The ethical dimension of academic critique

Subjectivity and knowledge within the Chilean academic community

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Declaration

I, Francisco Durán del Fierro, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

This thesis studies the experience that academics – scientists, intellectuals and artists engaging in formal research – have within the contemporary university. More specifically, it explores the ethical dimension of academic critique, which illustrates how academics relate to themselves, others and knowledge and the possibilities of thinking and behaving otherwise within the academic community.

This study uses Foucault's genealogy of ethics and navigates through multiple approaches and ideas to make sense of the phenomenon of academic critique. Drawing on my interpretation and adaptation of Foucault's four aspects of ethics (ethical substance, mode of subjectivation, ethical work, and telos), I examine the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge within universities by problematising how existing practices of critique reinforce or resist the conditions of its own existence and contribute to the cultivation of a particular academic-self. This thesis explores the modalities of experience in a particular context of policy and experience: the Chilean academic community. This case illustrates a unique experience of the neoliberalisation of academia, which conflicts with other material realities of academic life since the Republic period (nineteenth-century).

Four analyses are deployed throughout the thesis. The first is genealogical to trace the historical (re)organisation of a discourse that began in the late nineteenth century in ways that support and contest the contemporary forms of governmentality in the Chilean university system. I focus on one of the most important intellectuals in Latin America during the post-independence period and first Rector of the University of Chile: Andres Bello. The other three analyses dive into a number of different modalities of experience in the contemporary Chilean academy. These include what can be described as *sacrifice*, *missional* and *possibilising.* Based on these considerations, this thesis seeks to make two contributions. First, understanding further the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge within the contemporary university. Second, provide an analytical framework for the study of the formation of the academic-self considering an ethical perspective.

Impact statement

This thesis provides a critical account of the experience of academic critique within the contemporary university using the Chilean academic community as a case study. The empirical-theoretical arrangements presented across the thesis can benefit the academic community on at least three levels. First, these arrangements seek to provide an analytical framework for studying the experience of academic critique. This framework might be used across national, institutional and disciplinary contexts, thus expanding our understanding of subjectivity-constitution and research practices within the contemporary university. This approach aims beyond studies focusing exclusively on academic practices (e.g., science and technology studies) or emphasising organisational structures (e.g., higher education studies). Second, my thesis attempts to show the modalities of experience that academic critique entails today. In that respect, it seeks to broaden our understanding of academic life within university structures. This might contribute to scholarly debates concerning research integrity, knowledge production, open science, academic freedom, objectivity, etc. Third, my thesis aims to understand how specific policies and discourses motivate a restructuring of academics' relation to themselves, others and knowledge. In particular, it focuses on the role played by quality assurance policies in creating a specific ethos and model of academic behaviour. These reflections might well be helpful to rethink the aims and scope of quality policies in higher education.

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PART ONE – THE PROBLEMATISATION

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The scene (part one)

On 27th July 2016, the President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet (2014-2018), requested the resignation of Dr Roxana Pey Tumanoff, head of a new state University created during the Higher Education Reform, the *Universidad de Aysén* (located in one of southernmost places in the country). Arguing the violation of university autonomy, Dr Pey Tumanoff refused to resign. Yet two months later, she was removed by a presidential decree. In response to this state intervention, a group of authorities, professionals and academics abandoned the University.

I was one of them.

…

My personal experience is illustrative of a *conflictivity* in which multiple forms of power relations, subjectivities and material realities are brought into play within academia. Leaving the University of Aysén was an ethical dilemma impacting on my academic career and understanding of academic life. These conflicts can also be evidenced when looking at the global academy: research integrity issues in Chile and Denmark, protests and marking boycotts in the UK, dissatisfaction with governments due to new models of research governance and funding, attacks on academic freedom across universities, just to name a few. The reasons behind these conflicts are multiple, vary according to the place and are irreducible to one factor. Put differently, knowledge production within universities seems to be more than mere curiosity, reflexivity and objectivity.

In that context, how are academics dealing with these conflicts, tensions and contradictions? What do they do in their everyday life? Broadly speaking, at least three sorts of attitudes seem to characterise the modern global academy: leaving academia, playing the game, and resisting power relations. Leaving academia shows a radical decision based on dissatisfaction; playing the game is the tactic to survive academia; and resistance is an attitude towards academic life based on questioning power relations. My experience in the University of Aysén is an example of the intersection of all these attitudes.

Yet it is not evident how these attitudes and practices entail specific *modalities of experience* that shape and reactivate how academics relate with themselves, others and knowledge. Leaving academia, playing the game and resisting are interwoven practices defining a particular form of academic life at a given time and culture. But beyond these attitudes, *what modalities of experience does academic life entail today?*

How are these modalities entangled? Or, more precisely, what sort of contradictions and dynamics emerge from the intersection of these modalities, which conflicts with others forms of subjectivity and power relations that extend beyond neoliberalism and epistemic cultures?

These issues address two aspects of academic life which are the main focus of this thesis: critique and ethics. Critique is both the accommodation of and resistance to conditions of existence within the university. Ethics refers to the practices of the self, which determines how academics constitute themselves as moral subjects of their actions. In that respect, the *ethical dimension of academic critique* can be defined as the ways in which academics undertake a series of practices of the self aiming to accommodate or resist power relations, thus entailing a particular *form-of-life*. The intersection of these two concepts, I suggest, leads to a better understanding of the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge within universities.

Based on these assumptions, my research focuses on the ethical dimension of critique among academics engaging in formal research using the Chilean academic community as a case study. I examine the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge within universities by problematising how *existing practices of critique* reinforce or refuse the conditions of its own existence and contribute to the cultivation of a particular academic-self and form of life. This approach is relevant to understand further the mutual shaping of subjectivity and knowledge – in the form of abstract ideas, objects and infrastructures – within the modern university. Specifically, the case of the Chilean academic community might well be helpful to expand our understanding of how neoliberal policies change ways of thinking, imaginaries, vocabularies and behaviours which conflict with other forms of subjectivity and power relations.

This introductory chapter sets out the research problem by introducing three conceptual points of departure, the context of the Chilean academic community and the research questions.

Three points of departure

The relationship between subjectivity and knowledge within the modern university can be analysed from multiple perspectives. I have chosen three ideas whereby my research problem and research questions can be better understood: the ethical dimension of critique, the paradigm of excellence and the academic-self. These are fundamentally theoretical concerns which inform the whole thesis – they are further expanded upon in Chapter 4.

1. The ethical critique: practices of the self and productive force

Living in the neoliberal university involves an *ethical disposition*. It is not just critical thinking (knowledge) but also an attitude what is at play when academics exercise critique in their contingency of normality (everyday practices). Or in other words, knowledge production is more than merely an intellectual activity and involves an

ethical attitude. In that respect, as Castiglia put it, '[t]he "something" that is wrong with critique, I believe, is (…) its disposition, the attitude with which critique is approached' (Castiglia, 2017a, p. 212). Exploring these dispositions, or as Foucault called it, *modalities of experience* (Foucault, 2017), might shed some light on the conflicting relationship between subjectivity and knowledge within the contemporary university.

In particular, it can contribute to understanding the paradox between knowledge and social action. For example, according to Bacevic (2019), despite the proliferation of several critical accounts (one aspect of critique) about the neoliberalisation of academia, what characterises this community is the absence of enduring and robust resistance; that is, knowing something does not translate immediately into action. Yet this paradox is a paradox only from a perspective which pays too much attention to the epistemological side of critique. That is, it seems influenced by a form of Neo-Kantianism, which tends to separate epistemology (pure reason) and moral action (practical reason) (Rose, 1995). Against this position, in this thesis, I assume the inseparability between epistemology and ethics to examine academic critique. Considering this, academic resistance is never absent; on the contrary, it is present in many forms and dynamics.

Following Foucault, ethical analysis focuses on *the free relationship to the self, others and truth* (Foucault, 1997a). The relation to the self and others shows how the individual subject becomes ethical through self-formation practices. Or as Daston and Galison (2007) put it: 'ethical refers to normative codes of conduct that are bound up with a way of being in the world, an ethos in the sense of the habitual disposition of an individual or group' (p. 40). That is to say, in the practices of the self or ethical transformation of the subject what is at play is not the conditions of the possibility of true discourses (epistemology) but their historical-cultural conditions of existence (Foucault, 2011).

In addition, unlike most accounts of critique which focuses on critique as 'hermeneutic of suspicious' (Anker & Felski, 2017), in this thesis, I understand critique as a general activity which is both affirmative and negative. That is, critique is a *productive force* that reinforces power relations (installs a given order) and simultaneously refuses to be governed that way (Foucault, 2007b). The experience of academic critique then oscillates between accommodation and refusal of power relations. It is playing the game and resisting it all at once. It is the experience of scholarship. This definition assumes that critique is not merely a receptive and passive faculty but a productive force with the capacity to constitute modes of knowing and ways of life. This definition moves away from the epistemological and methodological debate about critique conceived of as either unveiling or constructing; matter of facts or matter of concerns; or composition or negative debunking. Following Lorenzini's and Tazzioli's (2020) position,

> the debunking and productive aspects of critique should never be separated. We should thus reject the binary opposition between subtracting and adding reality […]. Critique and the production of subjectivity and new political spaces should be thought together (2020, p. 30).

Considering both aspects of critique offers more analytical possibilities to understand the *paradoxes* that academics face when living in a contemporary university.

2. The paradigm of excellence in academia: exception and perfection

Another point of departure is the consideration of academic life to be driven by a *unifying ethos*. This does not mean the homogenisation of forms of seeing, acting and behaving or the omission of the particularities of epistemic cultures (Knorr-Cetina, 1999) or academic tribes or territories (Becher & Trowler, 2001) but the existence of an ethos that makes ways of thinking and behaving acceptable (Foucault, 2007a). This ethos is a general model of academic behaviour regulating how to behave in teaching, research and other activities.

In that context, it is claimed that excellence has become the paradigm that drives institutional values and practices in academia (Lamont, 2009; Moore et al., 2017). Based on my interpretation of Harvey and Green's (1993), excellence can be understood as the intersection of *exception* and *perfection* (improvement). The former refers to the traditional form of academic life and points to 'something special (…) distinctive (…) exceeding very high standards' (1993, p. 11). That is to say, exception

> is based on an assumption that the distinctiveness and inaccessibility of an Oxbridge education is of itself "quality". This is not quality to be judged against a set of criteria but the quality, separate and *unattainable* for most people [my emphasis] (1993, p. 11).

This form of excellence depends on establishing universal ideals and an identity defined by the academic community (e.g., Oxbridge education). These rules of conduct define a maximum which is unattainable in order to exclude others. However, quality assurance policies have reconfigured this form of excellence. They have created a set of standards that fit with the diversity of institutional missions in higher education. Thus introducing external standards that can be measured and compared makes the possibility of aspiring to excellence (exception) through self-improvement practices real. In the words of Harvey and Green,

> The conformance to standards approach to quality, unlike the excellence or traditional approach, can cater for non-universal standards in higher education. It gives all institutions an opportunity to aspire to quality as different standards can be set for different types of institution. Under this definition, it is perfectly possible to have a poor quality Rolls Royce and a high quality Mini (Harvey & Green, 1993, p 14).

This can be called *perfection* when someone or something can reach exceptionality or exclusivity through compliance with external standards. It is the search for consistency through the *improvement* of ‘a set of required (minimum) standards’. It ‘subverts exclusivity’ and ‘transform[s] the traditional notion of [exception] into something everybody can have’ (Harvey & Green, 1993, p. 15). While exception is attached to universal ideals to frame what can be considered as unique and distinctive, perfection follows the formal requirements set by the academic community for themselves in the form of *abstract* standards. It is the search for zero defects. It depends on an external gaze or inspection and, most importantly, an internal disposition and a self-regulating set of practices.

Yet both notions – exception and perfection – are driven by a common and uncanny force beyond disciplinary boundaries: *the right to exclude* – or what Foucault (2008) referred to as ‘state racism’. Exception and perfection set the limits under which the exclusion from academic environments is possible and legitimate. These exclusionary practices can happen at different levels (macro or micro levels) but are underpinned by the mark of excellence. In other words, excellence affirms the superior value of a particular academic-self to protect the university – physical place, people and knowledge – from society (worthy or unworthy life, rationality, identity, value, belief, etc.). For example, Felt (2021) provides a meaningful case to illustrate this point. Talking about the adoption of new research infrastructure in academia, she points out that:

> Exclusion from academic environments (…) no longer occurs through visibly depriving people of material resources. Exclusion can happen invisibly by not allowing particular individuals to be in line with the dominant temporal infrastructure (…) Ultimately the temporalities and the related sense-making processes act on the people within the system, on what they can do and what they can know, drawing the line between those who can enter and stay and those who cannot (2021, p. 276).

Governments and academic communities set standards regarding the use of research infrastructure. These standards are usually defined to meet the demands of new ways of working and doing research (how data is generated, transported and analysed); or in other words, these standards are set to keep excellence in place or to redefine it as performance. In order to meet these new demands, the academic community defines a plan to *improve* academic skills and competencies. In that context, these new standards draw ‘the line between those who can enter and stay and those who cannot’ (Felt, 2021, p. 276). In that sense excellence becomes a mechanism of power with the right to exclude.

But the mark of excellence is also visible through more subtle and contingent practices. For example, in some disciplines (e.g., economics), using a Word processor (Microsoft) – and not a more advanced tool to write – is indicative of that something is lacking which makes some community members suspicious of the quality of the work.

In other cases, academics disregard some readings according to the book publisher or the journal – language, location or quartiles[1]. Thus, excellence is deployed through specific gazes that exclude particular knowledges and practices.

3. From the scientific self to the academic-self

These new demands extend beyond knowledge and skills and include techniques of the self that mould and change the *academic-self*. Knowledge production is more than merely an intellectual activity and requires personal qualifications such as 'patience and attentiveness for the observer, manual dexterity for the experimenter, imagination for the theorist, tenacity for all' (Daston & Galison, 2007, p. 39). However, 'these qualities have been seen in most accounts of modern science as matters of competence, not *ethics*' [my emphasis] (2007, p. 39). Skills and competencies are personal qualifications but, most importantly, they are *techniques of the self* that transform how scientists relate to the self, others and knowledge.

Reflecting on these considerations, in this thesis, I propose the notion of *academic-self* to refer to the intersection of technologies of power and practices of the self, and I use the concept of *epistemic virtues* to describe the entanglement between epistemology and ethics. In what follows I define how I understand these concepts.

According to Galison (2015), the *scientific self* is always becoming-other as the result of the intersection of technologies of power and practices of the self. For Galison, the technology of power refers to both power relations in the form of rules, codes and laws and non-human actors like research infrastructures and objects. That is to say, the scientific self is made up of both research protocols and objects which teach scientists how to behave (Stefano & Galison, 2015). Latour (2007) referred to this as associations, accumulations and densities – the intersection of technologies, objects, documents, practices, places and territories – that produce effects and agents. Thus, for example, changes in how scientists manage and train perception and vision are transformations in governmentality (Halpern, 2015).

Yet, the scientific self also makes certain kinds of power technologies possible. The scientist is not only shaped by external factors in which she is intertwined in associations, accumulations and densities but also brings into play scholarly practices that open possibilities for new technologies of power to emerge. These are self-formation practices (changes in the self) or techniques of the self which extend beyond the demands of scientific expertise (like digital skills) and include practices in the form of accommodation to, ambivalence towards and resistance (counter-conduct practices) to ongoing knowledge production processes. For example, the pursuit of objectivity, which is conceived of as the suppression of subjectivity, not only requires

[1] In addition to the Impact Factor, journals in each subject category are ranked by quartiles from the highest to lowest.

the development of technical skills (e.g., how to make an objective image) but also techniques of the self to satisfy the demand of the absent or distant knower.

In that context, what is at play is the notion of *epistemic virtues* (Paul & van Dongen, 2017). These virtues are the intersection of technologies of power and practices of the self, or more precisely, of epistemology and ethics in academia. They represent the formal requirements put into place by scientific communities and, at the same time, the efforts made by academics to adapt to the changing environments. Thus, self-restraint (objectivity) is required and cultivated when a scientist creates, for example, an image of the Universe. Galison (2015) offers a meaningful example in this sense:

> the astronomer Percival Lowell had these pictures of Mars, and he wanted to show that there were canals on Mars. He thought, “Well, can’t I just fix the images so you can see them better?” He didn’t think of it as fraudulent; he thought of it as explanatory. But his editors said, above all, not to do that. If he dared to even touch the images they would lose what the editors called their “autograph value”—“nature’s pencil”. You would lose that sense that people had that the scientist had extricated him-or herself from the process and allowed nature to write itself or draw itself, print itself or photograph itself to the page (Stefano & Galison, 2015).

The cultivation of epistemic virtues thus entails *ethical dilemmas*. The example above is illustrative of how objectivity imposes behaviours and simultaneously entails dilemmas concerning what is acceptable or not when publishing images. Most of the time those dilemmas show the conflicting relationship between formal requirements and scientific values. Another example is the extensive use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in academia (e.g., ChatGPT). By and large, the introduction of AI brings about two things. First, the need to develop new skills and epistemic virtues to respond to highly digital environments. These skills and virtues become techniques of the self and rules of conduct set by academics for themselves which later turn into codes. Second, it engenders new dilemmas that modify the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge which leads to moral and political challenges.

The problem

1. **Living the neoliberal university in Chile: policies and academic life**

Doing and undoing university markets

Until 1980, the system comprised two state universities and six private ones funded by public expenditure. All these institutions carried out teaching and research activities, were very selective and staffed with highly qualified academics (Atria & Lemaitre, 2013). Chile's university system was dramatically transformed during Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1989). The education reform of 1981 reorganised the system and shifted the coordination from state to market (Brunner, 1997) thus entailing a process of deregulation, institutional diversification and extraordinary massification. The number and type of higher education institutions increased notably leading to a

more differentiated system (Atria & Lemaitre, 2013). Bluntly put, the system was structurally transformed.

The reform of 1981 was the point of departure for establishing a neoliberal regime, making the Chilean university system a pioneering example of marketisation in education (Brunner, 1993). Chile is recognised among the OECD countries as having one of the lowest rates of public funding, high tuition fees, and a sector predominantly composed of private universities with multiple missions (congregational, international business, etc.). Despite some increases in public funding over the recent years – e.g., free education policy – private expenditure remains one of the highest comparatively.

The effects of these transformations can be observed today at different levels: a highly privatised, segregated and differentiated university system – in terms of ownership, location, size, mission, quality, selectivity, student body and academic staff (Brunner, 2011a; Brunner & Uribe, 2007; Orellana, 2011). Thus, for example, while public universities receive students from different social backgrounds and are located across the country, private universities are more segregated – they receive students from low or high-income families according to university size and prestige – and concentrated in the most populated cities (Atria & Lemaitre, 2013).

These transformations also affected the academic community, which is now more diverse (in terms of social class, gender, age, discipline), dense, (de)centred, fragmented (e.g., part-time professors, researchers, teachers, etc.), hybrid, precariat and unstable (Berríos, 2015), very different from the traditional male, upper-class, urban and highly qualified academics. For example, the number of academics was duplicated from 1995-2011, motivated mainly by the creation of new private universities.

Regardless, the most significant transformation over the last decades has been the professionalisation of the academic career (Berríos, 2015). This process has been influenced by the research university model, which emphasises full-time contracts, doctoral studies and research activities. Thus, the number of academics with a doctorate has continuously growth over the recent years – three times since the early 90s. However, essential differences can be found among universities in terms of career trajectories of academics. Within public ones, academics often hold more stable contracts and undertake teaching and research activities. This situation varies according to whether the state university is in the capital (Santiago) or another region (north or the south). The latter is composed of a more diversified academic staff. Even though there are a few exceptions, the largest private universities are teaching-oriented, meaning academics often have fixed-term contracts and work in more than one university – the so-called *profesores taxis* [taxi professors] (Cantillana-Barañados et al., 2019; Simbürger & Neary, 2016). These academics are the majority among both public and private universities (Berríos, 2015). This has led to the institutionalisation

of two career tracks within some universities: full-time professors (research) and part-time professors (teaching).

Despite these differences, academics who want to follow the 'traditional academic career' and hence undertake research face similar opportunities and barriers regardless of the type of university. Public research funding is distributed on a competitive – e.g., number of publications – and peer-review basis and depends on annual budget negotiations, which have not significantly increased over the last decades. In that context, it is argued that state-owned universities have been the most affected by the market agenda (Orellana, 2016). To partially reverse this situation, they have had to introduce private forms of organisation – accountability – to compete for public funding, thus affecting the model of academic behaviour.

It is worth noting that 2018, a new structural reform was enacted. The reform sought to reverse the system's marketisation in response to the student movement in 2011, which asked for free (of charge) and quality education for all. Despite the initial purposes, the reform strengthened key aspects of the neoliberal agenda in higher education, in particular the quality assurance system. In Chile, the quality system was introduced in the early 90s to regulate the creation of private universities. It is so vital that the reform of 2018 kept the link between quality and public funding: institutional accreditation is required for universities and students to be eligible for grants and subsidised loans. In other words, rather than reversing the market, the reform created an advanced neoliberal project based on a public-private coordination (De Gayardon & Bernasconi, 2016).

Therefore, the quality system still plays a fundamental role in steering the system. It is the 'technical mechanism' used to regulate the allocation of public funds, institutional diversity and autonomy in higher education (Durán Del Fierro, 2022). Interestingly, the quality system in Chile focuses on *control* over improvement (Leihy & Salazar, 2017; Lemaitre, 2019). This means that institutional and programme accreditation aim to review whether universities comply with external standards for benchmarking rather than providing systematic support to overcome their deficiencies. In that context, the reform of 2018 introduced three levels of institutional compliance to consolidate this approach: excellence, advanced and basic accreditation (Ley 21091 Sobre Educación Superior, 2018). Universities that do not meet the minimal requirements (basic accreditation) must close their doors. Simply put, it is a system based on punishment rather than support or self-regulation.

This situation creates pressure on university authorities but especially on academics due to the high stakes when evaluated by the institutional accreditation. Recent studies exploring the link between quality and academic life in Chile show that the quality assurance system has incentivised the introduction of 'academic capitalism'; that is, entrepreneurialism, managerialism, income attainment, outsourcing of services, focus on-demand, resource management, and competition explain the

quality of the institution – in terms of the level of accreditation (Brunner, Rodríguez-Ponce, et al., 2022). Quality evaluations have brought into play market-like behaviours by appealing to the fear of not accessing public funds.

Quality as policy technology (Morley, 2004)

Considering these changes and policy frameworks, one could say that the introduction of quality assurance policies have produced a rupture within the Chilean academic community (Díaz Letelier, 2013). It dislocates the way prestige can be accumulated and transferred among academics – the market of prestige or reputation (P. Blackmore, 2015). What is at stake is not necessarily the inheritance of economic, social, and cultural capital – which still exists – but the *ability* to gain prestige through self-improvement practices. That is to say, rather than the reproduction of social and cultural capital through privileged spaces of knowledge production, now what seems to be important is the *acquisition* of those capitals through the assessment of what is provided as knowledge. Thus, *to have the ability to acquire* prestige has nothing to do with traditional civic virtues but *skills*. If the former was originally related to being part of a social class or developing certain practices deemed as exceptional, the skilled academic-subject *is able to be self-constituting*.

Unlike traditional excellence, which was based on distinctiveness, quality focuses on a set of *rational standards* suited to different types of institution, thus allowing academics to aspire to prestige regardless of their background (social class). Somehow, it is possible to say that quality is enabling and empowering because it recognises and values diverse forms of institutional projects and academic practices.

However, this does not mean that excellence as *exception* had disappeared in the Chilean university system. Notwithstanding the introduction of quality policies, the traditional model of the university (i.e., research-intensive university) still prevails over new types of universities (e.g., teaching university). While quality has dislocated some elements of the traditional model, there is an ongoing dispute that seems not yet to be solved (Lemaitre & Durán del Fierro, 2013). According to the quality assurance system, to be excellent still requires including research activities into universities' functions, which illustrate the longstanding prevalence of the traditional model of university in Chile (Brunner, 2011a).

Therefore, what has characterised academic life in Chile since the 1980s reform and its subsequent modifications is a conflicting transformation of normative principles, vocabularies, cultures, practices, attitudes, modes of signification, and imaginaries. But most importantly, when the dictatorship ended, the academic community faced enormous challenges and contradictions, especially academics from forbidden disciplines or those who had been exiled (arts, humanities and social science). According to Nelly Richard (2000), who is a feminist Chilean academic,

> The figures of *trauma*, *mourning* and *melancholy* became the emblematic figures of a certain form of critical thought of post-dictatorship (…) the coup as trauma, mourning as the loss of the object and melancholy as the unresolved suspension of mourning [my emphasis] (2000, p. 273).

Academics had to deal with a new political era with a lack of recognition and loss of knowledge, narratives and languages, and hence 'recreate new forms of *critical incidence* that contain the image of this destruction without remaining contemplatively adhered to it (…)' (Richard, 2000, p. 276). In that respect, for Richard, universal emblems like the nation-state or the Republic no longer drive academics' narratives, behaviours and attitudes. The *exile of thought*, which came about during the dictatorship but also in the so-called post-dictatorship university[2], has become a particular mode of academic critique within Chilean universities (Richard et al., 2004).

However, *the contemporary form of academic critique in Chile is irreducible to neoliberalism*. There are also historical continuities in the form of discourses and practices that still make up the experience of academic critique. Following a perspective grounded in genealogical inquiries (Halpern, 2015) and the notion of spectre (Schmukalla, 2021), it is possible to argue that there are discourses and practices of the past, with seemingly no ideological structure, that still haunt the way academics exercise critique today within universities. That is to say, some past experiences continue disrupting everyday life, routines, dynamics, intensities and rhythms of contemporary academic life which conflict with affects, experiences and material realities of neoliberalism. The entanglement of these experiences from the past and the present is conflicting as they seek to ignore or repress each other (Schmukalla, 2021).

Two historical moments

In that context, one could say that the arrival of quality is not entirely linked to neoliberalism but it was formed well before. Two historical moments are vital to understand how academics live the neoliberal university: the Post-independence period and the University reform (1967-1973).

The first university of the new Republic – *Universidad de Chile* – was created in 1842-1843 upon colonial legacies to contribute to the rationalisation, and at some point the secularization, of the state and society. The creation of the *national university* was the response to the need to produce a new kind of social order for the Republic (Serrano, 1994, p. 63). According to Bernasconi (2008), 'the university was to be the state's educational arm for the promotion of national unity and an enlightened citizenry' (2008, p. 27). Similar to other Latin American universities, the University of Chile was

[2] Today, one could argue, the exile of thought occurs in light of globalisation of knowledge. The fact that a great number of doctoral students are studying abroad implies a reconfiguration of epistemological frameworks and experiential ruptures.

therefore founded under the assumption that all its academic activities should be driven by the needs of the state.

The first Rector of the University of Chile, Andrés Bello, pointed out that 'encouragement of the nation's religious and moral instruction is a duty that each member of the university assumes by the mere fact of belonging to it' (Bello, 1999, p. 268). In that respect, the intellectual or scholar was devoted to training civil servants and professionals, analysing customs, practices and beliefs, and giving advice to the government on multiple matters guided by a particular episteme, which was considered 'the moralizing potential of higher education' (Jaksic, 1989, p. 31). Thereby, what characterised academic life at this time was the prevalence of imperatives set by the state and national needs, universally valid for all the members of the university (Serrano, 1994). It was a robust and active academic-self able to define, even against its own individuality and political views, the way in which the Republic needed to be built. As Jaksic put it in relation to the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities,

> They [academics] could espouse whatever positions they wished, and indeed they did so quite vocally outside the UCH. But when they came together as a group within the institution, there existed a fundamental consensus on the procedures for the conduct of academic pursuits (Jaksic, 1989, p. 38).

The second historical moment is the *University Reform* between 1960 and 1973 which was inspired in part by the Cordoba Reform movement of 1918. The reform was a movement organised by students and academics that put emphasis on the modernisation, democratisation and secularisation of universities, and the professionalization of academic career (Brunner, 2011b). Specifically, the reform modified the way universities were internally organised thus affecting the structures of faculties, schools, departments, institutes and chairs (*cátedras*). The university reform also sought to ensure academic freedom through scientific research. For example, Raúl Allard, the head of the Catholic University of Valparaíso between 1968 and 1973, asserts in his autobiography that the reform wanted to establish a 'university of spirit, opposed to the university of power' (Allard, 2002, p. 50). Put differently, the reform attempted to transform the Napoleonic university characteristic of the Republic period by means of introducing some elements of the *Humboldtian* model (Scherz, 2005).

However, this transition was not straightforward. Jaksic (1989) argues that during the university reform there was a dispute between those academics who believed in the transformation of the university into an institution actively engaged with social change (left-wing scholars), and those who believed in a university centred on the needs of the state and more accommodating to scientific research (centrist scholars) – the so-called professionalists. These attitudes varied according to university and disciplines, ranging from highly committed academics to others who ignored or condemned the politicization of society and universities (Jaksic, 1989). Notwithstanding the

commitment to social engagement within academia, the ivory tower – the university as the embodiment of reason – was strongly defended, especially by conservative scholars like Félix Martínez Bonati who believed that 'the mission of the university should not be determined by forces outside the institution, for the university's only commitment was to truth'; that is, the university 'had no social function other than inculcating a sense of responsibility in students through study. Any other social function belonged not to the university but to other institutions of society' (Jaksic, 1989, p. 290). Indeed, as a response to this reformist spirit, some scholars resigned their posts in faculties and departments, while others left the country, e.g., Félix Martínez Bonati and Roberto Torreti, the former dedicated to literary aesthetics and the latter to philosophy, moved to Germany and the US in 1965 (Jaksic, 1989).

Despite these controversies, what stands out from this process is the emergence of a model of academic behaviour organised essentially around the idea of *social change or social transformation*[3] (Lozoya López, 2020). The rector of the University of Chile between 1953 and 1963, Juan Gómez Millas, suggested – despite his numerous and fervent critiques of university reform process – that universities are 'the mirrors of the desire of what we want to be in the future, and therefore, they are the seeds of a general revolution of life in each country' (Millas, 1961, p. 7). Although academic freedom was seen as of prime importance for academic life, it was expected that academics' interests and research agenda were oriented by the needs of society, or more precisely, by a *developmental utilitarianism* (Brunner & Flisfisch, 2014).

Such a situation brought about two academic selves: the *political* and *scientific* – or as Scherz (2005) put it, it is the conflict between democratisation and modernisation. The political academic-self implied the consolidation of the *committed, militant, and revolutionary intellectual* (Lozoya López, 2020). What was at stake in this ethical disposition was a moral obligation of social transformation. Thereby, the experience within universities was driven by the duty to social engagement, otherwise academics run the risk of being labelled as *conformists*[4] (Allard, 2013). The *scientific self* also played an important role in the development and transformation of universities. Gomez Millas, for instance, sought to increase the number of academics trained scientifically. To do that, he created the *Escuela de Graduados* [Graduate School] to motivate academics to spend more time studying in international universities (Mellafe et al., 1992). As a result, a group of scholars trained abroad came back to Chile, which led to the incorporation of a larger number of academics into universities compared to the Republic period. Likewise, the arrival of academics from Europe and other Latin American countries – mainly fleeing from military coups in their countries – hired by

[3] At this point, it is worth noting that the promotion of democracy and social engagement within universities was not yet associated with a system of valorisation or codes, as we will see in the period of 'quality'. Even the drop in publications because of the cease of some academic journals (e.g., *Revista de Filosofia* temporarily ceased publication in 1967) during this period did not affect academic prestige at all and it was seen as part of the reconfiguration of the university.
[4] The same attitude was observed during the dictatorship (1973-1989), where different forms of political resistances took place across university communities.

the University of Chile and others institutions played an enormous influence in academic practices (Brunner & Flisfisch, 2014). This coincided with the professionalisation of some disciplines like sociology, political science, economy, anthropology, and history as well as the establishment of research centres within and outside universities, the professionalization of academic career – more full-time academics – (González Hernando, 2018) and the creation of more academic journals (Mellafe et al., 1992).

The university reform was abruptly interrupted by the Military coup in 1973. As a result, universities lost their autonomy and were subject to political intervention. Some programmes were closed (e.g., sociology), books were burnt, heads of universities and faculties were replaced by military authorities. Some intellectuals and scholars were killed, exiled or simply silenced by university structures. This situation produced an internal break within academia that has had impact until today in academic behaviour, attitudes and dispositions. Indeed, critical scholars have had to find new symbolic references to reorganise their thoughts and practices against the official vocabulary of the machineries of knowledge production (Richard, 2000; Richard et al., 2004). It was not until the reform of 1980 that the higher education system took a new direction: neoliberalism. However, the resistance to the neoliberal agenda has been significant, diverse and with multiple dynamics and intensities: the student movement of 2006 and 2011 and the social outbreak of 2019. All these moments have meaningfully impacted academic life and suspended, at least partially, neoliberalism within universities.

Reflecting on these historical moments, one could argue that there are continuities and discontinuities of values, attitudes, modes of signification and dispositions among academics. Thus, for example, excellence, which can be traced back to the Republic period but appears explicitly as a policy and a regulative system of academic behaviour during the market period, was transformed and then transferred into neoliberalism. Thus, within the history of neoliberalism in the Chilean university system, there has been a whole reconfiguration of excellence that has entailed the emergence and consolidation of the *culture of quality* as a new singular *experience* within academia – the entanglement of exception and perfection. In other words, the arrival of quality is not entirely linked to neoliberalism but it has been formed well before; that is, the appearance of quality policies does not coincide hand in hand with neoliberalism but with a certain mutation within neoliberalism. When neoliberalism was obliged to replace the techniques of self because these were no longer effective (i.e., excellence as perfection), the technologies developed well before emerged (i.e., excellence as exception). And here an important phenomenon marked the appearance of what is not a new code of academic behaviour but *a new experience*. Similarly, the relationship between neoliberalism and quality is not merely constructed through the practice of management, but through something else, which was formed later the introduction of the neoliberal agenda. This has to do with the development of a new subsidiary state that has tried to reverse the marketization of higher education.

The enactment of the Higher Education Reform Act in 2018 is illustrative of this situation.

Therefore, what is at stake here is not a historical transition from excellence to quality, or the conflict between two opposing models of knowledge production but the reconfiguration and reactivation of values, attitudes and dispositions, or more precisely, the *modalities of experience* of academic critique. Thus, with the arrival of quality we see the consolidation of codes and knowledge through which academics are given a place. This place, or modalities of experience, is what requires further analysis in order to understand the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge in contemporary academia.

2. Research questions

In this context, this study examines the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge within universities by problematising the ethical dimension of academic critique. As I defined earlier, the ethical critique is the way in which academics undertake a series of practices of the self aiming to accommodate or resist the conditions of existence, thus entailing a particular form-of-life. Therefore, I explore how *existing practices of critique* reinforce and resist the conditions of its own existence and contribute to the cultivation of a particular academic self. This implies engaging with longstanding sociological debates concerning the limits of knowledge, social practices and scientific investigations.

Considering this approach, the research question organising this study can thus be phrased as follows: *what modalities of experience does academic critique entail today in Chile?* This question tries to deal with experiences that extend beyond – although connected – technologies of power, codes, laws and policies, which are more stable, and it focuses instead on practices of the self which, according to Foucault, are less stable. In the case of the Chilean academic community, it attempts to problematise Richard's (2000) claim that 'trauma, mourning and melancholy' defines somehow the experience of critical thought in the post-dictatorship university in Chile.

In what follows, I will reconstruct the main research problems and formulate the four specific research questions.

I have argued that living in the neoliberal university brings into play a particular paradigm which can be named as *excellence*. Yet this experience is the result of associations, densities and intensities historically deployed that extend beyond neoliberalism and include other forms of social order. In that context, I argue that excellence can be seen as a cultural nucleus which is the intersection of discourses of truth, forms of governmentality and techniques of the self. Thus, *the logic of excellence* – the right to exclude – can be traced back until the post-independence period to show how it supports the contemporary forms of governmentality in the

Chilean university system. The question that arises from these considerations is whether it is possible to differentiate those practices influenced by neoliberalism and those by other forms of social order (the republic period). It seems more adequate to explore how the history of the university (past experiences) is linked with present experiences thus forming a particular academic-self. These entanglements are not fixed but fragile in the sense that they express historical associations, densities and intensities continuously reactivated by new modalities of experience. Thus, my first specific research question is genealogical: **what particular discourse and model of academic behaviour was brought into play during the post-independence period?** This question points to how some *spectres* of the past in the form of power relations, knowledge and practices are useful traces to understand the constitution of a particular discourse that still permeates academic practices.

I also hold that knowledge production is more than merely an intellectual activity (epistemology) and involves practices of the self (ethics). Or, in other words, academic critique entails a *struggle* which mediates the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge. This struggle shapes how the academic-self is cultivated. Therefore, my second research question is: **how do academics constitute themselves as ethical subjects aiming to produce knowledge?** This question attempts to explore the price to be paid by academics when undertaking critique within universities. It reflects on the implications of the relationship between technologies of power and practices of the self in the contemporary university.

Moreover, I suggest that the way academics relate to and process their experiences has changed over time: from the needs of the state in the Republic period to the needs of the society in the period of University Reform. Thus, my third research question is **how do academics relate to, process and elaborate their everyday experience as ethical subjects?** This question examines how academics relate to contemporary academic life and recognise their moral obligations. Or in other words, it explores why academics stay in academia under the context of neoliberalism and other forms of power relations.

Lastly, I argue that existing practices of critique might well be seen as a field of possibilities. Hence, my last research question is thus, **what happens when academics exercise a critique that addresses the conditions of their own existence?** This question seeks to explore those practices that open the possibility to think differently and consequently to understand under what conditions a field of possibilities become thinkable and attainable.

3. The development of the thesis

This thesis is organised into three parts. *Part One* deals with the research problem. *Chapter 1* introduces the topic by setting out the problem from a global and local perspective. *Chapter 2* addresses the development and transformation of universities

and academic life within global and local trends, paying special attention to how this neoliberalism has been organised in the Chilean context. I address an important issue: is there such thing as a neoliberal university?

Part Two lays out the epistemological and methodological implications of researching the experience of academic critique. Drawing on Foucault, *Chapter 3* develops an analytical framework for the study of the cultivation and transformation of the academic-self in the broader context of knowledge production within universities. *Chapter 4* presents the methodological design and describe the fieldwork process as well as some limitations and epistemological concerns.

Part Three deals with the main empirical-theoretical analysis based on a genealogical analysis and draws on the interviews with a group of Chilean scholars. *Chapter 5* examines the historical emergence of a specific model of academic behaviour within the broad experience of academic critique in ways that support the contemporary forms of governmentality in the Chilean academic community. It focuses on the post-independence period, particularly on the figure of Andres Bello, the first Rector of the University of Chile.

In *Chapter 6* I offer an account of how the quest for excellence of a group of academics, a journey of sacrifices and satisfactions, affects how they relate to themselves, others and knowledge. First, I describe how certain forms of renunciation define how academics sacrifice themselves to take part of knowledge production processes. Based on these descriptions, I propose three forms of sacrifice in academia, which might contribute to understanding broader academic communities: Metaphysical, Scientific and Market sacrifice. Second, I describe the experience of being excluded or the one who excludes and inhabits the zone of indeterminacy. Finally, I describe how satisfaction emerges in academia concerning recognition and desire. I underline the implications for the academic-subject of being the one that has succeeded in mastering techniques and social skills – that is, epistemic virtues – and also able to master pleasures and desires.

Chapter 7 is dedicated to understanding the mode of subjectivation driving academic life in the Chilean academic community. I argue that the mode of relating to the present form of academic critique rests upon a double-sided ethical attitude: *vocation* and *mission*. These modes of subjectivation show in what sense academics choose one element over the other as the basis for *accepting* or *contesting* the contemporary form of academic life. However, these two ethical dispositions are internally intertwined. The mission, as a mode of life resulted from old and new power relations, produces a sort of *crisis* within the academic-self due to the impossibility of being immersed in and impacting society. The way out of this crisis is the emergence of *ethical scepticism* – opposed to scientific scepticism – in the form of a cynical reason that oscillates between *despair* and *hope*.

In *Chapter 8* I propose two forms of critique to understand how critical attitudes are embedded in the system: *suspension* and *interruption*. The former rests upon an epistemological critique which attempts a break with some aspects of academic life or aims at creating alternative futures. The latter does not try to go against or create alternatives but rather dwell on the limits or field of possibilities. The *possibilising* dimension of this form of critique is essential to problematise how critical attitudes emerge in academia and their transformational force. However, I argue that both forms of critique remain trapped within foundational metaphysics or fantasmatic ideals which lead me to rethink – rather than get rid of – the role of ultimate ends for critical action. This also demands rethinking the intersection of utopia, hope and imagination for critical action in the contemporary academy.

Finally, in *Chapter 9* I describe briefly the four empirical-theoretical arguments developed in the thesis and their implications for the Chilean academic community. I also discuss two aspects of the contemporary form of academic critique: ethical idealism and the field of possibilities.

The scene (part two)

The President of Chile required the resignation of the Head of the *Universidad Estatal de Aysen* due to her not aligning with the government's reform. Leaving the University was an ethical dilemma and had a profound impact on my experience and understanding of academia.

Yet the project led by Roxana Pey Tumanoff was not completely eradicated. One element of university governance still exists: the *Social Council*. This Council serves as the place to discuss and challenge university practices and national policies.

Despite the exclusion of certain voices, the possibility of rethinking university and academic life from the *Universidad Estatal de Aysén* remains.

CHAPTER 2

ACADEMICS AS ETHICAL SUBJECTS

1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to problematise how academics constitute themselves as ethical subjects within the broader context of the contemporary university. I used extensive literature that addresses the development and transformation of universities and academic life within global and local trends, paying especial attention to the university model in the UK, Australia and the US (and sometimes other European countries) and, especially, the case of the Chilean academic community.

The chapter is divided into four sections. To begin, I describe the advent of the so-called *neoliberal university* as a particular way of governing academic life; that is, I discuss how the notion of the neoliberal university – and its alternative expressions – has been used to describe academic life. In addition, I explore how the experience of being an academic in a neoliberal university has been problematised from different perspectives. I focus – due to the predominance of certain epistemological and methodological approaches – on identity formation and subjectivity as well as practices of accommodation and resistance to power relations, or what Foucault calls *desubjectification* (Foucault, 2007b). Next, I describe the main transformations of the Chilean academic community during the introduction of the market agenda in the university system. Finally, I provide some conclusions that might be helpful to frame the thesis's epistemological discussion.

2. The locus of academic critique: is there such thing as a neoliberal university?

A hopeless opening

The contemporary university has been designated as entrepreneurial (Clark, 1998), managerial-corporate (Readings, 1996), imperial (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014), transformative (Guzmán-Valenzuela, 2016), developmental (McCowan, 2019), incentivised (Muller, 2022) as well as imagined as ecological (Barnett, 2018) or the thinking university (Barnett & Bengtsen, 2018). These categories have been used to illustrate how forces like globalization have changed the higher education landscape (Altbach et al., 2011) and at the same time to imagine alternative forms of teaching and doing research. Based on these transformations, a growing number of studies – that can be grouped under the label of *critical university studies* – have stressed the various crises that the university faces today due to the introduction of the neoliberal agenda.

In that context, a normative rather than a descriptive analysis seems to be driving these accounts (McCowan, 2019). Although critical voices on the contemporary

university differ considerably on how much they look back to the traditional model, or look forward to a new model that hasn't yet existed, a kind of essence or historical *raison d'etre* seems to be at issue when analysing the modern university (Smyth, 2017). Thus, the *neoliberal university,* grasped as an analytical but also a normative category, has become a unifying category and symbol to describe how academic life is governed today.

Critical analyses are devoted almost exclusively to illustrating the negative consequences of the neoliberal market reforms on universities (Ergül & Coşar, 2017; Mcgettigan, 2013); that is, the attack of neoliberalism on the university mission (Bailey & Freedman, 2011a) and academic freedom (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014). The hopeless university (Hall, 2020), the fractured profession (Johnson, 2017), the alienated academic (Hall, 2018b), or the toxic university (Smyth, 2017) are illustrative of a view that seems to accept that universities are under fire (Jones, 2022) and hence living a moment of inescapable crisis. In the face of these conditions, some have even suggested that 'the only possible relationship to the university today is a criminal one'; that is, 'one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can' (Moten & Harney, 2004, p. 101). Thus, a sort of apocalyptic tone defines the content of these critical analyses (Santa Cruz et al., 2000).

In 2000, the professor of comparative literature Bill Readings wrote *The University in Ruins* claiming that 'it is no longer clear what the place of the University is within society nor what the exact nature of that society is' (Readings, 1996, p. 2). According to Readings, the crisis of the university is explained by a historical shift marked by the adherence to excellence – and accordingly the decline of culture –, which relegates university functions to a consumerist ideology. Students, graduates and academics turn into objects under the control of the bureaucracy. What is in decline then is the national cultural mission of the university; 'the university is becoming', he writes, 'a different kind of institution, one that is no longer linked to the destiny of the nation-state by virtue of its role as producer, protector, and inculcator of an idea of national culture' (Readings, 1996, p. 2). Readings identified this crisis with the arrival of the discourse of excellence, a non-ideological and non-referential discourse, in all the aspects of university practices. For him,

> excellence is like the cash-nexus in that it has no content; it is hence neither true or false, neither ignorant nor self-conscious (…) its rules does not carry with it an automatic political or cultural orientation, for it not determined in relation to any identifiable instance of political power (Readings, 1996, p. 13).

If the university wants to go against the discourse of excellence, Readings suggests that 'an institutional pragmatism that makes an argument for the tactical use of the space of the University, while recognizing that space as a historical anachronism' (1996, p. 18) is needed. By doing so, he proposes 'the need for a philosophical separation of the notions of accountability and accounting' (Readings, 1996, p. 19).

Likewise, he is aware of the risks that entail moving back to the traditional notion of culture. To do that, Readings considers the university as a ruined institution which requires vigilance in disentangling metaphysics projects that seek to re-unify those ruins.

Richard Hall, from a Marxist perspective, has dedicated almost his entire intellectual life to analyse the current status of the contemporary university. For Hall 'the university has been forced into a constant rear-guard action, having to defend its governance, regulation and funding against relentless scrutiny' (Hall, 2020). This statement is indicative of a particular vision when it comes to analysing the modern university: it is seen as a place at war (Docherty, 2015) in which the university has to defend itself from neoliberalism inasmuch as the university is the 'site for learning how to think critically and act with civic courage' (Giroux, 2014, p. 27). A similar critical position is taken by Giroux who is troubled by the problem of how neoliberalism assaults university governance and pedagogical practices (Giroux, 2014, 2020). Both positions seem to be driven by the idea that the historical *raison d'etre* of the university needs to be defended. As a result of this assault on universities, Hall underlines some unwanted outcomes in the form of multiple crises:

> increased workloads; demands for knowledge exchange, research impact and commercialisation; internationalisation strategies aimed at opening up new markets; casualisation and precarious employment; intersectional inequalities in promotion and tenure; attacks on pensions and wages; demands for more innovation in (online) teaching; the sanctity of data and algorithmic control in setting strategies (Hall, 2020).

For Giroux the foremost issue is the assault on pedagogy within which critical thinking emerges. This situation leads, according to him, to a profound crisis of contemporary democracy (Giroux, 2020). 'The current assault', Giroux insists, 'threatening higher education and the humanities in particular cannot be understood outside of the crisis of economics, politics, and power' (Giroux, 2014, p. 25). These distinctive crises entail

> the increasing pace of the corporatization and militarization of the university, the squelching of academic freedom, the rise of an ever increasing contingent of part-time faculty, the rise of a bloated managerial class, and the view that students are basically consumers and faculty providers of a saleable commodity such as a credential or a set of workplace skills (Giroux, 2014, p. 26).

Giroux then adds that 'more striking still is the slow death of the university as a center of critique, vital source of civic education, and crucial public good'; therefore, 'the consequence of such dramatic transformations is the near-death of the university as a democratic public sphere' (Giroux, 2014, p. 26). Thus, the attack on universities not only brings about the demise of critique, academic freedom (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014), the public university (Wright & Shore, 2017) or the university as we know it (McCowan, 2017) but also a broader crisis within contemporary democracy.

Similar positions can be found in the most recent literature on higher education, especially from the Global North (Collini, 2017). Some have paid attention to the colonial foundations of higher education systems (Bhambra et al., 2018; Stein, 2022); how university reproduces class, gender and race inequalities (Nzinga, 2020) and practices of barbarism (O'Sullivan, 2016); the present and future of academic freedom (De Gennaro et al., 2022; Marginson, 2008; H. R. by J. W. Scott, 2019; Williams, 2016) in the age of post-truth (Gambetti, 2022); the commodification of knowledge in terms of pedagogical practices (Cowden & Singh, 2013); the fracture of academic work as a result of the commercialisation of research (Johnson, 2017); the role of the public universities (Watts, 2017), the possibility of a public regime (Durán Del Fierro, 2022), or the relationship between universities and public goods (Marginson, 2011; Noble & Ross, 2019).

In Chile, where the neoliberal market reforms first took place, the category of the neoliberal university – or market-oriented system – has played an essential role in defining a critical stance. Since the 2000s the critique of neoliberalism has been extensive and productive thus contributing to reforms that have sought to reverse the marketisation of universities (Espinoza, 2017a, 2017b; Friz Echeverría, 2016; Salazar Zegers & Leihy, 2013). In the same vein, the idea of crisis has also been used widely to describe the current state of universities (Thayer, 1996), especially public ones (Orellana, 2016). For instance, Thayer – who undertakes a philosophical critique – understands the crisis of the modern university not only as the crisis of academic freedom, the possibility of critique or financial sustainability – which are associated with market reforms – but also as the crisis of the categories created by modernity that sets the limits of the university. Thereby, the crisis of the modern university entails its end. It is the end of that rational, cognitive, national and missional institution oriented to understanding – from a critical distance and intellectual work – and disturbing society (Thayer, 1996). The 'perpetual state of incineration' (Santa Cruz et al., 2000, p. 231) of universities is illustrative of a crisis that cannot be represented by concepts or categories 'because the category of crisis is itself in crisis; that is to say, there is no term, no concept, no linguistic form that could sufficiently reveal' (Santa Cruz et al., 2000, p. 232) the scope of the crisis of the modern university. Thayer's argument is remarkable since it puts the origin of the crisis in the limits of the modern university, which according to him completely collapsed when market reforms were introduced into its structures.

All these analyses assume, in one way or another, that universities are living a moment of crisis as a result of, but not exclusively, the market agenda or neoliberalism in higher education[5]. Yet the scope and way out of this situation varies according to the tone of the critic. For some this situation is leading to, for instance, the death of the public

[5] It's important to recall that something else has happened to HE systems in this period: their massive expansion. Many of the changes observed concern the shift from compact, elite universities to a tertiary system with large numbers of non-traditional students requiring new institutions and teaching staff without a research focus.

university (Wright & Shore, 2017), while for others something needs to be rescued. Yet as Ball put it,

> if there are things that are worth defending within the previous regime of public service, and clearly not everything is, then one component of such a defence must be a proper understanding of the relations of power within which we now find ourselves enmeshed and which shape our present (Ball, 2012b, p. 26).

For Ball what is crucial then is 'the possibility of free and critical thought in the neoliberal university' (p. 26).

Governing academic life: the neoliberal agenda in higher education

Much of the current literature on academic subjectivities pays particular attention to the policies that make the market reforms in higher education possible – or what has also been called epistemic governance (Lund et al., 2022). In particular, the notion of *governmentality* – following Foucault's idea of the art of governing life – has been increasingly used to refer to the formation of the neoliberal academic subject (Ball, 2012b). This is what Ball and others call performativity, that is,

> a powerful and insidious policy technology that is now at work at all levels and in all kinds of education and public service, a technology that links effort, values, purposes and self-understanding to measures and comparisons of output (Ball, 2012b, p. 19).

In these regimes of performance what is transformed is the experience of being an academic and doing research and hence the ontological status of the knowledge produced through these practices (Lund et al., 2022). The university, according to these views, is no longer the exclusive place of critique or a meaningful experience but the site of productivity: recording, reporting, confessing and improving (Ball, 2012b; Morrissey, 2015; Tülübas & Göktürk, 2020). But perhaps the most important aspect of performativity lies in its productive side: 'We are produced rather than oppressed, animated rather than constrained!' (Ball, 2012b, p. 19). Thereby, performativity 'is a moral system that subverts and re-orients us to its ends. It makes us responsible for our performance and for the performance of others' (Ball, 2012b, p. 19).

According to this corpus of literature, what is at stake in the neoliberal regime in higher education is the way academics and the knowledge produced by them are governed (Naidoo, 2018; Naidoo & Williams, 2015). Drawing upon Musselin (2018), two forms of neoliberal competition permeate the contemporary higher education sector: quantitative and qualitative competition. The former includes competition for students, research grants, staff, etc.; while the latter consists of symbolic competition, that is, prestige and reputation via quality labels (Musselin, 2018). These forms of competition have brought about great policy reforms in higher education that seek to govern institutional and academic practices in light of the rise of the 'evaluative state'(Neave,

2012). As a result, there is a large volume of studies describing the role of these technologies of power – regulation and self-regulation – and the effects on every day academic life and the condition for the possibility of thought (Skelton, 2012; Strathern, 2000). For instance, Burrows pays attention to the development of quantitative control through a series of metrics: 'citations; workload models; transparent costing data; research assessments; teaching quality assessments; and commercial university league tables'(Burrows, 2012). Morley (2003) focuses particularly on the role of quality policies in shaping higher education at different levels: macro and micro systems of accountability, surveillance and regulation such as audits and accreditations, on the one hand, and peer review and publications, on the other (Morley, 2003). In a same vein, Skolnik (2010) refers to quality assurance as a political rather a technical process in which power relations are inevitable (Skolnik, 2010). Jarvis (2014) explores how quality regulatory tools create quasi-markets and promote competition based on political conviction rather than technical evidence (Jarvis, 2014). Brøgger examines how universities are governed through standards – such as the qualifications framework, the modularization and the outcome-orientation of the curriculum – that 'transform the social worlds they encounter on their way, they change that which they seek to govern and they are themselves transformed in the process' (Brøgger, 2019, p. 2). These standards, Brøgger argues, 'become almost invisible (….) faceless masters of higher education' (Brøgger, 2019, p. 3).

Other critical analyses link the development of these technologies with a new 'structure of feeling amongst academics' (Burrows, 2012) – the so-called 'affective turn' in higher education that focuses on desire, affects and emotions (Hey & Leathwood, 2009). It is argued that the emergence and introduction of these policy tools – e.g., performance indicators, global rankings and audits – have produced 'unhealthy emotions' (Ball, 2015, p. 253) such as stress, anxiety, shame, discomfort and despair amongst academics (Ball, 2003; Burrows, 2012; Gill, 2016; Houston et al., 2006). Similarly, some have emphasised the transformation of the experience of time within universities (Shahjahan, 2022), emphasising the uncertainties that it entails (Telling, 2018; Vostal, 2015a, 2021; Ylijoki, 2013). For instance, it is argued that the way knowledge is produced has been transformed from thought-time to money-time (Noonan, 2015). Likewise, Pardo-Guerra (2022) examines the effects of research evaluations on academics and concludes that these processes give rise to less diversity and more conformity (Pardo-Guerra, 2022). This is what Ball calls 'ontological insecurity', that is, 'both a loss of a sense of meaning in what we do and of what is important in what we do' (Ball, 2015, p. 253).

All these critical reflections show how the neoliberal agenda has defined a particular way of governing academic life: productivity, performativity, competition, research assessment, standards, rankings, accountability, among others. They also illustrate the impact of these policies on the experience of academic critique: uncertainties, insecurities, precarity, etc. Curiosity, creativity and objectivity seem no longer define academic life.

3. Critique and practices of the self in the academy: accommodation, ambivalence and refusal

The phase after the consolidation of market reforms in higher education is often referred to as neoliberal governmentality. Over the last decade or so, there has been a growing literature focusing on how market policies are translated into practices using a policy enactment approach (Ball et al., 2012; A. Braun et al., 2011; Singh et al., 2014). Specifically, what is at play is the emergence of new academic subjectivities in the form of practices of the self (Ball & Olmedo, 2013). However, the point of departure of these studies lies mostly in understanding how academic 'identities are always under construction in contexts that are characterised by indeterminacy, partiality and complexity' (Taylor, 2008, p. 28). Thus, some authors have emphasised the relational aspect of the process of identity formation, which involves tensions within particular disciplines and institutional settings (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Green & Little, 2013) as well as academic roles like teaching (Laiho et al., 2022; McCune, 2021). Therefore, there has been an attempt to emphasise the internal schism amongst academics, on the one hand, and the way in which academics, understood as individual subjects, reinforce their roles in relation to others and particular contexts, on the other.

Taylor (1999) distinguished three levels in which academic identities are made up which resonates with how academic life is organised: institutional, disciplinary and universal values. The first level refers to the differences between higher education institutions. For example, in Chile traditional universities are organised differently compared to new ones: while the former often are public institutions, the latter are private. The second level implies that there are significant variations – e.g., epistemological values – between how disciplines produce knowledge within universities (Becher & Trowler, 2001). The third level consists of a set of universal values that influence the way in which academics teach and do research (Taylor, 1999). A large body of literature has investigated academic identity formation considering these distinctions (Barrow et al., 2022), specially influenced by the work of Becher and Trowler (2001).

However, it is also possible to see investigations that show the complexities of studying academic identities merely from a disciplinary or institutional perspective. Unlike studies focused on identity formation within specific disciplinary fields, what is at stake here is the constitution of shared epistemic dispositions within academia, or what Foucault called *episteme* (Foucault, 2007a). For example, Leisyte examined how organizational managerialism and academic capitalism have replaced disciplines as the source of identity for academics (Leisyte, 2015). Similarly, the work of Mary Henkel has been significant in that respect. In the book *Academic identities and policy change in higher education* (2000) she argues that new professional academic identities are in the making as a result of market reforms in higher education. These more structured identities are attached to the institution rather than the disciplines regardless of the

role as teacher, researcher or manager (Henkel, 2000). Following this line of inquiry, some authors have focused on institutional changes within universities and have explored the degree to which traditional academic values, such as academic freedom, and the processes of knowledge production, have become more aligned with new organizational values (Fardella et al., 2016; Hakala, 2009). Thus, according to these studies, traditional academic values have been replaced by managerial ones, such as entrepreneurialism and profit-making ideals (Harris, 2005; Winter, 2009), thus creating a shared epistemic orientation amongst academics (Aarseth, 2022) and, as a consequence, the emergence of epistemic injustice (J. Blackmore, 2022; Fricker, 2007).

On the basis of these considerations, some authors have gone further and explored the practices of the self in the form of accommodation to, ambivalence towards and resistance to power relations within university settings (Gair et al., 2021; Webb, 2018). Recognising the pitfalls of some critical accounts, specifically those that have narrowly employed the notion of identity within specific disciplinary fields or that have deemed resistance merely as academic activism (Davids & Waghid, 2021; Spolander et al., 2022), these approaches intend to examine how academics respond to policy changes and institutional obligations using, although indistinctly, a Foucauldian perspective (Ball, 2012a, 2017; Cannizzo, 2015). In that respect, the notion of *subjectivity* has played an important role, being described as '*processes of becoming* that focus on *what we do* rather than on *what we are*, that is to say, the work of *the care of the self*' (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 87)[6]. Concentrating on *what we do* seems to be an epistemological tactic to move away from researching identities merely from the point of view of *what we are*. Therefore, subjectivity is 'a key site of political struggle – not a sufficient site perhaps, but a necessary one (…)' which involves 'engagement with, and can involve a refusal of, neoliberal governmentality in its own terms' (Ball, 2016, p. 1131). By understanding subjectivity this way, some authors have tried to explore the ambivalent ways academics translate policy changes into practices. Thus, academic subjectivity is seen as 'the site of power, where it is enacted or resisted/refused (…) but never in an absolute sense, rather within multiple "strategic skirmishes"' (Ball, 2016, p. 1131).

Based on these considerations, Lucas (2014), for instance, examined the ways in which academics resist quality assurance policies in England using a Foucauldian informed critical discourse analysis. In this critical account of forms of resistance, Lucas concludes that 'The success ultimately, therefore, of resistance, as least in these instances, is potentially reliant on the authorial positioning of the challengers'; and it occurs 'at the level of challenging the discourse and the meanings of the quality assurance processes rather than being able to effect substantive policy change'

[6] Here Ball follows Foucault definition of subjectivity, which "for him refers neither to a substance nor to a transcendental determination, but to a reflexivity that one could almost call practical: a manner of relating to
oneself in order to construct, to elaborate oneself" (Gros, 2005, p. 698).

(Lucas, 2014, p. 223). In other words, what she describes as resistance is the practice of refusing quality assurance processes but not necessarily neoliberal governmentality. Similarly, Shahjahan (2014) suggests four modes of postcolonial resistance to neoliberal conditions – competitiveness and productivity – in higher education: cultural, subversive, oppositional, and transformational. The author concludes that 'decolonizing resistance entails cultural, subversive and oppositional modes of resistance, but should also centre multiple ways of knowing and being that enable experimentation with the present to imagine a future of human connection and interdependence (…)'; the author then suggests that a 'shift from 'no' to 'yes' in resistance theory can help us more meaningfully set the 'terms of our existence' and produce alternative visions in HE' (Shahjahan, 2014, pp. 230–231).

In 2019 the Palgrave Critical University Studies published two books – in the context of Australian higher education – with the aim to shed some light on the multiple forms of resistance to the "ethos of neoliberalism" in universities, that is, 'efficiencies, productive competition and public accountability' (Bottrell & Manathunga, 2019, p. 1). The authors examined different aspects of academic life employing a myriad of theoretical and methodological approaches – e.g., affective and postcolonial theories, autoethnographies, and so on. According to the editors, the collection of essays signals the fact that 'there are cracks in the neoliberal university that still present opportunities for academics to pursue alternative priorities, resistances and refusals' (Bottrell & Manathunga, 2019, p. 2). The 'cracks' therefore represents the possibility of thinking and doing academic work differently. Drawing on Readings 'dwelling on the ruins', the editors suggest the need of 'interrogating, understanding and articulating new ways of seeing the substance and politics of change' (Bottrell & Manathunga, 2019, p. 2). In that respect, the essays not only offer an account of the conflicting practices produced by market policies – e.g., managerialism versus academic autonomy – but they also call for the reinvention of the praxis of teaching and research within universities. In other words, it is not only an attempt to describe academic experiences in the light of the neoliberal university but also a normative examination of the cracks and fissures emerging from every day and collective forms of academic resistance.

Inspired by this venture, Susan Gair, Tamar Hager and Omri Herzog (2021) have recently put together a set of personal stories addressing the damaging effects of neoliberalism – e.g., 'authoritarian managerialism, accountability processes, standardization measures, performance indicators and benchmarking achievement audits' (Gair et al., 2021, p. 1) – on their everyday life as female academics. Thus, for example, they describe stories of how the global pandemic led to the extensive use of online teaching and hence to the transformation of teachers and students experiences. These stories regarding everyday survival serve to expose 'the hidden costs of an academic's daily routine in the present higher education net, while challenging and opposing neoliberal oppressive processes' (Gair et al., 2021, p. 10). That is to say, the book in itself, which is rooted in a feminist epistemology and collaborative

autoethnographies, can be seen as a form of resistance to the hegemonic way of doing research within academia. Thus, they consider that their

> autoethnographies, then, can be written and read as a cooperation with hegemonic power (they use academic jargon and will contribute to our promotion, and will be measured by the academic metrics) and simultaneously as a rebellious and subversive response to this power (by questioning neoliberal notions of meritocracy, quality, difference and objectivity) (Gair et al., 2021, p. 13).

It is, as a result, a project which emphasises a sort of dialectic between compliance and resistance within the neoliberalised academy.

In a slightly different direction, Aarseth (2022) examines the implicit epistemology of metric governance in higher education with the aim to delve into 'the motivational drives behind creative scientific pursuits'. By using a phenomenological conception of Bourdieu's practice theory, for her 'what is at stake here is the more general drive towards formation and creation of meaning: the desire to "know the unknown"' (Aarseth, 2022, p. 1) – indeed, this argument is similar to Shah's (2017) assertion that the subject of science suffers from paranoia due to the impossibility of knowing the real truth, which is in opposition to Daston and Galison (2007) suggestion that an ethos of objectivity drives scientific epistemology. Or, in other words, rather than practices of compliance or resistance Aarseth is more interested in the epistemic orientations behind creative attachment and complexity when academics undertake research. She concludes that a sort of tension between a *desire for recognition*, which is guided by performance indicators, and a *desire for formation*, which is an object-relational conception of desire based on libidinal strivings, drives the motivational practices amongst academics (Aarseth, 2022). Using proximate theoretical assumptions, Lapping suggests (2007) that the act of compliance, e.g., accountability, is guided by a social fantasy in which the distinction between knowing and doing is fundamental. A similar argument has recently been put forward by Bacevic (2019) in relation to neoliberalism as an epistemic object. In other work, Lapping (2013) analyses some 'instances' from interviews with academics that for her correspond to 'a moment of disruption to disciplinary discourses/identities' (Lapping, 2013, p. 381). Lapping concludes that moments of disruption 'foregrounds the intense difficulty of moving beyond established discursive identities' and therefore 'what is at stake in research is the attempt to keep my own desire in flow, to avoid the sedimentation of desire into a claim to know' (Lapping, 2013, p. 384).

Although these studies have been fundamental to understand academic life further, some authors have questioned the adequacy of focusing on identities, practices of the self, affects or desire as a way to examine academic subjectivities within the broader context of the contemporary university. For instance, Neary and Winn argue that 'the concept of "academic identity" is not adequate to the critical task for which it is utilised as it fails to deal with the real nature of work in capitalist society' (Neary & Winn, 2016, p. 409); they suggest then that 'it is important to move on from the mystifying and

reified politics of identity and seek to understand academic life so that its alienated forms can be transformed'; thus, although 'identity has helped illuminate the crisis at the heart of academic life, yet it does not get beyond a sense of powerlessness and anxiety' (Neary & Winn, 2016, p. 409). The problem, according to this view, lies in the abandonment of key categories – like labour – when academic life is analysed. They include in their critique the work of Stephen Ball who for them

> offers a perceptive and emotive account of life in the neoliberal university yet stops short at offering an adequate theory of academic work and identity. Ultimately, Ball's account lacks explanatory and emancipatory power while the forces that shape academic life remain a mystery (…) This limitation is not unique to sociologists of education. In general, the last few decades of critical thinking in the social sciences have privileged questions of identity (race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender) to the neglect of what we regard as more fundamental categories of critique, including that of labour (…) (Neary & Winn, 2016, p. 409).

In this regard, Richard Hall has recently explored the concept of alienation to examine the realities of contemporary academia in the global north (Hall, 2018b). Likewise, Sutton offers a critical account of the paradox of fatalism and utopianism, or disenchantment and emancipation, using the notion of labour (Sutton, 2015, 2017). In a same vein, Maisuria (2020) undertook a critical analysis of the impact of neoliberalism on everyday experiences of academics and, most importantly, offers a provocative alternative – or form of emancipation –, the National Educational Service (NES), based on co-operative normative principles and practices.

The different ways of addressing the current conditions of academic life is indicative of a greater tension between two theoretical frameworks that permanently inform critical studies on universities and academic subjectivities: structuralism and poststructuralism. Despite some crucial differences, there are a number of studies that have attempted to go beyond these disciplinary boundaries and offer alternative or complementary approaches. This thesis can be seen as an attempt to examine the process of subjectivity-constitution of academics within the contemporary university from a more articulated perspective. In the final section, I briefly highlight some aspects of this effort.

4. Academic subjectivities in the Chilean academic community

In Chile, until the 2000s the efforts to understand the academy, intellectuals or scholars was relatively limited. The most relevant work in this field was undertaken by Brunner during the 1980s at the Latin American Social Sciences Institute (FLACSO Spanish acronym). His research agenda focused primarily on understanding the role of intellectuals in the broader development of a national culture; that is, how intellectual work carried out by academics from different universities and disciplines shapes institutional and national progress (Brunner, 1981; Brunner & Flisfisch, 2014). Later, his analyses have focused more on what has recently been called *academic capitalism* using the sociology of higher education as analytical framework. Indeed, Brunner has

in recent times systematised this approach to contribute to the study of academic culture in the Latin American context (Brunner, Salmi, et al., 2022).

Since the 2000s empirical investigation of the academic field within universities has expanded and gained more attention among Chilean researchers – although the research agenda is still limited compared to other countries. There are two major perspectives at play in these analyses. On the one hand, studies that seek to describe the transformation of the academic career in terms of the number, profile, working conditions, teaching and research activities, and so on (Berrios, 2007, 2008; Santelices, 2015; Veliz-Calderon et al., 2018); that is, studies focusing on the academic profession from a micro sociological perspective (Brunner, Salmi, et al., 2022). For instance, Berrios (2015), using historical data, described the professionalisation of the academy and the multiple forms of academic careers according to the type of university – e.g., private or public –; others have analysed the working conditions of part-time academics in Chile, the so-called taxi professors, that is, hourly underpaid academics dedicated almost exclusively to teaching activities (Cantillana-Barañados et al., 2019; Simbürger & Neary, 2016). These kinds of studies have undeniably contributed to the problematisation of the academy in light of global transformations, informing policy debates and providing useful insights for policy solutions.

On the other hand, there exist studies that attempt to delve into the experience of being an academic within the contemporary Chilean university (Fardella et al., 2019; Fardella, 2020; Fardella, Baleriola, et al., 2020; Mandiola & Varas, 2016; Ossa, 2016; Pey, 2016; Richard et al., 2004; Rojo, 2005). In that respect, the idea of *academic identities* – following the epistemological and methodological approaches from the Global North – has been extensively used to describe the lived experience of academics. In general, identity is regarded as an entanglement of values, judgments and principles that orient actions according to specific contexts (discipline, institution or culture). For instance, Guzmán-Valenzuela and Barnett (2013), using a social realist perspective (Archer, 1995), interviewed a group of academics from one public and private university to explore identity fragilities as a result of market reforms in Chile. The investigation focused on the tension between structure and agency and suggested two forms of fragilities according to the type of university (public or private). On the one hand, the fragility that emerges in the public university is *ontological* as 'academics […] are continuously faced with challenges not merely of choosing the paths that they will follow but also, and more especially, of continually having to make choices – amid all the contextual forces at work – as to who they want to be, and who they can be' (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Barnett, 2013a, p. 214). On the other hand, in the private university there is a *contractual* fragility due to the precarity of academics' professional and intellectual situation in terms of time and everyday management. Based on these considerations, it is argued that two academic markets at stake within the academy: reputational and branding. The relationship between these markets brings about structural constrains that make up the form of academic fragilities.

Despite these constrains, the authors emphasise the fact that academics still have 'spaces for agentic responses and journeys, opening up imaginative possibilities for profound individual differences' (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Barnett, 2013a, p. 218).

In order to expand the understanding of the *reputational fragility* among Chilean academics, Guzmán-Valenzuela and Martinez (2016) identified a series of tensions in the construction of academic identities in one research university in Chile. The authors foreground the tension between teaching, research, management and public engagement activities among academics. They connected these roles with disciplinary, institutional, national and global structures. By and large, the authors argue that academics find themselves in conflict when making decisions regarding future actions – it is a conflict between academic roles. This leads to the tension between academic freedom and institutional obligations; that is, between putting in practice an expected value due to belonging to a research university, and the compliance with the regimen of performance. Following the idea of academic tribes and territories (Becher & Trowler, 2001), the authors argue that this tension differs according to the faculty or academic department within the research university; that is, some spaces privilege research activities while others privilege teaching tasks, which entail the emergence of two different types of academics: one more associated with research (and hence more prestige) and one with teaching (less prestige).

Using the same distinction between academic roles but from a gender perspective, Mandiola, Rios and Varas (2019) reflect on 'the gendered organisation of academic practices' across disciplines, emphasising 'the social and political logics that constitute a gendered and genderized stratification of academic organizations, where masculinized research and feminized teaching are shaped as nodal points' (Mandiola et al., 2019, p. 1). Following this line of inquiry, it has also been problematised the role that a new set of gender policies and codes, especially following the "feminist May" in Chile (2018), are playing in transforming academic practices and the processes of knowledge production within universities (Mandiola et al., 2022).

Since 2015 Carla Fardella and other researchers have conducted a series of studies exploring the formation of academic identities in Chile, especially how academics adapt or resist new managerial systems. Following a narrative approach to analyse the formation of academic identities, Fardella, Sisto and Jimenez (2016) identified two elements that organise the narratives academics have on themselves: commitment to social change and passion for academic work. These narratives are built in opposition to productivity and managerial roles. According to the authors, and following the work of Ranciere and Foucault, these narratives can be seen as "moments of rupture and the reconfiguration of what is admissible" [my translation] (Fardella et al., 2016, p. 1634). However, they also suggest that "the passion for work" seems to be a form of reproducing the intensification and precarity of academic work. Drawing upon these reflections, Fardella, Garcia-Meneses, Soto and Corvalan-Navia (2021) identified three academics' identity narratives across scientific disciplines and types of

universities: the critical academic, the lonely academic, and the prestigious academic. Two overlapping tensions are underlined to illustrate how these shared narratives converge: the passion for academic work (or vocation) and individualisation. Reflecting on these considerations, they conclude that "there are aspects of academic identity that are profoundly exacerbated thanks to neo managerial systems" [my translation] (Fardella et al., 2021, p. 16).

Following this line of inquiry, Fardella, Broitman and Matter (2022) explored how academics resist managerial mechanisms and how a political subjectivity is configured within Chilean universities. Based on a set of interviews with Chilean academics from different disciplines and universities, the authors suggest three narratives/tensions (or values) whereby academics configure their relationship with the neoliberal university: reflexivity, affective practices and solidarity. Reflexivity questions the objective stance of academics in relation to knowledge production; affective practices emphasise the importance of commitments and empathy in academic work; and solidarity considers the practices of the care of the self and others as a way to resist accountability and productivity. Taken all together, the authors consider that these everyday practices of resistance consolidate a political subjectivity that contributes to the transformation of historical aspects of academic work; that is, political action, collective action and activism is possible when these practices of resistance become systematic and valuable within the academic community (Fardella et al., 2022). Similar conclusions were shared by Fardella and other researchers when they analysed the process of writing scientific articles among highly productive academics; these practices, according to them, are grounded in tensions organised around affectivity, fragility and strategy (Fardella, Carriel-Medina, et al., 2020).

From a slightly different perspective, Calderon and Balmaceda (2022) put more attention on how academic teacher identities are formed through practices that value academic work. They identified three motivational drivers that explain the passion for teaching: mission, recognition and curiosity. The mission is inspired by a vocation beyond personal benefits and focused more on students' learning outcomes. Recognition is defined as a sense of belonging created by meaningful relationships with others (students, colleagues, institution). Finally, curiosity emerges from the challenge that entails working with students from different backgrounds. The authors state that these drivers seem to be attached to one requirement: play the game. That is to say, mission, recognition and curiosity 'seem to be more clearly satisfied in participants who have learned the rules of the game and value teaching work as a space where those motivators can be exercised' [my translation] (Calderón Soto & Balmaceda, 2022, p. 11).

Another aspect used by researchers to understand academic life in Chile is time – in line with an expanding international research agenda on this topic (Berg & Seeber, 2016; Gibbs, 2015; Vostal, 2015a, 2015b, 2021; Ylijoki, 2013). Thus, Guzman-Valenzuela and Barnett (2013b), using a qualitative approach in one public university,

examined how academics experience time under the context of productivity and competition. The results suggest a series of narratives of time in academic life: fragmented time; distorted time; invisibility-visibility; the contradictions of slow time and fast time (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Di Napoli, 2015); and personal time. In addition, the authors introduced the idea of 'markets of time' or 'time-investments' through which 'academics invest themselves, for the tasks (whatever they be) are coming to constitute their academic *being*' (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Barnett, 2013b, p. 1131). Based on these considerations, two time-markets attached to different time-frames emerge from the data analysed:

An individual may be prepared to undertake an activity that offers little or no satisfaction and so experience a period of *lost time* (or 'wrong time'), if she or he can in return undertake an activity that offers a much greater level of satisfaction and in which she or he can experience some level of personal investment. This latter we term *committed time*: it is a timeframe that holds an activity in which there is an investment of self" (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Barnett, 2013b, p. 1132).

Using a similar framework to analyse time in academic life, Fardella and Corvalan (2020) suggest three narratives among female academics: 1) suffering from time; 2) managing time, and 3) re-inventing time. These repertoires are illustrative of a tension between work and personal life among female academics and show how they seek to balance their existence.

Overall, these studies show a particular form of academic life in Chile. This is defined by practices of accommodation and resistance sustained by distinct narratives and identities. What stands out from these explorations is that Chilean academics, either professors or young researchers, have long been experiencing academic capitalism (since the education reform of 1981).

5. Towards a hopeful beginning: academics as ethical subjects

Based on this review, four aspects need to be underlined for the study of the academic self within the broader experience of academic critique. It is worth noting that these four insights have contributed to the definition of the research questions.

First, it seems important to note that most critical accounts use neoliberalism as the backdrop of their analysis, being considered the primary source of damage to life in academia. The use of neoliberalism as an analytical category, or the neoliberal university, is helpful to critique policy reforms that have changed the institutional landscape of universities over the last three decades. However, it falls short when the aim is to explore the subjectivity-constitution of those individuals involve in knowledge production; that is, when the purpose is to delve into the modalities of experience that academic critique entails. Historical roots beyond market reforms constitute everyday

academic life, or more precisely, an epistemic project that goes back to the birth of the modern university.

Second, market reforms are typically referred to as detrimental to academic life, affecting, for instance, academic freedom (Collini, 2017), working conditions, or leading to the demise of the university (Wright & Shore, 2017). According to these reflections, academic life involves either the fragmentation of identities or 'the dispossession of time, agency and autonomy' (Hall, 2018, p. 101). An apocalyptic tone is often used to describe the current situation of universities. As a result, a sort of crisis appears to be haunting these critical analyses. Despite the fact that the current situation can be referred to as a crisis (Van Dermijnsbrugge & Chatelier, 2022), the problem with this category is that it boils down the experience of academic critique to either an attack of neoliberalism on the university (macro level) or on their appearances (micro level) and hence overlooks the contradictions underpinning knowledge production; that is, the ambivalences that academics face towards the epistemic governance of knowledge production. Or in other words, this apocalyptic attitude tends to bring about a dichotomy within critical studies: either focusing on objective determinations like neoliberal policies or lived experience like affective or subjective appearances (R. L. Scott, 2022). The relevant point that I want to focus is the examination of the contradictory relationship between subjectivities and a given regime of truth – with some differences, this is more or less what has been called policy enactment (Ball et al., 2012) or speculative experience (Rose, 1995; R. L. Scott, 2022) – see chapter 3 for further explanation.

Third, it is interesting to note that some critical accounts go beyond analysing disciplinary fields or institutional settings. A growing corpus of literature assumes that a specific episteme governs academic life and knowledge production, e.g., feminist studies of academia; and that the 'commonality' or 'universality' of university is built in various places simultaneously. This epistemological position is relevant to my research as I hold that critique – the productive negation of being governed that way – emerges across disciplines and at an everyday level. However, as I highlight in the theoretical framework (Chapter 3), it is possible to make an analytical distinction for studying the academic self: between epistemological and ethical practices. It is not only an implicit epistemology that governs academic life (Aarseth, 2022) but also an ethical attitude in the form of practices and epistemic virtues (Daston & Galison, 2007). This distinction could be a contribution to the study of the academy.

Finally, most studies examining what it means to be an academic within the contemporary university follow a Weberian approach – and hence a Neo-Kantian perspective (Rose, 1995). These studies focus on understanding how academic identity is formed through a series of practices and actions – i.e., what values orient and confer validity to academic practices; or what principles inform their substantive and instrumental practices (Le, 2022). In that respect, the notion of identity has widely been used to describe the emergence, transformation and decline of values in some

specific settings like the university, disciplinary fields or epistemic cultures. They are motivated by the need to postulate abstract principles or values – e.g., Weberian ideal types by means of making classifications or subject positions like the critical scholar or the lonely academic. Against this epistemological and methodological framework, I focus instead on the modes of subjectivation and practices of the self as part of an universal (regime of truth or episteme) that becomes real through the experience of academic critique – for more details on this point, see the methodology chapter.

PART TWO – THE APPROACH

CHAPTER 3

THE ETHICAL DIMENSION OF ACADEMIC CRITIQUE: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY OF THE ACADEMIC-SELF

1. Introduction

In Chapters 1 and 2, I problematised the way in which academics become ethical subjects. I offered some points of departure and placed the problem in a local context (the Chilean academic community) in order to set out the research questions. Then, I explored how academic subjects are constituted by the development of policies historically situated and practices of compliance and resistance at a global and local level.

In this chapter, I want to bring into play a set of key concepts and ideas and later discuss an analytical approach to the study of the academic-self. To do that, I first explore the relationship between governmentality, knowledge, ethics and desire using a Foucauldian approach. Second, I discuss the possibility of academic critique based on the debate initiated by Latour and continued by Felski and others – the so-called post-critique. Third, drawing upon the previous discussions, I offer three theoretical distinctions for the study of the academic-self within universities: epistemology and ethics; the ethics of excellence; and critique as a productive force.

2. The order of things and the constitution of an ethical subject

Neoliberal governmentality

Brown (2015) suggests two ways of addressing the notion of neoliberalism for analytical purposes. On the one hand, it can be seen as a form of remaking all state policies in accordance with economic rules, including the deregulation of markets, the privatization of public goods, the reduction of welfare state, and the introduction of capital flows. On the other hand, as a *normative order* or ‘a peculiar form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms’ (Brown, 2015, p. 17). In that sense, Brown argues that neoliberal reason is undoing the basic elements of contemporary liberal democracy, that is, ‘vocabularies, principles of justice, political cultures, habits of citizenship, practices of rule, and above all, democratic imaginaries’ (Brown, 2015, p. 17). In academia, this can be seen in the way academics refer to knowledge production (e.g., cutting-edge, innovation, etc.), undertake research and orient their actions (values).

Drawing on this last perspective, one could say that neoliberalism, following Foucault’s conceptualization, is a ‘particular art of governing human beings’ (Foucault, 2010; Lorenzini, 2018). Foucault’s definition of neoliberalism consists of three components: neoliberalism as a set of technologies shaping individuals’ practices and behaviours; as a governmental rationality structuring individual freedom as an instrument of power;

and as a set of political strategies that constitute a particular subjectivity (Lorenzini, 2018). Thus, rather than an ideology that 'give individuals an unprecedented opportunity to exercise their freedom far and wide, without imposing any specific form of life on them' (Lorenzini, 2018, p. 154), for Foucault neoliberalism is a form of *governmentality*, that is, the irreducible intersection of technologies and strategies of power for the conduct of free individuals and practices of the self. This notion, as it appears, is distinguishable from power as exploitation, domination and coercion, a single and unified order, or the rationalisation thesis pointed out by Weber (Dean, 2010).

Neoliberalism can also be seen as a particular form of *critique*. Indeed, Foucault in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, analyses the concept of liberalism and defines it 'as a *critical governmental reason* which raises the problem of "how not to govern too much"' (Foucault, 2010, p. 13). In that respect, any form of governmental reason, including (neo)liberalism, is a *critical epistemic project* which aims to *reactivate* the conditions of the operation of thought and forms of knowledge (Bacevic, 2017) – in addition to institutional frameworks.

Or in other words, neoliberalism can be seen as both governmentality and critique which entails a particular episteme. In the book *The Order of Things* Foucault describes the notion of *episteme* as an epistemological field that makes the conditions of possibility for knowledge possible in a given time and place. Or, in other words, it is a sort of normative/epistemological order, discourse (Ball, 1993) or social regularities (Scheurich, 1994) by means of which we are able to think as we think thus setting the limits on what is thinkable and unthinkable, present or absent. Thereby, the notion of episteme suggests that power operates beyond visible structures of domination such as policies, laws or institutions. That is to say, there are 'unconscious structures' underlying the conditions of the operation of thought. As a result, the individual subject emerges from theoretical projections of the Human Sciences, that is, the objectification of the speaking, living, and working subject in the sciences of language, life, and wealth. These human sciences 'enable modern power to circulate through finer channels (…) Through their knowledges and technologies, and in and through those institutions [institutions of modern power] (….) they made certain forms of practice possible, indeed necessary' (Ball, 2017, p. 10).

Later, Foucault suggests a politics of truth in which 'truth isn't outside power, or deprived of power' (Foucault, 1977, p. 13). That is to say,

> Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse it harbours and causes to function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true from false statements, the way in which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures which are valorised for obtaining truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (p. 13)

In that context, Foucault defined five ways of how truth is deployed across and within societies: in the form of scientific discourse and institutional practices; the demand for

truth from economic and political conflicts; the need for truth in education; truth is produced and transmitted under the control of a few political institutions (university, army, media); and, it is the stake of a social conflict or ideological struggles (Foucault, 1977).

The intersection of governmentality, episteme and regime of truth represents the constitution of broader technologies, knowledges, discourses and practices through which individual subjects are made up. For example, they can take the form of normative principles, foundational metaphysics (Ball, 2020; Ball & Collet-Sabé, 2021), fantasmatic ideals (Clarke, 2020) or reified generalities (De Landa, 2006) all of which contemplates specific ways of governing: examination, assessment, measurement, management, and so on. Thus, specifically, the true discourse about excellence, inclusion, equity, and equality in education, among others, are illustrative of how certain knowledges, discourses and practices are the condition of possibility for knowledge in a given time and place and how they make up individual conducts and behaviours. Thus, the true discourse about excellence entails the need to establish what has to be true about the subject in order for this discourse to exist.

However, the efficacy of neoliberal reason not only lies in deploying technologies of power but also in activating the subject even 'without touching it' (Foucault, 2010). Or, as Butler put it, power 'not only unilaterally *acts on* a given individual as a form of domination, but also *activates* or forms the subject' (Butler 1997, 84). What is crucial then is the existence of individual freedom insofar as it permits governmentality itself (Foucault, 2009, p. 353). The neoliberal form of government relies on the maximisation of 'the space of freedom given to (and perceived by) individuals' (Lorenzini, 2018, p. 158). Thus, 'neoliberalism governs people through their freedom because neoliberal governmentality does not only guarantee this or that specific form of freedom: it rather *produces*, *organises*, and *consumes* freedoms' (Lorenzini, 2018, p. 159). Power is not only repressive but productive and inventive thus conducting individual behaviours by incitation and provocation.

In the same vein, Beistegui (2018), in his analysis on the constitution of the liberal subject, points out that 'Desire is a key— if not *the* key— mechanism through which, beginning in the eighteenth century, men and women are understood to be *self*-governed, and this means able to generate a spontaneous order, independent of that of Divine Providence' (Beistegui 2018, 12). If desire – or 'preferences' in economic terms – can 'generate a spontaneous order', it would turn out to be the target of power. To control desire would be the goal of any government of conducts, similar to individual freedom.

Additionally, 'desire is also (…) a mechanism of (bio)power. By that, I mean that power is exercised not so much on, over, or even less against desire, as with it, and through it' (Beistegui 2018, 12). Thus, 'desire is no longer a force to be controlled, dominated, or punished, but one to be mobilized, used, or channelled'; it is 'the mechanism of government itself'. Put it another way, the individual subject is no longer governed against her desires but expanding and multiplying her desires freely. Thus, desire is

conceived of as the intersection (or assemblage) of power and knowledge through which subjects are made up. Therefore, desire cannot be grasped ‘as a transcendental feature of subjectivity, or as a basic structure of our psychical life, but as a *historical normative process*, to which individuals are subjected, a manifold set of procedures through which they are produced and their experience is shaped’ [my emphasis] (Beistegui 2018, 8). This historical component of desire is crucial for understanding the constitution of individual subjects in modernity.

In that respect, Beistegui states that desire is organised according to three overlapped configurations or regimes – different types of governmentality – under which we live today or through which the self is cultivated: *homo oeconomicus*, *homo sexualis* and *homo symbolicus.* The *homo oeconomicus* is ‘the figure of the consumer, producer and entrepreneur of him- or herself’ (Beistegui 2018, 24) whose mode of relating to oneself is through economic self-interest and utility. The *homo sexualis* is the construction of a *dispositif* of sexuality in which desire ‘centered not on the act itself, and the subject’s relation to others, but on the intention preceding the act, and located within the subject’ (Beistegui 2018, 17). The *homo symbolicus* is represented by the desire to be recognised as a person, that is, ‘as a being whose life cannot be lived without dignity and who is intrinsically worthy of respect’ (Beistegui 2018, 24); it is the stimulation of three modalities of relating to oneself: self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem.

These regimes constitute the silhouettes of a liberal self in modern societies and are illustrative of particular but sometimes overlapped technologies of power and practices of the self. Having discussed that, I am now moving on to the specific relationship between subjectivity and truth and the formation of the ethical subject to which that relation depends.

The ethical subject: subjectivity and truth

Foucault undertook the study of the relation between subjectivity and truth as a way to ‘problematize a subject that is not merely traversed and informed by external governmentalities, but constructs a definite relationship to self by means of regular exercises’ (Foucault, 2017, p. 302). During his last lectures at the College de France, Foucault focused his historical examination of the relation between subjectivity and truth on ‘techniques of self’ or ‘techniques of existence’. For instance, Foucault’s 1980-1981 lecture course at the College de France entitled *Subjectivity and Truth*, was devoted to analysing the experience of pleasures in Greco-Latin Antiquity through the notion of the ‘care of the self’ as an ethical work of the self on self. Later, he followed the same line of enquiry to explore the history of subjectivity: the transformations of the ‘relations with oneself’. Therefore, it is argued that Foucault changed the perspective of the question of governmentality from technologies of power to the relationship to oneself; ‘it is a matter of the formation of the self through techniques of life, not of repression by prohibition and the law’ (p. 295).

In this regard, Foucault utilised a very particular notion of ethics. It refers to practices, exercises and activities carried out by individuals to transform the relationship with the self by the self. To the same ends, he distinguished ethics from moral code (or transcendental constitution). While in the latter 'the subject refers his conduct to a law, or a set of laws' (Foucault, 1997a, p. XXVII), in the former the subject's behaviour is attached to 'the methods, techniques, and exercises directed at forming the self within a nexus of relationships' (p. XXVII). Both forms of moral systems, according to Foucault, are intertwined – i.e., forming oneself as an ethical subject is always attached to a code of conduct – but the distinction is nevertheless illustrative of the relation between the subject and truth at different periods of time.

Additionally, ethics is tied to *the game of truth*. Foucault insisted – in the context of Western tradition – that 'take care of oneself – as an ethical practice – requires knowing oneself', and 'to take care of the self is to equip oneself with these truths' (Foucault, 1997a, p. 285). That is to say, ethics is linked to a 'set of procedures that lead to a certain result, which, on the basis of its principles and rules of procedure, may be considered valid or invalid' (p. 297). Or, to take care of oneself requires knowing the truth about the body, pleasures, life, nature, desire, and so on. If one knows these truths, Foucault holds, we are then taking part of a game of truth.

In this context, in an interview carried out in 1983, Foucault established that 'ethical work' not only consists of a relation to oneself but also to others and the truth (Foucault, 1991). That is to say, when the individual subject freely relates to themselves and recognises their moral obligations and carries out a series of practices of the self, another subject and the truth are always involved. This is relevant, for example, to understand how the desire for recognition (*Homo Symbolicus*) requires the existence of an Other.

Foucault's 1981–82 lecture course entitled *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* further developed these analyses and suggested a fundamental distinction for the historical study of the relation between subjectivity and truth, which is helpful for this thesis: philosophy and spirituality (or between 'know yourself' and 'take care of yourself'). He stressed that Classical Antiquity philosophy was not conceived as a body of knowledge but a *mode of life*. Thus, spirituality was seen as a set of 'researches, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence, etc., which are, *not for knowledge but for the subject*, for the subject's very being, *the price to be paid for access to the truth*' [my emphasis] (Foucault, 2006, p. 15). Foucault asserted that spiritual and esoteric knowledge were a common practice in Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman philosophy, as well as Christian period (the end of fifth century): that is, having access to the truth was an impossible task without the subject being's transformation or becoming other-of-itself. Or in other words, philosophy and spirituality were inseparable. This is the first aspect of the structure of spirituality that according to Foucault informs ancient philosophy: self-transformation as the condition for truth. Then he added two more elements: the form of self-transformation is a movement or

journey through distinctive exercises of the self on the self (eros or ascetic); and, the effects of truth on the subject.

At some point, however, which Foucault called *the Cartesian moment*, the link between philosophy and spirituality was broken: now the subject, in and of itself or by default, is capable of having access to the truth and only secondarily an ethical work is required. That is to say, the requirement of the subject's transformation of himself and of his being (e.g., purifications or sacrifices that affect the subject’s being) is no longer necessary for truth. The separation between philosophy and spirituality marks then ‘a different age of the history of relations between subjectivity and truth’ (Foucault, 2006, p. 18). This separation, according to Foucault, was produced by ‘the will to knowledge’ (curiosity): for modern philosophy only the enlightened subject can transform herself and change the way she conducts. Or in other words, the price to be paid for knowledge no longer are ascetic exercises like ‘the care of the self’ but a distinctive ethos immersed in enlightenment projections; that is, epistemological concerns.

In sum, a subject becomes ethical through a distinctive nexus of relationships: relation to oneself, others and truth/knowledge. All these relationships are in one form or another intertwined. However, Foucault highlights that the price to be paid for truth or knowledge has taken multiple forms throughout history. Contemporary academic/scientific practices seem to be a period where the capacity to have access to the truth no longer requires the transformation of the subject’s being. It is, as a result, the schism between philosophy and spirituality.

Reflecting on these considerations, Daston and Galison (2007), based on Hadot’s and Foucault’s explorations of the history of subjectivity, examined the relationship between the scientific self and objectivity from the nineteenth century. Their point of departure is that the *ethos of objectivity* drives scientific epistemology. This means that what prevails in scientific practices is the attempt to suppress subjectivity from knowledge production (or scientific discoveries). This coincides with the separation pointed out by Foucault between philosophy and spirituality since the Cartesian moment: objectivity implies that the active intervention of the subject is not needed to access the truth. However, Daston and Galison (2007) states that

> certain personal qualifications were still deemed important to the success of the investigation: patience and attentiveness for the observer, manual dexterity for the experimenter, imagination for the theorist, tenacity for all. But these qualities have been seen in most accounts of modern science as matters of competence, not *ethics* (2007, p. 39).

In that respect, Daston and Galison (2007) state that there is an inextricable connection between conceptions of the self and depiction of nature. Or, as they put it, ‘To embrace objectivity — or one of its alternatives — was not only to practice a science but also to pattern a self’ (p. 10). The multiple forms in which objectivity is enacted by scientists involve at once the cultivation of divergent scientific selves: ‘The mastery of scientific practices is inevitably linked to self-mastery, the assiduous

cultivation of a certain kind of self' (p. 40). Thus, unlike Foucault, Daston and Galison emphasise the relevance of the self when it comes to embracing objectivity – or similar epistemic virtues – in modern scientific knowledge. They then ask: what kind of scientific self is constituted when a subject thinks and experiences objectivity? What scientific self emerge when scientists adopt a very particular understanding of objectivity? In addition, and drawing on Foucault, they assert the importance of distinguishing between the ethical and the moral:

> ethical refers to normative codes of conduct that are bound up with a way of being in the world, an ethos in the sense of the habitual disposition of an individual or group, while moral refers to specific normative rules that may be upheld or transgressed and to which one may be held to account (p. 40).

One key concept for the exploration of the relation between scientific objectivity and scientific self put forward by Daston and Galison is the category of *epistemic virtues* – like objectivity or excellence. These virtues frame the historically situated processes of the cultivation of a self through techniques of existence. Therefore, for Daston and Galison modern scientific life is characterised by an inseparable relation between epistemology and ethics. For example, the enactment of objectivity (or alternative epistemic virtues like excellence) requires the cultivation of a self, that is, practices of the self on the self that have an effect on the structure of spirituality, following Foucault's concepts. They put it in a provocative way:

> it is perhaps conceivable that an epistemology without an ethos may exist, but we have yet to encounter one. As long as knowledge posits a knower, and the knower is seen as a potential help or hindrance to the acquisition of knowledge, the self of the knower will be at epistemological issue. The self, in turn, can be modified only with ethical warrant (p. 40)

Hence, the cultivation of the self is examined not as a matter of competence or skills but as techniques of the self. What is relevant is not the emergence of a skilled self but an ethos oscillating between multiple demands. Or in other words, the point is not the conditions of the possibility of true knowledge but what kind of true self is at issue in order for epistemic virtues to exist and develop.

In addition, drawing on Foucault, they assume that 'these practices do not merely express a self; they forge and constitute it' (p. 199). Likewise, they do not 'see a single self in the periods under examination here. On the contrary, we find, for example, scientific and artistic selves to be conceived and trained in diametrically opposed ways in the mid-nineteenth century' (p. 199). Thus, Daston and Galison understand epistemic virtues and their correlative techniques of the self no longer oriented to knowing the self but '*knowing the world*' (p. 39). Thus, they focus on practices such as 'training the senses in scientific observation, keeping lab notebooks, drawing specimens, habitually monitoring one's own beliefs and hypotheses, quieting the will, and channeling the attention' (p. 199). As a result, all their efforts were oriented toward understanding the inseparability between epistemology and ethics in science.

3. The possibility of critique in academia

'Why has critique run out of steam?' Latour (2004) asks to the global academy. He raises this question in response to what he calls a global crisis: war against terrorism, ignorance, poverty, inequality, and so on. So, he asks again: 'Should we be at war, too, we, the scholars, the intellectuals? (…) Is it really our duty to add fresh ruins to fields of ruins? What has become of the critical spirit? Has it run out of steam?' (Latour, 2004, p. 225). Or, as Thayer (2020) says it, has critique lost its aura and use value?

What kind of *critique* is at stake when Latour suggest that critique has run out of steam? It seems that he is referring to the modern critical project that, according to him, failed to grasp the complexities and necessities emerging from reality. This project was somehow inaugurated by Kant when he, in the preface of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, stated that 'Our age is, in especial degree, the age of critique, and to critique everything must submit' (Kant, 1998). Kant established a critique to equip oneself with the tools to 'examine the universal structure of all knowledge and moral action' (the three critiques) in order to separate ourselves from *dogmatism* (rationalism) and *scepticism* (empiricism) – or metaphysical dispositions (Copleston, 1994). In the same vein, Foucault indicated that 'critique is, in a sense, the handbook of reason that has grown up in Enlightenment; and, conversely, the Enlightenment is the age of the critique' (Foucault, 1997a, p. 308). Put it this way, critique is conceived as a intellectual and political project that focuses on examining and analysing the conditions of the possibility of the legitimate use of reason and morality. Therefore, when Latour states that critique has run out of steam, he is basically referring to that critique devoted to vindicating, debunking, unmasking and problematising 'the conditions of possibility of a given matter of fact' (Latour, 2004, p. 245) in the form of knowledge, beliefs, actions, practices and behaviours. His target is that critique that is about questioning and hence interrogating, demystifying, defamiliarizing and dismantling established facts or what is taken for granted and inevitable, and hence subtracting reality. This is what Ricoeur (2009) called the *hermeneutics of suspicious*, that is, a never ending militant and relentless critical attitude of questioning, destabilization and estrangement driven by 'euphoric drug' (Latour, 2004, p. 239). Latour's target then is a critique that debunks, separates and decomposes.

Since the beginning of Kant's critical project, critique has taken multiple modalities or facets. Critique can be seen as a style of interpretation and academic argument, ways of reading, writing and analysis, rhetorical moves, philosophical assumptions (Boland, 2014) but also a distinctive disposition, tone, attitude, sensibility and affect; or, as Anker and Felski (2017) put it, 'critique is, among other things, a form of rhetoric that is codified via style, tone, figure, vocabulary and voice and that attends to certain tropes, motifs, and structures of texts at the expense of others' (p. 4). Critique as an epistemological practice is concerned on selecting the most appropriate approach to shed some light on 'the insufficiencies of meanings' (Felski, 2008). It is a style of interpretation, a mood, a form of thought that seeks to rip up the basis of what is known and its multiple meanings and explanations (Felski, 2015). In this sense, Anker and Felski (2017) suggest *three modalities of critique* to understand the variety of uses – aesthetic, affective and analytical components – across disciplines, fields and schools

of thought within the contemporary university: the diagnostic, allegorical, and self-reflexive form of critique. These modalities are useful to understand the ways in which academic critique is deployed within universities.

The *diagnostic* facet of critique refers to the never ending practice of identifying and investigating reality or social facts as a result of the incurability of the symptom. Thus, there is a distinctive separation between the knower and the object of knowledge. What characterises this modality is the relationship between the subject and the object, or in other words, between the critic and the reality. The former is

> engaged in the *scrutiny* of an object in order to decode certain *defects* or flaws that are not readily or automatically apparent to an non specialist perspective (…) To diagnose is to look closely and intently, in the belief that such scrutiny will bring problems to light that can be deciphered by an authoritative interpreter. The stance is one of judicious and knowledgeable detachment (Anker & Felski, 2017, p. 4)

One example is psychoanalysis, in particular, Freudian analysis and interpretation, or Foucauldian scholars that use the 'interrogative gaze' or 'diagnostic gaze' to uncover the entanglements of knowledge with power; Marxists scholars that read texts as 'fragments of social totalities that crystallize, often involuntarily, the defining elements of such totalities' (Anker & Felski, 2017). In short, what characterises this critique is the practice of digging down, of dissecting texts and their corresponding arguments, that is, *ideology critique* (Felski, 2015). Bringing truth to light, unmasking it, and uncovering it and, at the same time, mistrusting on the surface seems to be the most crucial element of this modality of critique.

The second form of critique considers *allegorical* narratives – moral-making – a way of imposing transcendental unities onto processes of reading and interpretation. There is a special relation between the critic and the world in which allegory is seen as a 'manifestation of larger social hierarchies and inequalities' (Anker & Felski, 2017, p. 6). What is problematised in this critique is the representational function of some allegorical narratives. The critic becomes then a sort of dissident who resists 'all the social pressures toward conformity, mass culture homogeneity, utilitarian demands and the bureaucratization of knowledge within the university' (p. 7). This critical project 'is often conceived in terms of an ethical disclosure of structures of Otherness or oppression' (p. 7). Likewise, this critique 'not only discovers previously unnoticed and politically pernicious allegories (…) it also brings allegorical modes of analysis to bear on texts so as to unearth what Jameson refers to as their "repressed" meanings' (p. 6). Zizek "tendency to explain everything (…) in allegorical terms" (p. 7) can be viewed as an specific example of how allegorical critique is employed as an analytical tool in academia.

The *self-reflexive* aspect of critique – which is the most fundamental form of critique for this thesis – is defined in terms of *the critique of critique*, or the critique that is about its own conditions of possibility. This critique, as Thayer put it, 'will thus only take place when the limits, the conditions, the laws of the field are thematized, transforming said law from being the "subject" of knowledge-practice into the position, now of examined

object' (Thayer, 2020, p. 36). Thereby, it 'requires stringent self-critique and continued attempts to second-guess or problematize one's own assumptions' (Anker & Felski, 2017, p. 8). From an epistemological point of view, it is a critique engaged in questioning critical approaches 'for being insufficiently attuned to the complexity or otherness of their objects and themselves invested in metanarratives, logocentrism, or a will to power' (p. 8). This position leads inexorably to a self-critique that has many implications: the risk of co-optation (Savage et al., 2021) or the fantasies of redemption (Ball, 2020; Ball & Collet-Sabé, 2021). From such a perspective, critique itself is part of an extensive network of power relations which shapes what is reasonable to say or avoid saying. Thus, rather than destroying or refusing, self-critique situates in a 'permanent critique of ourselves' (Foucault, 1997a, p. 313).

These modalities, although they are not exhaustive, are illustrative of the variety of critiques in contemporary academia. They denote the implicit and explicit differences between the subject and the object of knowledge when critique is carried out by scholars. Although diagnostic, allegorical and self-reflexive critique share an epistemological disposition tied to the hermeneutic of suspicious, they are enacted through particular ways of reading, analysis, interpretation, tone, disposition and attitude. Thus, for instance, self-critique shifts the emphasis of the target of the critique: it is no longer the text or the world but *one's own knowledges, beliefs and practices* that are to be put into question. This can be connected to one of the research questions of this thesis: what happens when academics exercise an ethical critique that is about the conditions of their own existence?

In this context, Thayer (2020), following Butler (2001), raises the question on the target of critique in a different way: 'can there be critique without subject matter or object, without its being a critique of…?' (Thayer, 2020, p. 70). Despite this insinuation, what kind of *of* is at play when critique is undertaken? Is it a critique of modernism, neoliberalism, capitalism, socialism or another universal figure? These interrogations lead us to consider critique in a broader context beyond academia. According to Foucault, the proliferation of different ways of governing life, an art of governing, cannot be dissociated from the question of 'how not to be governed like that, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them' (Foucault, 2007b); simply put, governmentalization entails critique. Therefore, the *of* at play, following Foucault's line of argument, is not necessarily one reified generality such as capitalism or neoliberalism, but a grid of knowledge/power relations. Unlike ideology critique, which depends on the creation of universals or allegorical narratives, Foucault's notion of critique emerged against distinctive and contingent power relations, leading to 'the art of not being governed or better, the art of not being governed like that and at that cost' (Foucault, 2007b). Foucault thus suggests a general definition for this critical attitude: the art of not being governed quite so much. Foucault then adds the following aspect of critique:

> if governmentalization is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practice through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth, well, then! I will say that critique is the movement by which the

> subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth (Foucault, 2007b, p. 47)

This characterisation has influenced various objections to the tradition of critique in academia. These objections can be grouped within the *turn to affect* movement – e.g., feminist critique of epistemology – which challenges 'the rationalism of critique and its frequent neglect of emotion, mood, and disposition' and at the same time 'the pervasive pessimism of academic thought' (Anker & Felski, 2017, p. 11). Latour has questioned the debunking aspect of critique (or the enlightenment-type critique) as an unnecessary critical attitude. Similarly, some thinkers have criticised a particular form of fatalism and pessimism within academic critique: cynicism (Allen, 2017, 2020). For example, Sloterdijk (1987) attributed this fatalism and the abandonment of radical change to the transformation of hope and revolt into an 'enlightened false-consciousness' devoted to an endless orientation towards unmasking and self-questioning with no political implication (Sloterdijk, 1987).

In response to the tone of fatalism and cynicism that characterise academic critique, 'some scholars have sought to reclaim negative emotions (…) and demonstrating their productive role in engendering political action and agency' (Anker & Felski, 2017, p. 12). Similarly, other scholars are committed to showing 'the reparative or productive value of positive emotions such hope, joy, and happiness' (p. 12). In a same vein, some academics are more invested in stressing the affirmative side of idealism and utopia in relation to critique (Muñoz, 2009): there is the need for more idealism and utopia since they 'serve as much-needed antidotes' (Anker & Felski, 2017, p. 12) against this bleak scenario left by critique. Castiglia (2017a), for instance, argues that 'a revitalized critique must be willing to embrace hopefulness, idealism, and imagination…the otherworldly serves to validate existing possibilities' (Anker & Felski, 2017, p. 24). Latour has responded to the current state of academic critique by outlining a new critical attitude:

> The critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who *assembles*. The critic is not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of the naïve believers, but the one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather. The critic is not the one who alternates haphazardly between antifetishism and positivism like the drunk iconoclast drawn by Goya, but the one for whom, if something is constructed, then it means it is fragile and thus in great need of care and caution [my emphasis] (Latour, 2004, p. 246)

Within such a context, Ball (2020) – reflecting on the role of modern sociology of education – has recently engaged in a debate on the role of hope and fantasmatic ideals within critique. In regard to hope, he states that 'if hope and redemption continue to define and distort the possibilities of a critical relationship of sociology to education, then we have yet to face up to the impossibility of education' (Ball, 2020, p. 876). Thus, he suggests a critique 'against rather than for education' and hence the 'abandonment of the redemptive perspective' and embrace 'the inevitability of failure' (p. 877). Likewise, Ball and Collet-Sabé (2021) suggest that we should 'refuse our own academic subjectivity produced and articulated by these modern school 'fantasmatic ideals' [equity and inclusion] in which relations of power are dissolved' (Ball & Collet-

Sabé, 2021, p. 12). Or, as Clarke (2020) asserts, 'the promise of wholeness, harmony and redemption' behind these ideals (like inclusion, equity or excellence) are in tension with the 'managerial tropes' that rather than dissolving power relations are reaffirmed.

Other objections have been asserted to critique. Firstly, 'the claim that critique has been normalized, domesticated, or defanged through its own popularity' (Anker & Felski, 2017, p. 13). This means that any form of institutionalization of critique is seen as a sign of co-optation. Thus, for instance, critical studies in arts, literature, filmmaking, sociology, psychology or in some genres like university critical studies, cultural studies, among others, are no longer marginal but mainstream. Critique thus has become part of international journals and networks and as a result it is no longer deemed sufficiently radical or oppositional. Secondly, it has been questioned that the rationalist orientation of critique not only neglects the role of emotions but it also disregards 'spiritual beliefs, sacramental practices, and attachments to the sacred that remain central to the lives of countless individuals' (Anker & Felski, 2017, p. 14). Critique, it is said, is still driven by Western epistemology.

Finally, Latour has also shaken up the perception of a critique entirely carried out by progressive intellectuals. For him, critique can no longer rest on a stance of opposition to justify its existence. For instance, the hermeneutics of suspicious has also been used by conservative thinkers to reaffirm power relations (e.g., the critique of scientific facts that support global warming). Latour suggests then to move 'from a spirit of debunking to one of *assembling*, or from critique to composition' [my emphasis] (Latour, 2004). In a similar vein, the 'postcritical turn' suggests that 'rethinking critique can thus forge stronger links between intellectual life and the nonacademic world' (Anker & Felski, 2017, p. 19). In some fields like humanities, there is a tendency towards 'influencing larger conversations and intervening in institutional policies and structures' (p. 19) inside and outside the university. It is the idea of a 'public humanities' and 'thoughtful engagement' rather than merely diagnosis and denunciation which transform the relationship that academics have with themselves, others and knowledge – the centre of this thesis.

In that respect, critique, in one way or another, has run out of steam and needs, depending on the intellectual position, to be rethought. Either has it ended up speaking the language of fatalism and cynicism or it has been captured, normalised or become complicit with existing institutional obligations (Docherty, 2016). As a result, there seems to be a divergence between those scholars who want to break with the modern critical project (e.g., postcritical turn and Latour), and others who insist on the need for critique but differently (e.g., Ball, Felski and Castaglia).

In that context, Thayer (2020) points out the effects of critique on critique. He states that

> Critique as the initiator of the state of exception has, in turn, three declensions. The first is commissary exception, which suspends order so as to preserve it (…) Second is the exception that suspends the field so as to found a new one (…) The third understand critique as an interruption that neither conserves nor founds

> another order, being interested rather in systematically thematizing the condition, the limit, and the limit of the limit (p. 36)

These three effects of critique on critique denote the possibilities behind a critical attitude but also its limitations. The point to be addressed is the way in which suspension and interruption are intertwined or what kind of overlapping are characteristic of academic critique in the contemporary university.

4. The ethical dimension of academic critique: an analytical distinction for the study of the academic self

Drawing on the previous key concepts and ideas, in this section, I explore some theoretical possibilities for the analytical trajectories of the thesis.

Epistemological and ethical form of critique

Despite the Cartesian break pointed out by Foucault, multiple objections to critique in academia have been put into place with an emphasis on *ethics*. In the context of this debate, Anker and Felski (2017) ask: 'given this inherently self-critical dimension of critique, what exactly is new or distinctive about its current reappraisal?' (Anker & Felski, 2017, p. 10). They provide an answer: 'it is no longer just a matter of engaging in critiques of critique – thereby prolonging the very style of thinking that is at issue (…) there is a need not just for different kinds of thinking but for an *alternative ethos, mood, or disposition*' [my emphasis] (2017, p. 10).

Similarly, Foucault's *oeuvre* devoted to the examination of critical attitudes throughout history was far from merely studying styles of interpretation or methods and rather he focused on the ethical transformations of the subject. For instance, in his study of the practice of *Parrhesia* in Greco-Roman Classical Antiquity what is examined is the subject's construction of a relation to self rather than the conditions of the possibility of true discourses (Folkers, 2016). In an interview in 1983 Foucault stated: 'the key to the personal political attitude of a philosopher is not to be sought in his ideas, as if it could be deduced from them, but rather in his philosophy, as life, in his philosophical life, his *ethos*' (Foucault, 1997a, p. 319). Indeed, Lorenzini (2020) suggests that 'Foucault's genealogical inquires comprise important moments in which the focus is not on normalising or subjugating power/knowledge mechanisms, but squarely on critical attitudes or "counter-conducts"' (p 9). And, one could argue, all these inquiries are in one way or another preoccupied with the ethical dimension – relation to oneself – of critical attitudes.

These two orientations towards ethics have nevertheless some limitations. Firstly, although objections to critique from turn to affect or postcritique emphasises 'alternative ethos, mood, or disposition' (Anker & Felski, 2017, p. 10), or the need to rethink 'the role of affect in criticism: that interpretation and argument are a matter not just of better or worse insights, but also of ethos and disposition' (2017, p. 20), or what is at play is 'differing affective styles and tonal registers of writing' (2017, p. 20), they fall short in understanding the ethical turn in critique and its implications for the

academic-self. These attempts remain exclusively in the realm of epistemology thus focusing on how to integrate emotions and affect into ways of analysing, reading and writing. Secondly, Foucault's analysis of philosophy and spirituality does not consider modern scientific knowledge as requiring a profound transformation of one's own being or spiritual exercises. Voogt (2021) put this tension accurately:

> While modern scientific inquiry obviously requires personal qualifications, such as educational training and a certain moral attitude (to make an honest effort, not to deceive, and so on), Foucault considers these conditions as falling outside the conditions of spirituality, because they do not concern the structure of the subject, only the individual in her concrete existence (Voogt, 2021, p. 18).

Against this position, Hegel's notion of self-relation as *struggle* or *practical achievement* (Pippin, 2011) seems to be more useful to understand – at least theoretically – the processes of subjectivity-constitution in contemporary academia. Similarly, but with different purposes, it is the movement from a notion of power based on the government to one on the struggle (Allen & Goddard, 2014). Hegel's idea that any activity involving rational thought or relation to an object requires a self-relation in the form of a struggle sits well with the assumption that epistemology and ethics are inseparable, even in modern times, or after the Cartesian break underlined by Foucault. Similarly, Hegel's idea of subjectivity is much more appropriate for understanding the ethical dimension of academic critique. For Hegel, it is not only an individual cognitive subject at issue (epistemology) but also an ethical subject characterised by an existential journey that always ends in tragedy or the struggle of dualisms (Hegel, 2013). That is to say, there is always an struggle that transforms the structure of the subject when the academic-subject undertakes scientific inquiry or any academic activity – academia is not just a job or career (Fish, 2014) but a lifestyle. Thus, for instance, learning skills or personal qualifications have an impact on a subject's conditions of existence – it is more than just intellectual activity. Or in other words, judgment – which is a cognitive faculty – does not just happens, it involves a practical achievement.

In light of these considerations, I would like to distinguish between the *epistemological* and the *ethical* form of critique regardless of its inseparability. This analytical distinction might be useful to further understand the processes of subjectivity-constitution (formation of an academic-self) in academia insofar as some ethical practices are irreducible to any epistemology. Indeed, the academy today is heavily driven by the division between epistemology, methodology and ethics (here understood in a conventional way). For instance, research integrity policies are discussed separately from epistemology; that is, when research misconduct become a problem, the academic community tends to standardise and create protocols focused on scientific procedures (epistemological side) and shows less concern with how academics relate to themselves, others and knowledge from an ethical perspective.

In addition, drawing on the distinctions outlined by Anker and Felski (2017), I focus on critique in its *self-reflexive* facet, that is, that critique oriented to the examination and

continuous scrutiny of academic activities. From an epistemological perspective, this critique examines its own's assumptions, approaches and methods. From an ethical one, it delves into the conditions of existence and modalities of experience of academics' contingency of normality. It is worth noting that I am more interested in everyday practices of critique rather than academic activism; that is, organisations of events or activities around political projects. Critique of own's conditions is an everyday experience of individuals that occurs across the academy.

Thus, on the one hand, I understand epistemological critique as those practices that make use of judgment (interpretation) or the faculty of reason to produce or challenge knowledge production within universities. It is the question about what makes a particular knowledge possible. Here the problem is the subject in relation to the *object*, or the manner in which critique is constituted by its relation to an object. The target of this critique is university, knowledge or academic life. This is more or less what Mignolo (2009) has called 'epistemic disobedience' to describe a critical discourse concerning decolonization in Latin America; or, what has been denominated 'postcolonial studies' (Rivera Cusicanqui & Geidel, 2020) or 'university critical studies', among others lines of enquiry. This form of critique is often involved in debates about governance, freedom, diversity, and so on. Yet, these debates concentrate mainly on 'rethinking' these categories. These disputes do not necessarily emerge from particular fields or disciplines but from across the academy. It is a preoccupation that touches the whole academic community.

More specifically, the issue at play in epistemology critique is the academic-subject in relation to *method*. Anker and Felski (2017) underline this emphasis on methods in recent efforts to reimagine critique. The point, according to them, is

> the ways in which established practices of reading limit the inquiries, experiences, and insights available to the critic. Critique, it is argued, implies a methodological orientation that encourages certain kinds of interpretation while leaving little room for others (2017, p. 15).

In the same vein, and beyond the traditional examination of objectivity in scientific knowledge, there have been some questionings on the methods used by critical inquiries (e.g. use of metaphors or too much emphasis on exposing hidden realities). These debates are epistemological because they are attentive to the ways of analyses and interpretation: what is needed, they suggest, is more attention to 'what lies on the surface', 'thin description', 'just reading', 'explore the grain with care and read along it first', or simply put, 'spirit of dialogue and constructiveness rather than dissection and diagnosis'. Or, as Latour (2004) put it, composition rather than destruction. This self-reflexive critique is epistemological since it focuses on the content of methods, the object to be analysed and the attitudes towards interpretation (the object is seen as an object).

On the other hand, ethical critique can be seen as the ways in which the subject undertakes a series of practices or exercises of the self on the self through opposition (Foucault), struggle or practical achievement (Hegel). I want to underline here that

moral experience in modern academia is not dependent merely on legal rules but on a process of ethical self-formation. Thereby, I argue then that critique is an 'ethical-political gesture' (Lemke, 2016) that involves a paradoxical relationship with oneself, others and knowledge (Foucault, 1997a). Yet, the most important and foremost difference is that in ethical critique the relation is not just with an object – in the form of method or process (Nail, 2021) – but with *another subject*. It is a subject-subject relation inasmuch as the object of critique – knowledge, university, governance, the academy – is experienced as a collective subject. If one accepts this theoretical perspective, it is possible to argue that what is at stake in the ethical critique is not merely a set of propositions, styles of interpretations, methods or critical discourses but a *form-of-life*: conflicting views and attitudes towards knowledge that transform the academic-self. From this perspective, when notions like freedom or objectivity are addressed, the aim is not to rethink this category but to enact it differently. That is to say, the limits of freedom and objectivity are set when they are enacted and that enactment is ethical.

However, epistemology and ethics are inseparable: accessing knowledge requires the transformation of the subject's being or scientific exercises (Stefano & Galison, 2015). Hence, how can we explore the intersection of epistemology and ethics across the academy? It seems to me that the notion of *epistemic virtues* is essential for making this relationship possible. First of all, as Paul and van Dongen (2017) point out,

> Epistemic virtues offer a promising angle for studying interaction between fields of research conventionally classified under the "sciences" and the "humanities." Given that virtues like objectivity, honesty, and accuracy are not confined to specific disciplines, they allow for comparative historical research between scientific fields as well as for histories of transfer, borrowing, and adaptation between disciplines (Paul & van Dongen, 2017, p. 1).

Although this notion indicates that what is central is knowledge,

> epistemic virtues are often imbued with moral, social, religious, and/or political meaning. If virtues specify the character traits marking a "scientific self," then scientific selfhood is never exclusively defined in epistemic terms (Paul & van Dongen, 2017, p. 1).

Thus, for instance, the pursuit of objectivity not only requires the development of methods (or technological developments) that ensure an objective approach to the object, but also a particular relation to oneself, others and knowledge (a collective subject). When objectivity becomes a virtue, that is, the ethics that drive scientific epistemology, it requires the cultivation of a specific self. And that self, as Dalson and Galison (2017) accurately explained, is forged according to the practices of the self that make objectivity possible. Or in other words, epistemic virtues are the conflation – and mediation – between technologies of power and techniques of self. The former in the form of power/knowledge relations and the latter as the mastery of certain skills.

Therefore, what epistemic virtues are contested when academics exercise ethical critique of their own conditions of existence? In what follows, I define excellence as the fundamental epistemic virtues driving academic life in contemporary universities.

The ethics of excellence in the academy

There have been numerous attempts to describe the kind of ethos driving academic life. In that respect, the work of Dalson and Galison (2007) has been crucial in exploring the ethos that drives scientific epistemology from a historical perspective. They have suggested that the ethics of objectivity, which have changed throughout history due to technological developments, has become – for different reasons – one of the most relevant epistemic virtues within scientific epistemology. What I would like to examine here is something similar; that is, how the ethics of excellence defines the experience of academic critique in the contemporary university.

The ethics of excellence is the intersection of two elements. Whereas excellence refers to those global norms, normative principles, fantasmatic ideals (Clarke, 2020) or reified generalities (De Landa, 2006) that orient values and actions, ethics is the way academics relate to themselves, others and knowledge. Thereby, the ethics of excellence is illustrative of the existence of a regulative system of behaviour (technologies of power) and self-constituting practices (techniques of the self). Rephrasing Foucault, one could say that excellence 'is no longer just the indicator of (normalizing, identifying, classifying, reducing, etcetera) power, but also of the subject in his relationship to truth' (Foucault, 2006, p. 512). It is not just a principle but also a set of practices. To be a good or excellent academic is a 'duty and a technique, a fundamental obligation and a set of carefully fashioned ways of behaving' (Foucault, 2006, p. 494). Or, excellence is ethical as it defines a particular way of being a good academic through the constitution of a series of practices and rules of conduct set by academics for themselves. As a result, excellence is not merely an abstract category that describe the conditions for the possibility of thought, even critical thinking, but it also is a set of situated practices that mark out the boundaries of what is acceptable (integrity), valuable (useful) and possible in academia.

This means that excellence is not merely opposed to the idea of culture (*Bildung*), as Bill Readings (1996) pointed out in his classical book *The University in Ruins* but its continuation. Excellence cannot simply be put it into the frame of neoliberalism, that is, as an exclusively economic concept based on productivity and competitiveness. It is part of the rise of the modern university, a governing idea of academic life and critique anchored in a particular form of life and in *the right to exclude*. Similarly, excellence cannot merely be opposed to the culture of quality in the university system – a policy framework that emerged during the 1990s worldwide; they are both entangled in a way that they are reconfigured and reactivated.

In that respect, excellence can be properly called an epistemic virtue: 'they [epistemic virtues] are norms that are internalized and enforced by appeal to ethical values, as well as to pragmatic efficacy in securing knowledge' (Daston & Galison, 2007, pp. 40–41). If excellence is an epistemic virtue, to *become excellent* requires then knowing

oneself. One could argue that to become a good academic is to equip oneself with the knowledges and skills that make an excellent academic possible. Or to internalise personal qualities associated with excellence to secure access to knowledge.

With this in mind, and based on the analytical distinction suggested by Harvey and Green (1993), I argue that academics are required to equip themselves with two different kind of knowledges and skills: *exception* and *perfection (or improvement)*. The former refers to the epistemological and ethical line between who is able to be exceptional and who is not. It seeks sophistication and uniqueness. Perfection (or improvement) is the line between who is in or out the academy; that is, it is the endless effort to improve one's performance in order not to be excluded from the system. Thus, excellence reveals a twofold *ethics of differentiation* that reproduces and reactivates multiple practices of inclusion and exclusion that are distinctive according to the time or culture analysed.

In that context, the ethics of excellence can be seen through a set of technologies of power and techniques of the self, which can be grouped around the concept of epistemic virtue. Yet the fundamental aspect of excellence is that it sets the limits that make exclusion and inclusion possible within the contemporary university (Watermeyer & Olssen, 2016). Indeed, the ethics of excellence entails an array of silences, joys, and pains that deserve further analysis.

Ethical critique as productive force: affirmation and negation

To say that critique is a productive force means above all that is a positive tension. In other words, in critique there seems to be an *end* involved that constitutes the academic-subject. Critique is not simply a practice or activity to be learned, or something that just happens, it is a relation and a social experience, a practical achievement and a struggle that constitutes the subject entitled to exercise critique.

Unlike most literature about critique, which focuses on the role of critique in humanities and social sciences, I want to suggest that the ethical form of critique is a practice that take place across disciplines. As Thayer (2020) points out, 'each critique takes place in particular sites of production on the basis of their technologies and modes of existence' (2020, p. 8). With this in mind, I argue that ethical critique has a twofold orientation: *affirmation* and *negation*. Or, in other words, ethical critique can be seen as a practice of *accommodation* to, *ambivalence* towards and *resistance* to (St. Pierre, 1995) the existing conditions of knowledge and the ethics that drives academia. This acceptance or refusal can also be seen as the *field of freedom* between to conduct someone and conduct oneself (Lorenzini, 2016). Either affirmative or negative, the exercise of this critique has an effect on academics relationship with themselves, others and knowledge.

With regard to this twofold orientation, one could say that, on the one hand, the affirmative side of ethical critique *preserves* the order, the norms, and the law of the academy. Or, more precisely, this critique is characterised by the enactment of a set

of practices that reaffirm the knowledges, beliefs and principles of excellence. It reinforces the codes of the academy in a way that ensures the reproduction of its logic.

On the other hand, the negative side of critique aims to refuse – in the form of a 'counter-conduct' – the conditions of its own existence: norms, laws, policies, values, beliefs, knowledge, etcetera are reinterpreted or reactivated. That is to say, any action or activity oriented to the questioning of academic life. The ethical negation of the conditions of critique's possibilities of existence seems to emerge from the special characteristics of the modern university: it installs an order but simultaneously problematises that order.

Reflecting on these considerations, the question that arises is that of what ethical critique prevails when excellence drives academic life and at the same time what are the implications for that order.

In this context, the notion of *preservation* becomes essential to further understand both the affirmative and negative aspect of the ethical critique (Thayer, 2020). It is clear that the affirmative side of critique aims to preserve the order of excellence. This critique seeks to improve the performance of excellence through innovation or a similar approach. Yet, what happens when the aim is to refuse the conditions of critique's conditions of existence? What are the implications of that refusal over critique and its target? Following Thayer's line of argument, critique as negation seems to oscillate between preservation and suspension of the order, the field, the law and the conditions of existence of critique. However, the negation moment also has a normative possibility: the possibility of composition, or as Foucault put it, of 'desubjugation'. Lorenzini's (2021) suggestion of genealogical inquiries as containing a *possibilising* dimension is illustrative of this point. For Lorenzini (2020), 'a genealogy of the critical attitude is neither vindicatory nor (purely) unmasking or problematising, but has an essentially possibilising dimension' (2020, p. 2). He suggests that

> This 'possibility', far from just being abstract, is to be thought of in terms of the elaboration and practice of concrete forms of counter-conduct in the present. Thus, although genealogy does not legislate the specific *content* of these possible counter-conducts, it does define their *form* (2020, p. 2).

He then adds that 'the genealogy of the critical attitude contributes to making the "formation of a "we" possible' (...) This is what I call the 'we-making' dimension of possibilising genealogy' (2020, p. 3). Here, the question is beyond genealogy as an epistemological tool and includes creating a field of possibilities. Thus, existing practices of ethical critique define the *form* of a possibility, the possibility of becoming other-of-itself, the possibility of another academic life, or the possibility of a different form of university. Exploring that kind of possibility, which emerges from existing practices of ethical critique, is, in part, the purpose of this thesis.

Therefore, what is essential for this approach is: the inseparability of epistemology and ethics; the definition of a unifying ethos driving academic life (excellence); and understanding critique as the substance of academic life that oscillates between

affirmation and negation – critique not only suspends but also preserves the order. These three theoretical entanglements are the building blocks of the discussion I would like to propose here.

A final (brief) note: objective determinations and subjectivity-constitution

In sociological research, the tension between objective determinations and lived experiences is often discussed. This longstanding discussion remains as a dichotomy: structure or agency. There have been numerous attempts to go beyond this dichotomy, but here, I want to highlight Rose's (1995) speculative experience approach which might be helpful in this thesis.

In her book *Hegel Contra Sociology*, Rose, according to Scott (2022), shows 'the dangerous conservatism of the allegedly postcritical alternative which reduces social reality and meaning to their appearances, or else to affective, subjective, and "lived" experiences' (R. L. Scott, 2022, p. 22). Against this position, according to Scott, Rose

> offers a third alternative, one which reveals the contradiction of this very dichotomy: the contradiction between the "conditioned" and their preconditions; between surface and depth; between the self-definition or -identification of consciousness and its real existence; between lived experience and the social and political structures that undergird them (p. 23).

In that respect, this study is pervaded by Rose's speculative experience. It tries to move away from the dichotomy between objective determinations and lived experiences; or between preconditions and the conditioned, between social determinations and affective/subjective experiences, etc. I understand subjectivity and in particular the academic-self, as a battleground, the locus of conflictivity in which political and social determinations and lived experiences are interwoven. Subjectivity is where they are articulated in a contradictory relation to one another – it is the activity of being a subject and becoming other-of-itself. This speculative experience is 'the experience of the contradiction between our economic determination and our subjective freedom; the contradiction between capital and life' (p. 28).

In the next chapter, I describe my approach to studying the experience of academic critique, considering these ideas and distinctions. It is particularly relevant how the ethical dimension of academic critique informs the techniques and methods to generate data.

CHAPTER 4

THINKING WITH THEORY AND RESISTING QUALITATIVE PARADIGMS TO RESEARCH THE EXPERIENCE OF ACADEMIC CRITIQUE IN THE CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY

1. Introduction

My experience in the *Universidad de Aysén* (see Chapter 1) illustrates that living in a neoliberal university involves an *ethical disposition.* That is, academic life is more than knowledge production and it involves the transformation of the academic-self. That is the starting point of this research. In addition to this personal experience, it is worth adding another context: the Higher Education Reform (law 21.091, 2018). This law is an example of the consolidation of a new form of governmentality that is the intersection of old and new forms of subjectivities and power relations. It is a political attempt to reverse Chile's marketisation of the university system through a new set of policies including, most importantly, the free higher education policy. It represents the intersection of neoliberalism and anti-neoliberal policies.

In that context, how did I investigate ethical practices within the Chilean academic community? I conducted research from an ethical perspective thinking with theory, making use of a variety of tools and devices, and at the same time resisting conventional qualitative paradigms. Specifically, my approach uses and adapts the tools and devices of Foucault's genealogy of ethics.

Recognising Foucault's critical stance, this is a qualitative case study interrupted multiple times by post qualitative insights. Since the beginning I used conventional research methods but they were challenged throughout the research process by an adaptable and flexible approach open to experimentation and ethical transformation. As a result, I tried to move away from predefined, formalised and systematised methodologies.

In this chapter, first I describe the onto-epistemological arrangements organising the (non-linear) research process and research questions. Second, I explain in detail the tools and devices used to examine the experience of academic critique and how the data was generated and analysed. Finally, I explore some epistemological and ethical concerns that emerged during the research due to post qualitative insights.

2. Categories of research: the onto-epistemological arrangements

According to St. Pierre (2021),

> A post qualitative study cannot and does not begin with any social science methodology, including qualitative methodology, but, rather, with the *onto-*

> *epistemological arrangement and concepts* of poststructuralism and its descriptions of key philosophical concepts such as ontology, epistemology, human being, rationality, truth, discourse, language, freedom, and so on [my emphasis] (St. Pierre, 2021, p. 1).

Drawing upon St. Pierre's framework and Foucault's ethical analysis, I employed four categories that constitute the structure of the becoming of an ethical subject to orient and re-orient my thoughts and generation of data during the thesis: ethical substance, modes of subjectivation, practices of the self and telos. In addition, two concepts emerged to complement these categories: field of possibilities and spectres. All these categories are the onto-epistemological arrangements used to explore the experience of academic critique within the university. In what follows, I describe in more details how I made use of them to examine the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge within universities.

Ethical substance. In order to define this category, Foucault asks 'which is the aspect or the part of myself or my behaviour which is concerned with moral conduct?' (Foucault, 1991, p. 263). However, 'it is not always the same part of ourselves, or of our behaviour, which is relevant for ethical judgment' (Foucault, 1991, p. 263). That is to say, the part of ourselves concerned with moral conduct change over time and according to the set of laws, codes and self-formation practices at a given time and culture. For Christians, according to Foucault, desire was the ethical substance. In his History of Sexuality, *aphrodisia* was that part of the self concerned with moral conduct. In my examination of academic critique, this concept was helpful to reflect on how pleasure/desire was linked to some epistemic virtues like objectivity or curiosity and so on.

Modes of subjectivation. According to Foucault, the mode of subjectivation is 'the way in which people are invited or incited to recognise their moral obligations' (Foucault, 1991, p. 264). In other words, it is an attitude, that is, 'a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at once and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself a task' (Foucault, 1997b, p. 309). Foucault focused on the way a subject freely relates to contemporary reality and recognise their moral obligations. This is similar to what Butler said: 'Although there are codes to be studied, these codes must always be studied in relation to the modes of subjectivation to which they correspond' (Butler, 2001). I used this concept to explore what obligations drive academic life and how academics recognise and relate to academic environments.

Practices of the self. Foucault asks: 'What are the means by which we can change ourselves in order to become ethical subjects?' (Foucault, 1991, p. 265). The subject, in order to behave ethically, has to undertake a series of practices or self-forming activities. The formation of the self depends on these practices which are attached to

codes but are more than that. For Foucault, these are practices of freedom when freedom is put into action. This concept was fundamental to explore the way in which academics exercise practices of the self motivated by 'not to be governed that way' (Foucault, 2007b); that is, how academics exercise academic freedom according to their positions and attitudes.

Teleology. Foucault raised the following question when referring to teleology in the context of ethics: 'Which is the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way?. For instance, shall we become pure, or immortal, or free, or master of ourselves, and so on? So that's what I call telos' (Foucault, 1991, p. 267). The point is what we would like to become when we behave in a moral way. The idea of 'what we want to become' was fundamental to examine the relationship between academics' present and future actions.

Field of possibilities. Barad (2007) stated that 'The space of possibilities does not represent a fixed event horizon . . . or does it represent a homogeneous, fixed, uniform container of choices' (Barad, 2007, p. 246). This form of space only is possible under a restricted or limited notion of power. Instead, according to Foucault, 'Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a *field of possibilities* in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments, may be realized' [my emphasis] (Foucault, 1982, p. 790). Or in other words, 'Every power relationship implies, at least in *potentia*, a strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not superimposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused. Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal' (Foucault, 1982, p. 794). This category was relevant for analysing academic critique as a normative force creating the possibility to rethink ideals and principles, and behave otherwise.

Spectres. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels refers to an uncanny spectre haunting Europe (communism). This ghostly figure was used to announce the possibility of a new social order. One century later Derrida (2011) wrote The *spectres of Marx* to refers to how Marx's ideas seemed urgent today. In this thesis, I used the idea of spectre to analyse in what sense the contemporary experience of academic critique still is haunted by the spectres of Andres Bello (understood as a collective subject and mechanism of power). Unlike the spectre put forward by Marx and Engels, which announces a possibility in the present, I analysed how the spectres of the past (Bello) inhabit the present. This ghost usually crops up around ethical dilemmas and urges academics to think and resolve tensions and contradictions within academic life. Bello emerges through multiple and contradictory ideas and practices.

Thinking with theory

These onto-epistemological arrangements were fundamental to produce and analyse data. Or more generally, my approach was constantly interrupted by theoretical concerns that made it difficult to isolate data – although this was never the goal. This is what Jackson and Mazzei (2012) refer to as *thinking with theory*. According to the authors, this practice

> pushes against traditional qualitative data analysis such as mechanistic coding, reducing data to themes, and writing up transparent narratives. These do little to critique the complexities of social life; such simplistic approaches preclude dense and multi-layered treatment of data. "Thinking with theory" pushes research and data and theory to their limits in order to produce knowledge differently. By refusing a closed system for fixed meaning, a new analytic is engaged to keep meaning on the move. The result is an extension of thought beyond an easy sense (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. ii)

Thinking with theory involves a position in which data analysis cannot be reduced to 'thematic "chunks" that can be interpreted free of context and circumstance' (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. viii). As a result, theory played a fundamental role in 'making [this] research possible and making it reflexive' (Ball, 2006, p. 3). This twofold role of theory was essential to my research. Without theory as a conceptual toolbox and means of analysis this research would not have been possible. Likewise, theory made this study reflexive along the way.

This means I tried to step aside from the epistemological debate on where 'findings' come from – even the word findings is not used here. The arguments deployed throughout my thesis are the interweaving of theory and data, which are fundamental to each other. It is neither a deductive nor an inductive process of knowledge production. It is both at the same time, or more precisely, it is the relationship between them what made this research possible. Data and concepts occurred simultaneously while I was thinking within a broader theoretical framework.

Research questions

Considering these onto-epistemological arrangements, the following research questions defined the study:

a. What particular discourse and model of academic behaviour was brought into play during the post-independence period in Chile?
b. How do academics constitute themselves as ethical subjects aiming to produce knowledge?
c. How do academics relate to, process and elaborate their everyday experience as ethical subjects?
d. What happens when academics exercise a critique that addresses the conditions of their own existence?

3. Techniques and devices

To address these research questions, I conducted a study based on document analysis (genealogy), self-observation and interviews. A genealogical inquiry is appropriate when the aim is to analyse historical events or discourses 'in terms of tactics and strategies of power' (Foucault, 1980, p. 77) and in its state of becoming. It helps to see 'discontinuities, recurrences, and unexpected backlashes as well as unexpected continuities' (Tamboukou & Ball, 2003, p. 5). Specifically, genealogy was relevant to analyse how a given discourse (excellence) emerged 'in a matrix of experience structured by the axial interplay of discourse, power, and subjectivation' (Clifford, 2001, p. 9). Self-observation is a refreshing approach when the object of study is oneself and everyday life becomes a 'material'. This method is fundamental to exploring everyday life and events from the observer's perspective as the observed (Brinkmann, 2012). Finally, interviewing – as one conversational practice – is a key method of qualitative research to obtain knowledge about others (Mears, 2009). In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to dive into practices and attitudes concerning challenges, tensions and dilemmas about knowledge production within universities.

The fieldwork started in May 2020 and finished *circa* June 2022. Two contexts were relevant during data generation. First, the COVID-19 global pandemic. It impacted how I conducted interviews and observations. I moved from in-person interviews and observations to online encounters (except for one in-person activity). Second, the interviews were conducted after the 2019 social outbreak in Chile. It was a period of intense political debate in which academics were involved in different activities and deliberations (workshops, conferences, etc).

Beyond these considerations, is worth noting that my data generation and analysis occurred well before the formal fieldwork. Following Brinkmann (2014), researching looks more like what he calls *abduction*: the interweaving of theory, empirical data and *breakdown experiences*. Abduction 'is a form of reasoning that is concerned with the relationship between a *situation* and *inquiry* (…) It occurs in situations of breakdown, surprise, bewilderment, or wonder' (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 722). Or, 'the abductive approach presents research as part of the life process, as what we do in situations of breakdown that inevitably arise in life's situations—big or small' (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 722). Therefore, my data generation was motivated by a (significant) breakdown – existential situation, unexpected encounter or estrangement – during my involvement in creating the *Universidad de Aysen*. This experience changed my approach and understanding of academic life and the role of universities in society. Since then, I have been using a personal journey, taking notes and doing multiple readings to understand further this unexpected experience/existential situation: the exclusion of critique from the boundaries of the university. In addition, it is also important to mention that my research topic is inevitably attached to my everyday life. I am part of the academic community by doing teaching and research. As a result, small breakdowns

have also operated in my own life as a researcher: many strange but interesting situations occur in my everyday life affecting how I understand knowledge production and the academy (see self-observation section below).

Based on these starting points, in what follows, I describe how I used a set of techniques and devices to generate and analyse data (document analysis, self-observation and interviewing) by understanding this process in a more flexible and unstable way. Three types of empirical materials were produced during the four years this research lasted: documents, notes and interview transcripts. Documents were used to explore the historical emergence of a discourse that support and contest the contemporary model of academic behaviour. Notes and interview transcripts were used to delve into the modalities of experience that academic critique entails today within the Chilean university system.

Document analysis (genealogy)

As I mentioned earlier, genealogical inquiries help make sense of certain discourses and practices of the present. This is done by analysing how these discourses emerge and become something else at a given time and culture. For Foucault (2007a), discursive formations produce different *epistemes* that have the aim of making a large body of knowledge possible. Thus, an episteme is not about knowledge; it is about the way in which a specific group of knowledges – principles and concepts – become acceptable for a particular society. The reasonableness of this episteme is relevant given that it enables us to develop concepts and to perform certain practices in a way that can be regarded appropriate. In other words, the idea of episteme allows us to

> rediscover on what basis knowledge and theory became possible; within what space of order knowledge was constituted; on the basis of what historical *a priori* (…) ideas could appear, sciences be established, experience be reflected in philosophies, rationalities be formed (…) (Foucault, 2007a, p. xxiii).

The documents analysed were essential to describe the *context of subjectivation* (Keller, 2012) of a specific discourse emerging in the post-independence period in Chile. I analysed documents' content and functioning; that is, I understood documents as active agents and part of dynamic networks of power/knowledge relations (Prior, 2008). According to Prior (2008), documents 'should not only be regarded as containers for words, images, information, instructions, and so forth, but (…) they can influence episodes of social interaction, and schemes of social organization (…)' (2008, p. 822). In that sense, historical texts still play a crucial role in reproducing ideas, images, and behaviours even when they are analysed in a different period.

Specifically, I delved into how Bello's texts (functioning) and discourse (content) defined a model of academic behaviour at given time and culture. Or, as Foucault put it, I considered this moment (post-independence period) as an '*attitude* rather than as

a period of history' [my emphasis] (Foucault, 1997b, p. 309); that is, Bello and others represent the definition of a model of academic behaviour rather than merely a historical moment. This analysis addressed one of my research questions, which points to how experiences of the past still haunts the experience of the present, or continuities and discontinuities between past and present; that is, how Bello's discourse still defines some aspects of the contemporary form of academic critique. It worth noting that Bello's texts still play a role in shaping contemporary debates regarding, for example, research integrity. The following texts were selected and analysed in accordance with their relevance in three of Bello's most fundamental works: language, education and history:

- Spanish Grammar (1832)
- Latin and Roman Law (1834)
- Observance of the Laws (1836)
- Address delivered at the inauguration of the University of Chile (1843)
- Commentary on "Investigations on the Social Influence of the Spanish Conquest and Colonial Regime in Chile" by Jose Victorino Lastarria (1844)
- Commentary on "Historical Sketch of the Constitution of the Government of Chile during the First Period of the Revolution, 1810 to 1814" by Jose Victorino Lastarria (1848)
- The Craft of History (1848)
- Philosophy of Understanding (1881 – posthumously published)

Two platforms were used to download these documents and others to analyse the historical context:

Memoria Chilena (Chilean memory). The site *Memoria Chilena*[7] was frequently visited to find and download historical documents. This site consists of historical collections in the form of books, papers from various disciplines, newspapers, speeches, legal documents, etc. This platform was an essential resource for exploring how the emergence of practices and discourses at a given time are linked to the power/knowledge grid. I mainly downloaded Andres Bello's and Jose Victorino Lastarria's books, articles and speeches to examine the establishment of a government of others and self in academic life during the creation and development of the *Universidad de Chile*.

Digital academic journal. The first academic journal in Chile, founded in 1843, is *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*[8]. This digital journal stores academic papers, authorities' speeches and minutes of the university council since the creation of the University. I paid particular attention to speeches delivered by university authorities

[7] http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-channel.html
[8] https://anales.uchile.cl/index.php/ANUC/issue/archive

during the creation of academic faculties and departments between 1843 and 1865 (Andres Bello's period as Rector of the University of Chile).

The analysis of these texts was undertaken to link discourse, practices and the power/knowledge grid at a given time and culture. That is to say, it draws elements from what has been called the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) which emphasises the analysis of texts 'as constituted by rationalities and logics associated with a particular time and space' (Anderson & Holloway, 2020, p. 193). These texts are the result of socio-cultural and political processes in which certain voices are included while others disregarded. Bello's text operates in what Khan and MacEachen (2021) calls 'successful claims (e.g., made by powerful/successful people)' (Khan & MacEachen, 2021, p. 2). This means that some discourses have and have had the capacity to define what can be claimed, argued and thought as well as who can speak at a given time and at a given culture. They are the ground on which we are able to think as we think, to speak as we speak and to act as we act.

Self-observation: working with everyday materials

Brinkmann refers to self-observation as 'qualitative inquiry in everyday life' (Brinkmann, 2012). That is to say, 'although it is driven by breakdowns in everyday understanding (which initiate an abductive process), it is not necessarily personal or confessional (although it might be)' (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 723). As I already mentioned, my experience in the *Universidad de Aysen* can be seen as a breakdown which initiated an *abductive* process. Since then I have been taking notes concerning what academic critique or critical attitudes means to me. Although these notes were not formally used as 'data' to inform the analysis (they have not been 'coded'), they, undoubtedly, helped me track and joint down my thoughts, thus influencing the pathways I have taken during this research.

Apart from this situation or significant breakdown, self-observation was conducted in three moments in my everyday life as a researcher between 2020 and 2022. By doing so, I sought to reflect on and make sense of how I immersed myself in academic activities. I put myself as an object to see in what sense knowledge production practices – understood in a broader sense – make up my subjectivity.

This process involved attending two online conferences, and one in-person doctoral summer school. In these events, I took notes manually, with a pen and paper, annotating ideas in the margins. My notes did not consider names, private information, or participants' behaviours but instead my thoughts about myself participating in these 'instances' (Brinkmann, 2014). Based on multiple interactions and conversations in these environments, I wrote down relationships between objects and people, focusing on my behaviours and ideas. Similar to the notes taken before my doctorate, I did not code them into categories or themes to inform data. Rather, I kept them as empirical materials ready to be reread again and again to inform my data interpretation.

The first conference took place in 2020. It was an online session with three panellists (one of them did not come up). Each speaker gave a 20-minute presentation. I was the first speaker. Unlike other conferences I have attended, I decided to read my presentation – rather than show a PowerPoint. I finished my presentation on time and listened to the other speakers. The audience was small but active. I answered three questions, and when I finished, I left the room. According to my notes, seven people attended the session. My thoughts focused on understanding the ideas of one of the speakers. I found the concept of ‘historical beginnings’ interesting, and I tried to annotate some theoretical links that could be helpful to my research. Also, my notes focused on developing my theoretical framework – in that moment I was trying to put some ideas together to write the chapter. One question from the audience was remarkably insightful, but I could not give a clear answer. One note says, ‘find better examples to explain the difference between epistemology and ethics’.

The second conference took place in 2021. It was an online session where I presented a paper based on my thesis’s theoretical framework. The roundtable consisted of five 15-minute presentations. I was the last speaker. I answered one question from the audience and another from one of the speakers. We discussed the possibility of further collaboration with other panellists, and we shared emails. After that, we all left the online room. According to my notes, just three people were listening to the presentations. My notes reflect on the role of these conferences and why we still – as academics – go to these activities. There are also questions about whether it is better to focus on small conferences where colleagues with similar interests seem more willing to listen and engage with questions and discussions or to choose bigger conferences where we can do more networking. No answer is provided.

The doctoral summer school took place in 2022. It was one-week in-person activity. The aim was to develop ideas about what the future university would looks like. The outcome was supposed to be a manifesto written by the participants. The program included keynotes led by experts during the mornings and workshops in the afternoons. Extracurricular activities were also organised to help people know each other. The last day was focused on presenting the proposal to university authorities. Yet the presentation did not go well. The authorities were confused by the ideas in the manifesto. They were expecting concrete measures regarding the new role of universities in the light of more complex challenges (e.g., climate change). Instead, the proposal focused on the precariat conditions of university staff and students. Even someone proposed to abolish the university. My notes focused exclusively on this conflict. I was interested in how imagining the future university brought different values and views into play. I also reflected on my position. My notes show an unsolved ethical dilemma during the workshops: even though I was supportive of the direction of the manifesto, I was still determining its utility. No answer is provided.

After each conference and the summer school, I linked my notes with theory from different angles. I tried to map out these instances. Yet it is still a work-in-progress. Despite this, these instances helped me keep thinking about academics' role, knowledge production and ethical transformations.

Interviewing academics using ethical dilemmas

I used interviews to explore the modalities of experience that academic critique entails today. I conducted 36 in-depth semi-structured interviews – in Spanish, which is my native language – with academics working in different Chilean universities between May 2020 and June 2021. It was a sort of experience-focused interviewing (Brinkmann, 2013). This type of interview allowed me to explore interviewees' practices and reasonings about their academic life, experiences and stories, challenges and tensions. It is worth noting that this period was marked by an intense political transition in Chile caused by the social outbreak in 2019. The country went through various elections, the most important being to decide whether a new political constitution needed to be written (September 2020).

Since the beginning, I had planned to interview academics from different disciplines, working full-time and undertaking research. As I argued earlier (Chapter 1), academics share a common experience living in the modern university that extend beyond epistemic cultures. This was the main sample criteria. Additionally, I wanted to interview academics from different types of universities (public and private, regional and metropolitan), seniority or years of experience, and gender. As a result, the participants were selected considering these elements but most importantly whether they were undertaking a research project – while the interview was set up – as principal investigator or co-investigator across different disciplines and with a full-time contract (purposive sample).

The following table summarises the final sample considering the main sample criteria.

Table 1. Sample of participants by discipline (see appendix)

Social Science	5	Education	4
Art and Architecture	1	Humanities	7
Technology	7	Commerce and Administration	2
Health	4	Law	1
Basic Science	5		

It is worth noting that moving from in-person to online interviews benefited my research. I could make my sample bigger and have access to participants working in universities across the country, especially from isolated areas. Given that the research focuses on the academic community, I tried to have a balanced sample between

disciplines. In two areas – Art and Architecture, and Law – the sample was reduced (just one participant).

To contact the participants I followed a twofold strategy. First, I emailed colleagues I have worked with in Chilean universities (three institutions) to explain my research project and asked them whether they knew someone that could be interested in participating. Having a first list of names, I began the contact using the information sheet to give a detailed information about the project (see the appendix). Second, I asked some interviewees to identify other potential participants in their field (snowball technique). I did this, especially in science and health, due to my lack of contacts in these areas. Yet this process was not linear. I repeated it during the fieldwork, which extended for almost one year.

The interviews were designed to explore the four ethical categories proposed by Foucault which are the onto-epistemological arrangements guiding my thoughts in this thesis (ethical substance, modes of subjectivation, practices of the self and telos). I used the following interview guide which shows the intersection of theory and research methods:

Table 2. Interview protocol

Dimension	Definition	Questions	Justification
1. Ethical Substance or the ontological element of ethics (*what?*)	It refers to the part of the self (or academic behaviour) which is concerned with knowledge production. It is the specific 'object' which ethical activity aims to transform.	*Relationship between the self and doing research* • What practice gives you more pleasure/reward when you are doing research? Why? • What are the most important cognitive and non-cognitive skills you need to develop when you are doing research? (e.g. empathy, autonomy, and so on) Which one is more rewarding/gratifying? Why? • What do you think is failing when you are doing research? (absence) why?	These questions provided information about the 'object' that ethical activity aims to transform. These questions shed some light on **the part of the self (or academic behaviour) that has been commodified/objectified** in academia.
2. Modes of subjectivation or the deontological element of ethics (*why?*)	The way in which people recognise their moral obligations and how they recognise the rules that need to be put into practice. It is the normative component of ethics.	*Relationship between moral obligations and doing research* • Why have you decided to conduct research? • Why do you think doing research is something valuable for yourself/your career? What are you pursuing while doing research? • According to your experience, which	These questions provided information about the **reasons** why scholars follow some **academic obligations** (e.g. the obligation of publishing in journals, presenting in conferences, and so on). Specifically, it focuses on **ethical obligations**.

		academic obligations have you had to do to succeed in academia? (publishing, going to conferences, *taking part in public deliberation*) Why do you think that these obligations are valuable? (for academia and higher education) • Is there another obligation that academics should do in relation to knowledge production and dissemination? (*ethical obligations*)	
		• ***Ethical dilemma***: have you ever experienced an ethical dilemma in relation to knowledge production? • Why did you make that decision?	This question provided information about **singular events (point of inflection)** in which scholars faced an ethical dilemma. These events offered some hints as to the **rationality** that characterise their decisions in relation to knowledge production.
3. Practices of the self or the ascetic element of ethics (*how?*)	It involves the means by which an individual can change in order to become an ethical subject (self-formation activities).	*Relationship between academic practices and doing research* • How do you behave to become more productive? What strategies do you usually employ in your everyday life? (e.g. exercises, healthy eating, sleep, hard work, time off). • How do you behave to improve your academic writing? (write every day; software tools; get feedback from peers; take small breaks while writing; read before writing; write lots of generative text; organise writing groups) • How do you behave to improve your productivity? (e.g. different form of organising research project or thesis; arrange new master courses) • How do you behave to do something different in relation to knowledge production? Have you ever changed the way of doing research and teaching? (e.g. publishing in open access journals only; teaching from home) • Have you ever self-imposed rules of conduct for certain daily activities? (e.g. arrange meetings before or after lunch; avoid having lunch meetings)	These questions provided information about the **strategies** scholars employ in order to be more **productive**. These practices might be oriented to accommodate themselves to external pressures (productivity) or to resist against those pressures and to propose something different. Apart from that, these questions provided information regarding self-esteem and self-confidence and the different roles they play.

4. Teleology	The idea of what we would like to become when we behave in a moral way	*Relationship between future (what is envisaged) and doing research* 1. Why do you act the way you do? (these acts are connected with the answers from section 3) 2. What are you striving for when you act in that way? 3. What would you like to become in the new few years? What resources will you mobilise to achieve that? • What skills would you like to develop in relation to knowledge production?	These questions provided information about the **goals** academics pursue in relation to knowledge production as well as questions about what they would like to become as an **individual subject** in academia.

I organised the interviews around these categories but used them flexibly, trying to experiment with the protocol according to the conversation rhythm rather than following a pre-established sequence of questions. I conducted two pilot interviews to test the protocol and questions. Although I did not make substantial changes, I tried to clarify some follow-up questions that were not sufficiently clear.

Before each interview, I asked my participants to complete a task (see the information sheet in the appendix). I asked them to think about an example where they had to deal with an *ethical dilemma* during their academic life. This dilemma could include teaching or research activities over a long period of time. I did not try to impose any example and kept this task open to reflection. I suggested they take notes before the interview to help them reflect on this experience beforehand. During the interview, I flexibly used a set of follow-up questions to obtain a detailed description of how the dilemma emerged, how it was solved (if that was the case), and the impact it had on the relationship with oneself, others and knowledge.

Apart from this task set up before the interview, I prepared one specific dilemma to be discussed with my participants to explore in more detail the challenges of disseminating knowledge. The dilemma was the following (imaginary journal): 'Imagine you have been asked to write a paper to be published in a highly ranked academic journal in your field. Your participation will consider all the benefits associated with publishing in an academic journal (e.g., H-index and career progression). There is just one condition: the article will be published anonymously. That is to say, your name will not appear in the paper. Will you be willing to publish?' Based on this dilemma, I had a set of follow-up questions to obtain more details about their reasonings.

The interviews took place at a date and time of participants' choice, and lasted, on average, one hour and a half: the shorter one lasted 45 minutes and the most extended

two hours. They were conducted in Spanish, tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. When conducting the interviews, I openly shared my position: a male researcher currently studying in a UK university and with experience working in Chilean universities. Although this kind of information not always help to build rapport with participants – due to a privileged position –, I considered vital to let them know from the beginning these details. In qualitative research, building rapport with participants is fundamental to produce rich data (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

- **Interview data analysis: transcription, coding and translation**

The data generated in my fieldwork took the form of *interview transcripts*. The interview video-audio recordings were transcribed in Spanish at various stages in order to build familiarity with the data. When finished, I checked the transcriptions to see any inconsistencies with my participants' descriptions. The translation from Spanish into English was done by myself – the dual role of being a researcher/translator (Zhu et al., 2019). However, I only translated the excerpts I used as codes since translating all the transcriptions would have been time-consuming and financially unrealistic.

Against the 'quasi-statistical analytic practice', which defines the codes from patterns and trends within the transcripts, the themes were driven by my theoretical concerns. That is to say, I did not create themes according to quantitative criteria (repetition of words or ideas) but instead to the relevance for understanding the problem. To put it in another way, although I followed some elements of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), I did not follow the data saturation rule (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Rather, I kept very close to my theoretical arrangements since 'theory (…) determine, first, what counts as data and, second, what counts as "good" or appropriate data' (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 715).

First, I undertook a thematic analysis of my empirical data. I was interested in generating some *themes* to be later used as entanglements with theory. Thus, the interview data was coded and then sorted into categories and themes. Yet, data coding did not occur in just one moment (after transcribing the recordings) but also during the interviews – taking notes –, the transcription and the multiple readings of the transcripts. It was thus conducted through various stages using Nvivo software. In this first moment – after reading more or less one-quarter of the transcripts – I ended up with preliminary categories based on interviewees' responses/narratives and my onto-epistemological arrangements. For the ethical substance, three categories were used: exclusion, pleasure/desire and sorrow/grief. For the modes of subjectivation: science, society and market. For the practices of the self: strategies, refusal practices, rules of conduct, and policy and critique. Second, having these categories, I continued reading the rest of the transcripts and new codes were introduced or redefined. For example, pleasure/desire was redrafted as 'satisfaction', and sorrow/grief as 'painful experiences'. In the latter, I added two codes: conformity and fears. In the practices of the self, I added two new codes: 'renunciation' and 'self-examination'. As a result, I

created a coding system based on my onto-epistemological concepts and interviewees' narratives which I used as an analytic tool. The following table shows the final coding system:

Table 3. Coding system: the ethical dimension of academic critique

1. Ethical substance	1.1. Painful experiences	1.1.1. Conformity
		1.1.2. Fears
	1.2. Exclusion	
	1.3. Satisfaction	
2. Modes of subjectivation	2.1. Market	
	2.2. Society	
	2.3. Science	
3. Practices of the self	1.1. Self-examination	
	1.2. Renunciation	
	1.3. Productive negation	1.3.1. Suspension
		1.3.2. Interruption
	1.4. Rules of conduct	
	1.5. Strategies	

Finally, I conducted an analysis inspired by a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) to foreground the relationship between the coding system and my theoretical concerns. Three themes were assembled: 1) sacrifice, 2) mission, and 3) possibilities. The first refers to the modality of experience that academic critique entails today within universities. It includes certain renunciations, ways of exclusion and satisfaction practices that define the way academics constitute themselves as ethical subjects. The mission indicates the mode of subjectivation prevailing among academics regardless of the discipline and university. That is to say, how academics recognise their moral obligations. The last theme deals with the question of what happens when academics exercise an ethical critique about the conditions of its existence.

- **Research ethics**

Conducting interviews involves ethical considerations that concern confidentiality, anonymity, pseudonymity and data storage. Before conducting the fieldwork, I submitted the ethics form to UCL Research Ethics which contained a plan to address these issues together with the consent form and information sheet used to contact my participants. The university approved the ethics form, which was later modified and amended due to the COVID-19 global pandemic (moving from in-person to online interviews). In that respect, the thesis complies with the British Education Research Association guidelines (BERA, 2018).

Confidentiality of the identity of all my participants was stated in the informed consent. The only information made available was their discipline, seniority and gender. My

participants' anonymity was ensured to protect both personal and institutional anonymity. The risk of some participants being identified by the public or other colleagues was low because the interviews focused on day-to-day practices, which are not readily identifiable compared to other studies addressing ideological debates. The confidentiality of the identity was helpful to facilitate the conversation and obtain richer data and accounts of everyday life within universities.

The informed consent sought to establish the voluntary character of the interview process. Participants could withdraw from the study before or during the interview without consequences. Although participants showed no discomfort with the procedure, before each interview I reassured them that they could decide to interrupt the conversation and withdraw at any time. I reminded my participants about this possibility to ensure commitment to the interview. It is worth noting that none of my participants decided to withdraw before, during and after the interview. In some cases, the interviewees requested more information about the aims and purposes of the study or more information about my position as a researcher. In those situations, I provided enough details without compromising the relationship between the researcher and the participant.

Similarly, I asked my participants if they minded to be recorded. This is particularly relevant when interviews are online since interviewees cannot see the tape recorder. In each interview, I told participants that the conversation would be recorded. Nobody refused to be recorded.

Data was pseudonymously stored, processed and used in an encrypted personal laptop. The transcriptions were pseudonymised, while the primary source (video-recorded interviews) was stored in a separate folder protected with a password. A copy of this information was stored in the UCL one drive, whose access is protected with user authentication via Single Sign On (SSO).

The informed consent also established that all the information would be used for academic purposes. All the data potentially publishable in academic journals will not disclose personal information about my participants.

4. Epistemological and ethical reflections

Using ethical dilemmas during the interviews

Interviewing involves accepting the centredness of the subject; that is, an individual, rational and given subject. This limit ‘does not mean that we reject such practices [interviews]; instead, we work the limits (and limitations) of such practices’ (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. ix). Thus I accepted the fact that data from interviews was always incomplete and partial (Law, 2004).

This is especially true when using ethical dilemmas in interviews. The data obtained from these dilemmas was incomplete due to they were unsolved, or cannot be solved. Indeed, dilemmas are an essential part of the experience of academic critique. Even when some participants had a clear idea of how to deal with the dilemma, they may act differently in the future. Thereby, some stories were told, but others were omitted or never accounted for. As a result, if one story was told in place of another, 'then not only "data" but also "analysis" become *something else*' (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. ix).

Positionality/reflexivity

This 'something else' is this thesis: the result of incomplete, partial (and *fictional* (Foucault, 1980)) stories. Readers of this thesis will not find generalised stories of the experience of academic critique within universities. They will not find a definitive account of how critique is undertaken within a particular academic community. Instead, they will find repeated data excerpts and multiple conceptual perspectives that open up new theoretical possibilities to think about the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge in the contemporary university.

Likewise, it is worth noting that this thesis also contributes to reproducing a particular form of knowledge production. It does it through engaging with conventional and critical analysis, which all belong to the current web of knowledge production. Also, it does as long as I, a male researcher from the Global South studying in a university in the Global North, reproduce inequalities (gender, class, etc.) and ways of knowing. To address this situation, especially the gender inequality within science, I did two things: first, I tried to have a balanced gender sample when selecting my participants; second, I tried to include more female academics in my larger theoretical framework. Recognising that all these measures are not enough, this thesis and I, as a researcher, inhabit the contradictions and forms of resistance to knowledge production within universities.

Between qualitative and post-qualitative inquiry

As I mentioned earlier, this thesis was driven by the conflicting relationship between conventional qualitative studies and post-qualitative insights. In that respect, I would like to say something more about the latter.

In words of St. Pierre, 'Post qualitative inquiry has no pre-existing research designs, methods, processes, procedures, or practices because *it is not a methodology at all*'. That is to say, post qualitative inquiry involves 'thinking without methods' and using 'emergent, fragmented strategies that mutate according to the task at hand' since 'nothing is set at the beginning' (Jackson, 2017, p. 667). Post qualitative inquiry is 'concerned not with what *is* but what *is not yet, to come*' (St. Pierre, 2021, p. 1) and

moves away from ‘rules for thought, with predetermined goals and ends’ (Jackson, 2017, p. 668).

In addition, in post-qualitative inquiry, data analysis does not happen in a given and formalised moment; that is, ‘its space–time cannot be secured in the traditional linear “process” trajectory of data collection>analysis>representation’ (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 717). This means that data generation and analysis have not ‘beginning or end, origin or destination’ (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 717). It occurs at different space-time levels. Thus, data analysis might well begin without ‘primary data’ (Brinkmann, 2014). This is the result of assuming that ‘analysis occurs everywhere and all the time’ (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 717).

Similarly, the post-qualitative approach recognises that interviews are more than mere interactions between two given agencies. That is, the agency does not precede but emerges from their ‘intra-action’. In that context, Kuntz and Presnall (2012) have reconceptualised interviews as ‘intraviews’.

Although these reflections played a significant role in defining my decisions and thoughts, it is also true that this research remains within the borders of conventional methods. My intention was to ‘play’ on the limits of both approaches. That is what I did throughout the time this research lasted.

Four intertwined themes

Analysing historical documents (genealogy), journal notes, and interview transcripts led me to four interwoven themes: Bello’s art of government; sacrificial practices; missional disposition; and field of possibilities. The first data chapter (chapter 5) aims to show how Bello established a particular model of academic behaviour which later was reactivated by neoliberalism. This examination sets the scene for the rest of the chapters since the ‘spectres of Bello’ can be seen through the contemporary form of academic critique. That is, the modalities of experience analysed in chapters 6, 7 and 8 cannot be understood without diving into Bello’s discourse.

PART THREE – THEORETICAL-EMPIRICAL ENTANGLEMENTS

CHAPTER 5

ANDRES BELLO'S ART OF GOVERNMENT

1. Introduction

Throughout this thesis, I have stressed that *the contemporary form of academic critique in Chile is irreducible to neoliberalism.* That is, some past experiences and discourses continue disrupting everyday life, routines, dynamics, intensities and rhythms of contemporary academic life which conflict with affects, experiences and material realities of neoliberalism. These past experiences emerge in the form of a *myth*, or more precisely, as a 'Mythological Machine' (Jesi, 2001); that is, as various institutional, technical, political and physical mechanisms which (re)produce *ad infinitum* images and practices. The entanglement of these experiences from the past and the present is conflicting as they seek to ignore or repress each other (Schmukalla, 2021). In that context, I have defined the following research question: what particular discourse and model of academic behaviour was brought into play during the post-independence period within the Chilean university system? Exploring this discourse might help understand how the current academic practices support and contest the contemporary forms of governmentality in the Chilean university system.

To address this question, I have selected the figure of Andres Bello, the first Rector of the University of Chile and a prolific intellectual, who, through a particular discourse, established a specific model of academic behaviour that, with some later modifications, reconfigurations and contradictions, returns to the present. As such, Bello's influence today can be seen through spectres enabling and limiting new possibilities for expanding academic critique. This chapter explores Bello's discourse to define the critical elements of a model of academic behaviour that began before the advent of neoliberalism in the academy. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 explore how Bello's spectres remain as an essential aspect of academic critique in Chile.

Bello's house

The University of Chile[9] is often referred to as *Bello's house* (*La casa de Bello*). Being an academic in this house, a site of scientific knowledge and artistic creation, captures an *intense experience* of historical continuities and discontinuities. Specifically, living in *Bello's house* as an academic implies adhering to a historically constituted identity based on exceptionality, sophistication, uniqueness, perfection, integrity and standardisation (Sabrovsky, 2009). Academic life in this university entails embodying an attitude and the cultivation of a specific self permeated by the need to produce

[9] The University of Chile was born with extraordinary powers and represented the centralised project of the new Republic. For example, it was responsible of the supervision of secondary education and the national curriculum.

exceptional and reliable knowledge beyond productivity. Or in other words, it is an ethical practice sustained by a particular relationship to oneself, others and truth which is not determined exclusively by policies and institutional codes but by rules of conduct set by academics for themselves. Therefore, the knowledge created in the form of ideas or technologies, needs to be exceptional and reliable as a way of supporting the culture of excellence that Bello's house represents for the country, echoing the spirit of the national university and the needs of the state during the mid-nineteenth and twentieth century (Serrano, 1994).

Two examples might help illustrate how Bello's house represents these values and practices. First, the case of Claudio Hetz, an internationally distinguished neuroscientist who is one of the most cited researchers in the field and holds an academic position in the University of Chile. In 2021, Hetz was accused of scientific fraud due to using altered images in a series of publications since 2002. As a result, the university commissioned an advisory committee with the aim of investigating the case concluding that 'patterns of behaviour that were objectionable and contrary to scientific ethics' (Rodríguez, 2021) as well as lack of rigour were detected, but there was no evidence of fraud; that is, deliberate actions destined to change the findings of experiments. In 2022, the university suspended Hetz from academic activities for two months. Hetz's reply shows what is at stake in this controversy: 'As scientists we know that excellence is first. We seek perfection but despite good intentions and seeking to be as meticulous as possible, we fail in this process' [my translation] (Yáñez, 2021). But then he adds: 'I consider this a closed chapter; now comes a process of learning and improvement' (Rodríguez, 2021). These two statements are remarkable as they show that the possibility of improvement stands when excellence fails. However, the academic community rejected the conclusions and sanctions as they set a 'poor example for researchers' (Rodríguez, 2021), showing the dispute between institutional norms enacted via administrative processes and rules of conduct set by academics for themselves.

In 2022 another public controversy shook *Bello's house*. The Faculty of Humanities was criticised due to the publication of a master's thesis analysing paedophilia from a philosophical perspective. Commentators argued that the thesis deliberately defended paedophilia. Having this information, the University rapidly released a public declaration and started a formal investigation. Two issues were put into question. First, the compliance with quality and ethical standards when the thesis was delivered. And second, the ideologisation of critical studies in social sciences. As regards the latter, some academics were criticised not only for lack of rigour but also for political reasons. Here academic freedom was defended by both sides. For some detractors, gender studies, feminism and critical studies, in general, have been hijacked by ideologised theoretical perspectives thus affecting academic freedom and hence the quality and credibility of research. For supporters of these approaches, what is attacked is precisely academic freedom when some theories or ideas are forbidden or questioned by political reasons.

These polemics show how Bello's house represents the *University of Excellence* in Chile. In this context, excellence involves, although it is not reduced to, integrity, exceptionality, perfection, quality and freedom. In that respect, the following question arises: what model of academic behaviour was brought into play during the creation of Bello's house in ways that support these elements? What makes the right to exclude certain academic conducts and practices possible?

A genealogical inquiry: Bello's discourse

Reflecting on these issues, a genealogical examination is needed to trace the historical emergence and organisation of a particular model of academic behaviour in ways that *support* and *contest* the contemporary forms of governmentality in the Chilean university system. In this chapter, I examine the manner in which academic conduct was problematised by one of the most prominent figures, or '*disciplined* intellectual' (Ramos, 2001), during the constitution of the Republic and the University of Chile: Andres Bello. Bello, according to Trujillo Silva, 'became the symbol of a way of being, of a modern republic, and especially, he was seen as the founding father, indeed, *an articulator of many tendencies that seemed completely incompatible*' [my translation and my emphasis] (Trujillo Silva, 2019, p. 20). Similarly, Jaksic offers a suitable description of Bello: 'Bello remains a familiar yet unknown figure, a *presence* that is recognized but cannot be explained' [my translation and my emphasis] (Jaksic, 2010, p. 19). In particular,

> Bello buttresses his reputation as a writer of "general knowledge," a tradition belonging to the encyclopedism of the Enlightenment, with the extensive use of citations that serve to delimit and specify their respective territories, resulting in the creation of relatively homogeneous texts. In addition to this degree of formality to be found in his writing, Bello begins to speak from a position of authority within the university, which he himself had helped to found in Chile (in 1842). His locus of speech, if indeed authorized as an administrative function for the public sphere, nevertheless establishes a degree of differentiation with respect to other areas of the polis (Ramos, 2001, p. 24).

Bello was one of the leaders, if not the most important, of the Republic project, especially concerning *social order* and the development of the university system. Indeed, Bello 'considered himself a *defender of order*' [my emphasis] (Jaksic, 2010, p. 24). Although he was born in Venezuela, he dedicated an important part of his life to the construction of the Republic of Chile. After spending some time in London as a diplomat (1810-1829) where he met intellectuals like James Mill and Jeremy Bentham (Zea, 1976), he moved to Chile hired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Santiago. During that period, he contributed to the nation's project as senator, professor and director of local newspapers. Among his most relevant contributions are the Chilean Civil Code and the creation of the University of Chile, where he was the first Rector for more than two decades (1843-1865).

Therefore, I explore how Bello, grasped as a *dispositif*, inaugurated and embodied a discourse that still permeates, in the form of a ghostly figure, the contemporary form of academic critique despite the ruptures and discontinuities throughout the history of Chilean universities. By putting Bello and his texts in the larger context of the history of the academy, I argue that his contributions read better not so much as an effort to establish a distinct field of research or epistemological field but to prescribe a certain set of virtues to be possessed by the members of the academy. In short, Bello's contribution to the organisation of the Republic and the academic community is as ethical as it is epistemological. Bello's texts, and the work of his intellectual rivals, especially Jose Victorino Lastarria (1817-1888) and Jacinto Chacon (1820-1898), serve as useful traces to investigate the historical attachment of a model of academic behaviour into its contemporary form. Bello's investigations on language, education and history provide the crucial elements to expand the moral horizons of the population through self-imposed civic virtues.

My argument then is that Bello introduced a particular form of power/knowledge relationship deployed at a capillary level (subjectivities) able to ensure the configuration of the structures of the contemporary university (teaching, research, public engagement, etc.) – see chapters 6, 7 and 8. This power/knowledge relationship can be examined under the category of *excellence*, that is, a form of *order* – local and contingent rationalities – that makes the contemporary relation between the academic community and the market possible. Or, excellence can be seen as a cultural nucleus which is the intersection of discourses of truth, forms of governmentality and techniques of the self that contains all forms of exclusion (class, race, gender and others). Therefore, the particular way excellence was exercised during the nineteenth century is the foundation for producing techniques of management (e.g., rankings and accreditation) and techniques of the self (the academic-self) in the contemporary university (I return to this issue in chapters 6, 7 and 8). The configuration of a specific relation to self, others and truth marks the starting point of the history of academic communities in Chile.

Based on Bello's texts, I have identified two ways Bello influenced the formation of the academic-self within the Chilean academic community. First, establishing a government of others (state-building and university-building) whereby a certain regime of truth – epistemological field – defined the grounds for what is thinkable and spoken. Bello's contribution was primarily the introduction of positivism within the Chilean philosophical discourse and the Spanish language's unification. Second, bringing into play a government of the self whereby certain practices and values defined the grounds for the academic-self. Bello introduced this government of the self through his reflections on personal virtues, freedom and objectivity. Before exploring these issues, I briefly describe Bello's epistemological context, characterised by the transition from romanticism to positivism during the post-independence period.

2. Bello’s political and philosophical context: the transition from romanticism to positivism

During the mid-nineteenth century, Latin American countries achieved political independence. However, the independence of mind from Europe remained untouched (Zea, 1976). In that context, two philosophical and epistemological perspectives were essential for critiquing the remaining colonial legacies and at the same time imagining the new nation-states or communities of shared knowledge (Miller, 2020): romanticism and positivism. The former was used as a theoretical framework to justify and pursue the autonomy and emancipation of the Latin American mind and hence the cultural independence from Europe, or what has been called the *Second Independence* (Pinedo, 2010). Positivism played an essential role in state-building from a scientific perspective. Regardless, both perspectives agreed on the need to create new ways of thinking beyond Spanish colonialism.

In general terms, the Romanticism movement opposed enlightened rationality. Latin American intellectuals took from romanticism primarily two elements: the exploration of national values and destiny (Zea, 1976). These elements helped Latin American thinkers to show the historical roots impeding the realisation of their identity and culture. Thus, multiple historical analyses were undertaken to exhibit the negative reality after the political Independence. In 1844, for instance, Jose Victorino Lastarria, who later became one of the most important positivists in Chile, wrote ‘*Investigaciones sobre la influencia social de la Conquista y el sistema colonial de los españoles en Chile*’ [Investigations on the Social Influence of the Spanish Conquest and Colonial Regime in Chile]. In this text, Lastarria criticised the adverse colonial effects on Chilean society. However, this diagnosis was only partially shared by other intellectuals. Although most of them were sympathetic to the criticism of Spanish colonisation and its legacy, some took a more moderate position and valued the colony's positive aspects. Bello’s reaction to Lastarria’s critical analysis is illustrative of this attitude. Bello was convinced that the Spanish colonisation had some positive elements; indeed, his early poems exemplify this enthusiastic position for imperial order (Jaksic, 2010). According to Bello, negative aspects do not necessarily come from European remnants but human nature (Zea, 1976). Commenting on Lastarria’s text, Bello pointed out that ‘Injustice, atrocity, perfidy in war, have not been of the Spaniards alone, but of all races, of all centuries’ [my translation] (Bello, 1957b, p. 161). Even the spirit driving the independence of the Republic had its roots in Spain:

> It seems to us, therefore, inaccurate that the Spanish system suffocated in its germ the inspirations of honour and of the homeland, of emulation and of all the generous sentiments from which civic virtues are born. There were no republican elements; Spain had not been able to create them; its laws undoubtedly gave souls an entirely opposite direction. But deep down in those souls there were seeds of magnanimity, heroism, haughty and generous independence [my translation] (Bello, 1957b, p. 169).

Yet, at the same time, Bello was part of an intellectual project that sought to make contributions far from European enlightenment. The assumption was that Latin American countries had nothing to learn from Europe and that a new epistemology, or modern knowledge, should emerge from these countries (Miller, 2020; Zea, 1976). Some intellectuals wrote books on grammar, literature and philosophy, motivated by the need to emancipate the Latin American mind, especially Bello who was concerned with the fragmentation of culture and language after Independence[10]. There were also institutional efforts to make these ideals real. For example, the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities of the University of Chile attempted to create a new grammatical institution of the Spanish language in opposition to the one existing in Spain (Serrano, 1994).

However, all these attempts somehow failed the task of being completely separated from European influence. In particular, most intellectuals (*pensadores*) were influenced by philosophical perspectives such as French traditionalism, eclecticism, Saint-Simonianism, Scottish liberalism and utilitarianism. Miller (2020) put it this way:

> Even though many Spanish Americans, throughout the nineteenth century, drew attention to the inadequacies of European philosophy and science in the contexts of the Americas—after all, the logic of empiricism is that theory is deduced from specific, observable evidence—'European' ways of knowing became the standard by which other kinds of knowledge were evaluated and normally found wanting (Miller, 2020, p. 220)

In that context positivism emerged in Chile. While romanticism was used as an approach to criticise cultural and religious colonialism legacies, positivism was seen as a perspective concerned almost exclusively with cultural independence, state-building and *social order* (Zea, 1949). That is to say, positivism contributed to the construction of the new nation-states; it was part of a *utopian* project that sought to end the chaos and anarchy inherited from the colonial mind. Or in other words, it was seen as a form of epistemological critique oriented to composing rather than debunking. The way positivism was introduced to the intellectual circles of Chilean society followed the idea that the practical application of scientific research might help establish social order, which was passionately sought and became the object of most intellectual projects. Thus, positivism became the episteme governing life during the Republic period.

The Comtean positivism introduced in Chile during the mid-nineteenth century provided the scientific justification for constructing the new Republic (Zea, 1949). However, at that time, two Comtean perspectives were at stake: heterodox and orthodox positivism. The former arrived in Chile to critique clerical and Catholic power which controlled a large part of the educational system (Jaksic, 1989); that is, to overcome the metaphysical and religious stage of society, following the Comtean Law

[10] One of the first Bello's intellectual projects was to seek the linguistic unity of Spanish language to avoid the fragmentation that occurred in Medieval Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire.

of Three Stages. Among the early heterodox positivists, Lastarria sought to use a scientific approach similarly to the physical sciences (observation) for the study of the laws of society (Lastarria, 1865). According to Bader (1970), early heterodox positivists 'felt that their society possessed a unique potential for the future if they could but determine the Laws to which it was subject' (p. 380). They regarded positivism as not founded on metaphysical or idealistic grounds like that of Hegel or Herder (romanticism). These approaches, they argued, were not relevant or adequate for the analysis of social order.

Chilean positivists were also liberals. This combination brought about contradictions between *individualistic* ideas of English positivists (*laissez-faire* liberalism) and the *absolutism* of French positivists (Bader, 1970). Lastarria, for example, 'tried to find a middle ground between the individualistic, anti-historical and anti-mystical positivism of the English school and the collective, historical and mystical system of August Comte' (Bader, 1970, p. 378). As a result, Chilean liberals and positivists could not completely integrate the English interpretations of positivism into their system of thought. Despite these difficulties, Lastarria defended an education free of state control (liberalism) but at the same time he believed that the state must intervene when obstacles to progress remain untouched (like Catholic schools) – his adaptation of positivism consisted of two ideas: freedom and progress. The paradox of Chilean positivism, composed of liberals and non-liberals, explains the uncertainties around the later conflicts with conservatives.

On the other hand, orthodox positivism, also known as the 'Religion of Humanity', was centred on providing moral guidance for social order. Yet orthodox positivism was controversial and the object of multiple criticisms, especially from English thinkers. For example, John Stuart Mill deemed Comte's Religion of Humanity as 'the completest system of spiritual and temporal despotism ever yet emanated from a human…brain' (Quoted in Bader, 1970, p. 378). The conflict between these two perspectives was replicated in Chile. Most liberal intellectuals supported the heterodox version of positivism, including Andres Bello, and rejected the orthodox perspective due to its missionary zeal. However, there were a few followers of the orthodox position with great influence within some intellectual circles: the three brothers Jorge, Juan Enrique and Luis Lagarrigue. It has been argued that the influence of these thinkers and intellectual projects impeded the total secularisation of the Chilean society (Perez-Wilson, 2015).

The emergence of positivism marked, therefore, the beginning of a local rationality that undoubtedly influenced state and university-building. The conflictual application of positivism in which liberal and non-liberal thinkers took part shows the contingency of this episteme and the need to explore its variations, dynamics and scope.

3. Bello and the formation of a community of shared knowledge

Drawing upon Bello's texts on philosophy, I argue that Bello contributed to constituting a community of shared knowledge through two projects: the distinction between positive and negative ideas; and the codification of the Spanish language.

Positive and negative ideas

In his *philosophy of the understanding* (originally published in 1881), Bello provided an epistemological framework concerned with how to study the relationship between history and politics and the limits of understanding (Perez-Wilson, 2015). It has been claimed that this book was influenced by Scottish Enlightenment and Common Sense (Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart and Thomas Brown), English empiricism, the Edinburgh School (John Locke) and utilitarianism (Jeremy Bentham) (Guzmán Toro, 2020). By making a series of distinctions at the level of perception and ideas, Bello gradually introduced the need for observation and science by highlighting the role of positive ideas in philosophy, contrary to scholasticism prevalent at that time based on Aristotelian logic and mainly focused on the suprasensible – unknowable – world (Cuartas, 2009). Or, differently put, this framework can be considered the building block of Chile's state-building project driven by a scientific perspective (practical spirit).

What stands out from Bello’s analysis is the emphasis on human *experience* beyond common sense – or sense certainty – that is, on perception and understanding – the higher levels of perception. The experience, according to Bello, provides knowledge through a series of perceptions. Thus, Bello called for observation and science to further describe reality's primary causes thus turning away from abstract and universal categories.

This anti metaphysics position led Bello to make a fundamental distinction within his philosophy: the difference between negative and positive ideas. For Bello negative ideas are invisible – nothingness – while positive ideas are visible. Yet, according to his view, both ideas are interwoven: ‘As a positive class is extended, the corresponding negative class narrows’ (Bello, 2013, p. 300). Thus, ‘if the positive class includes all entities, as does the one related to the words entity, being or thing, there will be no corresponding negative class; there will be nothing in its place (...)’ (Bello, 2013, p. 301). As a result,

> Nothingness has no positive quality, or nothingness is nothingness. The opposite proposition, the nothingness is something, the nothingness is a thing, is an expression of the impossible, is absurd; and therefore, every other proposition in which it is contained is also necessarily an expression of the impossible, an absurdity [my translation] (Bello, 2013, p. 301)

This logical sequence entails understanding positive ideas as those able to be analysed, studied and, most importantly, changed. Bello is close to positivists when he emphasises the contingency of the conditions for the possibility of knowledge, that is, the phenomenal world. Positive ideas put forward by Bello are linked to the

existence of an external reality that is given and independent of consciousness but knowable. Bello's distinctions served to frame the discussion about the epistemic status of objective reality underlined by positivism and at the same time to introduce positivists ideas within the Chilean intellectual circles.

Although Bello focused on philosophical ideas, these influenced the constitution of the Republic. As I pointed out earlier, positivism emerged to contribute to state-building from a scientific and practical perspective. Bello was the first intellectual to explore the need for a critique of metaphysics in Chile using this terminology. This critique, one could argue, emerged just in time when it was needed. Or Bello considered the development of this critique crucial to set the epistemological limits for the constitution of the Republic. Thus, despite later modifications, Bello's distinction between positive and negative ideas can be seen as the point of departure of a new episteme within the Chilean philosophical discourse. This episteme was fundamental to the constitution of disciplinary fields scientifically driven needed to build the nation-state. Or more precisely, this discourse defined, from a philosophical perspective, the mission of the University of Chile when it was created.

The unification of the nation: Spanish language

As regards the study of Spanish grammar, Bello himself moved away from the epistemological perspective initiated by Descartes and later applied by Claude Lancelot and Antoine Arnauld in their book *General and Rational Grammar, containing the fundamentals of the art of speaking, explained in a clear and natural manner* published in 1660 (well known as the Port-Royal Grammar). In this book, the authors sought to discover the essence of French language in Latin, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, Spanish, Italian, and German. Bello, however, discarded French rationalism and insisted that 'General grammar is one thing and the grammar of a given language another; it is one thing to compare two languages and another to consider a language as it is in itself' (Bello, 1999, p. 222). Bello rejected the General grammar's idea of universal patterns in Latin explaining the essence of other languages. In the prologue of his *Grammar*, Bello pointed out:

> The person who has learned Latin much better than it is generally learned among us will know Latin, and he also will have formed a fair idea of the structure of language and of what is called general grammar. But this does not mean that he will know Spanish grammar (…) (Bello, 1999, p. 210).

That is to say, what explains linguistic associations is not a universal law but an everyday and situated language experience. Or in other words, it is not logic but *analogy* that makes language possible. If 'each language has its own particular theory, its grammar (…) we must not apply indiscriminately to one language the principles, terms, and analogies into which, more or less successfully, the practices of another are resolved' (Bello, 1999, p. 222). This means, in practical terms, that language has a political responsibility: *the unification of the nation*. That was Bello's primary concern

which informed the creation of the Republic and the University of Chile. For Bello, the relationship between language and nation-building was vital to establish a grammar that extends beyond abstract universals and provides a national identity. In Bello's words:

> (…) our true homeland is that *rule of conduct* indicated by the rights, obligations, and functions that we have and that we owe each other; it is that rule which establishes public and private order, which strengthens, secures, and imparts all their vigor to the relationships that unite us, and forms that body of association of rational beings in which we find the only good, the only desirable things in our country. Therefore *that rule is our true homeland, and that rule is the law, without which everything disappears* [my emphasis] (Bello, 1999, p. 468).

The law, according to Bello, is the grounding terrain for social order. By understanding the homeland as where the rules of conduct are codified and enacted, 'without which everything disappears', Bello demanded nation-building through the codification of a series of rules, of which language played a crucial role. In that respect, Bello's studies and propositions on Spanish grammar were devoted to avoiding the language's fragmentation among and within Latin American countries in the post-Independence period. Bello was well aware of how language ended up fragmented after the fall of the Roman Empire in Europe (the Babel tower). To put it differently, Bello's idea was to provide the language for the construction of a new political order and community of knowledge (the University of Chile).

Bello's main project was the *standardisation* of the use of the Spanish language. For Bello, the language has to be as simple as possible to be used by most people, thus bringing about a sense of belonging, linguistic loyalty, pride and participation, among other attitudes (Torrejón, 1993). However, Bello considered high culture language the most appropriate for his nation-building project. At this moment, we can see the normative dimension of Bello's language political project. Bello advocated for the 'proper' or 'correct' use of language. In his own words:

> The grammar of a language is the art of speaking it correctly, that is, according to the proper use, which is that of *educated people* (…) This use is preferred because it is the most uniform in the various provinces and towns that speak the same language, and therefore the one that makes what is said easier and generally understandable; while the words and phrases of *ignorant people* vary significantly from one town and province to another, and are not easily understood outside of that narrow enclosure in which the uneducated masses use them [my emphasis] [my translation] (Bello, 1957a, p. 15).

Bello's study of Spanish grammar was an attempt to introduce the high-culture Spanish language (*Castellano*) into the new nation. For Bello, using this language was fundamental to avoid the fragmentation of the nations and set up a new political order able to define what is spoken and thinkable. By introducing the proper use of language, Bello established a sort of regime of truth that set the limits of university discourse and its members. Yet beyond the content of his grammar, what is at play here is the

constitution of an *art of government* based on unification and standardisation. The former is the epistemological and political nucleus from which deviance equates to fragmentation and hence the destruction of the nation-state project. Language played a crucial role in defining the limits of the community of shared knowledge. And given that the grammar of the language was that of educated people, which at that time were primarily academics, the unification project depended on the university's constitution. This unification led to the need for standardisation of practices from the very beginning of the Republic. These are the most fundamental elements surrounding the creation of the University of Chile, where Bello was the most important figure at that time.

4. Bello’s discourse of excellence: the formation of an unified academic-self

In the previous section, I showed how Bello’s philosophy and political project influenced the establishment of a particular government of others whose centre was the unification and standardisation of the knowledge community during the Republic period. In this section, I want to move on to how Bello’s philosophy of education contributed to forming a model of academic behaviour during the same time. Indeed, the demands on academic, scientific and professional expertise today extend beyond technical skills (e.g., digital skills) and include epistemic virtues formed well before that continuously re-establish academic life; that is, the epistemic and ethical basis for academic work. Put differently, Bello’s intellectual project in education made the problem of the government of others (nation-building and university-building) dependent upon an *ethical elaboration of the subject* (government of self). In his own words:

> Science and letters, apart from this social value, apart from the varnish of amenity and elegance that they give to human societies and which we must also count among their benefits, possess an intrinsic merit of their own insofar as they increase the pleasures and joys of the individual who cultivates and loves them. They are exquisite pleasures, untouched by the turbulence of the senses; they are pure joys (…) But letters and science, while they give delicious play to intellect and imagination, also elevate moral character. They weaken the power of sensual seduction and strip of their terrors most of the vicissitudes of fortune. Except for the humble and contented resignation of the religious soul, they are the best preparation for the moment of death (Bello, 1999, pp. 263–264).

Reflecting on these considerations, this section is divided into three themes I have identified from Bello’s thoughts on education: the virtues and skills of knowledge producers, the practice of (academic) freedom, and objectivity in research. Overall, this section examines how Bello contributed to forming an academic-self dependent upon developing particular epistemic virtues.

Knowledge producers: virtues and skills

According to Bello, language not only has a unifying power but also provides people with virtues and morality. What is at play in language is order. However, at the time of

Bello, 'the challenge was to move nations from the external imposition of order to an *internalized self-discipline* that achieved social and political stability while ensuring civic and personal freedoms' [my emphasis] (Jaksić, 1999, p. 57). For Bello, achieving this idea of order rested on the cultivation of reason, civic virtues and humanistic culture (internal order), to which the study of languages was fundamental. That is why Bello fiercely defended the teaching and learning of Latin during a cultural controversy (1842-1843) led by Ignacio Domeyko and Antonio Varas (Rodríguez Freire, 2016; Stuven, 2000). Bello responded to this controversy and clarified his position in a short text called *Latin and Roman Law* (1834). According to Bello:

> All the arguments that are made against study of the Latin language, and which *El Valdiviano Federal* [Chilean newspaper] has reproduced at length in its last issue, can be reduced to only one: that the time spent on Latin can be employed in acquiring other, more useful knowledge (Bello, 1999, p. 252).

In this text, Bello enumerates why studying Latin was beneficial: it is easier to learn other languages like Spanish; it permits the reading of philosophical texts, poems and compositions which are written in Latin; and it is the language of the religion professed in Chile (Catholicism). According to Bello's view, teaching and studying classical languages like Latin was of the greatest value for intellectual and mental development. Bello's argument seems close to pedagogical movements that have emphasised the connection between learning in one area and overall development[11]. Similarly, studying the best works of genius, especially poetry and philosophy, permits the emergence of personal and civic virtues within the political and knowledge community. In other words, the study of Latin, according to Bello, contributes to experiencing the totality, which, in this case, was nationhood and university life.

Beyond these nodal points, Bello saw a connection between studying Latin, or other classical languages, and social order in developing personal and civic virtues, especially for those working in the University of Chile. The defence of the study of Latin within the University expresses a position in which what is relevant is to maintain the symbolic distinction that Latin entails. Although Bello was influenced by Bentham's utilitarian approach and deemed the application of Latin grammar in Spanish problematic, he believed in studying Latin as an essential part of intellectual life: it develops personal virtues vital to creating knowledge.

In that respect, Bello's speech delivered at the inauguration of the University of Chile (1843) provides a framework that anticipates, to some extent, the contours of a particular experience of academic critique within the university. In this speech, Bello addressed several topics of which the cultivation of virtues (humanistic tradition) and skills was central, especially when discussing the role of knowledge producers within the recently created University of Chile. It is worth noting that Bello was particularly

[11] According to this theory, increasing the knowledge in Latin, students would increase his abilities on any task (Vygotskij, 1981).

interested in making education universal for the purposes of nation-building. In this speech, he insisted on this point, emphasising one special requirement: the need for trained 'distributors of knowledge':

> Making education universal requires a large number of carefully *trained teachers and the skills of these*, the ultimate distributors of knowledge, are in themselves more or less distant emanations of *the great scientific and literary depositories*. *Good teachers, good books, good methods, and good guidance of education are necessarily the work of a very advanced intellectual culture* [my emphasis] (Bello, 1999, p. 268).

Two issues are relevant in this quote. First, the need for Bello to have 'trained teachers and the skills of these' to make universal education possible. Indeed, for Bello 'the use of analytical methods [is] the only way to acquire true knowledge' (Bello, 1999, p. 275); that is, to be trained in analytical methods conferred knowledge producers the advantages to have access to 'true knowledge' – this is relevant later when I describe Bello's critique of imagination.

In another text called *The Craft of History* (1848) Bello discussed the role of European philosophy in forging Chilean knowledge and insisted that 'European philosophical works do not give us the philosophy of history of Chile. We Chileans must shape ours by the only legitimate route, which is that of *synthetic induction*' [my emphasis] (Bello, 1999, p. 339). The use of these analytical skills requires an additional effort and hence:

> for the purpose of nourishing the intellect, educating it, and making it think for itself, it would be just as inappropriate to accept the moral and political conclusions of Herder, for example, without the study of ancient and modern history, as it would be to adopt Euclid's theorems without the previous intellectual labor of demonstrating them (…) Herder himself did not try to supplant the knowledge of events, but to *illustrate* them, to *explain* them [my emphasis] (Bello, 1999, p. 275).

Thus, for instance, using merely deductions and formulas

> would mean depriving human experience of the salutary power of advice at precisely the age when it is most receptive to lasting impressions. It would mean depriving the poet of an inexhaustible vein of images and colors. And I believe that *what I am saying about history must be applied to all other branches of knowledge* [my emphasis] (Bello, 1999, p. 276).

This is to say that true knowledge or reliable knowledge claims depend on describing and explaining the events as they were. True knowledge rests on acquiring specific analytical skills – I will return to this problem in the following sections.

Second, what also stands out from the inaugural speech is that the source of these skills is 'the work of a very *advanced intellectual culture*' [my emphasis]. In other words, to have the status of knowledge producer meant to be integrated in various ways into the high culture. But at the same time, 'the work of a very advanced intellectual culture'

was recognised as such only if it contributed to nation-building. Therefore, as Miller (2020) put it:

> During the century after independence, the republic of knowledge was in principle open to all, and in practice a perhaps surprising number of individuals from outside the upper classes succeeded in establishing a place for themselves, but *the price of admission was acceptance of the imperative to become modern, which came to mean being integrated into a nation-state. Any group of people that preferred to continue as a distinctive community was denied the status of knowledge producers* [my emphasis] (Miller, 2020, p. 220).

Simply put, there was a strong connection between 'high culture' and 'being integrated into a nation-state'. This view was shared by Bello, to whom 'encouragement of the nation's religious and moral instruction is a duty that each member of the university assumes by the mere fact of belonging to it' (Bello, 1999, p. 268). Or more precisely, 'all the paths that the work of its faculty and students must follow converge on one center—our country' (Bello, 1999, p. 271). This statement is crucial as it indicates the importance of cultivating skills and virtues within the university, which are all devoted to nation-building and therefore political and social order.

Freedom and the dangers of imagination

In the speech delivered by Bello, freedom was problematised coupled with the concept of social order. It represented his concern about the tension between tradition and change. In the post-independence period, the concern was no longer over political liberation but nation-building. According to Jaksic (1999), 'in a context of nation building, freedom must be closely connected with, perhaps even subordinated to, the concept of order. Bello did not think that one concept contradicted the other. Quite to the contrary, it was Bello's conviction that there could be no true freedom without restraints on personal and political passions' (Jaksić, 1999, p. 57).

Freedom was an issue present in his analyses of the enforcement of law and the experience of letters and science within universities. In a short text called *Observance of the Laws* (1836) Bello sketched, in general terms, his understanding of freedom:

> Observance of the laws restrains men; it strips away all harmful distraction, leads them to knowledge of their own interests, and places them in possession of a truth which has so much in influence on order, considered under any aspect: namely, that the best way of ensuring the respect of one's own rights is to care religiously about the rights of others (Bello, 1999, p. 469)

Bluntly put, freedom is subjected to limits defined by legal codes; that is, freedom is nothing but the empire of the law. In the speech delivered at the inauguration of the University of Chile (1843), Bello reiterated the same idea but from a slightly difference angle: 'freedom is the stimulus that imparts healthy vigor and productive activity to social institutions' (Bello, 1999, p. 260).

At the level of knowledge producers or the members of the university, for Bello freedom needs to be cultivated by *regulating passion and imagination*. In the inaugural speech, Bello alerted of the dangers of *passionate* writing practices driven by imagination in letters and science, which meant a lack of discipline for him:

> I believe that an art exists that is a guide to the imagination, even in its most impetuous transports. Without that art I believe that imagination, instead of including in its works the type of ideal beauty, will produce aborted sphinxes, enigmatic and monstrous creations. This is my literary profession of faith. Freedom in everything. But *in orgies of the imagination I do not see freedom; I see instead licentious intoxication* [my emphasis] (Bello, 1999, pp. 278–279)

Here Bello points out something crucial. He is stating that (academic) freedom guided by an irresponsible imagination leads to 'enigmatic and monstrous creations'. It can give rise to neologisms or behaviours that do not attach to any rule. In the case of language, for example, if we embrace 'all the whims of extravagant neologisms, our America would soon reproduce the confusion of languages, dialects, and jargon, the Babel-like chaos of the Middle Ages, and ten nations would lose one of their most precious instruments for communication and trade' (Bello, 1999, pp. 274–275). Bello then underscores that freedom:

> As a counterweight, on the one hand, to the servile docility that receives everything without examining it; and on the other to the unbounded license that rebels against the authority of reason and against the purest and noblest instincts of the human heart, *[freedom] will undoubtedly be the university's theme in all its different departments* [my emphasis] (Bello, 1999, p. 279)

To put it differently, the model of academic behaviour was accompanied by a lengthy discourse insisting on the intrinsic value of freedom. However, freedom required some limits to avoid 'the orgies of the imagination'. For Bello, these limits depend on an art which is, in a Foucauldian sense, an art of government of self.

Objectivity in historical research

Bello's emphasis on nation-building and the university's role in defining social order led him to reflect on scientific research methods. In particular, Bello considered the study of history vital to the construction of the Republic, nevertheless, 'history could either be a divisive element or an important vehicle for the construction of national unity' (Jaksić, 1999, p. 58). For Bello, the study of the historical past should not be *politicised* to avoid 'disparate political proposals for the future' (Jaksić, 1999, p. 58).
In that context, Bello took part in a controversy with Lastarria regarding the methods used for historical research. It was a dispute between a *science of events* and a *philosophy of history*. Lastarria was the representative of the latter and wrote an essay called *Investigations on the Social Influence of the Spanish Conquest and Colonial Regime in Chile* (1844) in which he rejected 'the Iberian past in order to build a truly free and independent future, and claimed that his conclusions were based on the impartial and objective examination of historical facts' (Jaksić, 1999, p. 59). In addition,

he also stated that 'it was his search for objectivity that prevented him from writing about the more recent events of independence, where impartiality was nearly impossible' (Jaksić, 1999, p. 59).

Bello's response to Lastarria's philosophy of history was harsh. He contested both Lastarria's interpretation of the past (the radical break with the past) and historical research methods (the aspiration of a particular form of objectivity). As for the latter, Lastarria's pursuit of objectivity was based on a methodological decision: disregarding the more recent historical events. The distance from events, according to Lastarria, conferred him the possibility to be impartial. In his own words:

> I could also, and no doubt more easily, have spoken about the important events of our glorious revolution; but *I have been constrained, I admit, by the fear of not being completely impartial in my researches* (…) In that case my comments would be, if not offensive, at least tiresome and fruitless, and hence *I do not think that I have sufficient instruction and other gifts*, lacking in a young man, to rise to the heights necessary to judge events that I have not seen and have had no means of studying philosophically. Because our revolution is still in process, we are not prepared to construct its philosophic history. But *we are engaged in the task of discussing and accumulating data, in order to transmit them, along with our opinion and the result of our critical studies, to another generation which will posses the true historical criterion and the necessary impartiality to judge them* [my emphasis] (Lastarria, 1844, pp. 17–18).

The 'fear of not being completely impartial' or the fear of subjectivity interfering with objectivity was Lastarria's primary concern in this text. Bello admitted the difficulties of studying recent historical events in his reply:

> No doubt it is hard for the present generation to judge impartially the events and persons of our revolution; and moreover, it is almost impossible to do so even impartially and truthfully without arousing denials, without pressing the alarm button of sleeping passions, which it would be desirable to extinguish (Bello, 1999, p. 308)

However, Lastarria's fear of not being completely impartial was not justified, and, according to Bello, it lay in a lack of skills. For Bello, 'There is no lack of materials to consult, if they are sought intelligently and patiently in private collections, in archives, and in trustworthy traditions (…)' (Bello, 1999, p. 311). Bello sought to establish skills and epistemic virtues for studying historical events regardless of the period to be analysed. That is to say, the key was to master methodological skills such as factual accuracy, judgment and accountability.

Indeed, in his commentary on *Historical Sketch* [*Bosquejo historico*] *of the Constitution of the Government of Chile during the First Period of the Revolution 1810 to 1814* written by Lastarria (1848), but whose Prologue was composed by another historian called Jacinto Chacon, Bello considers that 'the first step [to undertake historical research] is to get the facts straight, then to explore their spirit, demonstrate their

connections, reduce them to broad and comprehensive generalizations (…)' (Bello, 1999, p. 329). And then he continues his argument against the philosophy of history represented by Lastarria and Chacon:

> And may we be permitted to say (though at the cost of seeming antiquated and outdated) that *we learn to know men and social evolution more thoroughly in the good political historians of antiquity and modern times, than in general and abstract theories that are called "philosophy of history."* These theories are not really instructive and useful except for those who have contemplated the social drama that pulses in historical details [my emphasis] (Bello, 1999, p. 330).

That is to say, 'getting the facts straight' was the most relevant skill to be mastered for studying historical events. The *evidence* became then the quintessence of the science of events. Bello insisted that '*It is a duty of history to tell the facts as they were, and we must not soften them simply because they do not seem to do honor to the memory of Chile's founders*' [my emphasis] (Bello, 1999, p. 312).

In that respect, it is worth noting that Bello's concerns about cultivating some skills are intimately linked to his personal experience undertaking historical research in the British Museum. Bello's analysis of the origins and development of vernacular Spanish led him to undertake documental and archival investigations, or more precisely, to gather evidence and provide claims and interpretations carefully. This experience appeared to have produced a longstanding mark in Bello's understanding of scientific research and was crucial in his response to Lastarria's *investigations*.

Yet, for Bello, the use of evidence was not sufficient for undertaking scientific research. Interpretation of evidence was also crucial, as he pointed out in his reply to Lastarria:

> The picture that *Señor* Lastarria gives us of the vices and abuses of Spain's colonial regime is based largely on documents of irreproachable authenticity and veracity: laws, ordinances, histories, the *Memorias secretas* of Don Jorge Juan and Don Antonio de Ulloa. But many distorting nuances have blurred the picture; *there is something that disclaims the impartiality recommended by the law* (…) [my emphasis] (Bello, 1999, p. 315)

Overall, what is at play in Bello's reply to Lastarria and Chacon is his rejection of a philosophical approach to history. Not any philosophy but the one attached to the 'orgies of imagination' that do not pay too much attention to facts. According to Bello,

> We must distinguish between two kinds of philosophy of history. One of them is simply the science of humanity in general, the science of moral and social laws, independent of local and temporal influences, and as necessary manifestations of man's intimate nature. The other is, comparatively speaking, a concrete science, which deduces from the facts of a race, a people, or a period, the peculiar spirit of that race, people, or period, just as we deduce the genius, the nature of an individual, from the facts about him (…) (Bello, 1999, p. 338).

These quotes are illustrative of an intellectual position opposed to the fantasies of imagination, metaphysics, biased judgment and poetry far from logic and the testimony of facts. Thus, 'in the absence of a picture in which events, persons, and all the material details of history appear in rough form, merely tracing general outlines has the defect of allowing scope for many theories, and of partially disfiguring the truth' (Bello, 1999, p. 342). The lack of objectivity impacts truth and, hence, the constitution of knowledge aimed at nation-building. Almost at the end of the text called *The Craft of History*, Bello drew some fundamental questions that still resonates within academia:

> With which of the two methods [science of events or philosophy of history; or the *ad probandum* method or the *ad narrandum* method] should we begin to write our history? With the one that provides the antecedents or the one that deduces the consequences? With the one that clarifies the facts, or the one that comments on them and summarizes them? (Bello, 1999, pp. 342–343)

As we might already know, Bello chose the science of events or the narrative method over the philosophy of history promoted by Lastarria and Chacon. The narrative method gives due consideration to Chilean peculiarities and for Bello that was vital. As a consequence, the choice of the science of events and the subsequent critiques undertaken by Bello marked the beginning of modes of academic critique that still influence the academy in Chile (see chapter 6, 7 and 8). Bello's critique of Lastarria and Chacon was also made to warn future generations how to behave in science. Bello admitted it himself at the end of his text:

> We beg our readers' pardon. We have prolonged somewhat tiresomely the defense of a truth, of an obvious principle, that for many is a trivial one. But we wanted to speak to young people. Our young men have taken up the study of history eagerly; we have recently seen brilliant proofs of their progress in this field, and we could wish that they fully understand the true mission of history in order to study it successfully (Bello, 1999, p. 348)

This is how Bello set the building blocks of a model of academic behaviour attached to particular ways of working and research practices. I argue that an ethos that can be called *ethics of excellence* underpins this model since it sets the limits or standards to include and exclude people from the possibility of making knowledge claims, as the controversy with Lastarria and Chacon shows.

5. The ethics of excellence as a model of academic behaviour

Bello contributed to the early institutionalisation of intellectual labour in Chile (Ramos, 2001). Or more precisely, I argue that Bello sowed the seeds for cultivating a particular academic-self – a normative framework of personhood – at the dawn of the Republic of Chile. Following Galison's claim about the history of objectivity and subjectivity, one could argue that 'a kind of historical self a priori' (Stefano & Galison, 2015, p. 97), which is not a transcendental or abstract individual subject but a local and contingent

one, emerged during this period. Bello played an essential role in this historical task. The question behind these considerations is then: what has to be true about the academic-self in order for knowledge production to exist? This 'historical self a priori' set the limits of the academic-self in a way that academic life and knowledge production were possible within the University of Chile. Yet, it is not Bello, the person, that is at stake here, but Bello as a mechanism or technology of power. Indeed, Bello's house is the contemporary representation (space and place) of this mechanism.

Language, education, and history were all significant elements in Bello's intellectual national unity project. That is why Bello insisted that 'all the paths that the work of its faculty and students must follow converge on one center—our country' (Bello, 1999, p. 271). Bello's search for order is crucial to understanding the cultivation of a particular academic-self which later in the country's history will support and conflict with new forms of subjectivity. This order, I argue, entailed not only the need for codifying a government of others (epistemological and institutional framework) but also a government of self (ethical limits); that is, the demands of ethical transformation of the academic-self that extend beyond institutional framework. This means, in practice, the configuration of ethics concerned with the *best behaviour* and *knowledge*. Thus, a model of academic behaviour organised essentially around a *principle of ethical differentiation* – the right to exclude to protect the national university project from an unknown other – was brought into play during the creation of the University of Chile.

I have called this principle the *ethics of excellence*. The contemporary form of this ethics is hence the end result of particular associations, densities, practices and articulations all of which were constituted by exclusionary practices aiming to defend the National University project during the post-independence period: a particular form of *academic freedom* (or curiosity) separated from 'the orgies of imagination'; and a specific mode of *objectivity* attached to a science of facts and distanced from subjective interpretations, utopian ideas or alternative futures. Put differently, a unified, free-of-extravagant imagination and self-restrained academic-self was forged for the nation-building project.

To achieve excellence involved undertaking a series of ethical practices that required a particular relation to oneself, others and truth – or also, the subject's relation to self and others is dependent on a particular form of excellence. It was the search for the 'best behaviour and knowledge' to serve the construction of the nation-state, which, as Nicola Miller points out, 'can be revealingly interpreted as a community of shared knowledge' (Miller, 2020, p. 218). Or in other words, and rephrasing Foucault, excellence does not depend on defining an ideal or abstract form of being exceptional or on the moral quality of a distinguished academic but on how academics have formed themselves as ethical subjects (see Chapter 6); that is, how the ethical elaboration of the academic-subject can bring out in herself and in front of the others the difference of a specific knowledge and practice (Foucault, 2011). At the centre of these concerns lies *academic freedom*, which determines creativity's and objectivity's dynamic and

scope. Thus, academic freedom is not merely a personal virtue, an ideal or abstract condition for the possibility of critique but an activity that demands a particular relation to oneself and others historically and socially situated. For instance, to be an active scholar within the university is to be able to exercise freedom even if others feel uncomfortable or the speaker runs the risk of confronting official knowledge. Bello himself was driven by the freedom to speak the truth to colleagues.

The obsession for national unity and seduction for social order (Stuven, 2000) led then to the search for the best behaviour and knowledge not only of the anonymous mass but, most importantly, of the members of the university, those entitled to exercise critique and fated to build the Republic. This institutional framework – national unity and social order – was introduced in the very structure of academic life, permitting the distinction between good and bad academics[12] and between valuable and futile knowledge to the nation. So here we can see a fundamental relationship between nation-building and the best behaviour and knowledge. The good academic was the one preoccupied with nation's interest and progress on the basis of cultivating *unity*, *freedom* and *objectivity*. The possibility of making these distinctions was one of Bello's primary endeavours.

However, how behaviours and knowledge were arranged cannot simply be linked to national morality. What was brought into play, following Foucault, was an ethical differentiation within the subject's relation to self, others and knowledge; that is, the limits of academic conduct. Bello's intellectual project of language, education and history was not based on the definition of abstract ideals but on how the members of the University form themselves as ethical subjects. The 'good academic' not only depended on the mastery of particular virtues (the quality of the person) but, more essentially, and that is what I want to point out here, on bringing into play specific understanding of social life (positivism) in the construction of the relation to self and others (Foucault, 2011). Yet it is not only knowledge but also epistemic virtue which is at issue here. This model was accompanied by a discourse insisting on the intrinsic value of *unity*, *freedom* and *objectivity* in scientific research. These elements were translated into practice and contributed, perhaps most importantly, to producing an ethical differentiation among academics. That is to say, it is not only the quality of scientific research (knowledge) but also putting into practice a series of virtues in constructing the relation to self and others while undertaking research. These epistemic virtues brought about a distance between those who hold these virtues and who do not.

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[12] Indeed, the introduction of the academic career progression system has contributed to establishing formal differences. Still, it does not adequately describe how specific ways of thinking and knowing within the academy are recognised and others excluded. The academy is a non-democratic system meaning that the voice of the masses is not allowed. The expert's figure needs to be protected by this institutional framework. The massification of higher education, both students and academics, has brought some tension to this framework. However, this institutional framework sustained not only in laws but also in rules of conduct set by academics for themselves remains untouched, making the distinction between good and bad academics (in terms of valuable knowledge) still possible.

Bello's critique of Lastarria and Chacon (and others) can be situated within this framework. It was not only an epistemological critique concerning impartiality and objectivity in research methods but also had *ethical implications* for the whole academic community: it set the limits and possibilities of critique. Bello's concern with historical methods informed what was acceptable to say and do in ways that support the contemporary form of undertaking research. The implications of Bello's critique were, therefore, the *exclusion* of specific modes of critical attitudes within academia. It was a normative critique that established the boundaries of what is possible to do in academic research. Put differently, Bello introduced a lengthy discourse into a model of academic behaviour, giving rise to an ethical difference within the subject's knowledge and epistemic virtues.

Bello's critique of 'the orgies of imagination'[13] had a similar result. It was not merely the preoccupation with 'enigmatic and monstrous creations' when telling the history of Chile but also the possibilities that these creations entail. Bello's positivist preference is evident in this point. It is the enlightened reason over imagination. Bello's search for national unity led him to emphasise what is *real* (positive ideas or reality's primary causes) over what is *possible*. The latter would entail a metaphysical position unacceptable to Bello. Thus, setting the limits of the fantasies of imagination or utopian thought was essential to the constitution of a community of shared knowledge in which reason, not imagination, was fundamental. Without imagination as central to the image of the self, nation's interest would prevail over absurd proposals for the future. The focus on what is real entails, thus, an ethics of excellence concerned with maintaining order rather than opening up speculative possibilities. That is why Lastarria's, but mainly Chacon's, imaginative speculations over the Republic's past and future were the centres of Bello's most furious attacks.

That framework of acceptable behaviour or comportment and what counts as good and valid research or what counts as valuable knowledge still seems to influence academic life today. Bello brought into play a picture of the academic-self similar to the one he was trained in Europe, combining the English and French traditions, in which independence of thought was crucial, but different from the one prevailing in Chile at that time, at least from Lastarria's and Chacon's perspective. The triumph of Bello's ethical differentiation put the ethics of excellence at the centre of academic life. That is the distinctive element of excellence that still prevails: a model of academic behaviour underpinned by the national unity that excludes in order to defend the university from 'the orgies of imagination' and 'utopian ideas'.

[13] To put it differently, the problem is not imagination in itself but when it is put into practice without rationality – for example, Bello praised universal artworks appealing to the use of imagination. That is, what he brought into play was a *disciplined imagination*.

However, the demands of knowledge or ethical formation (epistemic virtues) are irreducible to (traditional) forms of domination. Instead, it has to do with modes of subjectivation and practices of the self that have evolved since the foundation of the Republic. That is to say, one could argue that a model of academic behaviour sustained by a principle of ethical differentiation established a particular mode of subjectivation and ethical self-formation practices that requires further examination – in the next chapters I return to these issues.

6. Conclusion

In this section, I want to recap the arguments deployed succinctly. But before delving into this, it is worth insisting that the genealogy undertaken took Bello as a technology of knowledge/power, not as an individual subject or historical object. This means that Bello comes back as a presence, spectre or ghost – a colonial and anti-colonial one at the same time – in particular events (e.g., the scientific fraud or the University of Aysen) and academics' contingency of normality. By understanding Bello as a *dispositif*, I suggest he has become a *myth*, or more precisely the 'Mythological Machine' (Jesi, 2001), within university life. This 'machine' is mobilised through innumerable biographies, historical texts (historiography), articles, images, tributes and references to his figure within and outside Bello's house. Interestingly, the way this machine advances is not because of its content – it is actually empty – but for its capacity to dismantle the possibility to resist (the right to exclude), or rather, as I will analyse in the next Chapter, for its capacity to create a form of life embedded in 'sad passions' (Deleuze, 1990) or *sacrifices* (see Chapter 6).

Having this in mind, the logic of the argument is the following.

During the birth of the first university – which coincided with the construction of the Republic after political independence – a model of academic behaviour was forged. This model was defined through two pillars: a government of others and a government of the self – the structure of possible actions of others and self (Foucault, 1982). The government of others constituted a sort of epistemological limits that defined academics' attitudes towards knowledge. This government introduced positivism into the philosophical discourse (the prevalence of what is real) and stimulated the unification of the Spanish language (standardisation). Positivism was used for state-building and university-building. The unification project contributed to the standardisation of practices. Taken together, positivism and unification were, therefore, the first attempts to define what is real (the limits of the Republic) and how this can be organised (standards).

The government of the self constituted a sort of ethical limits that defined academics' attitudes toward knowledge. This government established two ethical practices: a form of academic freedom separated from imagination and a form of objectivity separated from utopian ideas. These forms of power relations (government of others and self), I

suggest, can be grouped under the category of excellence since they set the limits to protect the national project from 'the orgies of imagination' and 'utopian ideas'. The way the ethics of excellence is exercised depends on how unity, freedom and objectivity are internalised and cultivated by academics. Thus excellence can be understood as the myth, or the mythological machine, that reproduces the spectres of Bello within universities. It cannot stop producing and reproducing images devoted to maintaining a distinctive form of life to protect the national project.

However, Bello's model of academic behaviour – which, as I said, rests upon an institutional and ethical framework – is not only (re)produced through the exclusion of critical approaches, attitudes or fissures, sometimes violently – see the case of Lastarria and Chacon, or more recently, the example of the University of Aysen – but also through the mobilisation of counter-conducts, especially under the context of neoliberalism. For example, Bello's adherence to national unity and the needs of the state and the Republic might well serve as guiding principles and ethical practices to reverse the marketisation of academic life (see Chapter 8). Given that the neoliberal agenda in education is driven by market's demands, which means the reduction of the state's role, Bello's national unity spirit appears as a counter-practice. That is why conservative politicians often attack Bello's house – not necessarily because of its existence but of the reproduction of a particular fissure or critique of academic capitalism. Thereby, the passion for order mobilised by Bello plays a twofold role: it excludes critical attitudes and fissures through the production of images and, at the same time, defines the possibilities of thinking and acting differently. This possibility, nevertheless, is contingent upon the existence of neoliberalism. That is Bello's model of academic behaviour central tension.

In the following chapters, I examine how the spectres of Bello, in one way or another, still 'haunt', as a ghostly and repetitive figure, the experience of academic critique within Chilean universities. Although this 'unified' academic-self ended up fragmented into multiple 'identities' throughout history, I argue that a fundamental model of academic behaviour that was given a place during the post-independence period, sustained by a passion for order and practical spirit, still pervades the modalities of experience. These spectres return during political controversies (e.g., scientific fraud), social protests (2019 social outbreak), ethical dilemmas or in the contingency of normality in order to defend or contest academic excellence. However, these spectres conflict with other forms of subjectivity, affects, material realities and power relations (neoliberalism), making it difficult to distinguish clearly the borders, intensities and dynamics at play.

THE SPECTRES OF BELLO…

CHAPTER 6

MODALITIES OF EXPERIENCE IN ACADEMIA: SACRIFICE AND SATISFACTION

1. Introduction

It is often argued that the condition for the possibility of academic critique in contemporary universities is epistemological; that is, that depends on objectivity (Daston & Galison, 2007) or another epistemic virtue (Paul & van Dongen, 2017) like accuracy and honesty (Engel, 2022; Lüfter, 2022; Nash, 2019; Rider, 2022). Likewise, some have argued that critique depends on material conditions, i.e., working conditions (Marxist critique) (Bailey & Freedman, 2011b; Hall, 2018b). Acknowledging the importance of this problematisation, in this chapter, I argue instead that the condition for academic critique to be in effect does not rely on abstract imperatives but on historical and social practices of the self and technologies of power that affect the way academics relate with themselves, others and knowledge. Drawing upon the narratives of a group of Chilean scholars, I assert that these practices and technologies give rise to three modalities of experience: *sacrifice*, *exclusion* and *satisfaction*. This chapter describes how these modalities become academic critique conditions and techniques of the self within a modern, neoliberal and postcolonial university system.

The experience of academic critique has changed over time through multiple and sometimes paradoxical modifications and reconfigurations. These changes are the result of new power technologies and techniques of the self within the university system, which I have framed under the *excellence* category (see Chapter 5). That is to say, the technology of excellence, or more precisely, the ethics of excellence – because it is far from being simply a set of policies and techniques but a form of life – is not merely exercised over critique but through it; that is, excellence is a regulative system of behaviour which confers validity to practices carried out by academics. In that sense, academics are taught from the beginning of their careers the methods, techniques, skills and mannerisms of academia, or more precisely, the effective way to become a good scholar in order to protect knowledge from, for example, ignorance. Everyday life in academia – beyond the moral codes represented by higher education policies – offers a catalogue of good practices oriented to reinforce the form-of-life derived from excellence. Simply put, the possibility of academic critique calls for an ongoing examination of one's progress toward excellence. Thus, the conflation of critique and excellence needs to be further explored to understand how the good academic is constituted as a subject of virtue.

In general, academics are constantly required to work on their strengths and defects or that part of the self in need of elaboration or restoration (St. Pierre, 1995). As Allen

(2017) puts it, there is always '*something lacking we must work to fulfil*' (p. 174). Thus, for critique to be undertaken by academics, activating certain practices around a normative order that sets the limits regarding what to do and how to do it is required. These practices aim to fulfil what is absent or incomplete in the academic-self. The fact that something – e.g., knowledge, cognitive and non-cognitive skills – is always lacking makes the ethics of excellence possible as the moral framework for academic conduct.

In this chapter, I hold that *academic critique* is the target of the technology of excellence (i.e., a set of higher education policies and discourses such as quality or research integrity policies). But what does it mean to say that critique is the target of excellence in academia today? It implies that critique seeks to achieve two goals: exceptionality and improvement. The ethics of excellence permeates the practices of critique and shapes how academics relate to themselves and others (what is seen as legitimate or illegitimate). In this respect, the academic-self under evaluation results from the intersection of the modern (liberal) and the neoliberal academic-subject of critique; or more specifically, the 'unified self' influenced by Bello's practical spirit (chapter 5) and a fragmented self driven by neoliberalism. While the former is devoted to exceptionality through virtue, the latter seeks self-improvement through skills. It is worth remembering that the self at play is not a fixed essence or a thing in itself to be unveiled or unknowable but, on the contrary, a relationship historically constituted through different assemblages. Excellence has become the assemblage of two forms of ethical life in academia today, of two academic selves: exceptionality and improvement.

Therefore, critique as a form of life intended to broaden knowledge requires the transformation of the academic-self, an ethical work over critique, a particular relation to oneself and others. This transformation can be viewed as a *journey*[14]. For Hegel, for example, this movement towards the truth – or Absolute Knowledge, as he put it – is attached to doubt, despair, suffering, self-denial, and so forth. A striving, struggle or practical achievement is involved (Pippin, 2011). Nevertheless, at the end of this journey, when the academic-subject finally reaches the truth/knowledge, or when they are capable of fully exercising critique under the conditions imposed by excellence, this situation enables the subject to experience a state of satisfaction.

In this regard, the *desire* to be an excellent academic through exercising critique, which sounds reasonable and necessary for the constitution of a system of knowledge production, is what I would like to problematise in this chapter. In particular, I want to explore the transformation of the academic-self throughout this non-linear and unstable journey; that is, I explore how the academic-self, in its ontological dimension

[14] Although the metaphor of the journey is spatial and temporal, here I am not trying to suggest a linear progression toward the truth but an experience that occurs inexorably in time and involves a struggle. It is not the path towards the truth (discovery) but its deployment.

and under the institutional and ethical framework of excellence, is constituted by a dialectical movement in which a permanent state of sacrifice and fleeting satisfactions makes up the experience of critique within the neoliberal university in Chile. With these considerations in mind, by the end of the chapter, I attempt to reflect on how this sacrificial structure, practices of exclusion and satisfactions affect the experience of academic critique.

2. Sacrifice

Daston and Galison (2007) point out that 'Much of epistemology seems to be parasitic upon religious impulses to discipline and *sacrifice*, just as much of metaphysics seems to be parasitic upon theology' [my emphasis] (2007, p. 40). This quote summarizes very well in what sense epistemology (knowledge) and ethics (form of life) are inseparable. In that respect, *what is the price to be paid to stay in academia, for access to the truth/knowledge, if excellence is the ethos driving academic life?* What kind of 'impulses' are parasitic upon excellence?

Renunciation: Personal Life, Freedom and Prestige

My participants have adopted and, at the same time, created distinctive practices while working in the academy. What stands out from their narratives is their accommodation to, ambivalence toward, and resistance to certain aspects of academic life. All these practices and attitudes can be analysed around the notion of *renunciation*; that is, sacrifices are needed when academics adapt or refuse their conditions of existence.

Accommodating or playing the game requires some sacrifices. The first sacrifice takes the form of the renunciation of *personal life*. For example, literature has stressed how the academic career affects women's decisions about motherhood or academic mothers' difficulties in navigating their professional lives at different stages (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). One of my participants recalled this situation and described the vital decision she made to work in the academy:

> […] I don't know if I have had to change something about myself, but I have advantages, or *I made choices that have to do with other things*, not because of this, in life; I don't have children, for example. And I suppose that this is a tremendous possibility of having more time and of being able to dedicate it to the academy. I believe that many women are faced with this dilemma, I insist or I would not insist that it is just because of that, or maybe if, because of how much I like my job, *it was one of the things that influenced the decision not to have children*, there are other variables, but I guess that's important too. So of course, maybe one gives up certain things (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

This form of self-renunciation has become an essential condition for exercising critique among female academics which produces ambivalence between subjectivity and academic life.

Similarly, the need to play the game also brings tensions from the obligations attached to being an academic within a university. Most of my participants recognised that they have to do at least the following tasks: teaching, research, public engagement, and management – the allocation of time framework differed by position, years of experience, discipline and university. Yet, in general, they affirmed that management roles are the 'sacrifice' if one wants to stay in academia and play the game. Thus, what is relevant for one of my participants is to find the balance between the unwanted tasks and 'the truth job':

> […] and that is the responsibility, that is the *pega* [job], the truth job, and the other part is like *'ok, how much will it take me?'*, it will take me the half of my time to do *la lavada de platos* [the things I have to do but I do not like to do], ok, *so I still have the other half, and that cannot be subsumed by the other one* (Male – Early Researcher – Social Sciences)

Another participant has an ambivalent relationship with managerial tasks:

> I am really reluctant to put aside my investigation, *although my time is consumed a lot by management duties* (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Education)

This is to say that academic life is full of unrecognised tasks, or what literature calls 'meta-work', the work that enables work (Aroles et al., 2022), which often is not recognised yet necessary to knowledge production and academic life:

> […] you are worried about the letters, requests, solving problems, having meetings, meetings, the decree, the piece of paper, the signature and *that distorts you or distances you from what interests me at least, which is research, writing and teaching* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities).

When academics have more administrative responsibilities (e.g., head of the department), they sacrifice time otherwise used for their research activities,

> I arrived at an institution where everything has to be implemented, therefore, *our time is quite engulfed by commissions,* etc., which has been much to the detriment of many of us who are more involved in management and, for example, *I have published nothing* […] So that [it] has been a bit to the detriment of my application to Fondecyt, for example (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Science)

Which implies not keeping up to date with research publications,

> Does the fact that I do management make me a better researcher? For management yes, to manage my project yes, but *I'm not up to date with the readings, I'm not up to date, I don't know what's going on* […] so it's a limitation because I have to provide the [research] project a theoretical framework, I have to have a model, I have to have the methodology and my management role does not help me (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Science)

When they do not want to renounce research activities, the sacrifice is even more painful because it requires more time. One participant put it this way,

> I have not been able to write, I already have the objectives [of the research project], I have the structural part of the Fondecyt but I am missing the most difficult part, which is to write everything that is the theoretical part and I need time, and that, for example, is what I am going to do the other week [during holidays] […] one gets used to being multi-tasking [...] that is, *there is always a tension and it always hurts not to have time to investigate,* but they appear [obligations], if it's not accreditation [quality assurance], it's a change of study plan [curriculum], implementation of the study plan, if it is not implementation […] *there is always something to do [management] and management consumes you more than teaching and more than research* [my emphasis] (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Education)

Although these sacrifices seem to prevent academics from the prestige that implies doing research – because they have to renounce the desired productivity – they are often undertaken to conserve the position; they are carried out as an obligation that will be rewarded in the future as it will permit them to be more productive, accumulate prestige, or secure more research funds:

> I don't have hours to sit down [and write], in fact I'm going to stay here [university] one week more, all my colleagues go on holidays, and *I'll stay one week to write the Fondecyt, because that's the time I have to sit down and write,* without having meetings in between, or everything that management or teaching also involve [my emphasis] (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Education)

Sometimes the pressure to follow one's interests leads to an ambivalence towards other academic activities like teaching. Some academics showed a bit of scepticism about teaching since it interferes with and hampers research productivity; that is, teaching is seen as a sacrifice similar to an administrative role when it comes to doing research,

> […] In that sense, *one always has a bit of a love-hate relationship with teaching,* because it takes time away from doing things that interest me more [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Science)

In other words, pursuing excellence entails renouncing *academic autonomy* (Vostal, 2015a). If prestige and reputation depend on productivity and the level of impact in research, academics – as we have seen – have a sort of existential ambivalence with other university functions like teaching, management and public engagement. Yet, this ambivalence also arises when they do research. This academic declares that he does not feel completely free when deciding which academic journal is the best for his research,

> […] my decision is a bit coerced because the impact factor is important to measure your production at my university, thus *many times I am forced to send a manuscript to a journal that I don't like 100 percent*, that I like another, but the impact factor impact pushes me to make that decision not 100% free, I would like that this was

> not to be like that and I would like there to be another form of encouragement and not just because of the impact factor [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Education)

The renunciation of academic autonomy also entails the detriment of collective, collaborative and critical reflections inside the university. This academic put it this way,

> […] researchers are losing the ability to have a broader academic life and one is noticing that*, what one misses the most is the reflective space with less time pressure,* participating in more activities that have to do with thought and reflection, that is has been lost [my emphasis] (Male – Senior Researcher – Humanities)

Furthermore, resisting playing the game also involves sacrifices. For example, it entails renouncing *academic prestige and reputation*. This renunciation often comes from the resistance to following the traditional career in academia; e.g., the obligation to apply for research funds or lead research centres or projects. It is a kind of renunciation that might be seen as a refusal to be 'governed in a certain way', a resistance to follow institutional obligations, which is for the wellbeing of the academic-subject. Or in others words, the resistance to playing the game in academia always entails a sacrifice. For instance, these two academics have renounced participation in the research funds offered by the government (this is the most important research fund in the country). In the first case, the reason is that the money was insufficient to live:

> I voluntarily *resigned from presenting Fondecyt projects because it was a situation where I did not have enough money for the family*, because you give your life and it is like today they will pay you $250,000 thousand pesos per month for dedicating your life to a project (Male – Senior Researcher – Basic Science)

In the second case, the decision was made after failing to secure funds:

> I have never had support from Fondecyt-Conicyt, rather I have had funds from the university, but I applied to Conicyt around four times for the initiation fund, and despite being very close and having good evaluations, I never managed to get it, therefore, *I feel that I abandoned that path a little* […] Luckily, I don't need so many resources, I don't need to set up a laboratory, of course it bothers me because I can't hire assistants, but *the truth is that you also have to sacrifice many other things while you are keeping an eye on publishing in highly indexed journals* all the time, and the truth is that one makes choices, I'm not saying it's the right one either (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

Similarly, this academic decided to renounce being a prestigious research centre director because of some ethical issues. He said,

> At some point I marginalized myself from all of this, in fact after participating in a Millennium project [research centre] for example, a nucleus, in the Millennium Institute in which I was supposed to be the Director of an institute, I marginalized myself because I saw that there were bad practices inside and of course, *that means marginalizing oneself and if one is marginalized it means sacrificing not only a lot of money, because the researcher brings a lot of money, but also accessing a wide range of social benefits* in the sense of what a scientist generally

> aspires to is the national and international recognition, I don't know, many trips abroad, being part of international power structures, and that *I preferred to stay on the side because the truth is that organically it was doing me harm, so I had to marginalize myself,* so I made some decisions, I would say that more or less in the middle of my career that *meant sacrificing certain natural development that one could have had* (Male – Senior Researcher – Basic Science and Humanities)

This renunciation is remarkable as it is not the renunciation of the traditional form of prestige but its reinforcement. He has renounced having access to 'a wide range of social benefits' and 'national and international recognition' but not being an academic. The same participant added the following: 'what really makes me feel uncomfortable is the elitism within academia'. It seems then that this renunciation is not the negation of prestige but the *renunciation of a particular mode of reputation* which relies on productivity and elitism. It is the resistance to the new forms of reputation in academia.

Overall, these renunciations in the form of accommodation to, ambivalence towards and resistance to play the game, illustrate how sacrifice becomes the condition for critique under the ethics of excellence in the contemporary Chilean university system. In other words, similar to Christianity, in which 'salvation is attained through the renunciation of self', e.g., the renunciation of certain pleasures (Foucault, 1997a, p. 285), one could argue that excellence – as both exceptionality and improvement – is attained through the renunciation of *personal life, academic autonomy, and prestige*. The former is because it provides more time for productivity; the renunciation of academic autonomy (management role) allows academics to secure better positions in the future; and the renunciation of a specific type of prestige (leadership) might help accumulate more prestige (integrity). That is to say, much of excellence seems to be parasitic upon transcendental impulses (see Chapter 7) to sacrifice in the form of multiple renunciations. The price to be paid for access to knowledge is a set of sacrificial practices linked to life, normative principles and personal rewards.

Time and the Absolute Present: Contingency, Extension and Repetition

The absence or lack of time was a recurring topic during the interviews. This passage shows this clearly:

> *I don't have time now, it's that simple, I don't have time*, I don't have any energy left, that's what happens to me, I don't have any neurons left, I want to but I don't have any neurons left. At some point I wanted to do something called Open Science, in 2016, but it's impossible, I end up exhausted, *I don't have enough time*, before I could do those things, I can't anymore, it's that simple [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

There is an entanglement between time and sacrifice that deserve more attention to further describe the structure of sacrificial practices among academics. When the renunciation involves personal life or prestige, time serves to justify these renunciations. Yet time should not only be seen merely as justification; it also can be

deemed as *the structure of the experience of the present* that affects academic critique; that is, there is a temporality when it comes to exploring the academic-self that turns the experience of critique into a struggle. Or, the experience of academic critique is trapped by a struggle for time that is deeply rooted in the experience of historical time in the form of *acceleration* and complexity (Oyarzun, 2021).

Most studies on time focus on social acceleration, desynchronisation and conflicts between different social rhythms[15] (Rosa & Scheuerman, 2009; Rosa & Trejo-Mathys, 2013), the acceleration of time in academia (Vostal, 2015a, 2015b), speed-up society in the form of paid, unpaid work and leisure time (Sullivan & Gershuny, 2018); universities in the flux meaning lack of time and creativity, a lack of future, a loss of past and present time (Brew et al., 2017), a lack of reflective time (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Di Napoli, 2015), and a of epistemic time.

In this section, I focus instead on *the experience of academic critique in time*, that is, what it means to be an academic when exercising critique in a modern, neoliberal and postcolonial university. It is not the absence of something (time) but the subjective experience of time and knowledge: what sort of experience does the complexity of time produce in the experience of academic critique? In other words, I want to explore the experience of critique in time or the experience of critique immersed in a sort of *absolute present*. I would like to begin with the following passage from one of my participants, which accurately exemplifies this idea,

> […] I look back and say "how have I published so many things?" because imagine, I have about 500 publications, so you say *"in what time?",* and there are publications that are big, books and all that kind of things, so *I ask myself "how was all this done?"* [my emphasis] (Male – Senior Researcher – Humanities)

These questions ('in what time?' and 'how was all this done?') illustrate a particular experience in the academy: the experience of not experiencing historical time (past and future). This academic is inserted into a radical contingency of knowledge production; he does not know how knowledge in the form of books and articles was produced. Indeed, he then added, '(…) somehow it worked [the publication of books], but it's a very *contingent* thing' [my emphasis] (Male – Senior Researcher – Humanities).

From this experience, one could say that producing knowledge is a singular practice that changes according to the next idea; there is no way of tracing back the methods, procedures, mechanisms, and strategies used to publish things. When he asked himself, '*how have I published so many things?'* he seems to be immersed in the contingency of knowledge production. He is not referring to the outcome (500 publications) as a waste of time but instead to the impossibility of doing this at a given

[15] It is the relationship between the acceleration of social structures, e.g., labour market, and the consequences on subjectivity.

time; that is, the impossibility of writing all these things – books and articles – *in time*. There is no historical time when he asks himself about the experience of writing papers and books. It has simply happened. The acceleration of time makes it difficult to situate work in historical time. Everything boils down to fragmented contingencies (the present).

The radicalisation of time can also be visualised through the *extension* or totalisation of work time, regardless of the place. These two academics illustrate this point very well when they referred to working during the weekends,

> (…) you have to work at home; you take work home, like any teacher you take work home and this means working weekends, Saturdays and Sundays. *So it's like on weekends you project [extend] what you were doing during the week* [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

> (…) before getting into the university, I had a job in an office, but at university with all that flexibility I have less time than that other job (...) so in reality one never lets go, it seems that it is more flexible, because sometimes I can say I'm going to watch TV in the middle of the afternoon, but in practice you never do it, in practice the pressure is much more than 40, 44 hours, *the feeling that you have to be working is constant* (Male – Early Career Researcher – Humanities)

Even sometimes, academic life becomes the whole experience of life,

> I find the demands [productivity] quite acceptable, normal, but my personal life is a mess. My life is my academic life [...] I have a partner who does exactly the same as me and even works more hours than me and *we live doing this* (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Health)

Similarly, the pandemic (COVID-19), which brought about the need to work from home, has radicalised the totalisation of working time,

> With the issue of the pandemic this year [2021] I feel like I had a pretty big change in terms of working much of what should be my free time, especially the first few months [...] since I'm at home, it is better to be more productive, but in general I try to limit the time, although I tend to think that in the academy *one always works more hours than one would in an office, because one is always working, and if one has free time one still works* (Female -Early Career Researcher – Technology)

Moreover, the experience of academic critique in time also involves some particular rhythms, cycles and periods. According to this participant, knowledge production is the repetition of actions and strategies to secure research ideas (curiosity and creativity),

> (…) research ideas come to me at conferences, look, it's kind of unusual, I think it's when my mind is more open, more receptive, from listening to these wise people that one is going to listen to, and ideas and I write them down, then *I come back here and start to filter them and generate folders of ideas,* look, all these folders that you see here are future research projects of ideas that occur to me, *so each one of them has the title and inside each one I keep literature for when the time comes to do that research* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Health)

This academic has created a very systematic and organised research method. What happens to the academic-self when curiosity and creativity depend on repetitive actions and strategies? The academic-self becomes then the object of techniques of the self to respond to the new demands of (self) standardisation. Academic exercises are required to meet these new demands, which often take the form of skills. Likewise, what happens to knowledge when the academic-self does these repetitive tasks? It is hard to find a simple answer, but I would say that given knowledge becomes dependent on a 'disciplined curiosity', it acquires a new dynamic, intensity and density.

Reflecting on all these considerations, one could say that this experience, based on the contingency, extension and repetition of time, turns academic critique into an ahistorical experience. The totalisation of time involves that the search for excellence has no limits. New ways of knowing (curiosity) emerge when time is accelerated, extended and repetitive. These lead to the need for a new academic-self which adapts rapidly to these new conditions.

Three Forms of Sacrifice in academia: Metaphysical, Scientific and Market

Within this context, it is possible to argue that the journey to truth involves a *struggle*. It entails a transformation in which the knowing subject becomes permanently other-of-itself (Pippin, 2011), or 'other than himself', as Foucault put it (Foucault, 2006, p. 15). The experience of academic critique, under the framework of excellence, is only possible through *sacrificial practices*; that is, through a set of renunciations and modifications of existence which are not for knowledge but for the subject. These practices can be seen as 'the pursuit, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself to have access to the truth' (Foucault, 2006, p. 15).

However, these sacrificial practices not only negate the academic-self (or transform it) but also conserve it (Bubbio, 2012). The transformation of the academic self through these practices is not only characterised by a struggle (negation) but also leads to the restoration and conservation of a given order (see Chapter 8) – which is the order defined by excellence. In other words, sacrifice should be understood as a way to maintain the university machinery and survive the pressures and norms imposed by the ethics of excellence. The way this academic put it is clear,

> (…) what actually makes the immense difference, *and what saves you, is to publish well,* so there is a strange game but *one always ends up sacrificing hours of teaching and simplifying teaching* in order to give the greatest number of hours to research [my emphasis] (Male – Early Career Researcher – Commerce and Administration)

Academics write books, papers, reviews, and take part in public engagement activities to avoid becoming *the fallen* [*el caido*]. The figure of sacrifice permits the maintenance

of an external order (excellence) and preserving an internal one (the desire for excellence – I return to this topic in the final section). Thus, sacrificial practices should not be seen as 'a morality of renunciation but as an exercise of the self on the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain to a certain mode of being' (Foucault, 1997a, p. 282).

Therefore, these narratives illustrate the underlying assumption of this thesis: epistemology and ethics are inseparable[16]; that is, critique – understood as judgment or scientific knowledge – does not just happen; it also requires being 'initiated into all the pragmatic dimensions of appropriateness, authority, who gets to say what, when, and why' (Pippin, 2011, p. 18). The conditions for critique to be in effect involve much more than acquiring (or learning) the codes, skills and rules of scientific knowledge (epistemology and methodology); it also involves a practical achievement in the form of sacrificial practices that affect the structure of the existence of the academic-self.

In contrast to Foucault's understanding of modern scientific knowledge, which for him does not require the transformation of the subject's being to have access to the truth[17], I argue that these sacrificial practices can be seen as 'spiritual/scientific exercises' (Stefano & Galison, 2015) – renunciations and modifications of existence – necessary to put critique into practice, that is, as both the *condition* for critique under the ethics of excellence and the *effect* of the exercise of critique on the academic-subject. Thus, the practice of critique within a neoliberal, modern and postcolonial university is not merely undertaken by the activity of knowing. Still, it also necessitates the transformation of the academic-subject. To be initiated into critique involves transforming the structure of the academic-self in terms of its historical and social conditions. As we have seen through these academic narratives, even though modern academic knowledge requires personal qualifications (training skills) and a moral attitude, it also demands sacrificial practices – which requires the formation and cultivation of epistemic virtues – that concern the structure of the academic-subject.

Reflecting on all these considerations, I suggest that the structure of sacrificial practices can be divided into three dynamics. First, a *Metaphysical Sacrifice*, which searches for higher ends like social justice or equality and leads to an academic-self trapped around despair and hopelessness. Second, a *Scientific Sacrifice* focuses on exceptional and reliable knowledge and engenders an academic-self caught around

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[16] Although one can distinguish epistemological and ethical practices, the practice of knowledge production is inseparable of the practice of the self on the self. Or, as Voogt puts it, following Hegel, 'all strict conceptual reasoning is in fact always bound up with the conditions and exigencies of life and of life's concrete form in the historical period. And vice versa, transformations of consciousness, culture, and life are never disconnected from rational thought or the questioning of beliefs, values, and institutions that takes place within philosophy' (Voogt, 2021, p. 11).

[17] This is what he called the 'Cartesian moment'. It means that 'knowledge itself and knowledge alone gives access to the truth" (Foucault, 2006, p. 17). Or, in other words, "the philosopher or scientist, instead of being obliged to take care of her own self, to transform her being as a subject in order to gain access to truth, can know the truth simply by the activity of knowing' (Voogt, 2021, p. 4).

methodical doubt and disenchantment. Third, *Market Sacrifice*, which seeks self-improvement and productivity and gives rise to an academic-self haunted by exhaustion – in chapter 7, I return to how these three forms of sacrifice are interwoven with distinctive modes of subjectivation.

Therefore, what is at issue here is an entire ethics embedded in sacrificial practices, a set of practices of renunciation and modifications of existence that affect how academics exercise critique. This is what gives contemporary ethics of excellence its particular form within Chilean universities. However, I am not suggesting that this ethics is absolute or coincides with these renunciations *vis-à-vis*, but instead that this ethics relies upon a fundamental normative principle: *to exercise critique, you must sacrifice yourself*[18]. Whether you want to play the game or resist power relations, you must sacrifice yourself. Or in other words, the experience of academic critique is not simply given but requires an attitude and practices informed by sacrifice. Sacrificial practices designate the set of transformations of the academic-self that are both the fundamental *conditions* for the experience of academic critique and the *effects* of critique on the academic-self.

3. Exclusion

The Inside Excluded: The Role of Epistemic Virtues

Acknowledging multiple ways of exclusion, I want to focus on one particular form that emerges from the relationship between excellence and critique within academia: excluding those included (or integrated). Here, cultivating specific *epistemic virtues* is essential to establish exclusionary practices among academics. For instance, the situation faced by this academic is indicative of how the lack of honesty and accuracy entails an ambivalent relationship with others,

> well, I have experienced ethical issues when trying to work collaboratively, one experience was upsetting because one person copied and pasted a previous project and used the same idea to apply for *Fondef* [research grant application] […] of course, the person is evidently a *chanta* [bluffer], *he/she is not a scientist, just a good organiser* […] (Male - Senior Researcher – Basic Science)

From a different angle, *honesty* is also seen as an ethical limit when it comes to undertaking a peer review for an academic journal,

> For example, once I had to review a paper for an international journal for two authors who were Chileans that I knew well, *and it seemed to me that the paper was extremely flawed*, it is a subject that I had worked on and that is why they had chosen me, and there I was faced with *how honest* I had to be in that review, assuming that they were people I had a certain appreciation for, but with a job that

[18] There are other ethics in academia, such as the ethics of care. However, the purpose of this chapter is to describe the price to be paid when academics follow the path toward excellence in its multiple forms (exceptionality and improvement).

> seemed deficient to me and *in the end I was honest, that is, I did a review the way I thought I had to do it* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

Another epistemic virtue at play here is objectivity and neutrality, that is, the capacity for self-restraint or self-distanciation (Paul, 2011) when reviewing a research project,

> So, I said 'look, this part of the design, this, this and that, I used it here three years ago and this person…because, furthermore, it was a non-anonymous evaluation, as it sometimes is…I knew this person was there, in that room, because I know who he is', and then *I did a neutral assessment of the rest and I gave him an excellent score* because... *of course, how was I going to penalize something that I have shared*, see? It's not that I said 'this is a disaster', no, I said 'look, this is the evaluation, it's a powerful, winning evaluation' and in the confidential comments to the study group I said 'consider this and you will see if it is something more or less acceptable' [...] I wasn't very angry, I wasn't sure if it was punishable, but I didn't want to let it go either, so *I made a description as neutral as possible* in that sense (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities).

The ethics of excellence also set limits when dealing with ethical dilemmas. By and large, to evaluate a project scientifically, academics are expected to suspend their emotional life (White, 2009) and political views. In the following passage, it is visible how an academic needs to extort their emotions and opinions about the project's impact (environmental damage) and use their scientific skills such as accuracy, impartiality, and detachment. In addition, it is worth noting how this academic creates an *unknown otherness* – the scientific personae lacking epistemic virtues – to justify their position and exclude other alternative evaluators,

> […] the problem when one abstains from doing that work is that someone else is going to do it, and *perhaps that other person who is going to do it is not going to be the ideal person to do it,* then it's also like […] this is a frequent point of reflection that one tries to transmit to the students, the theme that the company is not going to stop doing the work because you don't want to do it, and in the end another person will end up doing the job, and perhaps this person is not capable […] One is left with a clear conscience of not having worked, of not having collaborated with the company, but in the end the problem still remains [...] I mean, in short, this situation arises, that is, many times one is faced with that dilemma of, for example, not directly because I have not been in those scenarios, but some colleagues who have faced the scenario of taking a certain problem because *they know that they are going to do it well despite the fact that many times it is going to generate some type of environmental damage or social damage* because they know that they are going to do it well and because, on the other hand, it is carried out in an area that they are professionally interested, and that in part is often because *they simply know that there are other people applying for the same job and that they know they are going to do it poorly* [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Science).

Through these narratives, we can see how the cultivation of epistemic virtues set the boundary of academic behaviour, thus giving rise to particular exclusionary practices. To be an academic involves following exceptionality, perfection and integrity. For example, the figure of *el chanta* [bluffer] is particularly relevant to understand the

formation of a *zone of indeterminacy* (Agamben, 2004); that is, the outside within the academy: the bluffer is deemed a non-scientist personae produced within the scientific community, an outside created from the inside. In other words, the bluffer is seen as lacking epistemic virtues essential to be a real scientist. The aim of these exclusionary practices – beyond the formal consequences – is to isolate the non-scientist within the scientific community and to *inform how to behave*.

These practices exclude by emphasising the lack of exceptionality, sophistication, and rationality. By violating these limits or behaving like *un chanta*, academics put themselves into the position of compromising their prestige and reputation. The bluffer is not necessarily excluded using management methods but through the rules of conduct set by academics for themselves. For example, in some universities, academics will never be promoted (tenured track) because they play the game in a way that is not acceptable for the academic community: self-plagiarism or republishing the same paper many times. “Too much productivity” is considered suspicious[19]. This differs from other universities (primarily private) where playing the game is valued and recognised regardless of the means utilised.

Similarly, the claim “I made a description as neutral as possible” describes how objectivity and neutrality set the limits of the ethics of excellence. Faced with the dilemma of being plagiarised by another academic, this person opted to be “as neutral as possible”. It could be argued that epistemic virtues limit academic behaviours and conduct even when someone wants to plagiarise your work. Or in other words, epistemic virtues (objectivity) seem to have priority over other normative principles (e.g., justice) when it comes to ethical dilemmas and self-positioning. This priority marks the boundary of what is legitimate or illegitimate.

Becoming a ghost

The constitution of this zone of indeterminacy, or more precisely, the boundary of what is seen as appropriate or inappropriate, is not only set by epistemic virtues but also by turning the academic-subject into an object. In particular, it is the transformation of the academic-subject into a sort of *ghost* due to deviance from the formal academic career path. Becoming a ghost in academia concerns how some academic practices or positioning are recognised as appropriate. But this appropriateness does not rely on having or not having some epistemic virtues – they actually may have a complete set of virtues – but on the presence/absence of the other. The experience of one academic illustrates this clearly when they admit that

> my colleagues with whom I had done my doctorate, *they closed the door a bit on me when I went to the industry* [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Technology)

[19] Another factor of not being promoted is social class.

This is what Shapin (2008) called the *industrial scientist*, the academic or researcher that becomes the 'unmentionable' part of academia due to their involvement in businesses or private companies. It is often argued that participating in commercial research involves conflicts of interest, profit-oriented practices, and lack of rigour and openness (Bright & Heesen, 2023). These practices conflict with the so-called academic research. Therefore, the exclusion occurs in the name of the vocation: those who leave – in different ways – academia become a ghost because they have abandoned searching for the truth. In this regard, it seems relevant to ask ourselves whether the scientific vocation has survived the onslaught of the entrepreneurial self and the consolidation of the industrial scientist and commercial research.

But what happens when the academic-subject does not necessarily leave academia but instead the disciplinary field, or when they get involved in political controversies? Or in other words, what is the cost to be paid for acting differently? – a critical attitude like 'speaking the truth to power'. I want to analyse the case of one academic who did not leave academia but rather the disciplinary field. She reflects on their experience as follows,

> (…) It is a promise, a kind of myth, the terror of being outside, *that outside the academy there is nothing*…it is a mix between contempt, fear, but it has its origin in the social, cultural, emotional invalidity of academics…because *they are standing in a place that is a bubble, a world that protects you… and getting out of that means dying* (…) [my emphasis] (Female – Senior Researcher – Basic Science)

Reflecting on this experience reminded her of their father when he returned to Europe to see his old friends at the university. According to my participant, her father felt like an outsider or a ghost,

> This resonates with an experience my father had…he and my uncle studied engineering at the UAB [Spain]…they graduated very young…and the civil war came and they left the country…they arrived in Chile in the Winnipeg…when he returned to Spain he went to the UAB and realised that his former colleagues were working there….and he told me his feelings in this way: 'people who never moved from that place, who remained attached, who lived through Franco's dictatorship and when the former comrade arrived from America, who fought in the war, *that meeting was like a ghost appeared,* and these others were the bureaucrats of the academy'….he crossed half the planet, and he met people who never moved within the university (…) [my emphasis] (Female – Senior Researcher – Basic Science)

The final episode that turned this academic into a ghost was a political controversy while she was leading a new university. She put it this way:

> (…) after the experience of the University of X, the following year I was a candidate for deputy, and that was like a resonance…*that ended up bothering the academy, I became an unreliable person* [my emphasis] (Female – Senior Researcher – Basic Science)

In that respect, it is possible to see that to avoid falling into the nothingness, the void, the abyss, or becoming a ghost, academics not only must carry out a series of sacrifices but they also have to be reluctant to go against the normativity of the academy or epistemic cultures. Then, she added,

> (…) deviance or discursive critique does not turn into real rebellion so as not to turn into a ghost, that is why they [academics] focus on that type of critique [critical discourse]…because it is tolerated, because *the most important ones are not tolerated* [my emphasis] (Female – Senior Researcher – Basic Science)

How does the fear of becoming a ghost, a spectre, of falling into the abyss affect the experience of critique? How does the fear of being excluded from the academy, of wandering in the zone of indeterminacy, affect knowledge production in academia? I argue that becoming a ghost impacts the experience of critique in a very particular way: it impedes or resignifies the mutual recognition that is indispensable for the constitution of the academic community. By creating the outside within the inside (the zone of indeterminacy), the academic community suffers a profound break that impacts the whole community. This reinforces some behaviour embedded in academia, such as competitiveness and individualism.

The zone of indeterminacy

Considering these stories, it is possible to say that exclusion within academia functions in two ways: on the one hand, laws, policies and rules which aim to regulate academic integrity and research outcomes – intellectual property, copyright, plagiarism, quality, etc. The existing literature on this form of exclusion is extensive and focuses mainly on how some regulations and policies – e.g., quality assurance policies – shape individual conduct (Cannizzo, 2015; Hartung et al., 2017; Parker & Jary, 1995), research agendas and institutional missions. Some studies have analysed how standardisation affects critical thinking (Sutton, 2017), the spectrum of research (Watermeyer & Olssen, 2016), and institutional governance. Studies on academic drift or homogeneity in higher education are relevant (McCowan & Dietz, 2021). On the other hand, self-imposed rules of conduct aim to animate the relationship between oneself and others in academia. These rules – that are not reducible to an act conforming to a law – serve as a way to exclude deviations from the path to excellence (e.g., resistances and refusals); that is, they put into effect exclusionary practices of the inside which produce the outside (non-excellence). Thus, for example, what happens when academics decide not to apply for research funds (e.g., Research Councils in the UK (UKRI) or Fondecyt in Chile)? What is the individual cost of exclusion or self-exclusion? Although there is an institutional way of exclusion (formal evaluations), self-formation practices make the constitution of the zone of indeterminacy (the outside) possible. Simply put, the stable element of excellence is the systematic and continuous practice of examining oneself and others.

Thus, given that excellence relies on oppositions such as exceptionality/failure, sophistication/inconsistency, novelty/uncreativeness, and integrity/misconduct, among other pairs, the university machinery ‘necessarily functions using an exclusion (which is also always already a capturing) and an inclusion (which is also always already an exclusion)’ (Agamben, 2004, p. 37). That is to say, the academy produces a sort of liminal space – a zone of indeterminacy – in which the inside is always an inclusion of the outside, while *the outside is always an exclusion of the inside*.

The path to truth/goodness, exception, novelty or perfection not only involves sacrificial practices but also requires the constitution of a system of exclusion; that is, everybody cannot be excellent; otherwise excellence is not possible (understood as exceptionality). The desire to be an outstanding academic, or as one of my participants expressed during the interview, ‘it is an ethics of doing things well, and of being the best at what one does’ (Male – Mid-career researcher – Humanities), does not necessarily refuse certain behaviours but make sure to ‘redress, correct, rectify, reintegrate, rehabilitate, in short, normalize’ (Beistegui, 2018, p. 10). The ethics of excellence creates a form of academic-self that defines who is in and who is out from the experience of academic critique. Yet, this is not only determined by repressive practices but increasingly by productive and inventive ones. The ethics of excellence does not necessarily focus on the negation of the other – as a repressive power – but rather on the affirmation of particular *epistemic virtues* (Paul & van Dongen, 2017) – whereby exclusion is possible. The exclusion of the other is undertaken using a ‘regularity of style’ (Foucault, 2002), which is a ‘particular way of excluding “the Other”; of relegating that which, in the particular discourse mobiliser’s view, belongs outside the boundary separating legitimate and relevant academic being/doing from illegitimate and irrelevant academic being/doing’ (Petersen, 2008, p. 394).

Drawing upon these assumptions, one could argue that the tension within academia today – that explains some exclusionary practices – seems to emerge from the absence of epistemic virtues like objectivity, accuracy, creativity, persistence, reliability, honesty, thoroughness, accountability, and others. The lack of these virtues is an obstacle to excellence and, therefore, a legitimate way to exclude the other; in labelling someone’s practices as illegitimate or inappropriate, academics often seem to invoke epistemic virtues.

The impossibility of epistemic virtues

Do these narratives demonstrate that epistemic virtues are the conditions of possibility for academic critique? Apparently, these virtues make academic critique possible: being honest or neutral, meticulous or innovative, permits the production and circulation of knowledge. However, working in academia involves facing ethical dilemmas that challenge the status and possibility of epistemic virtues. The paradox is that academics tend to pursue these virtues – as we can see through these narratives – although this task, I argue, is impossible to fulfil.

Shah points out that ‘there is always an ethical imperative at the core of epistemic virtues’ (Shah, 2017). This means that scientific communities – from social sciences to natural sciences – and the academic-self is driven by formal principles, like quality, freedom, objectivity, among others, that make up how epistemic virtues are enacted. That is to say, following Daston and Galison (2007), scientific communities have been influenced by a neo-Kantian epistemology: similar to the formal conditions for moral action (Kant, 2002), scientific communities have established the formal conditions for the possibility of knowledge. This means that the academic-self is constituted by ethical conduct that relies heavily on the definition of abstract ideals. Thus, epistemic virtues can be seen as the conditions for the possibility of critique in academia. For an action to be considered legitimate within the academy, it needs to be backed up by a particular personhood and epistemic virtues.

The problem is that these epistemic virtues are not merely formal conditions – as Kant promoted – but *normative principles*; that is, they are not simply describing the conditions under which critique is possible, but they have become prescriptive in a way that defines what to do and how to behave in academia – as we can see in the ethical dilemmas analysed above. Thereby, objectivity and neutrality not only define science's epistemology but also prescribe moral actions and therefore constitute an ethical life in academia. However, in all the cases, the result seems to be the same: the formal conditions are constantly overtaken by the concrete reality. The reality – in the form of ethical dilemmas – shows that being objective or neutral – or even expecting that others behave in a certain way, e.g., honesty – is hardly possible. So, how have academics been willing to act in a manner that is not practicable or achievable? Foucault would say that these epistemic virtues, although an illusion, are modes of subjectification (Foucault, 2010); they shape the way academics exercise critique within and outside universities. Despite the disciplinary power of epistemic virtues, this paradox – trying to achieve something unattainable – leads to a dislocation within the academic-self: disenchantment (Scientific Sacrifice). Academics sacrifice themselves in the name of objectivity and neutrality and end up dealing with their illusion.

According to Daston and Galison (2007), this problem comes from the fact that ‘Kant was creatively misunderstood, or to put it less tendentiously, adapted by scientists to their own purposes’ (2007, p. 206). For example, for Kant, objectivity was not an epistemic virtue but rather a set of a priori – or pure concepts – defined by the understanding which makes objective knowledge possible. Objectivity is part of the faculty of understanding, while subjective constructions belong to sensations (Rose, 1995). For Kant objectivity has nothing to do with suppressing subjectivity or the knower but rather the constitution of a transcendental subjectivity or unified consciousness, ‘which underlies all empirical knowledge of objective reality’ (Daston & Galison, 2007, p. 208). Thus, ‘Kant’s unification of the self as the necessary condition for the possibility of all ‘objective’ knowledge was not only an alternative

vision of mind but also an alternative vision of knowledge' (2007, p. 209). Simply put, the misinterpretation lies in understanding objectivity as an objective reality far from subjectivity. Thus, modern scientific communities turned objectivity from a unified self which is the condition for the possibility of objective knowledge, into a normative principle and epistemic virtue, which define the regulative system of behaviour in academia.

4. Satisfaction

Notably, Hegel, referring to the deployment of *desire* of the subject, concluded the following: '*self-consciousness finds its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness*' [my emphasis] (Hegel, 2013). This statement denotes a crucial philosophical shift in understanding the relationship between the subject and object. By and large, it means that satisfaction is only possible when a mutual recognition between two free selves is involved. That is to say, satisfaction no longer would rely on the appropriation of an object – e.g., consumption of goods – or on desiring permanently multiple things[20] – subjects that turn into objects – but on the recognition from another subject – individual or historical[21] – that one's freedom and self-imposed rules of conduct are authoritative (Pinkard, 2002). In this section, I want to analyse the experience of a group of academics with Hegel's statement as a backdrop to see in what sense satisfactory experiences in knowledge production activities depend or not on recognition and discuss how sacrifice and satisfaction are internally connected.

The questions that arise from these considerations and that I would like to address in this section can be drawn as follows: how has the intersection between the desire for recognition and the ethics of excellence constituted the experience of critique in academia today? How has satisfaction become a practice of the self that aims to restore order within academia? To delve into these issues, I consider those moments in which my participants described a state of satisfaction concerning some achievements or life experiences. I read these passages as struggles that express the end of the journey to truth, as moments in which the desire for excellence emerges through the appreciation of hard work (improvement) and sophistication (exceptionality), that is, through the approbation of the academic-self.

Two Forms of Satisfaction: Getting Things Done and Being Impactful

The ethics of excellence work on, through and from the academic self. The following passage from one of my participants illustrates how this ethos translates into the need for recognition,

[20] This desire emerges as an absence (the desired object: the commodity). When the subject accomplishes the desired object, the desire is over.
[21] This desire (which can be seen as a critique, that is, critique is desire) is a positive tension or force that constitutes the subject. The subject is formed by desire (Pippin, 2011). The desire occurs regardless of a desired object (the absence).

> (…) everyone who is in the academy has *a deep need for recognition*, ok?, That is in part…I guess that that is part of what configures this self-regulated academic-person, who has a strong 'super-ego', otherwise you cannot organise yourself, and perhaps this is not common, but they are looking for another type of compensation, for example, economic…perhaps; but that is not common, although it might be a possibility, but *what is more important is the recognition of the community, that is very important* [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities).

The distinction between the desire to reach the truth (academic vocation) and the desire oriented towards the self and social recognition (academic mission) must be analysed carefully. In what follows, I would like to focus on the latter, that is, the desire to be socially recognised. Within this form of desire, we can see – from the interviews – at least two ways through which the ethics of excellence works over and through satisfaction. One aspect expresses the desire to be recognised as an academic-subject able to *get things done*. It is the satisfaction of being recognised by others for one's achievements. The other angle is the desire to be recognised as an academic-subject that *contributes to developing a group, community or society*. It is the satisfaction that derives from being recognised by others for the impact of one's teaching or research activities.

To explore these two aspects in detail, during the interviews, I asked my participants open questions like these: *can you tell me what things have given you more satisfaction during your academic career*; and *what have been your happiest moments in academia?* This approach helped capture multiple experiences and moments that were relevant to remember, even though they came about a long time ago. This was visible in one of my participants, a senior researcher in the field of basic science, when he highlighted two moments that brought him happiness and satisfaction; one during the 1980s – the dictatorship period in Chile – and another from a couple of weeks before the interview. This is what he said when I asked him about his happiest memories in academia,

> (…) yes, when we won project X, I was in the US, the last months of 1985, and the chief of the study group called me and said: 'we won the project! ...call the others and tell them…' These projects are granted by an Advisory Council, and this council makes political decisions, and they made the political decision, given the strengths of the team, and also they run the risk, of giving us the money to do this in Chile, during the dictatorship, and it lasted six years […] but we did it (…) *those are very beautiful moments. Every time we win projects, it makes us happy.* Now our laboratory is accredited by annually audits, so the last week the laboratory in Santiago was re-accredited with zero flaws (…) [my emphasis] (Male – Senior Researcher – Basic Science).

This description is remarkable because it relates two forms of academic life in the history of Chilean universities: the apparent end of the traditional university[22] and the consolidation of the neoliberal one. What stands out from this description is that the source of satisfaction remains fundamentally the same: the recognition of the work done by an external (and unknown) instance. That is to say, it illustrates that personal or group achievements, such as the awarding of research projects or the accreditation of the university, department, programme or laboratory, play an enormous role in the constitution of the desire in academia. To be recognised by international and national agencies produces satisfaction, pride and happiness.

Either way, most narratives referring to this way of finding satisfaction focus on the gratification of publishing articles and getting research projects and degrees. The following narratives provide information about these different angles.

First, it is all about publishing papers and getting research projects,

> […] In research, the great moments are always *when a paper is published,* or when you win a project. When I won the Fondecyt [research grant] it was very good [*bakan*]; and the other very cool thing was when I published the first paper as the first author, where I was responsible for the entire article [my emphasis] (Male – Early Career Researcher – Basic Science and Education)

Second, the fact of sending the manuscript to the journal regardless of the outcome,

> Well, winning a project is always one of the highest [satisfactions], let's say, but *what gives me a lot of gratification is to send a publication*, in general this is the result of a lot of work and many hours of work, so when one is already happy with that, and *the moment of sending it always gives me a lot of gratification*, well *regardless if it is accepted or not,* but *the moment of sending it is quite euphoric* [my emphasis] (Male – Early Career Researcher – Technology)

Third, the process of undertaking a research project, especially the end of the journey,

> So, in short, the moments when I have done well, that materialise in things, for example, *my doctorate experience was really gratifying in general,* I felt that they valued me, that I was doing well, that I had good connection with my supervisors, but especially the last time when I had the Viva, that meeting was…because the two people who were my examiners, obviously I did not know them, there was no relationship with them, and it was really good, I felt 'wow [*chuta*], they really liked it', I felt really valued, they congratulated me, because they found that my work was better than I thought, so for me was super gratifying (Female – Early Career Researcher – Humanities)

Fourth, the satisfaction of getting a paper accepted by a good journal,

[22] In Chile, during the 1980s new regulations that changed the funding regime of universities were introduced, which marked somehow the end of the traditional university.

> […] when they accept you [an article] to an ISIS, WoS or Scopus, and when they accept you with very few comments […] *you said to yourself 'I'm doing well'* [my emphasis] (Male – Early Career Researcher – Social Science)

And, finally, the experience of doing a PhD abroad and all the implications that it entails,

> […] I think when you are recognised for your work, when one wins an important prize, when one wins things like that, but I think that for me *it was very gratifying getting my doctorate at Cambridge*, arriving there, far from home, abroad, and having done it in English and having been able to do it, the Viva, that is obviously, *one tries not to show off too much but it's obviously one the things that one feels proud of in life* [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

"One tries not to show off too much". Although the satisfaction of *getting things done* was largely assumed and accepted – "one feels proud of…" – which reinforces the ethics excellence (the source of satisfaction is to achieve exceptional things), it was often downplayed as "something banal", as a sort of prosaic satisfaction. The satisfaction of publishing in a prestigious academic journal, or receiving good feedback, although it means a lot for academics in general, is seen as

> something regretfully *banal* […] and part of the human nature [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Law)

That is to say, although this satisfaction is inevitable (or "part of the human nature"), it brings discomfort. It can openly be shared with the community or colleagues but is not academia's primary goal. Borrowing a Bourdieusian concept that might be helpful to describe this particular situation, this form of finding satisfaction produces a *hysteresis effect*, that is, dislocation between field (academia's values) and habitus (practices). This is due in part to the change in the way knowledge is created within and across universities which entailed the transformation of how the academic community recognises achievements; the critical difference is that the process of recognition no longer provides the same prestige and reputation – it is no longer an exclusive label. Although there is satisfaction, it is no longer the same, which entails the *dislocation* between the ethics of excellence and the academic-self.

According to some participants, the real satisfaction, which deserves to be shared with the academic community, is to be recognised for *the impact of one's work*. It is worth remembering that the impact agenda in higher education does not necessarily come from the neoliberal governmentality. It has been embedded in the academic self since the outset of the university system in Chile (see chapter 4), which was conceived as a crucial component of nation-building – via rules, language, education, and other elements. Yet, unlike the satisfaction of getting things done and being recognised by a system of valorisation, satisfaction attached to being impactful is not seen as inevitable; instead, it emerges from the entanglement of scientific vocation and mission (see chapter 6), and it takes place only when otherness is present, a real other (not

an institution). Therefore, if there is a strong vocation-mission towards the development or well-being of society, along with an otherness that can recognise this contribution, one could say that the academic self is affirmed and approved, that is, that it has found satisfaction. The existence of a mission, which takes the form of a *dream*, is precisely what these academics are referring to as satisfying,

> I think several things are gratifying, I know, it's gratifying to work with people and have, as it were, *the dream that what you are doing is going to work to help someone* or to become a public policy and that, you say that it would be good if this would work (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Technology)

It is the aim to improve lives,

> The truth is that I enjoy it; I find it very pleasant when what we do or what we investigate can generate *an impact on the lives of others* [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Technology)

Or, the materialisation of a research project,

> (…) that they accepted the research-based curriculum because it is the materialization of my thesis, as my first objective was to reveal, perhaps not as public policy, but for something one can start, that someone believes that what you investigated […] I am the first education program that has a research-based curriculum, so *that was one of the very good moments too and that is related to research, materializing, seeing my thesis embodied in a study plan* [my emphasis] (Female – Early Researcher – Education)

Unlike the neoliberal impact agenda, which uses a set of managerial and standardised mechanisms of validation, what is at play here is to be recognised by an otherness, which can take the form of an individual subject, a social group or a community. For instance, this academic finds satisfaction in being recognised by employers,

> I have been systematically told by all the employers where our students go for internships. They are inserted quickly and, on the other hand, what I like the most is that they say they are good people. Now*, when they tell me, a lot of businessmen, that my students are good people, it satisfies me a lot* because that means that they are not going to destroy the others, to treat people badly. They are going to join an organization and they are going to be collaborative, they are going to be people who are willing (…) And those are the things that for me are most valid and that help our students have ethical principles and apply them. Me, *when they are good people, that satisfies me* [my emphasis] (Male – Senior Researcher – Technology).

These two academics find satisfaction when they are recognised by students,

> One of the things that I have liked the most lately, last year, are the surveys that the students fill out at the end of each subject, an evaluation of the quality of the subjects is made, and one of the things that I have liked is that although I am not the module leader of these undergraduate students, they write my name, that this or that change in the subject has served them and has served them well, *I think*

> *that has been the best for me* [my emphasis] (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Health)

> (…) I have also linked the training of the undergraduate students of the University with the students of agricultural high schools […] a beautiful work, seeing their faces when they understand why the plants behave like this, it's like their eyes open and it's like a new world I swear to you, because you're not just teaching the mechanism, the concept, you're teaching to analyse and when people learn to analyse and to question it's like life opens up to them, so I asked, what's happening here, what could have influenced that and why is it being influenced like that, *it's a beautiful moment, it's like the eyes they open up and the students are shocked, it's like a before and after, it's beautiful* [my emphasis] (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Basic science)

This academic finds satisfaction when being recognised by a group of fishermen (a particular community in the south of Chile),

> […] that our results are useful. Of course, there is a pleasure when one understands things, when an experiment work, when one can specify and look at the data, and give it a certain orientation. But at this point, *what matters to me is that what we do is useful, that it has an impact* […] That acknowledgment in a meeting a few years ago, around Fondef project [research project] that we did with unions and fishing communities, and artisanal people from Chiloe; there was a big discussion with someone in the room, which was full, and one of the old men said: "Look, we believe Dr. X, that's the difference, we don't believe you at all". *And that for me was an award* (…) I never forgot that anecdote [my emphasis] (Male – Senior Researcher – Basic Science)

The Presence/Absence of the Other

There are many possible layers of analysis when we delve into these narratives and stories. However, I want to point out just one angle: the presence/absence of 'the Other' regarding academic recognition and satisfaction. The central question here is what sort of otherness makes this satisfaction possible. This Other can take the form of, on the one hand, an objectified subjectivity, that is, indexes, scores, rankings, accreditations, audits, and so forth; or, on the other, it can take the form of another self-consciousness – following Hegel's terminology –, either individual or social; that is, students, colleagues, communities, and so forth. The academic-subject has to permanently deal with the presence and absence of this Other, with its transformation and conversion. This twofold feature of the Other produces a struggle and dislocation within the academic self when making satisfaction real. One otherness seems to be subjected to the logic of competition – thus, what is recognised is the process of an academic-subject turning into an object (e.g., the H-Index); that is, *it is a relationship between two objects*. Dealing with another self-consciousness implies being subjected to a public regime in which what confers validity to actions is the constitution of historically rooted subjective meanings. Thus, what is recognised is the process of an academic-subject embedding into a collective subjectivity; that is, *it is a relationship*

between two subjectivities. In the following passage the latter form of recognition and satisfaction is visible,

> And the other thing is to see when the projects are being functional for the territory, it happened to me in the summer, we were working in the area of *Puerto Aysén* [the south of Chile], we went to see some plants in a town called *Bahía Acantilada*, which is like the centre of the summer in *Puerto Aysén,* and we were just collecting fruit, we were measuring the amount of sugar in the fruit, and a group of pickers arrived and told us, 'hello, how are you? What are you doing to the *calafate* [a type of fruit]?', we are measuring the amount of sugar, see when to harvest, and the ladies were excited because they have no idea when to harvest the fruit and we explained to them, and that was incredible because we kind of open them an opportunity and I think that this is *one of the most beautiful moments that science has given me* [my emphasis] (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Science).

Recognising two subjectivities – like the one between my participant, the fishing community, and the pickers – is crucial to understanding the relationship between the academic self and critique. Hegel pointed out that the struggle for recognition and satisfaction requires a relation to other people, a mutual recognition. He then asks, 'what alters when the object of the desires relevant to maintaining life turns out not to be just another object […] but another subject?' (Pippin, 2011, p. 20). This situation implies the reconfiguration of the ethics of excellence in academia. Bluntly put, the object of desire is no longer the self or the affirmation of the academic self – as I highlighted above – but another individual, social or historical subject. This reconfigures the ethical dimension of critique: the free relationship to the self. This means that self-relation is not merely obstructed, animated or constituted by an object – the index, the ranking or power relations in general – but challenged or refused by another subject. Therefore, what is altered is the relationship to oneself, our ethical work, as Foucault (1997a) put it. Yet, unlike Foucault's notion of ethics, I would like to argue, following Hegel's account of satisfaction and recognition, that the relationship to oneself is always a relationship to another self; there are always 'other people involved in the intimacy and privacy that seems to characterise my relation to myself' (Pippin, 2011, p. 19). Thereby, the fishing community or the pickers – as an otherness – can challenge or refuse my participants' relationship with themselves, which gives them satisfaction. Even further, one could argue that what brings satisfaction to the academic-subject is not the affirmation of the academic self by an otherness – a simple mutual recognition – but to be permanently in the desire of the other in which knowledge production plays an essential role. That is to say; there is a difference between the desire to be esteemed by others and to be in the desire of others. In other words, to be in the desire of others is not merely a moment of satisfaction that can be crystallised or solidified – as the neoliberal regime in higher education tends to do – but a state of becoming that requires a permanent negotiation (knowledge production) between two free selves within an academic community.

With these considerations in mind, one could say that the presence of such another subject, even when relating to oneself, represents a tension in the way critique is

exercised today in academia, especially under the ethics of excellence, which turns the academic self into an object. Today, especially in Chile, academics struggle with multiple practices of performativity, which bring into play a form of finding satisfaction in the desire to be recognised as a subject of excellence. Thereby, critique is devoted to both productivity and competitiveness so that gratification is linked to personal achievements such as publishing a paper or getting a research project, or more precisely, being successful in *playing the game*, as I stated earlier. In this sense, the desire to be a *good academic* rests upon the capacity to create something unique or produce exceptional work and improve one's performance.

However, the fact that the academic self finds satisfaction in another academic self – as we saw in some interviews – implies a possibility; that is, the possibility of thinking and acting differently within academia, the possibility of creating liminal space (the outside in the inside) that opens up speculative imagination – I return to this issue in chapter 8. I want to emphasise the following point as a concluding remark: the possibility of this form of mutual recognition – not the simple version – lies in rethinking the way critique is exercised. Or, more precisely, the possibility to rethink teaching, research and public engagement – just the possibility, not framing an alternative – and their normative principles and policy frameworks in a way that permits the de-commodification of universities seems to be linked to the emergence of this form of recognition in academia.

The following questions arise from the latter considerations: how does the presence/absence of the Other affect the meaning and experience of academic critique? How can academics be part of (to be in the desire of) a particular community – a researched community[23] as a historical subject – in a way that the community itself permanently challenge the academic-subject and, therefore, the knowledge produced? Two participants accurately put in this challenge; they said

> […] In the second year of the project the ethical dilemmas began because we saw that what we were doing, strictly speaking, *the ones who were learning the most were us, but for the school it was not very clear what our contribution was*, we delivered some reports that the directors valued more but when we went to the school we had focus groups with the teachers, questionnaires to students, teachers, a lot of information, I think the school didn't even realize that we were there because they are constantly asked information from others, so *we were there like extracted data, like the mining companies, extracting, and what it returns is not like something so significant either* [my emphasis] (Male – Early Career Researcher – Social Sciences)

Or, the connection with social organisations,

[23] These questions point to the problem of over-researched communities (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2013). Today, under the logic of competition, the selection of communities (or case studies) is influenced by researcher agendas and the pressure on productivity and engagement rather than a recognition process, as I have tried to sketch here.

> […] you are in a highly demanding, highly alienating [academic] job and *I don't see how you can have a real connection with social movements*, if you really want to make a difference you probably have to stop being an academic and dedicate yourself to working with people, there in the uncertainty, but the university, the accreditation systems, the only thing they do is get you out of there [my emphasis] (Male – Early Career Researcher – Commerce and Administration)

In that respect, more questions need to be addressed: under which conditions can the academic-subject be part of the Other's desire? In what sense does the community's desire constitute the academic self? Or, in what sense academic freedom – supposedly the basis of this mutual recognition – must be reinterpreted for this mutual recognition to be deployed? These questions, I think, provide a framework for rethinking academic critique and the ethics of excellence in the academy.

Homo Symbolicus: The Symbolic Regime of Desire in Academia

Reflecting on all these considerations, one could argue that the intersection of the ethics of excellence, critique, recognition and satisfaction in academia entails what Beistegui (2018) calls *the symbolic regime of desire*. Following Beistegui's (2018) genealogical analysis of desire, recognition constitutes one of the three normative frameworks within which desire governs us today. Yet, unlike Beistegui, and based on my analysis, I want to suggest that the academic self needs to not only to be recognised as a subject of equal rights – e.g., human dignity – but also as a subject of particular virtues – excellence – that define a mode of life; the academic-self needs to be recognised as a subject that can reach excellence (exceptionality), and not merely as a subject entitled to exercise critique.

Having this in mind, the intersection of the ethics of excellence – as both a technology of power and practice of the self – and the desire for recognition – as a productive force driving the individual subject[24] – constitutes a particular form of social relation governing academia. This articulation makes pleasure in everyday academic life possible. However, the satisfaction involved in the practice of critique is not merely the natural expression of desire but a set of actions undertaken to satisfy a desire. That is to say, the desire for recognition can be an 'object of attention, issues at stake, or reasons to be acted on or not' (Pippin, 2011, p. 36); or also, the desire to be recognised as a subject of multiple virtues in academia is not merely a personal goal. Instead, it includes a system of social relations, rules of conduct, behaviours, attitudes, self-formation practices, etc. In that respect, satisfaction is similar to sacrificial practices: *it preserves the order of things*. The ethical order remains untouched if academics find satisfaction in those practices tied to excellence. In other words, academic life

[24] By saying that desire is a productive force I mean that 'we desire not because we lack something that we do not have, but because of the productive force of intensities and connections of desire' (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 9).

necessitates satisfaction (or a system of pleasures); otherwise, excellence becomes an unbearable burden. Allen (2017) put it this way:

> Though we may think we turn unbearable conditions into bearable ones, we come to realise that we have not made 'unbearable circumstances bearable or even less bearable but only still more unbearable' as fabrications and lies (2017, p. 176).

To finalise, I would like to dwell briefly on this strange notion of recognition. It is odd and was even stranger during the birth of universities. We now think that it is the nature of the university to promise their scholars – and students as well – a life of rewards and personal recognition. At some point, there was a reconfiguration of the relationship between academic-self, desire, recognition and satisfaction. Simply put, from a desire that aims to reduce the significance of the academic-self to make room for its relation to the truth (the suppression of subjectivity) to a desire that is oriented towards the self[25] to intensify its effects (Beistegui, 2018; Daston & Galison, 2007). For the former, satisfaction occurs when the desire reaches its end: the search for truth is the object of its desire. For the desire oriented towards the self, satisfaction happens when the desire is recognised by an Other: a group, community, or society[26].

To be recognised by an Other, the academic-subject must work over the self, virtues, and skills. For instance, Beistegui (2018) argues that self-esteem and self-confidence play an essential role in putting in place recognition mechanisms. Therefore, following Beistegui, the logic goes as follows: as I pointed out earlier, in academia – like in other fields – there is always 'something lacking we must work to fulfil' (Allen, 2017, p. 174), e.g., the impostor syndrome. The experience that something is always lacking when we exercise critique in academia leads to the need to work on oneself, or as Beistegui (2018) puts it, to the need for more self-esteem and self-confidence[27]. For academics to make these efforts tangible, a range of recognition mechanisms must be implemented. The constitution of these mechanisms makes the symbolic regime of desire possible, which ultimately entails the transformation of the way academics relate to themselves, others and knowledge. Thereby, recognition 'is a desire with and according to which one is expected to govern oneself, as well as others' (Beistegui, 2018, p. 149). The striving for recognition lies in how one governs oneself – filling the gaps in virtues and skills – through the journey to the truth. Here the self is the object of its desire; that is, the desire is oriented towards the self that aims to maximise its satisfaction. The self – and its virtues – is the object of attention and approbation (Shapin, 2008). For instance, the creation and use of academic indexes (H-index) or

[25] In other words, this includes the economic concept that fits with this: human capital; that is, skills aim to increase opportunities. But it also refers to social capital, social networks and relationships that help realise mutual recognition. For instance, the idea of declining social capital in society expresses the same point: something is always lacking.

[26] Or also, the increase of the benefits of the greatest number of people in a society or a group is the object of the desire.

[27] Worldwide university systems have built a vast system intended for the development of academic skills.

intellectual property – the private property in academia (Biagioli et al., 2011; Biagioli & Galison, 2003) – can be explained by the desire of academics to be esteemed by others, that is, it is seen as the source of prestige, reputation and honour.

Therefore, it is possible to say that in order for academics to be recognised as a subject of virtues and skills (excellence) is that they make sacrifices. *They sacrifice themselves for small, unstable and fleeting satisfactions*. Or, as Bubbio (2012) put it, 'there is no sacrifice without recognition, and the process of recognition is intrinsically sacrificial' (p. 797).

5. Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I attempted to offer an account of how the quest for excellence of a group of Chilean scholars, an experience that happens throughout a cyclical journey, affects how they relate to themselves, others and knowledge. I explored how academics carried out this journey and discussed sociological and philosophical issues that may have implications for the academic-self. Thus, first, I described how the renunciation of personal life, freedom and prestige – which sometimes are forms of refusal and resistance – and the experience of time define how academics sacrifice themselves. In short, it is a matter of placing the imperative of *sacrifice yourself* which seems to be the condition for critique to be in effect. Based on these descriptions, I proposed three types of sacrifice in academia, which might contribute to understanding broader academic communities: Metaphysical, Scientific and Market sacrifice. The former – metaphysical – involves embracing universal ideals leading to despair; scientific sacrifice refers to the search for exceptional knowledge entailing disenchantment; and market sacrifice is the seek for productivity which engenders exhaustion and burnout.

Second, I described the experience of being excluded or the one who excludes and inhabits the zone of indeterminacy. I showed how the creation of this zone, outside within the inside, has profound implications for ethical life in academia. In this sense, the zone of indeterminacy requires further exploration concerning how its multiple intensities, densities and associations vary according to disciplines or academic milieu.

Finally, I described how academics experience pleasure based on the symbolic regime of desire that is characteristic of the academy. I underlined in what sense and the implications of the academic-subject being the one that has succeeded in mastering techniques and social skills – that is, epistemic virtues – and also able to master pleasures and desires. Thus, I concluded that learning these elements entails reproducing the symbolic regime of desire in academia and hence the ethics of excellence. Yet one particular form of recognition was highlighted: the desire to be in another's desire (individual or collective subject) which might open new possibilities to think and act differently in academia.

Therefore, the multiple sacrificial practices; the creation of an outside within the inside; and the constitution of a symbolic regime of desire that relies upon a system of recognition, illustrate how the ethics of excellence works over, through and from academic critique. The experience of sacrifice, exclusion and satisfaction under the symbolic regime of desire functions as a way to preserve excellence as the driving force of the critique's epistemology and ethics. Yet, the practices attached to sacrifice, exclusion and recognition should not be seen as ideologies or the consequences of the rationalisation of academic life but as the conditions on which the academic-self can be immersed within the technology of power; or how the academic-self is given a place within power/knowledge relations.

CHAPTER 7

THE STRUGGLE TO STAY: VOCATION, MISSION AND THE CYNICAL REASON

1. Introduction

Claims like 'the university is dead' (hopelessness), 'I am still committed to teaching and research, but I am fed up with how things work now' (disenchantment), or 'I like to teach and do research, but I feel tired' (exhaustion), frequently emerged during the interviews and are illustrative of a particular mode of relating to academic life within universities. For example, the editor of an academic journal put it in this way: "to survive, to do things well and avoid ending up burned out [*reventada*], the truth is that I take several pills at this time of the year, the neurologist has become my best friend, definitely" (Female – Senior Researcher – Social Science). One could argue that this situation is the result of the introduction of neoliberal policies – economic incentives – reconfiguring the way academics undertake critique, which now is much more dependent on a specific form of competitiveness: self-exploitation. However, the point is to explore why academics still stay – the struggle to stay – in universities despite these conditions. Indeed, according to other participant,'(…) it is *a life* [academic life] *of sacrifice with not so many rewards*, rewards for a few (...) also, academic life is much more difficult for women, much more difficult, and *despite everything, people are still willing to do it*' [my translation] (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities).

In that context, one general question needs to be addressed in this chapter: What is the mode of relating to academic critique within the contemporary university? Or more specifically, what makes academic life so 'unique' that academics decide to stay and work there? What kind of experience does the modern and neoliberal university offer to academics? What kind of *moral obligation* is at play here? Or in other words, given the existential conditions for critique to be in effect (sacrificial practices), what sustains academic critique in the contemporary university? To better understand these questions, we should delve into how academics recognise their moral obligation and are invited to become ethical in academia.

Some have argued that the moral norm of education no longer structures the university economy as a public good. It has been restructured, commodified and marketised by neoliberal capitalism (Giroux, 2014; Hall, 2018b; Maisuria, 2020; Sutton, 2017). Acknowledging the relevance of this line of argument, I hold that the consolidation of the neoliberal university in Chile rearticulates the normative framework – i.e., moral obligations – that compels academics to stay in academia – the framework installed by Bello (see Chapter 5). This means that rather than the disappearance of 'the moral norm of education as a public good' what is at stake within the contemporary university is the reconfiguration of the way academics recognise their moral obligations. It is not the disappearance of normativity but its reactivation (Durán Del Fierro, 2022).

With these considerations in mind, in this analysis, I examine how specific actions and practices carried out by academics tally with particular modes of subjectivation that emerge within a university system trapped around modernity, postcolonialism and neoliberalism. These modes of subjectivation, as Foucault pointed out, are an attitude, a way of thinking and behaving about moral obligations. Thus, if it is true that academics are affected by a set of laws and policies – e.g., quality policies and research integrity norms – their behaviour and actions cannot be merely reduced to these codes. Shrinking academic moral obligations to such a model would be unrealistic. Academic actions, thoughts, feelings, behaviours and practices are also consistent with relations with the self and others that give rise to certain moral obligations and ethical attitudes, and vice versa. Thereby, academics are not obliged to behave in a certain way to be excellent or have integrity. If they want to have an experience in which prestige and reputation are relevant, or if they want to be recognised by others, they must build a mode of relating to themselves and others engendered by prestige and reputation.

Drawing upon the experience of a group of Chilean scholars, I argue that the mode of relating to the present form of academic critique rests upon a double-sided ethical attitude: *vocation* and *mission*. These modes of subjectivation show in what sense academics choose one element over the other for which they decide to *accept* and *contest* the contemporary form of academic life. However, these two ethical dispositions are internally intertwined. Thus, I show how the internal logic of vocation gives rise to a missional attitude which relies upon a particular practice: community engagement. The mission, as a mode of life, produces a sort of *crisis* within the academic-self due to the impossibility of being immersed in and impacting society. The way out of this crisis is the emergence of *ethical scepticism* in the form of a cynical reason that oscillates between *despair* and *hope*. The interweaving of the missional attitude and hopefulness reinforces a mode of subjectivation that emphasises the need to improve people's lives, academic activism, among other similar conducts, anchored in the existence of social needs (or social problems) and society, all of which confers validity to practices and actions carried out by academics within universities. This implies a form of academic-self heavily sustained by an *ethical idealism* that shapes the way academics relate with themselves and others. Put differently, academics stay in academia due to the production of imaginaries, expectations and practices tied to idealistic goals concerning society (e.g., the end of poverty and inequalities or building solidarity). Paradoxically, an idealistic position once again brings back to despair and disenchantment.

2. A double-sided ethical attitude: academic vocation and mission (towards the crisis)

Drawing upon my participants' views and practices, one could say that the academic-self oscillates between two ethical attitudes[28]: vocation and mission. Whereas vocation focuses on *searching for truth* (knowledge) and *academic freedom*, the missional attitude concentrates on *improving people's lives* and *community engagement*. Likewise, vocation and mission appear to fluctuate between the means-end nexus, or more precisely, between instrumental-based questions and practical strategies (measurable), and value-based questions and ultimate purposes (not measurable)[29]. The intersection of vocation, mission and the means-end nexus makes the experience of academic critique meaningful and manageable. The point, however, is to see how this intertwining operates in academia today and confers validity to academic practices and actions in a way that academics remain in universities. In other words, I would like to show how the internal logic of vocation gives rise to a missional attitude and how the mission reinforces the ambivalences within vocation.

In that respect, *academic vocation* can be seen through multiple layers. First, it appears as a disposition to fight against *apathy* in academia,

> […] we have done one seminar, cycles of conversations, we put them online, on Youtube, and that does not have any academic reward, we are complying with anything, but *we are doing this by vocation*, so I try to keep these kind of things to face that *apathy* [within academia] (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

Second, it emerges as an attitude that defines the limits or boundaries of research integrity. Here the same quote from a participant but understood from a different angle:

> (…) once I had to review a paper for an international journal for two authors who were Chileans that I knew well, *and it seemed to me that the paper was extremely flawed* (…) and there I was faced with *how honest* I had to be in that review, assuming that they were people I had a certain appreciation for, but with a job that seemed deficient to me and *in the end I was honest, that is, I did a review the way I thought I had to do it* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

Third, as a way to promote, produce and disseminate knowledge beyond the university,

> For example, we are now carrying out, I am coordinating an environmental consultancy for X [international private company], for the electrical company in the south of Chile, which is an interesting project because it is indeed an environmental consultancy but *we managed to convince X, for example, to use money for research*, that is, not only to comply with what was required but to do much more, so in a certain way we are managing to reconcile those two things that do not always go hand in hand, the environmental impact study with the

[28] Or, in other words, these ethical attitudes act are the mediation (modes of subjectivation) between the academic-self and university life.

[29] In principle, these are not measurable, but they are increasingly becoming measurable (can we measure, or value in any form, the mission of the university?).

> research, *we showed X [private company] that the generation of knowledge is worth spending money on* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Science)

That is to say, as a way of advancing knowledge in a given topic. The same academic goes on,

> If you ask us, the archaeologists [about why is relevant to spend money doing research], the answer will always be on the side of *knowing more* about the human being, in this case *knowing* the human history of the territory, which helps to *enrich our knowledge*, contributes to positioning speeches as ones of tolerance culture, and know the cultural richness of Chile (…) (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Science)

The academic vocation thus is dependent on a particular attitude concerning, broadly speaking, the production and dissemination of knowledge which includes, for example, defining the limits of research integrity. This attitude expresses a particular role that academics play in society today: they must protect the integrity of knowledge against external (ideology) and internal forces (misconduct and apathy). This disposition is what Weber called the Calvinist sense of vocation; that is, actions and practices devoted to the pursuit of free inquiry. Or, more precisely, a vocation to 'make a demarcation between objective and subjective value-based judgments' (Antonovskiy & Barash, 2020, p. 125). Thereby, these experiences show the *ends-side* of the academic vocation: in order to 'know the world', what is relevant is to produce reliable knowledge.

The demand for reliable knowledge includes the cultivation of epistemic virtues in the form of individual skills and competencies. That is to say, what has to be true about the academic self in order for knowledge to exist depends on these epistemic virtues. These are, one could say, the *means-side* of academic vocation.

Yet, the experience of academic critique extends beyond the means-ends nexus and includes what could be referred to as *transcendental experience* that affects how academics relate to themselves, others and knowledge. In the view of this academic, doing research involves something that exceeds the limits of knowledge,

> […] and that is why, perhaps, I am doing investigation [...] as a job that has a meaning, so to speak, that is not a job because I go and earn money, and then spend it, but *something happens*, that goes as *transcending* a little (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Science)

In the same vein, another academic talk about the experience of searching 'the truth' or producing knowledge. What is at issue, as this scholar put it, is a *mystical experience*:

> For me, the most valuable thing is to make a theorem (...) the rest might not exist (...) that is, to write it, publish it and spread it, I think it is of a lower order, that is, the most valuable thing is to see if the theorem explain *this or that*, that's great (...)

> that is the most valuable moment and one treasures it, at least for me it is something *mystical* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Technology)

These attitudes are notable as they reflect the experience of producing knowledge as a *spiritual practice*. At times, academics relate to knowledge as if an abstraction mediating the subject and object relationship. When this academic refers to '*this or that'*, he emphasises that the object of knowledge can be considered by itself, as if its context were irrelevant. He justifies his academic life by assuming that what knowledge does is valuable regardless of writing and publication. Yet, at the same time, he indicates that 'the most valuable thing' in academia is that something (in this case, a theorem) '*explains*' something else. It involves a dynamic relationship between the subject and the object of knowledge: the subject can modify the object. That is to say, it is no longer the mere act of describing but instead transforming *reality*. And this reality can take various forms, such as society, territory or community, all of which become a sort of *transcendental a priori* for academics. This displacement, I would like to argue, from knowledge to society makes a new attitude or disposition possible. It is the transition from the vocational ends-side to the *missional ends-side*. It is worth remembering that vocation has always been linked to religious tenets. Indeed, as Kasavin (2020) reminds us, 'Scientists in the seventeenth century used to denote themselves as the priests of Nature' (2020, p. 101). That means that vocation and mission have historically been dependent on each other. The difference I want to explore here concerns the role of society – rather than nature – in establishing new metaphysical arrangements within academia. This began at the end of the eighteenth century when scholars were viewed as servants of humanity (see Chapter 5).

This academic talks about how academic life is driven by reflection and contributing to society:

> (…) what moves me is not so much personal recognition but rather contributing socially to reflection and the better development of science (…) (Male – Senior Researcher – Basic Science)

This other academic talks about the reasons behind entering academia, including the contribution to the education system:

> […] what led me to enter the doctorate, because it is *"how can I make a change"* in these micro worlds that one sees or that one talks with colleagues, and in that sense, *research allows strengthening future teachers and strengthening the system.* In addition, in Chile the level is very low, the gap that exists is closely associated with the socio-economic, that is, there is no quality education for all, but that does not come from a socio-economic system but also comes from training, so *that's how I can contribute* (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Education)

Some academics experience knowledge production, from its epistemological properties (validity, reproducibility, and so forth) to its ethical implications, as if it were

derived from a collective subject (society, territory or community). For academics, this experience involves being attentive to what society, territory and communities need and not necessarily to the dictations of knowledge. It is said to be the emergence and consolidation of *demand-side practices* in academia; that is, practices that 'seek to work with the issues and problems raised in and by communities' (Soudien, 2022). Or in other words, the experience of academic critique is unified by a collective subject that confers validity to the epistemological and ethical practices of academics within universities[30].

Therefore, the mystical experience around knowledge production is the ground under which some *transcendental obligations* emerge beyond university boundaries. Here we can see how the internal logic of the academic vocation (mystical experience when knowledge is generated or searching the truth) entails a missional attitude (transcendental obligations with society). It is not the search for truth alone but mediated by obligations that derive from society, territory or communities and that can take the form of ultimate ends or goals such as equality, social justice, inclusion, sustainability (sustainable development goals), or another elevated concept (Hacking, 2001). Or as Kasavin (2020) put it, 'the special epistemological status of science is justified not as an internal and autonomous priority of knowledge but as science's ability to generate and transmit cognitive goals, norms and ideals to society' (Kasavin, 2020). Thus, the ends-side of the *missional attitude* arrives in academia: *the need to improve people's lives.*

Apart from the ends-side of the missional attitude, the means-side is at issue. I have identified two actions and dispositions concerning the relationship between the academic self and reality (society): academic/research impact and community engagement. These actions and dispositions can be seen as *strategies* put into place to fulfil the ultimate end of the mission: improving people's lives. As regards academic/research impact, it is interesting to see how this academic sees and value the impact of what he does on, for example, students learning,

> I like what I do now much more, I think it has *an impact,* in the sense that I notice that the *teaching and learning of our students is improving*, I do not teach undergraduates, but I do teach the teachers who teach undergraduate, and I notice that student learning improves, *the quality of that learning improves,* and I notice that they are happier, because they see that there is a concern for teachers to improve their pedagogy (Male – Senior Researcher – Health and Education)

In relation to community engagement, what is relevant is how academics contribute to the development of the society, territory or community. I want to recall the following story due to its importance to illustrate this point:

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[30] Here I am arguing that the experience of knowledge oscillates between epistemology and ethics, that is, between understanding the object of study as objective (in its multiple forms) and as another subject. When the object of study is seen as another subject (subjectivity) we can speak about ethics.

> And the other thing is to see when the projects are being functional for the territory, it happened to me in the summer, we were working in the area of *Puerto Aysén* [the south of Chile], we went to see some plants in a town called *Bahía Acantilada*, which is like the centre of the summer in *Puerto Aysén,* and we were just collecting fruit, we were measuring the amount of sugar in the fruit, and a group of pickers arrived and told us, 'hello, how are you? What are you making to the *calafate* [a type of fruit]?', we are measuring the amount of sugar, see when to harvest, and the ladies were excited because they have no idea when to harvest the fruit and we explained to them, and that was incredible because we kind of open them an opportunity and I think that this is *one of the most beautiful moments that science has given me* [my emphasis] (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Science).

Overall, the missional attitude denotes a disposition based on hearing the call of society (or a collective subject), 'recognising it for what it is, and then justifying one's life in terms of it' (Fuller, 2020a, p. 105). This mission is achieved by selecting strategies that are impactful and more connected with people's and society needs. However, the mission requires academic vocation (an internal ethical discourse), and at once, academic vocation necessitates the mission. It is a double-sided ethical attitude that only exists due to the ambivalence generated by its existence: vocation is concerned with the search for truth using academic freedom, while the mission is oriented to improving people's lives through community engagement or teaching activities. Or, to put it more accurately, vocation has an irreducible missional aspect; that is, the search for truth needs to be impactful. At the same time, the mission is only possible within an internal ethical discourse in the form of academic vocation; that is, community engagement must be done without external interference. This interaction seems crucial to understanding academic life and why academics find staying in academia meaningful. The idea of "vocation for public service" summarises very well this intersection,

> I feel that this *vocation for public service* is really satisfying, that is, there are few spaces left in this country where people do things for others, *who feel a commitment, a moral duty*, or the need to return to society the privileges that one had being here inside [at the university], so *that vocation for public service is what I value the most* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

Similarly, the view of this academic is fascinating because he highlights this dialectical relationship from the perspective of a productive force,

> [academic life] is an *orientation to public service but mediated by the search for truth*, that is, in some sense *we are all oriented to public service*, whether those who work in a ministry or a politician, we are all trying to contribute to the public but favouring different processes, I believe that what we do in the academy is that we try to approach the problem, *try to understand it in its magnitude* and see what the fundamental problem is, *try to find an answer that is based on a reflection*, in the best possible version of that problem, how to deal with that problem, etc. […] *we contribute to the public but from a reflection that allows us to approach the truth* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Law)

'The contribution to the public' is seen as an obligation that defines the aims and contours of academic life. But this mission is mediated by the search for truth, that is, by 'a [free] reflection that allows [academics] to approach the truth'. Thereby, the academic-subject is the one that can be motivated by the mission and at the same time attached to a vocation, which sometimes takes the form of excellence: 'try to find an answer (…) in the *best possible version* of that problem'. Thus, academic life has, so to speak, fetishised the public (society) and the truth[31]. Without these fetishes, academic life appears to be impossible and senseless. That is to say, these elements (the public and the truth or society and knowledge) become commodities whose value is determined by, for instance, accreditation systems that evaluate to what extent community engagement and academic productivity have been achieved or attempted.

Since the mission evokes 'religious impulses to discipline and sacrifice' (Daston & Galison, 2007, p. 40) that depends on abstract and transcendental obligations (ends-side), one could argue that it serves as the basis of sacrificial practices among academics. Here we see a paradox in the missional attitude: it provides meaning and a sense of belonging to academics but simultaneously entails sacrificial practices. The way this academic put it is clear,

> […] in addition to this terrible idea of meritocracy, it is the *idea of mission*, the mission in teaching, the mission of educating, the mission of the professor […] during a council meeting I raised the hand and I said […] the mission is for the priests! What I have is an ethics of labour responsibility […] there is a distortion of the role of the professor […] now is the immolation, *the mission has to immolate you* […]. (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

This quote is remarkable as it emphasises the role played by the missional attitude in academia: it *immolates you*. Or in other words, *the mission makes sacrificial practices* possible (the metaphysical sacrifice). Suppose one asks why academics stay in academia despite all these sacrifices (immolation). In that case, the missional attitude (improving people's lives) plays a vital role in reproducing this mode of life. However, this relation (metaphysical and market sacrifice) is only possible through reconfiguring academic vocation[32]. Under the mission only, market sacrifice is impossible since self-sacrifice is considered a sin. In other words, the market sacrifice – the seek for productivity which engenders exhaustion – appears to be strengthened by enthusiasm and hope articulated around the spirit of enlightenment (individual academic-subject and practical knowledge) and religion (collective subjects and society). While higher ends or transcendental obligations drive the mission, the vocation helps to rationalise, through objective statements about reality, society and nature (Antonovskiy & Barash, 2020), how the academic-subject sacrifice herself. Or, to put it in another way,

[31] Also, it is possible to say that the academy has fetishised the end products: books, articles or patents. These are understood as commodities whose value is consigned by an internationalised system of valorisation.

[32] See below when I explore the relationship between knowledge and freedom. Simply put, academic vocation is trapped between two notions of freedom: negative freedom and community engagement. This shows how academic vocation and the mission are interrelated.

whereas the mission evokes a religious attitude that depends on abstract[33], precarious and uncertain obligations and ideals, the vocation is attached to an ethos as 'an invitation to wager one's life by venturing into a world of potentially' (Fuller, 2020a, p. 105). Therefore, one could say that the interaction of the mission and vocation permits sacrificial practices (market sacrifice) that become the condition for the possibility of academic critique under the ethics of excellence.

What we can see from these quotations is the constitution of a missional attitude that evokes a religious experience or impulses when it comes to society, territory or community. It is a vocation oriented to the search for truth and a moral obligation towards the public and society. That is to say, Chilean academics – at least from what my participants commented – seem to stay in academia despite all sacrifices because there is something 'higher' that makes the experience of academic critique meaningful and manageable[34]. Nowadays, society, territory and community have become the mystical figure that unifies academic life, thus echoing the practical spirit driven by the narratives of the nation-state set by Bello during the post-independence period. As a result, the intersection of academic vocation and mission is the ground under which immolation is possible; that is, where market sacrifice comes into being. This disposition, *the call of society*, so to speak, also serves as a way to justify sacrificial practices. Academics sacrifice themselves in the name of either knowledge or society or all at once. But most importantly, this entanglement entails, I want to argue, a *crisis* within the academic-subject inasmuch as they face an impossibility: the impossibility of being immersed in and impacting society. That is to say, those transcendental ideals become unattainable or unfulfillable promises. As a result, this situation involves the use of a particular form of scepticism in academia: the *cynical reason*. In what follows I explore the deployment of this practical reason.

3. The cynical reason in academia: scepticism, inaction and calculation (the way out of the crisis)

The tone of the following narratives and stories is of despair, disenchantment and exhaustion:

> *The academy today is not the academy that you knew,* nor is it the form of knowledge production, today I have realised or *I do not find sense in how knowledge is being produced and the type of knowledge that is being produced* (…) [Moreover] one no longer teaches [*formar*] students, one only delivers content, which is not even what one investigates (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

[33] These ideals are abstract because they make knowledge comparable. They act as the commodity that make the circulation of knowledge possible.

[34] There are other reasons that explain why they stay in academia: being a university academic is still a prestigious and well-paid occupation, which is comfortable and gratifying compared to many jobs in society. However, what I want to highlight here is not the material conditions of existence but the modes of subjectivation, that is, the way academics recognise their moral obligations within universities.

Thus, for example, the arrival of disenchantment because of communities turning into mere communities of interest:

> (…) today at the university the colleagues do not know each other, it is very crazy. What I am telling you is very crazy, and also because the other is the enemy, and if today you are not capable of generating networks because you think you are going to be deceived (…) so, *this idea of an imagined community that is the academy does not exist*, *it is a community of interests* and to the extent that you are useful to me, you and I get together, but just as we get together we separate and tomorrow they can deceive you (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

Despair from the way academic life has been organised:

> I think that what prevails today in general is "*let me do my job and I'll get paid at the end of the month in peace"*, as long as they pay me, the rest, if the world or society is falling, the truth is that it's not up to me, I'm not interested, and that's transversal, I don't think it's just in my university, that's in all universities, *there are few, very few professors, colleagues, who dare to go a little further* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Social Science)

Despair from the lack of commitment or activism among academics:

> We complain, I include myself, about the little participation of the population in the voting [national elections] or in the discussions at the national level, but *the debate in the university is non-existent.* I'm talking about a debate, not a conversation where I'll join you for coffee and we'll see how we can solve this, no, *real debate*, discuss the great national problems, what's happening in the region, so *we're immersed in that very neoliberal* [academic life] of your office, produce, because if I don't produce they will evaluate me badly and if they evaluate me badly I won't be promoted and if I don't produce they can also fire me (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Social Science)

Exhaustion from the pressure around productivity:

> I remember going to meetings where the ‘productivity traffic light’ was with the indices and they told us that we are in the red; the institute is in the red, ‘how? Are you kidding me? We publish more than the others, we have more projects than the others and even so we are in the red’, *go to hell!* Half of the team with mental health problems, *go to hell!* I couldn't take it anymore (...) after a long process, with license one month, two months and not having a good time, *I decided to quit and leave the university*[35] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Technology)

And disenchantment as a result of realising that change is not possible:

> (…) and perhaps I am not so motivated with that [research agenda] anymore because *I realise that there is not much that I can change*, I cannot decide that they start using this (my research) for something, but rather that people have to be convinced (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Technology)

[35] Although this academic left the university, he did not leave academia – he found a position in another university.

What kind of practical reason is deployed when academics find themselves in despair, disenchantment and exhaustion? What is the way out of the crisis produced by the mission-vocation attitude? Some have argued that this intersection (despair, disenchantment and exhaustion) has consolidated a particular attitude or practical reason in modernity, the so-called *cynical reason* (Allen, 2017; Ossa, 2016; Sloterdijk, 1987). It is crucial to explore whether this modern attitude operates in academia and if so, to consider how this practical reason is deployed – what form does it take in academia today? – to further understand the *struggle to stay* that academics face within universities.

Before diving into how this practical reason works in academia, I would like to briefly consider how the literature has addressed this individual or collective attitude. In 1983, Sloterdijk (2003) offered a thought-provoking critique of cynical reason. For him, this reason is featured by a general attitude or posture characterised by bitter scepticism, pessimism, melancholia and nihilism that does not challenge the status quo. The cynic is the one who, despite being pessimistic about how society is organised, is fully integrated into it, enjoys its benefits and maintains the order of things. Cynicism then becomes 'our moral status quo' (Sloterdijk, 2003, p. 192) that defines our practices and behaviours. Likewise, the 'integrated cynicism even has the understandable feeling about itself of being a victim and of making sacrifices' (Sloterdijk, 2003, p. 5). In addition, for Sloterdijk, cynicism is not merely scepticism or existential doubt (epistemological scepticism) but an 'enlightened false consciousness' (Sloterdijk, 2003, p. 5) that acts against better knowledge. He assumes that this definition is logically a paradox, but it 'appears in reality as the actual state of affairs' (Sloterdijk, 2003, p. 6) and 'lived as a private disposition' (Sloterdijk, 2003, p. 7). The cynical reason can be seen as an experience grounded in abstract moments and radical immediacy.

Similarly, Allen (2017) argues that *metaphysical attachments* or a metaphysics of verticality underpin almost all forms of education and educators – academics and teachers –, that is, how they relate to reality (this is similar to what I have called the *missional attitude*). This is grounded in the idea of progress to a 'higher state', which entails self-improvement practices among educators. But at the same time, educators are also those 'who no longer believe in the system and have given up on any radical pretensions, being content to demonstrate his superiority over the system by working within it, and playing it to his own perceived advantage' (Munro, 2018, p. 837). According to Allen (2017), this twofold dimension – commitment and disillusionment – is what characterises the cynical modern educator; he put it this way: teachers and academics are 'ground down, disenchanted, but committed to education. Unable to quit, yet deploring everything education has become' (Allen, 2017, p. 1). This persistent and contradictory attitude often involves a 'fanatical attachment' and sacrificial practices for a cause they do not entirely believe in or understand.

In the context adumbrated above, this modern cynicism's effect on academia seems daunting, especially when we analyse a neoliberal academy like the Chilean one. The cynical academic appears to be the one who does not waste time searching for truth but makes sure its survival motivated by self-interest. The position of this academic, based on his own experience and from others, makes this impression evident,

> (…) and I am seeing that [this attitude] in the ethics that I am having, and this in our generation is being repeated a lot and I see it in my colleagues, the young people apply to Fondecyt not because Fondecyt is good but rather because *it helps us to protect ourselves* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Social Science)

Although this academic is bitterly pessimistic about how the academy is organised today (the ethics around research grants), he accepts that there is no other way. This cynicism operates on cynical principles: pursuing any means necessary to achieve self-interested ends (e.g., more productivity and hence protection). In the same vein, this academic, who shares the same disillusionment about the academy, ends up doing what she criticises,

> I have no resistance at all because the performance metrics are linked to that [excellence], and *you end up doing those practices that I criticise*, that I do not like at all; no, I do not do that [resistance], I mean, I would do it if there were more critical mass and if it were a group activity but not by myself, because […] I mean, *I would be the one losing* (Female – Early Career Researcher – Technology)

The way academics survive today in academia is crucial. The attitude of 'I would do it [resistance] if there were more critical mass and if it were a group activity but not by myself' does not denote mere apathy but inaction and calculation. That is to say, this cynicism seems to be an attitude that differs from apathy in its intensity: it is a disposition more bitter than listless. The fact that this academic 'end(s) up doing those practices that (she) criticises' reflects this bitterness. In addition, there seems to be a radical contradiction: some academics do not believe in the system and give up on any form of resistance but feel comfortable demonstrating their capacity and skills. This attitude can be seen through the following statement, which highlights the ability to play the game,

> My position on that [the publication of an article in an academic journal] was to *play the game that they ask me to play*, which also interests me. I'm interested... I don't think it's a game where 'the dices are loaded' from the start (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities).

The point is that 'it is a game where the cards are [not] cheated from the start'. This attitude indicates that despite all the criticisms against the system of knowledge production and rewards, there is still something to be played and delivered; the fact that this academic is 'interested in' playing the game reveals a sort of commitment. Thereby, for this academic, playing the game is not something to be ashamed of; on the contrary, it is a significant part of academic life. This academic put it more clearly,

> (…) you have to publish in high-impact journals because that is required. So, well, since you're in that circle, you have to do it, I don't dislike it either, I do it thinking not because it has a high impact, *I do it because it seems pertinent to me and because I like to do it* (…) The other is directly related to academic work, *but I do it with pleasure,* I don't do it like "oh, I have to do this thing", because if I thought that I wouldn't apply for projects, I don't do projects, I don't bother with that (Male – Senior Researcher – Humanities).

The following quote shows how playing the game (productivity) is simply part of the job, part of being a researcher,

> (...) speaking of *productivity*, it does not seem complicated to me, *it is part of the life of a researcher*, it is something to be expected, my feeling is that if you are in this academic career it is part of your job (...) then it is not something that I have felt that I have to deal with, personally, it is a country that has given me a lot of opportunity, to obtain funds, to start leading my projects, *I have not felt it as a burden at all*, but rather I think it is something that is typical of the researcher's career (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Health)

With this in mind, this attitude is not only sustained by bitter inaction and calculation (the question about how to survive) but also by *conformism* regarding how things work and are organised today. Take, for example, this attitude,

> (…) you write an article and then you have to pay to see the article, and you don't own anything you did in the article. You can't even put your figures because they're like from the journal. So, *I feel that maybe that is something to criticise*. On the other hand, I also understand that it is like a super large machine, and powerful. So *it's very difficult to go against* that (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Science)

'It is very difficult to go against' the system. It seems that what characterises this subjective position is an unbearable pessimism which tends toward inertia (Lingard & Gale, 2007). Look at this another attitude,

> If you tell me that Fondecyt and the research projects are over and still there is a way to travel once a year, *that is enough for me* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Technology)

And he continues:

> I hope to be super low profile, I hope I'm not leading anything, I hope I'm publishing in a reasonable way in reasonable times, not being the one that publishes the most and the one that has the most impact factor and the one that has the most citations, I'm not interested at all; *I am interested in being super calm, being able to continue traveling, that is what worries me the most* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Technology)

One academic even used a metaphor: he has had to build a sort of *carcass* (a shell) to survive. This involves a kind of defensive ambiguity that:

> (…) just ignore them [academics playing the game], *ignore what I see, ignore the system and go my own way*, that's what you have to do, maybe it's not the best strategy, but that's what I want to do, however, it's not about ignoring either things completely, we must not neglect productivity so much because that implies a low qualification; so *one has to maintain a balance between those two things, between ignoring and fulfilling productivity* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Science)

Instead of convincing or persuading – like the committed academic often does – this academic reifies the others as a sort of 'false consciousness'. What this academic is trying to do is free himself from playing the game. He finds himself in a crucial tension, an inescapable pressure. In contrast to this position, some academics do play the game. However, playing the game can also be viewed as a form of "counter-conduct" (Foucault, 2011) for those academics working in more traditional universities,

> It's like saying to myself, "ok, you discuss how the university is going to be transformed for the future and how revolutionary it will be", *I find it cool, I support it, but I have to work on this other thing* [writing papers] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Social Science)

This *cynical critical consciousness* seeks to secure its survival while simultaneously operating as a critical attitude that supports critical practices when the time comes. It is an inactive but supportive – from a proper distance – disposition. In addition, it can be seen as an attitude toward the excess of revolution. That is to say, this cynical critique is directed less at a broader culture of corruption (suspicious attitude – ideological critique) and more at specific revolutionary attitude excess. Or in other words, this cynical posture seems to be against any form of idealism, which is viewed as counterproductive and unproductive. Thereby, it is helpful to see the imbrication of cynicism and critique (as negation) as indicative of the constitution of a cynical mode of critique emanating from prevailing neoliberal practices of individuality and competitiveness. This form of cynicism in academia evokes a way of engaged critique of revolutionary excesses while associating that critique with inaction and calculation.

Extrapolating from Allen when he says that educators are those who are 'ground down, disenchanted, but committed to education', one can also see an imbrication of cynical reason and commitment. I want to bring back this position since it represents very well this tension,

> […] I am still thinking of *the world of education, which motives me*, so […] and that is the responsibility, that is the 'pega' [job], *the truth job*, and the other part is like 'ok, how much will I take me?", it will take me the half of my time to solve 'la lavada de platos' [the things I have to do but I do not like to do], ok, *so I still have the other half, and that cannot be subsumed by the other one* (Male – Early Career Researcher – Social Sciences)

From this quotation, there is a tension between two positions. On the one hand, there are things academics like to do (commitment), and, on the other hand, things they do

not want to do thus bringing about disillusion and exhaustion. The point is that the former 'cannot be subsumed by the other'; that is, the disenchantment that produces certain practices within academia cannot impact the commitment (the mission). Thereby, there is a tension between commitment (the mission) and disenchantment (scientific sacrifice) that make academic life a sort of endless existential and ethical struggle. While the committed academic appeals to the progress of humanity and general well-being or another universal goal to justify her/his actions, the disenchanted or cynical one assumes that knowledge production is carried out merely to demonstrate one's own capacity and performance. Or, in other words, whereas the former tries to convince you that there are substantial reasons to do what we do (the mission), the cynical one transparently assumes that what we do – whatever we have to do – is inevitable and part of their job and that is fine, and ask you back, *so what?*

Reflecting on these considerations, academics who play the game and those who refuse to do it share some cynical attitudes. While those who play the game successfully become more cynical in their practices of productivity and competitiveness, those who renounce playing the game become more cynical in their disillusionment and hopelessness. Regardless, the cynical academic looks like a particular form of practical reason, a mode of intense commitment and weary withdrawal, and a style of inaction and conformity. As Kim (2020) put it about Weber's rationalisation thesis, it appears that the cynical academic exists in a 'dialectics of disenchantment and re-enchantment rather than as a one-sided, unilinear process of secularisation; (p. 147). The cynical academic has come to be despaired and hopeful all at once.

Overall, cynicism remains a persistent and problematic mode of relating to reality that affects relationships with oneself, others and knowledge. As for the latter, knowledge production is framed by a kind of defensive disillusionment that makes its potentiality less clear when engaging with society or communities. One could argue that a sort of *scepticism* emerges from how knowledge relates to society. However, this scepticism does not come from the limits of our cognition about reality, the finitude of objective knowledge, or the incapacity to have access to the real truth (objective knowledge) or to be objective, all of which represent epistemological boundaries (Gabriel, 2019)[36]. Instead, what appears to characterise academic critique is an *ethical scepticism* oscillating between despair and hope; that is, it oscillates between the commitment to social problems (missional attitude) and the hopelessness and inaction that comes from the impossibility of having a real impact on society or putting into practice unfulfillable promises. These existential conditions are lived as the way out of the crisis produced by sacrificial practices.

[36] Or, in words of Gabriel (2019), it is possible to distinguish three different conceptions of (epistemological) scepticism: negative dogmatism, Cartesian scepticism and methodological scepticism.

4. A puzzling entanglement: knowledge, reality and freedom (the end)

Academics and knowledge: society and social needs

Suppose one intends to understand why academics stay in academia today. In that case, it seems necessary to explore in more detail how the intersection of academic vocation and mission modifies academics' relationship with reality, morality and freedom (Kasavin, 2020). By doing so, we can see the ambivalence of academia as a mode of life devoted to improving people's lives and the fundamental problems that derive from the relationship between epistemology and ethics.

As a first approximation, there is a complex relationship between the academic-subject (the experience of critique), knowledge and reality mediated by the missional attitude. Although some have argued that 'the individual motivations of the scientist and his idea of his special mission are losing their significance' (Antonovskiy & Barash, 2020, p. 117) and that 'nothing embodies a transcendental and uncongnizable thing-in-itself'" (Kasavin, 2020, p. 102), which means that all technical knowledge about reality is cognisable, it seems that there is a reconfiguration of how knowledge is experienced (and justified) among academics. It is neither God nor nature that can secure knowledge claims. Today what seems to guarantee knowledge production within academia is *society*[37]. These two academics make this point clear,

> I believe that there are two things that must be done, first of all, we must think that *we are building knowledge for society and with society* and open ourselves up to that […] *I make that very clear to myself* (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities and social Sciences)
>
> I have always thought that *society in general*, not that it *expects but requires that its academics, and mainly from public universities, be more involved in national problems*, that is, not that they look from the tribune, that turn their backs [to society] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

But society not only acts as a guarantee of knowledge – which supposes a passive role of society – but it also can affect or change the way academics experience critique (research and teaching); that is, society also has an active role when it comes to academic practices. This academic reminds us what happens when social demonstrations emerge and hence when society questions the role played by academics,

> *October 18, 2019* [the day of massive social demonstrations in Chile] *was a good moment where society questions you and asks you, what do you think?* You only dedicate yourself to writing paper, books, doing your classes; there is an interpellation, I think we have a debt there (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

[37] Or as Gabriel put it, 'from the standpoint of our knowledge claims, the world itself assumes the status of the absolute, of that which is independent of and prior to knowledge' (Gabriel, 2019, p. 11).

Or, in particular, how social protests affect the way some academics undertake teaching,

> […] the number of courses that turned to 'public engagement learning' [*Aprendizaje Servicio*] after the social outbreak and the feminist movement was large, for example, I teach opera and *I had to change the bibliography, change the ways of understanding the problems and everything, to see things differently* through policies, gender issues, there are big changes that occurred in those two years, 2018 and 2019, one could not subtract [...] (Male – Early Career Researcher – Humanities and Arts)

It is interesting to see how academics have a shared attitude regarding the role they play within universities – academic work is purposeful and meaningful – and at the same time, how they behave beyond the university's codes and policies; that is, how they have imposed for themselves some rules of conduct or techniques of life, and how they are driven by a missional disposition far from norms and much more linked to society and its demands – or demand-side practices. From these quotations is possible to see how academics hear the *call of Society*, 'recognising it for what it is, and then justifying one's life in terms of it' (Fuller, 2020a, p. 105).

The call of society can also take a more active and particular disposition among academics: academic activism. Society – in this case represented by a social outbreak – 'questions you and asks you, what do you think?'. If one assumes that academic life is merely driven by a truth-oriented life (vocation), the fact that society 'questions you' becomes problematic; that is, there is a tension between a missional disposition oriented to life beyond the academic community and a vocation guided by truthfulness. In particular, there seems to be a clash between epistemic virtues (the way vocation is practised) and academic activism. Are epistemic virtues possible when it comes to academic activism? Can epistemic virtues such as integrity, steadfastness, diligence, resilience, rigour and carefulness be reconciled with the missional attitude? What kind of virtues emerge from the mission? Regardless, it is clear that society – through its different forms and multiple relationships – impacts how academics behave and relate to themselves, others and reality.

Yet, the question is how academics recognise or experience society when they exercise critique within universities. The following passage is notable because it makes clear the experience of academics when it comes to dealing with society,

> I believe that one of the things that must be done, first of all, is to reconnect with the social, and when I say the social, which *everyone hates*, because *the social is like everything and nothing,* […] that implies thinking of the university with its surroundings, with the territory where it is located, with its neighbouring communities, etc. (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities and Social Sciences)

When this academic points out that 'the social is like everything and nothing', something crucial has been stressed: it reveals a particular mode of relating to reality,

of the relationship between subjectivity (knowledge) and society. What is conceived of as 'the social' for academics is an idea – and not a thing – that seems to be impenetrable, inaccessible and unknowable, and that is why 'everyone hates' it; that is, the fact that society is 'everything and nothing' exposes the way academics relate to society: through a *unified idea that is unreachable and unattainable*. Thus, the academic mission to improve people's lives through knowledge and its applications is underpinned by a unified idea (society) that is activated and reactivated depending on academics' subjective positions.

Thereby, academics are tied to a unifying idea in the form of society or community that makes the exercise of critique and knowledge production possible. Yet, they also experience a diversity of singular objects as *social needs* or social problems. In Chile, the realisation of the importance of social needs for academic life occurred during the social revolt in 2019,

> Well, this idea of knowledge that we have been building is completely alienating and unrelated to the social; on the 18th of October [the day that the social revolt started in Chile in 2019], we became aware of it (...) nobody saw that coming (...) and they [academics] did not see it because *they are not connected with what is happening and the needs of the country*. So the problem is how do we produce knowledge if we are not connected to the needs of the country? What are you producing? (...) So, why do we want development? How do we understand development beyond a neoliberal perspective? Only productive production for what? And for whom? That is not clear (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

The global pandemic also served academics to become aware of this disconnection,

> Now the question is about the scientific production machinery, and it is an analysis that science is doing today, due to Covid: *does science always respond to the needs of the human being?* We have realised that research in Chile is state-of-the-art (...). We realised that our national research is good, it is not bad, but we also needed to link it a little more to the human (...) So the scientific human capital in Chile is very rich, but we had to see in situ that it had to be humanised a little more, that it had to be linked, and here comes the application, and it is the significant step that science has been taking (...) (Female – Mid-career – Technology)

Indeed, academics who have the ability to include social needs in their work demonstrate how the relationship between practice and knowledge changes,

> That paper I have in the medical journal is the most cited one I have. Why? Because it is an instrument that has become a policy, they want to adopt it in many places. So, one of the things I always did was look at needs. Concrete needs where there was a problem one could transform, and solve a need (...) (Male – Senior Researcher – Health)

Society and social needs are interwoven: the latter can be deemed the singular moment of the former. When academics investigate or solve social needs, they

already experience society as universal. Thus, the academic-subject oscillates between experiencing an assortment of social needs in their singularity (immediacy) and being subjected to a unified and unifying idea in the form of society; that is, between a practical experience and a transcendental one. The academic mission is justified by resorting to a universal (society) that forms a multiplicity (social needs[38]) that becomes part of speculations and preoccupations among academics. The following view is a good example of this intersection,

> I see it, for example, in theatre colleagues who are very keen, or in visual arts, *who are very keen to apply the arts to help people's daily life problems*, to heal *social wounds*, etc., *but it is very difficult to land [to do] that in a way that validates you* when you are evaluated (Male – Early Career Researcher – Humanities and Arts)

Even though academics are 'very keen' to help 'people's daily life problems', there seems to be an impossibility at stake. Although social needs express the existence of objective, real and practical social problems that are experienced by academics in their everyday life (research projects), these needs are also experienced as something external (realism) in terms of both time and space; that is, social needs are experienced without history (e.g., the acceleration of time through project-oriented research) and outside the academic community. The latter implies that social needs or social problems are not 'here' (within the academic community) but 'there' (society). Or, to put it in another way, one could affirm that social needs, seen as the unreachable aspect of empirical reality, justify the academic vocation: social knowledge retains something mysterious to be praised. Although academics can partially understand (epistemological dimension) social needs, these emerge only when the academic-subject has identified the problem and provided a solution (through research projects). Before and after this formal procedure and rationalisation, social needs are merely a *mystical* justification of the academic mission.

Suppose one accepts that social needs are the singular moment of a transcendental idea. In that case, it is possible to say then that society has become the new moral force, or the condition of the possibility of critique in academia, that drives academics behaviours and confers validity to their actions and attitudes within universities. Society is the (regulative or constitutive) authority to which some academic practices should be subordinated. Thus, for instance, although academic life is often constrained by the transitory dimension of research (short-term and project-oriented research), which affects the way academics see reality, what seems to unify academic endeavours, or gives systemic foundations to their practices and achievements, is the existence of society and communities and their social needs. These needs provide long-term foundations for the academic missional attitude. It looks like the slow death of universal emblems like the nation-state or the Republic (see Chapter 5) has reached

[38] It could be interesting to connect this experience with the premises of economics: there are infinite needs and scarce resources. Presumably, the experience of endless needs is a performative act from economics theories.

a new historical period characterised by the return of secular gods and demons in the form of social needs that justify the academic mission and its sacrificial practices. This situation goes against the general idea that academic life has lost its mission due to the process of rationalisation and the prevalence of instrumental reason in modern life, pointed out by Weber and his predecessors, and by Richard (2004) in Chile. Instead, I argue that academics have always retained the designated mission but have been reconfigured differently. The spectres of Bello have been reactivated.

In addition, the disconnection between the academic-subject and society and hence the need to 'reconnect with the social', as my participants often stated, leads to the fetishisation of the latter. This means that society, territory or community, due to its unknowability, becomes idealised; that is, society's needs and problems become something to be considered when exercising critique. The need to 'reconnect' with society brings about the question of what kind of things academics should consider relevant for teaching and research. By doing so, academics assign a particular representation to society, territory and community. However, these representations are not unique; they are multiple, which entails a struggle for which representation prevails within the academy. For instance, it is not the same to recognise other types of knowledge, practices and experiences (e.g., artisanal knowledge) as a legitimate way of knowing reality or to value some communities' role in identifying problems and providing solutions[39]. The relationship between the academy and society is different, and the epistemological implications are dissimilar. Yet, in both cases, there is a mediation between academic knowledge and society that takes the form of a representation or idealisation that engenders a particular mode of academic life. The fact that multiple, abstract and unstable representations mediate the relationship between the academic-subject and society gives rise to a struggle: although the individual academic-subject wants to 'reconnect with society' (transcendental), it has no access to its pure reality. It thus ends up having only access to particular social needs or problems. This impossibility seems to give rise to a specific form of *scepticism* – which is not epistemological but ethical – among academics (see previous section)[40].

Let us consider this in more detail. I suggest that academics recognise society as an external reality, a totality comprising everything that makes academic practices possible. The existence of society, territory or community is indispensable to the experience of academic critique. However, given academics experience social needs as immediacy and singular, they cannot experience society in its pureness. This situation leads them to experience *the impossibility of society* – to improve people's lives, to share social needs, or to be immersed in society – and, concomitantly, the

[39] 'The territory is the protagonist of the solutions'. This position was especially highlighted by academics working in regional or territorial universities. In those places, the region or the territory becomes a fundamental part of their practices and imaginaries.
[40] For instance, inter and transdisciplinary research often need help with defining the problem to be addressed.

constitution of a particular form of scepticism. The point I would like to highlight here is that this impossibility seems to be grounded in the way academic life is organised today: the acceleration of time (project-oriented research), which produces an experience shaped by the transitory dimension of knowledge production (Fuller, 2020b) and the establishment of certain (methodological, epistemological and ethical) boundaries between the academic community and society.

This ethical attitude would have possibly opposed Weber's proclamation of science as a moral project that seeks the constitution of an ivory tower far from society, that is, 'the only place where scientists sense of fulfilment can be generated, free agency regained and self-identity re-empowered' (Kasavin, 2020, p. 103). Instead, the academic mission now involves the moral obligation to contribute to society or human enhancement through various practices and activities[41]. Thereby, and borrowing Foucault's reflection on modes of subjectivation, one could argue that a divine law (God) was replaced by a social law (social needs) mediated and reactivated by the market. Despite this reconfiguration, the mode of subjectivation, or the way academics relate to reality, seems mystical.

In other words, Daston and Galison (2007) argue that the scientific self and the entire scientific community are driven by an epistemology and moral conduct heavily influenced by Neo-Kantianism, that is, by understanding reality as an objective external separated from subjectivity. Thereby, social needs appear for academics as a multiplicity of particulars, which denotes an epistemological experience: social problems are objective and exist outside the academic community. This is the *empirical moment* of the experience of academic critique. At the same time, it is possible to argue that, unlike Daston and Galison, society appears to academics as a unified and unifying idea resulting from academic knowledge. This is the *idealistic moment* of the experience of academic critique. Therefore, two modalities of experience are at play when academics relate to society and its demands. Regardless, both social needs and society are experienced as unreachable.

Academics and society: the academic-self

Yet, the mode of relating to these social needs is not unpolluted – now I move on from analysing the relationship between academics and society considering the perspective of the object (society) to examining the relationship between academics and society considering the standpoint of the subject (academics).

[41] There are multiple initiatives around the world seeking to 'reconnect' universities with communities. See, for example, the ecoversities project (https://ecoversities.org/). All these projects have something in common: the aestheticisation of society or communities.

Academics' fears and desires also mediate how academics relate to social needs. These elements can be seen through different layers. For instance, this academic is concerned with her level of productivity,

> (…) I think that the initial concern is *that I am not complying at the level of my productivity* for the qualification [tenure path], considering that if I am poorly qualified that will weigh on my dossier and at the same time, if in ten years, what the regulations of my university at least say, I do not settle in research areas, which is what always take more weight, I lose my job, or I am not, I am not hierarchized and I lose my job, *so it is clearly not a minor concern* (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Social Sciences and Education)

This one is concerned with how academia and universities are being swayed by external forces like the market, which affect academic purposes and autonomy,

> Those are the spaces that I am afraid of returning to the academy in Chile [knowledge legitimizing neoliberal policies; lack of autonomy], not afraid of relating with them, because I know that I am not going to link up with them, on principle, but it does *scare me that the academy in Chile could become under those types of parameters* (Female – Early Career Researcher – Art and Architecture)

Also, some academics show a preoccupation with how society might interpret their research findings. When the results are disseminated, a complex relationship between knowledge and society is materialised, requiring more attention. This academic says it clearly,

> An aspect that also suddenly appears to us is the issue that obviously the conclusions, the interpretations that one generates, so to speak, remain, after one produces them, publishes them, many times they remain as ... available for that *the public consumes them and in that process consumes them as they want* [...] then there is also a kind of small *ethical dilemma regarding what to say, how to say it*, and that sometimes escapes us because […] it doesn't occur to us that someone is going to read a scientific article but suddenly things just happen, grow, and escape from one's hands (Male – Senior Researcher – Basic Sciences)

Likewise, the fear of being excluded from academia plays a crucial role when it comes to relating to society,

> [...] leaving sciences is like a kind of death, and this is how they live it, it is very generalized; it is a way of life, they spend the night in the laboratories. It is a promise, *a kind of myth, of terror that outside the academy there is nothing* (of the university) and it is a mix between contempt, fear, but it has its origin in the social, cultural, emotional invalidity of the academics because they are standing in a place that is a bubble, a world, that protects you and *leaving that means dying* (Female – Senior Researcher – Basic Sciences and Social Sciences)

> […] I am more terrified of being abandoned than abandoning academia, because *in reality sometimes I feel that it is the only thing I can do* [investigate]; so, getting out of this would mean a lot of fear for me, because I don't know what else to do than write papers and articles, no one is going to pay me for that, for writing

> articles, except for the university (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Social Sciences)

The fear of not being valued by society,

> the way we are producing knowledge is an alienating way, disconnected with people and to the extent of its disconnection is that it does not produce any utility, where is the utility? Useful for whom? At least in the area of social sciences and humanities, apparently for no one because *we have also lost the value within society* (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities and Social Sciences)

And the disillusion of not doing things that has an impact on people's lives,

> [...] and also because of the issue of impact, one sometimes feels that one is in a very esoteric matter in the academy, working for, making some publications that are read by five people. Before working at the university I worked more on culture in general, the books I published*, the things I did had a much greater impact on many more people*, and meeting people and what one did was much more satisfying; In the academy *it is very easy to end up spending time writing papers about the community, and not a concrete action, a real impact on the people* [...] (Male – Mid-career Researcher - Humanities and Art and Architecture)

All these fears illustrate one particular attitude: the fear of being isolated or disconnected from society. In all these examples, society (as an abstract representation) plays a vital role in sketching out the boundaries and expectations of academics. Therefore, it seems that it is neither the fear of subjectivity interfering with objectivity (Daston & Galison, 2007) nor the impossibility of knowing the truth of the real (Shah, 2017) – which are epistemological fears – that characterises academic life but rather the fear of not contributing to social needs within the university; the fear of not being immersed in society, or being isolated; or as I put it in chapter 6, these fears are grounded in the desire to be recognised by both the academic community but also by the society – *homo symbolicus*. Simply put, it is the fear of not being recognised by a collective subject.

This general attitude also implies that academics are, in great measure, doomed to improve their skills to respond to the demands of this mission-vocation. Indeed, according to Shah (2017), there is always an ethical imperative at the core of epistemic virtues, or more precisely, if we want to maximise the impact of our endeavours, we need to keep working on our skills. Thus, it seems to me – as I have argued throughout the thesis – that it is neither the ethos of objectivity nor the pathos of paranoia that drives academic epistemology (Shah, 2017) but an ethics of excellence in the form of self-improvement. If academics want to maximise the impact of their achievements, they need to focus on improving their skills, competences and personal qualities. And these skills need to be recognised as techniques of the self, that is, practices carried out by academics to transform how they relate with themselves, others and knowledge.

Knowledge and freedom

Furthermore, the relationship between knowledge and freedom is crucially mediated by mission-vocation. According to what I have discussed so far, the mode of subjectivation of Chilean academics oscillates between mission and vocation. Whereas vocation defends creative and innovative individual freedom – 'taking the risk': the Calvinist sense of vocation – as the highest value in science (Kasavin, 2020), the mission emphasises community engagement as the value to be accounted for, as the regulative authority to which all actions and practices are attached to[42]. Although the academic community essentially shares this mission as a self-imposed rule of conduct or moral obligation beyond norms, over the last decades, the idea of community engagement [*vinculación con el medio*] has increasingly been regulated by rigid and standardised national policies and institutional codes – particularly in the case of Chile[43]. Regardless of the conditions and regulations put into effect by these policies, what seems to be crucial here is the tension between academic freedom and community engagement. Or, simply put, if academic freedom drives academic vocation, one could argue that science as a profession devoted to human enhancement and mutual recognition becomes hardly possible, as we have seen through the narratives above.

For academics, this tension is decisive today. In the view of this academic, referring to a personal dilemma, there is pressure from the region or territory with regards to what one investigates that affect one's research agenda,

> (...) we have regional funds, and there are many pressures from the region, that is, what does the region want one to investigate (...) but I work with disease mechanisms (biomedicine) that are much more basic and that can be transversal and they are not directly applicable to a disease (prevalent in the region), so in that sense one has to try to mould their projects to something more regional or definitely open a new line and open up to the problem of what here (the region) is considered interesting to investigate (...) So, in reality, one can be a bit of a Don Quixote and say "I am independent of all this and finally I am going to investigate what interests me and then I will see how I finance myself", however, personally I am interested in contributing (...) (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Health)

Despite this essential tension, my participants often drew upon academic freedom to justify their decision to remain in academia. Theoretically, this does not seem to be rare because one could argue that given the mission is sustained by a logic of exteriority (social needs are external and unreachable), the experience of individual freedom is possible: I am free by myself far away from everything and everyone. The question arising from these considerations is what kind of freedom is at play when they

[42] This difference can also be found in how Locke, Humboldt and Fichte interpreted the relationship between the individual subject and society: 'Whereas Locke had in mind the mutual non-interference of society's members, Humboldt and Fichte thought in terms of mutual facilitation of members. In Locke's society, you have a right to be left alone; in Humboldt and Fichte's society you have a duty to be recognized' (Fuller, 2020b, p. 109).

[43] This regulation involves evaluating public engagement activities during the institutional accreditation process.

recognise their obligations. Statements like "I don't like the system, but I stay because it gives me freedom" were commonplace during the interviews. This attitude indicates that freedom is used as an ethical imperative whereby academics see themselves as part of a community entitled to exercise freedom, or more precisely, embedded in freedom. The way this academic put it resonates with this position,

> One of the things that I like about the academy is that you can control your time more or less, in the sense that if today I am fed up [chato], I don't work, or I don't work in what is expected […] read or whatever and that's it, I don't have to ask anyone's permission (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Technology)

Some academics feel privileged because they can choose what they want to do in research. This possibility even gives them satisfaction,

> I am super happy with my work; I feel that we are... *I feel that I am privileged*, I always say it, from every point of view, from the point of view of the salary that I receive in countries with great inequality, regarding the possibility of traveling, the possibility of writing, *freedom to choose topics*, teamwork, reduced teaching load (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities).
>
> (...) *what gives me the most satisfaction is having the time and peace of mind to delve into a subject in depth*, study it well, read the literature and try to express it in what I do, that is something that I really like. Then read a particularly interesting paper, try to understand something that I did not understand well (…) (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Law).

But this privileged position is also sustained by the fact that there are some places – particularly universities – where you cannot be censored. This academic refers to his university as a place that ensures his freedom in contrast to other universities where some ideas or research agendas could be prohibited,

> one is a kind of 'intellectual', that is, *you have total control of your time*, you can decide to do whatever you want, you can be interested in whatever you want, at least at the University of Chile it favours me because *unlike all the other business schools in Chile, at the University of Chile there is no censorship*, in the other business schools there is censorship, therefore, *I would not have the freedom to invent what I wanted*, instead here yes, in other places they would prohibit me, so that is something that gives me great satisfaction, which is like having freedom (Male – Early Career Researcher – Commerce and Administration)

Interestingly, this academic sees himself as a 'kind of intellectual', which involves having 'total control of your time'. This academic 'employs' time rather than feeling time as an external pressure. This form of freedom permeates the experience of time in academia: from lack of time to time as a privilege to be used radically.

However, freedom not only refers to the privilege of not being controlled by an external entity that could impede academic research agendas (negative freedom), but it also depends on how academics enact the ethics of excellence that drives academic

epistemology; that is, it is necessary to distinguish between an *abstract experience of freedom* (I might have or I might not have freedom) and *how academics achieve freedom* (the struggle for freedom). Regarding the latter point, the view of this academic is notable,

> You do not secure yourself [holding a position] in your opinions, behaviour, courage, critical posture, but in the publications, and *that gives you freedom*. Better not talk. *And they can't get you out because you have the publications* (Female – Senior Researcher – Basic Sciences and Social Sciences)

Under the neoliberalisation of academia, or the so-called academic capitalism, what gives you freedom is to publish. It is not merely the consolidation of the *publish or perish* regime but the fact that publishing equates to freedom. Yet, it is more than surviving; to publish confers academics the capacity to choose what they want to do. Thereby, publishing provides academics with a shelter that helps them be free and find their work satisfying. Likewise, publishing offers a sort of protection when an external power comes or when the future (*telos*) is imagined,

> I have worked in several institutions (…) [where] one is considered *shit* and that *you have to work very hard in your area and publish because the institution can kick you out anywhere, at any time*. So I've found out that the university is my cool work platform, I protect it well, I do my best, I always put my signature where I work but this thing I don't do it for the university (…) I know that if I don't want to take on an administrative position because it bothers me and I reject it for the second or third time they are going to kick me out, *but before that I want to be at such a level of intellectual academic self-protection* that they say “we've already left him free” and for *that I have to work hard to become a highly respected person* in my area (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Social Sciences)

That is to say, for academics to do what they want, they have to ‘work hard and publish’. The academy seems to be dealing with a freedom that, on its surface, is liberal (negative freedom) but whose roots are neoliberal (productivity and competitiveness). To be free in the academy in Chile – at least in some places – does not necessarily involve doing one’s research agenda but being productive and competitive. If one’s research agenda is carried out successfully is secondary. What is relevant is ‘to publish because the institution can kick you out anywhere, at any time’; the fear of being abandoned by the academy rather than leaving academia characterises the struggle to stay. One could say that the ethics of excellence has reconfigured the relationship between two opposing values within academia: academic freedom and playing the game (productivity and competitiveness). The latter used to be regarded – at least in more traditional spaces – as a way of narrowing down academic freedom and hence prestige. Now freedom is playing the game, or more precisely, *playing the game gives you freedom*.

Therefore, the relationship between vocation (academic freedom) and mission (community engagement) is also reconfigured. Putting things this way, if academic freedom in the form of playing the game dominates academic life, one could argue

that science as a profession devoted to human enhancement becomes impossible (focus on productivity rather than on making an impact). Yet, although freedom has been inverted, the mission to improve people's lives still sustains its vocation and scientific achievements. Or, to put it more accurately, given that social needs appear for the academic-subject as external, this situation permits the experience of *abstract individual freedom*. Therefore it gives academics an excuse to stay.

5. Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have analysed why academics remain in universities despite some experiencing unstable but persistent existential conditions such as despair, disenchantment and exhaustion. I have tried to portray the struggle to stay when they decide to enter or remain in academia. To do that, I have connected the personal narratives of a group of Chilean scholars with the analysis of modes of subjectivation proposed by Foucault; that is, I have tried to understand the way academics recognise their moral obligations and become ethical subjects today within universities.

The analysis of the modes of subjectivation in academia indicates that despite the commodification of Chilean universities, which implies an apparent rationalisation and secularisation of all social relations, academics' practices are underpinned by metaphysical arrangements (Allen, 2017) or fantasmatic ideals (Clarke, 2020). These still orient their actions and influence how they relate to themselves, others, knowledge and reality. This situation gives rise to a renewed ethical attitude that resignifies academic vocation: *the missional attitude* – this resonates with Bello's concern with adhering to the needs of the nation-state as a key aspect of being a member of the university. I have highlighted how academics' relationship with the social – which appears to them as a phantasmatic and imaginary potency – becomes mystical due to the existence of multiple and mysterious[44] social needs which are unknowable and hence unreachable. It is mystical because it is mediated by a range of abstract representations or fetishisation: the public, the truth, prestige, reputation, etcetera. Simply put, this relationship with society can be seen as a new kind of religious zeal. With this in mind, I suggested that the order created by the ethics of excellence remains unchanged thanks to the constitution of an academic-self driven by a missional attitude and devoted to pursuing particular ends: the contribution to social needs through knowledge production. This mission sustains a network of practices and behaviours that make the academic critique a meaningful experience.

After grappling with the complexities of academic vocation and mission, I provided an account of what happens when this double-sided ethical attitude disappears or becomes a burden for academic life. A sort of *ethical scepticism* emerges when the mission-vocation is dislocated or reconfigured by the impossibility of having access to

[44] They are mysterious due to the commodification of knowledge within universities. A commodity form mediates the relationship between academics and society.

society and its social needs. This ethical scepticism oscillates between despair (disenchantment and exhaustion) and hope. These forms are ethical – and not epistemological – because they affect how academics relate to themselves, others and knowledge. I have focused on how the *cynical reason* operates in academia today to unify the practical reason behind this ethical scepticism. What characterises this reason in academia is an attitude grounded in a debilitating pessimism that leads to inaction, calculation and conformity but is also framed by an embedded commitment. The cynical academic seems to be spinning around a bitter disillusion about how academic life is organised and a defensive commitment and hope regarding the future of academia and university life. Or, in other words, in the cynical reason in academia, we see a detached pessimism which scarcely finds any hope. Yet, simultaneously find the committed academic who remains hopeful. The cynical academic thus turns out to be a disappointment and an optimistic figure. This tension defines the way academics relate to the contemporary university today. Therefore, the cynical academic – in its different variations – acts as a preserving force – rather than disruptive and productive one – that tolerates and supports the structures that sustain the ethics of excellence in academia.

Similarly, I have explored how this double-sided ethical attitude (mission-vocation) reactivates academic freedom. A crucial tension determines academic life today: academic freedom or community engagement. Despite this tension, I have shown how the fetish (or healing fiction) of academic freedom underpins the reasons behind staying in academia. Academics often resort to the advantages of academic freedom when describing their everyday life. With this in mind, I have distinguished between an *abstract experience of freedom* (I might or might not have freedom) and *how academics achieve freedom* (the struggle for freedom or practices of academic freedom). Drawing on this distinction, I have stated that academic freedom is constituted by an abstract experience based on 'negative freedom' and a practical experience based on productivity and competitiveness. Thereby, what gives freedom to academics is not an abstraction (e.g., academic freedom as the condition of academic life) but *playing the game*. That is to say, playing the game secures freedom or free inquiry.

In this regard, it is possible to say that vocation, mission and cynical reason, along with their multiple interconnections and reconfigurations, are the basis of academics' moral experience. Yet the following question must be addressed again: why do academics remain in the academy despite existential conditions? Although 'practical utilities and truth claims' still play an essential role in academic life, what seems to unify and provide long-term foundations for some Chilean academics is the mission to improve people's lives or have impact on society or another external abstraction; that is, academics stay because they strive for gaining a mode of life which is driven by a dialectical entanglement between community engagement and academic freedom that create a meaningful account of what academics do and how they should conduct their lives within and outside universities.

CHAPTER 8

POSSIBILISING

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the relationship between the ethics of excellence and existing practices of critique – here understood as a critical attitude – by problematising how refusing or reversing the conditions of knowledge production (governmental strategies) transforms academics' relation with themselves, others and knowledge. This issue can be addressed by the following question: can academics hold a critical attitude – productive negation – and, at the same time, behave according to the ethics of excellence? From an epistemological perspective, being critical and simultaneously driven by the ethics of excellence does not seem problematic. From an ethical standpoint, instead, the answer is more complicated. In principle, refusing how to be governed in a certain way *seems* to collide with the ethics of excellence because what this form of critique aims – one could argue – is precisely the reactivation or reconfiguration of the ethics that drives the academy. Or, to put it another way, a critical attitude often involves contesting the conditions of the possibility of modern thought (Ball, 2020)[45], producing tension and conflict between critique and the ethics that drive its practices.

Yet, can academics undertake practices of critique *beyond* sacrificial practices, the desire for inclusion and recognition (*homo symbolicus*), abstract ideals, the means-end nexus and ethical scepticism? (see Chapter 6 and 7). If one believes that all these conditions are inevitable, the answer is simple: academics cannot hold a critical attitude beyond these conditions. But what if critique extends beyond these conditions or at least wanders about their boundaries? This means that some critical attitudes still have yet to be captured by institutional obligation or that have yet to be wholly commodified. Drawing upon Daston and Galison (2007), I argue that the efforts towards refusing the modalities of academic life are necessarily linked to the *emergence* of an ethos and a particular academic-self. Thus, challenging objectivity, quality (epistemic virtues) or how academic life is organised at a given time and culture makes the tensions and contradictions within the academic-self visible. Or in other words, existing forms of critical attitudes make the possibility of thinking and acting differently possible. Reflecting on the *possibilising* dimension of existing practices of critique is the purpose of this chapter. It is worth noting that this dimension of critique emerged during the interviews and was complemented by theoretical reflections.

With this in mind, the aim is to understand further to what extent the ethics of excellence still *operates/mediates* when academics carry out refusal practices aiming to *disturb themselves and the academy*. Drawing upon existing practices of critique of a group of Chilean scholars, this exploration shows the emergence of an ethics that

[45] Indeed, critiquing science's assumptions is part of being a scientist.

extends beyond excellence and is tied to a field of possibilities. This ethic might contribute to the de-commodification of universities and hence thinking of new possibilities of doing academia. However, the formation of such an ethic exists in tension. Based on Thayer's (2020) distinction, two intertwined forms of critique are at issue: *suspension* and *interruption*. This means that two academic selves are cultivated and constantly forged by these practices.

2. Critique as suspension

Drawing on my participant's narratives and Thayer's (2020) and Ball's (2021) distinctions on critique, it is possible to argue that two critical attitudes *suspend* the order or the conditions of its own existence. On the one hand, the attitude of being *against* the field; that is, constant attitude of scepticism, or the so-called hermeneutic of suspicious (Anker & Felski, 2017); and, on the other hand, the attitude of being *for* the field and driven by the need to create a new one. Yet both, I want to argue, *preserve* the order and the conditions for the possibility of knowledge production within the contemporary university.

Rupturing practices (against)

Being against, or at least sceptical, about how knowledge is produced today within the university was a frequent issue during the interviews. This attitude focuses on what can be called *epistemological critique*. This interviewee, for example, describes the tension between traditional and new theoretical approaches when doing historical research,

> From the eyes of a more traditional historian, one could say, "well, there are many things that are already super-investigated", but the intersections and the different questions that are being asked of those same processes, periods, are super relevant (...) there is an almost *generalized fear* of everything that smells of post-modernism (...) which leaves a number of discussions, questions, etc, outside, almost as undue, respect for a discipline that clings to more traditional issues, so that's what I would say, *I believe at this time to produce a more notable historiography goes through understanding precisely that discussion that did not take place, at least in my case, did not take place in my formative process*, and that I came to discover almost by coincidence, and I know that that happened to other colleagues [my emphasis] (Male – Early Career Researcher – Humanities and Education)

The following view offers more details about what is at play in epistemological critique,

> In the field of history, I think that colleagues have had a hard time overcoming positivism, as well as what the sources say, consulting the most traditional sources, a lot of dates and a lot of stories (…) It is a way, a style and a school of doing history, which has its merits, the history department comes from a great school of social history and there are good exponents but they are a bit conservative (...) So of course, I have always been like a weirdo, not always with the same assessment, but *at the same time it allows me to say with great pride that I am one of the few and the first to have worked on the subject,* at least in the

> history department [my emphasis] (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

These critical attitudes are illustrative of two elements in epistemological critique. On the one hand, the questioning of 'traditional approaches' since they impede a fuller and better understanding of historical and social phenomena; that is, the attempt to break with a tradition that still predominates the disciplinary field (e.g. positivism). On the other hand, they illustrate the struggle for doing things 'more notable' or being 'the first to have worked on the subject'; that is, the importance for academics to achieve exceptional knowledge as a result of bringing new approaches or topics into the field.

In a broader context, some academics question established research practices (research grant evaluations) by appealing to a particular understanding of *academic freedom*. The experience of this academic when she applied for the first time for a research grant is meaningful,

> The first time I presented the project to Fondecyt (initiation), I noticed that one of the evaluators did not like the topic, and several [of my colleagues] suggested that I should change the topic so that I would win it the following year, [but] *I did not want to change it because I wanted to investigate that theme. There is a certain rebelliousness in insisting on what one thinks is relevant to do* (...) why would I have to change the subject when the arguments they give you do not convince you, *they were not very academic* [my emphasis] (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities)

Here we can see how refusal practices and the ethics of excellence are interwoven. This critical attitude insists on 'what one thinks is relevant to do' regardless of the evaluation; it resorts to academic freedom by refusing an *external interference* (the evaluators). In addition, she refers to this external evaluation as 'not very academic'. This affirmation means that the highest standards were not met when the evaluators reviewed her research project; in other words, the review was far from perfect and hence did not deserve attention. Here we can see the intersection of critical attitude and excellence when critiquing certain power relations in academia.

Similarly, normative principles or socio-political ideals like cooperation and collaboration are often used to criticise how academic life is organised today. It is well-known that productivity is an enabling factor in advancing the academic career. So, when one academic decides to renounce productivity as they are already 'at the best levels', although paradoxical, it denotes a critical attitude,

> I have been a full professor for about 20 years and I have always maintained myself *at the best levels*, so for me all that (productivity) is not a problem. Therefore, when I have research groups, I invite everyone and tell them "OK, you publish this, you publish this, you publish this. Happy now? They often ask, and you? It doesn't matter, don't worry about me, because I am capable of publishing. Don't worry about me, *what I want is for you to emerge, for you to go to the top* and those who have a researcher's soul and who like what they do and know that they have talent, go ahead and don't be succumbed to authority." So, for me, *the*

> *words cooperation and collaboration and multidisciplinary are central to research* (Female – Senior Researcher – Basic Science)

It is a paradoxical critical attitude since although it is driven by ideals or ultimate ends that extend beyond individual productivity and include collaboration and cooperation; it does not break with the system of valorisation of knowledge production within universities. It attempts to make research communities more collaborative while maintaining the order of things. Indeed, she stopped publishing because she already has enough publications for herself.

The same situation can be seen in the following narrative. In the name of more equality and recognition among senior and early career researchers, some academics advocate for equal economic incentives,

> But if *I have an act of rebellion*, the first is to share the productivity incentive with the students and among all the authors; the decree of the University says that the first author can access that, but I always have a letter signed so that everyone receives an economic contribution in equal parts, which is a stimulus and that seems to me to be a nice thing that can be done for recent graduates without work, *recognize their work* [my emphasis] (Female – Mid-career Researcher – Technology)

Others advocate for better working conditions in academia,

> What I have fought in this life is *against authoritarianism and arbitrariness* in the working conditions of young people in the laboratories (…) I was Director of an institute with 180 researchers, of which 140 are independent researchers. In most cases, the relationships work well but the people, subcontracted, paid for projects, is an *unimaginable and invisible situation of exploitation.* There I get rebellious, in those issues (…) (Male – Senior Researcher – Basic Sciences)

Although minor forms of critique, these examples show how critical attitudes are interwoven with the ethics of excellence in the contingency of normality. When academics question traditional epistemologies by appealing to exceptionality and freedom, or when they criticise practices like productivity, authoritarianism and exploitation and resort to socio-political ideals like collaboration, cooperation, and equality of opportunities, it might well be indicative of wider dynamics between the ethics of excellence and critical attitudes in academia.

Therefore, I argue that at some point and under certain circumstances, the practice of being against or sceptical or the rupture with the conditions of knowledge production brings into play a complex relationship between suspension and preservation. This is similar to what Ranciere (2007) pointed out when he referred to philosophical critique, which puts knowledge into question 'without ever touching its foundations' and as a result, 'the questioning of knowledge in philosophy always ends in its restoration'

(Rancière, 2007). Critical attitudes always have to deal with to what extent the order or episteme governing academic life is changed or reactivated differently.

Considering these experiences, one question needs to be addressed: how does the practice of being against or sceptical impact the way academics relate with themselves and others? This raises the problem of the *ethical limits* within epistemological critique (Ball & Collet-Sabé, 2021). The assumption behind this question is that the practice of being against modifies the subjective limits that academics set for themselves in their contingency of normality. Or, to put it another way, this critical attitude is a work constantly carried out by the academic-subject on herself. The following view from an early career researcher helps us understand the tension between epistemological critique and ethics,

> For me, teaching is important, I don't know if I could be a teacher, so to speak, a *robot teacher,* that is, they hire you to put a program into practice, and that still exists, I have heard it in several places, where they hire you and they say "this is the content that you have to teach" and here is everything, I think *that for me that is like an ethical limit* [my emphasis] (Male – Early Career Researcher – Social Sciences and Education)

When this academic refuses to be a 'robot teacher', that is, to teach in a certain way and a given content (syllabus dispute), that decision sets certain limits that have significant implications for himself and their academic life; that is, challenging disciplinary practices or epistemic virtues have decisive effects on the relationship that academics have with themselves, others and knowledge. Or in other words, epistemological critique implies a reconfiguration of the academic self in a way that transforms the limits of everyday academic practices, giving rise to self-formation practices that forge the academic self. The work of the academic-subject on the self leads at once to a self-negation moment and hence to a particular way of life. However, given that these activities are linked to an epistemological critique that tends to suspend the order momentarily, the ethical limits set by these self-formation practices cannot challenge the order of things in a way that academic life might be imagined differently. These self-formation practices (the limits) do not concern the structure of the academic self, which would lead to think *the limit* as a way of life, but merely "the individual in its concrete existence"; that is, being against or sceptical of the limits. In other words, this is the difference between the transformation of the limit (which critique as suspension does) and experiencing the limit as a way of life – I return to this idea in section 2.

Creating new alternatives (the invisible future)

A critical attitude also suspends the order when some utopian forces are brought into play by the academic self; or, as Latour put it, when *the world of beyond* emerges and drives their actions and reasonings (Latour, 2004). For this force, what is familiar and taken for granted – the episteme at a given time and culture – is called into question to *found a new field*, a new understanding of concepts and life (Thayer, 2020). It is not only being against the order but also creating a new one. Thus, alternative categories

are forged, but also old ones acquire new meanings or a renewed familiarity. It is a critique that after unmasking and exposing ideology and power relations, suspend the order and activate a process of estrangement and (dis)engagement[46].

When academics ask themselves 'what we are striving for', the response often emphasises the *world of beyond* (see chapter 7). What is relevant, according to academics, is more knowledge, justice, equality, democracy, or another higher goal. In what follows, I provide some examples to frame how this critical attitude appears.

First, one of my participants refers to the need to expand knowledge to understand some particularities of the country,

> (…) knowing the human history of the territory, which *helps to enrich our knowledge*, contributes to discourses such as cultural tolerance, knowing the cultural richness of Chile (…) [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Science)

Second, for some academics contributing to society through scientific knowledge is the most significant part of academic life,

> I tell you what moves me is not so much personal recognition but rather contributing socially to reflection and the *better development of science* [my emphasis] (Male – Senior Researcher – Basic Sciences and Humanities)

> (…) *I think we have to go back to that, that is, do science thinking about the problems of the country* (...) in this policy of papers and papers, It is not necessarily that this is in line with a reflection on the country, because you can write 20 papers on the leg of the fly, but perhaps the analysis does not have an impact [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities).

When my participants refer to society as the object of their preoccupations, they are highlighting the world of beyond; that is, a sort of "unity" and "objectivity" (an exterior place) that make their actions possible (see chapter 7). The order is suspended, at least symbolically, when they orient their actions and reasonings according to different *ways of imagining* how society can be developed and enhanced. Imagining new ways of living together or relating to nature is a moment whereby the order of things is momentarily suspended. It is suspended because what is familiar – categories, ideas, institutions, practices, etc. – is put into question and *potentially* becomes other-of-itself.

However, this critical attitude needs some specific conditions to emerge. The first condition is the *political and institutional context* of academic practices. Let us take the example of this academic, who was fired as a result of political controversies within a university but managed to come back and make substantive changes in the department,

> In 2001, they (the department) reinstated me *due to a kind of revolution that took place in pedagogy* (a university faculty), of transformation, where the school was

[46] See, for example, the decolonisation movement in academia.

> completely transformed (...) [my emphasis] (Male – Senior researcher – Humanities and Education)

This 'kind of revolution' – a particular context – was crucial in helping him return to the faculty. Yet, he did not just return to the university but was also invested with a kind of *transcendental* power that entitled him to make changes within the faculty; that is, to suspend a particular order to activate a new one. Thus,

> (…) we remade the program very much inspired by X [another university] (...) *we rearmed it but adapted to the pedagogical program*, which is a program that in general philosophy departments in Santiago hated or did not like very much because it was a program that had a canon of writings that was very contemporary (...) because we were oriented us to teaching, to training teachers for the system, for high school and basic education (...) [my emphasis] (Male – Senior researcher – Humanities and Education)

A particular form of suspension of the order sustains this stance. It is not merely being against but fighting *for* something higher beyond education and academia: in this case, for teachers. Or in other words, it is an attempt to dissolute the order in favour of more justice or equality. Then, my interviewee adds, the development of the new curriculum in the pedagogy department

> (...) took us a lot of time (...) I think we did it in 15 or 20 years to install that program in the university (...) *however, I think that all of that is dying now, structurally* (...) [my emphasis] (Male – Senior researcher – Humanities and Education)

Thus, what was taken for granted in this case (the programme's content) was morphed into new theoretical paradigms and teaching and learning strategies. As he pointed out, the problem is that 'all of that is dying now'. Regardless of the factors that explain this 'failure', I would like to highlight how creating alternatives brings into play the complex relationship between suspension and preservation. Would it be possible to say that there is something within this form of critique (utopian) that make it difficult to sustain these changes in the long term? Or, instead, is the university machine capturing any form of critique? Perhaps the following reflection of my participant might help us to address these questions,

> I look at the photos, for example, of that transformation that took place in the pedagogical department, that kind of *biestamental* [academics and students are part of the university governance] academic faculty, *where everything was transformed*, at least in ideas (…) and *the photos are exactly the photos of a popular church* (...) there is a whole thing there, well, that's over, the *biestamentalidad* is over, somehow, it's over (...) [my emphasis] (Male – Senior researcher – Humanities and Education)

The image of a 'popular church' accurately represents this form of critical attitude trapped around the *world of beyond*. What makes people gather around this sort of projects or ideas? One could argue that the idea of imagined futures, which can be seen as improved or different visions of the present, plays a crucial role in putting

people together. In this case, the idea of more democracy within the faculty contributed to the deployment of this critique. However, what made this critical attitude impossible? This is precisely what Foucault criticised in 'The Will to Knowledge' when he said that 'we ardently conjure away the present and appeal to the future' (Foucault, 1978, p. 6) as if imagining the future were an act of putting ourselves outside power relations. Perhaps this is the crucial point to understand the preservation moment of this form of critical attitude. Thus, rephrasing Foucault, we must not think that by appealing to the future, we are saying no to power; that is, imagining and reimagining universities, knowledge, or academic life are not necessarily emancipatory or transformational; in fact, power (university structures) operates through letting people imagine multiple and diverse futures[47].

This critique preserves the order through a twofold movement: the attachment to utopian forces or the world of beyond and, at the same time, the deployment of techniques of the self entangled with techniques of futuring (Oomen et al., 2022). It is not merely that university structures can capture this form of critique but also an internal movement in the form of techniques of the self (*resorting to the future*) which makes this critique (im)possible. As a result, this critical attitude is rapidly captured by university structures in a way that critique becomes a 'dead entity'. The same academic continues,

> (…) we began to install the Mapuche curriculum[48] as a second language in the pedagogical, multiculturalism (...) but [what prevailed was] that *tendency of the university to turn it into a dead language, into a dead archive* (...) [my emphasis] (Male – Senior researcher – Humanities and Education)

In this case, the attempt to introduce Mapuche's curriculum into pedagogical programmes was suffocated by 'the tendency of universities' to reinterpret – from a rational stance – every critical project at play. It was not the exclusion of a new epistemological perspective – artisanal knowledge – or the expulsion of the other, but rather its reappropriation and transformation into a 'dead archive'. The same might be said when the university and academic practices want to be transformed by appealing to bleak narratives such as the age of uncertainties, war times, social outbreak, economic crisis, ecological collapse or the university in ruins. Once inside the university, these narratives become 'dead or disciplined language'.

The same occurs when academics try to transform university's structures. For instance, this academic has attempted to modify the logic of faculty and departments (siloed structures) through promoting transdisciplinary research. Nevertheless, these efforts have become an almost impossible critical project, as this academic underscores,

[47] That is why today, we can see the emergence of strategies and techniques to motivate people to talk about the future. For instance, methods of futuring are used to imagine landscapes, environments, cities, universities, etc. These techniques attempt to operationalise individual imagination.

[48] Mapuche is the name of the indigenous people who live in Chile. There have been attempts to introduce Mapuche's curriculum – language, values and practices – into some professional programmes.

> I have always dreamed of finishing with the faculties, that is, all the projects that I have done, such as the undergraduate reform, all pointed there, that is, with generating a new, different issue, there was the issue of interdisciplinary [research] (. ..) but the faculties are allergic to interdisciplinary, that is, they don't have space to accommodate it, except perhaps a program, a doctorate in Latin American studies, a doctorate in Social Sciences, and our doctorate*, they are like the interdisciplinary places that are on campus, but they are places that we have had to build a little outside the logic of the faculty* (…) [my emphasis] (Male – Senior Researcher – Humanities)

In Chile, the crisis of the university system has been the backdrop of all these efforts. The state has supported – via funding grants – transdisciplinary research projects for multiple purposes, among which connecting disciplines and the university with society, territories, organisations, and communities has been one of the most significant. All these efforts, one way or another, have attempted to suspend 'the logic of the faculty' through multiple orientations and imagined ways of doing transdisciplinary research. Yet, although these efforts have made some substantial progress, they have not changed the structure of universities, as my participant highlights.

Considering these experiences, there seem to be three crucial moments for this critical attitude – crafting new alternatives – to emerge: 1) contexts of transformation, 2) suspension-imagination, and 3) preservation. Regarding *contexts of transformation*, the advent of economic or climate crises, wars, or a series of social and political uncertainties, creates the opportunity to rethink crucial aspects of reality – it brings into play fissures and discontinuities. These contexts trigger innumerable actions and projects inside the academy based on particular epistemological and ethical dispositions that aim to transform reality or what we take for granted or see as inevitable (e.g. climate change). An ethical disposition sustains the *suspension moment* according to which what is needed not only to fight against something (the way the present is organised) but, most importantly, to fight *for* something in the form of alternative futures. It is a suspension attached to images and representations of unknown and utopian futures which sometimes bring back the past: for example, when academics are against the neoliberal university, and at the same time, they advocate for traditional forms of the university (e.g., faculties and academic freedom). Finally, the *order is preserved* when what has been imagined is rapidly captured and suffocated by a set of power strategies and techniques of the self (e.g., techniques of futuring).

The suspension of the order: *against* and *for* knowledge

I have analysed the deployment of a critical attitude that, although seeking to challenge and transform reality, it preserves the order within the university system. It restores the status quo insofar as existing practices of critique depend on multiple tactics, strategies and techniques that cannot be separated from the ethics of excellence, which is the episteme governing the academy. These tactics, methods and techniques

operate through epistemic virtues like exceptionality and objectivity; and a *mythical* disposition that focuses on imagined futures and alternatives. Establishing ultimate ends affects how academics relate with themselves, others and knowledge. Or, more accurately, one could argue that these critical practices involve an ethical work on the self that remains in the form of sacrifice, scepticism, exclusion, recognition, self-evaluation, and so forth (see chapter 6 and 7).

In that respect, this critical attitude (critique as suspension) cannot be considered an attempt to be outside power relations or far from subjugation. As Foucault argued, we cannot put ourselves outside power relations. Or, as Ball put it, 'We cannot conceive of alternatives within the discursive possibilities we current inhabit. We are bound by epistemic rules and closures that enable and constrain us to think within certain versions of what is and might be true' (Ball, 2020, p. 877). So, if one accepts that critique is decisively trapped around particular modes of subjectification that govern the way academics think and act, even when they perform critical attitudes, the question is then how academics can refuse to be governed that way. If it is not about being against or going beyond the limits of power relations, what does it mean to refuse to be governed that way in the academy today?

3. Critique as interruption

Unlike Latour's claim that critique has run out of steam[49], I would like to suggest that some existing practices of critique in academia are *the experience of the limit itself* (Thayer, 2020). Rather than fighting against or for the university, this critique might be seen as an ethical stance interrupting the episteme governing academic life. It is not about putting ourselves outside the limits of the ethics of excellence but *putting ourselves at the border*. This is more or less what Ball suggested when he says that critique – talking about the sociology of education – 'requires the exploration and mapping of limits, and the testing and crossing of them whenever possible' (Ball, 2020, p. 877); or what is needed is a critique 'oriented toward a mapping of the contemporary limits of the necessary' (Ball, 2020, p. 877). Thus, 'we have to move beyond the outside-inside alternative; we have to be at the frontiers' (Foucault, 1997a, p. 315).

Drawing on these considerations, I would like to name this critique, following Thayer's distinctions, as *interruption*[50]. For Thayer, this critique 'neither conserves nor founds another order, being interested rather in systematically *thematising* the condition, the limit, and the limit of the limit' (Thayer, 2020, p. 36). What does it mean to thematise the limit? In this case, it means to question the conditions of the possibility of thought within universities. Yet, this critical attitude is *merely* an epistemological critique that focuses on 'mapping the contemporary limits of the necessary' (Ball, 2020, p. 877). Instead, the experience of the limit moves away from this form of critique – although intertwined, as we will see below. The practice of mapping or thematising the condition

[49] Latour refers to critique as an unmasking project or the hermeneutic of suspicious (epistemological critique).
[50] Critique as interruption might be seen similar to Foucault's genealogical analysis of counter-conducts like *Parrhesia*.

or the limit also involves a process of self-transformation that affects the academic-self. Hence, it is possible to argue that it is not only thematising (epistemology) but also *dwelling on* (ethics) the limit that makes this critique possible.

Four conditions for interrupting the order

I want to use the encounter between myself and one of my participants during the interview as an illustrative example of this critical attitude. This encounter brought into play a moment of active sense-making, or a 'moment of disruption to disciplinary or methodological identities' (Lapping, 2013). That is, thematising the way knowledge is produced and disseminated today in the university system activated a process of one's examination that had effects on the relation to oneself, others and knowledge. I asked my participants to think about a journal in which the idea of authorship disappears and, in that context, whether they would accept to participate in that project by any means. The way this academic describes this encounter and how this dilemma affected his thoughts and disposition is revealing,

> But it's difficult, *your question is difficult,* it *disturbed me* (...) I thank you because you made me think several things so it was also useful for me (...) the interview activates things that change the person you are interviewing or makes them think (...) The interview is not harmless. It is not innocuous in any sense, in the sense that it changes practices. In other words, I do an interview to know practices and when interviewing, minimally, no matter how much or little, it has an impact on the practices and *this question about the anonymous academic journal is great and it makes me want to do the anonymous journal [laugh]* (…) *I appreciate this moment* [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Social Sciences and Education)

This encounter had an impact on my participant's academic self. Thematising the condition of the possibility of another way of knowledge production – which was the aim of the interview – brought about contradictions, discomfort and ambivalence towards the dominant mode of academic life. Despite these contradictions, thematising the limit – in this case, the limit of authorship – implies a moment of dwelling on the limit and the interruption of that self that sustains the way of subjectification in academia. This is the *first condition* of this critique: thematising the episteme that governs academic subjectivities has decisive effects on the academic self (the third aspect of spirituality).

However,

> the recognition of the community is very important, it is very important. So, publishing a conceptual framework that took you many years to develop or publishing precious empirical data that took you a long time to build and erase the attribution of those who did it (...) erase that authorship of that work and *deprive yourself or us of recognition of the community*, I think it is something that *bothers me on a personal level* [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Social Sciences and Education)

Something causes discomfort when this academic thinks about this journal and the consequences for his career and the academic community. Similarly, this academic feels uncomfortable when she thinks about this option; she answers directly that

> unless all the journals do the same, that it be a new publication policy, I think not, it would bother me (...) publication is another job, that is, one thing is to investigate and another thing is to write, write an article and comply with the entire editorial line, and *that takes time,* and besides that, it is a job that is not directly paid, *so the minimum is that your name is there, the recognition,* that another person says "ah, X did it", I don't know, *I think it would be uncomfortable,* it would be something that is not fair (Female – Early Career Researcher – Humanities and Social Sciences)

Although these academics consider this option's disadvantages and feel uncomfortable thinking about erasing the authorship since it 'deprives yourself or us of recognition of the community', a *possibility* has been thematised. This means that the academic self has been disturbed in one way or another. Yet, what is at play when academics accept or refuse to publish in this journal? Or, more accurately, what happens when some academics are willing to publish in this imaginary journal? It seems that what is at stake around this dilemma is fundamentally personal recognition. Suppose knowledge – in the form of an article – can no longer be attached to an individual subject. In that case, the recognition of the community disappears, and hence the system of valorisation of knowledge falls apart. In the view of this academic,

> If they offer me a project in which different people are going to write, and what one writes will be anonymous, *I would not have any problem*, in fact many times in other instances one does it, for example, I write many notes for concerts [concerts review] in different places, and many times my name does not go there, and therefore, *I cannot include it in any type of indexation, of my academic productivity* [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Humanities and Arts)

For this academic, if the publication contributes to society it does not really matter the presence or absence of the author,

> *I publish [in this imaginary journal] because I would be publishing to value the work of teachers*. If I were simply concerned with the numbers, I would not be doing what I am doing in *management* (...) And if that article later had a specific relationship with everything that is teaching, teaching work, clearly I would publish it (... .) *I believe that research is a form of contribution to society.* So I cannot work on the basis of individualism, which is clearly promoted by the metrics of the journals, *currently my position is perhaps very utopian but it responds to the way in which I have done academia until now* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Education and Social Sciences)

In the same vein, this academic highlights the relevance of contributing to society when generating knowledge. Thus, although this goes against personal recognition, the contribution to society or communities is by far more relevant,

> If my name does not appear in the paper, in the subtitle in large bold, it does not matter. I think the important thing is the contribution to the area*. I know that what*

> *I say can be dangerous in terms of recognition,* and everything we talk about the structure of the academy*, but the contribution seems more important to me (...) I believe that the product [knowledge or gadgets] goes beyond the person*. Because later other people read it, it has other interpretations, it has certain meanings in certain contexts. Yeah, it's not the same in Science, but it could be too (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Sciences)

The idea that knowledge or any product 'goes beyond the person' illustrates the tension between personal recognition and contribution to society. It also indicates that knowledge production is more complex than merely repeating research projects attached to individual researchers. Likewise, the following quote reminds us of the role that academic vocation – and the missional attitude according to the distinction offered in chapter 7 – plays in challenging certain aspects of the current structure of knowledge production. The position of this academic about this imaginary journal is clear,

> Yes, I have no problems because I think that this contribution effectively makes an advance to knowledge, I see no reason why I should stay away from that project [imaginary journal], *if it can make an effective change in the field of some important knowledge*, if it has a good dissemination, if for that the condition is that my name does not go there, I have no problems, that is*, I have a genuine vocation to transmit knowledge* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Sciences)

The fact that some academics are eager to abandon personal recognition is powerful, especially in how knowledge production and academic career is organised today in Chile. It is an ethical disposition that is not simply against or for something, which requires an epistemological stance such as unmasking or imagining futures, but a critical attitude that allows us to 'separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think' (Foucault, 1984). Or, as Ball put it, 'it is only when we can see an end to the current "modalities of order" [personal recognition] that a different and "positive basis of knowledge" becomes thinkable' (Ball & Collet-Sabé, 2021, p. 9). This is also similar to what Lorenzini (2020) suggested regarding genealogy as a way to study critical attitudes. He states that 'a genealogy of the critical attitude is neither vindicatory nor (purely) unmasking or problematising, but has an essentially possibilising dimension' (Lorenzini, 2020, p. 2). I think this theoretical suggestion is crucial to understand this form of critique further.

Yet, Lorenzini's emphasis on genealogy as a form of inquiry still belongs to epistemology. What I would like to suggest instead, but following the spirit of Lorenzini's proposal, is that *dwelling on the limit* contributes to the formation of 'the possibility of no longer being, doing or thinking what we are, do, or think'. Therefore, what is at play is the emergence of a possibility that makes this critique possible. Or in other words, this critique is only possible if the practices carried out by academics can create a possibility. While the epistemological critical stance – vindicating, unmasking or problematising – focuses on exposing ideology, power relations or the contingency of established facts and practices, this critique seeks to interrupt the limit in a way that opens up a *possibility*. Or also, while critique as preservation gives rise

to scepticism since it pays too much attention to 'the real', critique as interruption focuses on 'the possible' and, as a result, rests upon hopefulness. These interruptions must be thought of as moments through which another mode of subjectification is thinkable and possible. The possibilising dimension of this critique is *the second element or condition* that I wanted to highlight.

However, this possibilising dimension, as Lorenzini suggests, should be seen as a *sui generis normative force*. It is not about drafting alternative futures, which are inherently underpinned by ultimate ends or external normative standards (abstracts) and hence based on normative debates on what is good or bad/right or wrong, but instead on practising a situated critique that makes another mode of subjectification possible. This form of critique does not tell us why we are fighting for or what to do (Allen & Goddard, 2014), instead 'it creates a concrete political framework for action (a political 'we') that commits us to resist the arbitrariness of the power/knowledge formations it reveals' (Lorenzini, 2020, p. 7). It does not tell us the 'why' since the 'why-question' (the normative question) is already decided by the missional disposition that still sustains this critique – as we shall see below. This critique 'commit[s] us to carry on, in one form or another, the struggle against the subjugating effects of the power/knowledge formations that still permeate our lives and whose arbitrariness they reveal' (Lorenzini, 2020, p. 16). Therefore, one could argue that the *contingent possibility* that emerges from this critique is creating a political framework (a *sui generis* normative force) for undoing and doing academic life out of an assortment of struggles throughout the history of universities.

In this sense, what is the difference between a possibility that emerges from an epistemological critique – as in the genealogical inquiry suggested by Lorenzini – and from an ethical one – according to the distinction I have made throughout this thesis? What kind of 'we' emerge from these critiques? Are they distinguishable? Forming a political 'we' seems only possible when epistemology and ethics are rejoined[51]. If the ethics of excellence separates epistemology and ethics, this critique puts them together differently. Thus, the effects of dwelling on the limit over the academic self not only can be seen in the realm of individuality (self-transformation practices); it also entails the creation of collective subjects in which the intersection of epistemology and ethics plays a crucial role. This is the *third element or condition* of this critique: creating a political 'we' through the entanglement of epistemology and ethics.

The possibility of a collective subject

The question from these reflections can be drawn as follows: what kind of 'we' is in the making today in academia, trapped within the modern (postcolonial) and neoliberal university? If one assumes that knowledge plays a crucial role in reproducing the ethics of excellence (knowledge as a commodity – e.g., intellectual property), what

[51] Although I have insisted on the need to understand critique as an activity in which epistemology and ethics are inseparable, I also assume that the current system of knowledge production tends to separate them to make productivity and competitiveness possible. Thus, for instance, the epistemological difference between the subject and the object of knowledge is essential in maintaining this separation.

sort of relation to knowledge takes place in academia when they exercise a critical attitude? What specific relation to knowledge do academics have when they interrupt the ethics of excellence? Is this relation useful to create a political 'we' from knowledge production practices? To address these seemingly odd questions, I would like to bring back the following view,

> I know that what I say can be dangerous in terms of recognition, and everything we talk about the structure of the academy, but the contribution seems more important to me (...) *I believe that the product [knowledge or gadgets] goes beyond the person* (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Sciences)

What seems to be emerging from this kind of disposition is the possibility of a 'we' or 'collective subject' in the form of one *separate intellect*[52] – 'knowledge goes beyond the person'. Averroes coined the idea of one separate intellect for all human thought in his readings on Aristotle's political writings and against medieval theology. A similar idea was then used by Marx to analyse the forces of production within capitalism: the *general intellect*. In short, it is the intersection of social intellect and technological expertise.

It seems that this notion might be helpful to describe this possibility, that is, to understand a crucial moment of the relation between *subjectivity* and *knowledge* in the academy today.

According to Averroes, a single and eternal intellect is separated from multiple subjectivities (body and mind). What is eternal is not the soul – like in Christianity – but the intellect. The soul, according to Averroes, vanishes when the body passes away. To be eternal, the intellect must be separated from finite individual subjects. This means that individuals are not those who think; instead, the separate intellect – or collective intellect – can think and does so through individuals (Campanini, 2008). Yet, this intellect cannot be considered an independent substance without relation to individuals. This collective intellect exists only if particular individuals use their *imagination* to actualise knowledge. Following Averroes's line of argument, this intellect has a potentiality: the possibility of a thought that has not been yet thought. The way this potential thought becomes real is through the use of imagination[53]. In this sense, Averroes underscores the role of imagination over reason/cognition when opening up new possibilities of thought (Amar Díaz, 2020).

Based on these assumptions, I would like to suggest that the 'we' in the form of one separate intellect – i.e., the possibility of understanding and practising knowledge and ways of knowing differently – can also be seen as a '*trans*-historical (and not *supra*-historical or *a*historical) subject of resistances' (Lorenzini, 2020, p. 14). That is to say, it is not only one separate entity but also one constituted by historical and social

[52] This concept was coined by Averroes when he discussed one of his controversial thesis: there is only one separate intellect for all humankind (Ogden, 2022).
[53] This explicitly goes against the Cartesian subject (*res cogitans*: a thinking thing) which uses rationality instead of imagination.

resistances that can take many forms. The possibility of one separate intellect lies in the interruption of how knowledge is produced and disseminated; it represents a trans-historical struggle that challenges how knowledge is governed today in academia. This separate intellect should be seen as an epistemological possibility – to think knowledge differently – and a political framework that commits us to build a different experience and relation between subjectivity and knowledge. Therefore, this 'we' 'is never stable, never defined once and for all, but fluid, heterogeneous, multiple, and structurally open' (Lorenzini, 2020, p. 15). In particular, the most remarkable effect of forming this 'we' on the academic-self is the end of personal recognition (authorship), as some of my participants emphasised. Or, to put it in another way, it represents the possibility of moving away from the logic of separation – between epistemology and ethics, for example – and embracing the logic of relationality[54] (Barad, 2007).

Finally, I would like to highlight this *critique's last element or condition*: dwelling on the limit is an activity that does not inevitably lead to despair/disenchantment/sacrifice but instead to a *game of forces* between despair and hope. About this debate, Ball suggests that 'critique in this sense rests on the opposite of hope, what Wenham (2013) calls "the tragic view of the world", according to which conflict, suffering and strife are inevitable phenomena of social and political life that may never be ultimately overcome' (Ball, 2020, p. 878). Rather than getting rid of hope and, as a result abandoning the redemptive perspective, dwelling on the limit – or critique as an interruption – looks more like a game in which the degree of hope or despair that is experienced depends on the political 'we' built; that is, to what extent the ethics of excellence is put into brackets. My participants' experience illustrates this point: sometimes they feel hopeful and sometimes disenchanted; sometimes they feel optimistic about the future and willing to start more critical projects, and sometimes they sacrifice themselves to play the game and, as a result, feel disillusioned. Hope and despair should not be thought of as abstract categories that become moral laws but rather as an endless struggle for becoming other-of-itself – hope struggles for becoming despair and despair struggles for becoming hope. Therefore, this critique seems to be shaped by a game between hope and despair that at once is framed by the possibility of the 'we' – another form of subjectification.

Reflecting on all these considerations, this critique is not enlightenment (critical theory), liberation, salvation, a struggle against or for the creation of imagined futures, or the 'commitment to uncertainty' (Ball, 2020, p. 877); it is a critical attitude that interrupts the continuity of the mode of subjectification in academia and hence opens up (im)possibilities. In this case, I have highlighted the potential of one separate intellect, which was created during this thesis, particularly from multiple conversations around an imaginary academic journal. Although this possibility – the 'we' – emerged alongside this process, it has been an essential part of academic life since the beginning of the university as a social institution – see chapter 6. Therefore, it is a

[54] Throughout its history, the university has approached thinking and knowledge production with the logic of separation. Division between rationality and spirituality, mind and body, epistemology and ethics, professor and student, research and teaching, expert and layman, natural sciences and humanities, etc. This can also be represented in the ethics of excellence and hence the division between exceptionality/success and failure.

trans-historical possibility constantly actualised by social and historical resistances or critical attitudes in the contingency of normality; that is, the 'we' comes into being in the process of actualisation of these practices. In each moment, what is created is a political framework that commits academics to refuse the way knowledge production is governed. Yet, it is a possibility that emerges as a *sui generis* normative force (Lorenzini, 2020).

The missional attitude, preservation and imagination

What makes the formation of this 'we' possible? What makes the renunciation of personal recognition among academics reasonable? To answer these questions, we need to explore the role of the missional attitude in academia (see chapter 7). This quote from one of my participants offers some preliminary hints,

> I see no reason why I should stay away from that project [imaginary journal], *if it can make an effective change in the field of some important knowledge*, if it has a good dissemination, if for that the condition is that my name does not go there, I have no problems, that is, *I have a genuine vocation to transmit knowledge* [my emphasis] (Male – Mid-career Researcher – Basic Sciences)

Even though this academic refers to 'academic vocation' to justify his position, what seems to sustain – according to what I have tried to suggest in this thesis – his willingness to abandon reputation and prestige is a missional attitude (public engagement and ultimate ends), or in other words, a 'foundational metaphysics' (Clarke, 2020) or the needs of 'the world of beyond' (Latour, 2004). The following question needs to be addressed: can academics move away from the ends-side of the missional attitude? If the justification for participating in this project (imaginary journal) still relies on the call of society or knowledge – as we can see from my participant's responses –it means that the ends-side remains untouched. Therefore, the question is: *does this critical attitude still preserve the order of things in academia?* Can existing practices of critique *interrupt* the mythical circulation of excellence? The reflection from one of my participants about this imaginary journal is revealing of this tension,

> (…) to refuse the idea of authorship can be read as a process that can reinforce the prevailing logic: *publish for publishing without a historical-cultural and political sense* (…) The important thing would be to debate in a more detailed way the way in which we can generate a new form of recognition [in academia] [my emphasis] (Male – Early Career Researcher – Social Sciences and Education)

This provocative reflection illustrates the prevalence of the ends-side ('without historical-cultural and political sense') and, simultaneously, how his critique preserves the order ('a process that can *reinforce* the prevailing logic'). This critique then seems to be trapped around a higher impossibility: the impossibility of putting ourselves outside the order of things, as Foucault pointed out.

Perhaps we can address these questions from another angle and be more attentive to the role that *imagination* plays in society renewal or disruption (Castiglia, 2017b). In this context, Foucault once said, ‘to imagine another system is to extend our participation in the present system’ (Foucault, 1997a, p. 230). That is to say, imagination appears trapped by the current conditions of the possibility of thought. As I argued in critique as suspension, imagining alternatives implies preserving the ethics that drive academic life. In this sense, what kind of imagination is at stake when ‘we ardently conjure away the present and appeal to the future’? Foucault considers imagination subjugated to the faculty of reason, or more precisely, to an epistemological critique (Ball & Collet-Sabé, 2021). However, it is essential to invert the question: what kind of imagination is at play when academics dwell on the limit, that is, when they interrupt the order of things, the law and codes of academic life? Here, we can see an imagination that no longer ‘extend our participation in the present system’ but potentially, it makes the ‘we’ possible. Dwelling on the limit is the moment in which a potentiality is activated.

Two social theorists have tried to delve into the complexities stemming from these issues, which might help understand these reflections further. For example, Agamben (2005) suggested that

> One day humanity will play with law just as children play with disused objects, not in order to restore them to their canonical use but to free them from it for good. What is found after the law is not a more proper and original use value that precedes the law, but a new use that is born only after it. And use, which has been contaminated by law, must also be freed from its own value. This liberation is the task of study, or of play. And this studious play is the passage that allows us to arrive at that justice that one of Benjamin's posthumous fragments defines as a state of the world in which the world appears as a good that absolutely cannot be appropriated or made juridical (2005, p. 64)

Similarly, Ranciere (2006) highlights the role played by works of art – or instances of aesthetic dissensus – in allowing specific configurations of experience that ‘reshape established capacities for political expression – enabling disagreement and disruption that may emerge in the most unexpected places’ (Anker & Felski, 2017). In sum, dwelling on the limit appears to permit the emergence of an imagination that does not restore but phases out the order. This, of course, is just a theoretical assumption that must be contrasted with reality.

4. Concluding remarks

Ball (2020) states that ‘in seeking to think differently perhaps we should leave behind any desire to find a *foundational metaphysics for critical action*’ [my emphasis] (p. 877). This claim summarises very well the central tension that marks the analysis of existing practices of critique or critical attitudes in academia: a sort of ‘foundational metaphysics’, ‘the revelation of the world of beyond’ (Latour, 2004), ‘fantasmatic ideals’ (Clarke, 2020) or ‘reified generalities’ (De Landa, 2006) are embedded in existing practices of critique. Ball suggests the need to move away from the ends-side for critical action; that is, leave behind a critical attitude driven by ultimate ends such

as equality, justice, knowledge, quality, inclusion, and sustainability, among others, since, for instance, 'the project of inclusion misreads the school [or the university in this case] as a site of opportunity and possibility, and we are always disappointed' (Ball & Collet-Sabé, 2021, p. 3) and hence it – inclusion – becomes "itself a technology of normalisation" (Ball & Collet-Sabé, 2021, p. 13). In this chapter, I showed how different forms of critical attitude in academia – critique as suspension and interruption – are driven by these normative ends – or Kant's idealism (Latour, 2007). By doing so, I asserted that critique suspends the order to preserve it; that is, there is a normative force (ultimate ends) driving academic life that makes it difficult to 'think differently' and hence ends up preserving or restoring the order of things. Or, to put it in another way, the ends-side of the mission appears to be the ground under which the mythical (ahistorical) cycle of critique (excellence) emerges in the form of, for example, sacrifice and ethical scepticism.

Considering this context, it seems reasonable to suggest *leaving behind* these fantasmatic ideals for critical action. However, Ball's suggestion appears to fall short because it fails to grasp the impossibility that 'leaving behind' entails. Or in other words, to overcome the 'alternative approach', which is based on a totalising critique and 'the search for formal structures with universal values', Ball offers an epistemological critique that falls short regarding the impracticality of putting ourselves outside power relations. Analysing existing practices of critique in academia shows this impossibility at different levels, dynamics and forms.

In addition, Ball's position does not consider the potentiality that 'foundational metaphysics' or 'fantasmatic ideals' have for, in this particular case, academic life. Critique as interruption is illustrative of this point: when the order is interrupted – dwelling on the limit – a possibility is created, which is the possibility of a 'political we'. Indeed, without foundational metaphysics, fantasmatic ideals or ultimate ends, this 'political we' is impossible. Therefore, rather than refusing these ends or ideals for critical action, what is needed instead is its reactivation via imagination (Castiglia, 2017b; Durán Del Fierro, 2022). The abandonment of hope (in these ideals or ends) misreads the university as a site of struggle in which the academic self oscillates inexorably between hope and despair.

In this context, what does the possibilising dimension of critique involve? As Lorenzini (2020) suggests, it is the possibility of a 'political we' that commits us to undo the way knowledge and academic life are governed today. During this thesis – which can be seen as a moment or instance (Lapping, 2013) in which academic life was thematised and perhaps I could dwell on the limit – a possibility was created: the possibility of a collective knowledge separated from personal recognition (imaginary journal). This possibility would entail the *disappearance* of the individual academic-subject as the locus of knowledge production. Or, more accurately, it implies a new relation between subjectivity and knowledge that requires the redefinition of the system of knowledge production. This possibility is an ongoing project that is actualised endlessly through multiple practices and ways of imagining. Yet, it is a form of imagination not devoted to imagining alternative futures – imagination as the faculty of reason – but to make

the ‘we’ possible; that is, imagination as an ethical practice. In practical terms, an ethical dilemma (e.g., research misconduct, plagiarism) is not solved by rationality or the faculty of reason (abstract categories) but when academics experience the limit and become aware of their possibilities. Thereby, critique as interruption helps us to rethink Ball’s suggestions and consider the possibilising dimension of critique more thoroughly.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS: THE EXPERIENCE OF ACADEMIC CRITIQUE

1. Subjectivity and knowledge within the contemporary university

Subjectivity and knowledge are inseparable. However, this relationship's dynamic and intensity vary according to the type of knowledge at play. Whereas scientists seek to suppress subjectivity from knowledge production, artists use their values, beliefs and emotions to create artwork. The schism between knower and knowledge has been fundamental within some communities to expand and make knowledge claims possible. Similarly, the entanglement of affects and emotions has been essential to developing art and humanities. Therefore, the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge within the university is conflictual and always becomes something else that deserves further attention.

Despite these internal differences across disciplines, the knower's character, attitude, disposition, skills and personal qualities have increasingly become relevant within the academic community and science studies. The problem, as I mentioned earlier, is that ‘these qualities have been seen in most accounts of modern science as matters of competence, not ethics” (Daston & Galison, 2007, p. 39). To make knowledge claims possible, the aim is no longer to suppress subjectivity but rather to shape the self. That is why epistemic virtues, which mould the self, are crucial. They are internalised values aiming to secure knowledge. Being objective or creative cease to be given and now have to be learnt – through moral anecdotes, *myths*, scientific instruction, and so on. And when objectivity or another epistemic virtue is finally internalised, a new self emerges, that is, a new way of knowing, seeing and behaving. This reorganisation entails a new knowledge production framework, thus changing knowledge itself. Therefore, *the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge depends on the ethical dimension of academic critique*.

The issue at play is then the dynamic and intensity of this relationship. For example, Bacevic (2019) points out a paradox around this relationship: why does *knowing* something not immediately translate into *action*? Bacevic (2019) underlines a crucial fact: the production of critical accounts of neoliberalism in higher education and research does not lead to active resistance against academic capitalism. Regardless of the reasons given (which are linked to the political, economic, and social context in which academic critique is produced), the initial question is problematic. This question – why does knowing something not translate into modes of social action? – falls short as it is concerned mainly with epistemological practices (e.g., writing papers, books, attending workshops, etc.), instead of ethical issues. The problem, as I have argued in this thesis, is to treat critical action merely from an epistemological perspective. That

is one of the main issues to be highlighted, which is addressed many times across the thesis.

2. A brief summary of the arguments

This thesis is about the ethical dimension of academic critique. I have examined the requirements on the academic-subject's relation to self, others and knowledge when academics produce knowledge within universities in their contingency of normality. That is, I have delved into the modalities of experience that academic critique entails today. However, as Foucault (2011) suggested, the ethical work on the self cannot be separated from the analysis of power/knowledge relationships. Therefore, although I have focused on the ethical dimension of academic critique, I have also examined the government of others and discourses of truth taking place in the academy.

In that context, four empirical-theoretical arguments are deployed across the thesis. It is worth noting that although these arguments are based on the case of the Chilean academic community, they might well be extended beyond this particular case and find some similarities with other experiences where neoliberalism has been extensively introduced.

My first research question was, **what particular discourse and model of academic behaviour was brought into play during the post-independence period in Chile?** This question was a response to a series of preoccupations around the consolidation of the paradigm of excellence in academia. This concern can be summarised as follows: excellence has become the paradigm that drives institutional values and practices in academia—for example, research excellence in the UK and Centres of Excellence in Chile. Also, we can see the importance of excellence when scientific controversies hit the public debate. However, excellence is an elusive concept. Following Harvey and Green's (1993), it is possible to suggest that excellence involves exception and perfection. That is, excellence is entangled with quality. Assuming the vagueness of excellence, the question is about the logic behind excellence beyond formal definitions. Drawing upon Foucault, one could argue that excellence follows the logic of the modern state: the right to exclude to protect the university from an unknown other. With these considerations in mind, a genealogical analysis was undertaken to understand how the logic of excellence (the right to exclude) was constituted within a model of academic behaviour during the birth of the first university in Chile. To do that, I took Andres Bello and his texts as a technology of power/knowledge which defined a model of academic behaviour at a capillary level during the dawn of the Republic. This model was defined through two pillars: a government of others and a government of the self. The government of others, through positivism and the unification of the Spanish language, constituted a sort of epistemological limits that defined academics' attitudes towards knowledge. The government of the self constituted a sort of ethical limits that defined academics' attitudes toward knowledge and others. This government established two ethical practices: a form of academic freedom separated

from imagination and a form of objectivity separated from utopian ideas. These forms of power relations (government of others and self), I suggest, can be grouped under the category of excellence since they set the limits to protect the national project. The way the ethics of excellence is exercised depends on how unity, freedom and objectivity are internalised and cultivated by academics. Finally, Bello can be seen as a paradoxical figure or mechanism of power: on the one hand, his work opens possibilities (the connection between the academia and the state/nation) and close others (his critique of imagination).

My second question was **how do academics constitute themselves as ethical subjects aiming to produce knowledge?** Or also, what is the price to be paid for academics when exercising critique in academia? Based on Hegel's notion of negativity, I argue that every activity entails a struggle or practical achievement that mediates the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge. When the mediation has been commodified (excellence) the price becomes real through an array of *sacrificial practices* in the form of renunciations (personal life, freedom and prestige). Three forms of sacrifice or strategies of power relations are at play in the academy: metaphysical, scientific and market. The metaphysical sacrifice is the practice of searching for higher ends or fantasmatic ideals whose impossibility leads to despair. Scientific sacrifice is the practice of producing exceptional and sophisticated knowledge whose (im)possibility engenders disenchantment. Market sacrifice is the search for productivity which entails exhaustion. However, the journey to truth/knowledge also entails joy and *satisfaction* which depends on a system of recognition and the presence of the Other. I analysed the conflicting relationships between the academic-self in search for recognition within the current political economy of knowledge production and the absence/presence of the Other which is the source of such recognition. Based on these considerations, I have argued that the modality of experience that academic critique entails today rests upon a dialectical movement – practices of the self – between sacrifice and satisfaction that affects the structure of the academic-self.

My third question pointed to **how do academics relate to, process and elaborate their everyday experience as ethical subjects?** Put differently, why do academics stay in academia – despite the sacrificial structure? According to this exploration, a double-sided ethical attitude characterises academic life: vocation and mission. I showed how the academic-self oscillates between these ethical attitudes and how the internal logic of vocation gives rise to a missional attitude driven by a specific disposition (community engagement) and fantasmatic ideals (improving people's lives). As a mode of life, the missional attitude – the world of beyond – produces a sort of crisis within the academic-self due to the impossibility of being immersed in and impacting society as expected. The way out of this crisis is ethical scepticism oscillating between despair and hope. The interweaving of the missional attitude and hopefulness reinforces a mode of subjectivation that emphasises the need to improve lives, academic activism, among other similar conducts, anchored in the existence of

social needs (or social problems) and society, all of which confers validity to practices and actions carried out by academics within universities. This implies a form of academic self heavily sustained by an *ethical idealism* that shapes the way academics relate with themselves and others. Or in other words, academics stay in academia due to the production of imaginaries, expectations and practices tied to idealistic goals concerning society (e.g., the end of poverty and inequalities or building solidarity).

My last research question was **what happens when academics exercise a critique that addresses the conditions of their own existence?** Or, can academics hold a critical attitude beyond sacrificial practices, the desire for inclusion and recognition, abstract ideals and ethical scepticism? Based on Thayer's distinctions, I proposed two forms of critique to understand further how critical attitudes are embedded in the system: *suspension* and *interruption*. On the one hand, the former rests upon an epistemological critique attempting to rupture some aspects of academic life or create alternative futures. Yet it still preserves the order of things since it cannot go beyond or leave behind knowledge production structures. On the other hand, I argued that critique as interruption does not try to go against or create alternatives but rather dwells on the limits or field of possibilities. The *possibilising* dimension of this form of critique is essential to problematise how critical attitudes emerge in academia and its transformational force. However, I argue that both forms of critique are still trapped around 'foundational metaphysics' or 'fantasmatic ideals' which led me to rethink – rather than getting rid of – the role of ultimate ends for critical action. This also demands rethinking the intersection of hope, imagination and critique for critical action in the contemporary academy.

Overall, these arguments seek to expand our understanding of the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge within universities. This exploration has led me to propose an analytical framework for studying this relationship based on the distinction between epistemology and ethics – despite their inseparability. This distinction has not been systematically used in higher education or social studies of science. I would like to see this analytical framework as the main contribution of the thesis. In addition, I have introduced the university as a category of analysis to better understand the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge. In most accounts of this relationship – see for example Shapin (2008) or Daston and Galison (2007) – the relevance of the university as an epistemic structure is often neglected. It is worth noting that the university, with its governance, institutional departments, norms, values, missions, and student population, plays a vital role in shaping how knowledge is produced and who can enter and has the capacity and legitimacy to generate knowledge. I have tried to acknowledge how the university – from a historical perspective and everyday practices – emerges as an epistemic structure beyond epistemic cultures. However, this contribution has, at the same time, a limitation. The main one is that the university is a complex structure where different approaches, methods and values determine the orientation of disciplines. Exploring the relationship between subjectivity and knowledge in specific fields might well contribute to overcoming this limitation.

3. The experience of Chilean academics

The intersection of these four empirical-theoretical arguments led me to the following conclusion for the Chilean case: an 'historical self *a priori*' was set out in the post-independence period on the basis of an ethics concerned with the *best* behaviour and knowledge in the name of the unification of the nation (centralised nationhood). A model of academic behaviour organised essentially around a *principle of ethical differentiation* was brought into play during the dawn of the University of Chile: the *ethics of excellence*. This academic-self was the precondition for the establishment of the subsequent forms of governmentality in the Chilean university system.

On the basis of this model, the contemporary form of academic critique is haunted by the spectres of Andres Bello. It is the intersection of an ethics of excellence concerned with both exception (best virtues) and perfection (self-improvement). It is an ethics that makes up how academics play the game but also how they refuse or resist to be governed that way. Simply put, the ethics of excellence is an essential part of critique as affirmation and negation. This ethic set the limits of what is acceptable to say and do thus defining who is part of the academia and who is not. Thus, for example, a *non-disciplined imagination* is rapidly expelled when it goes beyond those limits.

In other words, the ethics of excellence – through different mechanisms of power and self-formation practices – has the right to exclude particular modes of critical attitudes within academia. The case of the installation of the *Universidad de Aysén* facilities – located in Patagonia, one of the southernmost points of the country – illustrates how some critical attitudes are expelled from the 'national project'. Despite the fact that university autonomy was guaranteed by law, the central government asked for the resignation of the head of the university because she was not aligned with the government's educational project – too much imagination! would Bello exclaim. What prevailed was the needs of the state and nationhood over the local community. Therefore, if one thing characterises the experience of Chilean academics, it is the permanent ambivalence between the needs of the society (transcendental mediation), the cultivation of a productive academic-self and the rules and laws of a centralised state.

This situation makes Chile's universities and academic communities an essential space for transformative projects. In that respect, Webb's position regarding the role of the university and the academy is problematic within the Chilean context. Talking about the role of the university in creating radical experimental spaces, Webb (2018) concludes that the university 'cannot be the site for transformative utopian politics. It cannot even be the starting point for this' (2018, p. 108). Indeed, he suggests that 'Perhaps the emphasis on creating radical experimental spaces within the academy needs to shift toward operating in existing spaces of resistance outside it' (2018, p. 108). Then he asks:

> Why locate utopian pedagogy in the university when "critical utopian politics" can take place in "infrastructures of resistance" such as intentional communities, housing collectives, squats, art centers, community theatres, bars, book shops, health collectives, social centers, independent media and, increasingly of course, the digital sphere (…)? (2018, p. 109).

The example of the University of Aysén – and others like the 2011 student movement and 2019 social outbreak – shows that the university still can be a place for transformative utopian politics. Although it was a temporary mode of resistance, it bought into play a field of possibilities that helped the university make experimental and utopian practices – e.g., imagining new ways of relating to local communities and artisanal knowledge (Durán del Fierro & Pey, 2022). In Chile, the university space – including academics and students – has played an enormous role in mobilising utopianism and idealism, which later became transformative political projects.

Therefore, I argue that critical attitudes within universities are fundamental to thinking and acting otherwise. Thus, although the post-dictatorship university produced a loss of vocabulary, ideas, knowledge and attitudes, and installed the figures of trauma, mourning and melancholy among Chilean academics (Richard, 2000), existing practices of critique appear to constitute a field of possibilities that extend beyond this bleak description. These practices of critique serve as, at least potentially, transformative projects. Despite Richard's description, her words point to something fundamental for critical thought and practices that still resonates within critical projects. Indeed, she underlines that

> mobilize these forces [critical thought] supposes detecting *how* and *when* grand or small insurrections of meaning are formulated: social rebellion, but also poetics of writing, twists in genre (and gender), institutional fractures. Without conforming to the rules of understanding that fix the dominant reality effect (its practical realism, its common sense), but struggling on the inside of discursive conjunctures, is how intellectual criticism travels the folds of disobedience that striate the real so as, from *incompleteness* and the *uncertainty* of difference, to oppose the anti-Utopian closure of the real imposed by end-of-the-century neoliberalism as well as the vocabularies of impotence (Richard, 2000, p. 280).

Something crucial is at play in the Chilean critical project within universities: the reactivation of utopian thoughts. Beyond the debate about the scope of utopianism, what is needed – perhaps for further explorations – is a better understanding of how the reconfiguration of academia is affecting this critical project. The transformation of the structure of the academic community is not only driven by neoliberal policies but also by a new form of *exile of thought*. Rather than a loss – as it occurred during and after the dictatorship – every year, many new doctorates return to Chile from well-known universities, mainly from Europe and The United States, making their way to the academy. The question arises from this situation is to what extent or in what sense these new academics trained abroad – at least those who can follow an academic

career – will change the modalities of experience and hence utopianism and idealism within the academic community.

4. Neo-Kantianism in academia

Drawing upon Rose (1995), Daston and Galison (2007) and my empirical-theoretical arguments from the Chilean academic community, I hold that what prevails in the experience of academic critique is a form of Neo-Kantianism. I am not referring to the epistemological aspect of Kant's intellectual project, but instead to his reflections on practical reason. This can be seen at least through two different layers.

First, the experience of academic critique is driven by *ethical idealism* – a transcendental structure. I have argued that the mode of subjectivation or the way academics recognise their moral obligations rests upon a missional attitude concerned with social needs – or societal problems – and the development of society (in its multiple dimensions); that is, academics' actions are – although not exclusively – guided by abstract ideals such as social justice, equality, sustainability, etc. Being driven by ethical idealism means that society – or social impact – becomes an ideal that academics actively pursue as a goal and obligation. That is to say, academics prioritise the needs of society (or nature) when they produce and disseminate knowledge. As a result, *society* has become a sort of 'transcendental force' that motivates most academics' endeavours – in this case, the social is not an explanatory factor (Latour, 2007) but a regulative force of behaviour. These ideals, as Rescher (2020) has pointed out, are unattainable goals[55] since they have no concrete reality. Thus, pursuing unattainable goals (like improving people's lives or fighting against climate change) leads academics to deal with interminable research ideas, methods and projects to find the right way to address them[56]. The rationality or irrationality of pursuing unattainable goals in academia is not at play here. Instead, what I want to note is that these ideals 'serve to structure our actions and give meaning and guidance to our endeavours' (Rescher, 2020, p. 2). That is to say, the mere existence of this transcendental structure provides a particular experience of academic critique. This experience is somehow what Castiglia referred to as *critiqueness*, that is, 'the appearance of critique (…) that reinforces a *cycle of expectation* about the way the world works without acknowledging the existence of experiences that vary from or defy those expectations' [my emphasis] (Castiglia, 2017a, p. 214).

Second, this unattainability can also be seen at the level of epistemic virtues. Academic expertise extends beyond technical skills (e.g., digital skills) and includes

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[55] Note that I am saying unattainable and not unknowable. The latter involves an epistemological problem.

[56] See this example in the field of 'sustainability transitions research': Transformation by design or by disaster – Why we need more transformative research now | Impact of Social Sciences (lse.ac.uk). In this sense, the use of 'participatory action research', or similar approaches, aims to engage with communities or stakeholders to reduce the gap between research outcomes and societal problems.

epistemic virtues like objectivity, neutrality and integrity that constantly rework the epistemic and ethical basis for knowledge production. Thus, academic communities define a series of epistemic virtues that become the *formal conditions* – for the academic self – for the possibility of knowledge within universities, a set of *a priori* rules that make knowledge production possible. Simply put, knowledge is reliable when these virtues are embedded in the academic self. Hence, these virtues become ethical imperatives prescribing how to behave and think within academia. For example, academics cannot know and experience what objectivity is (ontologically speaking) but how objectivity operates according to the formal rules defined by the community. Another example: we cannot know and experience what quality is – indeed, policymakers and academics have widely assumed this – but simply to establish the formal conditions of quality in teaching or research. The problem with this way of experiencing epistemic virtues is that they are unachievable. Academics never experience objectivity or quality as is expected by the community's *a priori* rules.

Therefore, the existence of unattainable 'transcendental ideals', like things-in-themselves pointed out by Kant, and unreachable 'formal conditions' stems from the prevalence of Neo-Kantianism in academia. The academic community recognises its moral obligations in unattainable ideals and formulates formal conditions of behaviour or action that are unreachable. The problem, generally speaking, is to try to define ways of behaviour, rules of conduct and how we appraise, validate and value knowledge by dividing formal conditions and the concrete effectiveness of social actions. This form of abstraction, which can be seen through the establishment of epistemic virtues in academia, ignores the conflicting context and empirical reality from which they emerge. It is a sort of anti-metaphysics posture that avoid diving into ontological issues. What is relevant for this Neo-Kantian approach then is to define – through a rational and instrumental reason – how to behave (modes of subjectivation) but not to discuss what objectivity, neutrality, integrity or quality really and in a substantive form is. If epistemic virtues are not fulfilled – e.g., research fraud due to using altered images – the reaction is more standardisation, more rules, that is, more formal conditions[57], or what Taylor has called *code fetishism* (C. Taylor, 2014): modern life is marked by the need to define codes of conduct in the absence of shared understanding of the social ends or good. Academic communities are now experiencing this extreme form of Neo-Kantianism[58].

The theoretical question that arises from these reflections is to what extent the experience of academic critique within universities can move away from this Neo-Kantian ethical idealism. In what follows, I would like to discuss this further.

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[57] When these cases happen, it is common to see different explanations: the passion, delirium or bad intention of the academic; lack of rationalised processes; inequalities among academic careers; or the demands of productivity. All these explanations rest on the rationality or good will of the individual subject and omit the conflicting reality of epistemic virtues.

[58] For example, efforts to improve data sharing within and across academic communities face challenges related to lack of data standards.

5. The field of (im)possibilities: *reactivating* the experience of academic critique

Ball (2020) suggests – talking about the sociology of education as a modern human science – that 'in seeking to think differently perhaps we should leave behind any desire to find a foundational metaphysics for critical action', that is, 'one which begins from an 'ideal theory' of how humans ought to act' and therefore we should 'embrace 'the power of strangeness' and the inevitability of failure – rather than invest in the comforts of hope' (p. 877). Ball concludes that

> we should be against education rather than for it. We should seek to reveal its contingency and make it intolerable rather than seek to improve it. We should seek to re-think the educator and pedagogy not as constituted by skills and knowledges but as the formation of moral subjectivity, a form of politics, and a relation to ethics rather than to truth. This would involve a commitment to fostering ethical learners with a healthy suspicion of the present, while at the same time being able to acknowledge their own fallibility and to set themselves over and against the prevailing framework of modern education and its carceral forms (2020, p. 878)

Similarly, Allen (2017) points out:

> Unfortunately, there is nothing inherently radical, or even progressive, about the pursuit of hope. Indeed, in advanced liberal societies, capitalism depends upon it. These societies operate by stimulating rather than simply directing or repressing the desires of their populations. Under these conditions, obedient subjects are those that have not given up hope (2017, p. 8)

This position somehow collides with the one that draws on utopia, hope and alternative futures in higher education. For example, Hammond lays out a *utopian pedagogy* to engage the university community with new ways of thinking, learning and educating (Hammond, 2017). By bringing together a set of practical experiences or *hope-traces*, Hammond offers a set of tactics and counter-strategies to show the possibilities of utopian pedagogy. These examples are illustrative of cracks and fissures through which glimpses of utopia are created. Thereby, Hammond is concerned with showing new ways of thinking and doing academia beyond theoretical constructions and focusing instead on practical realities. Similarly, but from a slightly different angle, Webb (2017) has also focused on the practice of utopian pedagogy through educational archaeology. Thus, for example, he suggests that 'without a substantive *normative vision* to serve as a guide, utopian archaeology is conceptually flawed and practically ineffectual' [my emphasis] (2017, p. 551). Thus,

> *Utopian* pedagogy concerns itself with constructing visions of alternative ways of being, recognising that substantive programmatic visions of the future (blueprints) are needed in order to inspire and guide transformative hope and action (2017, p. 562).

Regardless of some differences, utopian approaches seek to rethink educational practices – within schools or universities – to create new forms of relating to reality, engage in imagining alternative futures and generate spaces of hope (Van Dermijnsbrugge & Chatelier, 2022).

Drawing upon the experience of a group of academics, in this thesis I have stated that a missional attitude drives the way academics relate to reality, recognise their moral obligations and become ethical subjects. This mission rests upon utopian forces in the form of fantasmatic ideals (Clarke, 2020) or the world of beyond which have become the normative framework for critique. So, when I asked my participants why they stay in academia despite the constrains imposed by the neoliberal agenda, they often stated an ethical imperative: improving people's lives. That is,

> the special epistemological status of science is justified not as an internal and autonomous priority of knowledge but as science's ability to generate and transmit cognitive goals, norms and ideals to society (Kasavin, 2020, p. 103).

Society is the object of academics' endeavours. Considering this missional attitude, I have suggested the impossibility of leaving behind any form of the 'world of beyond' – or normative framework – when exercising critique either as positive affirmation or negation. The academic self appears to be trapped around an ethical idealism.

The point, I want to argue, is not to get rid of these ideals, as Ball has suggested, or use them as points of departure or arrival for alternative futures, as utopian pedagogy advocates, but *reactivate* them differently. Yet the reactivation of these modes of subjectivation and practices of the self depends on how existing practices of critique (critical attitudes) entail the possibility of a new *regime* within the university system (Durán Del Fierro, 2022). The key is the *field of possibilities* that emerge from these practices – and not necessarily the actions in itself as Hammond has emphasised. What is relevant is how these possibilities reactivate familiar categories and experiences; that is, the *relationships* that make critical action possible. Following Lorenzini (2020), critical attitudes – and their study – have a possibilising dimension which entails the creation of a 'political we' that commit us to undo the way knowledge and academic life are governed today. The creation of a 'political we' – or a public regime in opposition to the neoliberal regime in higher education – leads to the *reactivation* of the whole experience of academics within universities, that is, the transformation of the political economy of knowledge production. Thus, sacrificial practices, ways of recognition and satisfaction, vocation and mission become *other-of-itself*. For example, one could say that the 'political we' is the moment of *radical recognition*: it is no longer the recognition of individual achievement but collective knowledge which leads to the momentary disappearance of the individual subject. It is the end of the authorship. To put it in another way, the academic self is *sacrificed* in the name of a knowledge separate from individual cognition and recognition. This is hence the re-establishment of the political economy of knowledge production, the

epistemic basis of work and academic critique within universities. Or in other words, it is the resignification of sacrifice in academia.

This also entails the reactivation of how *hope*, *imagination* and *ideals* are enacted by academics in their contingency of normality. Again, what is fundamental is not to get rid of hope or the capacity to imagine alternative futures but to reactivate these categories and experiences in accordance with the field of possibilities emerging from existing practices of critique. In that respect, Castiglia offers a refreshing perspective in which hope, imagination and idealism converge thus moving away from mere denunciation or reconstruction. He calls *hopefulness* the combination of critique and imaginative idealism which does not seek to create alternative futures but rather it is 'in favor of more inventive and experientially diverse versions of the *possible*' [my emphasis] (Castiglia, 2017a, p. 217). This is what Butler calls fantasy, which 'is not equated with what is not real, but rather with what is not yet real, what is possible or futural, or what belongs to a different version of the real' (Butler, 1990, p. 185); that is, the 'unseen' (Rancière, 2010) or the 'invisibles' (Latour, 2007). Sara Ahmed put it in this way,

> In imagining what is possible, in imagining what does not yet exist, we say yes to the future. In this yes, the future is not given content: it is not that the future is imagined as the overcoming of misery; nor is the future imagined as being happy. The future is what is kept open as the possibility of things not staying as they are, or being as they stay. Revolutionaries must dream; if their imaginations dwell *on* the injustice of how things stay, they do not simply dwell *in* what stays (Ahmed, 2010, p. 197)

However, I would add that what is at stake is not a 'diverse versions of the possible' or 'what is possible or futural' but instead the *impossible*. The emergence of a field of possibilities *makes thinking the impossible possible*. This possibility then reactivates the nature and scope of imagination and idealism in critique. That is to say, making thinkable the impossible depends on the existence of an imaginative idealism, or a dispositional attitude dependent on 'leap of hope', as Spivak (2007) has suggested, which is 'a disposition for criticism rather than a methodological program' (Castiglia, 2017a, p. 222). Therefore, it is neither the real nor the possible that is relevant for the ethical form of academic critique but the impossible, which might now be – although counter-intuitive – attainable and reachable in the messiness of our contingencies.

That is the crucial moment in which the relation between subjectivity and knowledge within university structures changes. Thus, with a different disposition, academics might well contribute to the *ethics of the impossible*, 'not as smug debunkers (…) not as melancholic dwellers' (Castiglia, 2017a, p. 226), not as cynical intellectuals in the post-dictatorship university but as…[59]

[59] This sentence has deliberately been left unfinished…just in case you wonder.

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Appendix A. Consent form

Consent for participation in a research interview

The limits of resistance and critique within the academic community in times of quality. Academics moral and political agency in Chilean universities

Researcher's name: Francisco Durán del Fierro
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Please sign this form after you have read the 'Information Sheet' and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

INFORMATION

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. This study forms part of the doctorate programme 'PhD in Education, Practice and Society'. This study aims to bring to light the complexities and contradictions of the practices of resistance and critique within the academic community in relation to quality rationality in the Chilean higher education system.

The main researcher is Francisco Durán del Fierro, a doctorate student of the Institute of Education, at University College London. This investigation is funded by the 'National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research' (CONICYT – Chile) through the 'Becas Chile' program.

Before confirming your participation it is important to consider the following information. Please, feel free to ask any question that may be unclear:

Participation: your participation will involve answering some question in the context of a semi-structured interview. The interview will last between one hour and one hour and half. In addition, your participation will be absolutely voluntary, which means that you will be able to give it up prior or during the interview at any time without consequences.

Risks: to ensure that the data only will be used for the research purpose, I will use pseudonymised names to refer to the participants in any published material.

Benefits: you will not receive any reward for the participation. However, your participation will be relevant to collect and analyse information regarding the consequences of quality assurance polices on the academic community.

Confidentiality: All your opinions will be confidential and will not be shared at any moment. In all the publications your name and the name of your institution will not be showed.

Findings: you will have the right to know the findings of this study. When the investigation is completed, you will receive an abstract of the main findings and conclusions to your email.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in our 'general' privacy notice:

For participants in research studies, click here

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices.

The lawful basis that will be used to process your personal data is 'Public task' for personal data.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

I accept to participate in the study '*The limits of resistance and critique within the academic community in times of quality. Academics moral and political agency in Chilean universities*'.

Furthermore, I confirm that I have read and understood the information and the conditions of my participation. I have had the opportunity of asking questions regarding the research and they have been answered appropriately.

____________________________ ____________________________

Participant's name and sign **Researcher's sign**

Date: ____

Appendix B. Research Information Sheet

Information sheet

The limits of resistance and critique within the academic community in times of quality. Academics moral and political agency in Chilean universities

Researcher's name: Francisco Durán del Fierro
Telephone number: +447562462423
Email address: [redacted]
Supervisors' name: Stephen Ball and Jane Perryman
Address: Department of Education, Practice and society, Institute of Education (IoE), University College London (UCL), 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL.

Introduction

You are being invited to take part in a research project for a doctorate programme (PhD) in Education, Practice and Society. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me any question or if there is anything that is not clear.

What is the project's purpose?

The main aim of the research is to bring to light the complexities and contradictions of the practices of resistance and critique within the academic community in relation to quality rationality and policies in the Chilean higher education system. To study the extent to which quality rationality makes up academic subjectivities I will focus on two different types of universities in Chile: a research-intensive and a teaching-oriented university.

Why have I chosen this topic?

I have been working as researcher in different topics of the development of higher education over the last seven years. I worked in the Ministry of Education during the design of the Higher Education Reform in Chile (2014-2016). Here I had the opportunity of being the coordinator of the quality assurance component. Additionally, I have had experience as professor and doing research in a research-intensive university. This is why I am particularly interested in the relationship between quality assurance policies and academia.

Why have you been invited to participate in this study?

You have been invited to participate in this study given your academic position in a Chilean university. Specifically, you have been selected for your experience doing research either in your discipline or in relation to the enhancement of university's functions.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you wish to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by the main researcher about your experience in knowledge production within the university. Specifically, the aim is to bring to light how you organize your time during research processes and what kind of practices you are carrying out. Prior to the interview, you will have to sign the consent form,

which specifies your rights as participant and the obligations about personal data. The interview will last between one hour and one hour and half.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in our 'general' privacy notice:

For participants in research studies, click here

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices.

The lawful basis that will be used to process your personal data is 'Public task' for personal data.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Appendix C. List of interviewees.

Interviewees	Type of university	Interviewees' Degree	Knowledge area	Academic career
Researcher 1	Public – research – regional	Anthropology	Social Science and Education	Early-career
Researcher 2	Public – research – regional	Engineering	Education	Early-career
Researcher 3	Public – research-intensive – regional	History	Social Science	Mid-career
Researcher 4	Private – research-intensive – Metropolitan	Design	Art and Architecture	Early-career
Researcher 5	Public – research-intensive – Metropolitan	History	Humanities	Mid-career
Researcher 6	Private – research – Metropolitan	Engineering	Technology	Early-career
Researcher 7	Public – research-intensive – Metropolitan	Psychology	Commerce and Administration	Mid-career
Researcher 8	Public – research-intensive – Metropolitan	Doctor	Health	Senior
Researcher 9	Private – research-intensive – Metropolitan	Lawyer	Law	Senior
Researcher 10	Private – research – Metropolitan	Engineering	Technology	Senior
Researcher 11	Public – research – Metropolitan	Engineering	Technology	Mid-career

Researcher 12	Public – research – regional	Computer scientist	Basic science	Mid-career
Researcher 13	Public – research-intensive – Metropolitan	Biochemistry	Basic science	Senior
Researcher 14	Private – teaching – Metropolitan	Engineering	Technology	Mid-career
Researcher 15	Private – teaching – Metropolitan	Engineering	Technology	Senior
Researcher 16	Public – research – regional	Doctor	Health	Mid-career
Researcher 17	Private – teaching – Metropolitan	Psychology	Education	Mid-career
Researcher 18	Private – teaching – Metropolitan	Teacher	Education	Mid-career
Researcher 19	Public – research-intensive – Metropolitan	Engineering	Commerce and Administration	Senior
Researcher 20	Private – research – Metropolitan	Dentist	Health	Senior
Researcher 21	Public – teaching – regional	Doctor	Health	Mid-career
Researcher 22	Public – teaching – regional	Agriculture	Technology	Mid-career
Researcher 23	Public – research – regional	Agriculture	Technology	Mid-career
Researcher 24	Public – research-intensive – Metropolitan	Sociology	Social Science	Mid-career

Researcher 25	Public – research – Metropolitan	History	Humanities	Mid-career
Researcher 26	Public – research-intensive – Metropolitan	Biology	Social science	Senior
Researcher 27	Public – research-intensive – Metropolitan	Philosophy	Humanities	Senior
Researcher 28	Public – research – Metropolitan	Philosophy	Humanities	Senior
Researcher 29	Public – research – Metropolitan	History	Humanities	Early-career
Researcher 30	Public – research – regional	Linguistic	Education	Mid-career
Researcher 31	Public – teaching – regional	Teacher	Education	Mid-career
Researcher 32	Private – research-intensive – Metropolitan	Mathematics	Basic Science	Mid-career
Researcher 33	Private – research-intensive – Metropolitan	Archeologist	Basic science	Mid-career
Researcher 34	Public – research-intensive – Metropolitan	Biology	Basic science	Senior
Researcher 35	Public – research – regional	Sociology	Music	Early-career
Researcher 36	Private – research-intensive – Metropolitan	Arts	Humanities	Mid-career