Humboldt Revisited: Liberal Education, University Reform, and the Opposition to the Neoliberal University

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This essay reexamines the use of Wilhelm von Humboldt in the postwar discourse on education policy in West Germany and the United States. The first part looks at the role of Humboldt in the attempt to restore the prefascist German university after 1945 and then explores the controversial debates about the future of the university in the reform movement of the 1960s. While some reformers were convinced that Humboldt's idea of the university should be abandoned to modernize the German university, others insisted on the continued importance of Humboldt's core ideas. Thus Humboldt was appropriated not only by conservatives who meant to defend existing structures but also by reformers who wanted to prevent the university from becoming a blind servant of industrial society. The second part analyzes the more recent American discourse on higher education, where a similar dichotomy can be observed. Here the proponents of Humboldt's ideas also come from different camps with strongly diverging political positions. The value conservatives of the 1980s draw selectively on Humboldt's ideas to defend the centrality of Western civilization against multiculturalism, which is understood as a dangerous politicization of the university, while the liberals and poststructuralists of the 1990s, mostly implicitly, make use of Humboldt to critique the neoliberal model of the "university of excellence." The third section examines the

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implicit rejection of Humboldt's ideas in the neoliberal model of the contemporary American university proposed by the George W. Bush administration.

This seemingly straightforward task, however, turns out to be fairly complicated. First, there is the difference between the German and the American concepts of the university. The modern German university has historically been a comprehensive state university with a heavy research component, while the American university has been characterized by a much greater variety of institutions, with different profiles and agendas. American higher education typically distinguishes between the undergraduate college, focused primarily on teaching, and the research university, with a fully developed graduate school. And the more recent rise of the two-year community college, with applied degrees, has only emphasized this division. Second, there is the difference between the German and the American discourse. While Humboldt is still an important intellectual figure in Germany, in American debates his ideas could be used and even play an important role without mentioning his name. But even within the German tradition the issue is complicated by the Humboldt myth, that is, the use of Humboldt's aura as an idealist reformer in discussing the twentieth century without firm grounding in the historical evidence.[1] More recent scholarship has found a significant difference between the work and achievements of the historical figure and the reconstructed Humboldt that circulated in German debates about university reform since the 1920s.[2] It was actually the model of the German university ascribed to Humboldt around 1900 that became the center of the twentieth-century debates.

I argue that the use of this model was ambiguous. It was invoked to emphasize either its intellectual content (the idea of the university) or a specific institutional structure. Since these aspects are closely intertwined in constructing the Humboldtian model, they were sometimes conflated in later discussions. It was taken for granted that Humboldt's idea of the university materialized as the University of Berlin was founded in 1810. But this logic could also be reversed by arguing that the existing nineteenth-century university in Prussia and Germany actually embodied Humboldt's idea. This logic still affected postwar discussions on higher education in West Germany. Since the participants shifted easily, and sometimes carelessly, between the ide-

1. Sylvia Palatschek, "Die Erfindung der Humboldtschen Universität: Die Konstruktion der deutschen Universitätsidee in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Historische Anthropologie* 10 (2002): 183–205.

2. Rüdiger vom Bruch, "A Slow Farewell to Humboldt? Stages in the History of German Universities, 1810–1945," in *German Universities Past and Future: Crisis or Renewal?*, ed. Michael G. Ash (Providence, RI: Berghahn, 1997), 3–27.

ational and the institutional sides of the reconstructed Humboldtian model, these analytically distinct aspects were not always clearly separated because of the strong normative link between idea and structure. The question, then, could be posed in the following way: could or should the needed institutional reforms be realigned with the core ideas of the reconstructed conception of Humboldt's university? This question did not play an important role in the more recent American discourse, since here Humboldt was not a compelling point of reference. In the American context the question might be reversed: could one still recognize and revitalize Humboldt's ideas inside the more recent structure of the American university?

The third complication concerns the use of Humboldt on the political spectrum of the postwar era. Conservative as well as liberal policymakers engaged Humboldt to support their programs. To explain this contradiction, can one argue that those who hold on to and support Humboldt's concept of the university, which he developed in his famous *Denkschrift* (memorandum) of 1810, could be conservatives?[3] After all, Humboldt himself, who made use of the ideas of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, and Friedrich Schleiermacher, was anything but conservative. In his early writings he was an outspoken liberal in the tradition of Immanuel Kant and an opponent of the absolutist state; later he participated in the Prussian reform movement that was crucial for Prussia's emergence as a modern society.[4] In short, Humboldt's contemporaries certainly did not see him as a conservative. How, then, could invoking Humboldt in connection with the restitution of the German universities after World War II be a sign of conservatism? Could one not also argue that the noticeable return to Humboldt's ideas after 1945 was an index for the revival of liberal ideas in higher education focusing on *Bildung* (liberal education) and individual autonomy instead of a fascist ideology that had dominated the German university between 1933 and the defeat of the Third Reich? This is, for instance, how the philosopher Karl Jaspers understood his intervention of 1946 and his call to retain the principles of Humboldt's university without imitating the nineteenth-century

3. Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Werke*, ed. Andreas Flitner and Klaus Giel, vol. 4 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), 255–66.

4. Eduard Spranger, *Wilhelm von Humboldt und die Reform des Bildungswesens* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1960); Clemens Menzel, *Die Bildungsreform Wilhem von Humboldts* (Hannover: Schroedel, 1975); Paul R. Sweet, *Wilhelm von Humboldt: A Biography*, 2 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978–80); Dietrich Benner, *Wilhelm von Humboldts Bildungstheorie: Eine problemgeschichtliche Studie zum Begründungszusammenhang neuzeitlicher Bildungsreform* (Weinheim: Juventa, 1990).

institutional framework.[5] Nevertheless, from a different perspective, for instance, that of social modernization, Jaspers's position could be called conservative. The reformers of the 1960s, faced with the dramatic expansion of the student population, were convinced that Jaspers's concept of the university had become obsolete and blocked necessary reforms.

Thus the term *conservative* in the postwar discourse on the university could take on several meanings. It could refer to reconnecting with the philosophical tradition of the German university. In this context, evoking Humboldt would indeed be a conservative move, namely, the wish to anchor the contemporary university in the ideas developed in the early nineteenth century and reinforced in the early twentieth century by those theorists, like Eduard Spranger, who rediscovered Humboldt. But the term could also refer to the institutional structure of the German university. In this context, the emphasis would be placed on the role of the *Ordinarien* (full professors) and the relationship between university and state (autonomy vs. state control). Finally, the term could also refer to conservative political and social groups and their preference for a specific type of higher education, for instance, the university's importance for the training of elites, a function the German university had performed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus the use of the term *conservative* would not necessarily result in a defense of Humboldt's university or a support of the structure of the nineteenth-century German research university. One can easily imagine other elitist models, for example, the French model of the *grandes écoles*, that would serve the same purpose.

These three uses of the term *conservative* in the discourse on the university tend to overlap, but only partly. The participants sometimes moved from one to the other meaning without indicating or even noticing the switch. This confusion complicated the heated debates of the 1960s, when it was generally accepted that German universities needed reform, but the direction of the change was in dispute. In this situation, Humboldt's name could be invoked by more than one camp, each referring to Humboldt's university for different and incompatible purposes. Those who opposed reform could make use of Humboldt, as could those who favored reform but disagreed with certain structural proposals.

Humboldt in the Old German University

The postwar university in West Germany (in clear contrast to East Germany) more or less preserved its older organization, although with a stronger empha-

5. Karl Jaspers, *Die Idee der Universität* (Berlin: Springer, 1946). Hereafter cited as *IU*.

sis on the autonomy of the faculty vis-à-vis the state.[6] Because of the adverse impact of the National Socialist state on university autonomy, the position of the senior faculty was strengthened to shield the university against an ideological state apparatus. At the heart of this university were the *Lehrstuhl* (chair) and the community of *Lehrstuhlinhaber* (chairpersons), a structure that became increasingly problematic in the 1960s, when the student population rose sharply. The question, then, was whether to expand the existing universities or create new ones. In both instances, the reform had to deal with surviving older structures. Had the time come to break away from outmoded institutional structures, as some reformers proposed? In this situation, the highly controversial debates invoked Humboldt's project in a number of ways, mostly in support of specific positions but occasionally also to mark the distance to a notion of the university that had to be overcome—Humboldt as the baggage of a more or less dubious past.

In the 1950s the self-understanding of the university was articulated in its ritual pronouncements, such as addresses of the *Rektor* (university president) to new students. A good example would be Helmut Coing's addresses at the University of Frankfurt. Coing, a member of the law faculty, also played an important role in the Wissenschaftsrat, a commission set up by the federal government and the states to study the structure of higher education and make recommendations through annual reports. In the fall of 1955 he presented to the new students a brief history of the German university from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century in which the reform movement connected with the name of Humboldt plays a central role. In this history Coing emphasizes that the new university at Berlin (1810) reconceptualized the relationship of science and society. While the university still functions as a training ground for the professions (law, medicine, and theology), its broader purpose is to provide a general education in scientific thought. The idea of *Wissenschaft* (science), Coing stresses, transcends advanced professional training. Invoking the Humboldtian model, he underlines the unity of *Wissenschaft* in contrast to the Enlightenment concept of science. *Wissenschaft* is the process of creating knowledge, and the university is where this happens among a community of teachers and students who are equally involved in the process. Thus Coing emphasizes the "link between research and teaching" as a defining moment of

6. Ernst Anrich, *Die Idee der deutschen Universität und die Reform der deutschen Universitäten* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960); Daniel Fallon, *The German University: A Heroic Ideal in Conflict with the Modern World* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1980), 54–59; Konrad H. Jarausch, "West German Universities, 1945–1989—an Academic Sonderweg?," in Ash, *German Universities*, 33–49.

the modern university.[7] In this context, the student has *Lernfreiheit*, that is, the privilege to choose his or her own courses, in clear contrast to the student at the *Gymnasium* (college-preparatory high school).

The critical question, then, is whether the university of 1955 is still in a position to live up to Humboldt's ideas. Coing readily admits that the contemporary university does not resemble the University of Berlin of 1810, because, he says, a technological evolution has complicated the theoretical process of science. As a result, university education has become more specialized and more expansive as well. Moreover, it takes more scientists and students to secure the advance of knowledge. In short, Coing paints a picture in which the contemporary university is determined by specialization that leaves the beginning student at a loss where to turn. Nonetheless, Coing does not draw the obvious conclusion that the students in front of him are bound to undergo professional specialization to accomplish their goals. Instead, toward the end of his address and without any mediation, he recommends a broad and transdisciplinary approach. He wants the students to take courses also in areas unrelated to their future profession. He encourages intellectual curiosity and the study of science for the sake of science. Thus Coing champions a general liberal education in a university organized by specialized disciplines. But there is no mediation between the existing institutional structure, which favors professional training, and the recommended *Bildung* of the individual student, possibly because the structure of the 1950s is still loose enough to allow the student to deviate from a strictly disciplinary course of study. Coing's ambivalence highlights the difference between the rigorous organizational structure of autonomous disciplines in a modern university, on the one hand, and, on the other, their intellectual content, which supposedly can still be synthesized by the student.

In more than one way Coing's address was typical of the response of the 1950s to the changes both inside and outside the university. There is the realization that the contemporary university is primarily focused on professional training in existing disciplines, yet at the normative level the Humboldtian rhetoric of *Bildung* continues. The contradiction is occasionally mentioned but not yet seen as a serious problem. And especially the unity of teaching and research is not questioned as it evolved through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This means that those forces that resist or mean to block reforms a decade later will invoke the Humboldtian model to articulate

7. Helmut Coing, *Über die Ziele des Universitätsstudiums: Vier Immatrikulationsreden* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1958), 11.

their position. Humboldt's ideas are then interpreted as a necessary and logical part of the established institutional structure. Any change at the institutional level will therefore imply a threat to the idea of the university. Consequently, those who want to preserve the Humboldtian idea of the university have to resist any reforms that fundamentally undermine or alter the old structure. To some extent, this became the dilemma of the reform movement of the 1960s. It remained tied to the Humboldtian model in the sense that the reformers were confronted with the perceived link between the idea of the university and the existing institutional structure. Their plans, while in certain ways beneficial, would destroy the classical idea of the university, the idea of *Bildung*. This argument could come either from a conservative or from a progressive position.

In the 1960s Humboldt's notion of the university becomes a conservative position that blocks inevitable reforms. In light of greater numbers of students and the declining effectiveness of teaching and learning at West German universities in comparison with institutions in other European countries and in the United States, the claim that Humboldt's ideas could or should inspire the university of the future was no longer self-evident. In retrospect, Jaspers's *Die Idee der Universität* (*The Idea of the University*, 1946), written immediately after the war to restore the heavily compromised German university, came across as a position that had lost its purchase, an institutional constellation that belonged to the past. Among other things, the philosopher Jaspers, who had already participated in the discussions of the 1920s, did not anticipate the mass university of the 1960s. For Jaspers, it remained self-evident that only a small percentage of the population would attend university; access would be based on rigorous selection out of a general pool to which not all social classes would equally contribute (*IU*, 101–9). What Jaspers has to say about the masses reflects a deep-seated aversion to the intellectual mediocrity of social groups outside the parameter of the traditional *Bildungsbürgertum* (educated professional bourgeoisie) (*IU*, 100). Jaspers's idea of the university openly (and in proximity to Martin Heidegger) claims the principle of *Geistesaristokratie*, a clear separation of intellectual elites from the masses: "The mass is hostile to the exceptional" (*IU*, 101). In other respects as well, Jaspers continues traditional notions of the university's position vis-à-vis the state and society. He places the university firmly on the side of theory, not praxis, which means that social and political actions (*Handeln*) are excluded (except those of self-governing, of course). While the university is expected to serve society and state, it does not participate in social and political conflicts. In short, Jaspers's university remains apolitical, a point that would become important in the

debates of the 1960s and 1970s. The power of the state, both in financial and administrative terms, is always assumed as necessary and beneficial as long as the state respects the university's intellectual autonomy. Jaspers could not possibly foresee the later evolution of the relationship between state and senior faculty, when the state used its power also to interfere with curriculum issues.

Jaspers does not propose or anticipate significant structural changes. Neither the predominant positions of the *Ordinarien* nor the *Laufbahn* (traditional career pattern) in the university (doctorate, habilitation) is questioned. The participation of the academic staff does not enter the discussion either. Briefly stated, then, Jaspers affirms the status quo without spending much time on its problems, which were already visible before 1933. While in 1946 Jaspers's intention could be understood as advocating change vis-à-vis the university of the Third Reich, two decades later the same text had become a conservative document, a tool to defend the status quo. In this historical context, however, the term *conservative* applies neither to the author nor to the original intention and function of the essay but to its use in the debates of the 1960s, when the junction between the Humboldtian idea of the university and its actual embodiment in the contemporary university came under pressure.

Humboldt and the West German Reform

While university reform was part of the discourse on higher education since the founding of the Federal Republic,[8] it became an urgent topic only in the 1960s. The evolving recommendations of the Wissenschaftsrat, which became a crucial instrument for reforms in the 1960s because it brought together senior representatives of the university faculty, university administrators, and representatives of the states, can be used as an index to measure the growing rift between idea and reality. Beginning in the late 1950s, the Wissenschaftsrat began to assess the actual situation (empirically) and to prepare for future reform. Under consideration was the unity of research and teaching. Should there be a new type of faculty primarily focused on teaching, thereby freeing other parts of the professoriat for research? Most members, under Coing's leadership, did not favor this solution and recommended expanding the existing universities by creating more faculty positions (*Parallellehrstühle*).[9] Initially, the given institutional structure was considered unproblematic, while the need for new universities to cope with a growing student population was

8. Rolf Neuhaus, ed., *Dokumente zur Hochschulreform, 1945–1959* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1961).

9. Olaf Bartz, *Der Wissenschaftsrat: Entwicklungslinien der Wissenschaftspolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1957–2007* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2007), 50–61.

denied. The proposed expansion, however, would imply unintended structural consequences. The suggested increase in the number of senior faculty members would also lead to a significant increase in academic staff (*Assistenten* et al.), and thereby a more pronounced hierarchy that would later raise the question of participation in university governance. Thus the proposed reforms contained from the very beginning problems that later created conflicts between various factions.

The direction of the recommendations was at least partly motivated by the lasting influence of the Humboldt myth, especially the notion that Humboldt's ideas had been essential for creating the modern German university and therefore could not be abandoned without the danger of destroying the specific concept of research and teaching that were part of it.[10] It became difficult to imagine that the cluster of ideas in Humboldt's 1810 *Denkschrift* could also be materialized in a different institutional structure. As late as 1963 the prominent sociologist Helmut Schelsky, in his influential study *Einsamkeit und Freiheit* (*Isolation and Freedom*), praised the Wissenschaftsrat for staying close to the traditional principles of the Humboldtian model, a position that he would significantly modify a few years later, when he himself became actively involved in the reform process.[11] The modern industrial society, as he and other critical observers of the academic scene remarked, demanded a different type of university. Hence most advocates of the reform movement, who were involved either in the expansion of existing or in the founding of new universities, distanced themselves from Humboldt by emphasizing the historical changes and thereby denying the transhistorical value of his ideas. They also distanced themselves from the notion that the university was primarily a place where the country's elites should be trained, which social conservatives took for granted.

The defense of Humboldt came, somewhat unexpectedly, from a different camp. Some of the critics of the reform movement on the left reinvoked Humboldt to expose some of the negative consequences of the planning process and its actual results. But before I turn to this curious revival, I have to sketch the goals of the 1960s reform movement in the context of the ongoing discourse on the university. On the one hand, there was, especially among the professoriat, the growing concern about the rapid increase of new students and its expected negative consequences for the quality of teaching and research

10. Palatschek, "Erfindung der Humboldtschen Universität."

11. Helmut Schelsky, *Einsamkeit und Freiheit: Idee und Gestalt der deutschen Universität und ihrer Reformen*, 2nd ed. (Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann, 1971).

(*Vermassung*). On the other, there was the sense that, as a time-honored institution, the German university did not fit into a modern industrial society with a democratic political system. While the former concern could be addressed either by creating additional universities or by expanding the existing ones, the latter pointed to the mission and function of the university itself. Was the *Bildung* of the individual still its primary function, or should it favor professional training to meet the needs of a modern industrial society? But the growing emphasis on the university's social function in the ensuing discussion, as well as the reform proposals themselves, would almost simultaneously produce a new type of criticism that disqualified the transformed university as technocratic. It is in the context of this controversy that Humboldt's idea of the university would come to the foreground again, not only from the familiar conservative perspective but also from a reform position that called for democratizing the university.

The recommendations of the Wissenschaftsrat in 1965 for the first time addressed the thorny problem of *Studiengänge* (curricula) and academic degrees and their social function.[12] The commission moved away from the idea of an elite education without any social function and embraced specific differentiated professional curricula leading to a socially useful degree. This meant that all students would attend the university only for a limited time, defined in terms of shorter or longer curricula. The model for this new design was clearly the British and American system of higher education, with the distinction between undergraduate and graduate studies and their respective degrees. The purpose was twofold: first, the reform was expected to deal with the inefficiency and the crowding of the German university; second, it was also meant to solidify the learning process by introducing exams at the end of each phase (*Zwischenprüfungen*). There was, possibly for the first time, the notion that there should be some type of output control. With an eye on the labor market, the university should be accountable for the training it provided. This meant that the reformers created a link between public funding and public welfare.

The conviction that curriculum reform was not only desirable but also inevitable for the survival of the German university was by no means limited to the Wissenschaftsrat. Individual states as well as individual planning groups were moving in the same direction. Among their leaders was Ralf Dahrendorf, a sociologist by training, an outspoken progressive liberal, and a prominent member of the younger generation of academics, who left his academic post

12. Wissenschaftsrat, *Empfehlungen des Wissenschaftsrates zum Ausbau der wissenschaftlichen Einrichtungen*, 3 vols. (Bonn: n.p., 1965); Bartz, *Wissenschaftsrat*, 81–89.

and served for several years as *Staatssekretär* (undersecretary) for the state of Baden-Württemberg. In this capacity he became one of the most energetic reformers. While the details of his work are not important for this essay, the general direction of his efforts deserves attention because he became the target of severe criticism, both from his conservative colleagues and from the left. His opponents perceived him as a typical technocrat who wanted to turn the university into a set of professional schools at the expense of autonomy and intellectual freedom. For Dahrendorf, the son of a union leader, the German university was still largely an institution controlled by and organized for the upper and middle classes and thus was no longer appropriate for a modern democratic society. One of his primary concerns was to open up higher education to the children of the working class.[13] His strong interest in university reform and possibly also his indifference to the rhetoric of the Humboldtian university has to be seen in this light. His proposal, based on the work of a state-sponsored committee in Stuttgart, aimed to reorganize the general curriculum so that the individual student would undertake a *Kurzstudium*, that is, would earn a degree in less time, typically leaving the university after three years with a BA.[14] A smaller number would continue another two years and receive an MA, while only a small fraction would spend another year at the university to obtain a PhD or a similar professional degree.

The similarity of this plan to the ideas developed by the Wissenschaftsrat is fairly obvious, as Dahrendorf would readily admit (*NW*, 19). More important is the question of legitimacy. Would the reform bring a substantive improvement apart from better controlling the number of matriculated students, which was clearly an important goal for the reformers? Dahrendorf's answer is pragmatic. He is convinced that the new *Kurzstudium* of three years will be accepted by German industry and, after certain modifications of the rules for promoting *Beamte* (tenured state employees), also by the state. Dahrendorf's argument begins with modern society's existing needs, which are taken for granted, and proposes to adapt the university to them. The students are seen as a population to be managed through good advising and improved career planning. To facilitate this professionalization of higher education, Dahrendorf also proposes a new type of instructor, namely, the *Studiendozent*, whose primary function is to teach without serious research obligation, a decisive deviation from the Humboldtian model.

13. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Arbeiterkinder an deutschen Universitäten* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965).

14. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Neue Wege zur Hochschulreform: Differenzierte Gesamthochschule—autonome Universität* (Hamburg: Decker, 1967). Hereafter cited as *NW*.

The ambiguity of Dahrendorf's ideas becomes apparent when one compares them with the recommendations of the Spellings Commission on Higher Education under George W. Bush in 2006. Their similarity is undeniable. But while Dahrendorf's proposal stressed the progressive aspect of opening the university to the lower classes, the Spellings Commission favored a market solution. It is the difference between a left-liberal and a neoliberal approach. From the state's viewpoint, the incentive for this solution is obvious: it is less expensive, as Dahrendorf emphasizes (*NW*, 31). At the same time, Dahrendorf understands his ideas as part of a larger project in which higher education is no longer the privilege of a few but the right of the average citizen. Therefore he favors a university that is open to all social classes and that defines itself in terms of scientific and professional training rather than *Bildung*.

Dahrendorf had already presented these general concerns in his 1965 study, *Bildung ist Bürgerrecht* (*Education Is a Citizen's Right*). The university of the future, he argues, has to decide whether it wants to serve a broad spectrum of students or a small elite.[15] Clearly, Dahrendorf supports democratizing the university, but he also believes that the opposition can be overcome, that it should be possible to develop a democratically organized elite university. However, it is not clear how this synthesis can be accomplished. The argument that the concept of science used in the German discourse on the university is outdated (*vermodert*) does not resolve the tension between the needs of the average students and scientific research, not to mention the need for a general liberal education. Therefore it was not surprising that Dahrendorf's ideas were severely criticized by those who wanted to maintain *Bildung* as part of a university education.

The opposition to Dahrendorf's pragmatism focused on his conception of education, specifically on the proposed curriculum reform but also on his implicit understanding of the institutional structure. The early student movement, partly influenced by its US counterpart, was seriously involved in the idea of university reform as part of larger social reforms. The movement's leaders felt that the German university allowed for individual freedom but did not encourage participation in its governance. The student representatives at a 1967 conference—Jens Litten, Ulrich Preuß, and Kurt Nevermann—contested not only Dahrendorf's idea of praxis but also his concept of democratization. For them, to simply address the needs of the existing society was not enough, and a reform that left the hierarchy of the present university intact could not

15. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Bildung ist Bürgerrecht: Plädoyer für eine aktive Bildungspolitik* (Hamburg: Nannen, 1965), 106–7.

encourage democratization or respond to the problems of the future. Thus the left critique returned to the idea of *Bildung* to articulate aspects eliminated from or at least marginalized in Dahrendorf's plan. For the idea of a "critical university" (Litten, quoted in *NW*, 47), a term coined around 1965, the concept of *Bildung* seemed to be *unverzichtbar* (nonnegotiable), whether or not Humboldt's name was mentioned.

In the discussion after Dahrendorf's presentation at the *Gesprächskreis* (roundtable discussion) in July 1967, it became clear that for the students, university reform had to strengthen those aspects of the institution that would ultimately promote or encourage social change. For this reason, they opposed merely adapting the university to the needs of industrial society, which in their eyes was neither democratic nor self-critical. In this context Preuß explicitly returned to Humboldt to elaborate the idea of a critical university:

> The fact . . . that Humboldt has been dead for 150 years does not mean that he is outmoded. He has focused on the unity of theory and practice. This unity cannot be realized the way he conceived it. But I believe that it is the task of critical intellectuals within the university to uphold this idea, which is by no means reactionary simply because in light of historical events it is considered inappropriate today. (quoted in *NW*, 51)

Here Humboldt is emphatically rescued from Dahrendorf's assessment as a premodern theorist, whose ideas impede reform and progress. For Preuß, it is Dahrendorf's pragmatism that blocks serious progress, because it reproduces the very social structures Dahrendorf means to overcome through a liberal, open society.

This defense of Humboldt from the left must have come as a surprise to Dahrendorf, who was of course used to the conservative opposition to the reform movement in the name of Humboldt. The conservative critics invoked the unity of research and teaching as well as the freedom of teaching and learning to delegitimize the reformers' recommendations. For the most part, however, this opposition amounted to little more than a defense of the established institutional structures and complaints about undue pressure from the state and too much work because of too many students.[16] In this discourse Humboldt plays the role of a well-known authority with legitimizing force. It is precisely not the utopian propensity of Humboldt's concept that is invoked.

16. Wolfgang Schöne, *Kampf um die deutsche Universität: Streitschrift anläßlich der am 14. Mai 1966 verabschiedeten Empfehlungen des Wissenschaftsrates zur Neuordnung des Studiums and den wissenschaftlichen Hochschulen* (Hamburg: Selbstverlag, 1966).

As I have noted, the belief in the utopian energy evolved on the left during the late 1960s and early 1970s in pronounced opposition to the notion of a *Leistungselite* (meritocracy) that was promoted by the business world.

What is remarkable about the use of Humboldt by the student movement and some of its academic supporters (among them Jürgen Habermas) was the shift of context. While the mainstream interpretation from Spranger to Schelsky had consistently foregrounded the moments of individualism and detachment from the practical world, the student movement emphasized the communal aspect, that is, the necessary democratization of the university as part of a modern democratic society. The university had to be rescued from reforms that would make it part of the larger project of creating a *formierte Gesellschaft* (technologically regulated society), with emphasis on efficiency and goal orientation, a society characterized by its actual lack of openness and equality. The recommendations of the Wissenschaftsrat, seemingly standing on the side of progress, were perceived as motivated by the same spirit (whether or not the reformers knew this). Where the reformers, such as Dahrendorf, saw progress, the student movement saw primarily regression. For this reason, the unity of teaching and research, the participation of the students in research, a cornerstone of the Humboldtian model, were vigorously defended against all attempts to streamline education through efficiency. By contrast, the idea of the university proposed by the student movement focused on the moment of critical reflection (about the university's social functions) and the link between theory and praxis (the ultimate social use of the knowledge created and transmitted at the university).

One has to understand the demand for democratization, which played a central role in the students' programs, in the context of an opposition to the ideal of the *formierte Gesellschaft* presented by the technocratic camp of the conservatives.[17] Initially, democratization implied the university as an open institution in an open society that could be structured by critical thought developed by the university community. It also meant eliminating that community's existing hierarchy. While the founding fathers of the modern German university did not eliminate the given institutional structure and thereby the difference between professors and students, their idea of a learning community (especially in the writings of Schleiermacher) would also de-emphasize

17. Axel Schildt, *Moderne Zeiten: Freizeit, Massenmedien und "Zeitgeist" in der Bundesrepublik der fünfziger Jahre* (Hamburg: Christians, 1995); Jens Hacke, *Philosophie der Bürgerlichkeit: Die liberalkonservative Begründung der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2006), 136–52.

the hierarchical aspect expressed in the status of the professor as a *Beamter* (tenured state employee).

As a critique of the recommendations of the Wissenschaftsrat and other academic bodies, the invocation of student rights is grounded in a Humboldtian understanding of the university as a free community of researchers (including students) without regard to the professional needs of society.[18] The emphasis is clearly placed on student participation rather than administrative management. In other words, professional training is not the center of the critical university. The more the university is detached from society's mundane expectations, the more it can fulfill its critical role. The strong, ultimately violent objection to a limited number of years for completing the course of study was rooted in the concept of the university as a commonly owned institution where neither the professoriat nor the state had the right to force out those students who had used up their allotted time (*Zwangsexmatrikulation*). In short, the students favored a new understanding of the university as a public good that was not owned by the state or the senior faculty. But this idea did not find acceptance in the ensuing debates, partly because the students tried to translate it directly into political demands. As a student resolution at the Free University Berlin of June 22, 1966, makes clear, they demanded that all decisions about the status of the students require student participation.[19] In the confrontation with the university administration in 1966, this demand turned into a call for *Drittelparität*, that is, a claim for one-third of the votes in all important university committees. The founding fathers' idea of the scholarly community morphed into a call for formal voting rights.

It is not surprising that most members of the professoriat responded with anger to these demands, because they would not recognize Humboldt's idea of the university in the program the students proposed. Based on their interpretation of Humboldt's core idea of a university community of equal participants, the students wanted structural reforms that went far beyond the recommendations of the Wissenschaftsrat or the plans of the state of Baden-Württemberg (Dahrendorf). The suggestion, for example, to abolish the *Lehrstuhlprinzip* (organization of the disciplines around chairs) and the *Habilitation* (second dissertation) seriously undermined the existing organization. If one placed the notion of an academic community, consisting of students and teachers, at the center of the Humboldtian model, the students' demands were a logical

18. Stephan Leibfried, ed., *Wider die Untertanenfabrik: Handbuch zur Demokratisierung der Hochschule* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1967), 208.

19. Ibid., 292–93.

extension of the Humboldtian project, although the founding fathers had clearly not developed such plans. The idea of academic autonomy, which after World War II had primarily meant the autonomy of the *Ordinarien*, is transformed into the independence of all participants from state intervention.

Habermas's Intervention

At a more abstract level Habermas offered a similar argument for democratizing the university in 1967.[20] Since 1964 he had been one of the most articulate supporters of the student movement and university reform on the left. Although his ongoing dialogue with the student leaders was not without friction because of strategic and tactical differences, Habermas remained supportive at least until 1968. Looking at the distinction between empirical knowledge, especially in the natural sciences, and practical knowledge in morality and politics, he observed that the goal of attaining good answers to practical questions called for rational dialogue based solely on the argument's quality. While he did not propose to reinstitute philosophy as the central discipline of the modern university, he did assign it an important role beyond its narrow task in philosophy departments. Its discursive rules can, as Habermas suggests, serve as a metamethodology for the university in general. It is clear that Habermas understands the university as a community governed by rational discussion. Democratization, then, means that no part of the institution is exempt from the rule of rational dialogue. Therefore the students should be included rather than excluded. "They have a legitimate role in determining local and national policies about the universities and higher education."[21] Similar to the student movement, Habermas reads the university as a political institution insofar as its governance should be based on discussions between all participants. In his November 1967 lecture at the Goethe House in New York, Habermas consciously extended the discussion to the political involvement of the student movement outside the university, that is, the transition from university reform to social issues at large: "They [the students] now seem to regard the campus as nothing but the training ground for the mobilization of troops. Their target is no longer the university as such, which has become too inconsiderable an opponent" (*RS*, 19–20). Clearly, for him, their investment in the Humboldtian notion of an autonomous academic community had become weaker and more questionable.

20. Jürgen Habermas, *Kleine politische Schriften I–IV* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 134–56. Hereafter cited as *PS*.

21. Jürgen Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics* (Boston: Beacon, 1971), 11. Hereafter cited as *RS*.

To what extent did Habermas, who was obviously sympathetic to student complaints about the conditions at German universities, support the general politicization of the students? His assessment shows a certain ambiguity. While he carefully explains the reasons for student protests in West Germany and Berlin, he does not identify with the movement, which he reads as a generational movement. But there is no attempt to legitimize the politicization of the students by invoking Humboldt's idea of the university. In fact, Habermas describes the actual German university in the wake of Humboldt in the nineteenth century as a pure research university, with little regard for students' needs, a university that, moreover, excluded the lower classes. Here Humboldt is used as a negative symbol. "The university was supposed to educate and cultivate, but it did not train masses or experts" (*RS*, 21). We can observe a tension between *Bildung* and the need for political participation. For Habermas (in this respect he is close to Dahrendorf), the university of middle-class *Bildung* seems outdated, in view of global social and political conflicts. To rescue the original concept, one would therefore have to distinguish very clearly between the historical research university of the nineteenth century and the Humboldtian idea. But in 1968–69 Habermas did not continue this strategy. Instead, he openly opted for political reform beyond the student movement. In a three-point proposal he called for critically assessing professional practices (critical analysis of social and political implications of research), politically conscious research planning (in the natural and social sciences), and transforming the educational system (*PS*, 176–85). Although by late 1968 Habermas's sympathies for the student movement had cooled considerably, he still assigned it an important but limited function in the necessary transformation of the university. Moreover, he shared the belief that the university was a crucial institution for social transformation, though not in the sense of immediate political action that the students preferred.

Habermas's position contained all the elements that the conservative professoriat decried: the democratization of the university, student participation and student rights, and curriculum reform intended to intensify the link between the academy and the social world. From the conservative viewpoint, the common denominator is the destruction of the autonomy of the university as a corporation. When Habermas suggested that the German professoriat had to decide whether to support the recommendations of the Wissenschaftsrat and thereby save its dominant position in the university or interpret these recommendations as a call for serious structural reform, he pointed to the precarious situation of the faculty in a time of historical change (*PS*, 145). By and large, the professoriat resisted change and wanted to retain the time-honored

structures but was willing to cooperate to some extent with the reforms proposed and carried out by the state as long as these reforms did not subvert their status. Pressure from the student movement especially could lead to realignments of formerly liberal professors with conservative positions. The rise of neoconservatism in West Germany was largely the result of 1968.[22]

The Neoconservative Turn: Hermann Lübbe

In certain ways the neoconservatives became the most articulate faction of the conservative camp, since they had to legitimize their new position, especially vis-à-vis those liberals who had moved to the left. Hermann Lübbe (b. 1926) is a good example of this shift. He was trained in philosophy by the conservative philosopher Joachim Ritter at the University of Münster and, like Dahrendorf, left his academic position for several years to serve as an undersecretary in the administration of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia between 1967 and 1970. Despite his conservative training, he became a member of the Social Democratic Party and was involved in the university reform movement during the early 1960s as a member of the senate of the University of Bochum; also, he became a member of the founding committee for another university in the eastern part of Westphalia. In short, Lübbe was in favor of change and actually supported university reform. It is only in 1970 that he joined the Bund freier Wissenschaften, an association of professors strongly opposed to the demands of the student movement. At this point, he was convinced that the *Freiheit der Wissenschaft* (freedom of research) was threatened. Lübbe left no doubt that the countermovement of the senior faculty was focused on restoring order in the university, a situation that the state should guarantee. In his opposition to "ideological extremism" he downplayed the idea of university autonomy and stressed the responsibility of the state for the university (the university "is first and foremost an institution of the state").[23] At the same time, he rigorously defended freedom of research, that is, a substantial element of the Humboldtian model.

This ambivalence raises the more general question: what is Humboldt's role in the (conservative) opposition to the student movement? The answer lies in Lübbe's participation in the university reform movement and his statements from the early to mid-1960s, when the initiative came either from the state or from progressive elements of the faculty. In 1972, in the preface to *Hochschulreform und Gegenaufklärung* (*University Reform and Counter-Enlightenment*),

22. Hermann Lübbe, "Neo-Konservative in der Kritik," *Merkur* 28 (1983): 622–31; Hacke, *Philosophie der Bürgerlichkeit*, 94–133.

23. Hermann Lübbe, *Hochschulreform und Gegenaufklärung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1972), 95. Hereafter cited as *HG*.

he explicitly states that Humboldt's university had come to an end. It was, as he notes in hindsight, an inevitable process that could not be reversed (*HG*, 10); however, this statement can be read in two rather different ways. It can refer either to the structure of the modern German university in the wake of the foundation of the University of Berlin or to Humboldt's ideal of a free academic community that never quite materialized. The first interpretation would define Lübbe as a modernizer of the university, someone who means to abolish and replace outdated structures. The second interpretation would possibly imply more radical disagreement with the notion of an autonomous academic community focused on *Bildung*. By describing the student movement as an irrational youth movement in the service of counter-enlightenment, Lübbe claimed for himself the position of the enlightened observer who finds the university in the claws of regressive forces.

Without going into detail, there were considerable shifts in the development of Lübbe's position between 1965 and 1970. Unlike conventional academic conservatives who simply defended the structure of the existing German university by insisting on its apolitical nature, Lübbe fully recognized the inevitable sociopolitical involvement of the university as part of the social totality. In fact, in 1965, the decisive year for university reform in the Federal Republic, he emphasized the university's dependence on the political system because of the growing financial needs of the research university. The autonomy of the old republic of scholars, he argued, was a thing of the past, because this very autonomy was ultimately secured by the "kulturverwaltende Obrigkeit" (state as the guardian of culture) (*HG*, 13), a veiled allusion to the Prussian university. By contrast, in a modern society, research and higher education had a much more central social function and were therefore also more exposed to the political system's impact. For Lübbe, it is important to recognize the shifting emphasis from the intellectual to the material side. The welfare of modern societies depends on the quality of higher education and research: "Science has become an essential part of human activities. It has become the material foundation of our existence" (*HG*, 14). Given this premise, Lübbe concludes that society, by way of its political system, has to sponsor research and higher education. But this has to be done only with the help of experts who can recognize the specific links between social needs and scientific research. In the wake of the sociologist Schelsky, Lübbe argues that rational planning processes depend on experts in *Bildungsökonomie* (educational economy). *Wissenschaftspolitik* (politics of science) as part of modern civilization becomes itself a complex process, with several steps of mediation between the community of scientists, on the one hand, and the average citizen, on the other,

which means that the political is drawn into the realm of science and vice versa. But one has to realize that Lübbe understands the average citizen's participation in the politics of scientific research as a highly mediated activity. This explains his later resistance and open hostility toward student demands. The necessary reform of the German university should be left in the hands of experts coming either from the state or from the university administration.

Given Lübbe's emphasis on the scientification of modern society, the question arises to what extent the Humboldtian model can still serve as a point of orientation. In 1967 he explicitly examined Humboldt's role in the Prussian university reform of 1809–10, probably with an eye to the use of Humboldt in the contemporary discourse on the university. While the standard approach to Humboldt's program focuses on his unpublished notes from 1809 and 1810, Lübbe looks at the larger context of Humboldt's service as diplomat and political adviser of the Prussian reformers Karl Freiherr vom Stein and Karl August Fürst Hardenberg. He argues that university reform must be seen as part of the larger program to modernize Prussia. In addition, Lübbe stresses the link of Humboldt's reorganization of the university to the Prussian Enlightenment, although he explicitly recognizes the distance between a "one-sided science-oriented pragmatism" (*HG*, 113) and Humboldt's idea. More important, against the conventional understanding of this idea in the formula of a synthesis of education and science, where the stress tends to fall on conducting scientific research, for Lübbe "the emphasis is placed on education" (*HG*, 113). The reason for this emphasis, as Lübbe argues, has to do with the social environment in which the University of Berlin was founded. The transformation of scientific theories into socially useful technology was beyond the horizon of 1810. In other words, for Lübbe, Humboldt's university is still essentially premodern. For this reason Humboldt, as Lübbe suggests, defines his university in terms of *Bildung* rather than of modern science. Those who have been educated at a reformed university will be qualified to participate in the business of the state, because they have developed critical judgment.

Lübbe sees the success of the Humboldtian university, as it evolved in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, not where most interpreters look: in the guarantee of the freedom of teaching and research. Rather, he underlines the state's central role for the strength and prosperity of the German university: "The close link between university and state has obviously been so successful that nobody has seriously attempted to privatize the university in Germany" (*HG*, 116). This argument speaks in favor of continuity rather than radical rethinking of the idea of the university.

Readers of Lübbe's essay who look for an application to the contemporary situation will be disappointed, not only because the author avoids the crucial question of whether the Humboldtian model is still of value for the reform movement but also because of Lübbe's ambivalence toward Humboldt's idea. Although he stresses the premodern character of Humboldt's plan, he emphasizes the difference between the corporate structure of the eighteenth-century university and the modern bourgeois character of Humboldt's program. By focusing on the new role of the faculty of philosophy, he acknowledges the almost revolutionary nature of establishing the idea of philosophical critique at the core of the university. The Kantian idea of critique was undoubtedly modern and possibly still helpful for the contemporary discussion. But there can be no doubt that Lübbe considered the Humboldtian model institutionally outdated and was serious about structural university reform, as his 1966 article "Reformprobleme der Philosophischen Fakultät" ("Problems of Reforming the Faculty of Philosophy") makes clear. However, the concept of reform propagated in this essay focuses on structural and organizational questions, not on the idea of the university. For example, he points out that the increase in university chairs (*Lehrstühle*) intended to cope with the growth of the student population had resulted in a more hierarchical professoriat, a situation with serious consequences for organizing the curriculum. The older notion that research and teaching should necessarily be linked, Lübbe suggests, was becoming less plausible in this environment. Thus in the discussions of the 1960s the conflation of institutional issues and intellectual questions was not always recognized. The Humboldtian conception could be understood either as a structural-institutional model or as a philosophical construct.

Unlike the typical proponent of the Humboldtian model, Lübbe perceives this separation ultimately as an advantage for curriculum reform, since it would presumably strengthen the quality of instruction for the younger students, an argument that was also favored by Dahrendorf. In Lübbe's approach to the economy of the university, it becomes quite obvious that he wants to abandon not only the structure of the Humboldtian model but also one of its essential ideas, namely, the notion of a research community in which both faculty and students participate. This position has significant consequences with regard to democratizing the university. If teaching and research are separated and research becomes more or less a faculty prerogative, one cannot speak of a fundamental equality as academic citizens. Lübbe's increasingly negative and hostile response to the student movement brings these predispositions into the foreground.

As I have argued, there is an explicit connection between Lübbe's anti-Humboldt position, his understanding of necessary organizational and conceptual university reforms, and his opposition to student demands. It is in the name of enlightened progress that Lübbe sharply opposes the call for democratizing the university, because this idea is ultimately based on the notion of fundamental equality of faculty and students as members of the academic community. In this struggle, like other former liberals, he uses the strategy of turning his ideological opponents on the left into *Dunkelmänner* (obscurantists) and representatives of the counter-enlightenment. For example, he compares the radical students in their reading practices of Marx's works to religious sectarians, a topos that Schelsky also used.[24]

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the focus of Lübbe's critique shifted to the critique of the left intellectual whose presence at the university was seen as a danger for the institution, but not only for the university. In Lübbe's perception, the stakes had become higher. As a result, the rhetoric had become more strident. By defining it as a cultural revolution Lübbe turned the student movement into a threat to the constitutional order of the Federal Republic. Now Lübbe, the reconstituted neoconservative, turned into a radical proponent of law and order for whom those who are more sympathetic to the student movement are *Mitläufer*, a term used for German citizens who passively supported the Third Reich.

In 1970 Lübbe concluded that the university reform had been a failure, since most of the goals had not been reached. Furthermore, he was convinced that the university could be saved only by outside intervention, although he did not define the necessary interventions that would save the university. There is no reason to assume, however, that the Humboldtian model, either as an idea or as an institutional structure, should be revived. In fact, in an article originally published in the *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt* of December 6, 1970, Lübbe makes fun of faculty members who still believe in the university's autonomy and notes (with a veiled reference to the student movement): "Applauded by professors who are exclusively interested in the autonomy [of the university], the university has become more detached from its social environment than ever before. The ivory tower is not finally leveled but rebuilt in concrete as an observation post for universal social critique" (*HG*, 71–72). Humboldt is explicitly declared outdated.

24. Helmut Schelsky, *Die Arbeit tun die anderen: Klassenkampf und Priesterherrschaft der Intellektuellen* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1975).

University Reform Revisited in the 1980s

By the mid-1970s the West German university reforms had come to an end, largely because the states (*Länder*) were financially no longer capable of sustaining the program, partly because of the ideological stalemate between the supporters of reform and their opponents on the right. When Lübbe returned to the topic of the university in 1988—the occasion was a conference in which Hans Georg Gadamer and Habermas also participated—the tone of complete despair had disappeared. Lübbe had left the Federal Republic and accepted a chair in philosophy at the University of Zürich. Now the global progress of organized scientific work is taken for granted. In fact, Lübbe states with satisfaction that in terms of investment in the support of science, the Federal Republic is one of the leading countries. However, this massive state support has also, as Lübbe suggests, a downside, namely, the emphasis on socially relevant projects at the expense of those where only the scientist's curiosity motivates research. The threat to scientific discovery comes no longer from unruly and obsessed students but from the internal logic of scientific research itself. The very process of scientific organization, Lübbe argues, threatens lived experience. This concept points to a situation where common sense is no longer sufficient to assess and evaluate scientific projects. As a result, the distance between the lifeworld, where political decisions have to be made, and the research university has grown and will continue to grow, a development that undercuts the democratic process. Thus the scientific process, in cultural terms, becomes less and less relevant for the average citizen, because it cannot be translated into a commonsense understanding of the world.

What conclusions does Lübbe draw from these observations for the idea of the university? In his review of the old reform movement, he emphasizes the important work of the Wissenschaftsrat in the early 1960s but harshly attacks the contributions of the student movement as mostly destructive. In light of the complexity of modern science, Lübbe recommends depoliticizing the university, a space that should be devoted to the work of science. Strangely enough, however, Lübbe fails to connect the first part of his essay with the second. While he does examine the limitations of a positivistic understanding of science and proposes the idea of experience as a counterweight, his review of the reform movement falls back on a notion of scientific, self-sustained autonomy that must not be disturbed by ethical and political considerations. Again, the positive relevance of science as a whole is taken for granted and not exposed to a metacritique. There is clearly no return to Humboldt. Only toward the end does Lübbe raise the question of norms that are necessary to regulate the

results of science because of their potential dangers for human life. And he rightly underlines the importance of the humanities for this task when he refers to a specific "need for cultural orientation" of modern civilizations.[25] Yet this insight does not prompt him to revise his universalist concept of science together with its positivistic background. For this reason there is still no place for Humboldt.

By contrast, Habermas's contribution to the same conference explicitly invokes the spirit of Humboldt to describe the university as an institution in which "eine ideale Lebensform" (an ideal form of life) can be embodied.[26] The following definition emphatically foregrounds the rhetoric of German idealism: "The idea of the university points to norms of *Bildung* that define all forms of the objective spirit" (IUL, 140). And Habermas does not simply stop there. Looking back at the 1960s, he notes that the debates about the reforms were carried out under the false premise that the question was either to preserve or to renew the idea of the university. The result was an institutional transformation that neither side wanted or predicted. In hindsight, Habermas interprets the actual changes as an additional process of differentiation that is no longer in need of a normative legitimation (IUL, 146). At the same time, he points to those aspects of the university that a system theoretical assessment tends to neglect, namely, *Bildung*, the preparation of the following generation of scholars, and the reflection on the cultural tradition. It is precisely in this context that he returns to the idea of the university as it was first articulated in the Prussian reform of 1809–10. However, the initial conception suggested a synthesis of all disciplines that could not, as Habermas readily admits, be realized at the level of organizational reform in the late twentieth century.

Then the crucial question is to what extent is the core of the idea still relevant? Can Humboldt be a point of orientation? Even in 1988 Habermas is convinced of Humboldt's relevance for the contemporary university. His careful reconstruction of the idealist program emphasizes the centrality of philosophy for *Wissenschaft* and teaching as well as the unity of scientific innovation and learning: "The construction of philosophical thought also determines the form of its pedagogical mediation" (IUL, 151). In short, at stake is the integra-

25. Hermann Lübbe, "Die Universität im Geltungswandel der Wissenschaft," in *Die Idee der Universität: Versuch einer Standortbestimmung*, ed. Manfred Eigen et al. (Berlin: Springer, 1988), 134.

26. Jürgen Habermas, "Die Idee der Universität—Lernprozesse," in Eigen et al., *Die Idee der Universität*, 140. Hereafter cited as IUL.

tion of "research processes and processes of education" (IUL, 152). In this construct, the university was supposed to be a microcosm of a (future) society of free and equal citizens. Habermas concludes that from the very beginning the institutional conditions could not fully support this idea, and the later evolution of the empirical sciences made it even more unlikely that the idea would ever become reality. Given these transformations, was the idea more than the ideology of the German professoriat, as more than one critic suggested?

The answer is developed in two steps. First, Habermas points to the revival of the Humboldtian model during the reform years. One cited example is Schelsky's study of 1963, which, according to Habermas, is not satisfied with a purely functionalist explanation of the university but proposes to move the necessary moment of theoretical self-reflection into the individual disciplines. At the same time, he notes that this project was only partly successful and did not renew the idea of the university. Second, Habermas tries to make the case that the system-theoretical understanding of the university as an institution without need for norms and value orientations is premature. It is not surprising that in the 1980s Habermas feels the need to defend his understanding of the university against systems theory, with its claims that processes of differentiation as they occur in the evolution of modern science do not depend on normative regulations. Specifically, he argues that the university cannot be completely separated from the lifeworld, that is, from a sphere where values and norms are indispensable for the life of human communities. Differentiation occurs in an institution that still holds norms and structures together.

While Habermas does not propose a dogmatic revival of Humboldt's idea, he defends a critical and selective reception that holds on to and modifies the idealistic program. Even in an age of advanced differentiation in the sciences, there is a moment of communal consciousness at the university, a common ground for the various practices. Theoretically, Habermas locates the ground of this consciousness in the role of language and communication. The historical point of reference is Schleiermacher's essay "Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten im deutschen Sinne" ("Occasional Thoughts on Universities in the German Sense"). Following Schleiermacher, Habermas reinterprets the university as a community of communication to serve science. All processes of academic learning "depend on the stimulus and the productive force of a discursive conflict" (IUL, 170). Ultimately, Habermas's argument in support of Humboldt's idea of the university focuses on teaching and learning rather than on knowledge production and social relevance. Teaching seems to be at the center of the institution.

Humboldt in the American Debate

As I have shown, pragmatic German liberalism, both its more progressive (Dahrendorf) and its more conservative (Lübbe) varieties, is not interested in the Humboldt connection. Here the advanced university of the late industrial society is defined in terms of social efficiency. The university's main function is, as it was in the eighteenth century, the training of professionals. For this reason, the unity of research and teaching, while not entirely rejected, is no longer seen as the core of the institution. This social pragmatism opposes both the belief in the continued value of the Humboldtian model of the conservative professoriat and the revival of Humboldt's idea in the name of a critical university proposed by the Left. While the American scene differs from the German situation in more than one respect, they share interesting similarities with regard to the core idea of the university. In the American case, however, the above-described constellation becomes more visible in the 1980s in the context of the culture wars, when the university's role and function come under intense scrutiny, especially on the conservative side. The claim that the university had fundamentally failed to fulfill its proper function because of its politicization (by left radicals) not only put increasing pressure on university administrations to reaffirm the traditional teaching mission but also renewed the discussion about the idea of the university. In contrast to the 1970s, the discourse of the 1980s is dominated by conservative or neoconservative voices, who want to rescue the university from radical ideologies and bring order back to campus.[27] While the political struggle is well known, the conceptual and philosophical underpinnings have received less attention, since they have been covered up by the noisy polemic between conservatives and liberals. If one looks more closely at the philosophical ideas underlying the political positions, it turns out that the conservative camp is less homogeneous than expected and that the defense of the university by conservatives focusing on values depends on fundamental ideas that liberals would equally invoke to explain their idea of the university. That is, the polemic against the politicized university on the right can emphasize either traditional values or the need for a transformed university that can better serve contemporary American society. In this complex debate, the name of Humboldt or the events of the Prussian reform of the early nineteenth century do not play a significant role, but this does not mean

27. Gerald Graff, *Beyond the Conflict: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education* (New York: Norton, 1992); John K. Wilson, *The Myth of Political Correctness: The Conservative Attack on Higher Education* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Jeffrey Williams, ed., *PC Wars: Politics and Theory in the Academy* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

that the idea of the modern research university formulated at that point in history is not relevant for the contemporary American discourse. The notion of the university's autonomy, supposedly undermined by left radicals, and the emphasis on teaching as a dialogue between professor and student owe their intellectual force to an older German discourse that is seldom recognized or acknowledged.

In contrast to the German discourse of the 1970s and 1980s, the American debates and heated controversies focused foremost on the function of teaching in the humanities. The importance of research in the natural sciences supported by the research university was not seriously questioned, because it could be defended pragmatically, either as part of national defense or as a tool for social progress. The battle concerned the college's mission. At stake were values and value judgments, the need either to continue or to reverse changes made during the 1970s. The "report on the humanities in higher education," edited by William J. Bennett in 1984, is a typical document of an attempt to redefine the role of the humanities in college education. There is, first of all, the will to assert the centrality of the humanities: "The humanities are not an educational luxury, and they are not just for majors." The need for a general education grounded in the humanities is reaffirmed without mentioning those forces in higher education that want to downgrade or marginalize the study of literature, philosophy, and the arts. This program is presented under the umbrella of "the perennial questions of human life."[28] When it comes to the desirable curriculum and reading lists, the report stays very much within traditional boundaries of Western civilization, with only minor excursions into non-Western cultures. By and large, the proposals mean to return to the 1950s and refrain from mentioning or addressing the controversial new disciplines such as feminism, black studies, and colonial and postcolonial studies. As one would expect, there is no mention of popular culture at all. The decline of the humanities in college curricula is primarily ascribed to the failure of the faculty to make the subject relevant rather than the changing interests of the students, who are more attuned to preprofessional training. Consequently, the question of teaching becomes crucial.

The report considers professional expectations and requirements—in short, the increasing importance of research—as a serious threat to the role of the humanities in the college curriculum. There is the perception of a distinct divide between the needs of the college and the expectations of the research

28. William J. Bennett, *To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1984), 8.

university. This tension is typical for the debates of the 1980s and 1990s. Conservative voices, not only in the humanities, express concern about the undue importance of research in the academy. By and large, conservative educators want to downgrade the professionalism of the graduate school, that is, the research university, and foreground the essential place of the college for higher education. There is also a certain bias against market considerations and any understanding of students as clients or consumers. One has to acknowledge the existence of fields such as accounting, communications, or prelaw studies but must not concede their preeminence in the curriculum.

While Bennett's report more or less reiterated a mission formulated in the 1950s, the report submitted by Lynne V. Cheney in 1988 significantly broadened the field by including film and television as helpful and appropriate media for teaching the Western canon. Her recommendations included the use of television programs and films to popularize the great works of literature. But there is no support for media studies per se; rather, the goal is a broader popular reception of the traditional canon that circumvents specialization among scholars and the alienating effect of literary theory. Both are seen as the logical result of the rise of the American research university during the second half of the twentieth century. Again, the expectations and the requirements of the graduate program clash with the idea of a general education for undergraduates. This tension is perceived as a threat to the humanities rather than as a problem of mediation between the most advanced form of scholarship and the undergraduate classroom. This sense of threat is partly due to the conservative understanding of curriculum politics at the contemporary university. Cheney's report charges that in 1988 the use of literature in the classroom is limited to the political: "Truth and beauty and excellence are regarded as irrelevant; questions of intellectual and aesthetic quality dismissed."[29] Here she enters the sphere of the culture wars of the 1980s, the heated controversy about Western civilization. Questioning the Western canon is seen as heresy, and those who do this as undesirable radicals. In the writings of Roger Kimball and Allan Bloom, this polemic is much more outspoken. Both attack the changes that took place during the 1970s as dangerous aberrations imposed on the university by left radicals such as Elaine Showalter, Houston Baker, and Fredric Jameson.[30]

29. Lynne V. Cheney, *Humanities in America: A Report to the President, Congress, and the American People* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1988), 12.

30. Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education* (New York: Harper, 1990), xi. Hereafter cited as *TR*.

In the context of this essay, the specific elements of this polemic—for example, the frontal attack on Paul de Man and deconstruction—are of less interest. What is worth noting, however, is that both Kimball and Bloom perceive the crisis of the university as a crisis of the humanities. (The obvious difference between them is that Bloom is intimately familiar with the field, while Kimball's knowledge is secondhand.) By contrast, conservative critics of the German university foregrounded the social sciences and political philosophy as the core of the protest movement. Furthermore, the German student movement proposed sweeping structural reforms, while in the American case the university's basic structure was never challenged. Instead, activists demanded changes in the curriculum through new programs in which topics and problems could be taught that had no place in the older curriculum. From the conservative perspective, the most notorious and dangerous programs were women's studies, black studies, and postcolonial studies, areas whose political nature was apparent. In this respect the defense of the established composition of the humanities meant to safeguard them from the intrusion of the political. Thus Kimball quotes Richard Rorty saying that "a new American cultural Left has come into being made of deconstruction with new historians, people in gender studies, ethnic studies, media studies, a few leftover Marxists, and so on. These people would like to use the English, French and Comparative Literature Departments of the universities as staging areas for political action" (*TR*, xii). The notion of a staging area gives us to understand that the subject matter is believed to be secondary to the primary function of turning the university into a political battlefield. The anger on the right against politicizing of the humanities has to be seen in the larger context of the actual depoliticizing of the social sciences that had already occurred at an earlier stage. Driven out of the social sciences, radical thought had moved to the humanities.

What makes the humanities the center of the perceived crisis is, first of all, the concern with values deemed necessary for a democratic society and, second, the idea of a liberal education as a preparation for further professional training. In short, the defense of the traditional curriculum of the humanities is at the same time understood as a defense of democracy, and those who propose and introduce changes are seen as hostile to Western democracy. By constructing the defense of the humanities as a defense of American democracy, Kimball gives his own conservative agenda an urgency that goes far beyond an academic discussion. While he concedes that there is no immediate threat of a political revolution at American universities in 1990, he points to what he sees as a continued danger, namely, the restructuring of the curriculum by radical

faculty members—but now with tenure. Hence only the return to the Western tradition and its established canon would guarantee political stability. It is tacitly but uncritically assumed, by the way, that the Western canon is in itself conservative, and therefore instruction based on this canon must support conservative political goals.

Humboldt Rediscovered: Bloom, Readings, and Nussbaum

The quest to restore the status quo ante is a typical conservative move. But the more serious and definitely more interesting question is how the defense of the humanities is conceived in terms of its underlying philosophical and pedagogical presuppositions. Is there more than the accusation of subversion? (*TR*, 166–67). While Kimball's study remains at the level of polemic and insinuation, Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind* (1987) offers not only a philosophically more sustained exposition of his position but also a fuller account of the pedagogical issues involved. Without any doubt, the notion of a liberal education as the foundation of all university studies stands at the center of Bloom's project. Although he does not explicitly introduce the concept, the German term *Bildung* might be the most appropriate label. In Bloom the idea of a liberal education is closely linked to the Western canon and its pedagogical extension in the Great Books course. In his words: "A good program of liberal education fuels the student's love of truth and passion to live a good life."[31] Clearly, the question of the good life transcends academic issues in the narrow sense. Bloom privileges the humanities over the social and natural sciences as the core of a liberal education, because they are concerned with essential human values. Unlike most conservative humanists, however, Bloom focuses on philosophy, specifically ancient philosophy, more than on literature. His attempt to rescue the contemporary university relies primarily, as his mentor Leo Strauss had already argued, on the interpretation of Plato. The decisive moment for Bloom's pedagogy, therefore, is the dialogue between teacher and students about ancient philosophy. Reading the ancients under the guidance of the experienced teacher opens the path to truth and a good life.

In the American discourse on college education, the dialogical method, however, can also be found in authors who share very little with Bloom. This would be true of Martha C. Nussbaum as well as Bill Readings. In *Cultivating Humanity* (1997) Nussbaum proposes to defend the humanities through a

31. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 345.

dialogical method of instruction.[32] This also applies, although in a more complex way, to Readings, whose severe critique of the contemporary university in *The University in Ruins* (1996) draws indirectly on Humboldt.[33] These studies appeared almost a decade after the culture wars and therefore respond to a rather different set of problems. This is especially true of Readings, while Nussbaum can still be read as a rejoinder to Bloom's conservative message. Readings's concept of the corporate university foregrounds the actual organizational changes at American universities during the 1980s, transformations that played no significant role in the controversies of the previous decade. For Readings, the new corporate university redefined itself along the lines of a commercial enterprise where success is measured in terms of capital investment and efficiency rather than the transmission of either liberal or conservative values. The new ideal type that all existing universities can only partly resemble has become apolitical, not because it wants to preserve the canon of Western civilization but because it has turned all elements of the curriculum into commodities. This includes Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe as well as gender studies and postcolonial studies. In this university the student has become a client who looks at his or her education as a preprofessional investment. This neoliberal version of the university, in which the center of gravity has shifted to the central administration, is equally indifferent to the ideas of the radical Left and the counterattacks of the Right. It rejects the notion of ideological commitments in the name of financial accountability and professional accomplishments. It is, by the way, remarkable that the conservative and neoconservative critics of the 1980s did not notice or respond to the actual transformations of the American university. By the 1990s the opponent of a traditional liberal education was no longer the radical student or a left-leaning professor but an administrator who defines curriculum reforms in terms of student enrollment and credit output.

When we pose the question from what perspective this neoliberal university model can be criticized, then we make an unexpected discovery. First of all, as in the case of Bloom, the humanities rather than the natural sciences are the ultimate line of defense, because the latter can argue for their significance in terms of their social usefulness. Second, and more important, in their defense of the humanities both Nussbaum and Readings make use of ideas

32. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). Hereafter cited as *CH*.

33. Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins: Cambridge and London* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). Hereafter cited as *UR*.

central to Humboldt's project. Although they belong to different ideological camps and therefore support different programs and curriculum models, they share a conception of the opponent and the destructive forces at the contemporary university. They are concerned about the silent transformation of the university into a collection of professional schools and preprofessional colleges. Especially for Readings this university has become part of the service industry. As he notes: "For its part the university is becoming a transnational bureaucratic corporation" (*UR*, 3). In this picture the central university administration has taken over the role of the evildoer. The claim is that this administration has cut or is cutting the link between education and democracy that was an essential part of higher education in the United States.

The remarkable element of this resistance is its proximity to Humboldt's ideas. In the name of a liberal education these authors oppose a pragmatic concept of education with an emphasis on pre- or professional training. The labor market is not the intended goal. Furthermore, the method of education is not geared to transmitting knowledge or even scientific methods and theories that are important for scientific discovery and scholarly achievements. Instead, the common core is a dialogical learning process between teachers and students. The center is a community of students, in the broad meaning of the term, who share through dialogue learning and mutual advancement that is not limited to the cognitive aspect. Readings introduces the concept of decentered teaching to mark the distance to the contemporary research university: "Decentering teaching begins with an attention to the pragmatic scene of teaching. This is to refuse the possibility of any privileged point of view as to make teaching something other than the self-reproduction of an autonomous subject" (*UR*, 153).

In the case of Nussbaum, the dialogical structure of teaching is even more pronounced. She chooses the Socratic dialogue as the model for the education of critical citizens at the college. But it is explicitly not Plato's Socrates whom she invokes. Instead, she refers to the historical Socrates, who questioned the traditions of Athens by asking unexpected and subversive questions. Unlike Bloom, who wants to ground the (political) education of his students in Plato's *Republic* and understands the study of the Western canon as an authoritative introduction to the ideas that a young person needs to be familiar with, Nussbaum thinks of the Socratic dialogue as a way to approach not only Western civilization but also non-Western cultures. Socrates becomes the educator of a world marked by social and cultural conflicts, of a reality without secure traditions that the university can claim. In this situation the goal must be a "reasoning community" (*CH*, 19).

The intellectual presence of Humboldt and Schleiermacher in the contemporary discourse on the American university is worth mentioning, although it cannot be stated with certainty that Bloom and Nussbaum are aware of this connection (Readings clearly is). For the critique of the neoliberal university, that is, the university of excellence, focused on efficiency and accountability, the idea of an academic community defined by an ongoing dialogue between teacher and student becomes a crucial tool. The parallel to the German situation of the 1960s is hard to overlook. In a similar fashion Humboldt was invoked to criticize the ongoing university reforms that emphasized professional training and output. The idea of *Bildung* as a self-reflective metalevel was introduced by the Left to oppose the "technocratic" tendencies of the university reform. At the same time, we also have to recognize the differences caused by the significantly altered historical situation and the cultural difference. The hope for fundamental institutional reforms that defined the decade between 1965 and 1975 in the Federal Republic had no equivalent in the American debates of the 1980s and 1990s. Here the focus has shifted from institutional reforms to curriculum reforms and teaching. However, the concept of the research university, which had always been part of the Humboldtian model, does not play a major role in the reflections of Bloom, Nussbaum, and Readings. Most explicitly, Nussbaum wants to revitalize the idea of a liberal education in the context of the college, while Readings sees the research university as part of the contemporary university of excellence that has compromised the notion of research by making it part of industrial production. In short, it is not the side of the Humboldt model that historians have traditionally foregrounded when writing about the German university that receives most attention. Rather, it is the notion of a critical, autonomous academic community focused on learning that stands at the center. If the American university (as an institution consisting of the college, the graduate school, and professional schools) can be rescued at all (which Readings finds doubtful), it has to be done from the inside out. There is no confidence that structural reforms will accomplish a serious transformation, since the structural changes that actually occurred at American universities used the business model and sought the alliance with the commercial world. They strengthened the central administration's position at the faculty's expense and redefined the notion of academic autonomy in financial rather than intellectual terms. For the proponents of the corporate university Humboldt's idea of the university is part of a past that cannot and should not be retrieved, for it would, if taken seriously, conflict with the future alignment of university and industry in the service of social utility. For Readings in particular, the historical Humboldtian model of the university,

which includes the idea of *Wissenschaft* and autonomous research, cannot be restored, since the existing research university is hopelessly corrupted by its entanglement with the corporate world. Instead, he focuses on the core notion of a teaching dialogue. The engagement with the future of the humanities on the part of Nussbaum and Readings does not include the university's research component.

In the German constellation, the proponents of modernization in the university reform movement opposed, either implicitly or explicitly, the Humboldtian model as inappropriate for the future. They fought both against its conservative and its utopian left version and focused on the needs of a modern industrial society. In other words, they opted for the professional side. Do we find a similar attitude among the proponents of the neoliberal university in the United States? Of course, one has to keep in mind that American proponents of efficiency and accountability (helped by a strong central administration) do not face the legacy of Humboldt in the same way as their German allies, since the American model of the research university, although indebted to its German origins, foregrounds innovation in research and professional training.[34] The clear division between college and graduate school in the American system certainly encourages this emphasis, since the aspect of a liberal education can be assigned to the college, leaving professional scientific training to the graduate school. It was Talcott Parsons, in his classic study of the American university, who emphasized these different functions, thereby finding a way to accommodate Humboldt.[35] But clearly, more recent analyses of higher education have come to different conclusions. In Bloom's and Readings's account, the idea of a liberal education is endangered.

Abandoning Humboldt: The Neoliberal Model

Obviously, in the university of excellence there is no place for Humboldt. But the rise of this new type remains a mystery in a purely phenomenological analysis because the historical background of the contemporary university, especially its economic background, remains largely unexplained. Once one examines the changing social, political, and economic environment of higher education since the 1980s, the phenomena observed by Readings can be under-

34. Lawrence A. Versey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Roger L. Geiger, *The Advance of Knowledge: The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Geiger, *Research and Relevant Knowledge: American Research Universities since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

35. Talcott Parsons and Gerald M. Platt, *The American University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

stood as part of a new organizational logic.[36] The pressure was coming from several sides, among them the reduction of state funding, which resulted in greater dependence on tuition and private funding and therefore increasing needs for donations and sponsors to fund growth in general and research growth in particular. The more intensive contacts with the private sector in turn led to a shift from basic to applied research. The result of these different pressures was twofold: it encouraged if not necessitated the strengthening of the central administration in the decision-making process at the expense of faculty power, and it invaded the organization of the curriculum in terms of perceived preferences and wishes of the students whose tuition became a crucial part of the budget. Under this pressure the administration itself shifted to a model of accountability and efficiency borrowed from the business world. It began to impose forms of bureaucratic quality control that also, and increasingly, spread into the sphere of teaching and learning. These measures were primarily designed to ensure the quality of teaching by controlling faculty activities in the classroom.

The dark colors that Readings uses for his painting of the neoliberal university reflect the altered organizational logic. But at the same time, Readings's university of excellence is a (negative) ideal type in Weber's sense, which actual universities resemble to varying degrees. Therefore the noticeable adaptations that have occurred in the United States do not mean that universities, as institutions, have forgotten the difference between their mission and the goals of the business world. Rather, because of their changed economy, the danger for them lies in the need to translate ideas about education and research into the language of the corporate world to attract needed funding and the support of legislators. In this translation Humboldt's ideas are likely to get lost, since there are no economic equivalents to the notion of a community of scholars involved in a dialogue of learning and teaching.

This loss becomes quite apparent when we look at Eugene W. Hickok's 2006 essay "Higher Education Needs Reforms, Too." For Hickok, the main concern is the nation's competitiveness in terms of its economy.[37] Therefore his analysis stresses several factors that in his assessment need special attention, among them the rising cost of higher education, the breadth and depth of the

36. Sheila Slaughter and Harry L. Leslie, *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Roger L. Geiger, *Knowledge and Money: Research Universities and the Paradox of the Marketplace* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), hereafter cited as *KM*.

37. Eugene W. Hickok, "Higher Education Needs Reforms, Too," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 10, 2006.

curriculum, and retention rate. The answer is a call for more accountability. The emphasis on accountability is also present in a paper of Charles Miller and Geri Malandra written for the commission on "the future of higher education." From the available statistical evidence, the authors conclude that the American college education is deficient in many ways. In their opinion, even questions of basic proficiency trouble the system. But one has to note that the perspective of this critique is the outside world, especially the corporate world. "Employers assert that the college graduates they hire are not prepared for the workplace, lacking the new set of skills necessary for successful employment and continuous career development."[38] The answer to many of these problems seems to be increased testing to ensure that the necessary knowledge has been acquired. Again, *accountability* is the keyword in this discourse, because it is supposed to ensure the nation's economic well-being. In the words of Frank H. T. Rhodes, former president of Cornell University: "Talent . . . is now the world's most sought-after commodity. Ranking in international educational comparisons may well indicate future rankings in national economic success."[39] His recommendations rightly emphasize the link between K–12 and college education, but he seems to favor extending the teaching methods of the schools to the college. In other words, for him the college is a school and should be treated as such. One could not be farther from Humboldt. In these statements the university is described as a locus of professional training, as a *Fachhochschule* for specific social purposes. In the same context, science is perceived primarily in terms of socially useful applied research, which means that scholarly work done in the humanities might not even qualify as legitimate research (as neoliberal observers have occasionally argued). It is tacitly assumed that research should be market oriented, and therefore it is not seriously discussed in the report.

An indication of the strong anti-Humboldt animus of the contemporary discussion is the report of the Spellings Commission. The report discusses the problems of higher education in terms of an economic model in which investments have to be monitored. Among the key terms, we find *cost cutting*, *productivity improvement*, *cost management*, and *accountability*. The learning process is described as a value added to the students' academic baseline. In a similar fashion, the report discusses the quality of teaching. After a brief

38. Charles Miller and Geri Malandra, "Accountability/Assessment" (issue paper), in *A National Dialogue: The Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education* (Washington, DC: US Department of Education, 2006), www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/reports/miller-malandra.pdf.

39. Frank H. T. Rhodes, "After Forty Years of Growth and Change: Higher Education Faces New Challenges," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 24, 2006.

description of successful new introductory courses, the report concludes: "The results speak for themselves: more learning at a lower cost to the university. Institutions reported an average of 37 percent reduced cost and an increase in student engagement and learning."[40] In this equation the driving force is cost reduction rather than the specific nature of learning and the change of the learning subject in this process. The intent of the Spellings report can be summarized as updating the existing American system of higher education in light of growing global competition. Hence the task is seen primarily as a management problem that can be properly addressed only after missing data have been supplied and new (now available) technology has been brought into place. The expected outcome will be better students and graduates in terms of the underlying economic model that measures achievement through testing. The concept of a liberal education does not play a significant role in the Spellings report.

The new outlook defined in the Spellings report was already anticipated in the transformation of university research that began in the 1980s and accelerated in the first decade of this century. While the older research university was involved in both theoretical and applied science, and consequently transferred technology to the commercial sector, the new version is heavily involved in research immediately linked to the market: "Universities have become significant agents of economic development. . . . they now feel compelled to foster conditions for generating regional wealth" (*KM*, 181). This new development implies a much stronger interaction between academic research and industrial technology. In this relationship, however, industry tends to be the defining partner, thereby curtailing the research university's autonomy not only in the choice of research projects but also through the impact of a research culture not defined in terms of transparency and open discussion. The new research university has to negotiate carefully the claim to independence and academic freedom for its faculty and the needs of its commercial partners to develop products for the marketplace. At what point does the university become an agent of industry, and at what point is the university itself becoming an entrepreneur? When a university looks at its place and role in the region in which it is located, it realizes that it is very much part of the economic structure, with obligations as well as opportunities through research commitments that benefit the region and thereby indirectly the university.

40. Margaret Spellings, ed., *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education; A Report of the Commission Appointed by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings* (Washington, DC: Department of Education, 2006), 21.

From the perspective of the Humboldtian model, this recent development of the research university clearly threatens the fundamental definition of science and its link to teaching because research (*Wissenschaft*) ought to be understood as an autonomous inquiry for advancing theoretical knowledge in the academic community. The trajectory of the contemporary American research university is anti-Humboldtian. It can deal with Humboldt's idea of *Wissenschaft* by limiting its use to certain parts of the total enterprise, namely, pure research and teaching (with an emphasis on the undergraduate curriculum). To succeed, today's research university has to live with the tension between its own entrepreneurial ambitions, including its numerous links to the commercial world, and its older identity as an institution dedicated to learning and scientific exploration. But the threat does not stop there. The recent evolution of the American research university puts pressure on the understanding of its educational mission as well. This becomes clear in the tenor of the Spellings report: its emphasis on skills and testing reflects a situation in which the academy has become part of a larger system in which the university is no longer clearly separated from industry and commerce. Higher education therefore is already perceived in terms of the needs of the corporate world. In this context, Humboldt's vision cannot be more than a faint echo from a distant past.

Although the present severe economic recession originating in a radical crisis of the US financial markets has not validated the corporate world, it is by no means clear that the ongoing aggressive critique of Wall Street will undermine the neoliberal model. It is more likely that possible revisions of the ideas of Spellings and her commission will leave the fundamental premises in place, since repairing the damage done to the American (and global) economy seems to require a better economic model rather than strong support of the humanities and pure scientific research in the context of a critical and self-reflexive university. The same would be true for the German scene. The Bologna Process, which resulted in the restructuring of the German university along Anglo-American ideas of higher education, is based on a neoliberal concept of the university, and there is no sign that the present crisis will raise questions about the direction of recent reforms. Especially in the German context, where the achievements of the historical Humboldt in the Prussian Reform of 1810 are well known, it is easy to dismiss the Humboldtian university as outdated and inadequate for today's challenges, and it would be difficult to extract and foreground those ideas that are still relevant for the present task. Only a radical and unorthodox rereading of Humboldt's writings could accomplish that.