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MUSICOLOGY AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Paper given at 'Music and the University' conference, City, University of London, 7 July 2022

The modern concept of academic freedom is generally dated back to Wilhelm von Humboldt and the founding of the Berlin Universität in 1810.

Wilhelm von Humboldt, 'Über die innere und äussere Organisation der höheren wissenschaftlichen Anstalten zu Berlin' (1809-10), translated as 'On the Spirit and the Organisational Framework of Intellectual Institutions in Berlin', *Minerva*, vol. 8, no. 2 (April 1970), pp. 242-250.

'Since these institutions [universities] can only fulfil their purposes when each of them bears continuously in mind the pure idea of science and scholarship [these two terms are used to translate *Wissenschaft*], their dominant principles must be freedom and the absence of distraction (*Einsamkeit*).'

'At the higher level, the teacher does not exist for the sake of the student; both teacher and student have their justification in the common pursuit of knowledge. The teacher's performance depends on the students' presence and interest – without this science and scholarship could not grow. If the students who are to form his audience did not come before him of their own free will, he, in his quest for knowledge, would have to seek them out. The goals of science and scholarship are worked towards most effectively through the synthesis of the teacher's and the students' dispositions.'

'The state must always remain conscious of the fact that it never has and in principle never can, by its own action, bring about the fruitfulness of intellectual activity. It must indeed be aware that it can only have a prejudicial influence if it intervenes. The state must understand that intellectual work will go on infinitely better if it does not intrude.'

'Now as regards the organisational and material side of the relationship of the institution to the state, the only concerns of the latter must be profusion (in the sense of mental power and variety) of intellectual talents to be brought together in the institution. This can be achieved through care in the selection of persons and the assurance of freedom in their intellectual activities. This intellectual freedom can be threatened not only by the state, but also by the intellectual institutions themselves which tend to develop, at their birth, a certain outlook and which will therefore readily resist the emergence of another outlook. The state must seek to avert the harm which can possibly arise from this source.

The heart of the matter is the appointment of the persons who are to do the intellectual work.'

'The state must not deal with its universities as *Gymnasia* or as specialised technical schools; it must not use its academy as if it were a technical or scientific commission. It must in general – with certain exceptions among the universities which will be considered later – demand nothing from them simply for the satisfaction of its own needs. It should instead adhere to a deep conviction that if the universities attain their

highest ends, they will also realise the state's ends too, and these on a far higher plane. On this higher plane, more is comprehended and forces and mechanisms are brought into action which are quite different from those which the state can command.'

'The young person, on entry into university, should be released from the This content downloaded from the compulsion to enter either into a state of idleness or into practical life, and should be enabled to aspire to and elevate himself to the cultivation of science or scholarship which hitherto have only been pointed out to him from afar.

The way thereto is simple and sure. The aim of the schools must be the harmonious development of all the capacities of their pupils. Their powers must be focused on the smallest possible number of subject- matters but every aspect of these must be dealt with to as great an extent as possible. Knowledge should be so implanted in the mind of the pupil that understanding, knowledge and creativity excite it, not through any external features, but through their inner precision, harmony and beauty. [. . .] A mind which has been trained in this way will spontaneously aspire to science and scholarship.'

Humboldt considered the traditional German division between universities on one hand and academics of the sciences and arts on the other. He definitely favours the former, and suggests that the latter have only really flourished where there are few universities. Academies have less strict requirements for selection of staff, compared to the habilitation required in a university. Humboldt does believe the state should take exclusive control of appointments, rather than faculties.

'Although disagreements and disputes within a university are wholesome and necessary, conflicts which might arise between teachers because of their specialised intellectual interests might unwittingly affect their viewpoints.' – Very important point which is at odds with common processes for selection in the UK. But different in the academy.

This developed into the twin concepts of *Lehrfreiheit* (freedom to teach) and *Lernfreiheit* (freedom to learn), as subsets of *Wissenschaftsfreiheit* or *Akademische Freiheit*.

Charles Sanders Peirce, 'The First Rule of Logic', in *Reasoning and the Logic of Things: The Cambridge Conferences Lectures of 1898*, edited Kenneth Laine Ketner (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 165-180.

'...inquiry of every type, fully carried out, has the vital power of self-correction and of growth. This is a property so deeply saturating its inmost nature that it may truly be said that there is but one thing needful for learning the truth, and that is a hearty and active desire to learn what is true. If you really want to learn the truth, you will, by however devious a path, be surely led into the way of truth, at last. No matter how erroneous your ideas of the method may be at first, you will be forced at length to correct them so long as your activity is moved by that sincere desire. Nay, no matter if you only half desire it, at first, that desire would at length conquer all others could

experience continue long enough. But the more voraciously truth is desired at the outset, the shorter by centuries will the road to it be.

In order to demonstrate that this is so, it is necessary to note what is essentially involved in The Will to Learn. The first thing that the Will to Learn supposes is a dissatisfaction with one's present state of opinion. There lies the secret of why it is that our American Universities are so miserably insignificant. What have they done for the advance of civilization? What is the great idea or where is [a] single great man who can truly be said to be the product of an American University? The English universities, rotting with sloth as they always have, have nevertheless in the past given birth to Locke and to Newton, and in our time to Cayley, Sylvester and Clifford. The German universities have been the light of the whole world. The medieval University of Bologna gave Europe its system of law. The University of Paris, and that despised Scholasticism took Abelard and made him into Descartes. The reason was that they were institutions of learning while ours are institutions for teaching. In order that a man's whole heart may be in teaching he must be thoroughly imbued with the vital importance and absolute truth of what he has to teach; while in order that he may have any measure of success in learning he must be penetrated with a sense of the unsatisfactoriness of his present condition of knowledge. The two attitudes are almost irreconcilable.' (pp. 170-171).

There were also a range of statements by the American Association of University Professors, of which the key one is the '1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure', endorsed by a wide range of US institutions.

1. Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.
2. Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter *which has no relation to their subject* [my italics]. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.
3. College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

In the UK, the most significant definition of academic freedom came in the 1988 Education Reform Act, specifically in the so-called 'Hillhead amendment', named after Lord [Roy] Jenkins of Hillhead, which appeared within Section 202, about the

appointment of a body of University Commissioners (following the abolition of tenure), who would have various tasks:

‘to ensure that academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions;’

1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel

III. 4: Institutions of higher education, and more particularly universities, are communities of scholars preserving, disseminating and expressing freely their opinions on traditional knowledge and culture, and pursuing new knowledge without constriction by prescribed doctrines. The pursuit of new knowledge and its application lie at the heart of the mandate of such institutions of higher education. In higher education institutions where original research is not required, higher-education teaching personnel should maintain and develop knowledge of their subject through scholarship and improved pedagogical skills.

VI. 26: Higher-education teaching personnel, like all other groups and individuals, should enjoy those internationally recognized civil, political, social and cultural rights applicable to all citizens. Therefore, all higher-education teaching personnel should enjoy freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression, assembly and association as well as the right to liberty and security of the person and liberty of movement. They should not be hindered or impeded in exercising their civil rights as citizens, including the right to contribute to social change through freely expressing their opinion of state policies and of policies affecting higher education. They should not suffer any penalties simply because of the exercise of such rights. Higher-education teaching personnel should not be subject to arbitrary arrest or detention, nor to torture, nor to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. In cases of gross violation of their rights, higher-education teaching personnel should have the right to appeal to the relevant national, regional or international bodies such as the agencies of the United Nations, and organizations representing higher-education teaching personnel should extend full support in such cases.

VI. 27: The maintaining of the above international standards should be upheld in the interest of higher education internationally and within the country. To do so, the principle of academic freedom should be scrupulously observed. Higher-education teaching personnel are entitled to the maintaining of academic freedom, that is to say, the right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies. All higher-education teaching personnel should have the right to fulfil their functions without discrimination of any kind and without fear of repression by the state or any other source. Higher-education teaching personnel can effectively do justice to this principle if the environment in which they operate

is conducive, which requires a democratic atmosphere; hence the challenge for all of developing a democratic society.

VI. 28: Higher-education teaching personnel have the right to teach without any interference, subject to accepted professional principles including professional responsibility and intellectual rigour with regard to standards and methods of teaching. Higher-education teaching personnel should not be forced to instruct against their own best knowledge and conscience or be forced to use curricula and methods contrary to national and international human rights standards. Higher-education teaching personnel should play a significant role in determining the curriculum.

VI. 29: Higher-education teaching personnel have a right to carry out research work without any interference, or any suppression, in accordance with their professional responsibility and subject to nationally and internationally recognized professional principles of intellectual rigour, scientific inquiry and research ethics. They should also have the right to publish and communicate the conclusions of the research of which they are authors or co-authors, as stated in paragraph 12 of this Recommendation.

VI. 30: Higher-education teaching personnel have a right to undertake professional activities outside of their employment, particularly those that enhance their professional skills or allow for the application of knowledge to the problems of the community, provided such activities do not interfere with their primary commitments to their home institutions in accordance with institutional policies and regulations or national laws and practice where they exist.

2017 Higher Education and Research Act Section 2(8)

In this Part, “the institutional autonomy of English higher education providers” means—

- (a) the freedom of English higher education providers within the law to conduct their day to day management in an effective and competent way,
- (b) the freedom of English higher education providers—
 - (i) to determine the content of particular courses and the manner in which they are taught, supervised and assessed,
 - (ii) to determine the criteria for the selection, appointment and dismissal of academic staff and apply those criteria in particular cases, and
 - (iii) to determine the criteria for the admission of students and apply those criteria in particular cases, and
- (c) the freedom within the law of academic staff at English higher education providers—
 - (i) to question and test received wisdom, and
 - (ii) to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at the providers.

In 2020, The Academic Freedom and Internationalisation Working Group produced a document entitled ‘Model Code of Conduct for the Protection of Academic Freedom and the Academic Community in the Context of the Internationalisation of the UK Higher Education Sector’ - [Model Code of Conduct | Human Rights Consortium \(sas.ac.uk\)](https://www.humanrightsconsortium.ac.uk/sas.ac.uk) . Whilst recognising the difficulties inherent in defining academic freedom satisfactorily, this group emphasise the following freedoms, drawing upon the 1988, 1997 and 2017 provisions:

- teach, discuss, assess, define the curriculum and study within their areas of academic expertise and/or inquiry;
- promote and engage in academic thinking, debate and inquiry; • carry out research, and publish the results and make them known;
- freely express opinions about the academic institution or system in which they work or study;
- participate in professional or representative academic bodies;
- not be censored; and,
- fulfil their functions without discrimination or fear of repression.

[*Leave this*] Then, the 2021 bill from the Department of Education entitled ‘Higher Education: Free Speech and Academic Freedom’

10. Academic freedom is primarily concerned with the ability of academics to question and test perceived wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at the HEP. This is vital in ensuring that academics are able to teach and undertake research that challenges established boundaries in their respective areas.

11. A further related and fundamental principle in higher education is the principle of institutional autonomy. This freedom from outside intervention gives HEPs clear grounds to resist external attempts to influence curricula and calls to take action that would undermine academic freedom, such as dismissal campaigns against academic staff. This document focuses on freedom of speech and academic freedom within higher education.

This bit is key:

The HEP should not interfere with academic freedom by imposing, or seeking to impose, a political or ideological viewpoint upon the teaching, research or other activities of individual academics, either across the whole HEP or at department, faculty or other level. For example, a head of faculty should not force or pressure academics to teach from a their own ideological viewpoint, or to only use set texts that comply with their own viewpoint. This applies equally to contested political ideologies that are not associated with a particular political party or view, such as ‘decolonising the curriculum’.

The HEP also seeks to ensure that their disciplinary codes or procedures are drafted in a way that does not act to inhibit lawful free speech and/or that does not create the impression that those codes or procedures may be used to punish lawful free speech.

For example, a disciplinary code which refers to ‘offensive speech’ or to ‘bringing the [HEP] into disrepute’ without reference to the right to free speech may act to inhibit free speech or academic freedom that is within the law.

In the context of musicology, a series of factors have brought the question of academic freedom to the fore. One is the affair known as ‘Schenkergate’, relating to the publication of a special issue of *The Journal of Schenkerian Studies* in 2020 in reference to the article by Philip A. Ewell, ‘Music Theory and the White Racial Frame’, *Music Theory*, vol. 26, no. 2 (September 2020), at [MTO 26.2: Ewell, Music Theory and the White Racial Frame \(mtosmt.org\)](#) . The controversy related in particular to an article by Schenker scholar Dr Timothy Jackson, making arguments about the prevalence of anti-semitism amongst African-Americans, and also arguing that the lack of involvement of African-Americans in music theory had much to do with the low incidence of classical music in the common upbringing of members of this community. Jackson found himself removed from the editorship of the journal as a result. He contested this in court and a Judge determined that this may violate his First Amendment rights. Prior to this, Jackson responded with an article for *Quillette* (‘The Schenker Controversy’, 20 December 2021 at [The Schenker Controversy \(quillette.com\)](#)) arguing for many fallacies in Ewell’s argument and reasoning.

The second affair was the resignation from a chair in musicology at Royal Holloway in the summer of 2021 of Professor J.P.E. Harper-Scott (who I will refer to as ‘Paul’, as that is how all who know him address him). He published an article online about his reasons (<https://jpehs.co.uk/why-i-left-academia/>), which included the following:

Without direct experience of academics until I went (as the first of my family) to university, I naively imagined them to be how they were presented in novels and TV programmes: sometimes quite bumbling and unworldly, but always committed to the pursuit of truth, never trusting in a commonplace ‘fact’ without subjecting it to the most serious sceptical scrutiny. This did not turn out to be true.

[...] It is a place filled with generally quite well-meaning people, but on the whole not with brave people, not people who are willing to follow the truth wherever it leads.

[...] I would put the problem in this (Kantian) way: I wrongly supposed that universities would be *critical* places, but they are becoming increasingly *dogmatic*.

This was followed by an example of a statement on the need to ‘decolonise’ the classical musical canon, which was an example of what Harper-Scott deemed dogmatic, with a suggested alternative which he felt was more in the spirit of critical scholarly inquiry.

I share many of Paul’s concerns, and am also concerned with the trajectory of events relating to Schenkergate. But these relate to what I perceive as a range of factors which serve to limit and condition academic freedom in academia. So I offer you the following list of these, some of which would concern those on the left, some those on the right, but all of which I think should concern anyone for whom academic freedom, defined more or less in the ways above, is a defining aspect of a university.

External engagement 1: Industry and Institutions

We have heard a bit about this earlier today. Here I refer to the situation whereby academics enter into partnerships with external institutions and bodies, which may be part of commercial music industry, or may be state-supported or partially state-supported. These partnerships may relate to research, teaching or both. In particular, I have in mind the situation in which the external institutions provide some financial support for these activities. If there is no such thing as a free lunch, there may also be no such thing as a free teaching or research grant. For such institutions to ask that their finance or other support entail concentration on certain areas is fair and to be expected. But what if the results are not necessarily what the external body wishes to hear?

The point may be made most clearly through reference to wider examples. Suppose that some major manufacturing corporation sponsors some research into the effects of particular types of manufacturing upon the environment. Perhaps the researchers in question may find their work leads them to the inexorable conclusion that this specific corporation are responsible for a range of environmentally damaging actions in the course of their regular activities, contrary to their own promotional material which argues that they are an environmentally-friendly corporation, also drawing attention to the fact that they sponsor this research in order to bolster such a thing. If the researchers felt under pressure to artificially modify or not publish their findings, for fear of not upsetting the corporation, this would in my view severely compromise academic freedom and integrity.

Another example which relates to some of my own research has to do with the Siemens Corporation. Siemens operated slave labour camps at Auschwitz, exploiting tens of thousands of people. In the post-war era, they spent a good deal of time trying to modify their public image so as to be associated with a form of modernity which was presented as in opposition to the values of Nazi Germany. This included support for aspects of contemporary and avant-garde culture, including new music – they financed a short-lived electronic music studio in Munich at the end of the 1950s, at which a range of important works by leading composers were produced. But at the same time, they spent 30 years fighting compensation claims from survivors of their camps, ending up with rather measly settlements in the early 1970s. Now they have a range of official histories and publications. Realising they could not entirely erase their Third Reich history, this does get mentioned, but generally very briefly or even just in footnotes. Here I feel the ‘official’ research sponsored by the corporation is compromised and stands in stark contrast to other brilliant work done by other types of academics. To this day the Ernst von Siemens Stiftung, set up by the former Chairman of the Supervisor Board, who played a major part in reworking the corporation after World War Two, is a major sponsor of new music. At least indirectly, the financial wherewithal which enables this cannot be separated from the actions of Siemens before 1945, and for this reason the composer Mathias Spahlinger very publicly refused any involvement with them. But I know of plenty in new music who have connections, not always in full awareness of Siemens’ dark history, and generally many shy away from thinking about the implications of all of this. This even includes some who are sharply critical of other institutions or practices which

are linked to historic figures linked to the slave trade. Here again I worry about a particular form of sponsorship leading at least to self-censorship on the part of practitioners looking to win favour with the Siemens Stiftung.

The stakes are less often this high in musicology, but the principles remain the same.

There needs to be some commonly agreed set of principles which become a basic prerequisite for academics entering into some partnership with an external institution, whereby they are free to follow where their research leads them without fear of the institution blocking their access or terminating the partnership prematurely, and also so that future partnerships will not discriminate against those who may have written critically about the institution in the past.

External engagement 2: Practitioners

This relates to concerns explored in some depth in the conference on ‘Writing on Contemporary Artists’ at the University of Surrey in 2017, organised by Christopher Wiley and myself, and in a specifically musical context will feature in our forthcoming book *Writing about Contemporary Musicians: Promotion, Advocacy, Disinterest, Censure*.

First of all, what happens when academics are dealing with living or recently living practitioners or their estates – composers, performers, critics, promoters, and so on? Or if they have strong external connections with some of these people beyond academia? How free can they feel to write and research these independently, at least considering perspectives on them and their work which may not necessarily coincide with their own self-presentation, that of their publishers, and so on?

Is the role of academics to be ‘advocates’ for these figures, or is it the case, as I believe, that a too strong application of this principle (as opposed to simply researching things to which one is sympathetic, which is a different matter) can easily result in hagiographic treatment? How do academics maintain critical independence without the fear of being frozen out of some of these people’s circles, their materials, and so on, certainly something I know some scholars have experienced when writing even mildly critical things about some very sensitive composers. I have certainly felt the pressure when writing about a range of living composers whose work I also play, and to some extent upon whom I rely upon for some good favour, writing new works for me, recommending me to festivals to play their work, and so on. I am still not sure whether these positions are reconcilable.

One of the factors afflicting a fair amount of writing on new music, in my view, is a failure to consider this. As I have written about in the case of writings by Lois Fitch on Brian Ferneyhough and Pirkko Moisala on Kaija Saariaho, a position of defensive advocacy, coupled to attempts to pathologise any who disagree with a 100% favourable view, leads to something more akin to promotional material than more sober scholarly work.

Cambridge Professor of Music Marina Frolova-Walker recently framed this to me, in a way which I have written about in a blog post. She said that practitioners deal with ‘advocacy’, while musicologists with ‘criticism’. Even if one thinks the dichotomy is

less stark, it should be clear how these are very different values, and both play a part in the wider culture of music and musical discourse.

And then of course there are plenty of practitioners themselves active within academic music departments. Whilst some are engaged in the type of more dispassionate scholarship characteristic of the humanities – and I would like to count myself in that category – in other cases the work is of a different nature, framing practice in terms of research questions and context, and with the use of verbal material essentially to articulate the ways in which it qualifies ‘as research’. Sometimes this is virtually indistinguishable from the ‘artists’ statements’ well-known in the art world – drawing upon a range of elevated philosophers and intellectuals, and much terminology associated with them, in ways which appear essentially to bolster their work’s intellectual credentials.

Musical and other artistic practitioners frequently have external careers, working in an alternative economy in which, as Aleksander Szram alluded to earlier today, critical thinking is by no means necessarily respected or admired. Sometimes simply saying the right thing to the right people, those in positions of power able to do favours, and not questioning all sorts of dominant ideologies operative in these circles, is a much better bet than asking more difficult questions. This can lead to a situation which I conceive as ‘two cultures’ of scholars and practitioners in terms of the attitude and approaches they take. The more music in universities revolves around practice and practitioners, as is increasingly the case especially in this country, the more worries I have about the possibility of maintaining a culture of academic freedom and independence.

These issues do, for sure, also apply to those who, as I do, seek to write in non-academic arenas about music, for various reasons, not least because of the differing role that value judgement might play therein. But I think it is possible to differentiate between academic and other writing and not confuse the two. I am much less sure of where the distinction lies with non-written forms of practice.

I am genuinely unsure of what a proposed way forward might be in this respect, but would welcome any thoughts from others.

In both these cases, I do feel the need to say something about some ethnographic treatments of musical institutions and practitioners. There is a tradition of ethnographic work undertaken by scholars from the developed world relating to those from less privileged regions, leading to some reticence when it comes to questioning the views of the subjects, in full knowledge of the unequal power dynamic involved. But when this attitude is transferred to ‘ethnography at home’, the result can amount, if not quite to hagiography (though that is certainly possible), to a type of writing which amounts more to data collection than critical analysis. Of course it is the prerogative of an academic to take this approach if they so feel it is appropriate, but I do question whether baggage inherited through post-colonial guilt, but applied in a non-colonial context, leads to self-censorship which is so often a factor in limiting academic freedom.

Top-down demands by institutions.

This concern is by no means specific to music. In any institutions with a degree of central control of teaching and research, individual academics may find themselves in conflict with the explicit demands or requirements of their department, school, or whole university. Some may try to dictate the contents of curricula, or require academics to fashion teaching in general towards generalised criteria of employability. In other cases, support and internal funding for research may rely upon its falling within certain areas, which may be fair enough, but could also require the employment of certain methods which themselves might be more likely to produce certain types of results.

These factors might affect the extent to which teaching can realistically focus on critical perspectives upon the music industry or music institutions for which students might be looking to work.

Elsewhere, policies relating to diversity or ‘decolonisation’ might dictate musical choices or approaches to their teaching, at worst precluding critical treatment of certain types of music and musicians, and conversely requiring only negative or pejorative towards others. It is notable in my experience that some who are ferociously defensive of their independence in other contexts can also be supportive of top-down policies in these respects.

But I believe it is important to resist these as far as possible, and insist on maximum independence right down to singular academics when it comes to teaching and research. It is fair that departments need to require that certain things are taught as part of a programme, but the approach to so doing should be left to the individual academic as far as possible. In this respect I have a lot of sympathy with the 2021 Higher Education Bill.

Departmental ‘branding’

Different academics, sometimes of very different or opposing views, work together in departments. A further concern in terms of academic freedom has to do with pressures to conform with prevailing orthodoxies within a department, not questioning these or colleagues who propagate them, so as to maintain a consistent ‘brand’ for a department which is competing with others for students.

Sometimes the term employed here to put pressures on individual academics is ‘collegiality’, understood as working within a set of parameters, not markedly questioning them in ways which are incompatible with a group view. But this is not consistent with what I think is a decent definition provided in the UNESCO 1997 document, which is on your handout.

UNESCO 1997, VI. 32: ‘The principles of collegiality include academic freedom, shared responsibility, the policy of participation of all concerned in internal decision making structures and practices, and the development of consultative mechanisms. Collegial decision-making should encompass decisions regarding the administration and determination of policies of higher education,

curricula, research, extension work, the allocation of resources and other related activities, in order to improve academic excellence and quality for the benefit of society at large.’

All of this is entirely compatible with permitting academics to work without feeling pressure to conform or fashion their work in line with some ‘majority view’ in their department, and I think this is also essential.

Need to concentrate work in particular fields.

This is a huge issue in music. Securing academic jobs depends a good deal on one’s particular field and the job opportunities available. In the UK, fewer than 20% of students take traditional Bmus or BA courses with a humanities approach which includes historical, analytical, critical and other types of musicology. The remainder take courses in musical theatre, music technology, popular music to a lesser extent, and certain types of musical performance, all of which are primarily vocationally oriented. As a result, the openings for historical musicologists (especially those working on early music), music analysts, and indeed ethnomusicologists working on the non-Western world are limited. Even those already holding university positions can come under pressure to shift in certain directions in light of changing provision, and some have encountered redundancies as a result. In some contexts, a more critical view of the music industry compared to some presentations of it as a model of diversity and inclusivity may create problems for the individual academics if they are seeking work in institutions wedded to such a view.

Here I would look back to the Humboldt model and make what now seems a radical suggestion, which is that appointments should be administered centrally by the state rather than individual institutions, so as to ensure a fair distribution and representation of plural areas of teaching and research. Individual departments may recruit ‘in their own image’, and this can have the effect of shutting out openings for academics who once again do not fit with the dominant ‘brand’.

Social Justice

Here I have in mind the view put forward by William Cheng, in his 2016 book *Just Vibrations*, which to my dismay has received positive endorsement from a range of leading musicologists, though others, not least Peter himself, have written very critically about this. Cheng is dismissive of academic freedom and even of ‘the belief that academics have a right to pursue their work free from political pressures and without fear of termination’. In place of this he advocates a musicology which he says ‘upholds interpersonal care as a core feature’. This is hardly compatible with Cheng’s own dismissive remarks about other musicologists and musicology, but is part of a certain view of ‘social justice’ musicology – it requires that researchers comply with an unyielding political agenda and fashion their work towards this. I believe this underlies most musicology linked to the term ‘social justice’, seemingly innocuous, but in reality anything but. This applies to a recent position advertised at the University of Southampton Music Department which included ‘social justice’ in the job title. I do not see the difference between this and advertising a position in ‘Music and Support for Jeremy Corbyn’, ‘Musicology and Brexit Advocacy’, and so on.

Everything about the view of Cheng and others reminds me strongly of the dictates operative in the Soviet Union, in which academics and artists found themselves under strong pressure to propagate particular political ideologies, or find themselves facing censure, termination or worse under anti-‘formalism’ campaigns and the like.

This should be utterly unacceptable to anyone concerned about academic freedom, and I would go so far as to say that I would distrust the integrity of any work associated with Cheng or his acolytes, or decision-making (including peer review) in which they are involved.

Student-as-consumer

A new study conducted by the Higher Education Policy Institute – Nick Hillman, “‘You can’t say that!’ What students really think of free speech on campus’ (June 2022) – at <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/You-cant-say-that-What-students-really-think-of-free-speech-on-campus.pdf> - suggests that very significant numbers of UK students prioritise what they regard as demands for safety and protection from discrimination over free speech, wish to place issues such as sexism and racism outside of the boundaries of legitimate debate, would limit expression of views which offend certain religious groups, and so on.

We hear in many places about the vital role of students as ‘consumers’ who make the activities of universities possible, definitively placing teaching rather than research at the centre of their activities. The pressure on institutions to respond to demands from these ‘consumers’ can be intense, and it is by no means guaranteed that they will always act to protect the freedoms of academics in the face of student pressure.

Here I think we do need statutory measures implemented and enforced by the state, and also welcome some of the proposals in the 2021 act for this reason. For students to be able to hound out academics because they do not like some of what they have to say (as opposed to illegal activity or other things which transgress the inevitable constraints on free speech which need to be enforced by law) is to produce a culture more reminiscent of Mao’s China during the Cultural Revolution.

While formal disciplinary mechanisms precluding academic freedom in the Western world may not be that extensive, there are other pressures which can lead to self-censorship. These include increasingly precarious employment. In the UK there is no tenure system, and – as we are witnessing in other areas of the arts and humanities at present – academics can find themselves dispensable.

Some on the left often advocate for silencing of those they deem racist, transphobic, etc., but are highly defensive when others are accused of anti-semitism (or when those associated with trans politics are accused of misogyny). Some on the right focus on anti-semitism, advocacy of views they associate with terrorism, but are more defensive with the other things. I believe that only in very blatant and explicit cases should any of these be used as a justification for limiting academic freedom. Anti-Zionists and gender-critical feminists should not feel that their view is illegitimate in academia.

Musicology should be free to be critical – indeed musicology should, even must, remain a presence in academic departments, maybe in all of them. All academics must be free to follow where their research and convictions take them, even if their conclusions are not what their institutions, external partners, or colleagues want to hear. To fashion one's work according to the demands of any of these is another fundamental betrayal of academic freedom.

[To allow departments simply to become second-best performance schools for those who cannot get into the more specialised institutions which are not primarily academic, is to betray all that a university stands for.]