

the clear and open elaboration of the criteria and conditions that must be met if particular activities are to be publicly funded.

Knight wants funding to go to the philosopher who just wants to 'sit and think long and hard about something, then write up the results of this critical thinking' 'but who can't, it seems, think hard and long enough to knock up a decent research proposal. However, such charismatic selection can only be secured if funds are allocated within and by the academy in accordance with arbitrary and/or preferential criteria: so much for every member of faculty as a more or less automatic perk, allocation on the principle of status, giving money to the 'best minds' rather than to the proposers of the best research plans, etc.

In this sense, both the traditional and the radical humanities' responses to the new mechanisms of research funding - and to the increased emphasis on social and community relevance that is associated with them - have been, in my view, ethically and politically questionable. For both discount arguments that research activities should be rendered more publicly accountable via a set of administered and scrutable procedures in favour of the academy's caste-like regulation of its own practices. They are both thereby ultimately committed to the defence of the academy's right to exist as a privileged zone at least one step removed - so far as its research activities are concerned - from the normal principles of accountability governing the allocation of public money.

A perhaps more important consideration, however, is that neither position allows for the development of particularly effective strategies vis-a-vis the new research funding environment. Indeed, it is difficult to see how they might give rise to anything other than an endless rhetorical denunciation of the situation they deplore. For precisely to the degree that these positions rest on an appeal to some ideal cultural or political community to whom, in the best of all possible worlds, researchers should be accountable, then so they are unable to envisage any means - short of labelling them a 'sell-out' - through which the new arrangements for research funding might be productively engaged with.

Of course, none of this is to suggest that we should be starry-eyed about the operating procedures of the Australian Research Council, its criteria for the determination of research priorities, or the way it interprets those criteria.⁵ Nor is it to suggest that the increasing pressure to seek funding outside the ARC system - from the private sector or from other branches of government - is without its problems. Rather, it is merely to argue that neither set of problems can be effectively engaged with if one starts from a position which, in the name of some higher calling, denies the legitimacy of the new forms of public accountability - to, in, and for the present - which these new arrangements and pressures embody.

Yet it is also to suggest that, if the rules of the game for

humanities research have changed, this is prospectively for the better. Only misplaced forms of political sentimentality should incline us to regret measures which undermine and lead beyond the model of the charismatic solo researcher responsible to none but his or her intra-muros academic peers. If ARC funding is more likely to go to individuals and teams of researchers who plan their activities systematically and in detail, it is difficult to see why there should be any cause for regret in this. Indeed, it may promote a more equitable and rational disbursement of the means of intellectual work and life.

If, moreover, humanities researchers are required to develop collaborative relations with agencies outside the academy in developing their research agendas, this can do no harm. To the contrary, the need to take into account the interests and concerns of specific policy bureaucracies can assist considerably in introducing a precision and rigour into the formulation of research objectives of a kind that is too often lacking when such objectives are governed entirely by the self-set agendas of particular scholarly, political or cultural communities.

Of course, not all research needs to be or can be of this type. Nor, it is now clear, is there any requirement that it should be: the new funding arrangements allow universities a fair degree of leeway with regard to how they allocate small grants; and since, in the humanities at least, most 'curiosity research' involves mainly, as Knight puts it, sitting and thinking (and may be a bit of reading, too!), it can get by on relatively small amounts of money. For the rest, however, we should not automatically relate to the 'new times' as 'bad times'; to the contrary, for those who live in the present and want to work in it, they are full of new possibilities. Still, I'm holding on to my library; the end of history isn't with us yet, and times might change again.

Notes and references

1. Terry Eagleton (ed) Raymond Williams: *Critical Perspectives*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989, p. 7.
2. Stephen Knight 'Searching for Research or The Selling of the Australian Mind', *Meanjin*, vol. 48, no. 3, 1989, p. 460. (My apologies to Stephen Knight for selecting this article as the vehicle for my arguments, as I admire most of what he writes, says and does. His interventions on this topic, however, have been particularly influential and most clearly enunciate the position that I wish to take issue with).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 461.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 459.
5. To the contrary: the introduction of the ARC category of Special Investigator has clearly introduced a charismatic principle of selection into the ARC's own procedures. For Special Investigators are those whose pre-eminence is such that they are to be allocated significant research funds without applying for them. This retrograde step - retrograde since it allows for research funds to be allocated without a publicly scrutable procedure resting on stated criteria of merit or relevance - is greatly to be regretted.

Two kinds of accountability

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Perhaps the most striking feature of the academic response to the Green and White Papers on Higher Education was the reassertion of what might seem to be traditional views of academic autonomy and of the broader social purposes served by higher education. Some insisted on the importance of pure research and the disinterested pursuit of knowledge while others stressed the cultural development of the individual or of the nation. It was also suggested that a system of higher education and research oriented to short term instrumental objectives may not have the flexibility to respond to as yet unknown future demands. These points were often taken to suggest that government should continue to provide adequate funding and leave the academic and research communities to get on with the job as they saw it. The implication was that the various social purposes of higher education and research would best be served by leaving decisions in the hands of the academic community itself.

In fact, the idea of autonomy and the various social goals invoked in its defense are somewhat amorphous. In the absence of careful specification they are hardly conducive to clear argumentation - as many contributions to the debate on higher education demonstrated all too clearly. Furthermore, the implied claim that the purposes of higher education would best be served by the autonomy of academic institutions as they presently stand took little account either of the dangers of institutional conservatism or of the existence of considerable dissatisfaction with the conduct of academic affairs within sections of the academic community itself.

If it is claimed that universities perform important social functions then it is difficult to argue that they should not be held responsible for their performance of those functions. While it is possible to argue that academic work should be autonomous in certain respects the demand for autonomy tout court is indefensible. Far from rejecting the idea of accountability, I suggest that a more productive approach would be to take seriously the various respects in which the academic community and those within it might be held to be responsible, and therefore accountable, for their activities. The first part of this paper examines the idea of accountability and of the scrutiny of institutions in terms of their performance while the second comments on some of the more widely canvassed of the broader social purposes of higher education and research.

Accountability

Discussion of what should happen in higher education and research now takes place in the context of a perceived shortage of public funds, which is usually taken to imply that there is a need to establish priorities for public spending. It is also widely agreed that recipients of public funds should be accountable for their uses of those funds. This is now understood by government and other funding agencies as requiring a focus on outcomes and on the use of routinised and clearly specified measures of performance as a means of evaluating achievements in terms of desired results. These assumptions are in no way peculiar to Australia or to discussion of higher education. They can be found throughout the OECD societies and they are applied quite generally to public spending programs.

The assumption that research and higher education should be accountable leaves room for discussion of the range of objectives in terms of which they might be assessed and the techniques and measures that might be appropriate. This paper concentrates on the distinct but related issue of 'accountability to ...', that is, on questions relating to the constituencies to which account should be given. It suggests that the problem with the White Paper is not that it proposed to make universities accountable but rather that it took too a restricted view of the relevant constituencies and that its specific proposals focused on too narrow a range of objectives and procedures.

Two kinds of accountability

Two broad senses of 'accountability to ...' are particularly relevant to the discussion of public spending programs: one involves formally constituted relations between superior and subordinate and the other involves some more general sense of responsibility to a constituency or public.

1 Accountability to a superior

Perhaps the most clearly understood sense of 'accountability to ...' appears in the context of formally constituted hierarchical relations of authority. These relations commonly identify one party as superior and the other as subordinate. The superior in question may be an employer, Minister, government department or educational institution, or an agent of any of these. The subordinate may be any person, organization or unit required to account to such a superior. Superiority here is not a matter of the personal qualities of the individuals concerned but rather of their occupation of the appropriate position in an hierarchical and formally constituted relationship. It means that one party may be called to account by the other. Accountability might be oriented either towards behaviour, a matter of appropriate conduct in the performance of one's duties and the proper stewardship of resources or towards results - or towards some combination of the two.

In August 1988 a joint working party of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and the Australian Committee of Directors and Principals (AVCC/ACDP) issued a Preliminary Report on Performance Indicators. The Working Party clearly regarded the notion of proper stewardship as the sense of accountability most appropriate to academic institutions. While the Introduction to the Report pays lip-service to the view that higher education should be accountable and more transparent to public scrutiny, the body of the Report is organized around the following assumption:

In making an evaluation of the state of an academic activity, whether on a national or a local scale, the question is simply "Is the institution/faculty/department in a healthy condition?" ... The process of judging whether an institution or an academic unit is healthy or not, is rather analogous to that by which a medical judgement is arrived at concerning the health of an individual: a person is pronounced healthy if various measures of important bodily functions are within normal limits. It follows therefore that within the development of the process of regular evaluation, an important aspect is the determination of the

associated normal ranges of the indicators. These normal ranges will be determined on the basis of experience, using data from comparable institutions or units within them. (p.4)

The most striking feature of this passage in the present context is the suggestion that the appropriate 'normal range' and therefore the 'health' of units within the system of higher education could be identified by reference to the system as it currently operates. A system of indicators based on such notions of 'health' and 'normal range' would, of course, do little more than formalise an existing system of evaluation that is heavily weighted in favour of the larger, well-established institutions.

I noted above that accountability is now understood by government in terms of the achievement of desired results as measured by performance indicators and related devices, that is, by the use of a limited number of routinised and clearly specified measures of performance. In the case of higher education, as in many other policy areas, this reflects a significant series of changes in recent years in the language and practice of public administration resulting in a shift from an orientation towards conduct and stewardship to an orientation towards results. Precisely how these changes should be characterized is a matter of some dispute. The end result has been described as 'managerialism' or 'economic rationalism', and evaluated according to some positive or negative rendering of these themes.

These disputes raise important questions, of politics and of social theory, but they are not my concern here. What matters for present purposes is that the AVCC/ACDP Working Party's view of performance indicators reflected a profound complacency about Australian higher education - a complacency that can still be found in many quarters. There is also an important sense in which it was politically inappropriate: it treated performance as a matter of normal functioning, of stewardship and proper conduct, not as a matter of results. In this respect it failed to acknowledge either the character or the depth of concern felt by government and important sections of the Australian community over the performance of the higher education system as a whole and of units within it.

2 Accountability to a constituency or public

Accountability to a constituency or public involves a rather different range of senses in which an organisation might be held to be responsible and therefore open to scrutiny. What they share is the absence of an hierarchical and formally constituted authority relationship. Universities might be said to have a responsibility towards their actual and potential students, towards the prospective employers of those students, towards the wider community of Australia, to the various communities of researchers and scholars, and towards various other groups. Again, the Australian Research Council (ARC) might be said to have a responsibility towards the relevant research communities, government and other sections of the Australian community, and so on. Wherever there is talk of responsibility it is possible to raise questions of accountability.

Here too accountability may be oriented primarily towards appropriate behaviour or towards results. For example, the relevant research communities might judge the allocation of research funds by ARC either in terms of proper procedure (peer review, absence of favouritism, etc), in terms of the solution of some pressing problem (aids, salination of agricultural land) or in terms of the general advance of knowledge in their area - and, of course, in a variety of other ways.

In some cases the results in question will be a matter of the provision of services to particular individuals - for example, where it is a matter of commissioned research or of the provision of education to particular students. The relation to a constituency or

public will then have some of the 'market' characteristics of relations between an industry and its customers. In other cases these results will relate directly to a community rather than to readily identifiable individuals within it. The provision of an educated population with a suitable mix of general and specialized knowledge and skills would be such a result. It may be regarded generally as desirable but there is nothing in the character of market relations to ensure that individuals will be provided either with the knowledge or with the incentives required to bring that result about. The provision of public goods of this kind cannot be left entirely to 'market' relations.

Accountability and government

The point of distinguishing between these two broad classes of accountability is that government has an important part to play in both of them. In Australia it is the paymaster of by far the greater part of the system of higher education and research. It would be difficult to deny that the higher education system and units within it are accountable to government in the mode of subordinate to superior, if only with regard to conduct and the appropriate stewardship of resources.

What of the other sense of accountability? I noted that there were cases in which the relation of higher education to a community shared some of the characteristics of relations between an industry and its customers. In those cases it is arguable that the interests of accountability might best be served if the customers were left to deal with the matter themselves within a suitable framework of legal regulation. However, there are other cases in which 'market' forms of accountability will not suffice. Standard notions of sovereignty and of the responsibility of government suggest that accountability to the community proceeds through the intermediaries of government and of parliamentary scrutiny.

There are several points to notice here about these two very different roles of government. First, in the case of accountability towards a constituency or public there are important respects in which private bodies may quite properly be held responsible for their behaviour. Government may have a significant supervisory role with regard to higher education quite independently of its position as paymaster of the public system.

Secondly, within the public system itself it is necessary to distinguish between accountability to a superior within a formally established hierarchy of authority and other aspects of accountability to a community. With regard to the latter, there are important senses in which government, or its agencies, and parliament might be regarded as standing in for the interests of the wider community, but these are limited senses at best. Some of the residue may be met by giving more power to the customers, for example to students.

For the rest, it is far from clear that the interests of public scrutiny and accountability to the community as a whole, or to the relevant publics within it, will necessarily be satisfied by the focus on priorities, performance indicators and other centralized measures proposed by the White Paper. The point to notice here concerns the problems of controlling public service agencies stressed, in rather different ways, by the Public Choice school of economists and by advocates of a more participatory style of democracy. These traditions share a common insistence on the severe limitations of parliamentary and bureaucratic mechanisms as means of ensuring public scrutiny and control over the behaviour of public institutions. Accountability to government as superior will have an important part to play in any system of public higher education but it cannot hope to encompass all of the ways in which that system and units within it should be accountable to

the community.

The Social Role of Higher Education and Research

This sketch of the range of senses of accountability that may be relevant to discussion of higher education and research is abstract and incomplete but it will serve to bring out the limited character of much of the recent debate. On the one side government aimed to reform the system of higher education in order to pursue what it regarded as urgent national needs. It gestured towards equity and other social goals without clearly specifying what these might be. To pursue these ends it proposed a more elaborate system of control operating in terms of nationally established priorities on the one hand and a variety of centrally administered performance indicators on the other. Accountability here was defined in terms of the role of government as superior and in terms of the achievement of results, focusing on a narrow range of policy concerns and interests.

On the other side the predominant response was to deplore the narrowly instrumental and utilitarian rationale of the government's proposals. It included very effective critiques of the cogency of some of the arguments underlying these proposals, especially with regard to the presumed connection between numbers of graduates and national economic performance. In contrast to the government's 'instrumentalism' the critics asserted the importance of pure research and the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. Many of them insisted on the significance of the humanities and the 'soft' social sciences for the full development of the individual personality and the cultural development of the nation.

The stress placed on the value of academic autonomy in connection with these goals involves several distinct but related elements. One is a concern for specific and delimited types of autonomy as integral features of certain types of teaching and research, and I return to that issue in a moment. However the demand for autonomy is usually presented in a more general form and other elements then come to the fore. Perhaps the most striking is the idea of the academic community as a modest and remarkably benign dictator. The suggestion is that society should provide academia with whatever it requests and having done so may go about its own business. In return, academia promises to deliver to society a variety of immeasurable benefits. The clearest expressions of this view come from the natural science community. For obvious reasons, the humanities and social sciences are somewhat less self-confident.

A further element is a real fear on the part of significant elements in the academic community of the consequences of public scrutiny. This could be a matter of a straight forward distrust of the populace and indeed of their political representatives, of hostility to the politicization of academic life, or of the view that thought should not be subject to political control (a transposition of the idea of the separation of powers into intellectual life). According to this last, the future of democracy depends, inter alia, on the maintenance of academic autonomy. Some version of this fear is implicit in much of the academic response to the Green and White papers but its clearest expression appears in the responses from the right. There we find the argument that universities have allowed themselves to become too politicized and that they house far too many charlatans and others whose business is not that of the university.¹

I will return to these last points towards the end of this paper. Before proceeding to discussion of some of the more widely canvassed broader goals it may be useful to begin by noting the diversity of activities, goals and purposes pursued in the system of

higher education as a whole and in the vast majority of units within it. That diversity suggests that there is little point in trying to identify the goal of the university and that questions of autonomy will not have the same significance in all areas of academic activity. Equally, there is no reason to suppose that the pursuit of one goal should exclude the pursuit of others. In particular, then, there is no reason in principle to object to instrumental or utilitarian goals in higher education and research provided they do not interfere with other goals that might be regarded as significant. The same point applies to market driven goals - relating, for example, to the teaching of accountancy, law, and other professional subjects. They may not involve pure research and pursuit of knowledge of the kinds that can be found, for example, in archeology or high energy physics, but that is no reason for excluding them. Indeed, there are grounds for preferring that training in these professional areas be subject to some degree of academic scrutiny.

So much by way of preamble. Perhaps the most widely canvassed broader goals are the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, the particular role of the humanities in the development of a rounded personality, and the more general development within society of a capacity for critical thinking and self-reflection.

The disinterested pursuit of knowledge

We may begin by noting that reference to the importance of the disinterested pursuit of knowledge is often little more than a kind of enlightened utilitarianism. One of the most frequently voiced arguments for funding pure research in the natural sciences is based on the premise that its results cannot be predicted in advance. Not to fund pure research is therefore to run the risk of missing out on unpredictable social and economic benefits. (That there might be dangers in the results of pure research is a matter not usually raised in this context). The argument from unknown future benefits is immune from any calculation of returns on outlays. It presents a case for regarding any given level of support for pure research as inadequate and thereby prepares the ground for the idea of science as benevolent dictator. Cases for some particular level of science funding and for the promotion of some particular areas of research must be made on other grounds.

Disinterest may also be invoked as a behavioural norm bearing on the practice of investigation - rather along the lines of Weber's case for a value-free social science. The argument here is simply that the intrusion of external values or interests into the course of enquiry is likely to have damaging consequences for the enquiry itself. This point can be extended into an argument for autonomy as an essential feature of teaching: at the higher levels of any discipline the acquisition of the knowledge and skills required for independent work in the relevant areas is a central part of the learning process. For the limited purposes of this paper I shall treat these senses of the disinterested pursuit of knowledge as relatively unproblematic although they are not universally accepted within the academic community. (They are disputed, for example, by some feminist researchers and also, in a rather different fashion, by advocates of 'action' research in certain policy areas.) This behavioural norm clearly implies the need for a limited type of academic autonomy, that is, from interference in the research and teaching processes themselves. (Those who dispute the norm are hardly well-placed to claim autonomy for their own work.)

So far, perhaps, so good. Problems arise in the attempt to go further and to suggest that the disinterested pursuit of knowledge is or should be institutionalized in some more general sense in universities and related organizations. First, it would be misleading to suggest that universities have ever been established or supported with nothing but the disinterested pursuit of knowledge in mind. In 'The Social Role of Higher Education', Encel

refers to Francis Bacon's complaint that the universities of his time were neglecting the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. (1965, pp.2-3) Second, it is far from clear that 'pursuit of knowledge' refers to the same kind of thing across the board, for example, in anthropology, philosophy, high-energy physics, literary criticism, law - to say nothing of differences within some of these disciplines. The distinction between research and scholarship captures one aspect of the differences at issue here.

Third, once it is taken beyond the level of a behavioural norm in the conduct of research and teaching, the claim to the disinterested pursuit of knowledge has a universalistic character which is inevitably undermined in the structure of universities and research institutes. In practice resources are allocated to some areas of knowledge and not to others. Some lines of enquiry are developed and some are left to wither on the vine. These allocations involve criteria and judgements that cannot be derived from the idea of the disinterested pursuit of knowledge alone. It is far from clear that the limited case for academic autonomy derived from disinterest as a behavioural norm can be extended to this area also. I referred in my Introduction to the dangers of institutional conservatism and the discontent in many sections of the academic community with the conduct of academic affairs. Most academics are familiar with cases in which the practice of peer review has proven far from satisfactory. The doctrine of the 'disinterested pursuit of knowledge' can sometimes provide a cover for practices of quite another kind.

Finally, not only does the pursuit of knowledge have a rather different content in different areas, but what is to count as 'pursuit of knowledge' is a matter of sometimes bitter dispute, especially in the social sciences and humanities. In his review of Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, David Armstrong refers in passing to 'serious philosophy, not French charlatany' (1987, p.16). His comment exemplifies a not uncommon feature of academic life. A large minority of natural scientists claim to know how the humanities and social sciences should proceed - and some of them feel no compunction about saying so in academic committees and in other, more public forums. Sociology, is still not represented in a number of the older Australian universities, in some part because of doubts about its intellectual respectability. More recent developments like communications and media studies are even closer to the edge.

I note these examples not in order to advocate an indiscriminating relativism in which whatever emerges should be encouraged to bloom. My purpose here is simply to note that the disinterested pursuit of knowledge is by no means the cosy, consensual flower that so often appears in academic rhetoric.

The many sided personality and the critical society

The two most widely canvassed justifications for research and teaching at a high level in the humanities argue either in terms of their role in cultivating the full development of the individual personality and the more general cultural development of society, or in terms of the development of a societal capacity for critical thinking and self-reflection. These two lines of justification have rather different connotations. The first tends to be associated with a conservative understanding of Literature and the more established Humanities disciplines. The second applies more generally across the range of academic activity but the humanities and the 'soft' social sciences are generally regarded as playing a central role. Many of the problems with these justifications have been discussed at length elsewhere (Hunter et al., 1991) and my own discussion can therefore be brief.

In his contribution to a recent colloquium on 'The future of the

humanities' the historian Keith Thomas presents the personality and culture theme in the following terms.

The real case for studying the humanities must surely rest upon the intrinsic value of the subject matter involved and the light it throws upon the nature of human beings, human society and the human imagination...We know from our own experience how a knowledge of literature and history can help people to lead fuller, richer lives; and it is up to us to convince others of the scale of the missing dimension in the lives of those who do not know them. THES, 2-12-88

This theme appears in many contributions to the Humanities Research Council 1959 volume, *The Humanities in Australia*, and it has been a recurrent feature of subsequent discussion of higher education, including, of course, responses to the Green and White Papers.

We may begin by noting that the benefits of a humanities education for a minority of individuals in the overall population do not in themselves provide any justification for the public funding of such education. The argument for privileging a minority with public support usually depends on the further claim that society has a need for such persons which would not be satisfied in the absence of public support. There are a number of possibilities here:

the training of a governing elite ('Greats' at Oxford. Higher education inside Australia has had no real equivalent);

the development of a pool of individuals with transferable analytical skills;

the formation of a basic set of cultural and ethical abilities in the population;

the promotion of a societal capacity for critical thinking and reflection;

the promotion of the cultural development of society.

The first three are of a broadly utilitarian kind - and are none the worse for that. (There may be an objection in some quarters to the existence of a governing elite, but if there is to be one its members should be trained). The fourth refers directly to the second main line of justification for humanities teaching and research. The last is clearly incomplete as it stands since it tells us nothing about which human attributes should be cultivated or why. These matters can hardly be taken for granted. How they should be determined in a relatively free and democratic society is a complex and difficult issue which I cannot go in to here.

We turn then to the remaining main line of justification for research and teaching at a high level especially, but not only, in the humanities and social sciences. Coady, writing in this journal, maintains that

the existence of people with critical, reflective, objective habits of mind is a non-quantifiable but vital benefit or good for a community [which] should be especially valued in a democratic society. I mean the production of more effective social, cultural and political critique...(Coady, 1988, p.17)

Two points are worth noting immediately. First, the habits of mind referred to here are far from being the clear and uncontentious goods that Coady and so many other contributors to the debate on higher education appear to assume. Secondly, as I noted with regard to the pursuit of knowledge, it would be misleading to suggest that the promotion of education in the humanities has ever been conceived by policy makers primarily in terms of generalized notions of society's self-understanding and critical reflection.

Nevertheless there is an important issue here which involves something rather different from generalized critical habits of mind and transferable analytical skills. The development of research and education in a variety of specialized areas of knowledge influences public debate and decision making in two significant respects. First, institutions engaged in research and teaching at a high academic level are an important source of specialized advice on a wide range of issues of public concern and of independent specialized input to public debate on such issues. Second, higher education produces a variety of educated minorities, able to engage in relatively informed debate and decision making in their areas of expertise.

In all modern societies, then, higher education and research play a major role in providing the conditions of informed debate across a range of complex and often difficult issues. The presence of a number of institutions of higher education will have an impact on the quality of decisions made by government and by other significant public and private organizations. Since the content of the various specialized knowledges is itself generally a matter of some debate there is a case for maintaining a diversity of teaching and research, even at the cost of some apparent duplication of effort.

Conclusions

Where do these points leave the argument for academic autonomy in terms of the supposed broader goals of higher education and research? I have indicated that the pursuit of knowledge is by no means as uncontentious as is often assumed and that the presentation of other widely canvassed goals is often somewhat misleading. Nevertheless it is clear that there are valuable social purposes served by higher education not adequately acknowledged in the arguments of the Green and White Papers and related documents.

To the extent that those purposes are worth pursuing they hardly suggest an argument for academic autonomy - except perhaps for the limited senses in which disinterest (and therefore non-interference) is an appropriate behavioural norm in the conduct of both teaching and research. For the rest, the government and various specialized publics in the wider society have a clear interest in ensuring that the diverse broader purposes are adequately pursued within the limits of available resources. The idea of academia as benevolent dictator may have a certain minority appeal but it is clearly unacceptable in any modern society.

The disinterested pursuit of knowledge is often interpreted as implying that, at least in the area of pure or basic research, academics should be left to their own devices. Even here the case for autonomy is weak. There are decisions in this area of a broadly technical character that may safely be left to experts. Other decisions, involving the allocation of resources between different areas of work or the identification of areas of strength and weakness, involve judgements that are, at times, contentious. They depend not only on disinterested assessments of the points at issue but also, and inescapably, on a variety of other types of consideration and on the balance of forces with an interest in the decision. To the extent that the pursuit of knowledge is an area of legitimate public concern, those decisions too should be open to public scrutiny. The alternative is unfettered power to academic administrators - and it is far from clear what the benefits of that might be.

Finally, what of the academic distrust of the populace and their elected representatives? It would be misleading to suggest that academia was unusual in this respect. The topic is a ubiquitous theme in Western political thought and the response is equally ubiquitous. The populace do not normally intervene as such, but

only through particular institutional forms and procedures. The doctrine of the separation of powers does not entail the autonomy of institutions in any generalized sense. It is a doctrine of freedom of action within well defined limits. There is, for example, a fundamental sense in which the judiciary should be independent but their actions are nevertheless carefully circumscribed. Few would suggest that they should be entirely free to make up the law as they go along or to conduct court procedures as they see fit. On similar grounds, what is defensible in the idea of academic freedom can hardly be taken to imply that the work of academic institutions should be immune from public scrutiny and control. To suggest otherwise is to discredit the case for freedom within well defined limits by confusing it with a case for irresponsibility. What matters for the future of the universities is not to prohibit intervention but rather to design the institutional forms and procedures that would best serve the various objectives of academic work.

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