EUROPEAN PATTERNS OF "HOMO ACADEMICUS" & HUNGARY

(1st Central European Higher Education Cooperation Conference, Corvinus University of Budapest, 28-29 January 2015)
I. Kant, Der Streit der Facultäten

M. Weber, Wissenschaft als Beruf

M. Heidegger, Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität

T. Parsons, The professions as social structure

P. Bourdieu, Homo academicus

Noam Chomsky, Thinking like corporations is harming American universities
1. Methodological problems of interpreting the term of “homo academicus“

“... the partial and partisan views of the agents engaged in the game, and the individual or collective struggles through which they aim to impose these views, are part of the objective truth of this game ...“


“life can only be known by life“.


Comment (on biased considerations and vivisection):

- objectivist analysis situs versus partisan views
- agents of game are engaged in the game
- the struggles of views are part of the objective truth of game
- biased considerations cannot be excluded
- case of “homo academicus“ can also be described by the inclusion of the subject of cognition in the process of cognition
- the study of academic activity appears to be vivisection
1. Methodological problems of interpreting the term of “homo academicus“ – continued

“… the code changes from an instrument of analysis to an object of analysis … under .. self-reflexive gaze …“

Pierre Bourdieu, Homo academicus, loc. cit. pp. 7-8;

“We cannot in fact dissociate … the structure of the university field … from … the logic of the struggles which derive their principle from this structure and aim to preserve or transform it by redefining the hierarchy of powers …“

Ibid. p. 17.

„Die ich rief, die Geister,
Werd’ ich nun nicht los.“

J.W. Goether, Der Zauberlehrling

Comment (on reflexivity, and on the structure and logic of struggles of power):

- the action of decoding reality becomes from an instrument of research into the object of research
- the action of research as an instrument of the perception of reality makes itself independent of the reality itself: is the researcher not similar to the „Zauberlehrling“?
- reflexive sociology: sociological research is not only determined by the objective reality, but this reality is also influenced by the research of it
- the structure in the university field of struggles versus the logic of struggles (upon redefining the hierarchy of powers)
2. Professional autonomy

“Professional authority, like other elements of the professional pattern, is characterized by ‘specificity of function.’”

Talcott Parsons, “The professions and social structure“, Social Forces, Vol. 17, No. 4 (May1939); p. 460

Comment (on functions, structural positions and roles):

- in a historic perspective: guilds – free trade (vocation versus profession) – integration into systems of specialised knowledge (occupation)

- justification of the professional status and role through professional authority to be described by the specificity of function

- departing from the pattern of “homo oeconomicus“ (just seeking for profit) through:
  - relevant knowledge (resting on a widely accepted theoretical base),
  - certification,
  - commitment to a particular spirit of profession (service of the public good and renunciation of the goal of profit maximisation in return for professional autonomy), and
  - code of ethics
3. Ethos of “homo academicus“

„Also wird die philosophische Fakultät darum, weil sie für die Wahrheit der Lehren … stehen muß, insofern als frei und nur unter der Gesetzgebung der Vernunft, nicht der Regierung stehend gedacht werden müssen. … die Nützlichkeit …, welche die oberen Fakultäten zum Zweck der Regierung versprechen, nur ein Moment von zweitem Rang ist.“


Comment (on methods and wisdom):

- promoting rational calculations and freedom from governmental intervention
- discussion of methods (argumenti) other than giving utilities (sapientia) / Socrates versus Platon at the „Scuola di Atene"
3. Ethos of “homo academicus“ - continued

„... jede wissenschaftliche »Erfüllung« bedeutet neue »Fragen« und will »überboten« werden und veralten.“


„Die zunehmende Intellektualisierung und Rationalisierung bedeutet … dass es also prinzipiell keine geheimnisvollen unberechenbaren Mächte gebe, die da hineinspielen, dass man vielmehr alle Dinge – im Prinzip – durch Berechnen beherrschen könne.“

Ibid. p. 488.

Comment (on specialisation, rationality and progression):

- academics specialise themselves in a discipline to come to terms with the challenge of being outbid and becoming obsolete
- sovereignty in decisions is presupposed by rational calculations
- although there are no value-free judgments, academics are bound to the need of innovation, and are framed by a horizon of progress
4. Historic patterns: Seven Free Arts

Comment (on autonomy, on abstraction and specificity, on professionalism, and on affection and rationalism):

- on the way towards freedom: reforms of Cluny operating in the 12th century were completed by the autonomy movements of local communities
- the patterns of clerical intellectuals and “jongleurs” (who were also successful in seceding from the official hierarchies of the feudal society)
- “Roman de la Rose”, ascribed to Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, triptych of Melun by Jean Bouquet: a combination of allegories (abstraction) and high sensuality (specificity)
- the negative pattern of a character like Beckmesser may flout the professional rules, desperately missing the complexity of life
- good and evil from a Gnostic perspective: Docetism cannot be reconciled with the professionalism of modern life
- affection versus rationalism: Francesco of Assisi discovered in his “Cantico di frate sole” the beauties of nature surrounding our life while Thomas Aquinas was eminent in praising the duties of cool reasoning
5. Prefabricated knowledge driven by narrow-minded instrumental rationality

“One image of education was that it should be like a vessel that is filled with, say, water. That’s what we call these days ’teaching to test’: you pour water into the vessel and then the vessel returns the water. But it’s a pretty leaky vessel, as all of us who went through school experienced…”

“The other model was described as laying out a string along which the student progresses in his or her own way under his or her own initiative, maybe moving the string, maybe deciding to go somewhere else, maybe raising questions.”

“… another technique of indoctrination is to cut back faculty-student contact: large classes, temporary teachers who are overburdened, who can barely survive on an adjunct salary. … These are all techniques of discipline, indoctrination, and control.”

Noam Chomsky, “Thinking Like Corporations is Harming American Universities“, Alternet, October 8, 2014

Comment (on the academic discipline and on the academic precariat):

- short-minded discipline of students or providing students with a safety cable?
- precariat at the American universities
6. Freedom to be withdrawn from “homo academicus“

„Eine geistige Welt allein verbürgt dem Volke die Größe. … Wollen wir dieses Wesen der Wissenschaft, denn muß die Lehrerschaft der Universität wirklich vorrücken in den äußersten Posten der Gefahr der ständigen Weltungewißheit. … dann wird sie stark zur Führerschaft. … Sich selbst das Gesetz geben, ist höchste Freiheit. Die ‚vielbesungene akademische Freiheit‘ wird aus der deutschen Universität verstoßen; denn diese Freiheit war unrecht, weil nur verneinend.“

Comment (on the vulnerability of knowledge, on leadership, on negativism, and on promoting volition):

- academic knowledge itself is vulnerable
- as such, it can only be viable if it is ready to serve leadership (Führerschaft)
- being bound to this law of science suggests a positive approach to freedom, in contrast to academic freedom, which is merely negativism
- academic knowledge may assist in supervising mere volition
7. University autonomy

Principles solemnly declared at Bologna in 1988 through the “Magna Charta Universitatum“:
- unity of education and research,
- independence of universities agains the state,
- academic freedom, and
- humanity

Comment (on the term of university autonomy, on the constitutional protection of it, and on subsidiarity and self-governance as means of good performance):

- although university autonomy seems to be an independent value, it can only be interpreted in line with quality performance that cannot still be expected without autonomy;
- even if university autonomy is not a subject of constitutional protection, it is a condition for the exercise of academic freedom, directly covered by a constitutional charter; and
- the abuse of organisational autonomy cannot be precluded, it is still indispensable to take the risk of tolerating subsidiarity and self-governance in the hope of really good performance that can be hoped in the long run
8. Subsequent concepts on the governance of higher education in Hungary

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<tr>
<th>Components of governance</th>
<th>2013 paper</th>
<th>2014 paper</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classification of institutions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (expected cooperation and competition among institutions?)</td>
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<td>Determination of academic specialisations</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Determination of public subsidies, depending on student decisions</td>
<td>Yes (with &quot;numerus clausus&quot; rather than student fees; student credit facilities)</td>
<td>No (student decisions are completely ignored in an allegedly market-oriented system)</td>
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<td>Determination of quality assurance</td>
<td>Yes (no satisfactory guarantees for independence)</td>
<td>Yes (knowledge triangle, but no satisfactory guarantees for independence)</td>
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<td>Determination of public spending on a normative basis</td>
<td>Yes (through output-based formulae)</td>
<td>No (performance contract? enhanced finance aimed at standards of excellence)</td>
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<td>Delegation of chancellors</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (corroborated)</td>
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9. Crisis of the status and ethos of “homo academicus“

“Whereas the highest goal of the traditional academy was to create fundamental knowledge, what has been described as the ‘scholarship of discovery’, the new emphasis of the knowledge society is on useful knowledge or the ‘scholarship of application’.“

“Chapter 1: Key challenges to the academic profession and its interface with management: Some introductory thoughts“; in: Maurice Kogan, Ulrich Teichler (Eds.), *Key challenges to the academic profession; Werkstattberichte*, INCHER, Kassel, 2007, p. 10;

“… some features of industrialisation can be observed, if one defines it as the passage from craft production of ad-hoc products to the production of mass products through organised production processes through three mechanisms: specialisation of tasks, rationalisation and normalisation.“

Christine Musselin, “Chapter 12: Transformation of academic work: Facts and analysis“, Maurice Kogan, Ulrich Teichler (Eds.), op.cit. p. 182;

Foresight is “a process for bringing together scientists, industrialists, government officials and others to identify the areas of strategic research and the emerging technologies likely to yield the greatest economic and social benefits.“

Mary Henkel, Chapter 13: “Shifting boundaries and the academic profession“, Maurice Kogan, Ulrich Teichler (Eds.), op.cit. pp. 192-193.

Comment (on short-term benefits, on the crisis of craft activity, and on reconciliation between science and technology):

- transformation of the “scholarship of discovery“ into “scholarship of application“ (benefits are envisaged in the short term)
- crisis of craft activity (in the process of mass production through specialisation and standardisation)
- reconciliation between science and technology (and not identification of technology with science)