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Education and the Future

Review of *Toward a Philosophy of Higher Education: Contemporary Philosophical Proposals for the University*, edited by Aaron Stoller and Eli Kramer (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 268 pages

Editors Aaron Stoller and Eli Kramer have organized and edited a group of essays that include a variety of perspectives regarding the present problems and tensions that condition possible futures of higher education institutions. The primary aim in this work is to create a sustained discussion about higher education that will provide the basis for a radical reimagining of the role of higher education. In order to navigate this difficult terrain, Stoller and Kramer introduce readers to some of the historical background that have shaped relevant contemporary problems in institutions of higher education. In addition to providing some historical background, Stoller and Kramer also offer guidelines for how the deployment of our imaginative capacities ought to be directed as the processes of globalization, corporatization, and privatization (among others) unfold as significant influences on higher education.

The book is organized into five parts that roughly approximate a pragmatic method of inquiry. This method requires that the departure point of investigation should be based in experience. From there, concrete problems can be proposed and articulated that shed light on some of the difficulties we face in imagining a better future for higher education. This phase of the inquiry constitutes part one of the book. In this part, we find essays that speak to postmodern worldmaking (Sartwell), a Weberian critique of online classes (Keehn, Anderson, and Boyles), and an essay that engages the promotion of "diversity" in higher education (Tunstall).

The second part, ideally, deploys particular strategies for understanding and ameliorating the problems put forth in the first part. It draws again from experience and applies theoretical frameworks from which to understand these problems more clearly and articulate conditions for the successful amelioration of those problems as well as providing a way forward in the overall inquiry. In this part, we have an essay that orients us in the direction of a theoretical and practical understanding of liberal education (Newell), and a pedagogical technique that emphasizes conversation as the basis for authentic education (Allan).

In the third part of the text, we transition from dealing with concrete issues and appropriate methods for moving forward into the philosophical work of generalizing principles that address our concrete concerns and produce a rich conceptual appreciation of higher education in order to ameliorate tensions and problems. These principles allow us to abstract from the present conditions the relevant data of experience and create ideals that provide us with the bases for determining action. In this part of the book, we have an essay that uses an ecological approach to understand culture and the universities role in influencing it (Barnett), a work that emphasizes the value of education for citizenship in a globalized world (Nussbaum), and a piece on the aim of higher education from a situated epistemological vantage of African thought (Metz).

Part four descends from the general theory produced by the combined efforts back to experience and addresses the advantages and difficulties that will be faced by pluralistic institutions of higher education where transdisciplinary efforts lead to collaborative efforts (Lake, McFarland, Jennrich). Part five provides us with what all good pragmatic inquiries do, the next question. It has a single essay dedicated to the coming revolution in higher education (Auxier).

I cannot do justice to the breadth and depth of each article, much less the methods employed therein. My intent for this review is to touch on some of the recurrent themes found in the essays as a collection.

Per the editors, one of the extant problems that universities face is the continual pressure from right-wing political groups to interpret the function of higher education as an institutional provision to the community for the creation of the laborers of tomorrow who have the technological and vocational skills that will vitalize (maybe revitalize) the advancement of industry and ensure the economic success of the country. In place of the traditional valuations of higher education as fundamental to either (or both) the cultivation of citizens participating in communities of inquiry and activism that are essential to a healthy democratic state, or as cultural centers dedicated to the development of contemplation and the advancement of the Western mind, a relatively new kind of interpretation has been thrust upon universities from the outside. This view is a sort of stark utilitarianism that has shaped much of the ire and distrust directed at the modern university.

A second problem that has some relation to the rise of right's capacity to criticize institutions of higher learning that Stoller and Kramer attend to is the lack of sufficient attention toward developing a theoretical understanding of the role of higher education as a distinguishable ontological unit, as well as an institution embedded in a greater culture. As the editors note, little effort has been exerted to sustain long-term philosophical investigations into improving our theoretical appreciation for the role of higher education. There have been brief moments in the history of higher education when some philosopher or other thinker addresses questions that are relevant to inquiries about higher learning. However, these concerns primarily addressed some particular problem as it appeared within the historical landscape. Though the proposed resolutions to these problems did provide a more general claim about the role of higher education, the conversations that might have continued to produce the intellectual fruit of theory rarely (if ever) persisted after the particular problem at hand was acted upon by those with the authority to make policy decisions.[1]

Despite the lack of any sufficiently holistic and historically continuous theoretical development regarding the role of higher education by scholars, Stoller and Kramer do note some of the more relevant tensions that have conditioned how we think (when we do) about higher education. In turn, given these tensions, the editors

1) Stoller and Kramer do document areas of study that have attempted to provide a more theoretical approach to understanding higher education in the contemporary epoch. However, the methods and results of all these movements have disappointingly remained particularized to certain difficulties faced by institutions of higher learning or the individuals that participate in them in that they explicitly or implicitly endorse the status quo in higher education, do not sufficiently differentiate between K-12 learning and post-secondary education, or address specific problems only experienced by a small strata of the larger community of higher learning.

propose some valuations regarding how to best think about them in reimagining higher education. I will speak to two of the tensions they address to illustrate what I see as the overarching problem that a philosophy of higher education needs to address in order to be successful.

One of the tensions is born out of two distinctly different ways of understanding higher education. In the first "way," we approach the university as a monolithic whole that serves some overarching ideal (for more on this, read the section regarding the Hutchins-Dewey debate provided by the authors). Within this framework, the path for developing a theoretical appreciation for higher education is smoothed because of the presumed homogeneity of the whole out of which the parts are shaped. This smoothing occurs as a result of an assertion of some predesignated aim that the whole serves. This view is rather difficult to maintain, however, when we investigate higher education as it is experienced from different vantages within the varied processes that makeup university living. The reason for the difficulty in maintaining this method stems from the empirical fact that there seems to be no underlying monoculture discoverable across the various organizations that make up the whole.[2] This method fails because it relies upon an assumption of homogeneity in a form that does not exist in the world. It is a model-centric view that overlooks the actual experiences found within the structures of the university itself. At its worst, this perspective overlooks valuable differences among the diverse parts of higher education and institutionally enforces homogeneity for the sake of a unified perspective.

In contrast to the whole-to-part model-centric view, we may choose the inverse method. This method could be called empirical, as it relies upon the extant concrete processes that already makeup the university as a basis for theoretical evaluation and explanation. This method reveals a multitude of microcultures that make up a complex ecological system of loosely affiliated departments that, altogether, serve a plurality of ends. The difficulty that is encountered when this method is selected is achieving a greater unity that is required for a clarification of the what, why, and how of higher education. Given that higher education is a human institution, we must play a significant role in elaborating some kind of ideal that higher education serves, as a whole, in order to coordinate and organize university processes under a general schema. However, at the same time, we cannot allow ourselves to become model-centric in our work to achieve an ideal, otherwise we fall prey to the problems that result from the whole-to-part method.

A second tension that translates well into an investigation based upon the logic of parts and wholes is the role of the university within the state. If the university functions as a whole in relation to the state, it has a high degree of autonomy and defines its own ends. As a part of the state, the question of the purpose and value of the university bleeds across the lines of the university and, depending upon the degree of autonomy that it has, the university yields some of the authority in determining its role to the greater community? Thus, the question regarding whether the university is a part of the greater community or is an independent whole that is related to, in some ways, but independent of the state is the question of autonomy.

As a primarily autonomous organ of the state, the university would be responsible for determining its own ends and means. Among other things, this autonomy would provide the basis from which the university can critically assess and make ethical demands on the state's activities when, for example, structural violence and other forms of injustice occur. If, however, the autonomy is too extreme, then the university, in deciding its own function and self-understanding, runs the risk of becoming disconnected from the vital needs of the community that supports it. In such conditions, if higher education takes on the role of critical evaluation of cultural practices, it does so only on its own terms and in ways that it sees fit. This complete autonomy would lead to a higher risk of epistemic blindness to the concrete conditions and needs of the greater community.

2) By "method" I mean only the selected mode of judgment for interpreting what higher education is, ought to be, and how it ought to accomplish its work.

On the other hand, a total lack of autonomy renders higher education as a merely utilitarian institution (which is what Hutchins feared) that is subject to the whims of cultural and political desire. In this scenario, the function of higher education is whatever the community (or its leaders) determines. This lack of autonomy, which seems to be what the right advocates (in our present conditions), demands that the role of higher education is subject to the same forces that govern capitalistic markets. Within this context, the function of higher education is to provide the laborers that will satisfy the future desires of the population through technological advances and better engineering. The questionable value of the humanities in this framework is reducible to understanding how the liberal arts can provide satisfactory entertainment for cultural consumption. If this understanding of the university as an institution without its own autonomy is accepted, then the university has very little to offer in the way of cultural critique. The inability of the university to reflect upon problems of injustice in the greater community occurs because higher education becomes immediately subject to the desires of the culture and, as a result of that primary aim, has no basis from which to reflect critically on those desires. Under such conditions, the university is a perpetuator of the status quo and a servant to desire.

There are other tensions that Stoller and Kramer address in the introduction, such as the tension between interpreting institutions of higher learning as producers of research or as focused on the cultivation of students through classroom activities. I believe that these other tensions can also be understood in terms of problems utilizing part-whole relations as analytical tools, but I think the main thrust of the introduction is that we need to find a way through these tensions that avoid problems that result from taking any one of the extreme positions as the appropriate method to understanding higher education.

The reason I selected these particular tensions is that they are complimentary to each other. I will have more to say on this in a moment. For now, let us consider these tensions independently. If we include in our imagining of the future of higher education a commitment to *both-this-and-that* rather than *either-this-or-that* thinking, we find a broad array of possibilities which may assist us in creating the best and sufficiently complex understanding of what higher education is. In the case of the first tension, between whole-to-part and part-to-whole methods of interpretation, we find that each method (when we use *either-or* thinking) produces a dissatisfying result. In the whole-to-part method, the ideal of higher education is taken to be fixed and predetermined, regardless of the real world activities and embedded processes that occur in higher education. The inverse method of part-to-whole, however, produces a plurality of individualistic entities that have various aims and exclusive activities that are difficult to hold together under some conceptual framework that unifies them. This latter problem, by itself, does not seem to be all that problematic, as long as we can find a way to communicate effectively across these divisions to maintain the processes that allow for the continuation of all of the entities involved. The reason that pluralism can be problematic will be clearer as we proceed.

We find though, if we integrate the methods of interpreting the university as one thing and as many things, the possibility of striking a balanced position that maximizes the benefits of both methods, while minimizing their risks. This integrative method applies to the second tension, too. If we take the university to be a whole independent from the state, by definition there is a rift between the community and higher education. The results of such a definition would certainly have methodological and administrative consequences that would structurally give rise to and reinforce the separation between the university and the community. However, if we take the university to be merely a part of community, it may readily succumb to the myopic demands of the culture. In such circumstances, the possibility that the university could function as a site for reflection adapted to the purposes of bettering the community (through making it more just and equitable) diminishes significantly.

When the integrative method for interpretation is used in the second tension, we see that we need to conceptualize higher education in such a way that it is capable of genuine critical reflection on the activities

that occur in the community. In addition to a degree of autonomy, though, the community should have some influence regarding the knowledge producing activities that occur in the university. Further, the community has both the privilege and the responsibility to hold institutions of higher education responsible for contributing to the enrichment of living in ways that are both robust and attentive to all dimensions of human experience.

With these balances in mind, we can address the problem of pluralism. Despite the seemingly unproblematic method of part-to-whole method of interpreting higher education, in light of the integrative method of interpretation that resolves the second tension, the part-to-whole method as sufficient to the ends of understanding higher education has a disastrous result. The empirical fact of a diversity of ends and the consequent practices that facilitate the achievement of those ends in higher education cannot be denied. Unfortunately, if we have nothing that binds us together under an ideal aim for higher education, our only recourse in explaining higher education to a community that is largely unaware of the role of higher education, is to have a cacophony of different voices that speak primarily from within whatever paradigmatic methods and ontologies prevail in their respective disciplines. With no commonly held values, we have no commonly held ideal. With no shared ideal (or ideals), we have no coherent voice. We can call this "the problem of unity in diversity."

When the right, or anyone for that matter, leans toward the direction of interpreting the university as merely a part (or servant) of the greater community, the problem of unity in diversity appears as central to the concerns of imagining what higher education is, does, and ought to be. A defense against such an extreme method of interpretation is untenable. In large part, this indefensibility of a semi-autonomous institution of higher education is the result of having no common language formed around a theoretically defensible position, based upon an internally constituted ideal (or vision) of higher education. So, the problem of unity (or lack thereof) in diversity leads to a problem of unity in adversity. If we have no common way of understanding the role of higher education from within the context of a higher education institution, we are left defenseless against attacks from those who have the clout to assert that they should be the source of definition regarding the role of higher learning in the greater community. The book that Stoller and Kramer put together, then, is an effort to find a middle way that reimagines the university as both a semi-autonomous and semi-homogeneous institution.

The Essays: More Parts, More Wholes

Along the lines of parts and wholes thinking, several essays come to mind. The second chapter, written by Crispin Sartwell, is critical of the contemporary university that conceives of itself as highly autonomous and progressively homogeneous. Sartwell's primary antagonist is Rorty, whom Sartwell argues is an epistemic authoritarian (my words) who arguably prefers a university that blocks the external community from influencing higher education in the formation of its ideals and practices. What is disconcerting in this mode of interpretation is that the university maintains its own epistemic demands and criteria that are inherently unchallengeable. These demands are intolerant to visions of progress that come from outside the institution. Further, the determination of who belongs to the community of higher education and who does not is based upon the criterion of ideological conformity of individuals to the preestablished aims of the university. In short, to disagree with the preestablished aims of the higher education in any way is to be both a speaker of falsity and to relegate oneself to non-member status of the community of higher education.

The institution of higher education that Sartwell presents as concrete fact is one that maintains its role of critical reflection on social and communal issues outside the university and polices its own critical reflection to ensure that these activities are never directed toward preestablished ideals. In order for a higher education to be successful, Sartwell contends, the demand for conformity to the narrow views established as the ideals of

higher education must diminish to the point that self-critical reflection can operate and flourish. There can be no progress when disagreement with preestablished ideals are institutionally invulnerable to criticism.

Another essay that is analyzable according to parts and wholes is the essay provided by Dwayne Tunstall, who advocates that pro-diversity in higher education is not sufficient for a robust appreciation for the aims of higher education. Celebration of diversity, of course, is necessary as part of the institutional disposition regarding the aims of higher education. However, Tunstall proposes, diversity needs to be enriched by the concepts and consequent praxes of inclusivity and equity. Further, this trinity of concepts and praxes should be grounded by a social justice framework that is sensitive to the historical dynamics of power and privilege distribution within the community, such as Mills' framework that is elaborated in *The Racial Contract*, which he advocates as advantageous to the work of developing a deeper appreciation for diversity.

Within the context of a part-whole analysis, Tunstall seeks to establish, through the introduction of emphases on inclusivity and equity in the social justice framework that creates the backdrop of the conceptual schema, a homogeneity to higher education along the lines of shared and equitable participation that fosters feelings of belongingness for everyone in the institution. Insofar as we have a long history of emphasizing exclusivity and inequity in the West, it would be difficult and immoral to defend either of these concepts as being conducive to the advance of higher education toward manifesting a more just community. Tunstall is indubitably correct to assert that we need robust notions of inclusivity, equity, and a social justice framework to inform our policies and praxes if we are to overcome the cultural trajectories of exclusivity and inequity of the past. My concern, however, lies in the advance of homogeneity along the lines of inclusivity. This concern can be represented by the issues that Tunstall does not address.

Diversity itself seems to rely upon a strong notion of exclusivity. Difference itself, of course, entails belonging to some group or groups rather than others. Without the belonging-not-belonging structure of understanding, diversity fades into non-existence. We certainly need to develop and give nuance to a robust notion of inclusivity that seeks justice along the lines of power and privilege distribution. This is why equity is such an important piece of Tunstall's work. However, it seems to me that, in order to maintain diversity, we also need to develop a robust moral theory of exclusivity. Inclusivity for the sake of inclusivity would seem to have a homogenizing effect on higher education and the greater community that has, as I see it, two potentially devastating implications for diversity. On the one hand, we find the danger of cultural appropriation, where all individuals gain the right to actively participate in cultural activities that were once exclusive to a more or less unique group of people. On the other hand, we find the danger of homogenization or cultural assimilation so that diversity itself evaporates and the advantages that are achieved by it consequently disappear.

I should reiterate that Tunstall's work addresses inclusivity and equity *through a social justice framework*. This means that his work is primarily focused on the distribution of power and privilege. His work cannot be interpreted, insofar as I understand it, to advocate the homogenization of diverse peoples into a universal culture through processes of appropriation or assimilation. Nevertheless, because we do not find a moral theory of exclusion in play in his thinking, the dangers of such possibilities remain intact. I argue, alongside the advancement of the concepts of diversity, inclusivity, and equity within the social justice framework, we also need to develop a theory that addresses when and why exclusivity is morally justifiable. Such a theory would maintain diversity while simultaneously protecting us from cultural appropriation and assimilation.

We find something of a germ of a moral theory of exclusion that Tunstall's essay does not address in Metz's essay on the theory of ends of education from an African standpoint. His theory provides a basis for exclusivity that maintains an active moral principle that extends to all people, regardless of their race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture, and so forth. In addition to this principle of greater inclusivity, Metz provides a way of excluding others (though the term "excluding" might not seem to be the best one, given the primary moral

principle Metz advocates) through a hierarchy of obligation based upon one's history and culture that seems to be both empirically established and rationally defensible.

For Metz, the primary moral obligation to all humans (and some animals) is based upon the capacity of an individual to commune with others. This basis of moral obligation is not located in the history one has with another in terms of past communion. Rather, it finds its basis in the possibility of communion. Wherever there is potential for communion, a moral obligation follows. By communion, Metz means relationships that emphasize "identifying with" or "sharing a way of life." In addition, it is the exhibition of solidarity or "achieving the good of all."[3] Off the cuff, it seems that Metz's communion could be contrasted with Heidegger's "being-with" as being-together. For communion, the "we" is prior to the "I," and the ethic seeks togetherness with a pronounced absence of people imposing discord, even for (maybe especially for) the sake of communion.

The part that I think is interesting in light of Tunstall's piece is that the hierarchy of obligation does afford a contrast between who belongs to the "we" and who does not. While a moral obligation is present wherever there is the *possibility* of communion (and this possibility extends to all human beings and some animals), the hierarchy of obligation entails that we have more obligation to those with whom we share an *actual* history of communion over those whom with we do not. This does not mean that we can mistreat others. It means that we can show preference to or, to state that more strongly, that we *ought* to show preference to those whom with we share a history of communion, at least insofar as they are committed to the morality of communion.[4]

Hypothetically, under the ethic of communion, if an other interrupts a communal activity in which there exists a history of shared communion, unless he or she is invited to join the activity, he or she should understand the intrusion as creating discord and leave. It is not that the other does not ultimately belong to the moral group that has the possibility of communion. Rather, the reason for the moral obligation to leave stems from the conditions of not having an actual history of communion with the group and, second, not being invited to commune with the others.

Now, if the other arrives at the communal activity in need of food or shelter, while he may not be welcome to attend the communal activity, the group still has a moral obligation to care for the other on the basis that he has the potential to be someone that individuals within the group or the group could commune with. To reject the stranger's need for food or shelter would undermine the possibility of communion for several reasons, the most important of which is his ability to continue living (and, therefore, potentially communing with others). Thus, the stranger's needs must be morally addressed, even if he is not welcome to join the communal activity.

The details of this possible moral theory of exclusion are far from worked out. I can foresee problems that would have to be thoughtfully considered and addressed before we could properly say that a moral theory of exclusion has been developed. Nevertheless, we need to discover moral spaces that are justifiably exclusive. To do so is to ensure that different groups with different experiences and practical concerns can come together and commune, cooperate, and address problems specific to their groups in environments that are non-hostile to them. Under the moral framework of communion, groups such as white supremacists would not have a morally justifiable reason (even if they have a legally justifiable one) to exclusion because they deny the prescriptive moral principle that the possibility of communion extends to and connects all human

3) Thaddeus Metz, "An African Theory of the Point of Higher Education: Communion as an Alternative to Autonomy, Truth, and Citizenship," in *Toward a Philosophy of Higher Education: Contemporary Philosophical Proposals for the University*, ed. Aaron Stoller & Eli Kramer (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 164.

4) This caveat is not asserted by Metz, but I cannot imagine that a more comprehensive account of communion ethics would omit this commitment.

beings. In addition, it would also be immoral for admissions counselors at historically and predominantly white universities to exclude black students, as they have recently been shown to do, because they are interested in race and racial justice.[5]

One other essay that can be understood through part-whole relations is Barnett's piece. His work is primarily interested in determining the best way for universities to understand their role in culture and as institutions of higher learning. What we find in Barnett's work is a struggle against a whole-to-part interpretation of culture that would homogenize each of the parts to match the whole. In this way, Barnett is concerned with problems of cultural imperialism and elitism. The similarities between this struggle and the struggle of higher education to find an appropriate middle ground between autonomy and subservience to the greater community is striking. Barnett notes that the whole messy affair has made many scholars squeamish in regard to understanding the university as an institution of cultural transmission. That is not to say that universities do not have something like a culture. Rather, the squeamishness is likely the result of concerns that any institutionally accepted notion of common culture could lead to problems of cultural elitism, authoritarianism, and/or imperialism.

Barnett, though, would like to overcome academic squeamishness about culture. I think his point is that, regardless of the university's hesitancy to endorse some practices and symbolic interpretations as belonging to culture and others as not, culture will continue to develop and have a strong influence on the greater community and on educational institutions. I think he is warning us that, if we choose to keep ourselves (as educators) divorced from culture, we lose relevance to culture or become irrelevant as contributors to the community.

Barnett defends the idea that universities ought to be centers of critical discourse (he borrows this idea from Alvin Gouldner). Critical discourse is defined by Barnett, as a first shot, as "one that minimally favors conversations in which there is both expositions of ideas. . .*and* a space in which such expositions can be evaluated."[6] He intentionally leaves the definition of critical discourse vague. Then, he goes on to lament that, if we are satisfied with the university as merely a center of critical discourse, then the job of the university is to carry on debate. While debate is not a negative practice, it seems that the university can and should do more than practice debate. So, Barnett advocates that we enrich our understanding by adding a third term, ecosystem, to connect university to culture.

Barnett writes:

> Culture, I suggest, may be considered to be an ecosystem—or, at least, possess properties of an ecosystem. These properties include those of a system or set of entities that possess some degree of interconnectivity, some actual or potential powers of sustainability, a real presence in the world, its internal range and scope (its "diversity") being in jeopardy, being somewhat impaired or falling short of its possibilities, impinging on humanity and humanity being so implicated having, in turn, responsibilities toward the further flourishing of the ecosystem in question.[7]

In addition to culture possessing these characteristics, the relationship between university and culture also exhibits these characteristics, says Barnett. Thus, minimally, the university and the culture are analogically

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5) Ted Thornhill, "We Want Black Students, Just Not You: How White Admissions Counselors Screen Black Prospective Students," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, American Sociological Association 2018, doi: 0.1177/2332649218792579.

6) Ronald Barnett, "Culture and the University: An Ecological Approach," in *Toward a Philosophy of Higher Education: Contemporary Philosophical Proposals for the University*, 138.

7) Barnett, "Culture and the University: An Ecological Approach," 139.

ecological in the sense that they share these characteristics. The question then becomes, if the university and culture are ecological systems (or like ecological systems), how can we take advantage of that understanding to determine how universities ought to behave.

Barnett suggests that the answer to two questions may help to shed light on critical discourse within the university. The first question asks us to discern the various modes that symbolic systems and meaning manifest. If we have the answer to this question, we understand the scope of activities that universities as cultural ecosystems should engage in. Barnett offers five domains of cultural manifestation: cognitive, practical, communicative, expressive, and material.[8] Understanding the university as an ecosystem involved in culture means that the university is responsible for engaging in cultural choices surrounding each domain of cultural manifestation. For example, "In the expressive domain, such a university would constitute itself as a space for expressive experimentation, for example (as some universities are doing), opening its grounds for public displays of sculpture and art."[9] Barnett's concern is not simply that universities attempt to understand and engage in the domains of cultural manifestation. Rather, he calls upon universities to help us flourish in them as well.

Adding an emphasis on process to Barnett's view, once we treat the university as an ecological system, the purview of our vision may widen. This is because, just as in ecosystems, there is no clear line of demarcation between one ecology and another, there is no clear ontological unit that maintains strict independence from others. Instead, each system interacts with, influences, and supports others. Given the implication of the university as an ecosystem that influences and is influenced by other such systems, the range of interests that ought to be addressed by university agentic culture becomes more apparent. These interests, as listed by Barnett, aside from culture itself, are the ecosystems of knowledge, wider social institutions, the economy, persons, learning, and the natural environment.[10] It is arguable, though Barnett does not do so, that these ecosystems make the university possible. If any of them fail in some significant way, it is likely that the university itself would either cease to exist or suffer some loss of possible and meaningful activity. Consequently, it is important for the university to contribute to the flourishing of these other ecosystems.

Understanding Barnett's position in terms of parts and wholes helps to make sense of his work. As I read him, Barnett is advocating a system of wholes (and, therefore, parts) that are dynamic, interdependent, and inter-influential. Some of these wholes become parts and achieve a temporary level of wholeness that organizes actions in relation to some issue. These new wholes will achieve new levels of integration or they will disintegrate into parts (that become their own wholes) as the need for wholeness dissipates or disappears. There are always wholes evolving into parts and parts evolving into wholes in such a system. When we understand the dynamic and evolving relationships of parts and wholes, we are better equipped to survey these transformations and contribute to their evolution in a way that more effectively brings about the results that we seek.

The Personal and the Moral

Another major theme running through the otherwise varied essays in the Stoller and Kramer collection that is difficult to miss, addresses the role of higher education in personal, inner, and interpersonal development. While none of the essays that discuss this theme deny the value of what George Allen calls "training," "a technique for providing someone with the information requisite to carrying out a kind of task," all of them dispute

8) Ibid., 140.

9) Ibid.

10) Ibid., 141.

that this aim suffices to capture the best work that universities achieve.[11] Over and above training, work that extends well beyond the bounds of the university, the university offers, according to many in this collection, a social education that includes emphases on inner and outer exploration.

Sartwell's contribution to this theme warns us of the troubles we could (and do) encounter when the inner exploration (as this exploration is the job of both teachers and students) is halted by the demand for conformity by authoritarian epistemologies. His work reminds us that what appears to be progressive and communally beneficial can turn out to be just as dangerous (if not more so) as neoliberal shenanigans, to higher education institutions and the individuals that emerge from them. The reason for this danger is that, although it still carries an air of morality, authoritarian demands for conformity strike at the heart of morality that is born out of the freedom of persons. When an authority demands silent conformity to a principle or an ideology from individuals who would advance disagreement, it depersonalizes those individuals and disavows the moral process of shared contribution. This mode of elevating a particularly narrow ideology above other competing moral ideologies is immoral on the basis of its depersonalizing activities. If higher education has, as a significant part of its work, the responsibility to morally educate those who work and learn within its halls, it cannot do so in an authoritarian way, lest it become immoral itself.

In the essay by Gabriel Keehn, Morgan Anderson, and Deron Boyles, they advance an argument that online classes exemplify the kinds of cultural and psychological transformations that concerned Weber. The authors suggest that the transition from understanding universities as centers for cultural learning and preparation for citizenship to a place of training (in the sense provide by Allan) is made more intelligible by the influences of neoliberalism on the university through the lens of Weberian capitalistic rationalization. The capitalistic rationale demands calculability and bureaucratic formalism, both of which detract from the personal and, therefore, in my estimation, the moral.

In Tunstall's piece, for all its formal (legalistic) style, the aim of his efforts seems to be to positively invigorate the experiences of people who have suffered a history of immoral exclusion. In doing so, Tunstall provides a formal undergirding of the spaces of higher education to ensure the possibility of personal and moral interaction through the introduction of a social justice framework. This formal basis, established in a social justice framework, makes it possible for people that belong to both hegemonic and marginalized strata to become aware of the structures of power and privilege that divide them. In bringing light to these issues, the possibility that the next generation of thinkers and activists will find solidarity in the face of discriminatory practices based upon race, sex, sexual orientation, and so forth, is increased. Where impersonal interaction characterized communication across these lines of power and privilege before, diverse, inclusive, and equitable education offer hope that personal interaction (interaction that includes empathy and authentic consideration of the other) will also increase.

In L. Jackson Newell's essay, there are two aspects of the personal and the moral that are striking. The first of these is the role of the student *qua* student during her matriculation. For Newell, higher education is fundamentally about exploring all dimensions of experience. This means, for Newell, that there is an inward exploration of feelings, thoughts, and values that accumulate across experiences as well as an outward exploration of the more "tangible realms of art, history, geology, philosophy, or anthropology."[12] Both of these journeys are indispensable for cultivating well-rounded individuals who will go on to become active citizens. To neglect

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11) George Allan, "The Conversation of a University," in *Toward a Philosophy of Higher Education: Contemporary Philosophical Proposals for the University*, 105.

12) L. Jackson Newell, "En Route: Toward a Philosophy and Practice of Liberal Education," in *Toward a Philosophy of Higher Education: Contemporary Philosophical Proposals for the University*, 69.

either of these explorations of experience is to fail in some respect as a student. The result of higher education is a student who, Newell writes, "is alive in all the dimensions that make us human, being intellectually active and curious, emotionally aware and sensitive, spiritually resonate in the highest sense, and physically robust within our natural or imposed limits."[13]

For our purposes here, the compliment to the inward journey of the students is not the outward journey of science, art, history, and so forth. Rather, the personal compliment to the inward journey a student takes in her endeavor to become an educated being is the relationships she builds with her peers and mentors. The best of mentors (teachers), according to Newell, appreciate each student not only for their present level of intellectual development, but also for who they might become. Each student is a valued contributor to the intellectual work to be accomplished. This personal interaction does not end with teachers finding value in each student and her contributions either. In addition, successful teachers are approachable and, in a sense, vulnerable (my word) to their students. Newell writes, "It matters to college students that they know their professors well enough to see that they struggle to live the principles they teach. What promises to change our students' behavior is witnessing a just act by someone they admire, seeing a merciful gesture (or benefitting from one), or absorbing the beauty of something both good and wholly unanticipated."[14] It is in these delicate moments, cultivated by trust, fostered by recognition of intelligence in students, and established in personal interaction that students can learn to trust themselves, intellectually and socially.

Allan recommends that the moral training that occurs in higher education is achieved by students but not taught by professors. This is because, he suggests, the content teachers can share with students is based upon prudential rules that are produced within a specific purposive framework, such as biology, literature, or baseball. These prudential rules are built around maximizing legitimate returns on the work invested in relation to the purpose served. This kind of content transmission is fact-based training and is not exclusive to the university. It is, however, part of what higher education does and will continue to do. The more substantive role that higher education plays in the cultivation of students is providing moral cultivation through processes of personal interaction, according to Allan.

Teachers do not choose to refrain from teaching the content of education. Rather, the problem is that the content is not teachable because it surpasses the practical (in terms of the ethical and the prudential) by the unassailable obstacle of the concrete (this is my description, not Allan's). That is to say, the wise actions (*phronesis*) of an educated person occur only as a result of having practiced them. Excellence cannot be achieved without action and, while the prudential rules of action based upon facts may be taught, the excellent acts themselves must be achieved by the individual through their performance. They cannot be achieved through the transmission of abstract facts (simple or complex). The question, though, is: if education is the process of cultivating moral wisdom, and wisdom cannot be taught, what is the role of the educator in higher education?

Allan says, "Our primary task as educators, therefore, should be to nurture neither learned scientists nor talented artists and artisans, but good citizens."[15] This cultivation occurs, Allan suggests, through conversations. While those conversations may be done within the prudential framework of a purpose that students engage in for the initial accomplishment of some proposed resolution to a problem, what they achieve is much greater than any close-ended resolution. Beyond this initial gain, students learn civic virtue. That is, they learn how to work together and promote social harmony while they solve whatever problem they are engaged with. In contrast to the application of prudential rules to a problem, what is learned in education is the how of this

13) Ibid., 88.

14) Ibid., 96.

15) Allan, "The Conversation of a University," 118.

application of rules. Education, then, extends beyond the resolution of the problem and opens out into social experience in general. This means that, whereas the problem-solving activity has a closed end to it that most often culminates and terminates in the advancement of some proposed solution, the educative content that is achieved in the practice of working together stays relevant outside the context of the conversational exercise. This content also remains open ended in the sense that it is always able to be refined and improved upon in future conversations. So, as educators, our role is to provide the proper contexts in which conversations can be had for the sake of giving students the opportunity to practice civic virtue and further their moral development.

In Martha Nussbaum's essay, we find that moral education in contemporary globalizing culture requires the development of three capacities in students. The first of these capacities is the student's ability to critically reflect on oneself and one's traditions. The practice of this critical reflection achieves something like Socrates' "examined life," according to Nussbaum. One of the reasons this capacity is laudable as a virtue of education is that democratic societies require individuals who can think for themselves rather than submit to authoritarian demands for conformity without critical reflection.

The second capacity to be cultivated in individual students is the ability of students to appreciate the humanity of all persons, including those beyond the bounds of one's own regional group. This sense of belonging to greater humanity is based upon connections to others through recognition and concern. The cultivation of what we might call "global citizenship" in students compliments the first capacity in that it requires an education of the various differences of traditions that exist around the world.

The third capacity that Nussbaum sees as important to higher education is the cultivation of narrative imagination. Narrative imagination is, she writes, "the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have."[16] Through this process of imagining ourselves in the place of the other, experiencing the conditions that they experience, enjoying what they enjoy, suffering what they suffer, we are drawn closer together in ways that were possible, but unlikely, before.

Where Nussbaum recommends that we cultivate the capacity for imagination in our students, Randall Auxier, in the final chapter, asks us to use our imagination, in an attempt to get into our futures through the act of speculation. What Auxier discovers in the future, one that is dependent upon us not destroying ourselves in the near future, is a second revolution that will unfold after or alongside the revolution that is going on today. This present revolution, of course, is the revolution of the information age. Auxier does spend some time talking about how *this* revolution has and will continue to change education in the future, but his real work is found in his speculations about the next revolution, one we might call the revolution of "low-entropic-being" in which new possible ways of being, non-biological ways of being, will be open up to us, in ways that require very little energy. In these low-entropic bodies (and they will be bodies, no doubt), our efforts will cost substantially less energy than our present bodily configurations do.

The good news, at least for those of us who anticipate waxing nostalgic about the loss of our biological form of life, is that we will still deeply appreciate our biological being for the foreseeable future. Biological ways of living will not disappear all of a sudden and be replaced by low-entropic being. Rather, low-entropy being will be a way to extend our lives beyond the constraining frailness of our biological environment. Second, the intensity of biological life will not be traded in for some lesser order of living. That is, we will demand that our lives be just as intense (a technical term for Auxier) in low-entropic form as they are in our biological forms. Otherwise, we will simply refuse, under most conditions, to take on this new form of life.

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16) Martha Nussbaum, "Education for Citizenship in an Era of Global Connection," in *Toward a Philosophy of Higher Education: Contemporary Philosophical Proposals for the University*, 155.

More importantly, given that our demand for intensity will remain the same in either form we take, we will demand that our new lives provide us with experiences that are interesting and provide us with choices that carry consequences for us. In short, we will demand that low-entropy life continues to afford us the opportunity to learn. Education in this revolutionary and post-revolutionary world will be about preparing us, over the course of our biological lives, for our post-biological, or low-entropy, lives. Auxier contends that this education will entail student transitions from perspectives to standpoints. To appreciate this shift, we should understand that perspectives are wide but shallow and standpoints are narrow but deep. Whereas wideness is a feature of taking in as much as possible, regardless of what is relevant to our purposes, narrowness is the achievement of excluding those irrelevancies for the sake of working with our purposes. Depth, then, is the process of entangling or engaging ourselves in relevancies in ways that help us adapt to and learn about the environment. We can suffer great losses from width (in fact, we choose to suffer width all the time – often for the worse), but losses from depth cannot be maintained for sustained periods of time without suffering.

In this landscape of the possible made actual, the new "three R's" will replace, says Auxier, the old ones (reading, writing, and arithmetic). They will be "interpretation of the text and image, the creation of text and image," and "the principles upon which computing occurs (both logical and mathematical)."[17] Our moral education will also play a central role in each of these arts. They might, perhaps, be indistinguishable from them (Auxier does not say this). Auxier suggests that the moral exemplars from our past may continue to shape our thinking and there is no reason to suppose that they will be supplanted in the future. This means that educators, as guides for the transition between perspective and standpoint, will likely teach students the lessons of, for example, the Buddha, Jesus, and Gandhi. They will, that is, teach compassion, love, and enlightenment to those who will someday become low-entropic beings.

Conclusion

What I find to be interesting among all of these essays, even the ones I have not mentioned here (only for the sake of conserving space), is that each of them illustrates an interesting continuity across the past, our (Jamesian) specious present, and the future. In reading these essays, it has been difficult to determine what the authors are doing. On one hand, I find that many of the thoughts represented in this book are imaginative activities that aim at forecasting a shifting personal, political, and global landscape for the sake of understanding how education will play a new role in shaping how we engage with our traditional institutions, in order to pave the way for new ones that are more conducive to greater inclusivity, equity, and moral living. On the other hand, the essays seem to be distilling out the best of what has been and is already present in our pedagogical practices as teachers in higher education. It is undeniable that our social ways of being are changing at a rate that was unimaginable a hundred years ago. Consequently, the need to understand how we will adapt to new environments demands that we work on determining the best way forward. However, it also seems to me like we are drawing deeply from our past to strive to discern the just from the unjust, the beautiful from the ugly, and the moral from the immoral. These strained attempts to glean something from the past, exclude the unfavorable, and amplify what is leftover to accomplish a higher, more authentic education.

To be clear, I am no Platonist. I do not find sufficient reason to infer from this activity of drawing from our past to adapt to the changing world that we are on the way to recognizing the form of education. Nevertheless, there is some deep allure in interpreting the work of the authors here as striving to find the best way to live our

17) Randall E. Auxier, "The Coming Revolution in (Higher) Education: Process, Time, and Singularity," in *Toward a Philosophy of Higher Education: Contemporary Philosophical Proposals for the University*, 253.

shared lives on this troubled and beautiful planet. I think that what each author does but does not say defines education very well. Each of the authors, of course, allude to some characteristic of the best kind of education. Whether they write about the personal, the political, or the pursuit of justice, each of the them draws upon a reliable source of sensibility about what we can achieve as individuals within our communities. What they say in my estimation, collectively, is that education is about catching a glimpse of that best imaginable life, capturing that life in feeling, and articulating that life in action and reflection. The difficult part of this educative process is that humility becomes a deliberate companion alongside the joy experienced in that gift of imagination. That is, the glimpse students achieve of the best imaginable life must always be available for revision according to the shifting landscape of the actual. This humility places students in the precarious position of being fallible, of being wrong about what they imagine the best life to be. It demands of them that they adjust their best imagined life according to the prevailing material conditions and organize them along with the best imagined lives of others.

This process of cultivating imagination and integrating its gifts with the hopes and dreams of others does not end. It is, in itself, the action of living well. There seems to be a parallel evolution of the institutions of higher education and the education of individuals. While there were likely many individuals who bounded ahead of higher educational institutions in any given epoch, it seems that the evolution of most students is dependent upon the evolution of higher education. In its first phase, institutional higher education was about exploring and maintaining whatever social order it found itself appearing within. Higher educational institutions in this phase of evolution were staunchly conservative, and advancing knowledge primarily meant giving nuance to and resolving problems of the paradigmatic concepts that shaped the traditions of the community. This conservatism was complimented by a critical spirit focused on those communities (and the individuals that resulted from them) that differed from the home community of higher education.

The second phase of higher education opens up as the community of inquiry discovers problems in its own paradigms.[18] Within this context, two general types of educators appear. Apologists maintain the conservative bent of their predecessors and do whatever they can to sustain the conceptual apparatus of the past. In contrast and at the other extreme of the continuum, radicals seek new paradigms that resolve the problems of the previous one. These radical educators play an important role in shifting the focus of critical emphasis from external communities to the community in which the institution of higher education resides. The result of this communally internal struggle is an admixture of old traditions and new ideas. All of the following phases of the evolution of higher education follow this same pattern of paradigmatic changes and the creation of new admixtures of the old and the new.

What is peculiar to our own evolution of education (and what I mean by "peculiar" is that which is actual but is not necessary), as the world has become more and more socially connected along many different lines, is that the critical spirit in education has shifted from an outward looking focus to one that has more and more internal emphasis on hegemonic culture in the community where higher education is embedded.[19] In a simplistic way, we can understand this shift in focus as one that moves from self-love to self-criticality. There are, of course, reversions and cycles of this transition of emphasis, but, overall, it seems apparent to me that the critical spirit of higher education is more focused on institutions that constitute the hegemonic order of the distribution of privilege and power. This inward critical spirit is complimented by an openness to other social orders that goes well beyond mere curiosity or sterile intellectual interest. There is, it seems, a willingness to embrace the other

18) I do intend paradigms here to be understood in the Kuhnian sense, though with a weaker sense of incommensurability.

19) I cannot speak to higher education institutions outside the West, as I do not have any experience of them. I speak here to higher education institutions in the West, generally, and in the US, specifically.

while recognizing our own faults. This compliment is simplistically understood in terms of a transition from otherizing to other-embracing (with all of the difficulties that arise from such efforts).

So, if I am right that there is a parallel evolution between institutions and individuals, then the general movement in the evolution of higher education and in the individuals that participate in it is from outwardly focused criticism to inwardly focused reflection on one's own traditional ways of thinking and becoming. The transformational role of higher education is to sharpen the tools of the critical spirit and, along the way, turn those tools back onto what institutions and students have taken for granted in their own becoming. The compliment to this work is discovering morally appropriate methods to embrace the variety of ways of living that belong to other communities. Perhaps, though, this is merely one moment of transition along the way to something else.

I do not intend to sound overly optimistic here. After all, a lot of things could go wrong. However, high-falutin idealistic conclusions can sometimes be at least entertaining, if not insightful. Given the proposed evolution of higher education in the past, it does seem probable that this process is not yet complete (nor should we expect that it will ever find some culminating moment). The future of higher educational institutions and the parallel transition of individuals who matriculate through such institutions could pursue another partial inversion of the critical spirit and the embrace of the other. Speculating in this direction, such a partial inversion might be realized in an equilibrium of cautious embrace of one's institutions and one's self alongside a deliberate appreciation for the other that does not quash the diversity of ways that moral life can be accomplished. To achieve this great ideal, we would need to find a deep aesthetic appreciation (not just a moral one) for diversity. In addition, we would also have to overcome the capitalistic forces of rationalization that drive the desire for efficiency through homogenization that lead to demands for conformity to one conventional way of becoming over others. Both of these criteria for achieving the next phase of development in higher education are daunting, to say the least.

Given the difficulties, I do not think that this next phase of evolution in higher education, if it does become actual, is likely to happen any time soon. However, we can find evidence that this process is already beginning. On the global scale, we find that communities and cultures are more in touch with each other than they ever have been. While the coming together of these various cultures and communities has likely caused as many problems as it has produced resolutions of local problems, it is hard to dispute the fact that the stitching together of a culture of cultures, a Shelleyan Frankenstein's monster of worldly proportions, is happening around us. Regardless of the tragedies that arise from this process, we are finding out that we need to learn to live together harmoniously. In part, I believe the inversion of the critical spirit and its self-love compliment that have transformed institutions of higher education are the result of the processes that have contributed to a globalizing culture. The suffering that accompanies the frustration of cultural differences and the underlying desire for communion where it is possible (see Metz) has influenced, if not vitalized, the inversion. I believe an analogous process is occurring in the academy.

In the penultimate chapter of *Toward a Philosophy of Higher Education*, Danielle Lake, Amy McFarland, and Jessica Jennrich address the ongoing disconnect between institutions of higher learning and the public. They identify several factors as contributing to and perpetuating this disconnect: "[a] persistent lack of focus on social literacy, local and global policy, and collaboration within higher education."[20] To redress these issues, the authors recommend that higher education commit to "(1) *collaboratively* generating and disseminating knowl-

20) Danielle Lake, Amy McFarland, and Jessica Jennrich, "Remaking the Academy: The Potential and the Challenge of Transdisciplinary Collaborative Engagement," in *Toward a Philosophy of Higher Education: Contemporary Philosophical Proposals for the University*, 189.

edge and skills but also by (2) connecting the production of knowledge to its use, (3) fostering the capacity for these practices, and (4) operating as a boundary-spanning space, working to train students as boundary spanners (people who cross worlds, drawing together stakeholders across difference in order to address social challenges.)"[21] On the theoretical side, these resolutions are given conceptual rigor through a constellation of three separate but interpenetrating paradigms, feminist pragmatism, public engagement, and transdisciplinarity.

We have addressed, even if only roughly, theories that would integrate social justice and public engagement into the discourse on the role of higher education, so I will not spend any more time on these subjects (valuable though they are). What I find to be novel and interesting in this essay is the introduction to transdisciplinarity. The authors write, "Broadly defined, transdisciplinarity captures the movement between one's home base and the larger world (whether one's home is an academic department, center, non-profit, or other entity). While some scholars more narrowly define transdisciplinarity as the integration of insights across disciplines (an inward framing), others emphasize the need to begin in and with the problems of our surrounding community."[22] The authors prefer the latter to the former. Like the ecological view of the university proposed by Barnett and Tunstall's social justice framework, transdisciplinarity emphasizes concrete problems over abstract issues that do not resolve any practical concerns. It engages and empowers all stakeholders to ensure inclusivity that facilitates egalitarian processes in the determination of shared agendas and ameliorative measures. Transdisciplinarity also demands that scholars move beyond mere knowledge production and assessment. The new scholar, under the paradigm of transdisciplinarity, is responsible for "collaboration across institutional divides aimed at meliorating complex pressing problems."[23]

The coming together of disciplinary studies to address the pressing problems of the world as it is lived in the concrete, by citizens, by students, and by scholars, indicates an impulse to span gaps that have historically divided us. Just as it is possible to overcome the divisions that have separated us in this nascent but developing global community, it is also possible that we can achieve an equilibrium in higher education that includes both criticality and love. However, no single discipline will accomplish equilibrium on its own. We will need artists, philosophers, engineers, and scientists to overcome the obstacles in our way. Additionally, all of these producers of knowledge will need to work together to do so. That there is such a thing as transdisciplinarity is an indication that, at some level, we understand the need for a system of higher education that is unified in its diversity to resolve the problems we will face in the future. However, even a unified academy will not fully resolve our problems. We will need citizens, laborers, leaders, students, and educators working hand-in-hand to bridge the unnecessary gaps that we have spent generations creating and bolstering. Only all of us together can resolve these problems.

In closing, if the aim of higher education is about the cultivation of moral global citizens, and morality is about the genuine engagement with and consideration of others, then higher education should work to cultivate students who are capable of interactions of this sort. To find the tools that are necessary to a good education, we should, as educators, find creative and moral ways to bridge the natural and the conventional gaps that divide us. While these final paragraphs have been based upon my reflections on the essays included in this book, rather than directly addressing the content therein, these reflections were made much easier by reading this book. As books go, it is a good book. I would recommend it to those who are genuinely interested in engaging in the question about the future of higher education.

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21) Lake, McFarland, and Jennrich, "Remaking the Academy," 190.

22) Ibid., 198.

23) Ibid.