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1. Introduction

Many issues were raised by my examination of the public intellectual culture in Germany, too many for me to deal with them all here. Hence, I have chosen to focus my attention on some interesting theoretical issues which arose out of that examination, rather than, for example, concentrating on a description of institutions and intellectual events in Germany. The former, however, is naturally informed by my research into the latter.

My interest in this topic first arose out of dissatisfaction with the public manifestations, or lack thereof, of intellectual life in Australia. The strong intellectual traditions of Germany make for an interesting comparison between various aspects of the intellectual life of the two countries, through their institutions of education, their media, and their public treatment of intellectuals. But also, and more interesting for my interests as a student of philosophy, the strong intellectual traditions of Germany encourage the examination of German intellectuals' understanding of their own activity on a theoretical level. For the work of public intellectuals is always reflexive to a significant degree.

The ultimate aims of this investigation are not purely theoretical, however, but practical. My desires are that the participation of intellectuals in the public sphere become more prominent; that the work of academics (particularly philosophers) become more socially engaged; and that Australian society in general embrace the benefits provided by the participation of intellectuals. These desires are supported by a framework garnered from models of liberal democracy which see the creation of a civic society as being the best aim for a democratic state, as opposed to the more instrumental goals which hold sway in contemporary thinking. This is reflected on the theoretical level itself, for I seek to close the gap between theory and practice which plagues much contemporary intellectual work. On the practical level, this corresponds to the closing of the gap between private thought and public action.

To this end, I articulate a conception of the public intellectual appropriate for a liberal democracy, criticising the older Romantic conception which still influences much discussion about intellectuals, perhaps even more so in Germany than in Australia. It is this older conception, I suggest, which leads to the regular but disingenuous appraisal of Australian intellectual culture as being in a state of crisis. I do not intend to echo this appraisal. Intellectual culture in this country is not in crisis; nor is it as healthy as it could be. There have been many intellectuals of public prominence in the short history of this country. My concern is that they are currently not prominent enough, nor are there enough of them. There is an abundance of scholarly forums, seminars and conferences in universities on topical issues, and on the public side, there is considerable popularity for literary and intellectual events such as Adelaide's Festival of Ideas. What seems to be missing is the link between these two cultures. It is interesting that many Germans I spoke with expressed the same concerns. Furthermore, the problems in the education sector, brought about by both governmental policy and a reticent academic culture, are all too real. There is also a serious

lack of intellectual participation in the popular media. These problems would also benefit from a consideration of the situation in Germany.

2. Preliminary Issues

2.1 The Public Intellectual

The first issue we must deal with is one of definition: how is the expression *public intellectual* to be defined? Or more subtly: what understanding of this expression should govern our inquiry, the very utility of which hangs on how this expression is understood? For if we are to offer more than a description of the current state of intellectual involvement in the public sphere — if, for example, we are also to articulate reasonable objectives for the future — then we should not unduly limit our grasp of the range of future possibilities by slaving ourselves to a restrictive conception of the public intellectual.

In the past, restrictive conceptions have surfaced both in the very definition of the public intellectual, and in the ultimately more important articulation of *the proper role* of the intellectual in the public sphere. Thus, some have argued, or else merely assumed, that a public intellectual is one with no ties to institutions of academia or government. Others have claimed that the purpose of the intellectual in the public sphere is one of resistance to established norms and institutions (seen in the far-too-common identification of the intellectual with left-wing political orientations). Such restrictive understandings generally subserve the author's own broader political or personal aims.

In consequence, I suggest we restrict our understanding of this term as little as possible, while maintaining plausible distinctions between intellectuals and other public figures, on the one hand, and between intellectuals who are active in the public sphere and those who are not, on the other. In keeping with this suggestion, I do not wish to pursue a specific political agenda; my purposes, rather, are social, born from a hope for a more reasonable future, in which proper thought is given, in essence, to thought itself. This ideal, which some, despite its significant history, might call vague if not fanciful, finds more concrete manifestation in the several hopes for the future direction of Australian society which I stated in the Introduction: that the participation of intellectuals in the public sphere become more prominent; that the work of academics (particularly philosophers) become more socially engaged; and that Australian society in general embrace the benefits provided by the participation of intellectuals.

2.2 The Intellectual in an Australian Context

Despite the initial reservations about intellectual life in Australia which are implicit in these aims, it should be noted that in recent years there has been an undeniable increase in the involvement of intellectuals in public debate. This is linked to the sense that the political and social certainties of Australia's first century should be reconsidered with the coming of its second. Public debate has concomitantly centred on issues of the republic and of reconciliation. The involvement of intellectuals in public forums has carried through from the initial impetus of such domestic matters to embrace wider questions about the direction Australian society should take in the 21st century, and about Australia's role in the international community as, for

example, a country which should be built on principles of toleration and understanding.

It is therefore of interest that, by far the strongest theme in any general discussion of public intellectuals is that of their decline (This is as true in Germany as it is in Australia). Talk about the decline of institutions, customs or practices is commonplace in our society, and it often betrays the narrow perspective of those who utter it. But where some see decline, others see change, or even progress. David Carter, for example, Director of the Australian Studies Centre at the University of Queensland, makes the shrewd claim that the increase in talk of a crisis in intellectual culture in Australia is in fact a sign of the *rise* in the participation of intellectuals in public life:

> ...the new rise to prominence of the public intellectual has been accompanied by a great rise, as well, in talk about the *decline* of public intellectual life, the narrowing or disintegration of public culture, a crisis in the contemporary public sphere. As we know, only public intellectuals talk that way. Public intellectuals might be defined as those who see a crisis where others see an event.[1]

Carter also states that the *market* for intellectual discussion has also increased in the past decade. His study draws on statistics from publishing, and reveals the largely unprecedented recent success of certain classes of non-fiction writing in Australia, including the essay. If "the industry, the marketplace, isn't behaving as if there were a crisis in public intellectual life," he asks, then why "are intellectuals so consistently thinking otherwise?"[2] (As we will see in Section 4, this claim echoes strongly in some of the findings of my research in Germany. This is even more interesting for the reason that the intellectual scene in Germany is publicly much more prominent than its Australian counterpart). Carter suggests that talk of decline or crisis represents, and even contributes to the creation of, the market space for public intellectuals in the broader 'book culture.' This is an interesting effect. In the long term, however, I believe the language of crisis will prove inadequate for maintaining the active participation of intellectuals in the public sphere as the public tires of its hyperbolic relation to the facts.

The main reason for the inconsistency between intellectuals' views of their own status and the real state of affairs is the inapplicability of older, romantic models of the intellectual to the context of a modern liberal democracy. The romantic model is that of the intellectual as outsider: someone whose social and intellectual *function* is in the public realm but who remains essentially outside that realm, passing judgment on society from without. But Carter's point about how the talk of crisis actually aids in the creation of the market space for the participation of intellectuals helps to

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1 'Public Intellectuals, Book Culture and Civil Society,' *Australian Humanities Review*, Vol.24, Dec 2001.

2 Ibid.

undermine this model. It does so by emphasising that in a liberal democracy the intellectual is in important ways a function of the market. If intellectuals continue to fashion themselves after the romantic model, as voices from above, arbiters of reason, or "secular priests,"[3] then they will continue to misrecognise their own institutional location.

If the situation of the intellectual in a liberal democracy is problematic when viewed from the viewpoint of the intellectual, it is no less so when viewed from that of the public. The push for a stronger role for intellectuals is often interpreted as elitism by the broader public. This is especially true in Australia, where many of our national values centre on the working-class hero or the 'Aussie battler.' These egalitarian values have arisen naturally from our history as a colony, and have been strengthened by the patterns of immigration which, from our earliest days, have drawn from the working classes of the world. These values are important to our character as a nation, and in no sense should we belittle them. Indeed it is these and similar values which have been raised again and again in the recent public debates I mentioned earlier, as values to be upheld as definitively Australian. Nevertheless, egalitarianism can slide all too easily into anti-intellectualism. This tendency is only exacerbated by the romantic model of the intellectual. Undermining this model should, therefore, enable us to move towards a better relationship between intellectuals and the public.

These themes are all the more interesting for the fact that the public intellectual, as we generally understand the term, is a figure who can find her true place only in a democracy. In non-democratic societies, the role of the intellectual is necessarily defined in relation to the ruling power, as either the adviser whose judgment must subserve the needs of the state (Kissinger's description of an intellectual as one who provides legitimations of the actions of the powerful),[4] or as the dissident whose only purpose is to oppose the views of the state. Neither role allows the occupant the full independence of thought appropriate to the concept of the public intellectual. It is interesting to note that some elements of these pre-democratic roles continue to pervade current thinking about intellectuals.

This is especially true of the latter role: the thinker as dissident. The idea that the role of the true intellectual is to oppose the dogma propagated by the state is one which carries much force. Right-wing thinkers are often not identified as intellectuals at all. This is an effect, perhaps, of the fact that the current generation of high-level academics (the product of the 1960s) is largely left-wing. In Germany this is also the case. I raised the question of the left-wing orientation of the majority of intellectuals in Germany with many of the people I interviewed. In many cases it seemed that the intellectual was identified with the public voicing of left-wing opinion. This

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[3] Mark McKenna, 'Spare a Thought for Australia,' *Eureka Street*, July/August 1998, p46. Dr McKenna is a historian and political scientist currently at the ANU.

[4] Cited in Tony Coady, 'The Public Philosopher,' *Meanjin*, 50:4, 1991, p484. Prof. Coady is Head, Melbourne Division, of the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics at the University of Melbourne.

suggests that the image of the intellectual as dissident persists quite strongly in Germany. The beliefs of many German intellectuals were rendered problematic following reunification, as the experience of intellectuals in the former GDR became widely known. For these latter thinkers, the role of the intellectual as dissident was clearly paramount, but the propagation of left-wing thought was clearly not highest on the agenda of most.

It is unfortunate that traces of non-democratic thinking have been visible in the behaviour of contemporary Australian governments towards intellectuals. Such thinking was clearly involved in recent, successive attempts to sabotage the operations of one of the main forums for independent intellectual discussion in Australia, the ABC. It is consistently evident in the attitudes of the current government towards public critique of governmental policy. The criticism by intellectual 'elites' is rebuked as 'un-Australian' and 'undemocratic', apparently because it runs counter to majority opinion.[5] That is if it is not merely dismissed as 'irrelevant'. Of course precisely what is undemocratic is the discouragement of, and refusal to answer to, contrary opinion. This behaviour is insidious and retrogressive. It is also instructive, since it draws our attention to a number of problematic aspects of the state of intellectual life in Australia, the most important of which is the small size of the market for intellectual culture. This renders many intellectuals dependent on government-funded bodies for the forums in which their discussions can take place. Careful rule-making guards such forums from direct assaults on their intellectual integrity, but their need for the government dollar puts them at the mercy of unscrupulous and anti-democratic politicians whose curtailing of funding represents a more insidious undermining of independence. This is perhaps most pressing in the case of education.

The small size of the market in Australia is demonstrated also by the low number of intellectual and cultural journals in circulation. Many budding thinkers are forced overseas in search of larger markets. This reinforces the importance of government funding, but unfortunately this approach does not represent a long-term solution, especially when the aim is to *increase* the public activity of intellectuals in this country. An increase in government spending in the future is unlikely, to say the least. But the reliance of intellectual culture in Australia on government money is undesirable in general terms as well. If we are to restructure our thinking about intellectual culture to harmonise it with the social structures of liberal democracy, then we must look beyond government funding towards ways in which the burgeoning public market for intellectual culture can be fostered to the degree that it can become largely independent.

This, at least, is the first step, and one which will by no means be easy to achieve. But there are other important objectives as well. One is the possibility of the government drawing much more upon independent intellectual expertise in its policy making, especially in ethical matters but

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[5] See Mark McKenna's commentary on the Liberal Party federal council meeting in April, 'No Mandate to Silence Dissent', in *The Age*, April 18, 2002.

not exclusively so. One of the important functions of the public intellectual is, after all, to point out that certain enterprises, thought to be outside the moral sphere, in fact lie well within its circumference. I am thinking here in particular of economic policy. Perhaps the most important objection to economic rationalism, but also the most difficult to make heard, is that it draws an artificial boundary between economics and morality, enabling the notion of the 'good' to be articulated in purely utilitarian terms.

Although the government is clearly to be encouraged to draw upon intellectual expertise, we must be aware that such an enterprise walks a perilous line between two dangers: the first is the danger of the intellectual assuming the role of governmental adviser and losing integrity and independence; the second is the danger of the government silencing or manipulating the opinions of those intellectuals called upon. This second danger is particularly insidious: while the appearance is that the government is drawing upon the expertise of its intellectuals by placing them on various committees, the reality is that it is doing no such thing. This problem arose quite recently in Australia with the committee appointed to oversee the question of drug law reform being manipulated into drawing the conclusions favoured by the current government.

The possibility of circumventing these dangers rests, ultimately, on the public. If the public develops a greater respect for, and interest in, the work of intellectuals, the government will also be less able to ignore that work. Here again, the situation in Germany provides us with some useful insights, for the public respect for intellectuals in that country motivates politicians to call upon intellectuals for advice. I will address this question again further on.

The generation of a genuine and active intellectual culture calls for significant development in all four relevant sectors of society—government, education, the media, and the general public. In Sections 3.1 and 3.2 I will outline a general model of the public intellectual which would provide the highest human gains within a liberal democracy. In Section 3.3 I will relate this model to some of my specific philosophical concerns. I will then turn, in Section 4, to a comparative study of the intellectual culture in Germany and in Australia, considering each of the four relevant sectors of society in turn.

3. Fostering an Intellectual Culture

3.1 The Function of the Public Intellectual

In the sections above I criticised the traditional, romantic model of the intellectual as the voice of reason, dropping pearls of wisdom from above. This model is clearly implicated in the prevalent accusations of elitism made against the very idea of intellectual culture in this country. Some might say that elitism is inherent in intellectual culture, and anti-intellectualism in the democratically-minded populace the inevitable result. However, I believe a genuine *rapprochement* between these two spheres to be possible, and in a *realistic* sense at that. Thus, on the one hand I don't wish to put forward a utopian vision of society in which "we'll all be

intellectuals,"[6] but, on the other, I don't think that the only alternative is elitism. It should be possible to generate a more widespread openness to intellectual culture.

This openness can only be achieved through education. Moreover, it can be achieved only through a certain *type* of education, which fosters a certain type of thinking. This type of thinking and learning is perhaps best and broadly described as critical and illuminating. I have in mind that type of thinking which the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein called the *seeing of connections*. It uncovers and articulates connections between spheres which seem conceptually disparate, increasing our understanding of the various forces at work in a particular discourse. One might say it consists in making explicit what lies implicit in regular patterns of thinking. I will say more about this later, but for now, I think it is far from outrageous to suggest that this is a type of thinking whose value is not enough recognised today—in the public, in government, and even in academia. In fact, it is perhaps in certain spheres of academia that its value is most underestimated, spheres where impoverished models of procedural reason and factual knowledge have an almost unshakeable grip.

It might be asked what this type of thinking has to do with the question of elitism. The answer is partly given to us by David Carter and Kay Ferres, in their piece in a new collection of essays, *Culture in Australia*: "Public intellectuals and writers are called upon as 'brokers of ideas and as mediators of difference. They are 'articulate', in the sense that they make connections, rather than in the sense that they bring a high moral 'tone' to debate."[7] Intellectuals should not see their function as analogous to that of the expert who is called upon to express the state of the game in a particular field for the benefit of the public. In the spheres of public life in which the intellectual finds her place, we can give little sense to the notion of 'expert'. In such spheres—we might call them the spheres of value—the reliance on certain figures as experts is precisely what has led, over the past decade or two, to the burgeoning of the 'lifestyle industry', so beloved of the popular media which is replete with magazines and books offering shallow recommendations on ways to pursue what they perceive as the 'good life'. This latter term, of course, has consequently been stripped of anything resembling its traditional, philosophical sense, and has become instead a deceptively positive name for the negative quality of self-obsession. Intellectuals should not stoop to the level of the lifestyle guru, but nor should they mislead themselves into believing that their vocation is that of the moral leader or the voice of conscience. Being moral is a matter of rightness of action, not of intellectual expertise or knowledge; and being a moral leader for a community is a matter of one's actions being perceived as worthy of imitation by others, not of constructing and articulating theoretical frameworks.

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[6] Tim Dunlop, 'The Other Side of 1984'. *On Line Opinion*, May/June 2000.

[7] *Culture in Australia: Policies, Publics and Programs*, Tony Bennett & David Carter, eds, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p156

This is linked to my conviction that strong allegiance to particular political ideologies is detrimental to the work of the public intellectual. Such ideologies are the province of politicians, not intellectuals. Notwithstanding the heavy criticism this view would receive from certain academic sectors, neutrality and objectivity are virtues of the public intellectual. In part, I would agree with critics of objectivism: I do not think neutrality to be strictly achievable. However, nor do I believe that accepting this point requires one to abandon neutrality as an important goal, to declare the forces of power and coercion the ultimate basis for all social interaction. The correct position lies somewhere in between. Certainly conviction is needed in order to motivate debate, and indeed variety of convictions is, as J.S. Mill argued, necessary for social and intellectual progress. As he also argued, however, too much conviction threatens the possibility of self-criticism, of openness to alternatives, and of toleration, all of which are impedances to progress. Thought that has become ideology is a spent force—tired and unoriginal. If the debate of public intellectuals is to become genuinely useful in a social context, whether the debate be amongst themselves, with the government, or with other public figures, then intellectuals must maintain, as much as possible, that not-insignificant degree of neutrality and objectivity which enables one to listen to others, to engage in self-criticism, and which is generally the mark of the reasonable.

Nor should the role of the intellectual be confused with that of the expert in a scientific sense. For this there are several reasons. The publicly active scientific expert is, without doubt, extremely important to the development of a generally literate and intellectual culture, and it is a figure which has become very prominent in recent years as an interest in science has awakened in more and more of the public. But the public function of the expert is to foreclose argument and to end debate by pronouncing definitively on the area of expertise. This is directly opposed to what I see as being the proper role of the public intellectual. In the socially most important debates, for example, that concerned with the effects of genetically modified food, there is often, furthermore, little agreement amongst scientists. This doesn't halt the media in their search for the expert sound byte, with the result that whatever knowledge the scientist has to disseminate is often dissipated into something of very little value. It is part of the task of the public intellectual to pick up on difficult debates such as this, to broaden them, and place them in historical, social and moral perspective so that their significance can be seen to stretch beyond the limited field delineated by the media-filtered statements of experts.

But the most important reason for the need to maintain a distinction between the intellectual and the expert is that, where the role of the expert is to know and disseminate facts, the role of the intellectual is to think and reason. Furthermore, this thinking and reasoning should not be confined to a particular field, as that of the specialist must. Rather, it should be broad-ranging and syncretic, drawing together disparate elements of debate, linking discussion with areas that, at first glance, are not obviously linked, uncovering assumptions behind various positions, resisting obscuration, overstatement, and the misuse of theory, constructing theoretical frameworks for the semi-articulated positions of others, and articulating the frameworks of our common practices.

Douglas Kirsner and Jenny Lee also state that the use of this type of thinking in public forums is "not so much a matter of making pronouncements from on high, announcing an 'expert' point of view on a particular issue, as of encouraging readers and listeners to think the issue through for themselves, to review their reflex prejudices, and to gain confidence in their own ability to participate in the process of speaking truth to power."[8] In important ways, the role of the intellectual is to make others aware of implicit assumptions and obscured patterns in their thinking, indeed in the practices of the society as a whole. In consequence, one could say that experts are people who, insofar as they address concerns within their area of expertise, ought to be listened to, whereas intellectuals are people who must earn the attention of the public. They do so by providing a framework to our actions, and thus by bringing increased understanding, rather than knowledge in a factual sense. This can be done, for example, by exposing the historical background of contemporary social issues. History, as Max Charlesworth states, can have a profoundly therapeutic effect.[9] This includes intellectual history. There is no in-principle restriction on the depth or breadth that such thinking can take. To illustrate: the intellectual might seek to increase the public's very sense of what constitutes a social issue, so that we focus not merely on specific issues like unemployment or medical ethics, but also on the broader intellectual and social history which has led to the general restriction of the meaning of 'social issue' to encompass only those very specific, concrete concerns.

Whether or not the words of a particular intellectual earn the interest of the public is, of course, dependent upon the extent to which they are genuinely illuminating. But it is also dependent upon the receptiveness of the public to illumination. This is why education is so important to the generation of an intellectual culture; but once again, it is a particular type of education which I mean to invoke here. In order for the public to find the critical thinking of intellectuals illuminating, they must themselves, to a large extent, be able to think in the same way. For example, it is claimed by many that modern Western societies, like our own, owe a tremendous debt to certain ideas which have come down to us from the European Enlightenment. This influence, it is said, is so pervasive that we are to some extent unaware of it. Certain categories which we consider natural and universally valid, like the notion of human rights, are in fact products of eighteenth-century, Enlightenment modes of thinking. The contemporary, globalised world is very different from that of eighteenth-century Europe, and categories inherited from that era have become problematic. By re-examining these inherited categories from a historically informed perspective it might be possible to overcome the impasses reached in

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[8] 'Introduction', *Meanjin*, 50:4, 1991, p444. This issue focuses on public intellectuals in Australia and is dedicated to Max Charlesworth. Dr Kirsner is an academic at Deakin University and Jenny Lee was then editor of *Meanjin*.

[9] 'A House of Theory for the Liberal Ideal', *Meanjin*, 50:4, 1991, p467. Max Charlesworth is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Deakin University and one of Australia's most prominent public intellectuals.

contemporary debates which invoke notions like human rights. What is important in this example is the idea that there are practices and modes of thinking which are common to members of a given society because they are products of their common history. Critical thinking about these common practices is thus an essentially reflexive process. This again speaks to the difference between this type of thinking and factual knowledge. It does not matter if the majority of people do not understand the theories of quantum physics—science will progress without us, and we will reap its technological benefits even as we do not comprehend them. But the purpose of the critical thinking of the public intellectual *is* to encourage the general enlightenment of the public, and this will not transpire if the public does not comprehend what is said. Moreover, it will not transpire unless as many of us as possible engage in the reflexive thinking which is required in the rational examination of one's own practices.

3.2 Education and the Development of an Intellectual Culture

The type of education which would be most beneficial to the development of an intellectual culture, then, would be one which develops skills of critical and reflective thinking. It is often urged how the study of the humanities at tertiary level assists in the development of these skills. In spite of this fact, the current state and status of humanities schools in this country is almost universally acknowledged as very grave indeed. The number of documents addressing this problem in the publications list of the National Academy of the Humanities over the last 15 years is enough to indicate that the talk of crisis is not uncalled for. This is not necessarily to say that the education provided by humanities schools is poor; although it, too, seems more and more likely to become so as the effects of various university reforms take hold.

The deteriorating status of the humanities has much to do with the almost total dominance of utilitarian doctrine amongst policy makers; although, as Tony Coady argues, "the philosophical theory of utilitarianism, in even its grossest forms, is not as crude as [these] attitudes... They might be better described as philistinism since it is not only their instrumentalism which is primitive but the goals they set before us to be pursued."[10] Coady's claim is supported by the fact that the humanities by no means lack justification even in the narrow terms of utilitarian arguments. There are many statistics available showing the high performance of humanities graduates in the public and corporate sectors relative to graduates of vocational and business-oriented courses. These statistics themselves speak for the advantages of a liberal education in the contemporary world.

More important for this discussion, however, is the broader *social* and *cultural* advantage offered by a public largely educated in the liberal humanist tradition. I see two main reasons why an education of this sort is beneficial for the promotion of an intellectual culture. The first reason is that the broadness of a liberal education helps to generate broadness of mind and

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[10] 'The Justification of Philosophy', in *The Relevance of the Humanities,* Occasional Paper of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, No. 8, 1990, p38.

interest. This might counteract the tendency in contemporary democracies for interesting, rational and informed debate to yield to a cacophony of the voices of competing single-interest groups. Specialisation is important for efficiency in scientific progress, but the principle of specialisation has taken hold in areas where its consequences are undesirable. This can be clearly seen in humanities research in the universities, where the forces of career-focussed professionalism encourage greater specialisation at the unfortunate expense of the broadness which underlies the humanist tradition which gave rise to the modern universities in the first place. It is important to see, however, that liberal education and specialisation are mutually exclusive only on one conception of their relationship. Thus, the provision of a liberal education for all does not limit society's access to the advantages provided by specialisation, for a liberal education does not preclude later specialisation. Early specialisation, by contrast, discourages liberal education.

The second advantage of a liberal education is that one of its principles is the emphasis of the manner of learning over and above the facts that are learnt. The essence of this idea, which in its modern form comes from Humboldt, that great thinker on education, is that of *Bildung*, according to which education aims for the creation of reasonable minds and cultured citizens rather than merely the advancement of knowledge. As Schiller, Humboldt's friend and teacher, asserted, no amount of technical or factual knowledge will equip one to deal with every situation, while one who is trained to think for himself will have far more chance of discovering the appropriate solution or creating the best strategy to deal with novel problems. At first glance, Humboldt's humanism can seem markedly individualistic, oriented as it is around the notion of personal growth. But this is only part of the picture. For Humboldt also believed the processes of teaching and learning to be inextricable, thus giving a necessarily dialogical character to both. Learning in the true sense cannot occur without dialogue or rational and creative exchange. This idea is fundamental to that of the university itself. It is also fundamental to the idea of the intellectual society I have been sketching.

Nonetheless, Humboldt's Hellenistic emphasis on the aesthetic obscures the importance of the development of the public and civic aspects of the individual as citizen which was more prominent in the Latin-inspired French Enlightenment represented principally by Rousseau.[11] This element of Humboldt's philosophy is typically German, finding its zenith in the aesthetic individualism of German Romanticism, where the division between the individual and the state, between private and public, is almost absolute. This positive individualism later transformed into an inward-looking, conservative and even reactionary attitude epitomised in the undemocratic, apolitical thinking of early twentieth- century intellectuals

[11] The French Enlightenment, however, tended towards a technical or encyclopaedic conception of knowledge and a pedagogical conception of education which were at odds with liberal humanism.

like Thomas Mann, who jettisoned political and civic involvement from his conception of the German identity.[12]

One of the most interesting aspects of recent intellectual culture in Germany is its continual struggle with the ambivalent heritage of German idealism. Figures like Habermas have been instrumental in abstracting the insights of liberal humanism and Enlightenment thought more generally from the more radical elements of aestheticism and individualism that were peculiar to the German Enlightenment, hence advancing a more democratic model of the intellectual against the purely Romantic.[13] The philosophical result of this project is something of a synthesis of French and German Enlightenment, Latin civic responsibility and Hellenistic aestheticism, social democracy and the self-development of the individual. Jan-Werner Müller suggests also that the democratisation of German intellectual thinking over the past few decades has emphasised that citizens and intellectuals both need "the right attitudes, rather than particular knowledge," if they are to realise the potential of liberal democracy to intellectualise its citizenship.[14]

In the context of liberal humanist ideas about education, C.P. Snow's polarisation of the natural sciences and the humanities makes little sense. Study of the sciences, as much as of the humanities, is an essential part of a liberal education, and may help to cultivate skills of critical and analytical thinking as much as the latter. Yet Humboldt himself warned that the natural sciences encourage a technological or instrumental conception of knowledge, and that the humanities must act as an important remedy to this unwholesome tendency. The infiltration of just this conception of knowledge into the humanities, through the intellectual forces of positivism and scientism, as well as through the academic or political forces of professionalisation and specialisation, has therefore had a most pernicious influence. Humboldt's original idea of the university was constructed in resistance to the specialist, vocational nature of technical and scientific academies and the empiricist conception of learning they encouraged.

In the work of the British philosopher, Michael Oakeshott, liberal humanist ideas are applied in broader terms to society at large, as well as to education.[15] Oakeshott hoped for the creation of what he called a *societas*, or a civic society, in which autonomous individuals are united with no

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[12] See his, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, 1918. Trans. 1987 by Walter D. Morris as *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man.*

[13] Jürgen Habermas is perhaps the most famous and most important living German philosopher. His philosophical work on the nature of rationality as it functions with regard to social, cultural and political criticism has always been matched by a commitment to public engagement on his own part.

[14] *Another Country: German Intellectuals, Unification and National Identity*, London: Yale University Press, 2000, p275.

[15] Michael Oakeshott (1901-1992) was a British philosopher whose major works criticise the contemporary ideological adherence to rationalism in political and social thought.

overriding common purpose. This is in contrast to the *universitas*, or enterprise society, whose members are united for the pursuit of a common goal. Businesses and corporations are examples of the latter, while universities are, or should be, examples of the former. The distinction can be expressed in German as that between *Gesellschaft und Gemeinschaft*.[16] The model of the enterprise association is, unfortunately, that which has come to dominate contemporary politics. Naturally appropriate as a model for success in business, it has many defects when applied outside this domain. The most drastic of these defects is the foreclosure of the possibility of engaging in rational criticism to any serious extent. This is because the particular enterprise driving the association—be it maximal profit, technological advancement, or a political ideology — determines the conceptual framework which governs all discussion. Criticism of the framework is nonsensical, since it is the framework which binds the association. Conceiving society on the enterprise model is therefore counter to the principles of democracy. The notion of the civic society, by contrast, is one in which debate can flourish; especially when coupled with the liberal humanist model of education, according to which each one of us should, through a dialogical learning process encompassing a diversity of subjects, equip oneself with the intellectual and civic skills necessary to become a fully participating member of society.

Unfortunately, the forces of professionalism and specialisation in both academia and society at large have contributed to the decline of these ideas. The domination of the technological model of the university can be seen in the extent to which even humanities faculties are driven by the principle of the *production* of knowledge. There are now disciplines which perpetuate themselves by fashioning their own purely theoretical subject matter. What they produce therefore bears little resemblance to knowledge, and has no application outside its own sphere. Theory is divorced from practice. Unfortunately, philosophy, in some of its contemporary forms, cannot be excused from such criticism. In the next section I will take a closer look at philosophy, for it has a significant role to play in the intellectual society.

3.3 Some Questions for Philosophy

The study of philosophy has a major role to play in the liberal education, and this in two respects. First, it involves, or should involve, studying the history of ideas. This is interesting in itself, though perhaps not all find it so. Its use extends beyond this interest, however, for the study of intellectual history performs the extremely important educational task of revealing the origins of the ideas which form the framework of contemporary culture. In short, it provides perspective. Like a good historian, a philosopher knows "that some current intellectual fad is probably, beneath the rhetoric, as old as Methuselah, or perhaps, Socrates, and this can give a perspective on theories and proposals that will yield real

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[16] Formalised by Ferdinand Tonnies in 1887 in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*.

understanding rather than mere capacity to mouth."[17] Studying the thought of other cultures provides perspective in a different, but equally important way. Second, the proper study of philosophy will, more than any other discipline, encourage critical thinking; complementing perspective with depth of insight. Philosophy trains one to analyse arguments for soundness; to uncover covert assumptions; to investigate the real implications of arguments and their presuppositions; as well as to reveal the deep patterns of thought from which traditions and worldviews are forged. This combination of perspective and depth in thinking that is philosophy encourages the critical examination of the tradition made articulate through history.

This is all true, but not as true as it should be. The specialisation that is an inevitable result of the professionalisation of academia has given further impetus to the already pernicious trend in academic philosophy towards scholasticism, esotericism, and obscurantism. The origins of this trend are actually to be found in a collection of philosophical ideas which have been very influential over the past century, namely positivism or scientism. Indeed, these ideas are discernible not only in academic disciplines such as philosophy, but in the emphasis on technical thinking and the production of factual knowledge which pervades contemporary Western society.

These ideas reject all forms of thought except those based on scientific discovery or logic. While they were quickly rejected in their most extreme forms, their influence has been extensive. As a result of this influence, three important aspects of philosophy have been lost: the consciousness of history; the broadness of perspective and inclusiveness of philosophical thinking; and the connection between theory and practice. Since philosophy is a reflexive discipline, each of these three aspects has been lost not only from the subject matter of contemporary philosophy, but from the very notion of philosophy itself: they are now thought to be incidental, rather than essential, to philosophical thinking. Thus, the study of philosophy is commonly divided, on the one hand, into the history of ideas (of scholarly interest only), and into philosophy proper. This division is even reflected in the structure of many philosophy departments. Second, the idea that philosophers are engaged in something resembling a scientific research program, united in the pursuit of common goals, drives the endless subdivision of philosophical subject matter into tiny areas of specialised interest. Third, there is an emphasis on theoretical modes of thought at the expense of the practical. This emphasis reveals a deep confusion about the sort of thinking that doing philosophy involves: mistaking what is essentially the pursuit of illumination and understanding for the construction of technical, explanatory theories. This sanctions the detachment of philosophical thinking from its origins in the rich sphere of social practice, of human action, of concrete life and common sense.

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[17] Tony Coady, 'The Justification of Philosophy', in *The Relevance of the Humanities*, Occasional Paper of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, No. 8, 1990, p41.

The upshot of these criticisms is that contemporary philosophy discourages its practitioners from engaging in the kind of reflexive thinking which, I have suggested, is essential to a properly functioning intellectual society. It is perhaps a sign of the times that the most reflexive discipline of all should find itself in this state. If philosophers can free themselves from these pernicious ideas, then its contribution to the generation of an intellectual society will already have begun. For in discovering the extent to which these ideas inform contemporary thought, including one's own, by engaging in a critique of the habitual directions of one's own thinking, by uncovering the assumptions which inform one's own perspective, one has already begun to engage in that kind of illuminating thinking which leads to a genuine understanding of one's own intellectual position in relation to the greater whole that is one's history and culture.

Ludwig Wittgenstein was one of the most subtle and incisive of philosophers, and also one of the most ardent critics of theoretical thinking. His very mode of philosophising itself, his reflexive style of thinking, unveils the importance of the practical, pre-theoretical kind of understanding which forms the background to our ways of life. Making sense of our ways of life by articulating this background understanding, by making explicit what is implicit in our practices, is the very basis of philosophy. Most of us do this from time to time in our everyday lives. Philosophers do much the same thing, but on a deeper, more critical level. Through the reflexive articulation of what lies implicit in her own modes of thinking, in her understanding of her own practices, the philosopher also makes explicit what lies implicit in the thought of her culture, of her time and place. She articulates the common understanding, the common sense, which is cultural history. As Hegel puts it, to philosophise is to apprehend one's own time in thought.

The problem with theoretical thinking is that it forms a barrier to the necessary reflexiveness of genuine philosophical illumination, forcing what is essentially an articulation of one's own understanding into impersonal, third-person structures. Natural science relies on these structures for its objectivity, but their infiltration into philosophy leads only to the kinds of metaphilosophical problems I explained above. Much as ideology is a negative, obscuring force in social debate, foreclosing alternatives to its own modes of thought, so too is much theory in philosophy. The thought of Wittgenstein shows us how to avoid some of these traps. According to his vision, philosophy can act as a kind of check on over-theorising, bridling the tendency of ideology and theory to get in the way of real thinking:

> If philosophy is the criticism a culture produces of itself, and proceeds essentially by criticising past efforts at this criticism, then Wittgenstein's originality lies in having developed modes of criticism that are not moralistic, that is that do not leave the critic imagining himself free of the faults he sees around him, and which proceed not by trying to argue a given statement false or wrong, but by showing that the person making an assertion does not really know what he means, has not really said what he wished. But since self-scrutiny, the full examination and defense of

> one's own position, has always been part of the impulse to philosophy, Wittgenstein's originality lies not in the creation of the impulse, but in finding ways to prevent it from defeating itself so easily, ways to make it methodical.[18]

The legacy of Wittgenstein's vision of philosophy extends beyond his own preoccupations with the philosophy of language into the civic and political spheres. It does so by focussing attention on the nature of essentially contested concepts and on the human desire to anchor such concepts to something which is not itself contested, a foundation in theory or in a reality independent of rhetoric and politics (the idea of which is itself a sort of metaphysical theory). For politics, just like philosophy, is a field of essentially contested concepts: What is Left?; What is Right?; What are refugees?; What is terrorism?; What are human rights? The answers one gives to such questions of definition determines one's political stance; political ideologies have a stock set of answers to these questions which are trotted out by one spokesperson after another.

Wittgenstein took his own philosophical task to be the retrieval of the everyday meanings of words from the distortions they undergo when they are manipulated in order to satisfy philosophical theory. The natural human desire to anchor the meanings of vague and contested concepts means that theoretical distortion is a continual hazard which must be countered time and again by a critical, reflexive process. This is a problem common to both theoretical philosophy and politics. In politics, this problem can be incidental or insidious, depending on the self-awareness of those who distort meanings, as George Orwell made all too clear. The task of the philosopher in an intellectual society might include an attention to the distortions of concepts that colour political and ethical debates. One common type of distortion is the limitation of the conceivable alternatives which the unreflective adoption of theoretical assumptions engenders. One is For or Against, Left or Right. Those who are dissatisfied with the alternatives presented to them find themselves without a political voice, or even a clear idea of what an alternative to the standard alternatives might look like. As Christopher Hitchens puts it, "to 'consider the alternatives' might be a definition of the critical mind or the alive intelligence." The intellectual exists in order to "consider, tease out and find alternatives."[19] And this most especially when genuine alternatives are obscured by ideological language.

It is clear that this sort of reflexive criticism is indispensable to an intellectual culture and to the intellectuals whose business it is to participate in it. How, then, might this sort of criticism become commonplace in the public sphere? First, philosophers themselves must engage in civic life. And they must do so *as* philosophers, as thinkers trained in reflexive criticism,

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[18] Stanley Cavell, 'Excursus on Wittgenstein's Vision of Language,' in *The New Wittgenstein*, Alice Crary and Rupert Read, eds. London: Routledge, 2000, p26.

[19] 'The Future of the Public Intellectual,' *The Nation*, 12th February, 2001. Christopher Hitchens is a British journalist, writer, and intellectual, now resident in the USA, famous for his acerbic attacks on political elites.

not merely as journalists, or popularisers of ideas, or commentators on issues about tertiary education. Max Charlesworth has this to say about the university in general, and it applies no less to philosophers in particular:

> ...those who want to politicize the university, and those who want to preserve the ideal of pure socially neutral scholarship, are both half right and half wrong. The university ought to be socially concerned, it ought to be relevant to the great social issues of the day, but it ought not to play politics as politicians play politics. It ought to be concerned with social and political issues but *in its own way*, within its own properly scholarly perspectives, by talk, and critical analysis and discussion, and demystification, and debate, and placing particular issues in a larger historical and social context... and the 'de-polarization' of contentious issues.[20]

Second, the study of philosophy must be encouraged, preferably beginning in school. Third, the government must be encouraged to call upon the skills and wisdom of philosophers in policy debates. Fourth, the media should also be encouraged to call upon the opinions of philosophers, and on thinkers in general, in opposition to 'professionally trained' journalists. Developing an interest on the part of the media and the general public is the most important issue here. Education is of paramount importance, of course, but so are the initiative and the visionary thinking of philosophers and intellectually minded people in general. As David Carter says of the Australian people, commenting on the recent increase in interest for reading groups and for literary and intellectual festivals in the middle classes, that "this is an audience that wants public intellectuals." Positive action is what is required, not negativity and crisis-mongering.

Germany has much to offer Australia with regard to these issues, and provides useful insights into both the advantages and disadvantages of a strong tradition of intellectual culture. In the next section, I will make some comparisons between Australia and Germany, focussing on intellectual participation in the media and in government, on the university culture, and on the general public reception of intellectuals.

4. The Public Intellectual in Germany

4.1 Germany: An Intellectual Culture

Germany is a country famous for many things, perhaps most widely for its industry and technological prowess. But to anyone with an interest in such things, Germany is most important for its contributions to thinking. The intellectual history of the West is heavy with German influence, and German thinkers are prominent on all sides of the intellectual spectrum: philosophers, scientists, poets, artists, rationalists, romantics, revolutionaries, conservatives, humanists, technologists. This intellectual

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[20] 'A House of Theory for the Liberal Ideal', *Meanjin*, 50:4, 1991, p467.

tradition figures large in the German cultural identity, and its resonances in contemporary German society are fascinating.

These resonances come in both obvious and more subtle forms. The former include: the prominence of intellectuals in German public life; the large public respect for intellectuals and academics, and for education; the sheer amount of cultural and intellectual activity in Germany. More subtle resonances are to be found in many aspects of German culture. One of the most interesting, especially given the discussion of the previous sections, is the German propensity towards self-reflection. Discussion of national identity, of history, of the nature of the German people and culture is ubiquitous, demonstrated every day in the media. Much of this is an effect of the tumultuous history Germany has suffered over the past century, the scale of which few other countries can lay claim to. By the same token, few other countries can profess such acute consciousness of the gravity of their own history. This consciousness extends from the personal level of memory and identity through to every reach of the public realm, where ruminations on the significance of German history ensure that this consciousness is continually reanimated.

Yet, it would be short-sighted to claim that German intellectual debate is limited to navel-gazing about the Nazi era, however much these issues predominate. Even so far as reflections on recent German history are concerned, there are many other events which have generated tremendous intellectual discussion, most notably re-unification. While German history has encouraged introspection, some ground has recently been given over to international issues, and to issues of broader ethical and intellectual, rather than political, significance. The former include Germany's critical involvement in the European Union, and naturally involve discussion of national identity and its place in a continental political framework. There has also been much recent debate about an international political role for Germany, as opposed to a merely economic role. The decision to contribute to Western involvement in Afghanistan was the focus of much discussion, since it necessitated the reconsideration of the policy of confining political involvement to a national, rather than international, scale. Issues of broader ethical and intellectual significance include genetic engineering and stem cell research, a hot topic during my time in Germany, with input from all areas of society. The newly formed national Ethikrat took the consideration of the ethics of stem cell research as its inaugural assignment.

The sheer public prominence of intellectuals, however, is the most striking feature of German intellectual culture, at least through the eyes of an Australian. University professors, even those in the humanities, are highly respected members of their local communities as well as the nation at large. Politicians seek the approval, if not always the advice, of intellectuals on important policy matters. The media, both broadcast and print, is replete with forums for intellectual debate. Higher education is revered. The editorial boards of the best newspapers are filled with PhD recipients, as are government departments and advisory bodies.

Nothing of this scale is to be found in Australian intellectual life, even when reckoned in proportion to our smaller population. Nor does anything approaching the German capacity for self-reflection inflect our

national consciousness. The latter, at least, is changing. The past decade has seen a major rise in national self-consciousness in Australian public life, beginning with issues of reconciliation and the republic and now extending into the refugee debate. It is interesting that much of this debate is not focussed narrowly on the issues themselves, but on questions of national identity arising out of these issues, and on the deep ethical considerations which taking a stand on questions of identity inevitably involves, but which are all too often left unconsidered.

Perhaps this judgement seems a little one-sided, and certainly there are complexities to the German intellectual culture which I have not considered so far. For German intellectuals, perhaps through the very weight of tradition which enables the continued flourishing of an intellectual culture in largely phlegmatic times, are prone to a certain elitism. The respect of the general public for the intellectual counterbalances the possibility of criticism of intellectual involvement in public life in a way that would not be possible in Australia's anti-elitist culture. But the processes of democratisation march on as the media society takes hold, and the perception of elitism can be dangerous. German intellectuals may discover to their and their country's detriment, that the self-possession a media society generates in its newly empowered citizens might find a self-nominated intellectual elite to be irrelevant to their needs.

There is also a strong political identification of German intellectuals with the Left, a factor which has led to talk of a crisis amongst intellectuals since reunification. This itself is partly a matter of the concept of the intellectual, the struggle over which is political in nature. There are certainly public intellectuals who come from the Right, though they might not so readily identify themselves as such. The issue of the Nazi past also makes the notion of rightist intellectuals somewhat problematic, even now.

Yet these problems themselves form part of the self-reflection and self-analysis of German intellectuals. That they do so is a sign of the presence of an intellectual culture. But according to some, the form that this self-reflection has taken on in recent years, though perhaps the sign of an intellectual culture, is not a sign of a healthy one. Rather, it is a sign of self-obsession, of stagnation, of decadence. Jan-Werner Müller, in his recent book, *Another Country: German Intellectuals, Unification and National Identity*, offers up a number of quotations from prominent figures which speak to this effect: "The debate tends toward morose, piercingly rational discussion about matters so abstract that solutions are hard to imagine"; a "psycho-social analysis of identity searches and identity crises"; and "ghostly" debates according to Habermas.[21] The preoccupation of Germans with their national history can seem more like obsession to foreigners. This preoccupation is a factor in the reluctance of Germany to engage in international political affairs. But as I remarked earlier, this is changing, if slowly. The extreme length of the parliamentary debate on the sending of troops to Afghanistan was as much a current issue during my time in

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[21] Op. cit., p2. The quotations are from Marc Fisher, Lord Dahrendorf and Jürgen Habermas.

Germany as the sending of troops itself, but its occurrence is revealing of a growing national political confidence, however tentative. What is most notable in any of these facets of German society is that they are all topics which are debated in public forums, on both concrete, first-order, and abstract, second-order level. The first-order debate about national memory and identity has thus been accompanied by a second-order debate about whether identity itself is the proper object of debate, or whether thought should be directed towards more political and civic questions.

4.2 Intellectuals on Intellectuals

Assessing judgements by German intellectuals about their own status was the initial task I set myself in order to gain some understanding of German intellectual culture. Naturally I came to Germany with certain, generally favourable, preconceptions about that culture. I expected German intellectual life to be strong in comparison with that of Australia. In conversation with intellectuals, however, I was struck at first by the negativity they evinced in the assessment of their own public status. Time and again I was told that the intellectual scene in Germany was in crisis; that politicians and the public cared little for the opinions of intellectuals; that the new pragmatism heralded the onset of hard times for intellectual and academic pursuits; that academics did not seek to engage in public debate; and so forth.

It all sounded so familiar. And yet its disparity with the realities of German life seemed even more striking than the standard, exaggerated declarations of intellectual crisis in Australia. Even a cursory glance at German newspapers or television cannot fail to impress an Australian with the sheer volume of intellectual discussion. Of course, such judgements must be tempered by a consideration of their relativity. Perhaps intellectual life in Germany has come upon hard times, relative to the rosiness of the past. Yet my own estimation of the prominence of intellectuals in public life stood counter to these judgements, despite their pervasiveness. It was only when I spoke with some more senior academics and intellectual figures that I heard dissenting opinions. Conversations with intellectually inclined members of the broader public also suggested that the talk of crisis, of a general philistinism and anti-intellectualism, was somewhat misplaced and even disingenuous.

These differences in opinion brought home to me the slipperiness of the concept of the intellectual—how much it is tied to self-assessment, to self-proclamation. The belief of those who complain about the lack of influence intellectuals have on public opinion could well stem from the fact that their own desire for influence far outweighs any influence they do have. We tend to generalise from our own experience, after all. One must earn one's status as an intellectual, as I suggested in the previous section, and one must earn it publicly. Being expert in a narrow academic field does not give one status as a public intellectual. If younger voices have trouble being heard, this is surely no different from any other line of work.

Just as in Australia, talk of crisis amongst intellectuals can reveal the influence of older, romantic models of the intellectual. In fact, this influence remains extensive in Germany, despite the conscious efforts of many contemporary intellectuals to resist the weight of the 19th Century conception

of intellectuals as members of a *Geistesaristokratie*. Habermas, for example, rails against the confusion between intellectual influence and political power to which the aspiring intellectual is often prone. I will come back to this topic later. Let us now turn to a discussion of the visible signs of intellectual life in Germany—in the media, in academia, and in government and politics.

4.3 Intellectuals in the Media

I have already mentioned a number of times the prominence of intellectuals and intellectual discussion in the German media. To the foreigner, this prominence is revealed occasionally in the most remarkable manner. For example, the WDR philosophy show, *Philosophie Heute*, ran to over 100 episodes over more than a decade. This is even more noteworthy given the fact that WDR is a regional, if government-sponsored, television station. Nor was the content of the show restricted to popular or applied philosophy, but extended to purely philosophical and historical issues. Furthermore, when the focus was on philosophical implications of contemporary issues, these were presented and discussed in a theoretical and scholarly manner.[22] The run of the program testifies to its popularity: no television program, no matter how noble the ideals of the television station, runs for over a decade without public approval. Nor is this an isolated phenomenon. A new show on ZDF, *Im Glashaus - das philosophische Quartet*, fills the gap left following the demise of *Philosophie Heute*, though its focus is more on the application of philosophy to contemporary, public issues. The combined vision of its two hosts, the renowned intellectuals, Rüdiger Safranski and Peter Sloterdijk, its inaugural and second broadcasts occurred while I was in Germany. Another philosophically oriented program, *Nachtstudio*, also on ZDF, has been running for several years.

The public market for intellectual discussion in Germany is, hence, substantial. The possibility of similar shows running on Australian television seems remote, though certainly not out of the question. Naturally, this has to do with the fact that the profile of philosophy in Germany is higher than in Australia, a result both of the historical eminence of German philosophical thinking and of philosophy forming a crucial part of the liberal German education. Once again, this stresses the significance of education in nurturing the intellectual market. Equally important, however, is the vision of those involved in inaugurating projects like *Philosophie Heute*.

Nonetheless, the interest of such programs would seem to be partly dependent upon the high public profile of the hosts and the guests. Rüdiger Safranski is a highly regarded writer and philosophical biographer who has managed to reach the braoder, middle-brow reading public with his work, though he is sometimes disingenuously regarded by academic philosophers as a populariser because of it. Peter Sloterdijk is a somewhat controversial but nevertheless prominent philosopher, much of whose work is done in the public realm. Veritable luminaries as Gadamer, Popper and Habermas

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[22] An archive of the programs can be found at http://www.wdr.de/tv/philosophie/archiv/index.html

appeared regularly on *Philosophie Heute*, and prominent guests such as Martin Walser and Klaus von Dohnanyi have featured on *Im Glashaus*. This undoubtedly contributes to the marketing potential of such programs. The lack of figures of similar intellectual, let alone public, standing in Australia is a potential problem for developing such projects here, but one must also take into consideration the fact that the public profile of intellectuals and the presence of media outlets for intellectual activity are mutually supporting. High-profile intellectuals cannot exist without a media which sustains them. The two must develop hand in hand, and at present it seems that the strength of Australian intellectual life and public demand for intellectual activity both far outstrip the pallid interest of the Australian popular media.

Turning from German television to print media, the presence of intellectual activity is no less impressive. Trans-regional newspapers such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeiting* and *Die Zeit* are very high quality papers with a large proportion of newsprint devoted to in-depth analysis, intellectual debate and cultural news and features. Though the readership of the latter seems to have declined in recent years, something often mentioned by many to whom I spoke, its influence as a gauge of intellectual climate is undisturbed. Furthermore, the readership of similarly focussed journals and magazines has risen. The quality, in terms of both form and content, of a paper like *Die Zeit* is far ahead of anything the Australian dailies and weeklies have to offer.

Intellectual battles are often waged publicly in the *Feuilletons* of the newspapers and the features and opinion sections of the journals, and such battles serve as very public records of national self-reflection. Müller states that "in Germany, unlike in Britain and the United States, it is almost self-evidently legitimate that men and women who have distinguished themselves in cultural and academic matters, should comment on affairs of state," and furthermore that this commentary should take place in the trans-regional newspapers.[23] I think this is especially true of writers and others who have 'distinguished themselves in cultural matters,' more so than of academics. One could say that prominent intellectuals have achieved their status generally by distinguishing themselves as writers of widely selling books, rather than as academics, but in a sense this just follows from the notion of the public intellectual.

Müller also claims that, "only in Germany does one find intellectuals such as Jürgen Habermas occupying the first two pages of a weekly such as *Die Zeit*; only in Germany could a critic literally tearing apart the latest book by Günter Grass make the cover of the country's most important magazine, *Der Spiegel*; only in Germany does one find political scientists regularly publishing popular books on the state of the nation, often with pictures of themselves looking diffident and angst-ridden on the front cover..."[24] I think Müller gets away from himself a little here, since all these statements are true of France and of some Latin American countries,

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[23] op. cit., p14

[24] ibid.

and at least the last is true of the USA. Nonetheless, they are all true of Germany, and they are certainly not true of Australia.

A further difference between Australia and Germany is that in the latter country the public interventions of intellectuals do genuinely influence the course of public opinion. The *Historikerstreit* which took place in the pages of the *Intelligenzblätter*, most notably the *FAZ*, and the debate surrounding Martin Walser's acceptance speech for the Book Trade Peace Prize, served as reference points for the thinking of Germans about the legacy of World War II, the protagonists articulating the framework of a dispute which went deep into questions of identity for all the German people. Candidates for recent Australian analogies to this kind of event could only be the republican, reconciliation and the current refugee debates. Yet only the first could be called a genuine debate, and only a small number of intellectual figures were prominent throughout. The last two are less intellectual debates than the united voices of intellectuals speaking against the government and other sectors of society. That is not to say that intellectuals have not written about such issues in books, or spoken about them at conferences. Rather, missing from all of these events is the forthright and deeply reflective *public* debate one finds in Germany, a debate *between* intellectual figures conducted on the open stage.

Yet such a debate, I believe, would find real interest in the Australian public. Instead, we find sports stars and other celebrities called upon to comment on political, social and ethical affairs. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it is deplorable when such figures come to occupy the role of the leaders of opinion, and when there is no deeper input from intellectual figures. The problem lies in the nature of the popular media, in which in-depth analysis is jettisoned in favour of the sound-byte, a phenomenon which no doubt finds its source in some primitive, Pavlovian theory about consumer psychology. Real intellectual engagement cannot occur on this level, which is rather suited to the pronouncement of the expert. Even more effective than a real expert in a five second grab is of course a voice emanating from a mouth attached to a universally recognisable face.

While Germany of course has its own Murdochian '*Regenbogenpresse*,' what makes for the real difference between the two countries is the fact that the quality German newspapers and journals are not staffed primarily by professional journalists, let alone graduates of journalism courses, but by people with intellectual and academic backgrounds. Many doctorates grace the *Impressum* of *Die Zeit* and similar papers, mostly gained in such humanistic disciplines as philosophy. While these people are professional journalists in the sense that their profession is journalism, it is exclusively intellectual journalism, analysis and comment which occupies their writing, rather than reporting. Such people are intellectual figures in their own right, and many have come initially from intellectual careers outside of journalism, in writing or academia. This is linked to the German tradition of *Publizistik*, or intellectual journalism, "with the *Publizist* writing in newspapers and magazines, while often not being a professional journalist, and publishing scholarly books, while not being an academic." Rüdiger Safranski, for example, has built a

philosophically focussed intellectual career without ever becoming an academic, although he studied philosophy to a high level. Wilhelm Schmid is another. Such figures fall more easily into our notion of the essayist rather than the journalist, and are prime examples of what one might call genuine, professional public intellectuals. There are very few candidates for this title in Australia, in part a result of the fact that the media do not recognise the potential of a market which could support them and are therefore not active in cultivating it.

Intellectual involvement in public life in Germany also embraces a more traditional and an even more modern forum than those just discussed. It even combines the two. Thus, the monthly *Philosophische Nachtgespräche* in Munich's Muffathalle take place in the traditional intellectual venue of the café or bar, and are simultaneously broadcast live over the internet. These talks, inaugurated by the philosopher-cum-public servant-cum-politician Julian Nida-Rümelin, have met with much popular success, and attract some of the biggest names of German philosophy, such as Jürgen Mittelstrass, to the leading of discussion. These forums take seriously the call to reawaken the notion of the intellectual and civic society, and do so in a way designed to reach a large potential audience. Philosophical cafés have recently been instigated in a couple of Australian cities, and their founders could learn much from considering the reasons for the success of the Munich forum. This kind of grass-roots development of intellectual forums is just what is required to nurture the Australian market for intellectual activity at more serious levels, creating demands on the media and government for genuine inclusion of intellectuals in their respective domains.

4.4 Academia and Education

The role of the academy in German public life has a problematic history. One of the greatest elements of German society is the general respect for higher education and for the universities and their professors. But equally, the academy is a last bastion of quite entrenched elitism which often seems to protect itself through conservative and anti-democratic attitudes. Such attitudes are inimical to a genuine, public intellectual society. Processes of education reform currently in progress will most probably lessen the burden of this elitist culture by loosening the narrow professorial career structure with its lengthy *Habilitation* and due-serving culture. Hopefully these reforms will not threaten the positive aspects of the grand humanist tradition on which the education system was based.

It is interesting, however, that the endemic elitism of the German academy can be seen to have resulted from a certain corruption of German idealism itself, a corruption which coupled the humanist emphasis on the private autonomy of the individual with public ideological conformity. This led naturally to an ideological model of the public intellectual and to one which was divorced from the private education of the individual which was the province of the university. The public interventions of academics occurred, if at all, on an ideological level. Intellectuals saw themselves either as the conscience of the nation, as 'intellectual mandarins,' or as excused from civic responsibility altogether. This, in combination with the success of the German education system, contributed to the unequalled public estimation of the university, but equally to the gradual withdrawal of the

university from public life. Even worse, it led to the loss of the democratic values which combined with liberal humanism to form the general set of ideals developed in the Enlightenment: "Seen from this perspective, the educational ideals of neo-classicism may have sustained Germany's special development, her *Sonderweg,* which during the second half of the nineteenth century caused her to deviate from Western liberal concepts, supported by an educational elite which formed a one-sided, undemocratic alliance with state power and authority."[25] This development can be seen even earlier, for the authoritarian state policies of Prussia encouraged public ideological conformity and confined freedom to the private life of the mind and the development of the individual. Many recent struggles amongst intellectuals reflect the way in which the continued influence of these traditions conflicts with an ever-increasing emphasis on liberal democracy and civic virtue.

Many of the young academics and post-graduates I spoke with were impatient with traditional academic structures. This no doubt forms part of the background to their expressions of general dissatisfaction with the intellectual culture of Germany which I discussed in Section 4.2. Most claimed that academics do not involve themselves in public life, and become instead ever more irrelevant. They claimed that the public has no interest and even that Germany has no public intellectuals to speak of. These implausible comments are more understandable in the light of the continued influence of the traditional, elitist, apolitical conceptions of the academy. Those that are not an effect of professional envy and as-yet-unfulfilled ambition could certainly be the expression of a desire not for intellectual activity where there is none, despite this being their outward articulation, but for more democratic, more rational, more pragmatic, less moralistic and less ideological intellectual activity. Democratisation is, after all, a driving force of the university reforms themselves. But these reforms will only succeed where the force of democratisation aims towards a civic society, not an enterprise society. It is where democratisation is confused with instrumental notions of progress that the notion of the university becomes threatened. German universities face this danger, but not to the same extent as their Australian counterparts, for the vision of Humboldt still guides the former. Further, while the negative elitism of academia should be dampened, this must not be at the expense of public respect for higher education and for intellectuals in general.

Similar complaints of elitism and of a lack of public involvement are often made by and about Australian academics. This seems incongruous in comparison with the situation in Germany. Elitism, where it exists, is not accompanied by the respect for academia found in Germany, and Australia does not suffer under the traditional division between state-driven public ideology and personal autonomy which underpins the elitism of the German system. Australians in general are democratically minded and anti-elitist, and this is not less but perhaps more true of many of its intellectuals. One could say that the lack of public respect for universities in Australia *fuels* the accusations of elitism: a strange affair indeed.

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[25] H.-J. Hahn, *Education and Society in Germany,* Oxford: Berg, 1998, p15.

But what of the lack of public involvement? The desire for public involvement on the behalf of Australian intellectuals is, I believe, very strong. The frequent complaint of the silence of academics about public issues is more often than not misplaced. Discussions about public issues occur at a high level in university forums all the time. It is true that these discussions do not often find their way into the public consciousness, but this does not justify the accusation of silence. Nor does it even justify the accusation of *public* silence, since the latter involves an intention to keep silent which is not readily apparent amongst Australian academics. The perceived silence is rather a side-effect of the dearth of publishing opportunities which reflects the general conservatism and lack of interest of the Australian media. This is certainly not the case in Germany.

In some respects, the Australian and German academic-intellectual cultures are seeking the same ground but from opposite directions. Both are looking for greater participation, for a sense of *societas* and civic responsibility, for a republican culture driven by liberal ideals, for a rapprochement of intellectual culture and public life. Germany is moving towards this possibility from an elitist, individualist tradition (one must also not forget that democracy is a rather new phenomenon in German history); Australia from a very democratic but anti-intellectual tradition. Each, I believe, has something to learn from the other.

Dr Wilhelm Trapp, of the *Ethikrat* in Berlin, confirmed this thought when he said that, while, on the one hand one can study very theoretical subjects at a very high level in German universities, and on the other, there is a strong popular culture, there seems to be little middle ground of popular but intellectually respectable learning. This echoes some of the comments of David Carter on Australia. The growth of the middle-brow culture is what creates the market necessary to support a civic society, and it is towards this that both Australia and Germany are moving.

4.5 Intellectuals, Government and Society

The relationship between a society's government and its intellectuals will always be complex and problematic, and Germany is no different. Nevertheless, the general public respect for intellectuals in Germany means that the government is more likely to take heed of them. Willy Brandt is the name most often heard when the question of a mutually beneficial relationship between intellectuals and government is raised. A thoughtful figure himself, Brandt did much to encourage dialogue. Helmut Kohl is generally believed to have encouraged the opposite tendency. Gerhard Schroeder, while certainly not of an intellectual background, recognised the need, where Kohl did not, of maintaining dialogue with prominent intellectuals. Grass and Habermas, amongst others, have been involved in private discussions with Schroeder. This is a laudable move on the part of a politician whose relationship with the blue collar classes is more important for his voter base.

It is also a move which met with mixed reactions from intellectuals. Some see it as a cynical and shallow political move, an attempt to win the support of the intelligentsia. This is sometimes linked to the deeper fear that the traditionally critical, resistance-focussed role of left-wing intellectuals might dissolve if they become too approving of the ruling party. The

presence of a left-wing party in government means that the oppositional role of intellectuals is not as clear-cut as when the conservatives are in power. Others see Schroeder's move as positive.

This reveals the problematic relationship intellectuals have with the forces of power. There are two conflicting forces operating on the intellectual here: a desire for greater effectiveness in influencing public opinion and government policy; and the awareness of the traditional role of the intellectual as, in Said's terms, one who speaks truth to power. This tension will always be part of the lot of the intellectual, but it is exacerbated, I believe, by intellectuals who steer their function according to the dictates of ideology. It is overtly left-wing thinkers, for example, who feel their role to have become awkward with the election of a left-wing government.

Such thinking misunderstands the real role of both politicians and intellectuals in a liberal democracy. The primary interest of politicians in a democratic state will always be re-election. This is one of the downsides of democracy, but it is a fact which gives real importance to the role of the intellectual. The latter, in turn, must be conceived as existing completely within the democratic public, not as some kind of third power alongside the government and the law. When this is understood, the intellectual will see herself not as the voice of an interest group, but indeed as opposed to this ideological stance.

Thus, Habermas' own 'strategic interventions' in the *Historikerstreit* were opposed to the urgings of the political polemicist or ideologue and were concerned with "protecting the *conditions of possibility* of a democratic culture and a public sphere in which one could argue reasonably about political ends."[26] Even Habermas' political opponents recognise his value in this regard. This standpoint breaks with past self-conceptions of the role of the German intellectual as voices of total resistance which "failed to differentiate and to defend what little had been achieved in the way of liberal democracy..." and which led to the widely recognised failure of the Weimar left-wing, "...with disastrous consequences."[27]

This totalising stance was myopically revived by the generation of '68. The contemporary consequence of this stance, which is still playing itself out, is the narrowing of possible outlooks which the intellectual can take. This results in the ready identification of the intellectual with standard and received left-wing values, to the extent that any contrary voice is howled down with vituperation. This represents a view of consensus as the norm of democracy, where it is in fact anti-democratic. Thus, on the second episode of *Im Glashaus*, Klaus von Dohnyani suggested that a real ideological conservatism pervades German thinking, supporting a narrow corridor of discourse which is only transgressed with great effort and courage. It is for

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[26] Müller, op. cit., p91. See also Jürgen Habermas, 'Heinrich Heine and the Role of the Intellectual in Germany,' in *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticsm and the Historians' Debate*, trans. S. W. Nicholson. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989.

[27] Müller, op.cit., p104.

this reason that he supported Martin Walser in the aftermath of the latter's Peace Prize lecture. The resistance of the New Right to this left-wing hegemony suffered also from a desire for ideological consensus, though naturally of a different sort. This sort of thinking not only fails to fulfil the proper responsibilities of the intellectual, but it generally also fails to achieve genuine political or social change, for it thwarts the dialogue that is a necessary condition for such change. Müller refers to Charles Maier's criticism of the decisionism which ensues from this desire for consensus and which has come to pervade German intellectual, political and public life more generally:

> This refers to a tendency rationally and bureaucratically to limit choice as much as possible, so that in the narrow space remaining for choice, a seemingly irrational decision has to be made. Choice is then a matter of conflicting wills and seemingly irrational, innermost personal beliefs. In the same vein, when the shared search for consensus fails, the ensuing conflict tends to be particularly sharp and couched in the language of innermost convictions.[28]

That such a culture surrounds debates about post-Holocaust Germany identity is clear. Müller suggests rightly that the possibility for a productive intellectual culture in Germany depends on the ability of intellectuals "to resist not only the consensus of the powerful, but also the consensus of fellow intellectuals, and to make the persistent, painful effort to think beyond the intellectual *juste milieu* in a highly differentiated and complex society."[29]

Despite these problems, there are some clear cases where the activities of intellectuals have contributed to genuine progress in German society. A specific example is the success of the German environmental movement, both on a social and political level unprecedented anywhere in the world. This was certainly an intellectually backed movement in Germany, but its success came as a result of its active support amongst the general public and the sense of intellectuals that they were included in this public movement, rather than from intellectuals acting as the country's moral conscience. The democratic force of such citizens' movements has led to the partial democratisation of the self-conception of intellectuals themselves.[30] The traditional dichotomy of individualist retreat and public ideological conformity, of politics and ethics, has been somewhat dissolved as a result.[31]

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[28] ibid., p264

[29] ibid., p265

[30] ibid., p57

[31] Cf.: Eva Kolinsky and Wilfried van der Will, 'In search of German culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to German Culture*, Cambridge: CUP, 1998, p15; and Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Umbrüche und normale Zeiten: Braucht Politik Intellektuelle?' in *Kritik und Mandat: Intellektuelle in der Deutschen Politik*, Gangolf Hübinger and Thomas Hertfelder, eds, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt GmbH, 2000, pp269-83.

The influence of intellectuals actually *in* German policy-making parallels, to some extent, that of their involvement in the media. Just as the country's top newspapers are full of writers with intellectual backgrounds, so too are government departments and independent advisory bodies full of PhDs. This naturally increases the profile of intellectual activity within the government, and the possibility of genuine intellectual involvement in policy making.

One recent initiative is the *Ethikrat*, housed in Berlin, which brings together thinkers from very different perspectives to work together on the careful formulation of the theoretical issues surrounding contemporary ethical debates such as stem-cell cloning and importation. This is a real example of philosophical thinking being brought to bear on public issues, in a public way. There are public ethics centres in Australia, but they do not have the clout of the *Ethikrat*. Another well-known boost for German intellectual culture came with the appointment of Julian Nida-Rümelin to the newly created federal post of *Staatsminister für Kultur* in Berlin, an initiative which broke with the traditional restriction of cultural policy to state level (Nida-Rümelin is the second appointee to this position). Nida-Rümelin's experience at state-level in Bavaria should result in increased possibilities of public involvement in intellectual initiatives at a national level. This can only contribute to the development of a genuinely democratic, civic, intellectual society.

5. Conclusion

I have argued that Australia and Germany can learn much from each other in their quests to become more intellectually aware, civic societies. The respect Germans display towards their intellectuals, reflected in their public estimation as well as in their prominent participation in the media and in public life in general, is something which stems from a strong intellectual tradition which Australia does not have. By the same token, an observation of Australia's movement towards a civic society from a strongly democratic basis would benefit Germany in its attempts to move beyond the elitism and the ideological intellectual tradition which result from the theoretical division between intellect and ethics that underlies the real separation of public and private selves in German life.

It is clear, however, that the Australian public has a desire for such a society. Indeed, this desire is present in any self-consciously democratic country, as Australia most surely is. The general conservatism of the Australian media and government, rather than the oft-alleged philistinism of the broader public, is largely to blame for the low profile of the public intellectual culture in Australia. This is of pressing concern; unfortunately any solution is distant and would require profound changes in attitude. Recent and current governments have been reliably uninterested in intellectual input and reliably interested in quashing criticism of their policies. Only occasionally will there be a government which exhibits disinterestedness in its treatment of intellectuals and their forums, respecting the reciprocal and dialogical nature of democratic society. This is

unlikely to change in the near future. Nor is the attitude of the popular media.

The real solution is to be found in the increase and improvement of the relations between intellectuals and the broader public. This will lead to the broadening of the market for intellectual debate, and the involvement of more and more of the public in that debate. The power of quality education to provide the impetus for such improvement cannot be underestimated. Education lies at the very foundation of a liberal, democratic culture. To those who acknowledge this point, recent Federal education policy is perplexing and its purposes unfathomable. Our country would greatly benefit from an examination of the liberal ideals of education formulated in German humanism, which continue (for the moment at least) to hold a strong influence on Germany's education policies. This would need to be coupled with an emphasis on the importance of the public responsibilities of intellectuals in a civic society.

It is not only in the general aspects of its intellectual culture that Germany is of interest to Australia, however. Institutions such as the national *Ethikrat,* discussed earlier in the report, would benefit this country as much as they will benefit the other. Australia has many institutes which deal with issues of public ethics and public policy, but they are mainly based in universities and their reach is correspondingly limited. The formal debate of many important issues in Australia is conducted by specially created committees whose mandates are temporary, and the selection of whose members is often less than impartial. The institution of more permanent bodies, whose function is to conduct formal debate on topics of national importance, is to be recommended.

Appendix: Institutions Visited and Individuals Contacted in Germany

17th January 2002—Dr Volker Hartmann, Director, Goethe Institut Freiburg

I talked with Dr Hartmann about the public perception of intellectuals in Germany. He echoed the common belief that intellectuals do not participate enough in public culture in Germany, and drew a comparison with the overt political involvement of intellectuals in France. He also supplied me with the names of some contacts in Munich.

23rd January 2002 - Dr Michael Kolber, Professor in Philosophy, University of Freiburg

I attended a lecture by Dr Kolber on early twentieth century analytic philosophy, and spoke with him afterwards about the public contributions of philosophers in contemporary German society. He lamented the lack of participation of academic philosophers, and once again drew comparisons with other cultures, this time with Finland, where he had spent a number of years earlier in his career. In Finland, he states, it is normal and expected that academics will participate in civic life, in contrast to Germany. With regard to academically respected philosophers, Dr Kolber singled out Jürgen Habermas as exceptional in his participation in public and political life. While acknowledging the profile of other figures such as Peter Sloterdijk and Rüdiger Safranski, Dr Kolber suggested that they did not have the academic credibility to be able to build real bridges between the public and academic sectors.

27th January 2002—Beate Sander, intellectually interested citizen, Lörrach

Frau Sander discussed with me various aspects of intellectual presence in the German media, in particular the high profile and public importance of figures such as Marcel Reich-Ranicki. The television program which Reich-Ranicki had hosted for many years, *Das Literarische Quartet*, had recently ceased broadcasting. The impression was that a substantial lacuna in the intellectual life of the country had transpired as a result, though no doubt other programs and other figures would take their place.

1st February 2002—Prof. Dr Jürgen Mittelstrass, Professor of Philosophy, University of Konstanz, former President of the German Society for Analytic Philosophy

I saw Professor Mittelstrass give a lecture at one of the *Philosophische Nachtgespräche* in the Muffat Café at the Muffathalle, Munich. The lecture was broadcast over the internet. Professor Mittelstrass' lecture was relevant to my research in both its form and content. First, in its form it was part of a considered attempt to bring philosophy into public view, and in a manner traditional to the notion of a civic society, where the

public are participants in the reasonably informal discussion, rather than the scholar addressing the public from on high. Yet it was also innovative in its embrace of modern communications technology. It is important that this format appeals to younger members of the society.

Second, in its content, the talk addressed the division between the public world and the world of science and scholarship. Speaking from his own area of expertise as a philosopher of science, Prof. Mittelstrass raised problems associated with making science communicable and accessible to the general public while maintaining the integrity of science itself. He claimed that there has been no real framework developed within which useful discussion between science and the public might yield genuine ethical advancement over technological issues such as stem-cell cloning. This could only be a piecemeal process which evolves through democratic dialogue. This also reveals the dangers inherent in purely technological thinking and in the transferability of science between cultures without the necessarily concomitant transfer of Western democratic ideals.

I contacted Prof. Mittelstrass a few days after the *Nactgespräch*, as I would be travelling to Konstanz after Munich. Unfortunately he was engaged on a lecture tour around the country. He was nonetheless kind enough to discuss via e-mail some of the questions I wished to ask him. My questions concerned the role for philosophers in public life, and whether the theoretical conceptions which rule one's philosophical thinking bear on one's conception of philosophy's public role. Prof. Mittelstrass answered that what was important was one's attitude of civic responsibility and of the necessity to conceive of philosophy as a public, dialogical practice rather than a purely theoretical enterprise.

1st February 2002—Literaturhaus, Munich

The Literaturhaus in Munich serves as a focal point for literary activity in Munich, holding exhibitions, hosting talks and symposia, and providing a meeting place for those interested in literary culture. It also houses a literary archive and library, and a collection of artefacts from the family of Thomas Mann. This is only one example of many such institutions in a city so active in cultural areas. When I visited there was a special exhibition focussing on the life and work of Ödöl Horváth.

4th February 2002—Karin Sommer, Pressesprecherin, Kulturreferat, Muenchen

Frau Sommer talked me through some of the functioning of the Bavarian Kulturreferat, the state department which overseas all cultural activity in Bavaria. It was while he was Secretary of the Kulturreferat that Julian Nida-Rümelin instigated the *Philosophische Nachtgespräche*. Frau Sommer gave me a lot of information to take away, and gave me a number of contacts.

-- Julia Müller, Pressereferentin, Bayrische Akademie der Wissenschaften

I spoke with Frau Müller about the function of the Academy, and its role in intellectual life in Munich. She said that the public view of the Academy was generally negative. It was often considered too traditionalist and a waste of money. But she also said such views were a result of some bad reporting which the Academy suffered after the Symposium of the National Academies held in Munich in 2001. At this symposium, many members of the academies mad negative comments about the academies and about intellectual and research culture in Germany in general. Journalists seized on this negativity and beat up a crisis in the press. There were calls for reform in the academies, which after all are very old-school, elitist enterprises in many ways at odds with the Humboldt vision of holistic education. My visits to this academy and the one in Berlin, however, suggested that they play quite a strong role in the intellectual life of their cities, hosting and sponsoring talks and symposia, funding numerous research projects on themes of both civic and more narrow, scholarly interest.

-- Podium Discussion, Philosophy Dept, Ludwig Maximilian Universität, Munich

I attended a podium discussion on the contemporary relevance of the philosophy of the German idealist and important public figure Johann Gottlieb Fichte. The discussion was the last in a series sponsored by the Bayrische Akademie der Wissenschaften, which had the theme, 'Die praktische Natur des Menschen: zur aktuellen Bedeutung der Philosophie Johann Gottlieb Fichtes.' The discussion featured Dr Erich Fuchs, Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Jacobs, Dr Dr Hans Georg von Manz (all from Munich), Dr Ives Radrizzani (Lausanne/Munich) and Prof. Dr. Günter Zöller. Fichte, like his contemporary Humboldt, had an extraordinary influence on German intellectual culture, including on its education system.

5th February 2002—Christian Lüffe, Goethe Institut Munich

I met with Herr Lüffe at the instigation of Dr Hartmann at Freiburg. We spoke about many aspects of intellectual life in Germany, including some of the activities of the Goethe Institut, which has its head office in Munich. A recent symposium held in Munich hosted the American philosopher Richard Rorty, who is the subject of my PhD dissertation. The Institut also hosted a Kultur/Wissenschaftsbeirat which featured the participation of such philosophical honoraries as Jürgen Mittelstrass and Axel Honneth. Herr Lüffe said that, like in England, there is a traditional separation of politicians and intellectuals, much more so than in Latin countries. We discussed the political tactics of Gerhard Schroeder, including his well publicised conversations with Habermas. He also suggested that, apart from Habermas, there are few philosophers of real public prominence. I got the feeling that the reputation of Habermas is so great that the public activities of other philosophers merely go unnoticed. Herr Lüffe also made the interesting comment that symposia held at the Institut attract a larger

public audience when they concern literary, rather than political or ethical themes. He also said that the increasing pragmatism of politicians was dangerous, but that their desire to gain the respect of intellectuals was still apparent. Herr Lüffe also gave me a number of references.

-- Dr Daniela Rippl, Leiterin, Fachgebiet Wissenschaft, Kulturreferat, Munich

Dr Rippl was the moderator at the *Nachtgespräch* given by Jürgen Mittelstrass a few days earlier, part of her function as the head of science in the Kulturreferat. She has a philosophical background herself, having completed her *Doktorarbeit* in philosophy. This is interesting as an example of those with intellectual backgrounds moving quickly into important positions in the public service. We spoke about the *Nachtgespräche* and about Julian Nida-Rümelin who inaugurated them. We also spoke about more general themes to do with my research. Dr Rippl echoed the thoughts of Christian Lüffe, saying that a big gap exists between the intellectual and political worlds in Germany. As part of her job, Dr Rippl writes on cultural and scientific themes in local newspapers and journals, and produces monthly publications, the *Literaturblatt* and the *Wissenschaftsblatt*, outlining the full range of cultural and academic activities in Munich.

7th February 2002—Prof. Dr Klaus Oettinger, Professor Emeritus, Germanistik, University of Konstanz

Prof. Oettinger was very helpful for my research. He has spent a great deal of time investigating the very questions raised by my research, and is an excellent example of an academic who understood that being active in the community was part and parcel of his role as an intellectual figure. He continues to be highly respected in the city of Constance, where he moved when the university was founded. Constance itself is a perfect example of the German university town which is such an integral part of the German intellectual landscape. With Prof. Oettinger I discussed the history of the involvement of intellectuals in public and political life over the past fifty years, as well as the historical and theoretical background of German political thought, including if its various constitutions. He provided many insights, as well as opinions which were a little wiser and more considered than those of the younger academics I spoke to.

12th February 2002—René Fahr, PhD Student, Bonn

With René Fahr I discussed the relationship between the current government and the intellectuals. Herr Fahr suggested that the pragmatism and non-intellectual background of Schroeder has led to problems in this area. The movement of the left away from ideological towards pragmatic concerns has resulted in the disenfranchisement of the leftist intellectuals.

14th February 2002—Prof. Dr Klaus-Dieter Lehmann, Director State Libraries, Berlin

I attended a lecture by Prof. Lehmann at the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, entitled 'Blinde Flecken des kulturellen Gedächtnisses.' It concerned the rise to prominence of new types of knowledge in the digital age and the problems this created for the archiving and accessing of cultural material. The dominant form of knowledge is now the ephemeral and transitory, he claimed. Information must forever be recycled. A radical delocalisation of information has also resulted. Further, the question of the public's connection with the national cultural identity is raised when material is less often stored in physical form in libraries and museums.

-- Literaturforum im Brechthaus

Here I attended a small symposium on the theme of 'Brecht, Profanisation and Sacrilisation'. The symposium formed part of the Brecht-Tage, an annual series of Brecht-related events, with a different focus each year.

19th - 22nd February 2002—Conference, 'Psychologische Konstruktionen: Politiken der Erkenntnis', Freie Universität, Berlin

I attended this international conference and presented a paper on the 21st February. The topic of my paper was Richard Rorty's psychological nominalism and its consequences for his understanding of epistemic practices, a topic drawn from my PhD work in philosophy. The conference itself featured a number of interesting papers.

19th February 2002—Philosophisches Café, Literaturhaus Berlin

I attended another instance of the burgeoning philosophical café scene, this time in Berlin. The topic was more concerned with the history of ideas, but it was once again interesting to see how the general public was becoming involved in discussions of philosophy. The Literaturhaus itself was a similar affair to that in Munich, providing a meeting point for members of the public interested in literary and intellectual events, organising and sponsoring symposia and workshops, housing resident writers, and so on.

20th February 2002—Nigel Stanier and Margaret Hamilton, Australian Embassy, Berlin

I discussed my research interests with both Nigel and Margaret, and heard their opinions on the intellectual life of Germany. It was useful to hear other comparisons between Australia and Germany, providing my thinking with certain reference points. Both expressed enthusiasm at the amount and

level of intellectual and cultural activity in Berlin, while holding reservations about the dominance of theory over real action and decision-making.

-- Dr. Wilhelm Trapp, Pressereferent, Nationaler Ethikrat

I had a lengthy conversation with Dr Trapp, touching on many aspects of my research. We discussed the general state of intellectual life in Germany, the education system, the relationship between high and popular culture, the divisions between politics, academia and the public, as well as much to do with the functioning of the newly formed *Ethikrat* itself. The *Ethikrat* is a commendable achievement on the part of the German government. It meets to research and discuss specific issues of current importance and to formulate the ethical and moral significance of those issues without presupposing any particular ethical framework. Its members are drawn from many different walks of life, but all are high achievers in the intellectual realm, be they scientists, philosophers, clerics, writers, or whatever. They cannot be involved with the government in any active sense. All this is designed to ensure the impartiality of the *Rat* and the broadness and objectivity of its investigations. Its findings are then taken into account by policy makers when they encounter facets of these issues. In this way, intelligent analysis is provided for all those who have an interest in the issue. An institution such as this would be of great benefit to any country, and most certainly to Australia, by providing a central, respected advisory body on matters of ethical concern.

-- Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften and the Junge Akademie, Wissenschaftsforum, Berlin

I visited both these institutions and made use of the various research materials that were available. The Junge Akademie is an interesting institution, designed for young academics who do not yet have the success or seniority to become members of the full academy, but who are thereby still provided with the opportunity for intellectual exchange.

22nd February 2002—Seminar, Prof. Dr Peter Bieri, Professor of Philosophy, Freie Universität, Berlin

I attended a seminar by Prof. Bieri, the last in a series he supervised on the work of Richard Rorty, who is the subject of my doctoral thesis. Prof. Bieri is a personal friend of Rorty's and a prominent figure in German philosophy who is making inroads as a public intellectual. He has also participated in Munich's *Philosophische Nachtgespräche*.

-- Wissenschaftszentrum, Berlin

This is a centre for social science research. It is interdisciplinary, focussed on issues that the decision-making community and society at large have a special interest in solving. It co-operates with the universities of Berlin but is not affiliated with them. It has a useful library containing, amongst others, books written by those associated with the centre during its history. Several figures who have researched at the centre have investigated questions concerning the role of intellectuals in Germany.

23rd February 2002—Dr Justus Fetscher, Researcher, Zentrum für Literaturforschung

I met with Dr Fetscher at the Staatsbibliothek for a lengthy discussion. I was referred to him by the director of the centre, Prof. Dr. Sigrid Weigel. Dr Fetscher also has a research interest in German intellectuals, but his object of comparison is France. We spoke mainly about the antics of intellectuals since reunification, and the machinations and manoeuverings of intellectual figures belonging to various ideological camps, but also on a more general level about the relationship between politicians, intellectuals and the public. Dr Fetscher also provided me with a number of bibliographical references.

28th February 2002—Deutscher Kulturrat, Bonn

I obtained a large variety of publications and other information produced by the Kulturrat, the federal body which co-ordinates cultural activities on a national level. It has partly remained in Bonn while the head office has shifted to Berlin.

-- Herr Jörg Hausmann, Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft, Bonn

I had a lengthy chat with Herr Hausmann about the functioning of the Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft. He also generously provided me with many publications produced by the society. The society is a federal body whose main directive is the democratisation of culture, but which does not neglect commercial development. This was naturally of great relevance to my research. Herr Hausmann also gave me a number of bibliographical references to works written by figures within the society, such as Hermann Glaser's book, *Deutsche Kultur, 1945-2000.*