The exclusion of ethics
La exclusión de la ética

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INTRODUCTION. This paper focuses especially on what has been called the fragmentation of ethics in the university – the pigeonholing of ethical questions in such a way that ethics is deprived of its critical purpose and its practical possibilities are curtailed. At its worst, the understanding of ethics in this way takes it to be a "bolt-on" component to curricula, with citizenship education a further tokenistic addition, alongside entrepreneurial and ICT skills. Where ethics is addressed more systematically, problems of a different order arise. Quite commonly — for example, in courses in medical ethics — the trend has been to outline the "major ethical positions" (utilitarianism and deontology) and to invite learners to choose between them, exploring how each is best "applied" to particular cases in a field that is otherwise understood in technical terms. The prevailing ethos is one of what works best, and this is conceived against background assumptions of more or less uncontroversial ends. This paper is against ethics understood in these ways. It asks how can there be any subject of university study, in fact any university at all, without some sense of the value of that subject's content or of what the institution is about. **METHOD.** This is a philosophical enquiry, and its methodological approach is that of the *essay* — that is, an unsystematic exploration of the topic, a trying-out of ideas in relation to its central theme. It does this through assembling the views of a number of highly influential thinkers and through engaging with those views. **RESULTS.** It affirms the multiple ways in which values inhere across the range of human practice. The university, rightly conceived, becomes the place where those values, especially those by which a society orients itself, are questioned and tested in an exemplary manner. **DISCUSSION.** It calls into question prominent ways of formulating questions about the ethical, suggesting that the confusions that abound around this notion stem in part from problems in moral philosophy. It seeks to articulate a better way of addressing these matters and of thinking ethically.

Keywords: *University, Ethics, Teaching, Learning, Alasdair MacIntyre, Allan Bloom, Michael Oakeshott, Bernard Williams.*

Introduction

This paper focuses especially on what has been called the fragmentation of ethics in the university — the pigeonholing of ethical questions in such a way that ethics is deprived of its critical purpose and its practical possibilities are curtailed. At its worst, the understanding of ethics in this way takes it to be a "bolt-on" component to curricula, with citizenship education a further tokenistic addition, alongside entrepreneurial and ICT skills. In tandem with this, ethics becomes a corrective for interpersonal relations, whether in the ethics of research methods or in codes of practice for teaching and the supervision of students. Where ethics is addressed more systematically, problems of a different order arise. Quite commonly — for example, in courses in medical ethics – the trend has been to outline the "major ethical positions" (utilitarianism and deontology) and to invite learners to choose between them, exploring how each is best "applied" to particular cases in a field that is otherwise understood in technical terms. Indeed, the dominance of technical reason is apparent in a prevailing ethos of "what works best", and this is conceived against background assumptions of more or less uncontroversial ends.

The present essay is against ethics understood in these ways. It shows how such understandings are not only reductive but exclusionary, effecting profound forms of denial and hiding a failure of responsibility amongst those leading the institution, which in due course is imparted to its students. How can there be any subject of university study, in fact any university at all, without some sense of the values it embodies or of what the institution is about? Values are internal to the very idea of institutions. The denial, then, is a failure to acknowledge the value inherent in the activity into which students are being inducted, recognizing that accounts of this — whatever the subject — cannot be given in purely technical terms. In

an age that trumpets the importance of "values" and "standards", the exclusion that is identified reflects the emptiness of such rhetoric and its underlying nihilism. The discussion concludes, in contrast, by affirming the multiple ways in which values inhere across the range of human practice. Thus understood, the university becomes the place where they are questioned and tested in exemplary ways.

The ethos of the university

The fragmentation of ethics might reasonably be associated with the charge that what is at stake here is not just the questionable place of ethics in particular courses or in the behavior of its staff and students but also an erosion of the ethical purpose that has characterized the university in the past. This is not merely to eulogize the past. Certainly there have been times and places where universities have manifestly failed to live up to the ideals the institution represents. Historically they have at times been bastions of privilege, refuges from the real world, and comfortable environments where complacent professors could while away their lives without too much disturbance from the world outside. Nevertheless, the ideals in question *have* been realized by many institutions in some degree.

In recent decades, however, there has been a decline of a different kind, in some places and in certain respects; and it is reasonable and realistic to acknowledge this. This may seem a bold claim, and certainly it is one that can be made too easily. But on the whole, and in many countries, universities find themselves under far greater pressure in terms of funding than they were in the not-so-distant past. Without doubt there have been gains too, as is evidenced perhaps most obviously by the democratization of higher education, by the fact that more people in more parts of the world have access to such opportunities than was the case ever before. Weighing up the nature of the loss and

gain is already a matter of ethics, for it concerns the values at stake in these changes.

It is obvious that universities vary greatly in terms of the range of subjects they offer. Hence, it is appropriate to keep in mind the kinds of courses that are offered and the variety of ethical components within them. While some of the most famous universities have ancient roots, with magnificent stone buildings, and ivy-clad images, there are also new campus-based universities on green-field sites, other less glamorous new universities constructed from the amalgamation of a variety of institutions, and a large number of mostly civic universities that established themselves strongly in the course of the 20th century.

A dimension of this variety is evident in distinctions in nomenclature, marked differently in different languages, but often relating to some notion of the technical and its relative prominence. In English this has been expressed in the past in terms of the difference between the university and the polytechnic, and these words — and not least their prefixes — are in some ways instructive. Over a matter of decades, this distinction was enacted in institutional terms in the United Kingdom in a relatively clear-cut way, and similar distinctions have been in place in other jurisdictions. Polytechnics taught degree courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from the more purely technical to the sciences and humanities. The name advertised the variety. But, ironically perhaps, universities were also teaching degree courses in these same subjects, albeit that they tended to give more prominence to the "pure" than the "applied". The polytechnics may have been more teaching-intensive and less research-oriented, but in substance they were covering the same curriculum range. In the UK in 1992, what had been referred to as the "binary divide" between these institutions was ended, and the polytechnics acquired the status of universities: the name "polytechnic" went out of use. While on the face of it the removal of this binary

classification has equalised the institutions, it has of course not removed differences in status, albeit that these are no longer there in that primarily categorial way. In fact, whereas it had been possible to say that the polytechnics and the universities were not unequal in status because the institutions in fact had different functions and orientations, it has since 1992 been the case that the common nomenclature and funding system expose all institutions to the same overtly market-based competition. What is in a name, it might well be asked? Does it make any difference whether we speak of "polytechnics" or "universities"? It matters to the extent that we take seriously a difference implied by the words in terms of how we are to understand the university. In many respects "polytechnic" is the more appropriate name for universities today, given the diversity of subjects offered, and especially the proportion of technical subjects, and the relative lack of a unifying ethos. Of course this can easily be contested in view of the prominence of university mission statements and strap-lines attesting the beliefs and commitments that the institution seeks to uphold. It can be contested also where universities place emphasis on the value of generic skills — interpersonal skills, ICT skills, entrepreneurial skills, and the like — as well as that more ineffable quality that has been identified as "graduateness". Surely, it might be held, such statements and commitments show that the institution has a unifying ethical purpose. But plainly the apparatus of mission statements has become incorporated into the machinery of marketing.

In 1950, Michael Oakeshott showed some prescience when he spoke with concern of the way that talk of the mission of the university was spreading (Oakeshott in Fuller 1989: 96; see also Collini, 2012, 89-90). It is a mistake, Oakeshott argued, to suppose that having a mission in life involves determining a goal and then calculating how to act to realise that goal. Rather it is the other way about: it involves knowing what it means to behave in a

particular way, what the value of that particular practice or set of practices is, and then trying to behave in that way. 'Mission' will then be a kind of shorthand expression of this knowledge and behaviour; it will not be a programme — or the basis of a programme — of action. The point is underscored by the famous analogy Oakeshott developed between educational practice and a kind of conversation (see Bakhurst and Fairfield, 2016; Standish, 2016a). The good conversation is not praised for its end result so much as for the intrinsic quality of its interactions. A university is not a contrivance of some sort with a particular function, appropriately stipulated by a statement of intent: to see it in such terms is already to have thrown something valuable away. It is rather to be understood in terms of the quality of the practices it sustains.

Plainly, then, Oakeshott is talking about matters of value, and to speak of value in this sense — as opposed to the pricing of an item in the market — is to speak of ethics. Ethics has to do with the good of a practice, and Oakeshott's views turn attention to this good not in terms of some pay-off and still less as guaranteed by its professed purpose. He leads the reader to the thought that it is the historic achievement of our higher education that it was put together by people who knew only dimly what they were doing. They were beckoned on by aims higher than they could easily imagine, Oakeshott claims, seeking a perfection of human nature by adding to it what is more than nature, and directing it towards aims higher than its own. These are uncomfortable and untimely thoughts for the current discourse of higher education, and they are hard to take in when the prevailing ethos is utilitarian and managerialistic. Indeed, remarks along these lines can easily be portrayed as sentimental and unrealistic, and, where they are not simply dismissed, they can cause today's policy-makers and university leaders some embarrassment — as if these were matters of which we should not really speak. At best those administrators and university leaders tend to accommodate such worthy aspirations in tokenistic ways, with a paragraph in the prospectus, a carefully chosen line in a speech or press release, but with little substantive change to practice or amelioration of the culture of performativity. In fact, embarrassment of this kind may be rather more widespread, for often it is the case that those in the academy legitimate what they are doing in terms of some specialism, the proof of their worthiness being illustrated by citation indexes and other quantifiable ratings. Affirmations of value of the kind that concern Oakeshott are uncomfortable because they resist reduction to the stipulation of clear-cut performance criteria, and this is so untimely because they speak to a conception of ethics to which the contemporary discourse of higher education has become progressively deaf.

The modern university is in many respects, and in many places, a product of liberal society, but its inheritance of and contribution to liberalism is more complicated than may at first seem to be the case, and it is to this that we should now turn. Indeed, there is reason to hold that the institution of the university is sometimes best protected where *it is not simply a product* of liberal political values. It may even, and perhaps ironically, be the case that the university best protects a democratic society where it sustains an institutional culture that has not been subject to such a society's demands. To consider this, we need to consider, first, arguments in defence of the independence of the university from political interference and, second, questions concerning the relationship between liberal political values and the idea of a liberal education.

Liberalism and a liberal education

Not long after the time when Lyotard had coined the term "performativity" in order to capture the tendencies he wished to criticise in the postmodern world (Lyotard, 1979; Dhillon and Standish, 2000), and in response

to increasingly frequent demands that the university justify itself in public terms, Alasdair MacIntyre made the following remark:

> The beginning of any worthwhile answers to such questions, posed by some external critic, as "What are universities for?" or "What peculiar goods do universities serve?" should be, "They are, when they are true to their own vocation, institutions within which the form 'What are x's for?' and 'What peculiar goods do y's serve?' are formulated and answered in the best rationally defensible way". That is to say, when it is demanded of a university community that it justify itself by specifying what its peculiar or essential function is, that function which, were it not to exist, no other institution could discharge, the response of the community ought to be that universities are places where conceptions of and standards of rational justification are elaborated, put to work in the detailed practices of enquiry, and themselves rationally evaluated, so that only from the university can the wider society learn how to conduct its own debates, practical or theoretical, in a rationally defensible way (MacIntyre, 1990: 222).

I have some sympathy with the spirit of this remark but doubts about the weight that is placed on the contrast between the "university community" and "some external critic", and misgivings about its tone. In what follows I hope to broach questions of the public role of the university, of accountancy and transparency, in a way that both moves beyond the complaints against performativity and avoids MacIntyre's characteristic hauteur.

MacIntyre argued that such an endeavour was feasible only where the university made possible the confrontation of rival and antagonistic views: it demanded of academics something other than that they retreat to their rooms and withdraw into ever-narrowing specialisms, leaving them no common conversation with their colleagues. Of course, there is debate

within specialist fields, and in many respects this is rightly the role of everyday academic activity. But MacIntyre's position was that the larger dialectic between frameworks of thinking was lacking. He went so far as to say that it was precisely the fact that universities had failed in this respect that had led to a situation in which "the official responses of both the appointed leaders and the working members of university communities to their recent external critics have been so lamentable" (*ibid.*).

MacIntyre's complaint, as must be clear, places him in some tension with liberal traditions. He himself has made plain that he is critical of what we might think of as the liberal university — that is, the kind of university most prevalent today, with its lack of unifying ethos; and he sees this as contrasting with the pre-liberal university. The pre-liberal university was sustained by a homogeneity of fundamental belief that supported and determined what was to count as standards of rational justification. Standards were maintained and strengthened through the process of enquiry itself, through the exclusion from the university of certain groups, subjects and practices, and through the promotion of staff who most clearly maintained those standards and that ethos. This measure of orthodoxy did not restrict enquiry but in fact was enabling: it provided something that its members held in common; it provided a common vocabulary in which differences could be meaningfully articulated and disagreements aired and addressed. By contrast, on MacIntyre's account, the liberal university neutralises argument — or confines it within narrow specialist fields. Of course, as he concedes, the preliberal university fostered injustices of certain kinds, not least in respect of its exclusions, and its conservative tendencies contained also the seeds of its own decline. All this was understood by those who promoted the new liberal institutions, but they made the mistake of thinking that the university could be sustained as a community by reliance on standards of rationality alone, and without,

that is, some sharing of fundamental beliefs of a more substantive kind. In consequence the liberal university is characterised by a kind of proceduralism (see Standish, 2001). The rise of performativity in the postmodern world takes this to an extreme.

Of course, it is a striking feature of the development of universities over the last fifty years that science and technology have become dominant. This is tied closely to questions of funding. The fact that funding has come to the fore is itself a reflection of liberal principles to the extent that public accountability and questions of value for money — understood in terms of the nature of the return to society and to the tax-payer — have assumed a new prominence. Funding mechanisms and measures can make it more easy to reckon up what the return is on investment. The calculative thinking that is then promoted is further elaborated in bibliometrics and other measures of performance. Moreover, the mind-set that this thinking depends upon and promotes then finds its way into the very conception of what educational achievement is — and *a fortiori* what education is! There is by now a new generation that has been schooled in such thinking.

The rise of science has also had effects that were presumably not intended, especially in institutional circumstances where there has been an absence of underlying substantive agreement or sense of common purpose. Thus, technical approaches, emulating science, have proliferated across the humanities and social sciences. Often these have been advanced on the grounds that research in these fields should *not* be engaged in "value judgements", for to do so would be to countenance forms of enquiry that were merely "subjective". Indeed, it is a major contemporary problem that thinking across significant stretches of the university and society as a whole remains entrenched in a set of dichotomies, even though decisive arguments have been mounted against these (see, for example, Putnam, 2012, Standish,

2017). Cartesianism and the empiricism that, with the rise of science, developed in response have both entrenched not only mind/body dualism but the more surreptitious fact/value and subject/object divides. It is not that one can never differentiate between fact and value or subject and object, but the dualisms that became entrenched operated at a metaphysical level: the universe was pictured as a realm in which human intercourse was deprived of its ordinary ways of thinking and being, and in which the world itself was turned into an object of study rather than the place where we live. This can reasonably be called a process of disenchantment (Standish, 2016b).

Such disenchantment had a further manifestation in the university's institutional politics and substantive ethical stance. The apparent tolerance displayed by a liberal institution of this kind can mask what is in effect a kind of indifference: it does not matter what those in the university are doing so long as it can be judged "Excellent". Bill Readings' diagnosis of this reveals the susceptibility of concern for standards, in the absence of more substantive commitments, to degeneration into the flaunting of signifiers (Readings, 1996). Writing in the 1990s, Readings lights upon the tedious rehearsal of the word "excellent", whereas today it is perhaps "standards" itself that is uttered with correspondingly committed enthusiasm and apparent resolve. In both cases the reiteration of the word corresponds inversely to genuine confidence in the value of the practice to which it purportedly relates. All this betrays an underlying nihilism (Standish, 1999). Proceduralism and performativity, conditioned by the inflated importance attached to quantificatory measures, circumscribe what is to count as rational, effectively muffling real disagreement. They do this sometimes through a process of silencing and exclusion but also by a particular kind of accommodation: it does not matter how apparently controversial, radical, or outrageous the research, so long as it can provoke citations and figure prominently in

the impact rankings by which the university is increasingly sustained.

MacIntyre's critique of the liberal university finds a parallel in the highly influential polemics of Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987). Bloom's lengthy subtitle for the book is "how higher education has failed democracy and impoverished the souls of today's students" — as explicit an ethical statement as one might wish. Like MacIntyre, then, Bloom sees much to be at stake. But Bloom's usage of the word "liberal" is markedly different. He speaks of the failure of contemporary liberal education but does this in the name of a retrieval of what that phrase, "liberal education", should mean. Thus, he castigates aspects of the *political* tradition of liberalism:

> Liberalism without natural rights, the kind that we know from John Stuart Mill and John Dewey, taught us that the only danger confronting us is being closed to the emergent, the new, the manifestations of progress. No attention had to be paid to the fundamental principles or the moral virtues that inclined men to live according to them. To use language now popular, civic culture was neglected. And this turn in liberalism is what prepared us for cultural relativism and the fact-value distinction, which seemed to carry that viewpoint further and give it greater intellectual weight (Bloom, 1987: 29-30).

But this contrasts clearly with his commitments to a liberal education (sometimes called "general education" in his terms):

> It is a general rule that the students who have any chance of getting a liberal education are those who do not have a fixed career goal, or at least those for whom the university is not merely a training ground for a profession. Those who do have such a goal go through the university with blinders on, studying what the chosen discipline imposes on them while occasionally diverting themselves with

an elective course that attracts them. True liberal education requires that the student's whole life be radically changed by it, that what he learns may radically affect his action, his tastes, his choices, that no previous attachment be immune to examination and hence re-evaluation. Liberal education puts everything at risk and requires students who are able to risk everything (370).

Some thirty years after Bloom made these remarks, William Deresiewicz invoked the same metaphor: today's high achievers also are wearing blinders and sleepwalking through their lives and education (Deresiewicz, 2014). In fact, it becomes incumbent on them not really to think: "'Work within the system' is the ethos. Forget about ideals and ideologies and big ideas, those scourges of the twentieth century. Just pick a problem and go to work on it" (140). Bloom and Deresiewicz alike are surely identifying a depletion of ethics, if this is not its exclusion[1].

These are powerful and important arguments, and it seems clear that they are dedicated to preserving something of central importance about the university that is partly under threat. But the positions held by MacIntyre, Bloom, and Oakeshott are obviously open to criticism in that their primary concern is with the preservation and sustaining of elite practice: the vision of liberal learning that they impart is not for all — or, at least, this is not their concern. Indeed, they do not see it as their business to address the ways in which such experience might be played out across the wider population: they have their work cut out in identifying the practice and articulating its importance, in the face of a variety of threats, including widespread lack of understanding. There is good reason, however, to entertain the criticism that stances such as these invite and to see whether, in spite of such criticisms, the substance of their arguments can be given wider significance. Such criticism extends into issues of major political and economic

significance, all of which are necessarily ethical matters in part. Within the scope of this essay it will obviously not be possible to examine these issues in the round, but it is possible to focus on the following question: how far are the qualities that the authors above identify as crucial to the university and to a liberal education extendable to the wider scale of provision that exists in many countries today? In the apparent anxiety of Oakeshott, MacIntyre, and Bloom to hold fast to a line of thought that they rightly anticipate to be unfashionable and accept the brunt of the charge of elitism, none of them seriously addresses this wider question.

To broach the question is tacitly to assume that the expansion of the university sector has been a good thing. While there is strong reason not to resist this assumption, there are grounds for wondering whether what has actually happened has proved the best way to extend education democractically. One danger with extended university provision is that university teachers have found themselves confronted by students with abilities and orientations different from those of the students to whom they had in the past been accustomed; conversely, students have sometimes found themselves confronted by curricula for which they have not been particularly well prepared and by expectations that they cannot easily meet. It is not uncommon for these tensions to be played out along class, ethnic, and gender lines, and the intersections between these. In view of these difficulties, there is a case for saying, I believe, that a better investment might have been in institutions at a lower academic level — say, at the level of what in the United States is known as the "community college" — and in forms of continuing education. So much turns here on questions of funding policy, which of course is pre-eminently a matter of ethical deliberation. And so much turns on a rethinking of those institutions too: while, on the one hand, it is possible to draw upon rich traditions of adult education, vocational education, workers' educational associations, and non-standard

forms of provision, it is also the case, on the other, that the mainstream community colleges led the way in the movement towards performativity. So there are no easy solutions or models here. How is this unhappy convergence of wider provision and performativity to be resisted? My point regarding university expansion is that the inflation of expectations — where the superficial insignia of a university education, hyped in contemporary marketing, assume importance over the substance of what is studied — means that the real opportunities for much that is important in a liberal education are missed.

The problem with ethics and its exclusion

I referred at the start to the way that ethics is often understood in "bolt-on" terms — that is, as a kind of extra to the main substance of the curriculum, an element of social responsibility that, in courses such as medicine or business studies, will function as a corrective to technical excesses. A further example here would be the way that ethics is understood in relation to research methods, where the "ethics of educational research" is understood as pertaining more or less exclusively to such matters as the confidential handling of data and the appropriate treatment of research subjects, but where there is a failure to see the essentially ethical questions that are there at the start of the research (why is it that this topic is worth pursuing?) and at the end (where the analysis of data typically involves interpretation and speculation, often in relation to literature that is more overtly ethical in kind)[2]. No doubt this is also the case in many social science and professional fields. A part of the problem here is the anxiety to gain credibility by adopting an apparently rigorous technical stance. A self-conscious earnestness about the protocols of research methods, of the kind that is sometimes promoted on research methods courses, often stands in the way of serious thought about the

substance of what is studied. Yet this lapses into a scientism that obscures what most matters.

It should be conceded, however, that part of the problem is in moral philosophy itself. I also noted at the start the reductivism at work where ethics is understood in terms of two predominant ethical "theories", utilitarianism and deontology, that need to be "applied". It was a sustained contention of the philosopher Bernard Williams that what he called "the morality system" — a phrase he used recurrently in his work in criticism of mainstream moral philosophy — was partly to blame. He complained of ready-made philosophical theories that would be used to legitimate interventions or to engage in a practice in a legalistic way. In the light of this, courses in moral philosophy were themselves in danger of turning into a kind of exercise in casuistry. His point was that it is not through the application of certain moral systems or principles or theories that we are likely to think well about the ethical matters that confront us. Moreover, it should be added, the tendency to isolate a problem as requiring the application of such principles is likely to blind us to the ways in which ethics pervades our lives — a theme that has been emphasised throughout this essay. Such a tendency throws emphasis on what might be called "headline issues" (abortion, human rights, the despoliation of the environment) to the neglect of the ordinary everyday ways in which ethics is there in our lives and work.

Think here, furthermore, not just of the ways that we interact daily with our fellow human beings but of how we spend each hour. Think of the way that a student attends to what she is reading or seeks to speak sincerely in her response to what she is studying. Think of why what she is studying is worth studying and how this might matter to her. It is easy to see how a corresponding set of thoughts can be assembled in respect of the task of the teacher or the university administrator. But it is also important, I believe, not to be distracted by superficial views to the effect that what is most important here is the exercise of interpersonal

or communication skills. The relation between teachers and students constitutes one side of a triangle, where the third point is provided by what it is that causes them to come together, the subject content by which their attention is potentially gathered. It is somewhere in the middle of this triangle that the ethical substance of the university is to be found, and there are multiple sources of distraction from this ethical core (see Standish, 2014).

Before closing, let me anticipate a potential criticism. How, given the breadth of significance I am claiming for ethics, do these arguments place the relationship between education and the political? How can understanding the ethical as extending through the most ordinary, everyday practices have public importance? How can it have a bearing on the public role of the university? Is not this all just too much a matter of personal and interpersonal relations, and so of little relevance to the public sphere? It is now nearly fifty years since the feminist slogan "The personal is political"[3] (and sometimes "The private is political") became the rallying cry for protest and liberation movements of various kinds, and so the idea that the political extends into private matters is now far from new. It has rightly drawn attention to immorality and unfairness in ordinary intimate and familial circumstances, whether particular and local or structural in kind. But the position being taken here is far more radical and of more pervasive importance. The point is precisely that the world we create is in large measure dependent upon the ways we find to talk and engage with one another, and this engagement extends throughout our lives: it is there in virtually everything we do. Our city, Socrates says, is a city of words. Although this can seem hyperbolic, and certainly it is a thought that is alien to those surreptitious fact/value and subject/object divides that were attacked earlier in the discussion, it captures the following truth: that there is little that we say and do that does not, for good or ill, inch forward a little that world we share with one another.

This is no less true of education than it is of that range of practices, at home, at work, and in our leisure, that inevitably we share with one another. Our accustomed boundaries between the private and the public, or, say, between the personal and the political, do then indeed need to be revised.

To ask what ethical education employers expect from the university, or what impact ethical training has on recent graduates, or how ethical education fares in ideas of learning to teach effectively in a university, is primarily to raise questions of an empirical kind. But such questions may be leading ones, I suggest, in that they are apt to posit ethics as something that can be reasonably easily circumscribed. This is directly at odds with the burden of the present argument. So let me reiterate its main point, which is crucial for the understanding of the place and importance of ethics in education. Values are internal to any practice in that a practice necessarily involves a sense of the appropriate way to carry on or, otherwise put, of ways of acting that make things better or worse. This is so for the humblest, most everyday human concerns, as it is for the highest — including practices committed to the human good of the kind that define the university. What is it to teach, and what is it to learn, in a university setting? These are ethical questions through and through.

Notes

¹ For an interesting discussion and elaboration of Deresiewicz's *Excellent Sheep*, see Naoko Saito's "Philosophy, translation, and the anxieties of inclusion" (Saito, 2017).

² For an example of the way of thinking under criticism, see Michael Crotty's highly regarded *The Foundations of Social Research: meaning and perspective in the research process* (Crotty, 1998). For criticism of this, see Standish (2017).

³ The phrase is commonly attributed to Carol Hanisch: http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html. Accessed 24 April 2017.

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Resumen

La exclusión de la ética

INTRODUCCIÓN. El presente trabajo se centra especialmente en lo que se ha denominado la fragmentación de la ética en la universidad, el abandono de las cuestiones éticas, de tal manera que la ética se ve privada de su propósito crítico y sus posibilidades prácticas. En el peor de los casos, la comprensión de la ética se convierte en un componente que está "atornillado" a los planes de estudios junto a la educación ciudadana, una serie de habilidades empresariales y las TIC. Cuando la ética se aborda de forma más sistemática, surgen problemas de orden diferente. Por lo general, en los cursos de ética médica se ha tratado de esbozar las "grandes posiciones éticas" (utilitarismo y deontología) e invitar a los estudiantes a elegir entre ellas, explorando cómo cada una se "aplica" mejor según sean los casos particulares; de lo contrario, el asunto ético se entiende en términos técnicos. El ethos prevaleciente es uno de los que mejor funciona, y esto se concibe contra supuestos de fondo que tienen fines sin apenas controversias. Este artículo está en contra de la ética entendida de esta manera. Se pregunta cómo puede existir cualquier tema de estudio universitario, de hecho cualquier universidad en general, sin algún sentido del valor del contenido que se trabaja o de lo que es la propia institución. **MÉTODO.** Se trata de una investigación filosófica y su enfoque metodológico es el del ensayo, es decir, una exploración no sistemática del tema, una relación de ideas en relación con el tema central. Se hace mediante la reunión de las opiniones de un número de pensadores altamente influyentes, y mediante la participación de autor en esas opiniones. **RESULTADOS.** Se confirman las múltiples formas en que los valores están presentes en el ámbito de la práctica humana. La universidad se convierte en el lugar donde esos valores, especialmente aquellos por los que se orienta una sociedad, son cuestionados y probados de manera ejemplar. **DISCUSIÓN.** Se cuestionan determinadas formas de formular preguntas sobre lo ético, hecho que sugiere que las confusiones que abundan en torno a esta noción provienen en parte de problemas propios de la filosofía moral. El objetivo es articular una mejor manera de abordar estas cuestiones y de pensar éticamente.

Palabras clave: *Universidad, Ética, Enseñanza, Aprendizaje, Alasdair MacIntyre, Allan Bloom, Michael Oakeshott, Bernard Williams.*

Résumé

L'exclusion de l'éthique

INTRODUCTION. Cet article est centré sur ce qui a été appelé la fragmentation de l'éthique à l'université. L'abandon des questions éthiques a pour conséquences principales que l'éthique est privée de son côté critique et ses fonctions pratiques sont minimisées. Dans le pire des cas, l'élément éthique est vissé sur les programmes d'études en compagnie de l'éducation a la citoyenneté, une série d'habilités entrepreneuriales et les TIC. Là où l'éthique est appliquée systématiquement d'autres problèmes surviennent. Par exemple, dans les cours d'éthique médicale la tendance a été généralement de mettre en avant "les principales positions éthiques (l'utilitarisme et la déontologie) et d'inviter les apprenants à choisir entre eux, tout en explorant comment l'une ou l'autre est plus pertinent selon le cas, autrement, les questions éthiques sont compris d'après une perspective technique. L'éthos qui prédomine est celui qui "est le plus approprié", basé sur des hypothèses plus ou moins incontestables. Cet article argumente contre cette conception de l'éthique. On se demande comment il peut y avoir un module d'études universitaires, même une université, qui ne tienne pas compte la valeur moral des contenus à travailler dans les programmes d'études et la valeur que la propre institution représente. **MÉTHODE.** Il s'agit d'une recherche philosophique et l'approche méthodologique est celle de l'essai, ainsi, ce n'est pas une exploration systématique du thème, mais plutôt une mise en relation entre les idées et le thème principal. Cela se fait en rassemblant les points de vue des grands académiciens avec la réflexion de l'auteur sur ces opinions. **RÉSULTATS.** Cela affirme les multiples façons dont les valeurs sont inhérentes dans la pratique humaine. L'université, ainsi, devient le lieu où ces valeurs, spécialement celles sur lesquelles notre société est fondée, sont questionnées et testées de façon exemplaire. **DISCUSSION.** Cela provoque une mise en question des manières de formuler des questions sur l'éthique, suggérant que les multiples confusions autour de cette notion proviennent en grande partie des problèmes de la philosophie morale. Il cherche à articuler une meilleure façon d'adresser ces problèmes et à penser éthiquement.

Mots-clés: *Université, Ethique, Enseignement, Apprentissage, Alasdair MacIntyre, Allan Bloom, Michael Oakeshott, Bernard Williams.*

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