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The Idea of a Public University

John Holmwood

In this chapter, I want to address the idea of the public university – specifically, the functions that might be attributed to it – and to do so in the context of changes in the wider environment in which universities operate. I shall also examine the idea of the *public* (or publics), from which the modern university might derive its meaning as a *public* university. In doing so, I will draw on the work of the American pragmatist philosopher, John Dewey.

I shall also connect these functions to the theme of the ‘Big Society’, something promoted by the Prime Minister, David Cameron, as the alternative to ‘Big Government’ and the key idea behind reforms across a number of different sectors. I shall suggest that the problems associated with this idea derive from a failure to articulate the meaning of the public (or publics).

The problems I address are not new. Writing in 1963, Clark Kerr (2001 [1963]) set out the history of the modern research university – or ‘multiversity’ – as an institution sustained by contract research and continuous government grants. With increased public funding came an increased political interest in using that funding to direct the university towards meeting public policy objectives. For the most part, these came to be reduced to the twin objectives of securing economic growth and an educated workforce. However, for Kerr, the university also served a social mission. If this remained obscured by its other functions, the explanation was, in part, because the rise of mass higher education was also associated with a general societal process of democratic inclusion and a narrowing of economic inequalities.¹

What is radically different about our own times, amid the continuities, is that for the first time the university is being addressed as an instrument

to extend social inequality. The promotion of the market mechanism in higher education is set to reproduce and solidify inequalities, rather than to dissolve them. We can no longer, then, avoid the issue of the university's social mission and, in particular, its role in social justice. Following Dewey, I shall argue that the problems of the public are problems of social justice. The failure of present policies and the debate that surrounds them is the common reduction of the university to instrumental functions.

The functions of a university

I do not intend to provide a detailed history of the university. An institution that can trace its origins to the thirteenth and fourteenth century, it has come to be a central part of the modern social order, and, in the course of that journey, it has drawn its character and functions from the wider environment in which it finds itself. A number of key functions have been attributed to the university from that, endorsed by Immanuel Kant and Alexander von Humboldt, of the university as a repository of reason and culture (as expressed by the humanities and the faculty of philosophy), to Cardinal John Henry Newman's idea of the university as a community engaged in the education of character and intellect (as expressed in the collegiate organization of Oxford and Cambridge). Whereas Humboldt argued for the importance of research alongside teaching, Newman saw no role for research within the university, believing it to be organized around utilitarian ends and to be something that could be pursued just as effectively outside the university, where it would not conflict with the latter's proper purposes.

These ideas of the university have a powerful hold, but were already in decline when Max Weber wrote his essay on 'science as a vocation' (1948 [1919]). According to him, scholarship and research were becoming more specialized and a university appointment was increasingly seen, not in terms of a 'vocation', but in terms of employment and a career embedded within a bureaucratic organization.² Weber was reflecting on the rise of the university in the United States and, in part, on the impact of the latter's democratic ethos, which encouraged a practical attitude to education and its value in everyday, commercial life. In contrast, the ideal of the pursuit of knowledge as a 'vocation' betrayed its origin as part of an upper-class status order to which others might aspire to be recruited

(though not women or Jews – to the latter, Weber said, ‘abandon all hope’ of academic advancement [1948 (1919): 134] – and, of course, in the USA, unnoticed by Weber, not black Americans, who were to be ‘segregated scholars’ [Wilson 2006] until the 1960s).

For much of the twentieth century, the development of universities in the United States seemed to progress in a manner different to that of other countries. To be sure, the rise of the ‘civic’ universities in England and Wales from the late nineteenth century onwards, together with the rather different Scottish universities, had begun to loosen the hold of the collegiate idea of the university and its orientation toward the ‘liberal professions’. As Sanderson argues, the new ‘civic’ universities were designed to meet the demands of local business elites (1972).³ However, the hold of the collegiate idea was also evident in the Robbins Report (1963). It gave rise to the creation of seven ‘new universities’, which incorporated the collegiate idea into their organization and architecture. The idea that a university education was not simply about the transmission of skills, but also about a broader development of the individual which required interaction among teachers, who also pursued research, and among students, who were ‘in residence’ and part of a community of individuals pursuing courses of study together, was a central idea (which also became the norm for older civic universities, too).

The traditional idea of the university, as Weber acknowledged, served an elite status order. In England this involved an alignment of the private secondary schools, such as Eton, Harrow, Westminster and Winchester, with Oxbridge colleges, something also reflected in their common architecture of quadrangle, dining hall and chapel. A significant part of the history of the university in the twentieth century, then, is its accommodation to the transformation of that status order and the democratization of the wider society that it served. This is precisely the significance of the Robbins Report and its recommendation of a system of public higher education and its expansion.

Although the particularities of university and secondary school systems differ across countries and, indeed, in the case of the UK within them, too, there are similarities in how they have developed. Paradoxically, given its determinedly anti-elitist ethos, the United States is one of the few countries to have private universities – the ‘ivy league’ – alongside state-funded institutions (going back to the ‘land grant’ institutions introduced by President Lincoln). Otherwise, the dominant model is

of publicly funded institutions. Some universities, like the publicly funded institutions of the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, also charge tuition fees to students (in contrast to the public funding of universal secondary education). With the charging of fees comes the attenuation of the residential idea of the university, as students combine study with part-time work and seek to reduce their costs by living at home and attending the 'local' university. It is in this context that the relatively equal status of different institutions becomes important, or else status differences also express the ability to pay. This is a very clear tension in the US system of higher education and one that the government is now seeking to introduce into Britain.⁴

At the same time that Lord Robbins delivered his report to the British Parliament, Clark Kerr, President of the University of California, delivered his Godkin lectures on the uses of the university (Kerr 2001 [1963]). He spoke of the transformation of the university into a 'multiversity'. He used this term to indicate the different functions, or uses, of the modern university and how it had been transformed from a single community into a multiplicity of communities, each reflecting its different functions. Kerr was also clear that while modern universities (and their academic constituencies) were jealous of their autonomy, they were also highly adaptive institutions. Most of the changes had taken place as a consequence of changes in the wider social environment, to which the university had adjusted, but in each case the adjustment had also been brought about by the active engagement of at least one of its constituent communities. This frequently gave rise to conflict within the multiversity, just in so far as a conflict of interest among its different constituencies was associated with shifts in the valuation of its different activities (for example, with regard to rewards of promotion, status and the like).

The multiversity, for Kerr, then, is necessarily pluralist, but also necessarily in tension. What is at issue, now, is the extent to which that plurality and tension is being resolved by the reduction of the university to the determination by the market and utility, where the university becomes not a multiversity but a monoversity; that is, neither a community in Newman's sense nor a plurality of communities in Kerr's, but a corporation delivering higher education.

Essentially, Kerr describes two broad trends. The first was a shift from the university concerned with teaching (associated with the liberal professions of law and religious ministry, and subsequently medicine)

to one concerned with research (with its emphasis on postgraduate rather than undergraduate education). The second is the shift from higher education as the province of an elite (initially, of men) to it being made available for all as part of a mass education system that integrated secondary school education with higher education. Each development is associated with what Kerr called the 'knowledge industries'. These incorporated research and development as aspects of the corporate capitalist economy and, at the same time, increased the demand for an educated workforce (in effect, creating new professions and quasi-professions, based on university learning). However, the expansion of the mass education system was also associated with 'democratization', as education became seen as a right to be guaranteed by the state and equal opportunities became embodied within that right (although, of course, in the United States racially segregated higher education remained a reality, unremarked by Kerr when he first delivered his lectures).

Thus, a number of refractions separate Cardinal Newman's disparagement of research and its utility, in his expression of the essential idea of the university, from Clark Kerr's idea of the multiversity and its multiple utilities. Kerr's multiversity is a research university and it is located in a mass education system. With the rise of the knowledge economy it has also become increasingly an object of public policy. Where the university had previously been maintained by private and public endowments, the multiversity would increasingly be sustained by contract research and continuous government grants. Even if Newman's high ideals were attenuated, the growth of the research function within universities did not displace the importance of teaching. However, it did frequently bring research into conflict with it. In addition, a new conflict emerged between 'external' pressures to make education reflect the demands of employment and vocational training and the 'internal' orientation of academics toward the reproduction of disciplines and recruitment to postgraduate programmes.⁵

Kerr's arguments coincided with the expansion of higher education and with the enrolment of a generation of students, many of whom were the first in their families to attend universities. His wider arguments about the university were quickly overtaken by a wave of student and faculty radicalism that attacked his acceptance that one of its roles was engagement with the corporate economy. His critics perceived a different role for the university, as part of the democratization of public life against its increasing domination by corporate interests. In this way, an

older idea of the university as a community engaged with fundamental issues of culture and public life was also articulated, if only briefly, and frequently with a radical and combative tone.

Kerr's account of the modern university was prescient. The 'students for democracy' of the 1960s and 1970s have become recast as consumers of education and investors in their own human capital (even if the student occupations and protests that have accompanied the current government's plans have provided an echo of those past concerns).⁶ Kerr's book has been republished four times, when he returned to his original themes with the benefit of hindsight. Each new edition shows him becoming progressively less sanguine and more concerned about the future. He came to suggest that some of the functions of the multiversity might atrophy and that a more restricted funding environment (associated in his local context with relatively poor productivity growth in the US economy and competing demands for public funds) would increase competition among universities, a competition in which privately funded universities might benefit over those still reliant on some public funding.⁷

Universities, Kerr argued, would also confront resistance to spending on activities other than those that could be justified in terms of their contribution to health and medicine, economic growth or the development of the military-industrial complex, all of which could command support in the electoral politics of public spending. There would be a decline, he suggested, in the humanities and most social sciences, except that they functioned in support of these 'big three' topics, and there would be a decline in the concern with equalities and the social mission of the university. Each of these developments, then, represents a potential 'pathology' of the modern university, especially of the research university. In this respect, then, for Kerr, the health of a university cannot be judged simply by its financial position or place within global rank orders, but by the extent to which it manages the tensions among its different purposes.

Despite the fact that nearly all university vice-chancellors and senior administrators, and civil servants involved in higher education, have read Kerr's account of the multiversity, it is hard to resist the conclusion that current policies for higher education in the UK reinforce the very pathologies that Kerr described. For example, the current emphasis is upon the 'big three' topics and research is to be driven by a funding agenda that emphasizes the importance of 'impact' over the short and medium term. Public funding for teaching in the arts, humanities and social sciences has been withdrawn, to be retained only for 'priority'

subjects (themselves defined by reference to the ‘big three’). Otherwise, the direction of university teaching and research is to be determined by the market, to be driven by student choices in the light of their (necessarily partial and problematic) knowledge of the differential returns to education from different subjects and universities. These differential returns are expected to be matched by differential fees, with ‘for-profit’ providers and further education colleges entering to undercut fees at the lower end. Education to degree level will no longer presuppose a university education, a return to the situation that prevailed prior to the Robbins Report.

The introduction of student fees does not create a system that is sustainable for the future. With fees at £6,000, students will pay more for courses that will receive fewer resources than they do under the system of funding that is being replaced. With fees at £9,000, and set to rise higher in the future, students will be asked to pay high fees for the privilege of attending a selective university with the likely consequence that a portion of those fees (especially when fees rise further) will be used to fund research. The conflict between teaching and research that Kerr argued to be characteristic of the research university is set to continue. Indeed, it is now made general to the system, despite the emphasis on placing the ‘student at the centre’, with teaching universities starved of resources (including access to research funding) and research universities privileging research over teaching. Insofar as students are attracted by the ‘brand’, they will be encouraged to seek a place at a ‘selective’ university regardless of its teaching quality or of the proportion of the fees that they bring being devoted to teaching.

Finally, the introduction of higher, differentiated student fees exacerbates issues of equality of access and undermines the social mission of universities in terms of the democratization of higher education. Indeed, the differentiation of universities is likely to reinforce current tendencies where most students are from middle-class backgrounds, with low participation from students from working-class backgrounds. Moreover, as Roberts (2010) has suggested, the differentiation of types of universities is likely to create a division between students from the upper middle class and those from the middle class, with the former concentrated in ‘selective’ universities.⁸

Writing in 1931 in his book on *Equality*, R.H. Tawney observed that the English make a ‘religion of inequality’ and, further, that they seem to ‘like to be governed by Etonians’ (1964 [1931]). Our new political

governing caste has certainly made the market its article of faith,⁹ with the cynical consequence that only those able to attend 'elite institutions' will have the advantage of enjoying the wider purposes of education that have previously sustained our system of public universities. If, as Newfield argues (2008), the attack upon the public university is an attack upon the middle class – that is, the wider population (including women and ethnic minorities) brought into universities following the expansion of mass higher education and, thus challenging higher education as a form of cultural capital appropriate for the privileged few – then the reforms currently being enacted in England represent that attack in its pure form. It is not the consequence of the atrophy of public funding and various kinds of populist tax revolts as skirmishes within the cultural wars. It is systematic government policy designed to dismantle fifty years of educational policy that sought to establish education as a social right.

The idea of the public

For the most part, Kerr was concerned to provide sociological description rather than philosophical insight. In these terms, there can be no way back from the multiversity to an earlier idea of the university, nor can the public university be defended by reference to principles that derive from a status order with which it is now in conflict. However, it is important to acknowledge that the necessary public functions of the university are part of the same processes of development that seem now to be calling them into question. To argue for the public university and its social mission is not to look back to a 'golden age' of the university before mass higher education, but to embrace the very principles associated with the development of mass higher education.

For Kerr, the atrophy of the public functions of the university represents a potential crisis in the 'advancement of trained intelligence' (2001 [1995]) and this, for him, is what the future requires, not nostalgia for a (misrepresented) past. Kerr derives the phrase from Alfred North Whitehead, but a similar term is used by the American pragmatist philosopher, John Dewey, in his idea of 'collective intelligence'. I suggest that it is through the idea of the public university as an instrument for 'collective intelligence' that we can begin to understand its fundamental role for culture and for public life. In what remains of this chapter, I shall address this requirement in terms of the idea of the 'public' and how its

interests may be served by the university.

First, I want to examine the rhetoric of the ‘public’ and its ‘interests’, as it functions in the justifications of current policies, especially those associated with the ‘Big Society’ and the opposition to ‘Big Government’. The public is variously invoked as having an interest in the reduction of the fiscal deficit, an interest in greater choice and an interest in the efficient delivery of services. In this way, the public is identified as an aggregate of private individuals and government is tasked with representing its interests. The public interest, conceived in this way, is set against a tendency of groups to exert a form of collective power to maintain services to their own, private benefit. In this way, ‘producers’ of services are set against ‘consumers’ and the way to prevent their ‘monopolistic’ appropriation is via a mechanism that serves their interests directly, that of the market.

Indeed, the problem of ‘collectivities’ is extended to government itself, which, apparently, must represent the public against its own tendency to appropriate decision-making. On its website, the Cabinet Office states that, ‘The Big Society is about helping people to come together to improve their own lives. It’s about putting more power in people’s hands – a massive transfer of power from Whitehall to local communities.’¹⁰ One of the weaknesses of this rhetoric is that the transfer is to communities in which markets also operate. At best, it represents the self-organizing community as the solution to ‘market failure’.¹¹ However, the market is also represented as putting more power in people’s hands and so the policies that promote the ‘Big Society’ are simultaneously engaged with the promotion of the market. What is missing is any understanding that the market is itself ‘anti-social’, bringing about the ‘disorganization’ of the community whose empowerment is being sought. The ‘Big Society’ is countered to the ‘Big State’, but there is no equivalent analysis of the role of the market.

The first usage of the term ‘Big Society’ – or its analogue, the ‘Great Society’ – occurs in a speech by President Woodrow Wilson in 1913. He uses it to describe the shift from a society of individuals to a society where the relation among individuals was mediated by large-scale organizations, primarily those of the corporate economy. This theme was taken up by Graham Wallas in a book, *The Great Society* (1936), but which he describes in a preface as having a gestation back in 1910 and to discussions with the American political theorist, Walter Lippmann. I do not want to get into the nature of Wallas’ argument for a new social

psychology, but Lippmann's (1925) contribution to the debate is crucial, since it forms the context of John Dewey's intervention.

Essentially, the core of Lippmann's argument is that increased social complexity undermines the possibility of democracy approximating the forms endorsed by standard liberal accounts of representative democracy. The public, for Lippmann, is increasingly ill-equipped to make the sort of judgements attributed to it within democratic theory. He argues that the public is a 'phantom category' (that is, something that functioned only in theories of democracy and had little real substance). For Lippmann, what Dewey came to call the 'eclipse of the public' is a necessary consequence of the complexity of modern societies that increasingly required organized expertise of various kinds. In consequence, 'expert opinion' would replace 'public opinion' and democracy would necessarily be attenuated. Lippmann anticipated that expert opinion would operate in conjunction with the state and economic corporations and, in effect, would be 'co-produced' by them. These are ideas about the relation between knowledge and public policy that continue to determine the thinking of research councils and government, especially in the UK in terms of the 'impact agenda' (Research Councils UK n.d.).

Dewey's book, *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), is a riposte to Lippmann. However, he also noted that the 'eclipse of the public' is prefigured in the very idea of the market economy in which decisions by (consumer) sovereign individuals are perceived to be efficiently aggregated through impersonal market exchanges. This is held to be in contrast to their inefficient aggregation by collective political decision-making through the agency of the state. In other words, according to Dewey, the idea of a political realm in which the public expresses its democratic will is already severely compromised by the liberal distrust of 'group', or collective, actions and the idea that it is only the market that can properly express the general interest.

Dewey proposes to rescue the public from its eclipse by market and expert opinion by a radical refocusing of political philosophy, not as a *theory of the state* and its forms, but as a *theory of the public* and of the relation of institutional forms to the public, with the university as one crucial institutional form. He does so through an account of the 'social self', which he contrasts with the 'liberal self', as expressed in economics and political theory (in this way, also indicating the normative assumptions in the liberal idea of instrumental knowledge).

Dewey begins from the argument that the individual is necessarily a

social being involved in 'associative life', and that this is true of what are conventionally regarded as private actions as well as of public actions.¹² For Dewey, individuals form associations, but they are also formed by associations. At the same time, the multiplicity of associations and their interconnected actions have consequences. In all of this, Dewey's idea of a 'public', and of the several nature of 'publics', is crucial. It contains a strong idea of democracy associated with participation and dialogue, but does not deny that there will be functionally differentiated publics, whose articulation will be at issue. The key to his definition of a public is contained in the idea of action in the world having effects and consequences that are ramified and impact upon others who are not the initiators of the action. Essentially, all action is associative action, but a public is brought into being in consequence of being indirectly and seriously affected by those actions of others. His analysis of the problem of modern democracy, then, is concerned with the imbalance in the development of associations and the proliferation of problems in areas where the public cannot properly defend itself.

This immediately raises the issue of the state as the representative of the 'public'. It is the point at which Dewey shifts gear to argue that the wider idea of a public can achieve a level of generality that requires organization and personnel to express it. This is the idea of a state, understood as a set of public authorities. Thus, Dewey proposes that, 'the lasting, extensive and serious consequences of associated activity bring into existence a public. In itself it is unorganized and formless. By means of officials and their special powers it becomes a state. A public articulated and operating through representative officers is the state; there is no state without a government, but also there is none without the public' (1927: 67).

Dewey by no means suggests that these developments mean that a state necessarily will act in the public interest – power can be accrued, authority can be exercised despotically and, indeed, the personnel of government can act on their own private or other special interests. The fundamental point, however, is that the state takes its meaning from the idea of a public and its interests, and that this is conceived as a dynamic thing. This means that, for Dewey, not only associations external to the state, but the state itself and its modes of organization are subject to change and revision in the light of other changes in the development of associative life. In other words, although the state exists in relation to the problems of associative, social life that create a public, its own

forms and modes of organization may come to constitute a problem for the expression of that public, although, paradoxically, that is its *raison d'être*. So far, then, Dewey is expressing ideas that fit with concerns recently expressed under the idea of the 'Big Society'.

However, Dewey has as his target two pathologies. The first *sets the state against the public*, and is attributed to liberal individualism and its argument for the minimum state. The second is attributed to the conditions of modern corporate capitalism in which there appears to be an '*eclipse of the public*' brought about by the dominance of corporate interests over the state. Dewey argues that the first undermines the individual as surely as it seeks to set the individual free. This is because the ruling idea of liberalism is that of the individual free of associations, which is linked with the idea of the 'naturalness' of economic laws (embodied in market exchanges). It is precisely the ideology of liberal individualism, according to Dewey, that suggests that the market can replace the state as the regulator of social life, but leaves the individual vulnerable to the outcomes of the market.

However, according to Dewey, this doctrine emerged just as the idea of an 'individual' free of associations was being rendered untenable by the very developments of corporate capitalism with which it was linked. Thus, Dewey says that, "the individual", about which the new philosophy centred itself, was in process of complete submergence in fact at the very time in which he was being elevated on high in theory' (1927: 96). The ideology which operates in the name of the individual, then, serves to undermine the very protection of the individual from egoistic, corporate associations that were themselves the very antithesis of the doctrine being espoused.

For Dewey, what is necessary for the proper expression of the public and for democracy is a 'Great Community'. Without it, the 'Big Society' involves nothing more than state-supported corporate interests, together with partial and ad hoc responses. In contrast, Dewey writes of democracy in the 'Great Community' that:

From the standpoint of the individual, it consists in having a responsible share according to capacity in forming and directing the activities of the groups to which one belongs and in participating according to need in the values which the groups sustain. From the standpoint of the groups, it demands liberation of the potentialities of members of a group in harmony with the interests and goods which are in common. Since every individual is a member of many groups this specification cannot be fulfilled except

when different groups interact flexibly and fully in connections with other groups. (1927: 147)¹³

The university and the public

What does all of this have to do with the modern university? Dewey was also writing at the birth of the ‘multiversity’. Knowledge production and professional services were coming increasingly to be university-based, and, at the same time, the university was becoming increasingly involved in the corporate economy with the commodification of research. Yet, Dewey wishes to argue that the university has a necessary role for democracy and in facilitating the Great Community.

The key issue is whether the complexity attributed to modern society and the problems it poses for a democratic public can be answered by the role of ‘experts’. Quite apart from the undemocratic implications of the argument, Dewey also challenges it on sociological grounds. In contemporary discussions of the impact of research, much is made of the engagement with users and the development of ‘pathways to impact’ in which research is ‘co-produced’ with users or beneficiaries of it (Research Councils UK n.d.). However, this takes the structure of associations as given, when the problem of publics is always the problem of the consequences of associated actions for others. How are the ‘publics’ affected in the knowledge process to be protected and brought into a responsible share in the direction of activities? ‘Co-production’ is necessarily based upon forms of inclusion and exclusion (Jasanoff 2004). On Dewey’s analysis, this is not something that can be left to government. Indeed, this is evident in the current government’s management of the fiscal deficit, which is having very significant and differential consequences, with the very wealthy increasing their share and those most disadvantaged bearing a disproportionate burden, an outcome justified by reference to the ‘market’.¹⁴

While the operation of economic interests can operate unseen, precisely because of the formal separation of economic and political institutions typical of modern capitalism, the application of expert knowledge must necessarily take place in front of the public. Where the argument about the role of experts depends upon the idea that the public is unable to judge complex matters, it remains the case that they will be able to judge the pretensions of experts. Moreover, they are likely to be vulnerable to

populist mobilizations by the very interests that expert opinion is being called upon to moderate. Thus, Dewey writes that, 'rule by an economic class may be disguised from the masses; rule by experts could not be covered up. It could only be made to work only if the intellectuals became the willing tools of big economic interests. Otherwise they would have to ally themselves with the masses, and that implies, once more, a share in government by the latter' (1927: 206). As soon as 'expertise' is defined in terms of the instrumentalization of knowledge, there arises the problem that it is aligned with interests and, thereby, a problem of trust.

What is prescient is Dewey's concern with the problem of expert publics and their relation to wider publics. As expertise is increasingly co-produced, so what seems to be attenuated is the role of the wider public. In a context where risks of concentrated activities – whether of nuclear power production or carbon-hungry economic profit-seeking, to give just two examples – are also seen to be widely (indeed, globally) distributed, those that are affected are displaced from participation in decisions about them. At the same time, the nature of democracy is that wider public opinions can be made to count in elections and are subject to populist influence by advertising and by mass media, precisely as Dewey set out. It is hard to resist Turner's conclusion that the problem of expertise is one of the defining problems of modern democracy (Turner 2003). And if that is so, the answer necessarily entails a university functioning for the public. For Dewey, the significance of expert knowledge is how it can facilitate public debate, not government and corporate decision-making independently of the participation of the wider public. The increasingly embedded character of expert knowledge within corporations and government serves to de-legitimize expertise precisely by these forms of associations. It is necessarily part of the 'eclipse of the public'. As Dewey puts it, 'the essential need ... is the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion. That is *the* problem of the public' (1927: 208).

If the improvement of debate, discussion and persuasion is *the* problem, then the university is necessarily part of the answer. But, it is only part of the answer *if it is at the service of the public*. A university at the service of the public, in Dewey's sense, is a university that should properly be regarded as a public university. This would not be the only function of a university, but it is a necessary function and it is one that would place social justice at its heart. Anything less and the university is just another private corporation in which a corporate economy has

become a corporate society. The university would finally have given up any pretension to a social mission other than being at service to whoever paid.