Contents

List of participants – page 2
Programme – page 3
Abstracts – page 4
Conference venue – page 15
Organizers and funding – page 17
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### PROGRAMME

#### Wednesday November 24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Speaker/Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09.00–09.15</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.15–10.00</td>
<td>Hans Ruin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00–10.45</td>
<td>Pieter Dhondt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.45–11.15</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.15–12.15</td>
<td>Keynote speaker 1: Susan Wright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.15–13:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.30–14.15</td>
<td>Thomas Karlsohn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.15–15.00</td>
<td>Mattias Pirholt</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.00–15.30</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.30–16.15</td>
<td>Peter Josephson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.15–16.45</td>
<td>Commentator 1: Sven-Eric Liedman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Thursday November 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Speaker/Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09.00–09.15</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>09.15–10.00</td>
<td>Jens Erik Kristensen</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.00–10.45</td>
<td>Sharon Rider</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.45–11.15</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.15–12.15</td>
<td>Keynote speaker 2: Mitchell G. Ash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.15–13:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.30–14.15</td>
<td>Johan Östling</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.15–15.00</td>
<td>Marja Jalava</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.00–15.30</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.30–16.00</td>
<td>Commentator 2: Laura Kolbe</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.00–16.15</td>
<td>Concluding remarks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACTS

Susan Wright

"Humboldt" – Humbug!

Contemporary Mobilisations of "Humboldt" as a Discourse to Support the Corporatisation and Marketisation of Universities and to Disparage Alternatives

This paper explores the ways that discourses about "Humboldt" are used in contemporary policy papers and discussions about the future of universities. First, it analyses OECD documents which project a "Global Knowledge Economy" as an inevitable and fast-approaching future and which set out the university reforms they say are needed if OECD member states are to retain their competitive advantage. Using Stuart Hall's idea of discourses dancing a "double shuffle", this analysis shows that where a dominant discourse moves progressively towards the corporatisation and marketisation of universities, it can only do so if a supporting partner, referring to the "traditional" or "Humboldt" university, keeps in step. This supporting partner appeals to academics, whose collaboration is necessary for this transformation to occur, and gives them hope that their values are not lost.

Second, the paper explores the difficulty of un-coupling "Humboldt" from this dance. An analysis of "debate books" and lobbying studies produced by Danish academics shows how their critics disparage references to university autonomy, academic or research freedom, and links between research and teaching – however erroneously – as "Humboldt", out of date humbug, and academic romantisations of a golden age that never was.

The paper ends by pointing to problems with the corporatization and marketisation of universities, as emerging, for example, in England, and highlights the importance of academics' releasing themselves from accusations of "Humboldt" humbug and imagining quite different future alternatives.
Mitchell G. Ash

From Berlin (or Göttingen) to Bologna and beyond:
Humboldt (with others) and "Humboldt", past and present

A significant component of public debate on higher education reform today consists of competing, highly simplified views about what higher education institutions, particularly universities, are or should become. To a surprising extent, these views are based upon even more highly simplified characterizations of university history. The claims in question have been repeated so often that they have become matters of course. They are accepted by most players in the game, not only by politicians or university rectors and presidents seeking convenient rhetorical formulae for the addresses they must give at jubilees and other important occasions, but also by many specialists in higher education policy research or in social studies of higher education. Historical research has challenged all of these conventional claims for some time. I propose to begin my remarks with a brief summary of this historical research, focusing on what I have chosen elsewhere to call the "Humboldt Myth." By this I explicitly do not mean the popular conception of "myths" as deliberate, untrue inventions meant to cover up an unsavory past, but rather wish to describe "Humboldt" (in quotes) as a cultural code, an invented tradition that has shown astonishing vitality – despite its multiple disconnections with actual university life – due to its multiple functions both within university cultures and in the self-representation of universities in the public sphere.

In the second part of my remarks I propose to consider more closely what I would like to call "'Humboldt’ the undead” in the context of another, potentially mythical but also reality-shaping cultural symbol called "Bologna.” By this I mean the many roles and functions of “Humboldt” (in quotes) and particular the often alleged "death” or “revival” of "Humboldt” in recent debates on the massive higher education reform program that began in the late 1990s and continues today. Of course much can be said about the use of “Humboldt” and his alleged (multiple) "death(s)” as symbols around which old-school professorial and also much other opposition to "Bologna” (in its many and varied meanings) can be organized; but such discussions do not exhaust the topic. Rather, I would like to suggest that such discussions also mark what in another context has been called the presence of an absence. Meant here is the continued lack of a cultural code powerful enough to replace the code organized around "Humboldt”, which I trace directly to a significant deficit in the so-called "Bologna process”, namely the failure of its inventors and the continuing failure of its executors to formulate or even consider in any depth a vision of the meaning of higher education in the 21st century that would go beyond the logic of economic or administrative reason.
Hans Ruin

The Role of Philosophy in the University: Critical Reflections in the Light of Humboldt’s Idea

My presentation starts out from a summary discussion of the model of the university outlined in Humboldt’s 1809 program for the Berlin Academy. The focus is on how, in his vision, “philosophy” becomes a possible name for the ideal space of knowledge production, but also as a possible crisis for this spirit. In the writings of Kant and Schiller idea of freedom or autonomy of reason finds its utmost telos in the philosophical, as a culmination of what a free critical rationality could be. Kant’s text on the Strife of the faculties constitutes an important background for the discussion, especially for the way in which it places philosophy at the center and basis of the organizational structure of knowledge. The same exceptions are directed toward philosophy by Schiller, and eventually by Hegel – the first professor in philosophy at the Berlin university – whose’s system of thought can be read as an attempt to realize Humboldt’s ideal of how a philosophical spirit can impregnate and guide the academy.

Against this background the text then moves on to the 20th century, and the crisis and transformation of the role of philosophy in the modern university, as partly a crisis of Hegelianism. In a comparison between some of the representatives for the two dominant schools – analytic and phenomenological-hermeneutic philosophy – the argument is articulated that they both in different ways can be said to aspire to cultivate the Humboldtian inheritance. But in their different ways they also manifest the gradual dispersal of this inheritance. In the final section of the text I connect this background and analysis of the contemporary situation to the conditions for establishing and practicing philosophy within the academy today. The conclusion is that the situation is ambiguous. On the one hand one can see how philosophy not only as a central academic discipline, but as a discipline as such, is threatened in the modern university. On the other hand the modern liberal and economy-driven structure opens possibilities for the establishment of critical and creative environments, that can cultivate the Humboldtian idea. In order to create something new, however, we need to think thoroughly through the contemporary situation for academic work, and to explore the peculiar nature of the public place we still designate as “the university”.

6
Pieter Dondt

"Humboldt” in Belgium:
Rhetoric on the German University Model

From the 1860s, German universities were increasingly referred to as sources of inspiration for reforms needed at their Belgian counterparts. Certainly the great intellectual freedom contrasted to a large extent with the authoritarian attitude of the Belgian government, according to a great number of Belgian professors and students. Still, the majority of them thought that Belgium should not completely renounce its (catholic) Latin and French past. On the contrary, the country should make better use of its central position between allegedly practical France and philosophical Germany, by combining French honesty and accuracy with German inventiveness. The Belgian universities had to search for the golden mean between the (French) applied-practical and the (German) fundamental-scientific approach of education. It resulted in a new law on university education in 1890, aiming for a typically Belgian compromise.

Of a much less moderate kind was the introduction of specific characteristics of what was considered the German university model at the Von Bissing University in Ghent. The establishment of this institution was a direct effect of the German occupation of Belgium during the First World War. Professors at the Von Bissing University were obliged to teach in Flemish (Nederduits) and many Humboldtian ideas were introduced. However, this outright attempt at pushing the German academic model may have had adverse effects. Famous Belgian intellectuals, like the historian Henri Pirenne, strongly opposed this example of German imperialism, and after 1918 Belgian intellectuals tended to consider academic arrangements in the United Kingdom and the United States as examples that were more worthy of their attention.

Still, certainly in recent years, references to the ideas of Wilhelm von Humboldt reappear increasingly often in discussions on university policy. In a number of inaugural, rectorial addresses Humboldt’s essay ”On the Inner and Outer Organization of the Higher Institutions of Learning in Berlin” is put on the same level with John Henry Newmans ”An Idea of a University”. The ideas of both influential thinkers are used to oppose the prevailing neoliberal commodification of university and science. Even without making a thorough analysis of current university policy (which goes beyond the scope of this article), it is striking though to what extent rhetoric and practice differ from each other in this respect. Shamelessly, Humboldt’s and Newmans ideas are used as mere rhetoric instruments, as will be shown by some examples.
Thomas Karlsohn

Presence and Absence at the University:
Remarks on Romantic and Contemporary Notions of the Academic Lecture

The university constitute a specific spatial location. In fact, the question of space has been central ever since this institution emerged in the middle ages. Where should the university be located? Where should learning and scientific work take place? Who has the right or obligation to be present and part of the academic community? Who is absent and why?

My paper explores one aspect of the university as a place, namely the academic lecture. Towards the end of his famous memorandum of 1809/1810 Humboldt discusses the relationship between universities and academies. He underlines the advantages of coupling lecturing and research, and he states that such a coupling has great inspirational value: "Unconstrained oral communication to an audience, which includes a significant number of intelligences thinking in unison with the lecturer, inspires those who have become used to this mode of study just as surely as does the peaceful solitude of a writer or the less institutionalised activities of the members of an academy."

In this as in many other matters Humboldt’s line of argument is highly influenced by thinkers and theories of the university in his own time. It is not difficult to find traces of Fichte and Schelling in his short remarks on lecturing. In my presentation I will discuss the new ideas about academic teaching developing at the end of the eighteenth century. These ideas do not only formulate new pedagogical methods for transmission of scientific facts. They actually imply a whole new understanding of the essence of academic learning. Above all, they reformulate the meaning of spatial presence and absence at the university.

In the ongoing process that some commentators regard as an irreversible transition from "brick universities" to "click universities" the so called e-lecture is gaining great popularity. Digicams, podcasting and webstreaming are currently replacing traditional lecturing in many places. I will conclude my presentation with some remarks on what I see as an intellectual poverty surrounding these phenomena. Even though the university envisioned by Humboldt is a thing of the past, he and his contemporaries still represent a far more sensible insight into the complex processes of higher education.
Despite the subtitle, Wilhelm von Humboldt’s Aesthetische Versuche. Erster Theil. Uber Goethes Herrmann und Dorothea (1798) is not so much a study of Goethe’s epic poem as it is an extensive prolegomena to a general aesthetic theory. Appropriating ideas from Lessing, Schiller and even Goethe himself, Humboldt articulates in the essay the quintessence of a classicist aesthetics, which underscores the ideality, harmony and completeness of the work of art in general and the epic poem in particular. In short, through the workings of imagination (Einbildungskraft) the artist is able to transform nature into ideal representations, which constitute a complete and pure objectivity. Although Humboldt’s ideas are far from original, articulating a number of thoughts and concepts that were in fashion, his essay on Goethe has not received much attention from either Goethe scholars or Humboldt scholars and must be considered more or less a failure.

In my paper I will examine how Humboldt’s work as a critic corresponds to his more acknowledged accomplishments as philosopher on Bildung and education. What will become apparent is how difficult it is to combine his classicist aesthetics with his ideas on Bildung. Whereas the latter construes the formation of man as a continuous process, the former presupposes static artifacts that are complete in themselves; whereas the latter focus on the dialectical relation between subject and object, the former is solely interested in the object, under which the subject is subdued. I will argue that the failure of Humboldt’s aesthetics comes from its inability to explain the complexity of the work of art, which presupposes sincere attention to the perceiving subject in relation to the work. Unlike the romantics or other classicist thinkers, such as Goethe and Schiller, Humboldt is unable to include the activity of the subject in his aesthetics.
"Must a university teacher be a writer of books, and as such famous as well? This is a new question that we will have to make up our mind about very soon.” Thus writes Johann David Michaëlis in the second part of *Raisonnement über den protestantischen Universitäten in Deutschland* from 1770. Michaëlis lived in a time when the academic profession had already begun to change. University professors of the traditional kind, whose main and sometimes only teaching aid had been the oral lecture, were now heading for a dim future. Instead, German princes and ministers increasingly chose to recruit the most prominent and well-known writers to their seats of learning. Johann Adam Bergk commented on the phenomenon in *Die Kunst, Bücher zu lesen* from 1799: “The value and greatness of the scholar is today judged solely on the basis of his writings. He who does not write is no longer to be reckoned with in the world of learning, and he who aims at an official position will be asked what he has written.”

In my paper, I will examine how this regime of ”publish or perish” was established and what the consequences were. Why did princes and ministers in the late 1700s decide to adopt this new policy on academic appointments? Why did they choose to hire teachers who had won fame as writers? How did representatives of the world of academia react to this change? Once appointed, professors at universities were supposed to continue writing. What arguments and tools of governance were used to make them meet this requirement? As will become apparent, today’s discussions on bibliometrics, academic accountability and the ranking of universities, are in many ways reminiscent of debates and controversies that accompanied a process of change that took place over 200 years ago.
Jens Erik Kristensen

From "Bildung durch Wissenschaft" to "Unbildung durch Wissensproduktion"?

The paper will take its departure in some of the essential traits in the Humboldtian idea of "Bildung durch Wissenschaft". In the light of the transformations in the underlying concepts of both "Bildung" and "Wissenschaft" since the days of von Humboldt it will discuss some of the attempts to save and give meaning to this idea in the postwar period of the 20th century (for example Habermas' idea of "Bildung durch Wissenschaftstheorie").

On the background of a diagnosis of tendencies in contemporary university reforms and with reference to the political narratives of knowledge society and global knowledge economy the paper will finally discuss why it seems impossible today to sustain the idea of "Bildung durch Wissenschaft" in the context of the new corporate universities – but also why it seems difficult to dispense with it.
Sharon Rider

Humboldt in Bologna:

On Aims and Means in Higher Education

In this paper, I will address a number of presuppositions which I take to undergird the Bologna process. My approach will differ somewhat from other critical stances, insofar as I will not concern myself primarily with the economic, social or political implications, assumptions or consequences. Rather, my focus will be to make explicit the epistemological premises which are typically suppressed in arguments for the implementation of Bologna, but which deserve critical scrutiny. In particular, I will analyze how the notions of "learning" and "learning outcomes" are construed, and examine this use in light of classical philosophical arguments about the nature of education. One of the consequences of the comparison will be to compare what I will call, for the sake of brevity, "the Prussian Enlightenment model" to what I will call the "Bolognese industrial model". My main argument is

i) the liberal notion of higher education as education befitting a free man, or education in the service of freedom, has deep philosophical roots, going back to Plato and Aristotle. It is the main focus for Kant’s, Rousseau’s and Mill’s reflections on the subject. Central to the philosophical notion of the aims of higher education, is the training in the capacity to exercise independent judgment: the capacity for autonomy. Thus the epistemological question is in what the capacity for correct judgment consists; the practical question is how best to cultivate that capacity. The inculcation of the capacity for sound, independent judgment as an ideal becomes problematic with the expansion of the university in the late 19th century, when higher education is democratized and becomes a part of general education. The need for advanced vocational/technical/practical/professional training and its relation to the goals and ideals of liberal education seems to be at the heart of Dewey’s ideas about educational reform, for instance. We are in the latter stages of this development, and the Bologna process should be seen as articulating the consequences of one side of it.

ii) The tools to be implemented in accordance with the Bologna process are explicitly aimed at standardization, measurability and predictability of both the process and the product ("outcomes") of higher education. "Constructive alignment" and related concepts are used to transfer focus from the subject matter to how the subject is taught, together with how the results of teaching are audited and controlled. Thus there is a shift from the idea of the study of a discipline as intrinsic to the capacity for judgment, as a kind of spiritual exercise, to the idea that what is studied is irrelevant for the achievement of the desired outcomes ("skills" and "competencies"), i.e. from what may call a philosophical idea of learning to a socio-psychological model. Teaching, as well as the "critical thinking" that it is supposed to engender, are seen as distinct cognitive skills that can be trained as such, rather than as intrinsically related to what is taught/critically examined.

iii) The Bologna model, strictly applied, undermines the goals of liberal education understood in the sense described in (i), by training students not to exercise independent judgment, but to follow blindly formal protocols.
Johan Östling

*The Humboldtian Renaissance:*

*The Idea of the University in the Wake of the Second World War*

Although Wilhelm von Humboldt’s name has been recurrent in the debate on the foundations of the modern university for a long time, his will has been opened for highly diverging interpretations. In recent years, new research has shown how Humboldt’s legacy always has been reshaped by shifting historical experiences, national traditions and ideological currents. The overwhelming majority of these new studies have been devoted to the 19th and early 20th century. The postwar era, by contrast, has so far been superficially analyzed, despite the fact that the university underwent deep-seated transformations during this period.

In my presentation, however, I will draw attention to the early postwar period and the return of Humboldt during these years. In the wake of the Second World War, Germany experienced a Humboldtian renaissance. Prominent professors and rectors promulgated the academic ideas that were associated with Humboldt. In inaugural lectures and university ceremonies, his ideas were embraced as a tempting alternative to the disastrous academic principles of the Third Reich.

I will analyze this return of Humboldt by putting it into its proper political, cultural and intellectual contexts. Moreover, I will widen the scope and conclude with a brief comparative discussion on the nature and character of both earlier and later Humboldtian renaissances.
In Finland, as in the rest of the Western world, the post-WW II era was a crucial transition period for higher education. In the public discussion, it was commonly claimed that the universities were outdated and rigid, stuck in an “ivory tower attitude” with “obsolete autonomy.” Influenced by the university reforms in Europe, such as UKAS in Sweden and the Ottosen Committee in Norway, the Finnish politicians demanded the university to fulfill diverse tasks and requirements expected by society more dutifully and effectively. As the chief administrator of the Department for Education and Science Policy at the Ministry of Education Mikko Niemi put it, the modern mass university was a huge production plant, and it was not insignificant to society where all its ”products” ended up. In his eyes, the traditional ideal of Humboldtian autonomy was socially irresponsible and thus, it had to be replaced by education policy in which the goals of academia were reduced from general social goals, being, in Niemi’s case, Social Democratic goals.

My paper focuses on the changing interpretations of the Humboldtian tradition within the leftist student movement, the special emphasis being on the 1970s discussion about the Humboldtian Bildungsuniversität. During the first years of the major university reforms – the university administration reform and degree reform – the leftist student movement, too, criticized the prevailing ”archaic humanistic” university ideal which, for them, represented a poorly masked attempt to defend the bourgeois hegemony at the university. While the slogan of the day was ”the university at the service of the people”, the leftist activists sought inspiration from countries such as China, Cuba, and East Germany. In the most ambitious visions, the boundaries between theoretical and vocational studies were entirely demolished and the conceptions of ”work” and ”study” united so that the university as an independent institution disappeared.

After the 1973 Oil Crisis and the consequential economic recession, leading in Finland to a broad political commitment to ”economic resuscitation” with the de-politicization of the relationship between labor and capital, the leftist student movement made a radical turnabout, however, embarrassingly finding itself on the same side as the traditionalist academic elite. Since their first priority was now the protection of the university against ”capitalist restoration”, they ended up defending Bildung (in Finnish, sivistys) as the intrinsic value that could not be subordinated to any other principles such as economic growth or the usefulness of knowledge in practical problem-solving. A particular subject of criticism was ”technocratic Social Democracy”, declared ”the chief enemy of Bildung” in all Nordic countries. In my paper, I analyze in more detail these changing interpretations of Humboldtianism which, in my mind, are highly topical even in the contemporary discussion about the proper role of the university as a part of the so-called national innovation system.
CONFERENCE VENUE – ADDRESS AND MAPS

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