 19–20).

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damagingly parochial, those who oppose or at least call into question the rationalism of the Enlightenment often bewail the destruction of community in the interests of what Kant calls “the society of the citizens of the world” (Kant 2006, 19). In the first case, what appears to be demanded is a form of “reverse-*kenosis*.” St Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians says that “Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself [*ekenōsen*], taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:5-7, RSV). According to theorists of kenotic theology, this *kenosis*, or “self-emptying” was necessary in order that the eternal and creating Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, could “descend” and take the form of a human being, Jesus of Nazareth (Gore 1891, 157–158). When Kant and his followers speak of becoming cosmopolitan, however, what appears to be required is also a form of self-emptying, but of one’s particular characteristics in order to “rise” to the level of discourse and societal life in the *kosmos*.⁹

Granted, for Karatani being cosmopolitan appears to be an additional rather than a completely alternative way of living. He writes that Kant “never denied that everyone always belongs to a certain community. He simply urged that individuals behave as cosmopolitans in thinking and action” (Karatani 2003b, 104). Therefore, “[i]n the concrete, [being enlightened] means becoming a member not (*only*) of a national community but (*also*) of a cosmopolitan society” (Karatani 2003b, 100, italics added). The parentheses which he uses in this last quote, however, indicate a degree of reticence to concede this point, and it is therefore unsurprising that he writes subsequently in *The Structure of World History*: “True fraternity and free association are only possible once individuals cut ties with their communities (in Kant’s language, cosmopolitans)” (Karatani 2014, 236). That is to say, for him membership and participation within a national community is an unavoidable practical necessity, but as far as possible it should be tempered and trumped by a cosmopolitan orientation.

Nevertheless, given that we are tracing Karatani’s line of argument, we have

9 This dynamic can also be linked to what Charles Taylor, in his work on secularity, has called “*excarnation*.” Writing in the context of religion, Taylor points out that the movements of Reform in Latin Christendom resulted in “the transfer of our religious life out of bodily forms of ritual, worship, practice, so that it comes more and more to reside ‘in the head’” (Taylor 2007, 613). As a consequence of this, “[e]mbodied feeling is no longer a medium in which we relate to what we recognize as rightly bearing an aura of the higher; either we do recognize something like this, and we see reason as our unique access to it; or we tend to reject this kind of higher altogether, reducing it through naturalistic explanation” (Taylor 2007, 288). To transpose Taylor’s argument into the terms we have been using in this thesis, the Reformation marks a turn to thought-centricism and a concomitant denigration of feeling-centricism, which also results in a simultaneous transformation of the sphere of acting.

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once again crossed over into speaking as if the nation(-state) is the only, or at least the most centrally, relevant aspect of our particularities. There are, of course, many other particular alliances and entanglements which are involved. In the sphere of the university, these include disciplinary boundaries, institutional affiliations, as well as inter- and intra-disciplinary cliques (which often are organised according to theoretical/practical interests and/or political tendencies).

However, even in the restricted space of national and other inwardly-facing communities, it should be noted that Karatani's perspective appears to have broadened in the decade or so between the writing of *Transcritique* and *The Structure of World History*. Whereas in *Transcritique* he simply opposes the individuality-particularity-generality circuit to the singularity-universality circuit, considering them to be at odds with each other even where they co-exist, in the later text he appears to have moved towards a more transcritical position. Speaking in the context of universal religions such as Judaism and Christianity, he states that they “do not become universal by negating the particular. Rather, they become universal through an incessant awareness of the contradiction between universality and particularity” (Karatani 2014, 143). In other words, if we do not wish to collapse in one or the other direction what is in many respects a productive antinomy, we cannot but endure the somewhat unsettling nature of dwelling within such contradictions.

Therefore, this discomfort is not to be lamented, for it is within this space of tension between particularity and universality that responses to the history of the postwar British university which are truly singular may be forged. Through the operation of transcritique – that is, bracketing – these responses will also be able to access the other circuit and thus engage with their respective particular contexts in a resolutely specific manner. Kant was able to resolve the Third Antinomy between nature and freedom by paradoxically affirming the truth of both through essentially a bracketing operation. By bracketing the determining operations of natural causality, it is possible to establish practical freedom; conversely, by bracketing the assumption of free will, it is possible to observe the motions of causality (Karatani 2003b, 117). Likewise, so long as we are prepared to oscillate from one circuit to the other, we do not necessarily have to choose between singularity-universality and individuality-particularity-generality, although it should be added that it is best to engage with the latter circuit under the aegis of the specific and not the specified.

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Having said all this, how do we deal with the obvious fact of the multifarious and conflicting responses to the set of circumstances we find ourselves in? If we wish to move away from the easiest “solution” of finding like-minded others to combine one's efforts or identifying contrary-minded others to oppose, we will have to acknowledge the *necessary plurality* in *vocations*. This is where the aphorism from Blake quoted at the beginning of this chapter may help us find a way forward. In a famous section in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* titled, “Proverbs of Hell,” the radical poet and artist wrote, “The apple tree never asks the beech how he shall grow, nor the lion, the horse, how he shall take his prey” (Blake 2002, 167). This simple recognition of multiplicity, which consists in accepting that we are not all identical beings and therefore cannot be expected to adhere to identical forms of life, may seem banal,¹⁰ but we shall use it as a starting point for discussing vocation, the subject of the next section of this chapter. Nevertheless, we must meet the challenge, already alluded to in the aforementioned quote from Hallward, that any such talk not fall into the truly banal mass media message that “everyone is different and special in their own way,” but seriously grapple with the specific and the singular, for our aim is to formulate an adequate way of dealing with the conflicting demands of the conceptual triad in the university.

5.2 Vocation

The term vocation is one that often elicits rather strong reactions, at least in part due to its complicated history. In some spheres of academic and political thought, any positive resort to language or concepts which have a religious – especially Christian – provenance is still deemed slightly suspect, if not completely anathema. Nevertheless, the legacies of twentieth-century thinkers such as Carl Schmitt and Walter Benjamin who engaged with theological thought, as well as the recent popularity and prominence of continental thinkers who have followed in their steps, including Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek and – arguably in the most extensive fashion – Giorgio Agamben, have altered the scene to a significant degree. Hence, it has become possible for declarations such as

10 The Italian feminist Adrian Cavarero has argued against the blanket application of the poststructuralist axioms of difference and anti-essentialism to the field of sexual difference, pointing out that “feminine sexual difference is a corporeal difference,” and that this “banality” nevertheless “asks for a meaning, the returning of a meaning” (Cavarero and Bertolino 2008, 143–144). The Blake proverb likewise grounds its meaning upon the banality of differences in the physical world. It is far more contentious whether human persons are distinct in such “banal” ways, but the bare fact of physical and physiological differences, both external and internal, which lead to differences in basic abilities such as dexterity and strength, do indicate that although the human person is arguably more adaptable and malleable than the apple tree, there are distinct *limits* to her degree of self-creation.

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that of legal theorist Anton Schütz (from which an extended quote is necessary):

[T]he line between 'religion' and 'outside religion', between the 'spiritual' and the 'temporal/secular', has collapsed as such. And it is its disappearance and the resulting indissociability of the two sides which opens up, for the first time, the possibility of viewing the Western experience in toto *as one immense* (although empirically finite) *unitary event*, a “singularity.” Not only is there a relation linking Lenin and Saint Paul, but without the Pauline “uncoupling from law” no Western Science, no Enlightenment anti-institutionalism, no socialist revolution, no post-modern human rights philosophy, can as much as be conceived, no social-peace-pampering Western-type “civil society” as much as be dreamt of. The task consists in retracing the history of Christianity-*cum*-postchristianity as a West-*internal longue durée*, in drawing the general map of the Western adventure, in inscribing Humanism, Enlightenment philosophy, socialism, etc., within this one overarching Western event. (Schütz 2005, 85).

In other words, the project of extracting from this “Western experience” a secularised essence which can be synthesised with one's favoured revolutionary or reformist views – that is, the exercise which fuelled experiments such as the French republican calendar,¹¹ as well as other attempts to clear from the messy slate of Western history any influences from religion and, to risk some vain repetition, Christianity, in particular – has to be rejected as an ahistorical and ultimately counter-productive cause. Even if one is a thorough believer in secularism, a participant in the postcolonial or decolonial movements, or even an anti-Constantinian Christian, any investigation which is either premised upon or engages seriously with Western thought has to pass through Christendom and its contested legacy rather than attempt to leap over it.

Therefore, if we wish to grapple with the relations between universality, singularity and particularity – that is to say, the problematic stated in the previous section – there is much that can be gained from engaging with Judeo-Christian ideas on vocation, in that this textual and lived tradition has for millenia wrestled with the tensions between, in the Christian case, universalist visions and singular lives, as well as, in the Jewish context, the roles played by particular communal vocations and the singular person in the fashioning of a world-affirming approach to life. At this point of setting off, if we wanted to summarise the overarching argument of this section, we could say that the concept of vocation allows a person to hold on firmly and act boldly

11 In their zeal to abolish as many elements of the *ancien regime* as possible, the French revolutionaries adopted a new decimalised calendar which had twelve months, each divided into three weeks of ten days length. The months were renamed with neologisms referring to the season, such as Fructidor (a combination of the Latin word for fruit, *fructus*, and the Greek word for gift, *doron*) (M. Shaw 2011, 43).

according to her views, principles and deepest stirrings, and yet avoid the danger of considering them to be superior to or more true than all others and in all cases.

The Invention of Vocation

We begin our enquiry into vocation by examining its lexical and conceptual history. Etymologically-speaking, the Latin word *vocatio* simply means a calling, and in Ancient Rome it had been used in various senses, including a legal summons or even an invitation to dinner (Lewis and Short 1879). However, the use of the word by Jerome in the Vulgate to translate the Greek *klesis* – which itself had similar meanings as *vocatio* in the legal and non-religious social realm (Liddell and Scott 1940) – in the New Testament epistles led to its meaning acquiring a distinctly Christian context and content, which with the rise of Christendom indelibly marked its history from then on.

Of course, the religious concept of vocation pre-dates textual sources which utilise the respective Latin or Greek terms like the Vulgate or indeed the New Testament, for the idea of calling has a much older provenance. Even within the biblical canon,¹² Walter Brueggemann has argued that the creation narrative in the Hebrew Book of Genesis, wherein God assigns to the human being the task of “tilling” and “keeping” the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1:15, RSV), implies that “[f]rom the beginning, the human creature is called [and] given a vocation” (Brueggemann 1982, 46). As for a vocation which is given to a singular person, the paramount example in the Hebrew Scriptures is arguably that of Abraham, but both the Old and New Testaments are replete with stories of those who received special tasks, almost without exception as a result of divine revelation. In fact, in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, words from the same family as *klesis* are used in narratives involving “Adamic naming,” where a person or place is given a name that corresponds with a deep truth of its reality, as in the mythical naming of the animals by Adam in the second chapter of Genesis.¹³ Therefore, Adamic names are considered “perfect linguistic

12 For reasons of space and argumentative cohesiveness, we shall constrain our *textual* discussion to the Judeo-Christian tradition, given that it is the central source for the Western idea of vocation which we are most concerned with here. It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate concepts within non-Western civilisations and pre-Christian Western Antiquity which are similar to the Christian and/or secular notions of vocation which have arisen in the West in the Common Era. This is not to downplay the significance of these alternative discourses, but rather simply to recognise their less prominent role in constructing the sphere of the British university and indeed Anglo-American discourse more generally.

13 Of course, the Adamic naming of the animals in the creation narrative pertains to a particular and not a singular reality, for as Karatani points out, the sphere of the singular is that of the proper name,

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representations of nonlinguistic realities” (D. Dawson 1991, 85). It should be noted, however, that these underlying realities are not necessarily eternal or even pre-existing, for there are numerous instances in the Hebrew Scriptures where a new name is given to fit a new identity or ontological reality, such as when Abram, the “exalted father” (Strong 1890), becomes Abraham, the “father of many nations” (Genesis 17:5, KJV). Thus we see that *klesis* need not be understood as a static, essentialist notion, but can in fact be framed as a dynamic concept with much affinity to philosophies of becoming.

Nevertheless, we have to be careful not to indiscriminately read into the textual canon a modern conception of vocation which involves, to put it simply, choosing between multiple options for one's central (pre)occupation. Such a task generally arises wherever and whenever a significant degree of social mobility exists. In the various times and places in history and the present where social stratification is rigid, the possibility of living a life which veers away from the path that appears to be set out for one from birth – whether due to class, caste or any other social constraint – is highly unlikely. In such situations, the question of vocation in terms of “work” appears to have a rather restricted range of answers, the most common one being to simply follow the family occupation or trade, or, in the case of women in certain strata and societies, becoming a wife and mother. However, it would be equally mistaken to assume that the possibility of choosing one's primary (pre)occupations is an entirely modern phenomenon, for the historical record does provide instances of this even in relatively socially-immobile settings, most dramatically perhaps in the decision to abandon the life of “regular” work for that of philosophical contemplation, such as that of Socrates, the son of a stonemason (Howatson 2013, 528). Indeed, the primary barrier to social mobility in traditional societies such as that of Ancient Greece is one less tied to occupation but rather to status or estate, for although a slave, a foreign resident and a citizen may all exert their strength and skill in the same workshop, a social chasm separates the latter from his less privileged workmates (Austin 1980, 22–23).

Here we have one of those areas of life where the pre-modern situation is closer to our “post-modern” present than the modern one. It can be argued that the modern understanding which originated in the Protestant Reformation whereby one's everyday occupation or work is the primary locus of one's vocation distracts us from more

such as with a dog named Taro, rather than the generic name, as with the genus *Canis* to which the dog named Taro belongs on a taxonomic level (Karatani 1995b, xxiii).

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infrastructural questions. For if we extrapolate from the image from antiquity of fellow craftsmen who, although they cooperate in their activities, are nevertheless very distinct from each other due to their different legal statuses, we may say that the issue of vocation today is less a question of what the primary activities that one engages in are but rather one's way of being and becoming. Such an understanding of vocation is indelibly tied to *how* one lives, of which practical tasks – that is to say, the *what* – are but one consideration. Two young academics may share an office, and outwardly appear to be of one occupation, and yet it is possible that one has a state of being and becoming which is aligned to what we may call her vocation, while the other does not.

What then is this idea of vocation which concentrates upon the *how*? Before we can answer this question adequately, we will first have to conduct a brief genealogy of the development of the notion of *klesis*, observing both its use in the early texts as well as its most important permutations in the succeeding centuries. Through this investigation we shall see that the idea of vocation which focuses upon *form* superimposed upon a minimalist yet essential *content* is not only closer to the original use of *klesis* when compared to its subsequent manifestations, but is also much more radical in its nature and consequences.

A Very Brief History of Vocation in the Christian Context

As we have already seen, the Latin word *vocatio* first acquired the sense of a religious calling or vocation when Jerome used it to translate the Greek term *klesis* as it was used in the New Testament letters, for instance in the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians, where the apostle writes, “For ye see your *calling*, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Cor. 1:26, KJV, italics added). Or, again, in his Epistle to the Philippians, “Brethren... this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high *calling* of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14, KJV, italics added). From these examples we can see that Paul is not speaking of calling in the modern, workaday sense of an occupation – nor even an occupation which one feels a special affinity with – but rather “the general Christian 'calling' to belong to Christ” (Elliott 2005, 33).¹⁴

14 In the words of Karl Barth, the Swiss proponent of “dialectical theology,” this calling is “the act of the call of God issued in Jesus Christ by which a man is transplanted into his new state as a Christian, is made a participant in the promise... bound up with this new state, and assumes the duty...”

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To some contemporary eyes and ears, this may seem a narrow or even insignificant matter, but it is important that we not forget the marginality of the Christian faith when Paul was writing. Far from the conformist default of Christendom or the personal and/or private choice of the modern and postmodern age, to become a Christian in the first century C.E. was to join a strange sect that sprang out from Judaism in the Eastern backwaters of the Roman Empire. Moreover, the exclusivity of the claims of the Christian faith within its theological framework, which led to its adherents refusing to engage in the official Imperial religious rites, made embracing it a dangerous choice, for it was not just a matter of refusal or exodus but rather a counter-narrative that challenged the discourse of the Empire by appropriating its key concepts and seemingly subverting them.¹⁵

This choice to respond to this calling to the Christian faith was not, however, a wholly individualistic one, for one's response made one a member of the church or Christian community, whose original word in Greek, *ekklesia* or assembly, itself shares the same etymological filiation as *klesis* (Agamben 2005, 19). The heroism of early Christianity, however, almost came to an end with Constantine's embrace of the faith and its rise to become the religion of the Empire. With the inversion of Christianity from structurally-disadvantaged sect into state religion, the radical idea of *klesis* had to evolve or risk complete dissipation. Hence, it mutated from being simply the call to be a Christian to that of an "authentic" Christian life, which in its earliest manifestations generally took the form of a flight from the city in order to live a life of a solitary or cenobitic (i.e. communal) ascetic in the desert. Nevertheless, to use the terms that we discussed in the previous section of this chapter, in both these cases the core of the vocation was, strictly-speaking, particular and not singular, in that they each involved a general exhortation inviting whoever may respond to a general and not a universal calling. Thus, the demands placed on the respondent were generic and not singular. For the message was "become a Christian" or "become a consecrated religious," and for this task the singular qualities of the hearer were insignificant, or even irrelevant, which leads us back to the interpellating posters depicting Lord Kitchener and Uncle Sam.

corresponding to this state" (Barth 1961, III.4:600).

- 15 Indeed, much of the language used by early Christians to refer to Christ and his Kingdom could be seen as plagiarised from Imperial terminology. To give just a few examples, the "good news" of Emperor Augustus' birthday became the Christian *euangélion* or gospel, the inscription referring to Julius Caesar as "God made manifest" was transposed into the Christian understanding of the Incarnation, and the word for the Second Coming of Christ, *parousia*, was originally used to describe the Emperor's visit to a city (Young 2006, 14–15).

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Thus, from the early monastic athletes – who gained the name Desert Mothers and Fathers – onwards until the Protestant Reformation, the word *vocatio* came to refer solely to the special vocation of becoming a priest or consecrated religious (Placher 2005, 6–7). It is easy to critique this development as being a hierarchical turn which created an ecclesiastical elite – and, indeed, in many ways it was – but it is also worth noting that what it also did was preserve the notion that *vocatio* was something other than simply the instrumental demands of whatever practical social and economic structure was in place. Granted, the social structures and ideologies of Antiquity and the medieval era, where productive work was seen as inferior to a life of contemplation, helped to produce this elitist conception (J. Dawson 2005, 223). However, to return to the argument of Schütz's which highlights the continuity of secular, post-Christian developments with the Christian period which preceded and still conditions it, it can still be argued that the figure of the ascetic under religious vows is the precursor to subsequent counter-cultural roles such as that of the rebel, the revolutionary and the activist. Indeed, numerous figures in historical insurrections, revolutions and protest movements have been either clerics and/or monastics or former clerics and/or former monastics, from the late medieval Lollard priest John Ball and radical reformer Thomas Müntzer to, more recently, Sr Anne Montgomery RSCJ and Fr Daniel Berrigan SJ of the anti-war Plowshares Movement.¹⁶ Of course, the two exemplary examples of this phenomenon from the United States in the twentieth century were Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X. With such persons we find a rebellion against the conformist and conforming elements of the consecrated religious vocation, which converts and subverts the particular-general medieval notion of such a vocation into singular, and yet not necessarily solitary, expressions. It is as if having responded to the religious equivalent of a Lord Kitchener poster – and there are many instances of such literature in churches – such persons then decide that a path which treads precariously between “loyal” rebellion and heterodox resistance is one they really are to walk upon.

The next major modulation of vocation in Western Christendom took place during and as part of the Protestant Reformation. In “An Open Letter to The Christian

16 The Plowshares Movement began in 1980 when eight anti-war activists broke into the General Electric Nuclear Missile facility in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, damaged nose cones of nuclear warheads and poured blood onto various documents. The name of the movement comes from a passage in the biblical Book of Isaiah: “[T]hey shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa. 2:4, KJV). Over seventy-five similar actions have taken place around the world since the first action, primarily but not exclusively by religious activists (M. A. Muller and Brown 2010).

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Nobility,” written in 1520, the German reformer Martin Luther attacks the Catholic doctrine of the time which divided the world into a “spiritual estate” comprised of “pope, bishops, priests and monks” and a “temporal estate” made up of “princes, lords, artisans, and farmers” (Luther 1520). This conception, which elevated clerics to a special status, Luther rejects in his characteristically truculent manner as “a fine bit of lying and hypocrisy” (Luther 1520). It is important to note that Luther maintains a distinction between the sphere of secular government, which he terms the worldly kingdom of “law,” and that of spiritual striving, which he terms the heavenly kingdom of “grace” (Luther 1989, 429), but he expands the boundaries of the latter to include all Christians, and not just the “spiritual professionals” (Luther 1520). The theological path towards this “democratisation” is mapped through a reading of selected New Testament epistles, which allows him to challenge the very foundation of the specifically Catholic division of spiritual and temporal, namely, the distinction between clerical and lay persons.

Traditional Catholic theology held that the priesthood was a special ontological status which was conferred by the sacrament of priestly ordination by a bishop. Luther, on the other hand, puts forward a notion that has become known as the “priesthood of all believers.” He justified this conception by citing both St Peter and St Paul. In the First Epistle of Peter, the author, addressing his audience of Christians who were “scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” writes: “[Y]e are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation” (1 Peter 1:1-2, 2:9, KJV). If all Christians are already priests, then the role of dispensing the sacraments and preaching is not premised upon a unique ontological status, but is rather an office which is undertaken by the office-holder within the boundaries of church order (Luther 1520). Luther cites Paul's Letter to the Romans, where it is said that “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Rom. 12:4-5, KJV).

At first glance, this levelling of the priesthood to simply one role in the body of believers at the same time appears to elevate all forms of human activity – including non-economic labour, e.g. being a spouse, parent or child – to the status of vocations, a position that is taken by various commentators such as William E. Placher (Placher 2005, 205–206). After all, in a Christmas sermon written around 1521, Luther argues that “all works are the same to a Christian, no matter what they are” (Luther 2005, 214). Nevertheless, it may be more accurate to say that Luther's broadening of the concept of

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vocation, like some instances of democratisation in the political realm, is primarily a levelling down rather than a levelling up.¹⁷ A particularly telling expression of Luther's theology of vocation can be found in his translation of a key passage in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (7:20) in which the word *klesis* – or, to be exact, its equivalent form *kleseis* – is translated as *Beruf*, that is, “job” or “occupation,” rather than *Berufung* or *Ruf*, that is, “calling” (Elliott 2005, 36). The King James Version maintained the straightforward and widely-accepted concept of *klesis*: “Let every man abide in the same *calling* wherein he was called” (1 Cor. 7:20, KJV). Luther, on the other hand, translated the passage as follows: “Ein jeglicher bleibe in dem *Beruf*, darin er berufen ist” (L1545). It is not an exaggeration to say that this choice of word by Luther in this single passage has had significant consequences for the history of the concept of vocation ever since.

Luther's intention, in translating what had been understood as *vocatio* into *Beruf*, was “to demonstrate and prove that not only the monk has a vocation, but every Christian in the world and in secular employment as well” (Kittel and Friedrich 1966). The effect of this daring translation, however, was to subsume the concept of vocation under a socially conservative rubric, for together with Luther's attempt to horizontalise the previously hegemonic idea of vocation came his teaching that Christians should not seek to change their “external position[s],” just as the shepherds who worshipped the infant Jesus returned to their flocks and did not attempt to retire to a “higher” monastic life (Luther 2005, 214). Thus, Luther's democratisation of vocation is formal rather than

17 Luther would probably not have accepted this claim, given his interesting thought experiment in the sphere of political theory, one which he considers analogical to the priesthood of all believers. He sketches a situation where “ten brothers, all king's sons and equal heirs” decide upon “one of themselves to rule the inheritance for them all,” and argues that in such a situation “they would all be kings and equal in power, though one of them would be charged with the duty of ruling” (Luther 1520). An enthusiastic democrat may see Luther's image as an apologia for popular sovereignty, and even link it to the claims that an “ascending” theory of government – to use Walter Ullmann's term – was the practice of medieval Germanic tribes, who elected their rulers (Ullmann 1978, 22). However, as even Ullmann recognises, the king could only be elected those from deemed to be of royal blood. Frode Horvik has pointed out that this “royal blood-right” was considered to be sacral; thus, the plausibility of claiming a strong element of democracy – whether in the classical or modern sense – among these tribes is rather low (Hervik 2012, 144). Luther's enthusiastic cooperation with the various princes in the Holy Roman Empire, moreover, makes any claim for a pronounced democratic impulse in him rather difficult, at least in the secular kingdom of Law. Furthermore, to return to the question of levelling up or down in the spiritual kingdom of Grace, if we take priesthood as being something that is “added” to “bare humanity” upon one's embrace of the Christian faith, Luther's concomitant proviso that practical order requires the office of priest to be exercised by specific people means that in his attempt to raise all Christians to the status of priesthood, Luther ironically reduces all to the position of the laity. This may not be a bad thing for some, particularly anti-institutionalists and anti-clericalists whether formally within the sphere of Christianity (such as the Quakers or the Japanese Non-Church Movement) or outside it, but ultimately Luther's claim that ten heirs may select one of their number to rule and yet be all kings equally is nonsensical, for to be a king is to be a monarch, and the very meaning of *monarchos* is “sole ruler.”

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substantive, as the upshot of his treatment of all varieties of *Beruf* as of equal standing before God, when twinned with the idea that one's place in the world is no accident but rather appointed by God, is to legitimise the actual hierarchies that exist. The peasant is to remain a peasant, the artisan an artisan, and so on. This attitude of indifference and resignation to what one is “given” is ironically a central part of the internal life of the religious orders which Luther opposed. As the *Principles* of the Anglican Society of the Sacred Mission counsels the member potentially disaffected by an uncongenial assignment, “If you have given your whole life to God why should you prefer to lose it in this way rather than it that” (Society of the Sacred Mission 1909, sec. xii)?¹⁸

Hence, New Testament scholar S. Scott Bartchy has argued that *Ruf* is the German word that corresponds best to *klesis*. Although *Berufung*, a word that carries the meaning of vocation or calling, is arguably slightly preferable to the technical/vocational term *Beruf*, and certainly better than alternative terms even more tied to social class such as *Stand* (status) or *Platz* (place) which have been used in translations since the Luther Bible, he nevertheless cites German feminist theologian Luise Schottroff's scepticism that *Berufung* is “a clear advance” over *Beruf* (Bartchy 2009). This is probably so because although the difference between *Ruf* and *Berufung* is subtle, the former's advantage is that it is associated with a call from an external source, as in the traditional *Ruf* to take up a professorship in a German university (Phillips 2015, 219).¹⁹ In other words, with *Ruf* the (proto-)liberal element of autonomous choice is downplayed, as one does not initiate the vocational “move” but rather responds to a call which comes from *outside* oneself. Nevertheless, it can be argued that this response is itself only possible if it is in accord with something that is *inside* oneself. To use, analogically, the example of the *Ruf* to become a professor at a particular university, if one has absolutely no inclination towards the position, then the call will almost certainly go unheeded. In other words, a connection must be made between the within and the beyond for there to be an instance of a fulfilled *klesis* or vocation.

18 Beyond this occupational indifference, however, Luther's translation of *klesis* as *Beruf* has gradually led to an even nastier turn in the interpretation of the subsequent verse in the chapter. As S. Scott Bartchy has shown, *Beruf* gradually morphed in some translations into words even further from the original meaning of *klesis* such as *Stand* or, in English, condition. Hence in the New Revised Standard Version, published in 1989, verses 20 and 21 are translated as follows: “Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called. Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. *Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever*” (1 Cor. 7:20-21, NRSV, italics added). Thus Paul's ruminations about the calling to embrace the way of Christ have evolved monstrously into a justification for slaves to remain in slavery (Bartchy 2008).

19 I am indebted to Félix Krawatzek for this distinction between the two terms.

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As Weber famously pointed out, Luther's radical reworking of the concept of vocation in his translation of the Bible spilled over into other Protestant societies, with the clearest example in the English-speaking world being that of the Calvinist Puritans (Weber 2001, xiii). Puritan divines such as William Perkins formulated a two-fold conception of vocation, dividing it into the "general calling" of Christian life, "common to all who live in the Church of God," and "particular" or "personal callings" which correspond to specific forms of labour or offices (Perkins 1626, 752, 754). The closeness of his terminology to our discussion in the previous section is significant, although there are certain finer distinctions that should be made. First of all, Perkins is generally considered to be among the Calvinists who hold to an understanding of the Christian *klesis* which is, in the terms we have been using, particular rather than general (and certainly not universal). It is a central doctrine of Calvinism that God has chosen an "elect" to be saved from eternal damnation, and by extension excluded many others from salvation. This is what is commonly known as "predestination." However, the particularity of this calling is further strengthened by those who hold to what has come to be known as "limited atonement." These Calvinists, whose patrimony some trace back to Theodore Beza, the sixteenth-century French theologian and disciple of Calvin, hold to the idea that Christ's atonement on the cross was "limited," and by this it is meant that Christ died not for the sins of the whole world but rather only for the elect.²⁰ Perkins, like other theologians of his time, spoke of "redemption" and "satisfaction" rather than "atonement," the latter being a term that came into use later (Ballitch 2015, 452), but his denial that Christ died for those outside the elect nevertheless arguably gives him a place among this group. In his own words, "the price is payd in the counsell of God, and as touching the event *only for those which are elected and predestinated*" (Perkins 1606, 18, italics added).

Secondly, Perkins' understanding of a "personal calling" is what we would call

20 It is true that the doctrine of limited atonement is a later formulation and does not itself occur in the writings of Calvin or other early Calvinists, although some argue that it and the other four of the "five points" of Calvinism can be traced back to the Synod of Dort in 1618-1619, which was convened in response to the rise of Arminianism, with its belief in what was subsequently termed unlimited atonement, namely, the notion that Christ died for all and not just for the elect, although some may choose not to believe and thus not be saved (Torrance 1983, 83). The historical theologian Richard A. Muller has cast doubt on these claims, noting that not only is atonement an English word which was not used by Calvin or any of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Calvinist theologians who wrote in Latin, the theological debates of their time were very different from those that erupted in the Anglo-American world from the nineteenth century, and the "five points" of Calvinism are a distillation of the tradition which occurred in that spatial-temporal context (R. A. Muller 2012, 59-60).

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an individual and not a singular calling. In his view, one is called to fill particular roles or “offices” in society, and he names and categorises them under two headings. The first are “of the essence and foundation of any societie,” and include that of a master or a servant, a husband or a wife, a parent and a child; the second are “only for the good, happy and quiet estate of a society,” such as that of a merchant, a husbandman, a physician, a lawyer and so on (Perkins 1626, 758). All of these roles are pre-given, and require only persons to be inserted into them, thus following the pattern of the individual-general relation which we discussed earlier.

The upshot of this is that we can see how the classical Protestant understanding of vocation, from Luther through the Puritan Calvinists and up until the present day, is based on the individual-particular-general circuit rather than the singular-universal one. This being the case, it is perhaps no wonder that such thinking could not resist, and indeed went hand-in-hand with, the rise of alienated labour under capitalism, as studies from Weber and R. H. Tawney onwards on the intimate relationship between religion and the economy in the countries where the capitalist mode of production arose have shown. For if one's vocation is simply filling in a role that has to be played in a given socio-historical situation, this role is not only infused with religious significance, as Weber pointed out (Weber 2001, 40), but also eradicates the singularity of the person. For if the person is not singular but merely individual, even if, as Perkins acknowledged, “every calling must be fitted to the man” (Perkins 1606, 758), the fit is akin to, it can be said without excessive exaggeration, a specific nut being sought for a specific bolt, thus resulting in a rather mechanical view of society with people as interchangeable parts.²¹

The aforementioned transformation of labour under capitalism brought about another gradual shift in the Christian understanding of vocation. To begin, it should be noted that in the Catholic regions of Europe, the intellectual and spiritual legacy of the Counter-Reformation was such that the medieval understanding of vocation as restricted to special religious callings was maintained, and would not change significantly until after the church-shaking event of the Second Vatican Council in 1962-

21 It is true that the predominant metaphor used by such Christian writers to describe the Christian community – or, in a few cases, society as a whole – is an organic one, i.e. a human body, and in this they follow St Paul. However, it has been discerned that the conception or paradigm of a living creature which they worked with was influenced by the philosophies of mechanism in thinkers such as Descartes and Hobbes who were their contemporaries. The literary theorist George C. Herndl, for instance, detects mechanistic strands in Perkins' sermons and tracts (Herndl 1970, 154).

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1965.²² It was this divergence that Weber pointed towards in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* when he noted that the conception of vocation as *Beruf* or practical sphere of work was in fact absent in the languages of the Catholic peoples of Europe (Weber 2001, 39). This can be attributed to the rejection of the Lutheran innovation in understanding vocation which we discussed earlier. Hence, we find that in Pope Leo XIII's famous 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, which inaugurated the body of theology known as Catholic Social Teaching, he deals with the question of work not in terms of vocation but rather primarily as a means of earning a living, supporting a family and bettering one's condition by acquiring private property (Leo XIII 2002, sec. 5).

However, with the advent and intensification of capitalist hegemony across the Western world, voices began to be heard from even Protestant quarters which called into question the equivalence of vocation and work brought about by Luther, the Puritans and other Reformers. Often this took the form of a critique of capitalism or, at least, the principle of competition which it is generally founded upon, as in the work of Baptist minister and social gospel pioneer Walter Rauschenbusch, most notably in *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907), his powerful broadside against not only the inequality and injustices of the time but also the apolitical and asocial forms of piety which explicitly or tacitly legitimised them. He pointed out that the “right to work” had become a slogan deployed by employers to hire strike-breakers (W. Rauschenbusch 2007, 263), and that the principle of cooperation based on the Christian idea of human relations of love was increasingly difficult to practise in a capitalist culture, with the “higher principle” of service to others greatly obscured unless one was in a line of work such as medicine, teaching or art (W. Rauschenbusch 2007, 253). Nevertheless, Rauschenbusch still believed that a person's daily work could be filled with divine purpose if society could be reconstructed on the basis of service to humanity, which he linked to the Gospel idea of the Kingdom of God (W. Rauschenbusch 2007, 290).

Subsequently, however, the entire project to sanctify everyday labour came under attack from dissident voices such as the French Protestant theologian, social theorist and Christian anarchist Jacques Ellul. Ellul writes in a 1980 essay (which appeared in English in 1985): “I scarcely know a biblical text which presents work as

²² Hence, one finds in Evelyn Waugh's 1945 novel *Brideshead Revisited* the fifteen-year old Cordelia Flyte, a devout Roman Catholic, explaining to the Anglican-raised protagonist, Charles Ryder, what it would mean for her to have a vocation: “[A vocation] means you can be a nun. If you haven't a vocation, it's no good however much you want to be; and if you have a vocation, you can't get away from it, however much you hate it” (Waugh 2000, 213).

valuable, good, or virtuous. ... In the Bible work is a necessity, a constraint, a punishment, except in a few, unusual texts” (Ellul 1985, 43). In another piece published in English in 1972, he insists that “[n]othing in the Bible allows us to identify *work* with *calling*. ... [Work] is an imperative of survival, and the Bible remains realistic enough not to superimpose upon this necessity a superfluous spiritual decoration” (Ellul 1972, 8). Here we find that Ellul rejects the Protestant *Beruf*, but also refuses to return to the traditionalist Catholic *vocatio*, thus opening a way for him and others to reach back to the primitive understanding of *klesis* as the “mere” calling to follow Christ.

Versions of Academic *Klesis*

Having examined the invention and development of the concept of *klesis* within the Christian context in the preceding section, the question which arises naturally is simply this: if the *klesis* of the New Testament, understood in its primitive and most meaningful sense, is to belong to and follow after Christ, what is the *klesis* of the university? What are we who dwell within it *called* to do? In order to answer this seemingly simple and yet rather controversial question, we shall consider the rather interesting taxonomy of academics formulated by Stanley Fish in a 2012 series of lectures, published as *Versions of Academic Freedom: From Professionalism to Revolution* (Fish 2014). Fish categorises academics according to their various views on the contentious subject of academic freedom, but it can be argued that his analysis is relevant to not just this particular aspect of higher education, but in fact the university's calling as a whole. An examination and extension of Fish's arguments will reveal that the broad periods in which the conception of vocation developed within the Christian West, as discussed above, have in fact more specific analogues within the sphere of higher education. However, we will see that we cannot easily leap into an understanding of a primitive *klesis* for the university as is possible in the Christian context, given the canonical textual resources available to the latter which we unfortunately do not have in the same manner. It is also important to note that, in employing Fish's taxonomy, we must avoid the trap of reducing the entirety of higher education to simply the work of academics, who form but one of its parts. Hence, with each of Fish's classifications, we have to be careful to not forget the perspectives of the other major human segments of the university community, namely non-academic staff and students.

Fish identifies five “schools” which differ in their assessment of the boundaries

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and responsibilities of academic freedom, which he organises in an ascending fashion from the most inward-facing and conservative to the most outward-facing and radical – or, in his own words, “plotted on a continuum that goes from right to left” (Fish 2014, 7). For the purposes of our argument, however, we can divide the five into two main categories, for at the core of Fish's classifications is one simple question: does academia exist for a good or an end that lies outside its practical activities – whether in part or in toto – or is its *raison d'être* contained simply in its primary internal activities, that is, those directly involving or indirectly linked to learning, teaching and research?

For four of Fish's five schools, the answer to this question is that there is indeed a *telos* or at least a justification that is added on to the “bare” work of the university. The differences between them arise from varying opinions as to what exactly this additional justification is, and how it transforms how one understands the basic activities carried out in the higher education sphere. It is clear, however, that Fish sees in them a trajectory of increasing radicalism in the expansion – which in some cases is paradoxically accompanied by a certain narrowing – of the purposes of the academic institution, a radicalism that he disapproves of.

Let us begin, however, with the first school, in which Fish places himself – and half-jokingly but rather unpersuasively suggests that he may be the only member of.²³ He calls it the “It's just a job” school, and its perspective on higher education, which he describes as “deflationary,” considers academia to be “a service that offers knowledge and skills to students who wish to receive them” and not “a vocation or holy calling” (Fish 2014, 10). It is important to note that Fish's antipathy to the word vocation arises from his disagreement with the 1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure promulgated by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which he claims is founded upon a distinction between what is considered a “job” and what is considered a “vocation.” In his words:

A job is defined by an agreement (often contractual) between a worker and a boss: you will do X and I will pay you Y; and if you fail to perform as stipulated, I will discipline or even dismiss you. Those called to a vocation are not merely workers; they are professionals; that is, they profess something larger than the task immediately at hand – a religious faith, a commitment to the rule of law, a dedication to healing, a zeal for truth – and in order to

23 Literary critic Evan Kindley, in a review of Fish's book, points out that Fish is “being disingenuous: there is in fact a large class of professionals within the university who tend to hold just such a view – the view that professors are, at the end of the day, just employees, with no special rights or privileges that don't attach to other kinds of employees. They're called administrators” (Kindley 2016).

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become credentialed professors, as opposed to being amateurs, they must undergo a rigorous and lengthy period of training. Being a professional is less a matter of specific performances... than of a continual, indeed, lifelong responsiveness to an ideal or a spirit. (Fish 2014, 3)

Rejecting the concept of “vocation” which the AAUP Declaration and its intellectual successors are founded upon,²⁴ Fish and other adherents to the “It’s just a job” school believe that they are not in their academic labours “exercising First Amendment rights or forming citizens or inculcating moral values or training soldiers to fight for social justice;” instead, “[t]heir obligations and aspirations are defined by the distinctive task – the advancement of knowledge – they are trained and paid to perform, defined, that is, by contract and by the course catalog rather than by a vision of democracy or world peace” (Fish 2014, 10). Given that the AAUP’s invocation of the concept of vocation or calling is clearly rooted in the Protestant innovation in the idea of *klesis*, the desacralisation of the work of the academic that Fish’s first school advocates can be seen as a break with the sanctification of everyday labour embodied in the Lutheran notion of vocation as *Beruf*. However, this school goes beyond the critique of Luther’s *Beruf* which we examined earlier, namely, the one made by Christians critics such as Ellul, because in this case there is not even a baseline *klesis*, such as the calling to a Christian life, that can be returned to. The gesture here is towards disenchantment and secularity pure and simple: there is no such thing as an academic *klesis*; there is not even Luther’s *Beruf*, but only the pre-Reformation understanding of the German word and its corresponding analogues in other languages. Therefore for Fish, academic teaching, research and other related labours are all merely instances of work, and nothing grander. This is not to say that he thinks academic work is of not great value, but rather that its value lies solely in itself. We might call this autotelic approach, borrowing from the famous aesthetic slogan which first came to prominence in the nineteenth century, “academia for academia’s sake.”

The second school arises directly out of the 1915 AAUP declaration quoted above, and Fish terms it the “For the common good” school. Here we find a conception of vocation similar to Luther’s *Beruf*, although the sacred dimension of calling has here been largely secularised. Rather than performing one’s work for the glory of God, it is

24 The 1915 Declaration certainly describes the task of the academic in lofty terms, including as a “high calling” which “our profession may prove unworthy of” (American Association of University Professors 2006, 300).

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rather to democracy and the community that one renders one's service.²⁵ Alongside the extension of human knowledge and the education of students, the university's task is to provide expert advice “for various branches of public service” which will contribute “toward the right solution of... social problems” (American Association of University Professors 2006). The university in a democratic society bears the responsibility “to help make public opinion more self-critical and more circumspect, to check the more hasty and unconsidered impulses of popular feeling, to train the democracy to the habit of looking before and after” (American Association of University Professors 2006).

A third school, Fish says, comes into being as “a logical extension” of the second. This is the “Academic exceptionalism or uncommon beings” school (Fish 2014, 11). If academics are meant to be “a counterweight to the force of common popular opinion, they must themselves be *uncommon*, not only intellectually but morally; they must be in the words of the 1915 Declaration, ‘men of high gift and character’” (Fish 2014, 11–12, italics in original). The underlying principle of this school is eerily reminiscent of the elitist idea of vocation which was hegemonic in pre-Reformation Christendom and which continued in the Catholic world from the Counter-Reformation until the Second Vatican Council. Here we find that academics are the equivalent of nuns, monks, priests and apostolic religious in the realm of higher education; that is, they are the spiritual athletes of the university, bearers of a unique calling, which carries not just special responsibilities but also special rights, for in their role of correcting “the errors of popular opinion, they escape popular judgment and are not to be held accountable to the same laws and restrictions that constrain ordinary citizens” (Fish 2014, 12).

For Fish, the next step away from seeing academic labours as simply a job whose value lies wholly in itself is taken by the fourth school, the “Academic freedom as critique” school. He cites Judith Butler's work on the concept and practice of critique as being exemplary of this approach, whereby “[a]cademic freedom is understood... as a protection for dissent;” furthermore, “the scope of dissent must extend to the very distinction and boundaries the academy presently enforces” (Fish 2014, 13). In this vision, the boundaries between academic labours and political imperatives become blurred, for the drawing of definite lines “has the effect of freezing the status quo and of allowing distinctions originally rooted in politics to present themselves as apolitical and

25 Nonetheless, there is arguably a residue of religiosity here, for it was St Paul who summarised the entirety of the law in one single duty, namely to love one's neighbour (Gal. 5:14).

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natural” (Fish 2014, 13). The critical legal tradition that we will examine in the final section of this chapter is, of course, the central expression of this school within the realm of legal studies, and embodies all the strengths and weaknesses of this approach.

Finally, we have the most daring school, namely the “Academic freedom as revolution” school (Fish 2014, 13). Its academic members equate the duties of teaching to that of a citizen, with the latter generally construed in a leftist political fashion, leading to radical pedagogist Henry A. Giroux's pronouncement that university teachers have a responsibility to “fight for an inclusive and radical democracy by recognizing that education in the broadest sense is not just about understanding, however critical, but also about providing the conditions for assuming the responsibilities we have as citizens to expose human misery and to eliminate the conditions that produce it” (Giroux 2008, 128). Interestingly, this approach erases, in a sense, the uniqueness of the academic: she is merely carrying out the general tasks of preparing the way for and fomenting revolution in the specific realm of her daily work. Here we find a conception of vocation, then, which at first glance seems, in terms of structure, remarkably close to the primitive Christian understanding of *klesis*, for the calling to work for social justice and to challenge an unjust world is common to all who choose to embrace it, in response to it reaching their ears. However, this is *not* a *klesis* specific to the university, but rather one which leads to a *doxa* and *praxis* of activists, revolutionaries, and their fellow travellers. In this sense, it lies halfway between Luther's *Beruf* and traditionalist Catholic *vocatio*, as it paradoxically involves both the baptism of worldly activities in the light of higher aims, as well as the sense that one is carrying out a special task.²⁶

In light of the discussion above, it can be argued that Fish sees the fairly moderate perspective of the “For the common good” school as the beginning of a slippery slope. By admitting that there are “higher values” or aims which transcend the “severe professionalism of the 'It's just a job' school” (Fish 2014, 11), one takes the first tentative step onto the top of the slope, and, from where Fish stands, it becomes difficult either to avoid sliding all the way to asserting that the value of academia lies in its service to the revolution, or to validly criticise those who happily do so, even if one has latched on to an intermediate point down the hill.

26 An analogue from the history of Christianity is the *devotio moderna* movement which flowered in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Germany and the Low Countries. The central idea behind this movement was that it was possible to live a rigorous and devoted Christian life in the world without formally embracing the institutional framework of the religious orders (McGinn 2012, 97).

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However, Fish's one-dimensional continuum, in which the latter four of his five schools represent incremental shifts away from the simple and pure “It's just a job” perspective, is far too simplistic. It is possible to map out Fish's framework more accurately as well as bring it into a conversation with the various other theoretical threads we have explored so far in this thesis, an encounter which we have already begun in the last few pages. The diagram on the following page²⁷ represents the discussion so far and what is to come.

The diagram allows us to see convergences and divergences which may not always be as visible while engaging purely in the linguistic mode. For example, it becomes easier to see that Fish's desire to resist external validation or vindication for the activities of the university can be turned against right-wing tendencies as well as the left-wing ones which he trains his fire upon.²⁸ Hence, his framing of his five schools as being “plotted on a continuum that goes from right to left” is misleading (Fish 2014, 7). To begin with, his denigration of the “Academic freedom as revolution” school as subsuming academic activities completely under a foreign rubric applies as well to the economic instrumentalism we analysed in Chapter Two, because in both cases the university does not have its own justifying content – that is, it does not exist and operate for itself – but is judged according to its furtherance of extrinsic goals. The key difference, however, is that whereas academic radicals of the revolutionary sort hold in a febrile tension their idealistic commitments and their instrumentalist aims, economic instrumentalism formally ignores the matter of principles, and so even though its practitioners are often not themselves devoid of abstract ideas, the primary source of justification(s) for their decisions and policies lies squarely at the top of the triangle.

We can also enquire into certain curious affinities in the diagram. For a start, how can it be that economic instrumentalism, which is the hegemonic manifestation of the “university without its own content” which we discussed in Chapter Two, is located in the same corner of the triangle as Fish's “It's just a job” school, given that Fish is against justifying academic labour through any *telos* apart from the work itself? What in fact unites them is their commitment to what we may call a “pure” – that is, pre-

²⁷ The basic structure of this triangular diagram is adapted from one in Donald F. Durnbaugh's study, *The Believers' Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism*, in which he maps out the various Christian churches and sects according to the Trinitarian poles of Word, Spirit and Tradition (Durnbaugh 1985, 31).

²⁸ In his aforementioned review of the book, Kindley asserts that “there are left[-wing] and right[-wing] versions of all of the positions [Fish] describes” (Kindley 2016).

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can be depicted on a single line that runs from right to left. The “For the common good” school is indeed often the first move away from the “It’s just a job” mentality, but once one reaches the centre of the triangle, to shift one’s perspective towards any of the final three schools takes one in different directions.

Academic exceptionalism, with its assertion that the task of the university is a unique one with its own distinct premises and perhaps even deserving of *sui generis* privileges within wider society, takes one down-and-leftwards in the direction of the university-in-itself and its emphasis on community, and also, as we have already observed, very close to medieval *vocatio*. It is particularly concerned with its own internal consistency and counter-hegemonic position, which entails a more “separatist” approach, which is expressed most closely by the image of the *dissident cell*.

The revolutionary school, on the other hand, is premised more upon abstract ideals and principles such as social justice and emancipation than community *per se*. Nevertheless, there is a strong instrumentalist streak in its operations as well, and so it involves a movement primarily to the right side of the triangle. On the vertical axis it lies in between Luther’s *Beruf* and medieval *vocatio*, as we discussed earlier, and it sees its operations as being that of a “vanguard” within the university and society. Its purpose is to exert power over and harness existing institutions towards wider societal transformation, rather than to create spaces of exception via a strategy of exodus, and therefore can be represented by the image of the *radical institution*.

Finally, adherents to the school of critique are the most critical of any form of instrumentalism, and thus joining this party entails a move downwards and far away from the top-end of the triangle. Its idea of calling involves some elements of medieval *vocatio*, but is also perhaps the closest among the five schools to the New Testament conception of *klesis*, with its critique of narrow professionalism and a general orientation towards an entire way or form of life. On the horizontal axis, it straddles somewhat precariously the middle point between community and abstract principles, separatism and vanguardism. The counter-cultural aspects of critique lead to and presuppose a strong sense of community, but it is also a school which involves strongly-held ideals. Thus, the image which symbolises it best, perhaps, is the *student occupation*.

Having synthesised Fish’s useful taxonomy with the theoretical framework which we have constructed over the course of this thesis, we are now in position where we may return to the question with which we began this sub-section, namely: what

is the *klesis* of the university? There is sadly no single answer, for one's response to this question depends on what one's conception of calling is, which is in turn linked to one's relation to each of the three poles of the conceptual triad of the university. All these complicated dynamics can be represented by where one is located on the triangular diagram above. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise that the mapping of the ideal types in Fish's taxonomy onto the diagram are not meant to be static, unshifting points, but rather something closer to a "home base" from which singular and collective actors begin their work and return to. For instance, there will be those aligned to the school of critique who choose at certain times to engage in more instrumentalist struggles.²⁹ This does not either invalidate the heuristic value of the diagram nor does it necessarily indicate a rupture in the dominant position of such actors, but in many cases simply signals a tactical and often temporary shift.

This situation of stark plurality both in understanding the idea of *klesis* or calling within the university as well as how such an idea is expressed in thought, affect and practice may seem rather overwhelming in its unruliness. How then are we to deal with these conflicting forces? One way of doing so is to dip once again into the Pauline toolbox and bring into the discussion the concept which is the necessary partner of *klesis*, namely, *charismata*, that is, the various *charisma* or gifts that accompany the calling. For it is through delving into the dynamics of convergent, divergent and even patently irreconcilable expressions of and attempts to live out the academic *klesis* that we may interrogate what at first sight appears to be the meta-antinomy which runs across and divides the pluralistic university, namely that of partiality and integration.

5.3 Partiality and Integration in a Web of Pluralism and Exclusivism

There are two opposing yet complementary ways in which denizens of the university may manifest their respective callings. The first is the path of *partiality*, which involves holding firmly to the specific perspective and approach which one feels most passionate about, and not allowing oneself to be distracted or swayed by opposing viewpoints. Despite a few decades of postmodern and post-structuralist currents in academic discourse, it can be said that this is still the default mode in which most within the university operate. The second path is that of *integration*, which involves careful

²⁹ An example of this would be a critical scholar who decides to enter the world of representative politics. Instances of this in the critical legal world include Roberto M. Unger in Brazil and, more recently, Costas Douzinas in Greece.

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listening and observation of the various strands of *doxa* and *praxis* in the university, and then developing a synthesis of sorts which allows one to create a hopefully valuable if seemingly motley blend of these elements.³⁰ In terms of the diagram above, we can understand the partial approach as finding one's spot in the triangle and rooting oneself there, while the integrative approach involves hovering within a particular area and staking out what is often a new point between existing positions. Hovering over these two approaches is the possibility of a *pluralist attitude*, in which one may adopt either a partial or integrative strategy, yet acknowledge that one's viewpoint does not explain the whole of the field, and indeed value the multiplicity of expressions. The opposite of this is, of course, an *exclusivist attitude*, which considers one's specific position to be the complete truth or, at the very least, very close to it. It can be said that pluralists recognise that their personal and collective stances are located somewhere on the triangle – or to use a common phrase, are but part of a bigger picture. Conversely, exclusivists generally refuse to acknowledge that anything like the diagram exists, for it does not fit with their vision, which sees things in one-dimensional terms of black and white. Even they do accept that they can be placed on a particular taxonomic diagram, they hold to the view there is in fact a *correct* spot on it where one *should* be.

Exclusivism is fairly straight-forward to practise and to preach. By contrast, a large part of the challenge of adopting and maintaining a pluralist attitude is the fact that the format of academic discourse favours its exclusivist “rival.” It is true that Julia Kristeva argues, building upon the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, that a text contains underlying capacities for “intertextuality” due to its relationship with prior, synchronic and future texts. In her own words, a text “relat[es] communicative speech, which aims to inform directly, to different kinds of anterior or synchronic utterances” (Kristeva 1980, 36). However, the conventional academic text, considered on its own, is at the same time a monologic, centripetal medium due to the requirement that it put forward a unified, non-contradictory main argument. This aspect of academic texts is clearest when we compare them with the explicitly dialogical, centrifugal approach which Bakhtin identifies in the novel (Bakhtin 1981, 272–273), although these elements are also present in other genres, such as the Platonic dialogue.

The fact that no piece of writing is in truth formed outside of exchanges with

30 It is important to note that this new synthesis is itself often an instance of creativity and novelty, rather than simply a piecing together of elements previously considered to be contradictory. The fruit of integration is a new thing, akin to a chemically-bonded compound rather than just a mixture.

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others living, deceased and to come nonetheless does not puncture one of the official pretensions of academic writing, in which the formal acknowledgements offered still stand apart from the author. And yet Bakhtin's argument that "the culture of essential and inescapable solitude" conceals that "[t]he very being of man (both external and internal) is the deepest communion" (Bakhtin 1984, 287) is only one surface of a multi-sided phenomenon. To move momentarily from Bakhtin to some of those who can be said to extend his work, it is accurate to say that reports of the death of the author have been greatly exaggerated, for an exaggeration necessarily presupposes an actual truth that has been blown out of proportion. The received wisdom of post-structuralist textual indeterminacy has not put to an end the attribution of thoughts expressed in words to those from whom those words have come. Even if the writer is a shell filled entirely with elements from outside, the existence of the shell cannot be done away with. Hence Bakhtin's assertion that "[a] person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary" (Bakhtin 1984, 287) misses the fact that this boundary, if semi-porous for the most part, not infrequently closes upon itself, if only to open up again.

Hence, there is what appears at first glance to be a meta-antinomy between partiality and integration, which is connected to but far from identical with the leaning towards either exclusivism and pluralism which lies in the background. A closer consideration of this dynamic, however, reveals that partiality and integration are not diametrically opposed but are rather the two extremes of a continuum, for it is perfectly possible to strongly favour a particular approach while accepting approaches which are more integrative as equally valid alternatives, and vice versa. The real antinomy is, in fact, the opposition between the exclusivist attitude and the pluralist attitude, for adherents to one almost always consider those on the other side to be completely mistaken. However, what if it were possible to understand both these positions as mutually supportive when viewed from a second-order perspective?

Adopting a frame of reference that is both wider and deeper, it can be argued that both exclusivists and pluralists have something to contribute to the university as a totality. The passion of the former for their specific particularity or synthesis allows them to act and speak with great decisiveness and conviction. This ties in with William James' characterisation of a great philosopher, already quoted above, as she who sees things "straight in [her] own peculiar way, and [is] dissatisfied with any opposite way of seeing them" (W. James 1955, 20). To demand that such persons give up their

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singleness of mind, heart and hand would be to deprive us of their valuable contributions, attained through the deployment of – and even surrender to – the powerful internal forces which drive them.

However, unflinching conviction is not the only virtue that is needed in a sphere such the university. The pluralist view may be caricatured by its detractors as over-cautious, indecisive or wishy-washy, but it too has an important part to play. Especially in situations which have become extremely polarised, the impulse which impels some to recognise the partial truths among the various actors locked into agonistic stand-offs can be remarkably helpful. To use an everyday metaphor, in a highly oppositional situation in which one perspective is emerging as hegemonic, the exclusivist attitude is like the pedal in a motorised vehicle which allows it to accelerate in a particular direction, while the pluralist attitude often acts as the brake pedal, which allows for a more considered survey of one's surroundings and turning, if required, to the left, to the right, or even around. In fact, in certain circumstances such braking is necessary to prevent a horrendous accident. In a different situation – for instance, one which is less polarised and more conciliatory – these roles may be reversed, and pluralism may be the throttle while exclusivism may act as the brake pedal. Regardless of which roles are taken up by the two attitudes in the situation concerned, it is clear that the university, to link it by analogy to an automobile, needs both pedals in order to be driven well.

If both exclusivist and pluralist attitudes have valuable contributions to make to the university's overall vocation, then the question on the level of a singular person or group of persons is this: how does one choose between them? Indeed, is choice even the right concept to deploy, given that, strictly-speaking, one does not generally *decide upon* a vocation but is rather, quite often, seized by it? Following on from this, if taking an exclusivist or pluralist stance is a “decision” or acquiescence that only forms the backdrop to one's expression of the academic vocation, how does one reconcile the manifold partial or integrative expressions of these two stances, of which the five schools Fish identified are but a few ideal types? The answer to these two questions lies in the concept which we will now delve into, namely that of *charismata* or gifts.

Charismata: The Counterpart which Provides Form to Klesis

When it comes to debates about the purpose and essence of the university and those who labour within it, the temptation is to attempt to convince every other actor that

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one's specific notion and expression of the academic *klesis* is the right one. However, given that we have explored the various conflicting understandings of what having a vocation within the university even means – from “pure” or secular *Beruf*, on the one end, to New Testament *klesis*, on the other – such an endeavour is quite certainly futile, for it is nearly impossible to agree upon a certain substantive content when one does not even agree upon the form in which that content is to be contained within.

It must be emphasised that what is being advocated here is *not* a weakening of one's particular positions, beliefs or practices in favour of a bland middle-of-the-road liberalism which only admits into the terrain of dispute and decision a constricted band of theory-affect-practice which is considered “reasonable.” Neither is it necessary for *all* of us to abandon our objections to particular ideas, affects and practices of those on the other sides of the divide. Indeed, as already stated above, it is important for there to be *some* of us who resolutely refuse to entertain the possibility that conflicting perspectives have significant (or even any) validity. Such absolute convictions often assist the rigorous development of those positions. However, it is equally important that there are *others* who are willing to stand in the unstable middle ground and, when faced with matters of great contestation, attempt to broker workable compromises between rival groups, or at least carry the pluralist flag. For it is also crucial to note that compromise is simply one of the many possible resolutions to a certain conflict. But perhaps one way of summing up the heart of the matter is this: it is essential for at least certain persons in the university to recognise the distinctive *charisms* of its various actors.

The term “charism” is a religious one, and comes from the Greek word *charisma*, which means a “gift of grace” (Kittel and Friedrich 1985). In the Pauline tradition, this concept is tied to that of *klesis*, for while the latter is universal, the former – in its plural form, that is, *charismata* – provides both singular and particular renderings of that universal vocation among the various persons who embrace it. It can be said that *charismata* have both singular and particular aspects, for often life in human society requires that persons combine their efforts and energies in collective endeavours, which then results in the creation or affirmation of a particular charism which structures the common life of an organisation or even a group of friends such as the Bloomsbury Group or the Clapham Sect. Such particular charisms are rarely identical to the singular

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charism which a person experiences as developing during the course of her life, but one clear exception can be seen in the case of a notable figure who founds an organisation according to a particular vision which overlaps significantly with her singular one.³¹

Paul addresses the relation between *klesis* and *charismata* most significantly in a text we have already referenced above, namely his First Letter to the Corinthians. To begin with, he recognises that he himself has a specific constellation of gifts which make up his singular *charisma*, and his passion for this charism can easily lead to him wishing that all possessed it. Nonetheless, he is aware that his singular charism is not that of everyone else. Thus he states in a passage discussing celibacy and marriage, “For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift [*charisma*] of God, one after this manner, and another after that” (1 Cor. 7:7, KJV). Paul tempers his obvious enthusiasm for celibacy, which came from his personal experience of the freedom which it gave him to carry out his missionary endeavours, by acknowledging that the merits of such a way of life do not negate those of other ways, such as marriage. This move of Paul's is a remarkable gesture towards a pluralist stance, even if within a rather particular frame, namely that of the Christian faith.

Thus he goes on to write that “as God hath distributed [*emerisen*] to every man, as the Lord hath called [*keklēken*] every one, so let him walk” (1 Cor. 7:17, KJV). Barty argues in an unpublished note received by the author of this thesis on 7th July 2016 that we should understand *emerisen* and *keklēken* not as synonyms used by Paul to merely underscore a point, but rather as two distinct terms corresponding to, respectively, *charismata* and *klesis*. Citing Wolfgang Schrage's German commentary on the letter, he also asserts that *charismata* is bound up with one's external situation – that is, the distinct location and set of circumstances which one finds oneself in – while *klesis* pertains to the essential call. It is important for us to stress that one's distinct location in the world, whether understood as being purely contingent or imbued with some greater sense of meaning or purpose, is always the practical starting point for any form of life. Even in an age which elevates personal choice as one of the highest ideals, any person who has lived for a certain number of years will recognise that there are many things in life which are beyond the autonomous determination of a single person. It is by recognising this fact of overarching heteronomy that we may be able to accept that our

31 A fairly recent example of this exceptional confluence of singularity and particularity in the religious sphere is that of Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity.

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talents and defects, our capacities and limitations, our resources and poverty, and so on, are all in some way *charismata* or gifts. Given the choice, we may have not chosen some of these things for ourselves, yet, whether we like them or not, they are the raw materials with which our lives must be fashioned.

If it can be said that *charismata* provides forms for the living out of *klesis*, it is equally the case that *klesis* provides an underlying structure for the exercise of *charismata*. It is, of course, a truism that a gift can always be misused, because if something is truly handed over to the use of a person, that person has the power to utilise it for whatever she decides upon. Here is where the concept of *klesis* returns to perform its role, for the actions of a person who takes on a certain calling – that is, the exercise of her gifts – can always be measured by their congruence with the basic content of the essential vocation in question. Thus *charismata*, far from displacing or superseding *klesis*, in fact enters into a mutually-supportive relationship with it.

“That's all very well and good,” one might say, “but what does all this hullabaloo about *klesis* and *charismata* have to do beyond the sphere of Christianity, especially since we have deconstructed the secular conception of vocation?” What the word *charismata* signifies outside its ecclesiastical setting and the framework of Christian theology is, like the existence of multiplicity we discussed above, a banality. It is widely recognised that some of us are or have become better at certain things than other things, although it is also recognised that there is generally ample room for persons to venture into activities which they do not – on the surface and according to the usual criteria – seem to be “fitted” to. We may call the first instance “ability” and the second “potential,” and they connect with Manuel Delanda's idea that it is not simply presently-manifested *properties* that are real, but also latent *tendencies* and *capacities* (DeLanda 2013, 71). The strength of the concept of *charismata*, however, lies in the fact that it, when paired with *klesis*, it holds together the antinomial poles of pluralism and exclusivism, as alternatives to mere fragmentation and/or totalitarianism.³²

32 An additional objection to the deployment of the concept of *charismata*, from a secular perspective, is that speaking of gifts presupposes a giver, which in the Christian references here is assumed to be God. Indeed, as Angus McDonald has pointed out in an exploration of “Critique as Avocation,” the same can be said about the idea of vocation as a calling, for historically-speaking the one who calls the human being to a certain thing was also a divine being (McDonald 2012). Nevertheless, this protest does not in any significant way challenge the use to which we have put Pauline concepts such as *klesis* and *charismata*, for although they may have a religious origin, the empirical matters which they deal with – namely, stirrings towards particular and singular tasks and the certain capacities which tend to accompany them – are indisputable, even if they often resist easy explanation.

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Indeed, the best way of valuing the various interpretations and expressions of the academic vocation, represented by the triangular diagram above, is to (re)conceive them *not* as conflicting versions of *klesis* but rather as strangely complementary versions of *charismata*. To each of us has been distributed [*emerisen*] a singular *charisma*, which is far from static but constantly evolving and developing. It is by embodying this *charisma* that a person or group is able to engage in the overarching and underlying *klesis* of the university. Faced with a divisive ecclesial community in Corinth, Paul chose the metaphor of a body to illustrate the value of plurality:

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? ... And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. (1 Cor. 12:14-17, 21-22, KJV)

Perhaps the greatest barrier towards such an understanding of the varied expressions of vocation in the university is the fact that many of us, if scratched hard enough, reveal (semi-)exclusivist tendencies below any surface pluralism. The metaphor of the body simply does not work if one considers another actor to be part of *not* the wider body one is a member of but rather *another* body. Here the spatial aspects of the triangle diagram are instructive, as often one may not be entirely sectarian in one's conceptualisation of who is part of the same body as oneself, but will nevertheless delimit this body to a certain section of the triangle instead of embracing it in its entirety. This is a less dogmatic and more strategic form of exclusivism, because it believes that collaboration with those outside one's specific area can take place on the basis of certain congruent aims, but it remains exclusivist because clear boundaries are maintained. Thus it is conceivable that the proponents of the school of "critique" may make common cause with those in the school of "revolution," the "academic exceptionalism" school or even those in the "for the common good" school, but refuse to have anything to do with the "it's just a job" school.

We must, however, return to the difficult question which we have thus far skirted around: can we formulate a "baseline *klesis*" for the university, in the manner of the simple Christian pledge to follow Christ discussed in the preceding section? Even despite the manifest disagreements between the various ideal types of the university

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vocation, as well as the structural contingency of the alliances and divergences between these types which we have just discussed, it is possible to say that if we retrace the variegated academic vocations to “ground zero,” we will find an agreement upon Fish's description of the most basic mission of the university, namely to educate and advance knowledge. From this starting point, many denizens of higher education have set off in contrasting directions, which has led to inevitable differences on what educating and advancing knowledge means and involves, and what should be added unto these basic activities, yet at the level of bare academic *praxis*, there still exists this common ground. At the day's end, this is not something to be scoffed at, but rather valued as a possible basis for mutual recognition, if not appreciation between the various contesting sides.

At this point it is necessary for the writer to pause for a moment the impersonal form of argumentation being pursued and make a personal declaration and admission. In the previous chapters, we have followed a trajectory that can be said to be ultimately partial rather than disinterested. The critique of instrumentalism and idealism in the postwar university in Chapters Two and Three, as well as the elucidation of the university-in-itself in Chapter Four, are latently grounded on the methodological presupposition that although bracketing all other viewpoints in order to focus one's attention on one particular perspective is possible in part, and indeed necessary, it is impossible to completely escape one's subjective position in the world and thus engage in absolutely “objective” reflection. With the partial exception of this chapter, largely hidden in the backstage of this thesis is an overarching view which is coloured by the writer's own inclinations toward a “feeling-centred” approach, that is, towards the bottom-left corner of the triangle, with the closest of the five schools being, perhaps unsurprisingly, that of “critique.” Therefore, transposing the alleged words of Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms into what we are here considering, I am left with no choice but to admit, “Here I stand; I can do no other.”³³ For I am of course not completely exempt from the statement in Chapter Four that “convinced proponents of one of the three perspectives... carry their home terrain within them wherever they go and thus instinctively reframe everything they encounter in its terms.”

Nevertheless, on the issue of exclusivism versus pluralism, my tendencies lean

33 Some more recent translations have interpreted Luther's famous statement in a manner which stress its propositional element. For instance, in the collection edited by Henry Scowcroft Bettenson, we find the first phrase translated as “On this I stand” (Bettenson 1967, 201). The traditional, and more literal, translation from the German “Hie stehe ich” is here preferred for its spatial connotations.

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towards the latter, and thus I am less of a “convinced proponent of one of the three perspectives” than someone who recognises his instinctive leanings and who wishes to moderate them through productive oscillation. However, although I can attempt to minimise the influence of my partiality in the last instance, and briefly enter, for instance, the world at the top of the triangle where – at its most extreme – instrumentalism reigns and everything is just a job, in order to grasp its underlying logic, it is nonetheless for me a very difficult operation which I cannot presume to execute with complete precision or success. Having already critiqued the aspects of instrumentalism which I find to be damaging, the follow-up question of whether there is anything to be redeemed from the wider sphere in which it arose, namely, action-centrism, needs to be addressed. However, given my residual partiality, the best that I can do is to firstly assume, as a matter of methodology, that there is a contribution to be made from that section of the diagram, and then do all I can to discern what it may be. For what I am unable to fully present (much less represent), I can nevertheless posit in principle. That is to say, even though I may personally be very much disinclined towards a strongly instrumentalist perspective, and may struggle to articulate its merits, I am still convinced that the broader action-centric perspective which has brought about this instrumentalist approach has its place within the larger whole.

It is at this point, however, that the dangers of an unreflective form of pluralism become apparent. It is all well and good to wish to include the action-centric perspective from which the rapacious instrumentalism documented in Chapter Two arose, but if this is done at the expense of critically assessing the impact of such an approach, then what we end up with is a form of insipid relativism, that is, the sort of “equivocating” which, as we have seen, Karatani rightly excoriates (Karatani 2003b, 23). The underlying search for truth which drives exclusivism will be completely surrendered to an inclusivity-obsessed approach which masquerades behind a mask of pluralism. Thus we would be unable to identify the misuses of *charismata* which we have already gestured toward above, because in the name of transcritical oscillation we will have suspended the equally pertinent task of measuring a particular expression of any of the three overarching perspectives according to the *klesis* of the university. True pluralism – that is, a careful grappling with plurality – does not say, “anything goes,” but rather, “despite our differences, let's work together for a common good.”

This leads us to a difficult question: how are we to identify when a particular

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charisma is being abused or expressed in a negative form? One way has already been mentioned, namely to examine whether the expression is in line with the core *klesis* of the university, which we have defined as to educate and advance knowledge. This is a *substantive* method of assessment. There is another, more *procedural* method, which takes as its focus the manner in which the *charisma* is being manifested. Although we have said that it is sometimes acceptable and even helpful for an exclusivist approach to be taken, when this is done in a way which not only denigrates all other perspectives but also seeks to marginalise or even destroy them, we have a strong indication that the *klesis* of the university is being lost to an out-of-control abuse of *charismata*. Indeed, the hegemonic instrumentalism presently regnant in much of the university qualifies as an instance of abuse from both substantive and procedural standpoints, for not only does it subordinate the baseline *klesis* of the university to non-educational externalist aims grounded on narrow economism, it also fails to recognise whatsoever the value of thought-centric and feeling-centric views and practices. Hence, it is not only a dominant framework, but can also be considered as an at least incipiently totalitarian one.

Furthermore, the incapacity of any of us to encompass the totality within a single frame of vision is simply a symptom of subjectivity and finitude. For to return once again to a previous argument, this time from Chapter Two, we cannot but accept Žižek's assertion that “[t]he trap to be avoided here, of course, is the naïve idea that one should keep in view the social totality” (Žižek 2004, 129). Adorno's captures this most succinctly when he writes that “the whole is the false” (Adorno 2005, 50). This insight has also been expressed in terms more down-to-earth, and indeed more applied, by G. K. Chesterton, who in a piece entitled “History Versus the Historians” argued as follows:

No good modern historians are impartial. All modern historians are divided into two classes – those who tell half the truth, like Macaulay and Froude, and those who tell none of the truth, like Hallam and the Impartials. The angry historians see one side of the question. The calm historians see nothing at all, not even the question itself. (Chesterton 1958, 129)

Having said all this, in the remainder of this thesis I will attempt to explore the practical contours of what it means to take a side and to “tell half the truth,” or perhaps even less than half. On the level of analysis I am bounded by my own subjective limitations – here I take humble leave of the project of Kantian objectivity – yet on the level of meta-analysis, it is, I submit, possible to enquire into how analysis is by-and-large done. In other words, what is to be carried out is an investigation into *process*

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rather than *substance*. The central argument that I have been putting forward is that vocational expression is a form of truth-telling, and thus a singular and existential affair, but which, on the intermediate level of particularity, nevertheless intersects with certain categories which were explored in the preceding chapters and represented in the triangular diagram, which we might call, somewhat inelegantly, the University Triangle. For from this confluence we have been able to sketch what is close to a taxonomy of life within the university, linked to the concept of vocation as conditioned by both *klesis* and *charismata*. In the final chapter of this thesis, in order to put some flesh on these skeletal frameworks, we shall turn to examining how this has played out within a very specific sphere, namely that of the British tradition of critical legal thought.

What we shall see through this “case study,” as it were, is that the concept of *charismata* helps us to explore the varied responses to the question of “how is it to be done?” where the divergent extrapolations of *klesis* beyond the baseline of education and research mean that the old Leninist question “what is to be done?” is unable to be answered in a straight-forward manner.³⁴

Conclusion

We began this chapter with the question of how the various conflicting perspectives within the space of the university may be understood in relation to each other. The speculative gamble that was taken was to begin our enquiry at the level of singular persons, which required us to examine the relationship between the two circuits of individuality-particularity-generality and singularity-universality which Karatani has identified within the tradition of modern European philosophy, construed broadly. The end-result of this examination was a hypothesis that both the realms of the particular (or specific) and the singular should be engaged with, for where utter singularity fails to provide any clear markers, the patterns of particularity provide possible ways forward.

Having laid out the abstract foundations of our engagement, we then moved on to a consideration of the concept of vocation as a means of understanding how a singular person or group may arbitrate between the subterranean tensions between universalist visions, singular lives and particular categories. An etymological and historical survey of the concept in the Christian (and therefore post-Antiquity Western)

³⁴ One source of inspiration for this formulation is a text by the Tiqqun collective, first published in 2001 and titled “How is it to be done?” (Tiqqun 2008).

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tradition allowed us to understand the varieties of the idea from its most primitive form of a baseline *klesis* to a purely secular understanding of work, with the Catholic exaltation of the monastic path as the true fulfilment of the Christian calling as well as the Protestant sacralisation of everyday undertakings lying somewhere in between. These concepts were then brought into a conversation with Stanley Fish's typology of interpretations of the academic vocation, finally resulting in our development of the University Triangle as a diagram which places the various conceptual threads of this and the preceding chapters into a cohesive relational structure.

Nevertheless, our examination of Christian and academic vocation revealed more divergences than congruences, and thus the Pauline concept of *charismata* or gifts was explored as a companion to *klesis* which allows for the valuing of distinct and even seemingly conflicting understandings of the academic vocation (and, indeed, vocation in general). By putting in place a methodological axiom that the various particular vocations explored in the preceding section are brought into complex and potentially enriching configurations via the operations of partiality and integration as well as exclusivism and pluralism, we were able to assert that these organising categories of the singular gifts which are the possession of the various actors in the university should not be summarily dismissed as inferior or misguided. Nevertheless, we ended with an acknowledgement that a comprehensive view of the totality is unavailable to any of us as a singular being, and thus the best that can be done is to engage with the facts of plurality and otherness while steadfastly telling the truth of one's singular vocation.

Having explored these issues on a theoretical level, it now behoves us to ground the predominantly abstract analysis of this chapter within a specific context within the university. Thus, in the next and final chapter we shall take as a particular case study the tale of European critical legal thought, mapping the various sub-cultures of its expressions of critique with the assistance of the University Triangle via a consideration of certain texts and thinkers. This exercise will allow us to see how the neat formulations we have been dealing with have to be qualified and contextualised when dealing with such specificities, in a test of the interpretive validity and utility of the framework which we have constructed. However, our entry into the case study will be preceded by a preparation of the ground via an examination of the partiality of any triadic understanding within a particular thinker or body of work.

Chapter 6

Test-driving the Vocational Hypothesis: The Conceptual Triad in British Critical Legal Thought

“There is something in critique which is akin to virtue.”

(Foucault 1997, 25)

In a September 2012 post on the *Critical Legal Thinking* blog, one of the few Web 2.0 outlets dedicated specifically to the tradition of European critical legal thought, Gilbert Leung reflects on the 30th Critical Legal Conference (CLC) which had taken place earlier that month. Hosted by the KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Leung quotes the organiser as saying that the institute has no law department, nor does it confer law degrees, but this “in a way makes it the ideal place to hold a legal conference whose very identity, to put it euphemistically, seems forever in question” (Leung 2012). He then makes reference to a debate which erupted on the website prior to the conference about the CLC's purpose, its relevance or irrelevance, and indeed what critique really means, before relating an anecdote from the final plenary session. Angus McDonald, a stalwart of the CLC since the late 1980s, delivered a paper on “Critique as Avocation,” and during the question time which followed, was asked by a newcomer if he “could help her out of the general 'confusion' in which the conference had left her” (Leung 2012). McDonald's muted response was simply: “I can't help you” (Leung 2012).

I begin this final chapter with these allusions to confusion, identity crises and restless searching for purpose because it is part of the everyday experience of many in the contemporary university, and is thus foundational for this very thesis. In the last chapter I have endeavoured to provide, through the discussion of the various forms of *klesis* and *charismata* that presently exist in the sphere of British higher education, an organisational key to make some sense of the generally decentred, even tumultuous state of things. In this chapter, we shall examine how the triadic conception of the university can be utilised as a practical tool of analysis in two rather different settings. In the first section, we examine how the triad in its most general form – namely thought-centricism, action-centricism and feeling-centricism – allows us to understand the ultimately partial triadic conceptions such as that of Kant himself. In the second section, we will take the specific case of British/European critical legal theory to

demonstrate how the general form of the triad interacts with the University Triad of instrumentalism, idealism and community. The particular sphere of the British/European Critical Legal Conference will thus act as an intermediate space between these two triadic conceptualisations, revealing the dynamics between them.

6.1 The Partiality of Triads

In the last section of Chapter One, we explored the triadic discursive-practical structure of the university in terms of both the constitution of each element of the triad as well as, in outline, the relations between them. It was argued that each question arises through the bracketing or temporary suspension of the other two questions. This operation can be said to be the underlying cause of the inability of those who primarily employ one of the three perspectives to comprehend the standpoints of those who generally opt for either of the other two. Indeed, for some, the perspective they favour contracts their field of vision so acutely that they cannot conceive of any other valid view. This does not, of course, mean that they simply deny the existence of other perspectives, nor that they never oscillate into viewing the university from them, but rather that these other perspectives are seen as deficient in “value” or “truth.” The terrain that they choose to fight from – instrumentalism, idealism or community – very easily becomes the *only* terrain that they admit as permissible for engagement.

This territorial analogy is, however, imperfect in that it may mislead us into thinking that convinced proponents of one of the three perspectives refuse to venture from their home terrain. It is rather the case that they carry their home terrain within them wherever they go and thus automatically reframe everything they encounter in its terms. Hence, the idealist does not deny the need for practical decisions, but approaches them in a resolutely idealist fashion, such as with Kant's categorical imperative; likewise, the instrumentalist is able to converse about principles, but derives them from utilitarian calculations and empirical observations. Nevertheless, such one-sided manoeuvres are never without contradictions and incongruences, because as Karatani points out, “[w]hen one seeks to explain everything from one and the same positionality, one is inexorably confronted by antinomy” (Karatani 2003b, 41).

It is, of course, beyond the scope of this thesis to enquire deeply into *how* or *why* any person or group comes to prefer – or, indeed, have an orientation towards – one (or, at most, two) of the three perspectives in the triad. To carry out such an investigation

adequately would require us to delve into spheres such as psychology and sociology which, while not unrelated to this present study, are nonetheless sufficiently distinct from it that any treatment of these issues would distract more than it would enlighten. After all, it is unnecessary for us to establish a link between a person's individual propensities towards specific modes of thought, feeling and action and the substantive views which she puts forward. It is sufficient for our purposes to identify the wider pattern of her engagement through an examination of the arguments made. Hence, with one key exception, the questions of *how* and *why* will be bracketed even as we focus on *what exactly this dynamic entails* and *what could we do in light of such understanding*.¹

The Ultimate Partiality of Kant's Architectonic

Although the initial analogous triad upon which the conceptual triad of the British university has been elaborated so far in this thesis has been drawn from the philosophy of Kant, it is important to emphasise that Karatani himself identifies its recurrence in various theoretical triads since Kant, most prominently in Lacan's triptych of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, but also – albeit with less elaboration – in Marx and Nietzsche (Karatani 1995b, xlii).² In his words: “The fact that Kant's triadic concept is replaceable with different triads indicates that it forms a kind of structure that can be grasped transcendently” (Karatani 1995b, xliii).

In the section titled “The Architectonic of Pure Reason” in his First Critique, Kant argues that it is necessary to practise architectonics, or “the art of constructing a system,” because “[w]ithout systematic unity, our knowledge cannot become science; it will be an aggregate, and not a system” (Kant 1990, 466). Although in the preceding chapters our discussion of this triad has been grounded primarily upon Karatani's reading of Kant's architectonic, it should be recognised that Kant himself was not free from his own individual perspective, which can be categorised as an instance of *thought-centric* thought, as distinct from *action-centric* or *feeling-centric* thought. This

1 It should be noted, however, that these questions of *how* and *why* are most worthy of closer examination by those who wish to take them up. Even those who are the most disdainful of psychologisms or sociologisms in such an area cannot deny the everyday experience, whether banal or profound, of being more attracted to particular directions in thought, feeling and action.

2 In an interview with Joel Wainwright, published in 2012, Karatani responds to a question on whether “Marx's value form theory” can be regarded “as an explicit reiteration of Kant's triadic structure” by first gesturing toward his bringing together of the Kantian and Lacanian triads, before stating that commodities can be considered as akin to the real, value-form to the symbolic and money to the imaginary (Karatani and Wainwright 2012, 33).

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partiality makes his conceptual triad or architectonic less “universal,” scientific or pure than he and his followers, past and present, might have believed.

In prosaic, everyday terms, each element in the conceptual triad is necessary because all of us have an approach to the three dimensions of life which it describes: firstly, how we interact with the outer world, that is, our day-to-day *doing*; secondly, how we engage with ideas as well as employ them to understand the world, that is, our mechanisms of *thinking*; and thirdly, how we deal with the unruly dimensions of life which escape both practical action and conceptual cognition, which is captured by terms such as affect, emotion, prehension or simply *feeling*.

Here we may find a link, albeit not an entirely straight-forward one, to the three Neoplatonic “transcendentals” deriving from Antiquity but formally established during the Renaissance, namely, goodness, truth and beauty.³ These three transcendentals, of course, connect directly to Kant's three *Critiques*, which examined each in turn, beginning with truth, then goodness and finally beauty. In an exchange in 2013 with Korean literary critic, Kim Uchang, Karatani carries out a very concise genealogy of the three transcendentals as they have developed in competition with each other through the centuries, forming what he termed “intellectual, ethical and sensible approaches” (Kim and Karatani 2014, 182). He points out that at different points in time and space, one (or sometimes two) of these three approaches have been regarded with greater favour. The sensible approach which approaches the world through beauty has generally been considered “inferior,” but there have been times and places where it has become ascendent, such as Japan in the Heian period and with the Romanticism that emerged in the West in the wake of Kant (Kim and Karatani 2014, 182). In the Occident, Romanticism was followed by realism in literature, marking the return of truth and the intellectual approach to a central position, before Socialism, which was a secular form of morality, came onto the scene to indicate a new rise of the ethical approach (Kim and Karatani 2014, 182). The dynamics of these complex shifts between intellectual, ethical

3 The Italian Neoplatonic philosopher Marsilio Ficino is regarded as the first to distill this tripartite formulation of the transcendentals from the discord of debates through the centuries. In *The Philebus Commentary*, published in 1496, he writes, “So the action of the intelligence is directed to some end. For in so far as it understands, its end is the truth; in so far as it wills, its end is the good; in so far as it acts, its end is the beautiful” (Ficino 1975, 78). Although Ficino uses the word “acts” to describe the activity of the intelligence with regards to the beautiful, we should understand this less as an instance of physical activity in the world, and more in the generic sense in which aesthetics is concerned with judging impressions which have a sensuous dimension. Kant himself, in a 1772 letter to his student, Marcus Herz, spoke of “the universal principles of feeling, taste, and sensuous desire” (Kant 1998a, 47).

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and sensible stances constitute, in effect, the history of relations between humans and other beings and objects in the world, as well as within human societies.

At this point it is important to note the fuzziness of divisions between the approaches, particularly the intellectual and the ethical, especially when connecting them with the categories of thinking and acting. In Kant's system, for example, practical action is governed by the faculty of reason, and thus one's *acting* has to proceed through rational principles. On the other hand, the search for truth takes place for Kant within the domain of phenomena or sensible nature, and so one's *thinking* is far from divorced from the world. In other words, each approach pre-supposes and is sustained by the other. Just as a point of contrast, in a different system that privileges direct experience, the guiding thread of acting would not be reason but perhaps an embodied life-force, and thus under such a paradigm ethics would be linked to something akin to libido.

Likewise, if we consider the sphere of the postwar British university we can see that the patent antagonism between instrumentalism and idealism masks their mutual contamination. For there is a sense in which a hidden residue of instrumentalism lies at the heart of the most vigorous forms of idealism, and vice versa. What this means is that there is, strictly-speaking, no such thing as a “pure” form of either perspective, but that each is penetrated by the other, resulting in the silent subsistence of undercover elements at the core of that which may appear at first glance to be unadulterated. That is to say, bracketing is an artificial operation involving ordering, rather than a simple “accessing” of cleanly-delineated spheres which are, as it were, already “there.”

Nevertheless, the semi-porousness of the borders between the domains does not override the fact that particular philosophies tend to privilege one of them. For instance, a thought-centric system of thought such as Kant's subsumes the other two domains of action and feeling under the rubric of thinking. Although Karatani does not himself make this point – and it is uncertain that he would agree with it, given his own secondary thinking-centred sympathies which aligns partially with Kant's⁴ – he nonetheless recognises that Kant's critique reshaped what was meant by scientific thought, morality and the arts. In his words, “before and after Kant the categorisation of

4 Karatani's thinking-centred leanings are evident in his consistent advocacy of universality and singularity over communal (i.e. subjectivist and particular) perspectives. However, it can be argued that his primary approach is an action-centric one, which can be discerned from his recurring emphasis on the ethical as well as politics. In his dialogue with Kim Uchang, for instance, he laments the historical bias towards aesthetics (i.e. feeling-centricism) in Japan and appears to admire the political stance of contemporary Koreans, opining: “[W]e need to become more political in Japan” (Kim and Karatani 2014, 187).

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scientific thoughts, moralities and the arts was totally altered” (Karatani 2003b, 35).

Hence, for instance, we find that Kant's ethical prescriptions for acting in the world – in his own words, his practical *reason* – is based not upon a consideration of concrete reality, which for Kant is only accessible to humans in the mediated form of phenomena, given that things-in-themselves are obscured from us, but rather upon the pure principles derived through the faculty of reason, which deals not with the sensible or *nature* but rather the suprasensible (or supersensible) (Kant 1996, 178). The question, “How are we to act?” receives the response, “In accordance to the maxims which your exercise of reason has led you to legislate for yourself, and if you wish to be moral – that is, truly free from your tempestuous desires – according to only the maxims which you are able to will to be universal laws.”

Here it should also be noted that Kant's thought-centric architectonic has a strongly pseudo-juridical flavour, as is obvious from the distinctly legal terminology which he constantly employs.⁵ The cognitive faculties of reason, understanding and judgment are *law-givers* for the faculties of the soul, namely desire, knowledge and feeling (Kant 1986, 16–17). Each faculty in the first triad has its corresponding *jurisdiction* in the second triad (Nuzzo 2005, 127). Kant's injunction to follow the exercise of reason in one's moral conduct extends also to his political theory. In the words of the post-colonial theorist and anthropologist Talal Asad: “It was Kant who replaced the model of the 'republic of letters' with another model: the 'court of reason'” (Asad 2009, 50). Against the focus of the republic of letters upon the egalitarian mental jousting between ideas and their progenitors, Kant's court of reason posited the possibility and indeed superiority of *rational critique* – that is to say, the elevation of a philosophical science over literary rhetoric (Asad 2009, 49–50). We might even say, borrowing a distinction which Cornel West invokes in contrasting Plato and American pragmatism, that this results in the return of “objective” *epistēmē* to triumph over “subjective” *doxa* (West and Brown 1993, S163).

Indeed, the rational law-giver is the centre of Kantian political life. As Asad puts it, “In Kant's political philosophy it is *law*, not critique, that ends the chaos of

⁵ It is important to note, however, that in *The Metaphysic of Morals*, Kant distinguishes between what he calls the *juridical* and the *ethical* aspects of morality. The former is “directed merely to external actions and their conformity to law” whereas the latter “also require[s] that they (the laws) themselves be the determining grounds of actions” (Kant 1991, 42). In this manner Kant reserves the term *juridical* for the sphere of external laws. Bearing this distinction of his in mind, as we shall see, his repeated invocation of legal words and phrases can nevertheless be said to provide what we term here a “pseudo-juridical flavour” to his philosophical system.

metaphysics and holds the corrosive effects of skepticism in check. And its concern is no longer with mundane life but with epistemology” – that is, political action is not grounded upon immediate experience but rather with the true (Asad 2009, 50, italics in original). Ironically-enough, what we may term the “will to law” is at work even in many critical legal theorists who would disclaim any lineage to the Kantian project, but who in their focus on legality ultimately elevate law and its underlying rationalism – even if deconstructed and/or de-centred to almost a-rational forms – over ethics, politics or art. This can be contrasted, for instance, to critical legal theorists who elevate ethics and politics over law, creating an action-centric rather than a thought-centric account of the relationship between the juridical and other spheres of life. Finally, there are critical legal theorists who adopt an aesthetic stance, taking as their primary source aspects of the world which stimulate feeling, such as literature and visual art. These divisions will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Having just mentioned the aesthetic stance, it is important for us to briefly examine Kant's thought-centric approach to this very question of aesthetics, in order that we might see the effects of his particular perspective in this sphere.⁶ We have seen how Kant's architectonic necessitates a turn away in the sphere of practical action from empirical experience to the categorical imperative – the maxim which can be willed as a *universal* law – as the bearer of objective morality. In the aesthetic component of his triadic system we find a similar concern for the universal as the guarantor of an exercise of human rationality, in order that aesthetic judgment may be designated as a higher human faculty, that is, together with understanding and reason and above that of sensibility. In his *Analytic of the Beautiful*, it is clear Kant appreciates that empirical agreement by everyone upon matters of taste – that is, *general* agreement – is impossible. Nevertheless, he posits that an instance of proper exercise of taste is *universal*, in that it demands the assent of all to its judgment. In his own words:

The judgement of taste itself does not *postulate* the agreement of everyone (for it is only competent for a logically universal judgement to do this, in that it is able to bring forward reasons); it only *imputes* this agreement to everyone, as an instance of the rule in respect of which it looks for confirmation, not from concepts, but from the concurrence of others. The

6 It is crucial to note, however, that Kant does not use the word “aesthetics” for the domain of sensuous beauty which we are discussing here, preferring the term “taste.” In a footnote in the First Critique he states that “[t]he Germans are the only ones who now employ the word 'aesthetics' to designate that which others call the critique of taste” (Kant 1998a, 156). Instead, he reserves the word “aesthetics” for its etymological and classical sense, that is, for sensuous perception.

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universal voice is, therefore, only an idea – resting upon grounds the investigation of which is here postponed. (Kant 1986, 56, italics in original)

As Karatani points out with regards to the original German, “*postulieren* [i.e. to postulate] means to assume as self-evident, while *ansinnen* [i.e. to impute] means to make an (unreasonable) request or demand” (Karatani 2003b, 38). Or as Michael Wayne puts it, “We accord the aesthetic judgment a certain universal validity *as if* it were a logical objective judgment, when in fact it is merely a subjective one, but one which [nonetheless] escapes private and individualistic subjectivity” (M. Wayne 2014, 96). This elegant (if somewhat questionable) operation ensures that within the Kantian system, judgments of taste are lifted to an idealistic, “rational” and universal plane, despite their manifest difference from what other theoretical systems may consider as rationality.

In summary, it can be said that in order to fully benefit from Kant's architectonic, we have to recognise its limits and limitations, particularly its bias towards reason or thinking, which leads to the recasting of both the spheres of acting and feeling within a rational mould. Nevertheless, the great strength of Kant's system is its underlying drive towards comprehensiveness and internal coherence. Although it is ultimately (and indeed inevitably) unable to cut itself off completely from its thought-centricism, its valiant persistence according to the “will to architecture” – a term used by Karatani to denote “the will to construct an edifice of knowledge on a solid foundation” that he considers the “foundation of Western thought” (Karatani 1995b, xxxii, xxxv) – makes it one of the deepest explorations of the conceptual triad within the Occidental canon.

Finally, however, it must be noted that to point out Kant's over-emphasis on reason is not to abandon reason itself *in toto*. Karatani is right to argue that “[a]s Kant has shown, the critique of reason, or the critique of its grounding that is caused by the constitutive use of reason, cannot be made but by reason” (Karatani 2008b, 593). Here we may gain some insight from the work of the cultural historian Morris Berman, whose book *Wandering God* criticises what he calls the “dominant tradition” in the West, a tradition which privileges logic and form over process, matter and paradox (Berman 2000, 208–209). However, discussing the evolution of Wittgenstein's philosophy, which Berman perceives as moving from a logic-centred system with some concessions to process in the early years to one embracing paradox, he argues that, even in Wittgenstein's later work, the philosopher “never completely left the [dominant tradition] because it is this form of intellectual transcendence that makes any rational

discourse and analysis... possible,” including Berman's own book (Berman 2000, 211–212). Hence, what we began in Chapter Five and continue here can be regarded as a contribution to the Kantian exploration of “the boundaries or limits of human subjective faculties” (Karatani 2003b, 34), not ignoring the more severe critiques of rationalism arising from traditions such as Romanticism, postmodernism and post-structuralism, but weighing them up in light of the present moment and specific context.

6.2 The Triadic University Meets British/European Critical Legal Theory

In the previous chapter, we explored the question of identifying singular expressions of academic vocation, which even so contain strivings towards universality, within a general context of a plurality in which particular patterns can be identified. Much of this was at a relatively high level of abstraction, and thus in this section our attention will shift to articulating how these singular vocations play out within a more circumscribed context. The “case study” that has been chosen is that of critical legal studies in the European tradition, as it will allow us to see, at a level closer to the ground, how a particular ideal type of academic *klesis* – in this case, the school of “critique” – interacts with its surroundings, as depicted in the University Triangle.

Nevertheless, it would be far too ambitious to attempt a comprehensive survey of the entire “BritCrit” tradition within the constrained space of this portion of the chapter, and so what has become necessary is to delimit the territory being covered. Accordingly, although the discussion to come involves narrative elements, we will in general focus our attention on selected texts which put forward arguments which display strong tendencies towards one of the three corners of the triangle, while not losing sight of the fact that the location of the “home base” of critique within the diagram, that is, towards its bottom, restricts the range of movement those who begin there. For example, even the most action-centric of such writings will not soar to the diagrammatic heights which may be achieved with a resolutely instrumentalist starting point, or even one which commences at the central point of “the common good.” It is also worth noting, however, that in this exercise the centripetal and monologic tendencies of academic writing which we have discussed are an advantage, as where even a focus on specific authors would be difficult due to the evolutionary character of the thought of most thinkers, the medium of a text written at a certain time and place and to a certain audience is able to display its leanings toward one (or two) of the poles.

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In addition, at this point it is essential for us to note, as was argued above with reference to Morris Berman, that it is impossible to engage in rational discourse or analysis without at least partially embedding oneself in what he calls the “dominant tradition” which privileges logic and reason. Thus, any attempt to examine the impact of our conceptual triad in critical legal *writing* will have to engage with texts which are far from the best exemplars of action-centrism or feeling-centrism, for the most developed and refined cases of these viewpoints are not found in academic discourse, but rather in more embodied spheres such as activism and artistic production.

Finally, the terms *British* and *European* critical legal theory are used here interchangeably, for lack of better adjectives, because even though the tradition of critical legal thought which is being addressed is in fact not limited to the British isles but rather has involved comrades in Europe and even beyond, it is nevertheless a phenomenon which revolves around an academic conference that began in and still finds its (non-institutional) centre in the United Kingdom.⁷ This is the British Critical Legal Conference, better known to its regular participants as simply “the CLC,” the first of which was held in 1985 at the University of Kent. Since then it has made occasional travels to places as far-flung as India and South Africa, but has generally taken place in the United Kingdom or, regularly yet less frequently, in different parts of continental Europe. Of course, there are undoubtedly those who are influenced by and, indeed, practitioners of this tradition of critical legal thinking without being regulars at the yearly conferences, yet the CLC still acts as a key physical manifestation of the movement which, in a brief history of the conference written by Costas Douzinas, one of its stalwarts from the earliest days, is described as “a school of thought committed to a plurality of theoretical approaches to law and radical politics” (Douzinas 2014, 189).⁸

Douzinas' use of the word “plurality” in the description just cited is instructive as it is true that unlike the American equivalent of the CLC, the Conference for Critical

7 In 1987 it was still possible for Peter Fitzpatrick and Alan Hunt to remark that although “[t]here are considerable variations in the style, focus and method of work produced under the label of 'critical legal studies' ... [c]ritical legal scholarship has not formed clearly delineated 'national' varieties” (Fitzpatrick and Hunt 1987, 1). Within less than a decade this statement was no longer an easy one to make, with the increasing distance between the approaches taken on different sides of the Atlantic, even though these divergences were more along regional rather than strictly national lines.

8 We have made reference in Chapter Four to the minimalist institutionalism of the CLC as described by Douzinas. Aside from the absence of any functionaries or committees, we flagged its nature as “just a conference, an ‘inoperative community’, a broad church that exists for 3 days once a year and goes into abeyance once it is over.” Thus, “each year the conference decides the place and organisers for the next meeting, leaving it to its organisers to put together the programme” (Douzinas 2014, 189).

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Legal Studies, which effectively disbanded itself after a rancorous meeting in 1994 at Georgetown University in which the “old Marxists guard” left in protest at the emerging dominance of those engaged in the “critique of difference” (Douzinas 2014, 193), the British manifestation of the movement has managed to largely hold together despite not insignificant divergences in theoretical-practical concerns amongst its participants. Nevertheless, this “broad church,” to use a term from Douzinas' article, is quite similar to the institution from which the very term originates, namely the Church of England. As with “the C of E,” polite, formal unity conceals a multitude of divisions from the usual personal rivalries to full-scale accusations of betraying the cause, that is to say, “heresy” (often intoned *sotto voce* in casual conversation but also not infrequently in more strident writing and speech), which occasionally result in the breaking of fellowship, although in less formal terms than the organisational concept of “schism.” It is these divisions which we are concerned to outline, in order to see whether it is indeed possible to *value* the contributions of the various parties rather than simply to *tolerate* them as misguided (if sincere) views, or whether nothing short of a Puritan attitude is ultimately the lot of many of the BritCrits.

The three main directions which the vocation of critique has been taken within the British critical legal tradition can be named as follows: firstly, action-centric *politics*; secondly, thought-centric *law and ethics*; and thirdly, feeling-centric *aesthetics*. Throughout the movement's history each of these sub-cultures have been present, although at different points one or more of them have come to the fore. Here it is worth noting that these divisions echo in part Perry Anderson's argument in *Considerations on Western Marxism* that leftist movements in Europe have generally moved in a trajectory which goes from traditional proletarian political struggles, to a retreat into the theoretical seclusion of universities (the style of which begins with the work of Gramsci and Benjamin), and finally to a concern with aesthetics and the study of culture (Anderson 1979, 89, 92–93). Peter Goodrich has applied this analysis to the development of critical legal studies, referring to it as the movement “from practice to melancholia to aesthetics” (Katyal, Goodrich, and Tushnet 2013, 604). Goodrich's historical argument is broadly true of critical legal thinking if treated as a global phenomenon. However, from a more parochial perspective, it can be asserted that the full emergence of the BritCrit tradition in the form of the CLC during the mid-1980s took place at the stage where the more overtly political focus on practice was in decline, institutionalist melancholia had

settled in, and a certain form of aesthetics was on the rise. Since then, there has arguably been a movement in the opposite direction where, despite all three strands remaining active, the focus has shifted back to politics after a sojourn through the terrain of more idealist conceptions of law which are often fairly well attuned to institutionalised existence. We shall examine the three sub-cultures according to this broad chronology of the European tradition, that is, from aesthetics to politics via law.

However, before we depart on our very swift aerial journey, it is necessary to make a brief note of the broader history of critical legal studies (CLS), already alluded to above, before its British arm took off in a real way. In an article written in 1991, American CLS scholar Mark Tushnet gives the following account of its beginnings:

The origins of critical legal studies as a political location are relatively easy to identify. In early 1976 David Trubek returned from a trip to Cambridge [in Massachusetts] and told me that he had spoken with Duncan Kennedy.⁹ They had agreed that there were a number of people doing academic studies of law that seemed to have certain common themes, and that it might be useful to gather these people, and a few others, to see whether that perception was accurate. The themes dealt with questions of ideology in ways that seemed compatible with the traditional focus on “law and society” at the University of Wisconsin Law School, yet concentrated on legal doctrine in ways that seemed compatible with more mainstream approaches to legal scholarship. If that perception were correct, the thought was, some sort of organizational locus for that intellectual work would be useful.¹⁰ (Tushnet 1991, 1523)

There were from the start numerous expressions of this common intellectual work, but “[t]hese themes converged in the programmatic statement that law is politics, all the way down” (Tushnet 1991, 1526). This assertion was not the more quotidian one whereby “we can talk about identifiably liberal and conservative positions on various issues in the law, ranging from affirmative action to strict liability versus negligence,” but rather one which “saw law as a form of human activity in which political conflicts were worked out in ways that contributed to the stability of the social order ('legitimation') in part by constituting personality and social institutions in ways that came to seem natural” (Tushnet 1991, 1526). These statements sum up the first stage of CLS, which intersected with the slightly older tradition of law and society “where the

9 Details of the relationship between Trubek and Kennedy as well as other early events can be found in Schlegel 1984, which is a much less clinical treatment of the early history of the CLS movement.

10 Tushnet goes on to remark that “[e]ven at the start there was some sense that a relatively formal structure was needed to provide the location for the academic activities that Trubek had referred to, and we developed a list of ‘steering committee’ members to put on the letterhead” (Tushnet 1991, 1523). This characteristic of the American CLS movement stands in stark contrast to the British one, which, as already noted in a footnote above, prides itself in having no such formal structure, but rather manifesting as an “inoperative community” that simply convenes for three days every year.

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legal Marxists were originally located,” before moving “from practice, from radical and rebellious lawyering, from confronting authority, to institutionalization” (Katyal, Goodrich, and Tushnet 2013, 604). Goodrich recounts the phase of institutionalisation, where CLS scholars rose in the academy, as one where “they taught, they published, [and] forged links with the outside of the law school and with its temporal other, the next generation of scholars and students” (Katyal, Goodrich, and Tushnet 2013, 604).

Although the temporalities of the American and European critical legal traditions are, strictly-speaking, parallel and therefore subject to distinct, uneven and discontinuous developments, there have nonetheless been certain combined and resonant effects over the years. Hence, the developments in the 1980s and 1990s within the European scene can be seen as both an extension of and a response to earlier as well as concurrent developments within its American counterpart. With all this in mind, we may now proceed to discuss the first phase of the European critical legal tradition according to Douzinas, that is, the one which was dominated by “aesthetics.”

Aesthetics

In his article on the history of the CLC, Douzinas describes the fifth conference which was held in 1989 at the University of Newcastle:

It was something of a watershed. Peter Rush gave a performance: without speaking he walked around and danced to a pre-recorded set of comments and music. Ronnie Warrington, Shaun McVeigh, Peter Goodrich and myself performed a play entitled “Suspended Sentences” ... Kate Green and Hilary Lim organised an open debate with the audience about women and law, someone played the bagpipes. It was the high point of what can be called the “aesthetic turn” in critical legal theory. (Douzinas 2014, 190)

Douzinas attributes this turning point in European critical legal theory to the wider political conjuncture, with the collapse of the Berlin wall and, with it, much of the “[o]ld radical certainties, Marxist dogmas [and] aspirations of radical sociology and criminology” (Douzinas 2014, 190). Many of the early BritCrits, in contrast to the aforementioned old Marxist guard of American CLS and their European counterparts, schooled themselves in different intellectual lineages, particularly post-Marxism and poststructuralism, and were thus more conversant in philosophy, psychoanalysis and aesthetics than sociology, criminology and economics (Douzinas 2014, 191). As a result, in the aftermath of a political defeat for the left similar in scale to that which was faced by Benjamin and Gramsci with the rise of fascism, and which had brought about the

first wave of left-wing melancholy in the twentieth century (Anderson 1979, 89–90), the gaze of these British critics was turned upon issues relevant to and deploying the tools of deconstruction and hermeneutics, psychoanalysis and semiotics. The textual methods of European continental philosophers were used to trace the “omissions, repressions and distortions, signs of the oppressive power and symptoms of the traumas created by the institution” of law and legality, among them “racism, patriarchy [and] economic exploitation” (Douzinas 2014, 190).

Such was the historical constellation which drove British critical legal thinking at the time, but underlying this phase was what we may understand as a feeling-centric turn towards community. The very fact that deep bonds of comradeship and solidarity were forged among relatively isolated and even institutionally-ostracised critical legal thinkers, through the deepening of the foundations of a non-substantialist community such as the Critical Legal Conference, was a display of longing for a communal spirit in the wake of disillusionment with its twentieth-century substantialist expressions. Returning to the University Triangle, the CLC can also be understood as a key manifestation of a certain separatist mentality, for if the pre-existing legal academic associations could not assimilate the “Crits,” it was only natural that an alternative forum be found(ed) for these (semi-)outcasts.¹¹

Once a particular academic wave or trend subsides, it is often only the most dedicated who steadfastly remain with what was for many a non-permanent obsession. In the case of the aesthetic turn in British critical legal thought, the turn of the millenium saw a steady decline in the use of deconstructive parentheses and puns, but the province of feeling-centric concerns such as community, beauty, art, virtue, materiality and creation continues to be the primary abode for certain scholars. Moreover, there are always new ones who arrive within its boundaries to set up camp, and who might settle down if the territory proves to be a congenial place for them.

How are we to recognise such legal aesthetes? Perhaps one place to start is to examine one of the central preoccupations of feeling-centred thought which we have just mentioned, and indeed have explored at some length in Chapter Four, namely the question of community. Here the work of Adam Gearey, who has drawn widely from aesthetic philosophy and literary sources to interrogate various issues of law and the

11 The same can be argued for other BritCrit institutions which came into being around this time, including the *Law and Critique* journal, established in 1990, and Birkbeck Law School, the first academic outfit to be founded explicitly upon critical legal values, in 1992.

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political from his early monograph *Law and Aesthetics* (Gearey 2001) onwards, is quite instructive. For example, in his recent work on welfare, he argues for a realignment of thinking on welfare rights which, while tactically adapting themes from Rawlsian liberalism and communitarianism which “are useful to our project” (Gearey 2015, 4), takes as an alternative starting point the concept of *solidarity* (Gearey 2015, 2).

Gearey admits that solidarity has become a tricky term to deploy, not least of all because of the presently regnant discourse in the area which considers those “on welfare” – or, in British terminology, “benefits” – as “scroungers or 'chavs',” that is, “an underclass who must be disciplined and put back to work” (Gearey 2015, 2). He then raises, however, a counter-tradition of thought that “sees welfare as rooted in mutual aid,” and which connects with “a great deal of contemporary anthropological evidence that describes the centrality of reciprocity and cooperation to human social behaviour” (Gearey 2015, 2–3). With the appearance of the word *reciprocity*, we know that we have reached a sphere homologous to Karatani's Mode of Exchange A.¹² Gearey's multiple recourse to Mauss in the legal thinker's monograph *Justice as Welfare* provide further evidence of this orientation, such as when he cites passages from Mauss' *The Gift* which relate to social insurance (Gearey 2012, 64).

However, it should be noted that Gearey is not, in any way, a beater of narrow communal drums, for he emphasises that “[s]olidarity does not suggest some inclusion into an essential community that erases the very real differences that constitute social being” (Gearey 2015, 7). Instead, he grounds his understanding of solidarity on “only an understanding of social existence as characterized by a life cycle that moves from childhood, to adulthood and old age” (Gearey 2015, 7). Nevertheless, his confidence in the continued relevance of the language of reciprocity, as well as terms favoured by R. H. Tawney such as “common institutions,” “common needs,” “common enjoyment” and indeed “common culture” suggest an expansive understanding of – to use Esposito's terms – the substantialist proper which is held in common, rather than a rejection of it for purely non-substantialist community. Hence, Gearey writes that “[s]olidarity defines the ‘in common’¹³ of the welfare state: that set of mutual rights and obligations that we

12 Gearey goes on to state that what he terms the “welfare *community*” involves “a form of solidarity or mutual concern... that is an expression of political agency rather than dependency on the *state* or the privatized atomism of the *market*” (Gearey 2012, 3, italics added). This is, of course, a classic case of pitting of Mode A against Modes B and C, which as Karatani has pointed out, often endeavours to perform “a conscious, nostalgic restoration of the past” (Karatani 2014, 259).

13 Another clear sign of Gearey's feeling-centric alignment can be found in a recent journal article where he reads F. W. Maitland's jurisprudential understanding of the trust in English common law

have described as the welfare community” (Gearey 2012, 26).

Thus, here we find an instance of a feeling-centric turn within a field which has been dominated by action-centricism and thought-centricism – that is, by policy “wonkery” and the construction of abstract formulations. Nevertheless, Gearey's aestheticism is not restricted to invocations of communal spirit and “being-with,” but are also evinced in his methodological orientations, in which he deploys art in general and poetry in particular in often surprising ways. To give just one example, in an article in an edited collection published in 2011, he attempts to delve into “the meaning of welfare” through an engagement with Walt Whitman's poems, “So Long” and “Song of Myself” (Gearey 2011, 149). However, it is crucial to note that for Gearey, here “the aesthetic is not to be understood as a *theory* of the beautiful,” but, following the lead of Terry Eagleton, is rather linked to the meaning of *aesthesis*, its root word, which is situated in “the realm of the human perception, of sensation in the material world” (Gearey 2011, 150, italics added). Nevertheless, it would be mistaken for us to understand from this assertion that the beautiful *itself* is banished, for in the very appeal to the insights of poetry we find an engagement with art, and therefore beauty. Perhaps contrary to first impressions, the sphere of the aesthetic is simply broadened to encompass spheres which are normally seen as the territory of other approaches.

While the writings of Gearey which we have briefly examined here displays a steadfast walking upon the path of aesthetics, on a wider level this route – for a time a central highway – has become a much-less-treaded road, and its centrality in the *chronos* of European CLS in the late 1980s and early 1990s was supplanted by the route of ethics as law and justice, which we will now consider.

Ethics and Law

The mid-1990s saw the rise of another paradigm for critical legal theory in Europe, as a slightly belated response to the ascendancy of Western neoliberal capitalism – that is, the putative “end of history” which Francis Fukuyama proclaimed (Fukuyama 1992) – in

alongside Hegel's concept of *sittlichkeit* (Gearey 2016, 106), which the Hegelian scholar Charles Taylor has defined as “refer[ring] to the moral obligations I have to an ongoing community of which I am part” (Taylor 2015, 81). William E. Conklin points out that the fairly common contemporary translation of this Hegelian idea into English as “ethical life” risks “the imputation by the Anglo-American legal scholar that *Sittlichkeit* concerns individual moral action... rather than the manner in which a community shares values and assumptions that concern how strangers recognize each other” (Conklin 2008, 162). By expounding on this concept using the language of *ethos* (Gearey 2016, 106–107), Gearey avoids this individualistic confusion, but has to struggle against its associations with *ethnos* and the inward-facing community, which we have explored in Chapter Four.

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the aftermath of the demise of “Really Existing Socialism” in 1989-1992. This triumph of the dominant ideology of the Western world heralded the creation of “a common symbolic, ideological and institutional framework” grounded upon an ethical humanism of sorts, leading to “humanitarian” military action, a focus upon human rights, and so on (Douzinas 2014, 192). Critical jurisprudence replied to this appeal to “[i]nternational law and universal morality” which endeavoured to “humanise capitalism [and] soften its side-effects” by developing conceptions of morality and justice which were not built upon Kantian foundations, but which maintained “a utopian moment” in order to escape the generally subtle tyranny of the ideas then hegemonic (Douzinas 2014, 192).

Douzinas points out that this “emerging strong ethical position mobilised the *quasi-transcendental or transcendent* concept of the Other and the associated gambits of incalculable justice, messianism without a messiah or the democracy to come” (Douzinas 2014, 192, italics added). To give a prominent example, Peter Fitzpatrick, whose work in the 1980s and early 1990s was, in the main, informed by Western Marxism, Foucault, anthropology and a certain variety of legal pluralism,¹⁴ came to embrace the late Derridianism which was a central element of this ethical turn.

In Douzinas' narrative, the central dichotomy which the critical legal ethics posed – drawing from Derrida, Levinas, Benjamin and Bloch – was that between an immanent conception of law, which sought to “redress, redirect the law when it forgets its own promises,” and a transcendent “justice proper” which “judges the whole of the law in the name of a transcendent other-based principle” (Douzinas 2014, 192–193). In the work of Fitzpatrick from the later 1990s onwards we find elements of this dualism, albeit in a characteristically unique form. His most notable insight was to identify two aspects in the workings of the law, a *determinate* one which allows us to say at a given point what the law is in a definitive manner – an essential criterion for its operations – as well as a *responsive* one which allows the law to adapt to an “ever-changing relation” which is the “generative terms of [our] being together” (Fitzpatrick 2007, 181–182).¹⁵ In his words, “[o]ne quality... cannot be affirmed without the pertinence of the other” (Fitzpatrick 2016, 259). The inspiration for this aporetic conception is Derrida's

¹⁴ A paradigmatic instance of this period of his work is Fitzpatrick 1983.

¹⁵ It is important to recognise that Fitzpatrick's interest in the question of the law's capacity to respond to an ever-changing environment can be found in as early an article as “Law and Societies” in 1984, where he states: “The gap between law and social reality is sometimes seen as the law's lack of responsiveness to society and sometimes in terms of its efforts to bring society into line with it” (Fitzpatrick 1984, 127). However, at this point the (late) Derridian toolbox was not available to him to formulate the determinate/responsive distinction which became his signature concept.

distinction between the conditioned and the unconditional, which he explored in various fields, including law and hospitality (Derrida 1987; Derrida 2000).

If we were to analyse these twinned concepts within the University Triangle, we can see that it is a shift towards the idealism and thought-centricism at its bottom-right corner, given its formulation and application in fairly abstract terms.¹⁶ The messy and unruly aspects involved in action-centricism, which often trouble elegant theoretical devices, are not its foremost domain, and it does not glorify the (self-)creative impulse in the manner which we have seen in feeling-centric legal critique. It is, indeed, a sober and measured analysis of the operations of law at a highly conceptual level. Although the responsive is linked to the horizontal and particular, as compared to the vertical and universal tendencies of the determined (Fitzpatrick 2016, 258–259), these connections to “the ground” are made primarily as a matter of deduction rather than induction.¹⁷

Douzinas' assessment of the critique of this ethical period, of which Fitzpatrick's work stands as one exemplary instance, runs as follows:

The welcoming of the other, the emergence of justice, the coming of the event appeared on the theoretical horizon at the point when the conditions for their realisation were retreating. The emergence of the “Other” as a key critical position was an admission of defeat however. The hope for a just law and society was transferred into some unpredictable future. With hindsight this explicit and extravagant turn to morality was perhaps too big a concession to the dominant ideology of the time. (Douzinas 2014, 193)

This somewhat measured post-hoc appraisal seems fair, although its necessarily broad-brush strokes do not adequately capture the nuances of the wider spectrum of thought-centric critique. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that the practical import of the reorientation of thinkers like Fitzpatrick away from Marxism and Foucauldian thought and towards deconstruction¹⁸ marked a move away from a more overtly activist mentality to one involving greater critical distance and abstraction, leading ultimately to a certain reticence in the sphere of practical political engagement. Hence, it is unsurprising that as the world changed and the tide of critique turned in response, it

16 For example, in *Modernism and the Grounds of Law*, a key monograph of this phase of Fitzpatrick's work, the practical “instantiations” of the central principle of determinedness and responsiveness which are explored are nationalism, imperialism and globalism – hardly micro-issues, to say the least (Fitzpatrick 2001, chap. 4–6).

17 This observation is not meant to be a criticism of any sort. Indeed, many of the argumentative paths taken in this thesis itself are, in the main, deductive rather than inductive. In the terms set out in the first chapter, this is the effect of *transcendental* retrospection, which supplements *empirical* genealogy.

18 Taking into account the singular temporalities of academics, it is unsurprising that some did not heartily embrace the aesthetic phase of the early CLC, and instead transitioned from the slightly “older” Marxist and the “law and society” traditions to deconstructive ethics.

was upon the shores of politics that the BritCrit waves began to wash upon once more.

Politics

It was argued earlier, drawing from Douzinas, that both the aesthetic and ethical phases of the European critical legal tradition arose as a result of the decisive events of 1989-1992 and the ushering in of a “new world order” marked by a seemingly victorious globalised capitalism and its ideological and institutional counterparts. However, as Douzinas also points out, the political settlement came under decisive assault with the September 11, 2001 attacks, while the economic settlement started to unravel with the global economic turmoil beginning in 2008. This, he asserts, “led to a distinct turn to a politics of resistance” (Douzinas 2014, 194). In the terms of this thesis' conceptual framework, we can say that what resulted was a rise in action-centric *theoria* as well as *praxis* within the British critical legal community.

One of the hallmarks of an action-centric political approach is its attention to concrete factors, which always trouble any polished, abstract theory. Abstraction cannot be avoided, particularly in an academic environment, but here it is brought into contact with the messier elements of reality as an inevitable necessity. This characteristic of critical legal thinking which focuses on action can be seen in the recent political writings of Douzinas. A piece of commentary on the Syriza government in Greece, published in April 2016 and part of a forthcoming book, provides a classic instance of his approach in miniature. In it he argues that “[l]eft governmentality involves planning carefully and preparing state reforms, but also improvising and adjusting, becoming at once brutally pragmatic and uncompromisingly principled” (Douzinas 2016). Although at first glance pragmatism and principles appear to be placed in an equal relationship, Douzinas' conception of multiple temporalities allows us to see that the former predominates on the shorter term, while the latter comes to a fuller expression only on the long term. In a nod towards both Derrida's *à venir* (“to come”) and Bloch's “Not Yet” – thus displaying a measure of continuity with the ethical period which we have just examined¹⁹ – as well as employing concepts from Lacanian psychoanalysis, he writes:

The memorandum is the symbolic order of Syriza. It distributes government, MPs and party into their current positions of unwilling small-scale agents of European capital. The social transformation programme, on the other hand, is

¹⁹ Indeed, Douzinas argues that in the present phase of critical legal thinking in Europe, “aesthetic and ethical concerns [have] remained methodologically strong. But the collapse of the new world order [has] led to a distinct turn to a politics of resistance” (Douzinas 2014, 193–194).

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the imaginary order. It allows us to keep going by believing and acting now in the name of a “not yet” or a “to come,” which re-defines our current predicament as the necessary precursor of a socialist future. ... Syriza will reach the second temporality of left governance and the third of left vision only by continuously and simultaneously implementing and undermining the agreement policies. Only when this third temporality starts unfolding, freed from the neoliberal lambast, will the full programme of the left of the 21st century emerge. It is a case of escaping into the future, acting now from the perspective of a future perfect, of what will have been. In this sense, the future becomes an active factor of our present. (Douzinas 2016)

Here it is worth recalling that Karatani links Lacan's symbolic order to the phenomenon in Kant, and the imaginary order to the Kantian idea. Mapping these links onto our own conceptual triad, we see that for Douzinas, although the sphere of action is in this case dominated by the despised memorandum with the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund which the Syriza government was arm-twisted into accepting and implementing, it is necessary to remain in this situation of imperfection yet working with an orientation towards a Blochian-Derridian *Novum* that is to come. The alternative of escaping into a pure realm of complete rupture with the aforementioned institutions – which in different forms is the choice of the Communist KKE, the splinter group Popular Unity and various other far-left groups – is to begin with an ideal rather than with the present balance of forces. Although on at least a formal level these alternative groupings on the Left share with Syriza the left-wing commitment towards “a concrete analysis of the concrete situation, taking full notice of the balance of forces” (Douzinas 2016), their underlying aversion to any form of pragmatism is what distinguishes them from Douzinas and others on his side in the Greek left who are evidently less thought-centric and wedded to purity than these critics of Syriza.

Indeed, those for whom action is essential tend to engage with the problematic of idealism by adopting the regulative idea rather than the constitutive idea. As we have noted in the preliminary note on Karatani, this is indeed the case in his recent work, and he names this regulative idea “X” or “association” (Karatani 2008b, 576). Douzinas enacts a similar move when he argues for “isodemocracy,” which he terms, adopting a phrase used much by Jodi Dean, a “communist horizon”²⁰ (Douzinas 2016). It is particularly important to note that such a regulative horizon is not “a future utopia, a non-realizable ideal,” but neither is it “a telos, a terminal station, or the purpose and end

20 See, for instance Dean 2012.

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of historical teleology or entelechy;” rather, it “remains open and unreachable but is integrated as a guiding lighthouse beam into our everyday practice” (Douzinas 2016).

Whereas thought-centricism since Plato involves an assumption that the idea is pristine and its actualisation necessarily involves a contamination of its immaculate essence, action-centricism celebrates the transition from abstract to concrete. When Douzinas turns to the democratic aspect of isodemocracy, for example, he states that it “too, is a horizon that keeps changing as we approach it. The general principle becomes concretized and transformed, the horizon takes on the colors and tints of the rainbow, a deeper hue and a wider spectrum. We move from strengthening a principle that has been hollowed out to *the recognition that the principle itself has limited reach*. It needs to be universalized and deepened in order to succeed” (Douzinas 2016, italics added).

This argument about the limited reach of the principle itself and the necessity of concretising it is a crucial shift upwards in the University Triangle from the generally low-lying position of the school of critique. While it is true that those of this school have rarely been isolated from the sphere of *praxis*, their forays into the political realm have generally been at the level of micropolitics and protest rather than macropolitics and governmentality. Hence, although it would be inaccurate to say that the BritCrits have remained cooped up in their ivory towers, they have for the most part been content to limit their on-the-ground engagement to spaces such as the street, the picket line, the refugee camp and the occupation of square, park or building. In such contexts, the necessity of not just practical compromise but ideological contamination is kept at a manageable level, and thus the disconcerting yet easily-slung left-wing epithets such as “hierarchical,” “patriarchal,” “anti-democratic” or simply “problematic” are hard to avoid.

We can also observe Douzinas' action-centric leanings in his formulation of a “universal moral command” in his 2013 book *Philosophy and Resistance in the Crisis: Greece and the Future of Europe*, a theoretical move that he makes as a response to the crippling “erosion of social ethos” experienced in Greece as a result of the economic crisis. A comparison with the Kantian categorical imperative which is its tacit prototype brings out their manifest differences. In his *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Kant writes: “There is, therefore, only a single categorical imperative and it is this: act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law” (Kant 1998b, 31). This primary formulation by Kant of the imperative is procedural rather than substantive, in that he provides an overarching

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structure to guide ethical action but leaves the autonomous subject in his system to fill out the empty space. Douzinas, by contrast, phrases his universal moral command in the following categorical form: “Always act according to a maxim which, universally applied, attacks and cancels the causes that exclude and condemn to symbolic and physical death large numbers of people” (Douzinas 2013, 63). The activist – and indeed, progressive or left-wing political – implications of this imperative are clear. An evil is named, namely the exclusions and condemnations to “symbolic and physical death” of “large numbers of people,” and Douzinas enjoins the reader to evaluate her possible actions according to whether they will contribute to eradicating the causes of this evil.

Moreover, lest we assume that action-centrism is focused upon politics or political philosophy pure and simple, it is worth noting Douzinas has pursued this approach in more explicitly legal settings as well. In Chapter Four we made reference to his 2005 article, “Oubliez Critique.” In this piece, which is an exploration of what it means to engage in critique in our political present, which he terms the “New Times,” he argues that the “global biopolitical turn” means that “(the dominant types of) critique” practised by critical legal scholars in the preceding period, which include deconstruction and the ethical turn, should be “forgotten” in favour of “acts of resistance” (Douzinas 2005, 66, 68–69). Even before the financial crisis beginning in 2008 caused the hidden cracks in the make-up of our society to be made undeniably visible, Douzinas was already calling for “counter action” rather than a “counter principle” to resist sovereignty in these “New Times” (Douzinas 2005, 68). It is crucial, he insists, for critical legal theory to “be re-linked with emancipatory and radical politics” (Douzinas 2005, 58), and it is only by “forgetting (the dominant types of) critique that we might be able to defy” what is symbolised and actualised in “the law” (Douzinas 2005, 69).

The Wider Canvas

Now that we’ve gone on a whistlestop tour through the territory of European critical legal thinking with the University Triangle as our conceptual map, it is possible to make a few comments about how the concepts developed earlier in this and the previous chapter intersect with this particular segment of university reality. First of all, we can see that complete partiality is a rarity on the ground, for although Gearey’s primary position is solidly on the feeling-centric side of things, in his concern for the wider sphere of materiality, as well as his engagement with social-political issues such as

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welfare, we find a certain integrative aspect in his work. Likewise, Douzinas' engagement with practical politics in Greece does not undo his solid commitment to principled thought-centricism, as evinced in his residual appeals to the ethical critique of politics and the political, and his ultimate subordination of pragmatism to a vision of “a socialist future,” which can be understood as a regulative idea (Douzinas 2016).

Nevertheless, there is little sign of a pluralist attitude in the writings which we have examined, with the exclusivist attitude being almost an unspoken *sine qua non*. This is not surprising, given what we have already said about the nature of academic *praxis* and its strong predilection towards exclusivism. However, where explicit recognition of the value of competing analyses and ideas is absent, perhaps the practical expression of a certain pluralism can be found in the continued existence of the CLC, which continues to be a space where critically-inclined legal thinkers can convene for a long weekend each year for both deep discussion and casual camaraderie. While any previous and present participant of this inoperative community can testify as to the fierceness – to a point approaching rancour – of not a few of these intellectual and socio-political exchanges, the very fact that the CLC is thirty-two years old and counting²¹ is testament to the fact that a certain implicit pluralism can co-exist with a more dominant exclusivist framework.

Given the generally exclusivist framework in which critical legal thinking has by and large taken place, perhaps one challenge which participants in the European critical legal tradition may wish to take up is the articulation of a coherent pluralist perspective which may inform the workings of this more-or-less non-substantialist community. If this were ever to be taken up seriously, it is hoped that this thesis may contribute to the conversation. Nevertheless, it may be that such an endeavour is unnecessary given the underlying (if conditional) pluralist attitudes of the liberal political tradition, conceived broadly, from its early figures to Rawls and Habermas in the last half-century, which already form part of the environment in which critique takes place. In this sense, perhaps the combative agonism which is experienced at the CLC and its wider republic of articles and monographs is itself a key contribution to the space of academic *klesis*. Here, once again, we find the concomitance of two antinomical elements – that is, pluralism and exclusivism – and thus it is crucial to maintain a transcritical approach.

21 This figure becomes all the more significant when we place it beside the fact that the American Conference on Critical Legal Studies only lasted for seventeen years, i.e. from 1977-1994.

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For given that the distribution of these elements are unequal depending on one's location within the wider matrix, it is often a difficult process to determine which is to be affirmed, and which is to be acted against. Hence, to keep both in play is necessary, even as this task often has to be distributed among different actors in the wider frame, given that none of us are able to take on the task of being all things for all situations.

Conclusion

We began this chapter with an intention to interrogate in more specific ways the triadic conceptualisation of the university which was developed in the preceding chapters. In the first section, we considered the matter of the ultimate partiality of any formulation of the conceptual triad, including that of Kant's architectonic which we, following Karatani, took as our starting point. By placing this architectonic in the context of Kant's thought-centricism, we were able to appreciate how his own subjective slant colours any triad we may extract from his work in a rationalistic hue, focused as it is on universal principles and imbued with juridical metaphors. Nevertheless, we ended by acknowledging that this imbalance in Kant's own work should not induce in us a reaction to swing away from reason completely, especially due to its essential role in any form of reasoned discourse, but merely allow us to see the inevitability of any vision to be influenced by its subject-position, which is both singular and particular.

We then moved on in the second section to examine the case of British/European critical legal thought, as an intermediate sphere between the more generic forms of the triad formulated through our reading of Karatani, and the far more specific form of the triad in the sphere of the university. We took as our starting point Douzinas' narrative of the development of the Critical Legal Conference as a guiding thread for our enquiry into the three perspectives of aesthetics, ethics and law, and politics. Specific writings from critical legal thinkers were then analysed to extract their essential contents which manifest leanings toward feeling-centricism, thought-centricism and action-centricism, respectively. From here we saw that although all the thinkers cited were themselves not "pure" examples of any of the three perspectives, it is nevertheless possible to trace the tendencies of each. Finally, we reflected upon the contradiction between exclusivism and pluralism in these writings and more generally, before concluding that what must be maintained is a transcritical approach which is able to hold the two poles of this and other antinomies of the university in a productive, if often uncomfortable tension.

Conclusion

It is customary for all theses to end with a conclusion. The etymology of the English word “conclude” comes from the Latin *con* and *claudo*. *Claudo* means “to shut something that is open” (Lewis and Short 1879), but the prefix *con* bears two possible meanings. One is to designate “the completeness, perfecting of any act” (Lewis and Short 1879), and on this reading to conclude would be to shut something completely, one might even say for good. This is the most natural understanding of a conclusion in an academic work, in that it is meant to bring the text to a definite close – to declare, as in the words of Pontius Pilate: “What I have written, I have written” (John 19:22, DV).

However, the other possible meaning of *con* is related to its primitive form *cum*, a word meaning a “bringing together of several objects” (Lewis and Short 1879), which can also be translated simply as “with.”²² Hence, could we not say that to conclude this thesis would be to shut a number of disparate things together, to impel these rather unruly objects to be with each other, but without *final* closure? For to insist on such finality would not do justice to the indelibly anarchic elements which will continue to writhe about even if we were to bury them six feet under the ground in a shared grave – it would, in effect, be an attempt to freeze what is an unceasingly dynamic process.

Indeed, it is a central two-sided theme of this thesis that, on the one hand, the elements of the postwar British university which seem to be combined in an indistinct mixture can be separated out and grasped as specific ingredients, but, on the other hand, these distinct elements are always intimately related. Hence, using a form of the bracketing procedure developed by Karatani and other allied thinkers, we have been able to explore in turn the perspectives of instrumentalism, idealism and community, i.e. the University Triangle, as they have developed in British higher education over the last seventy years. Yet we have not remained content with such procedural separation, but have also explored the interpenetration of each of these perspectives with the others.

Indeed, this thesis began proper by developing in the first chapter a methodology which involves the bringing together of two historical-philosophical traditions, namely the genealogy of Foucault *cum* the transcendental retrospection of Karatani. By combining the empirical punch of the former with the transcendental

²² This is, of course, the very same *cum* which plays a central role in Nancy's meditations on community (Nancy 1991) as well as the various related concepts he formulates from “being-in-common” and “being-together,” to “being-with” and the extremely minimalist “with” (Esposito and Nancy 2010, 81).

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finesse of the latter into a method we termed trans-genealogy, we were able to set the tone for an investigation which endeavours to not privilege either narrowly empirical or over-abstractly structural factors. We ended the chapter by laying out the scaffolding for the chapters that were to follow. Taking Karatani's reading of Kant according to a triadic lens as our starting point, we outlined the three questions or perspectives in the British university to be expanded upon and linked them to Kant's phenomenon, idea and thing-in-itself. We then brought the chapter to a close by underlining that the nature of bracketing means that it is impossible to perceive and intervene in the university from more than one viewpoint at a given time, and thus the only way to avoid the illusions created by the pronounced parallax and attain a wider grasp of the picture is to oscillate between various viewpoints in a transcritical manner.

In the subsequent three chapters, which can be considered the second part of the thesis, we utilised the bracketing operation in order to examine the points of invention for each of the three perspectives in the University Triangle. We began in Chapter Two with the instrumentalist mentality, which we defined as a viewpoint which assumes that the primary measure of any policy or practice within higher education is its consequences for whatever goals have been pre-determined. This approach, which results in a university without its own *telos* or content, is one which is generally associated with Thatcherite neoliberalism. However, contrary to this assumption, we traced the history of higher education instrumentalism to a significantly earlier point, that is, the postwar Labour government under Clement Attlee, via a reading of the Barlow Report which provided an ideological basis for the expansion of public university funding in the idea of producing “scientific man-power.”

In Chapter Three, we turned our attention to what we termed the idealist conception of higher education, generally grounded as it is on a flawed reading of the 1963 Robbins Report on Higher Education. The idealist approach is one which posits a single, unifying ideal to be the backbone of a system of university education, and measures policies according to their furtherance of this ideal. However, far from the received interpretation of the Robbins Report which continues to be trumpeted by those who argue for the renewal of the idea of a “public university” built upon the Report's foundations, we saw how Lionel Robbins' neoliberal economic ideas were peppered throughout the model of and justification for higher education which he develops. Moreover, Karatani's exegesis of Kant's distinction between constitutive and regulative

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ideas was deployed to grasp the impossibility of pure idealism, and hence the regulative idea that provides an index for action but not a blueprint for rolling out was advocated.

Both Chapters Two and Three, dealing as they were with bygone periods of the university's history, were tacitly founded upon the thought-centric enquiry which intends to ascertain the truth or accuracy of the pictures of the past which have come down to us. In Chapter Four, we turned to consider the third perspective of community, but considering as we were this question within the frame of our situation in the present, we reorientated ourselves epistemically to the action-centric question of what is timely or appropriate given the state of the British university today. In order to make sense of the various contemporary forces tussling on the subject of community, we made use of Tönnies' conceptual distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* in order to formulate two ideal types of substantialist and non-substantialist community which we find in both the spheres of theory and practice. We then surveyed the playing out of these dynamics in the distinct yet overlapping circles of students, non-academic staff and academic staff, and concluded that the drive towards individualism in the postwar period has resulted in the deterioration of the sense of substantialist community which was more tangible in the early decades after the Second World War. Finally, having found both substantialist and non-substantialist community lacking in various ways, we took Karatani's fourfold conceptualisation of the modes of exchange in society as a launching point for an alternative conception of community in higher education inspired by his fourth, "Mode D," and named it the associationist university. This notion, however, is a regulative idea rather than a detailed, practical agenda.

Having come to the end of the second part of the thesis, we found that we had an interpretive key for organising the disparate elements in the postwar university, namely the University Triangle, and a narrative of how each element in the triad has come to be. However, we still lacked a sense of what can be done beyond setting the associationist university as a horizon for general orientation. In the final section of the thesis, we turned to exploring a means of arbitrating between and dwelling with the manifold expressions of the University Triangle that presently exist, not only outside of us but indeed within each actor in the British university. In doing this we calibrated ourselves to the final element of the Epistemic Triangle, namely the feeling-centric enquiry into authenticity. Having examined the objective questions of truth and timeliness/appropriateness, in these final two chapters we adopted a more subjective

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strategy, approaching the question of what we can do through the concept of vocation.

Given that the question of vocation is essentially a way of grappling with the problematic of singularity, Chapter Five thus began with an exploration of what Karatani has called the two circuits of individuality-particularity-generality and singularity-universality, in order to lay the theoretical groundwork for what was to come. It was argued that transcritical engagement with both these circuits is necessary in order to get beyond the dichotomy which pits them against each other, for vocation involves universalist visions, singular lives and particular categories. Having laid these foundations, we then launched into an examination of the concept of vocation as it has developed in the post-Antiquity Western – that is, Christian – tradition, for in this history we were able to find various connected but competing interpretations of the Pauline concept of *klesis* or calling, ranging from the primitive baseline *klesis* of being a Christ-follower and the Catholic elevation of monasticism as the true fulfilment of Christian life, to the Lutheran concept of *Beruf* which sacralises everyday work and a purely secular idea of labour. We then connected these concepts to Stanley Fish's typology of versions of the academic vocation, resulting in a more detailed mapping of various elements we have discussed of the University Triangle in a single diagram. However, this placement of the elements in a diagrammatic format did not resolve the persistent question of how the diverging elements are to be understood: are they locked in an unending battle for the soul of the university, with no common ground to be found between them? Or is some sort of mutual understanding or at least tolerance possible? To attempt to answer this question, we brought in another concept for the Pauline toolbox which is a counterpart to *klesis*, namely *charismata* or gifts. It was argued that the tension between partiality towards one or more vocational directions and a strategy of integration is, in fact, not as tricky to resolve as that between an attitude of exclusivism and one of pluralism. However, if we assume, on principle if not in total subjective conviction, that no single person can grasp the totality, following the lead of Žižek and Adorno, then we are able to accept the task of telling the truth of our singular vocations while attempting to engage with the seemingly strange approaches to higher education which are manifested by others.

In the sixth and final chapter, we set out to place the theoretical elaboration in the previous chapter on a more grounded footing. By examining the partiality in the last instance which is found in every formulation of the conceptual triad – with the possible

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exception of its more general form, i.e. thought-centricism, action-centricism and feeling-centricism – through a consideration of Kant's architectonic, we were able to see how every triadic conceptualisation is coloured by the tint of its author's glasses. Lastly, we explored the sphere of British/European critical legal theory as a case study of sorts, in order to see how the conceptual triad plays out in a particular context within the university. By examining specific writings by specific thinkers, we were able to see how leanings toward the different poles of the triangle find expression. Faced with these irreducible distinctions, we ended by returning to the practice of transcritical oscillation as the only way of keeping all these elements in play in the wider sphere, even if none of us is able to embody them all at once.

We began this thesis with a methodological exploration which led us to the transcendental topos for transcritique, and it is with this topos that we draw things to a close. For it is in this transversal, transpositional space that we are able to shut disparate elements together, to place them in an uneasy state of being alongside or *cum*, without mandating that they stay frozen for eternity. However, it must be emphasised that transcritical oscillation is not only necessary at the superstructural level of the University Triangle, but also at the infrastructural level of the Epistemic Triangle. For example, if one enters into the subjectivist perspective of authenticity by bracketing truth and contextual timeliness, it becomes impossible to dispute with those who insist that what one considers wrong-headed or damaging policies, actions and arguments are honest expressions of their deeply held convictions and patterns of life – that is to say, their *charismata*. Even appeals to a baseline *klesis* as a means of dialogue or arbitration may not be sufficient, for there is often contestation about the very content of an essential vocation of the university, even if an “ecumenical” approach allows us to posit the basic vocation of conveying and furthering knowledge as a common thread which can bring a sense of unity, however tenuous. Therefore, in such a situation, it may be necessary to switch epistemic perspectives and approach the problem from the standpoint of truth or timeliness, where the deficiencies of such “adversaries” can be attacked on the grounds of falsity and/or a poor interpretation of the situation. The drawback of this, of course, is that it may lead to the opposed sides talking past each other, especially if the underlying rules of engagement are not mutually recognised – in other words, if what is being bracketed and unbracketed is different for each side.

How do we know what is most appropriate to be bracketed or unbracketed?

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Given the complexities of the social totality, is it not the case that coherent cases can be made for favouring each of the various stances over the others in a given situation? Here we return to the gamble we made at the beginning of Chapter Five, namely “to bet *against* there being a silver bullet, one-size-fits-all solution such as “*such-and-such* community is always the answer,” and instead place “many advantages in life” on the side of there being singular and dynamic resolutions for singular persons, collectives and situations, which are themselves ever-shifting.” If, as has been argued, one of the constitutional limitations of the academic argument is that of requiring a monologic argument, another related problem is that it tends to lead to the advocacy of a single exclusivist solution to a problem. This, of course, includes the single solution of “pure” pluralism, itself a exclusivist claim on a different level of abstraction.

Moreover, although this thesis has taken the path of attempting to analyse the heterogeneity and complexity of the university, it is far from the case that a complex, nuanced understanding is always the best. It is at this point that we should return to a concept we explored in Chapter One, namely Foucault's notion of the intolerable. The immediacy of an intolerable aspect or situation can cut through the vacillating of seemingly pluralist or “postmodern” indeterminacy which any complex formulation tends toward. To return to an earlier theme, it is possible, in the abstract, to see the value of an instrumentalist approach to university policy based on a particular reading of the present juncture – that is, a doubly action-centric stance. However, when we consider the fact that such an approach, clearly manifested in recent governmental documents such as the Browne Report and the last two White Papers on higher education, is presently running roughshod over and effectively silencing alternative viewpoints, the response of some actors within the university of unflinching, prophetic denunciation is to be greatly appreciated. We in the university have a need for some prophets in both the vein of the Hebrew Scriptures and modern revolutionaries, and indeed probably more regularly than “sometimes.” For after all, in a realm where questions and debates seem to be never-ending, there is a vocation for those who are able to conclude in the sense of providing a *con* of completeness, however momentary.

And thus, even though I must admit that I doubt such an unbending, nail-in-the-coffin conviction is entirely my lot in this thesis, the impossibility to continue to write until the end of time forces me to inscribe here: “*Quod scripsi, scripsi.*”²³

23 The Latin version of Pilate's aforementioned statement.

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