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**Ethical and Moral Dimensions for Higher Education and
Science in Europe**

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Academic Freedom, Innovation, and Responsibility: Towards an ‘Ethical GPS’ in Higher Education and Science

JAN SADLAK AND HENRYK RATAJCZAK

In lieu of the usual ‘From the Editors’ piece, Jan Sadlak, Director of UNESCO-CEPES, and Henryk Ratajczak, Vice-President of the European Academy of Arts, Sciences and Humanities (EAASH), describe below the scope and highlights of the International Conference on Ethical and Moral Dimensions for Higher Education and Science in Europe, held in Bucharest on 2–5 September 2004. The articles in this issue, some of which are drawn from Conference presentations, are also introduced here.

The Conference was organized by the above two organizations, in collaboration with the United Nations University (UNU) in Tokyo and the Division of Basic and Engineering Sciences of UNESCO in Paris. It took place under the joint high patronage of Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, and Mr. Ion Iliescu, President of Romania, and received further distinction in the form of special messages from Pope John Paul II, HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal, and Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO. All Conference documents can be accessed on the UNESCO-CEPES website, <www.cepes.ro>. Throughout their history, universities and other higher academic institutions have been responsible not only for education and research, but also for the promotion of normative ethical and moral values. In fact, over the past Century, these institutions have been the initiators and pioneers of crucial ethical debates concerning the civil rights movement, gender equality, affirmative action and equality of opportunity, the moral aspects of science, and so on.

The great transformations of the late Twentieth Century, particularly in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, have yielded new perspectives on the ethical and moral dimensions of higher education and science in the region and indeed in other regions as well. In light of the constant reconfigurations of globalisation, higher education institutions are now expected to assume an even more prominent role as exponents of modern, democratic social values such as freedom of expression and association, equality of access, responsibility towards stakeholders, and the rule of law.

In many cases, the members of academic communities are taking practical steps to define, design, implement, and evaluate the dissemination of such values. Yet with the emergence of the knowledge society, higher education and research institutions are more directly implicated in economic and social life, and, in turn, more affected by it. Humanity has benefited incalculably from the marvellous results of scientific and technological progress, which, until relatively recently, were principally material. However the results of such progress are increasingly intangible and virtual; we are confronted with consequent, and altogether uncharted, ethical and moral challenges. Information presents us today with a fresh panorama of problems. Our private, public, political, and professional lives are increasingly defined not only by information, but also by its symbiosis with a new galaxy of hardware and software.

Most of our daily tasks are essentially various forms of information production or consumption and the wonders of the Internet have changed irrevocably the functioning of schools, universities, laboratories, and research organizations.

Practically every day we are thus confronted with ethical challenges linked to, or deriving from, such generally wonderful achievements of human creativity. For example, the ubiquitous practice of Internet downloading constitutes a significant problem in the evaluation of student work; or indeed in that of academic publishing.

Adapted legal and administrative measures are of course needed, but these will not address the ethical challenges inherent in information technology. Neither will technology necessarily solve technology-induced problems; the harnessing of information does not lie in control or in centralisation.

With regard to science, spectacular chemical discoveries have undeniably advanced our civilisation, polluting the environment in the process and with unforeseeable biological and social consequences. Today's Molecular Biology and Genetics, despite improving legal parameters, are hardly safe and controlled in their development. Our growing industries and wealthier societies carry threats to the planet, including looming climatic change as energy consumption pollutes the atmosphere and thins our protective ozone layer. In other areas of science, pure research work could yet lead to new, and more readily available, means of mass destruction.

Viewed as a process of natural evolution, science must be allowed to develop freely; any limitation of scientific research would be almost a contradiction in terms. On the other hand, unrestricted research may lead to inconceivable dangers. Those setting policy or undertaking research are thus faced with an ethical dilemma: allow science to proceed unrestrained, and take the risks, or consider research foremost in a context of consequences, social impact, and responsibility? Responsibility is of course a key word for all, not just for scientists. We believe that ethics and responsibility will be a

behavioural *sine qua non* for human beings in the Twenty-First Century.

In addition to technological 'push' and 'pull' effects and as inferred earlier, the ethical and moral dimensions of higher education and science must be considered in the context of globalisation. Only the ignorant would question the relevance and inherently positive role of the market as a dominating relational principle, but not everything, even in economic life, can be organized by supply and demand or the search for market equilibrium. It is thus a matter of genuine concern that 'to have' is dominating 'to be' in our collective behaviour. A further challenge of globalisation is that the mechanisms and institutional settings for a global system of checks and balances are insufficient; these are necessary for an international civil society and a truly civilized human existence. The forces of globalisation are powerful; our mechanisms to cope with emerging challenges are yet weak. Let us recall however that the future rests not only with democratic political and social institutions, but – most importantly – with/in the individual – for our purposes the students, researchers, professors, and other members of the academic community.

The moral and ethical responsibilities of higher education and research institutions relate to their twin roles, as economic actors and seats of academic communities. This

is a crucial point, because we are witnessing today a paradigm shift in the organization and operation of higher education. While most current debates on European higher education focus on topics such as institutional structure and management, student flows, quality assurance, and trade in educational services, academic values have been sidelined and basic principles regarding what is, and is not, appropriate in this regard are fading into the background. The erosion of core academic values is not mere academic verbiage, as inattention to fraud, nepotism,

proper governance, and corruption in higher education will undermine its status and role in a democratic society. Equally, these developing socio-economic trends have been missing from higher education curricula, or neglected altogether. It is timely to seek a better balance between qualifications and qualities, so as to help students appropriately blend and develop their professional, personal, and civic responsibilities in a democratic society.

Four principal conceptual frameworks were elaborated for the Conference; in addition to the recommendations of the Conference adopted in the Bucharest Declaration, these frameworks reflect our problematique:

- How ethical and moral contexts affect modern higher education and science, foremost from an institutional perspective;
- Solutions to and ways of dealing with ethical challenges in various institutions, study programmes and research activities;
- Ethical frameworks of governance, to address not only such institutional pathologies as corruption, but also the growing ‘grey areas’ evident in many complex organisations;
- And the above makes little sense if we do not learn to better live together, for which
- a ‘Culture of Peace’ is a symbolic proposition.

In conclusion, many of the implicit assumptions regarding the moral and ethical dimensions of higher education and science are currently being challenged; in our view, this justified the convening of our Conference. The wonders of technological advancement, such as the global positioning system (GPS), are assisting us to reach unknown destinations. We could benefit likewise from an ‘ethical GPS’, to guide our individual and collective movement in the direction of a New Humanism based on freedom, innovation, and responsibility. These are starting principles from which to introduce the papers presented in this issue of Higher Education in Europe, and the Bucharest Declaration – also published here.

In the first paper of this issue’s Topic, Peter Scott sets the stage by considering the apparent disengagement of universities from what he terms “essential value structures”. He highlights the fact that higher education institutions today more readily align themselves with values related to business, instrumentalism, and/or science; ethical issues are de facto in danger of relegation to the back seat, sublimated instead into a diffuse set of what Scott characterises as “procedural issues”. His analysis of this seeming erosion of ethical autonomy, and of the sea change in what constitutes academic values, is most potent in that it is counterintuitive: he argues that these changes are in fact a mark of expansion, and not of defeat at the hands of political and market forces. The relationship between modern higher education and the knowledge society has led to novel configurations of production and consumption; Scott’s paper frames the expansion of the university into new socio-cultural, economic, and technological territory. Scott identifies three key trends driving the development of the knowledge society, and proposes that this development, along with its multiple engagements with mass higher education, is at the heart of current flux in value systems.

Scott’s argument, that higher education is simultaneously engaging with new forms of society and being changed by them, is taken up by Eric Gould with equal grace but a differing emphasis. Gould considers the role of the university in the knowledge society and argues, in the final analysis, for a purposeful place for ethics in university curricula – an intellectually sound, ‘pragmatic ethics’. To get there, he accompanies

the reader through the ethical minefield that is the contemporary generation of knowledge: the creation of values as a by-product of knowledge development; the challenge of an integrated, interdisciplinary approach to knowledge; the promotion of democracy; and the massification and corporatisation of universities, both following from the rise and rise of liberal capitalism. Gould points out that higher education institutions, as they branch out, more and more must "... look and act like businesses" in the interest of survival. The implication is clear, in that the relation between knowledge and economic interest becomes ever-closer and an essential ethical challenge according to Gould is therefore the very gap between the traditional academic values of the university and the market values of the knowledge society. Will universities succeed in mediating between modernity and modernization? Can they re-problematize over-simplified social and ethical issues, and mend the rift between "... capitalist motives and democratic values"?

Roger Manière argues that unchecked liberalism and an omnipresent and invasive globalisation represent an implicit threat to the collective good; the question of the collective interest and its preservation is therefore central. But how will these be fostered? In tracing the historical evolution of universities in Europe, Manière considers the rich and diverse heritage of the continent. He blends this history with modern sociological, political, and economic developments and adds a useful ethical post-scriptum to Peter Scott's trademark: 'massification' in of itself was also an ethical choice and indeed an ethical success. To some of the more Anglo-Saxon, deterministic frameworks addressed in the two preceding papers, Manie` re's article offers a complimentary, if contrasting, continental perspective: the process of European Integration n in higher education requires not only co-operation, but co-operation based on an ethics of sharing and solidarity. He introduces the role of the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) as an operational structure to this end and argues that programmatic activities within such a framework are a good vehicle to further linguistic diversity, environmental protection, democratisation, and the critical role of ITCs in the equitable distribution of knowledge.

Two authors based in Central and Eastern Europe, Andrzej Szostek and Andrei Marga, follow Manie` re's lead in taking stock of Europe's humanist tradition in higher education. Szostek considers in his paper some of the contemporary challenges to the European university, arguing that one may take research and teaching out of the university but not vice versa. The humanistic role of the university environment cannot simply be discarded, he writes, and remains central to conceptions of the search for truth, of an educational community, and of European civic and cultural life. Nevertheless, Szostek acknowledges the challenges of modernity and globalized liberalism to this universal, humanistic vocation. These include massification, technological advances, obsolescent academic career management structures, and an ever-changing labour market. He argues that the maintenance of the university's core mission in such times is a "moral challenge", born out of faith in the Europeanuniversity's heritage of cultural production and social renewal.

Sharing Szostek's concern over the protection and nurturing of the continent's educational heritage, Andrei Marga considers the crisis of the Humboldtian model, observing the seemingly irretrievable fragmentation of its unified vision of education and development. Marga warns that cultural changes are afoot, in that the adaptive capacity of Europe's educational cultures is a crucial indicator of success: European universities must heed the historical traditions of their genesis, but also the imperatives of constructive change. He proposes that the re-iteration and re-direction

of the university's mission and key functions are crucial, notably in the areas of institutional reform, fostering creativity, problem-solving, and democratic governance. Universities are essential articulators of value systems, including those related to ethics; no less essentially, Jürgen Kohler's careful and thorough observations are where principle meets practice. Kohler's article seeks to analyse and draft an ethical framework of governance in the area of higher education and science, and he provides a welcome series of exemplifications. He makes, for instance, a distinction between ethical challenges and preventive measures, addressing practical aspects of the quest for knowledge, conflict and equality in academia, and failures of oversight. Kohler also suggests remedial or preventive ethical frameworks of governance, at the level of structures to ensure the cultural integration of governance and ethics, as well as in the management of ethics and risk prevention. Moving on from the institutional frameworks put forward by Kohler, Federico Mayor provides an individual perspective on the ethical boundaries of knowledge.

Mayor argues for greater use of ethics in determining the admissible applications of knowledge, in that knowledge and the related acquisition of power have grown exponentially but necessary ethical frameworks have regrettably not kept pace. Mayor looks back to some of the ethically important moments of the past fifty-odd years, going on to highlight the role of higher education institutions as potential global promoters of the ethical dimensions of knowledge.

Abdelwahab Hechiche provides a related assessment of the ethical mandate of higher education and closes the circle by highlighting, as did Scott, the growing divide between ethics themselves and the broader context of ethical literature and 'procedures' in higher education. Technical and procedural euphemisms are increasingly replacing any open ethical commitment and Hechiche calls for the reaffirmation of ethics as an inherently social quality and pursuit, more important than ever in light of emerging transnational trends in higher education. Ethics is best suited to this purpose according to Hechiche because, unlike more judgemental conceptions of morality, its social dimension favours conciliation and a focus on mutual entitlements. Such entitlements, including rights, are ambiguous in the context of converging/diverging global dynamics; hence the primacy of frameworks pertaining to co-operation and dialogue. Hechiche also examines the discipline of peace education as an application of these ideas, and considers some implications for the teaching profession. Notably, his parting advice is that, in these fractious times, the burden of ethics be a shared one.

The Topic section of this issue of Higher Education in Europe is brought to a close by

the Bucharest Declaration, the full text of which is printed here. At the close of the above-mentioned Conference, participants adopted this set of recommendations, intended to lead to wider acceptance of the ethical and moral dimensions of higher education and science in Europe. The Declaration proposes some guiding values and principles on the subjects of academic ethos, culture and community; academic integrity in teaching and learning; democratic and ethical governance; integrity and social responsiveness in research; and the implementation of ethical principles. The Declaration also recommends that UNESCO-CEPES, in co-operation with other stakeholders, initiate follow-up activities focused on the identification and promotion of good institutional practice.

In the Tribune section, Adriaan Hofman and Muriel van den Berg consider the case of aptly-named 'highbrows' in the Netherlands, who take two courses of university study concurrently. Through a theoretical perspective based on notions of

human and financial capital and the relevance of programmatic and motivational factors, the authors report explanatory frameworks related to gender, motivation, the enhancement of students' human capital, and family resources. Most interestingly perhaps, they find that intellectual interest and intrinsic motivation are key factors; for the purposes of this issue, this is a refreshing reaffirmation of higher education's key 'business areas', rising loftily above our debates.

Last but not least, this issue of Higher Education in Europe features book reviews by our different reviewers; recommended reading. The next issue of the UNESCOPEPES review will be on the topic of 'The Bologna Process: Retrospect and Prospects'. Submissions are welcome.