

## **THE ROLE OF THE HUMANITIES IN THE BOLOGNA IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY: LEARNING FROM THE AMERICAN MODEL?**

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The recent debates on university education in Europe, centring on the Bologna process, have identified at least two central problems: the massification of higher education has led to the threat of falling standards, and its modularization has led to the threat of a fall in the acquisition of deep competences within a specific field, i.e. thorough progression. These threats are both related to an ideal of university education that is firmly rooted in the European tradition. The student is to rise to a level of competence equal to the researcher who is 'leader,' 'guide,' but never 'teacher.' This tradition can be seen as a form of research apprenticeship, but with a freer relationship between professor and student than in the traditional master-apprentice relationship. According to Schelling and Fichte at the dawn of the nineteenth century there were no such things as the educational rights and duties of the professor, in the sense of the professor providing a moral upbringing. The student was considered to be an adult, and learned only by dint of self-education. In opposition to this tradition stands the American one, which in some respects may be seen as the blueprint of the Bologna-process, not only in its use of the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary 'bachelor,' 'master' and 'PhD' but also in its educational rationale. The American residential college has traditionally had a much stricter educational function, *in loco parentis*, than its European counterpart. Young Americans are to be formed and educated throughout their college years, in such a way that their parents at home can rest assured of the high moral, civic and career-oriented habitus of their children resulting from the experience. A brief look at university architecture is enough to reveal

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this difference in educational tradition. While the American campus surroundings offer a whole life experience via their residential, social, cultural and educational buildings, the typical European university offers no more than a conglomeration of lecture halls and laboratories. These differences can only be bridged with great difficulty. Moreover, one could ask if we in Europe really want to ‘Americanize’ our institutions. This article, however, will make a friendlier examination of the possible great role model for the Bologna process. Its core argument is that the American model could help us find a broader educational pathway, not least regarding the role of the humanities in higher education in the 21st century.

### **I. THE BOLOGNA BACHELOR - BRITISH OR AMERICAN?**

The bachelor in the Bologna idea of a university could be viewed as inspired directly by the British or the American; judging from the vocabulary and the structure it must be inspired by some part of the Anglo-Saxon tradition. This idea of possible Anglo-Saxon inspiration is to be developed in this article. What is the bachelor going to become through the Bologna process? Two distinguished researchers on comparative higher education, Sheldon Rothblatt and Guy Neave, have had private conversations on what can be expected from this bachelor. And Neave answers (with disappointment?) that he does not expect it to be any other than the highly specialized British model, serving only as the launching ramp for further master specialization. I certainly read into this conversation a wish between the two of them that the Bologna bachelor should be more like the American model. Sheldon Rothblatt writes: «Guy Neave of the University of Twente in the Netherlands cautions that the Bologna scheme, while separating undergraduate from graduate instruction, is based far more on the British three-year first degree specialist model than on anything approaching the farrago (my word (SR)) of courses customary in the United States» (ROTHBLATT, 2003). The massification and modularization intended in this bachelor certainly could be read as a step in the direction of the American model, but it is equally easy to see that the transitory model is that of the strong British specialization.

## **II. THE EUROPEAN TRADITION - THE MARRIAGE BETWEEN WISSENSCHAFT AND CURRICULUM**

The Humboldtian idea of a university has, for better or for worse, served as a blueprint for the past two centuries of university development in large parts of Europe. Universities in the German speaking area of central Europe, the Low Countries and Scandinavia are still to a large extent inspired by the Humboldt tradition. Especially the self-perception of the university staff demonstrates this tradition. The university lecturer or professor primarily considers herself as a researcher who also happens to have students whose research she guides. Attempts to reform the university teaching in the direction of broader course variety or modularization are met with the fear of turning the university into a 'mere' school. The term in the German debate is 'Verschulung.'

This self-perception can in my view be traced back to the Humboldtian ideal of a university. Wilhelm von Humboldt's vision contained the idea of a unity between research and personal cultivation («*Bildung durch Wissenschaft*»). He saw profound and existential qualities in this interplay that deserve attention. The true activity of 'Wissenschaft' was to lead through self-directedness to self-perfection and self-moralisation ('*Selbstversittlichung*'). One might call this a belief in the formal cultivational qualities of research. It could seem odd from a more direct perspective of learning, but Humboldt believed that through the process of research, the character of an individual was elevated to a new level of moral freedom, where education, in the sense of being led by a mentor, was substituted by self-cultivation. As for practical relevance, his vision was that action in and through ideas would ultimately lead to a practical mastery of the world on a much higher level than direct practical instruction.

As regards the curriculum, Humboldt was strongly opposed to any kind of overspecialization. Philosophy, including both the natural sciences and the study of man, was to be the prime interest for this truly inquisitive spirit that should be dominant in all students. The 'research' of his time was of quite a different kind than late nineteenth century positivist specialization. It was more 'Wissenschaft' in the sense of idealistic or romantic holism he had in mind (SCHELKY, 1963: 79f). This brings me to a claim, which is common in the German literature; cultivation through pure research is now far from Humboldt's visions of *Bildung* (SCHELKY, 1963). Firstly positivism with

its inherent specialization and secondly the advent of a strong theorization have contributed to sever the connection to a more educational function, *Bildung* in its original educational and ethical sense. One could come up with contemporary analogies to Humboldt's arguments, and argue along with him for new cultivational qualities of modern humanities research. Just to mention one example, his repeated argument about the fleeting nature of the truth that was to be searched for, but never found, resembles the claims about the fleeting sense of truths in the post modern knowledge society. Looking for formal cultivation in the humanities may still prove to be a fruitful pedagogic endeavour in the knowledge society, but does the formula *Bildung durch Wissenschaft*, cultivation through research, show us the most fruitful way to see the role of the humanities in higher education? And do we serve the coming generations of university students best by adhering to specialization and by letting research agendas automatically also be educational agendas? Is the monogamist marriage between research and higher education the only happy one?

### III. THE AMERICAN LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

The American liberal arts college and university tradition, particularly at the bachelor level, has traditionally separated the purely educational readings in the humanities from the more scholarly pursuits of these disciplines.

The former president of the University of California Clark Kerr's happy concept of a 'multiversity' comprises a multitude of different functions all collected under the 'university' umbrella. He describes this plurality as a unique result of the American history: An undergraduate college of liberal arts of British origin from the time of the early colonies, a graduate school of specialized research of German origin imported at the close of the nineteenth century and a service orientation of pragmatist American land grant and federal grant origin from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Kerr states that: «A university anywhere can aim no higher than to be as British as possible for the sake of the undergraduates, as German as possible for the sake of the graduates and the research personnel, as American as possible for the sake of the public at large - and as confused as possible for the sake of the preservation of the whole uneasy balance» (KERR, 1963).

This balance is by no means maintained, in idealist terms, by a common purpose; rather the individual parts exist, flourish and decay without any traceable impact on the life of the other functional units.

More than once Kerr states, that the ‘three cultures,’ i.e. natural sciences, humanities and professionals each prefer their own part of this multiversity. Where the scientists prefer the graduate specialization and the professionals the contact with the real world, the humanists tend to flourish in the undergraduate liberal arts colleges. But what do they find there? A German observer in the late nineteenth century didn’t know what to make of these institutions. He said: «I confess that I am unable to divine what is ultimately to be the position of the Colleges, which cannot become Universities and which will not be Gymnasia. I cannot see what reason they have to exist» (KIMBALL, 1986: 164).

This viewpoint can be complemented by two contemporary diagnoses of American college education. The German professor of comparative literature at Stanford University, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, considers the college years to incorporate the true idea of *Bildung* in the original German sense. He describes how the humanities are more thoroughly incorporated into the curriculum even among students with technical and natural science majors than in Europe. He quotes the president of the University as saying that he expected all undergraduates at Stanford at some point in their college years to read Plato’s *The State*. As a European observer, he has grown quite impressed with what the college offers its undergraduates<sup>1</sup>. Sheldon Rothblatt seems to think that the American liberal arts college serves as an adjustment or cure for the poor condition of the American primary and secondary schooling. In Europe the Gymnasiums, Public Schools and Lyceums take pride in serving a broad personal cultivation, but this does not happen to the same extent in the American High Schools. Apart from this critique of the American secondary education it is a somewhat pessimistic view of the United States that Rothblatt is presenting: «The function of universities and colleges was to educate young men and women to recognize the serious deficiencies in American culture and to use liberal education to ‘correct’ them» (ROTHBLATT, 1993: 60).

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<sup>1</sup> Conversations with Gumbrecht at Stanford University January 2005, and Gumbrecht, 2004.

There are two aspects of this characterization. The one is that the American college serves double purposes. It has to serve both the extension of the general educational functions of primary and secondary education, and the preparation for later specialization on the master level. Sheldon Rothblatt characterizes this situation in the following way: «The undergraduate curriculum is competed for by both schools and graduate school. Overlap with the former continues, while the graduate school presses down upon the undergraduate curriculum and forces the departmental major towards pre-professional work» (ROTHBLATT, 1993: 57).

The key word of the other characteristic is that of *liberal arts*. This tradition is commonly reconstructed in American educational debate as going back to the ancient Greek and Roman education. Historians dismiss various new interpretations of the word *liberal* as referring to the liberation of the mind and soul, and argue that the etymology only is based on the distinction between the education of free men and slaves in the ancient western civilisations. The American historian Bruce Kimball separates two competing traditions, as indicated in the title of his work *Orators and Philosophers*. This dual tradition he finds himself able to discern from the ancient origins, through the Middle Ages, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and into post-war America. The first of these traditions he calls the *artes liberales* tradition, connects it with the orators, and describes it as committed to the moral and rhetorical learning through a literary canon. The other he calls the *liberal free* tradition, connects it with the critical inquiry of the philosophers and associates it with a research affinity of the curriculum. Later in history the first is more oriented towards the humanities, the latter towards the natural sciences. Kimball describes these two traditions as follows:

«In the *artes liberales* ideal, a presumption of certitude underlies the identification of virtues and standards repositied in classical texts; and commitment is thereby demanded, identifying an elite who embrace the virtues and preserve them as leaders of society. The foundation of the curriculum lies in the study of language and letters, required in order for the student to fathom the texts and then to express their lessons in public forums as advocates, statesmen, preachers, or professors. In the *liberal-free* ideal, sceptical doubt undermines all certainty, casting individuals entirely upon their own intellect for judgements that can never finally be proven true.

Consequently, the views of others must be tolerated and respected equally, while all beliefs must change and develop over time. Logic and mathematics, which hone the intellect, and experimental science, which teaches the honed intellect to turn old truths into new hypotheses for further testing, form the core of the curriculum designed to graduate the scientist and researcher who loves knowledge and therefore pursues it without end» (KIMBALL, 1986: 218f).

This opposition is carried right into the twentieth century American discussion, which goes to show that the German university tradition, as described above, has been a continuous part of the discussion on the liberal-free side. One could therefore argue that for a curious European looking at the Anglo-Saxon liberal arts, the *artes liberales* tradition is most exotic and therefore most interesting. Kimball mentions Matthew Arnold as a great proponent of the *artes liberales* tradition. His definition of a true liberal education was that it should be comprised of «The best that has been thought and said in the world» [ARNOLD, 1932 (1869): 6, 70]. This statement leads to a canonical thinking that, for better or for worse, has dominated the discussion in America to this day. A canon, a 'core-curriculum' based on the great books of western civilisation has been advised by educationalists since the beginning of the twentieth century. In this discussion the qualities of the great books lie less in their scientific relevance, and far more in the educational functions of the reading. Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Shakespeare and Blake are on the list because they can educate the reader, not because they should be the objects of scholarly pursuits.

One might argue that the canon discussion actually only is possible because of the unique institution of the Anglo-Saxon college. Of course it is still possible to discuss a canon in Europe relevant for the primary and secondary level, but not at a level comparable with that of a higher educational institution. So the function of the liberal arts college is broad and gives a special role to the humanities as being inherently educational as opposed to scholarly. This is, I think, the reason that the American philosopher Richard Rorty recently could state that German politicians did not know what a university was there for. They had just cut the humanities by half of its staff in Hamburg.

#### IV. THE AMERICAN COLLEGE AND THE RELEVANCE OF THE HUMANITIES

Two optimistic views of the functions of the American college are presented in two documents produced almost sixty years apart: The *Harvard report* from 1945 and the panel report of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) *Greater Expectations* from 2002.

The *Harvard report* envisaged America as the true heir of ancient western civilization, equally excelling, but now democratized: «The primary concern of American education today is not the development of the appreciation of the ‘good life’ in young gentlemen born to the purple. It is the infusion of the liberal and humane tradition into our entire educational system. Our purpose is to cultivate the largest possible number of our future citizens to an appreciation of both the responsibilities and the benefits which come to them because they are Americans and are free» (BUCK *et al.*, 1945: xiv). So the ambition of the liberal arts college was to further western civilisation: «The task of modern democracy is to preserve the ancient ideal of liberal education and to extend it as far as possible to all the members of the community» (BUCK *et al.*, 1945: 53).

The humanities are ascribed several different functions in the recommendations of the Harvard Report. The liberal arts as a whole are supposed to compensate for the centrifugal forces of specialization in the modern society. The broad education is supposed to give the coming citizen an opportunity to «...grasp the complexities of life as a whole» (BUCK *et al.*, 1945: 54). The report distinguishes between three areas of knowledge - natural sciences, social studies and the humanities with each their specific educational relevance: «The study of the natural sciences looks to an understanding of our physical environment, so that we may have a suitable relation to it. The study of social sciences is intended to produce an understanding of our social environment and of human institutions in general, so that the student may achieve a proper relation to society - not only local but also the great society, and by aid of history, the society of the past and even of the future. Finally the purpose of the humanities is to enable man to understand man in relation to himself, that is to say, in his inner aspirations and ideals» (BUCK *et al.*, 1945: 58f). It is obvious to consider this statement and the stress on the historical and sociological knowledge in the light of the

war experience, but for our purpose it is clear that what the authors had in mind was an education of a much broader quality than mere specialization for employability.

The concept of a liberal arts college education has played the role of a panacea concerning expectations to future citizens. Every societal problem was supposed to get its fair share of attention in this curriculum. And this tendency has certainly not diminished in the recent rhetoric on the objects of liberal education. In *Greater Expectations* a new mirror of societal concerns is being presented. Several objectives are outlined in the preamble. College should lead to «successful careers» and a «knowledgeable citizenship,» it should create a «just democracy, cooperation among diverse peoples, and a sustainable world.» The students are to be «empowered, informed and responsible.» All these headings include quite a bit of what has traditionally been labelled humanities. To be ‘*empowered*’ among other things includes that students should learn to: «effectively communicate orally, visually, in writing, and in a second language - understand and employ quantitative and qualitative analysis to solve problems - interpret and evaluate information from a variety of sources - transform information into knowledge and knowledge into judgement and action.» To be ‘*informed*’ includes learning about «the human imagination, expression, and the products of many cultures - the interrelations within and among global and cross-cultural communities - means of modelling the natural, social, and technical worlds - the values and histories underlying U.S. democracy.» Lastly to be ‘*responsible*’ includes «intellectual honesty - discernment of the ethical consequences of decisions and actions - deep understanding of one’s self and the complex identities of others, their histories, and their cultures.» Apart from being an employee and a citizen, the student also learns for life: «Preparation for a fulfilling life, as well as a rewarding career, comprehends learning about the world, culture, and the arts. College education offers an understanding of the past, concepts for grappling with fundamental human and scientific questions, and tools to continue learning throughout life» (RAMALEY, 200: 4).

A definite shift from the *Harvard report* can be observed here: From a focus on Western culture to global awareness. The former academy «studies majority Western cultures, perspectives and issues,» but «to respond to the plurality of the modern world, worldwide problems, and interdependence» the new academy «ALSO learns about cultural complexity, a range of

cultures, and global issues.» This is global awareness seen from America. The college is in the light of 9/11 to «produce ethical and compassionate graduates, courageous enough to act on their convictions and reflective in shaping society's larger values» (RAMALEY, 200: 5).

The view of what counts as important knowledge has changed in a direction, which can be described in the terms of Lyotard; from a *speculative* to a post modern *performative* narrative of knowledge [LYOTARD, 1984 (1979)]. This transition is described in the following terms: «Formerly the academy saw the curriculum predominantly as a conveyor of well-established knowledge,» but «in recognition of the worlds diverse complexity» the new academy «ALSO interprets education as an informed probing of ideas and values.» And the performative narrative of knowledge is expressed even more clearly as follows: The former academy «values learning for learning's sake,» but «to acknowledge the new role of higher education in U.S. society» the new academy «ALSO celebrates practical knowledge» (RAMALEY, 2002: 44).

*Greater Expectations* is less specific about what subjects are to form a part of the curriculum, but rather stresses the value of curriculum for life in its broadest sense. From a Danish perspective one could say that the educational agenda of an American liberal arts college education is a crossover between a gymnasium, a folk high school and a university. And this opens for a very broad educational agenda.

## V. THE ROLE OF THE HUMANITIES IN POST-WAR EUROPEAN DISCOURSE

This broad agenda of educational needs must somehow also be present in Europe - but where, when not in the higher education debate? The logical setting for a part of this debate would be on the secondary level, where we find the term general culture (German: *allgemeine Bildung* or Danish: *almendannelse*), which does carry some of the features of the American concept of a liberal education. The humanities do have a prominent place in the curriculum of all students on the secondary level. Until recently, ancient Greek culture was a required course for all students of the Danish Gymnasiums, and foreign languages along with history and the national philology are still very important parts of the curriculum. The Danish scholar

Harry Haue has argued convincingly that the concept of *almendannelse*, which entails significant reference to the humanities, has established a red thread through the whole of the history of the Gymnasium from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the present day (HAUE, 2003). This varies somewhat from country to country, the traditions are stronger in Germany and Denmark than in Norway, but a broad 'liberal' educational agenda, to use the Anglo-Saxon concept, is an important part of European secondary education in most countries.

Another place to look for a discussion of the role of the humanities is in the research policy agenda. Here we have a Nordic tradition of national humanities research councils dating back to World War II. An analysis of their arguments shows quite a few parallels with the liberal arts agenda of the US. Examining the discourse of the national research councils for the humanities in the post-war period to the present day in Norway and Denmark we find a chronology of answers to the question: Why do research in the humanities? This chronology of arguments is briefly described below.

From 1945 to 1957, the *culture argument* was dominant. This entailed the obligation to study the humanities of a culture-nation ('*Kulturnation*'), considering the humanities to be a part of high culture, but also a part of the cultivation of the national cultural heritage. From around 1957 to 1965 the *compensation argument* gradually entered the discourse. The argument was ascribed to the German philosopher Joachim Ritter, but occurred simultaneously in the Norwegian debate. The argument was that one had to study the humanities to compensate for the misfortunes of the modern development. The technical and material culture was becoming so dominant that a moral rearmament was needed. This rearmament was to come with the help of the humanities to compensate for schizophrenic tendencies in modern identity building (MARQUARD, 1958; RITTER, 2003). From 1968 to 1980 the *society argument* dominated the discussion. In both leftist and rightist political discourse, a new contract was introduced between research and society. In this line of reasoning all research was to be directly useful for societal concerns. This entailed a whole new line of arguments for the utilitarian aspects of the humanities, e.g. in communication or in datalinguistics. From the left, the cry was that research should be «for the people,» indicating that the highbrow elitist content of much humanities research should be discarded in favour of research into the 'ordinary' lives of

women, workers or farmers. Finally a change occurred ca. 1980 to a double agenda of both a *problem solving argument* and a *dissemination argument*. In a Lyotardian language the problem solving argument can be called a *performative* view of legitimacy of the humanities. According to this view one should study the humanities for solving problems of cultural clashes along with the older arguments about enhancing communication. On the other hand a new acknowledgement of the resources for individual identity-work in the humanities was seen. The central *dissemination* argument of the 1980's in the Nordic countries was that the humanities should reach out to every single individual. The goal was again to educate the public, but now understood not as groups (farmers, workers, women etc.) but as Kierkegaardian absolute individuals.

The Nordic countries and Germany thus have had a functional equivalent of a liberal arts agenda throughout the post-war period. But it was never closely connected to the debate on the curricular politics of the humanities in higher education. Many examples of argumentation for the educational qualities of the humanities can be found in this literature, but somehow these arguments have not entered into the debate on higher education to the same extent as in America.

## **VI. THE HUMANITIES IN EUROPE - THE CURRENT SITUATION FROM HAMBURG TO COPENHAGEN**

Recent debates on the humanities show substantial differences across the Atlantic. As we have seen in the above reports on the objectives of a college education, the humanities in America are mostly debated in terms of their educational accountability. In contrast to this the humanities in highly specialized higher education programs in Europe are mostly discussed in their narrow relevance to the business sector strangely separated from the broad educational discussions on the secondary level and in the research policy agenda outlined above.

In a reform initiated by a commission under Klaus von Dohnanyi of the University of Hamburg in 2004 the criteria for survival for the humanities in a quite severe cut-down was the relevance of the individual studies to business life. The cutbacks were based on a simple analysis of what the

business sector would demand of its employees in 2012. If the subject was relevant for the cities' major source of income, i.e. trade, it survived; otherwise it was cut dramatically, sometimes fully abolished. Now, the focus in Hamburg is on languages, preferably the languages of large new business partners as China, and media studies, with immediate marketing relevance. In fact the humanities at Hamburg University have been reduced to a business school. As mentioned above, this cut-down made Richard Rorty, a frequent guest of the German universities, asks the rhetorical question: Do German politicians know what universities are there for? And the answer he gave was a resounding NO. His argument was along liberal educational lines. The high level of German secondary and tertiary education would suffer dramatically under these cuts. In a comparison with the American scene Rorty stated that it would be considered «a bad joke» if some U.S. state government was to suggest a similar cut of the humanities at any higher education institution (RORTY, 2004).

The Danish politicians have not yet gone as far as their Hamburg colleagues. A recent report issued by the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, which is responsible for the universities, deals with an overview of the developmental prospects of the humanities in higher education (HESSELDAHL *et al.*, 2005). The affinity to Hamburg nonetheless shows itself on the very first page, where the committee signalizes the nature of this 'overview'; all references to humanities research or to the job market in education (more than half of the job market) are excluded from the report, which is supposed to inform the ministry on future policy in the field. This signalizes a strong focus on what is referred to as transferable skills in the British debate. The report constructs the humanities as dealing with the manipulation of 'meanings' ('betydning'), and focuses on this aspect of business life in the future knowledge society. It is explicitly stressed that the ideas of 'human qualities' and 'soft competencies' of the humanities are based on deep misunderstandings. These subjects are just as 'hard' and 'formal' as the natural sciences. The result is a severing of any educational function of the humanities apart from transferable «meaning» exercises. This in my opinion is what comes out of an unhappy marriage between 'Wissenschaft' and business life.

The original ministerial commission actually asks far more visionary questions than the report answers. There is a plea for comparative research,

for the committee to investigate the functions and developments of the humanities in countries we tend to compare ourselves with along with questions of the possibility of non-humanist students taking modules in the humanities. These aspects are not touched at all in the report. If this report is to serve as the guidelines for future Danish humanities policy it certainly does not look too good from a broader educational viewpoint. For the purpose of this article, however, it is interesting to note that the humanities are discussed in strict employability terms and only one area is discussed: the employability in the business sector.

## **VII. CONCLUDING PROS AND CON'S**

Could the Bologna process be an occasion for the European bachelor to be remodelled along the lines of the American liberal arts model? Could the humanities prove their relevance for non-specialists in European higher education?

The Norwegian university historian Fredrik Thue commented that the American model was based on two important features of the American society. Firstly the plurality of society and also its institutions of higher learning gave rise to a broad variety of educational rationales pursued by individual institutions. The whole picture seemed less attractive to Thue than the usually selected elite examples, in that the humanities were not too well of in a lot of undergraduate programs. One could add to Thues argument the diagnosis of a national report on the humanities in higher education by William J. Bennet, *To Reclaim a Legacy*: often the required courses in western civilisation decayed into mere «bus trips of the west» (BENNETT, 1984). Secondly, Thue stated that it can be difficult to copy traits of the American scene to the European arena, because of the high level of educational and civic idealism in the American tradition. The counterpart of this in Europe would be «Americanisation through the state,» which would not result in the same civic response as in America.

There are nevertheless interesting examples of how to create liberal arts colleges in the midst of Europe. At the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands there are both a truly 'American' residential college and a

program of liberal arts in the existing university. These examples show that it is not necessary to implement the whole of the American model to achieve some of the advantages of the liberal arts model<sup>2</sup>.

One comment made in the Danish report mentioned above may be true. The self-perception in the Danish humanities may prove to be an obstacle to valuable reforms. The insistence on the high scholarly level of all offered courses could make the humanities unattainable for anybody other than highly specialized future researchers and secondary level teachers. The vision to be proposed here would be that of a much wider scope of students taking electives in the humanities even though they were majoring in business, law, medicine or any other fields. If the broader view of the American higher education vision is adopted, there would be no problem in showing the enormous relevance of the humanities in higher education for all in the future knowledge society.

One suggestion in this direction would be to reconsider the strict connection between 'Wissenschaft' and the curriculum. Ethical and political concerns could be dealt with without being 'Wissenschaft' in the narrow sense, and still be very relevant in the creation of a broadly reflective citizenship. Nevertheless, it is important to keep an eye on the quality of the curriculum, which the European research affinity seems to have ensured quite successfully. *Greater Expectations* points to undergraduate research as one way to enhance quality in American colleges. A solution could be a compromise: to keep a close contact between research and curriculum, but also take into account other more ethical and educational concerns in suggesting valuable parts of curriculum for the individual student. One could adopt a more material sense of relevance of the humanities; *what* they teach is relevant to life and work, not only *how* they teach. The view on the humanities could be educational as opposed to narrowly research oriented, but of course research and/or scholarship should continuously be a part of any university scholar's duties and rights.

The British scholar on higher education Gerard Delanty noted that he much preferred the continental *transformative* view of curriculum to the

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<sup>2</sup> For the university program see <http://www.las.uu.nl/onderwijs/gep.shtml> and for the residential college see <http://www.ucu.uu.nl/>

Anglo-Saxon *reproductive*<sup>3</sup>. This application of (value-laden) adjectives is certainly to be taken seriously. Firstly, however, I would prefer to see both kinds of curriculum as potentially transformative. The reading of a classic does not have to be strictly reproductive, but rather, in the understanding of the German philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer, be a totally new event in both the personal history of a student and in the general development of society. Gadamer uses the phrase *the merging of horizons* to clarify that what happens in the interpretation of a classic is certainly not only *reproduction*, but a genuine productive and transforming reception in time of a specific work of thought (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) (GADAMER, 1990). Secondly, there can be distinguished between *formal* and *material* cultivation. I would call the transformative aspect the *formal* hallmark of the *Wissenschaft*-curriculum and the reproductive aspect a *material* aspect of true scholarship. In this use of concepts there is something to be said for both kinds of cultivation. Where the formal cultivation supplies method and rigor the material cultivation supplies contextualization, and establishes a broad outlook or worldview in the student.

In the American liberal arts colleges, we have institutions that take on themselves an educational role far beyond mere professional employability, a fact that has been eagerly acknowledged by American educational and societal thinkers. The college institution tries to carry a large burden of leading to civic engagement, moral responsibility and lately also global and environmental awareness. In 1963 Clark Kerr stated that the American 'multiversity' would become a model for the world, «This is said not to boast. It is simply that the imperatives that have moulded the American university are at work around the world» and since Bologna he could appear to be right (KERR, 1963: 86).

To recapitulate the arguments, there are quite a few good reasons to get inspired by the American model. At its best, the American liberal arts college facilitates a breadth of cultivation, what some considers being true *Bildung*, it is relevant for life rather than just for work, it has a broader agenda than *Wissenschaft* alone and it includes ethics, civic engagement and the instilling of a global outlook in its students. Moreover, it seems to give back to the humanities their inherently educational function inspiring all students.

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<sup>3</sup> Conference homepage: <http://ugle.svf.uib.no/admorg/default.asp?strId=4173&kategori=35>.

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## RESUMEN

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La idea humboldtiana de la universidad ha sido, para bien o para mal, una referencia para el desarrollo universitario en una gran parte de Europa durante los dos siglos pasados. Implica un concepto de unión entre investigación y formación (*Bildung*) que, efectivamente, tiene sus defectos. Desde la llegada de una fuerte especialización y teorización, las Humanidades han abandonado, en su mayor medida, la función educacional, *Bildung* en su sentido ético. Por otra parte, la tradición universitaria de las Artes Liberales americanas, particularmente a nivel de Licenciatura, ha diferenciado la lectura puramente educacional del «canon», del meramente académico. Debates recientes han mostrado la existencia de esta diferenciación. Mientras que las altamente especializadas Humanidades en Europa tienen grandes dificultades en mostrar su relevancia en la sociedad moderna y el mercado de trabajo, en Norteamérica son consideradas, mayoritariamente, bajo los términos de su responsabilidad educacional. ¿Podría el Proceso de Bolonia ser una ocasión para que las Licenciaturas europeas sean remodeladas siguiendo el modelo americano de las Artes Liberales? ¿Podrían las Humanidades mostrar su relevancia a quienes sean inexpertos en Educación Superior Europea?

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** El modelo de las artes liberales. Escuelas o facultades de artes liberales (Filosofía y Letras). Las «Tres Culturas». *Bildung* (formación) y *Wissenschaft* (ciencia). Conocimiento preformativo. Visión transformativa del vitae. Visión reproductiva del vitae.

## ABSTRACT

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The Humboldtian idea of a university has, for better or for worse, served as a blueprint for the past two centuries of university development in large parts of Europe. It entails the idea of a unity between research and personal cultivation (*Bildung*) that indeed has its shortcomings. Since the advent of a strong specialization and theorization the humanities have largely abandoned the more educational function, *Bildung* in its educational and ethical sense. The American liberal arts college- and university tradition on the other hand, particularly at the bachelor level, has traditionally separated the purely educational readings of a humanities 'canon' from the more scholarly pursuits of the humanities. Recent debates on the humanities show these differences across the Atlantic. While the highly specialized humanities in Europe have great problems proving their relevance in a modern society and job-market, the humanities in America are mostly discussed in terms of their educational accountability. Could the Bologna process be an occasion for the European bachelor to be remodelled along the lines of the American liberal arts model? Could the humanities prove their relevance to non-specialists in European higher education?

**KEY WORDS:** Liberal arts model. Liberal arts colleges. «Tres Culturas». *Bildung & Wissenschaft*; performative knowledge. Transformative view of curriculum. Reproductive view of curriculum.

