

**Friedrich W. M. v. Ziemietzki, *The Academic Life in the Spirit of Scholarship: A Free Gift to the Brothers and Comrades of the German University* (1812)**

NB: For didactic purposes I translate *Wissenschaft* throughout as “scholarship,” though “science” would also be justified—simply in order not to take the disciplinary status of the latter for granted. The syntax reproduces the original as far as possible, with some resultant awkwardness, but hopefully this will move us to closer inspection of contemporary usage.

*Chapter 2*

Our project is to know the academic life, and we have just expressed it thus initially: that we want to investigate, consider, and represent the academic life. Its transformation should namely be achieved by this knowledge according to the demands of scholarship; and it thereby demands a procedure suited to this aim. Insofar as we must indicate the elements of scholarly life, we will take pains to go into the bases of the phenomena and demonstrate why this or that has come to be, for we are investigating the academic life; in our conception what we are considering is merely as it is according to its reality; and we portray it where we indicate its transformation in the spirit of scholarship, and demonstrate how the academic life will be formed differently through the elevation of the moral elements. If we were to admit all peculiarities, and to explain and justify historically the genesis and the entire formation of academic life, we would be forced: to present the history of universities, especially in relation to student life, and to mention all the other causes having influence on it from general history, and to demonstrate the grounds for this. But this would lead us too far astray, my brothers, as it might then be a more broadly encompassing and more difficult undertaking. We remain rather more on our own and limit the design of our project in the following form. We want to know namely what we should do within this domain as those who are studying, or as students insofar as we form a comradeship, in order to elevate the scholarly and moral view of life to dominance, toward the formation of the realm of scholarship. For this sake we submit foremost only to ourselves, our academic life, and indeed insofar as this is a public discharge of facts and a formal presentation, to our research. This then is the specific conception of our endeavor, and we may not overstep it, no matter whether or not it will be necessary that we bring to bear other matters of relevance in accordance with the demonstration of knowledge.

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Like scholarly knowledge as well or the cognition of truth does not permit shackling and binding or domination from anywhere else but itself, the university must also be thoroughly free, i.e.: it may never suffer any restriction other than those which its own aim determines and gives. Thence a certain separation from the state, to the extent that the formation of universities into institutes of the state as such would have to have brought distortion, and obviously the repression of scholarly instruction. For this sake then there is nothing more important than to be vigilant and know where the unifying and dividing points of universities and the state lie, so that a wholly destructive alignment of the former to the latter does not result, and their particular life is not killed. History itself gives the most vocal example for this and lets us recognize how the true concept of the university has already so to speak been in effect invisibly for centuries.

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So if what has been said is indeed to relate to academic freedom as a consequence, that its representation will be advanced by scholarship itself, and the Germans according to their profound character have especially satisfied this demand, academic freedom has always portrayed and sustained itself, and it must be maintained as a sacred good, if the magnificent character of the nation [*Volk*] is not to decline: then the necessary consequence of this false understanding, if conceived differently than we have presented it, will be understood sensually, a wholly false and perverse life in this academic freedom. But the view presented here would in itself nowhere like to have been dominant and a goad to action, but rather more a more-or-less false conception...

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We should now speak in particular about the [regional] associations [*Landsmannschaften*] and above all the the student-league lifestyle [*Burschenwesen*] whose wildness and crudeness has stigmatized them: so after we wanted to make academic freedom comprehensible in what has been said so far, for the sake of understanding the future, we must turn closer to our aim. We have long maintained, and also maintain here, that student bonds and associations [*Vereine*] for any kind of political aim and from any similar grounds are thoroughly at odds with the true concept of the student, and we stipulate here: the student as such has a civic value or a political weight relevant to him neither in the state nor anywhere else, a value which secures to each one directly his personal value and the representation in the world of the senses. So the student does not form a class at all, because he is in no way incorporated in the number of the burghers, and affords not the slightest for the other burghers, but the concept of a class is that it confers benefits upon itself from which the student wants to and should be wholly excluded; he is never due the arrogance of calling himself a class, or letting himself be called such. Thus from the side of the state, the political so far eludes him that he can and should well be an object, and indeed a very important one, of state wisdom and state art, and he has political, civic value for the state, but he may not in any way presume to want to appear as a future burgher in state associations anywhere with political status, or a civic weight or civic value. So nothing else remains for him than as the political status that falls to his individual person; —and for the masters of state art maintaining students as a social consortium finding itself under their protection, under the edict of the teacher consigned to the association of burghers, to a general aim, that of the advancement of scholarly insight and the expansion of light, the character of the *community*, a corporation, and as such the university now unquestionably has its lawful influence in the state, its voice and its political value, and it should have it, for without a doubt it must itself be attentive first of all to its best, if for that matter it immediately wants to be formally excluded from all politics...

Consideration of the external [*das Aeussern*] [i.e., external to scholarship] as such is strictly forbidden everywhere as a result of this, and hence the discrepancy in which the [regional] associations stand with respect to the true student spirit by now already shines forth. But they themselves have their most profound motivation in the absence of such spirit prevailing among the students, a spirit swerving away above the superficial [*das Aeusserliche*] that holds scholarly training alone in view. For how would the kind of person who has applied himself diligently to knowledge be in a position, over many years, just as reality has only too often demonstrated, to deal with the fisticuffs and inanities of others, and as senior [i.e., elder] or charger [in the sense of a horse for battle or parade] (someone loaded down, an expression that is not suitable, also with respect to the people [*Volk*] from which he comes) be able to win the respect of his comrades with awe-inspiring life-contortion [*Lebensverdrehung*] as a burgher both wonderful and meritorious? But crude sentient natures

lift their gaze to the external, and since among them disputes and affronts without number must be created, does anything lie nearer to their eyes than this: that they are born from a land, from a province, they could conveniently unite in such a provincial fashion for mutual protection against all affronts which they could well better resist with joint power than if they remained alone? And so indeed out of sheer weakness and fear of the individual those who believe that if they combined and joined their common weakness and fear, they would be better able to protect themselves, or even gain greater respect as brave and powerful, the limiting contingency of being born from the provinces again manifesting itself—these mutual protection confederations, under a certain general law, the cartel, where the article [i.e., statute], so extraordinarily important for them, about affronts and duels, hunting crops, imposing bans, snitches and such, is treated, along with the formal lifestyle of the lads [*Burschen*], [*Comment genannt*], and the relation of the associations are all specified, in their entirety but amounting to this: that they should by all means give and take satisfaction with the backsword, and where possible never suffer one of them or even among others [i.e., outside the association] as well who would not want this. So these associations arise and portray themselves in the universities as gentlemen protectors of academic freedom under sundry actions, as perhaps Brandenburgers, Prussians, Pomeranians, Westphalians, Silesians, Vandals (probably scions of the old Genseric [who established the Vandal Kingdom in the fifth century], who remigrated from Africa to the vicinity of their fatherland), Franks, Saxons, Thuringians, Lusatians, and so forth. They now divide the university quite admirably, the nation [*Volk*] of youths who should be striving toward scholarly training, into arbitrary provinces, into certain cantons, where they often exercise their recruiting privileges so that their spirit may also be turned into powers of persuasion and their obtuseness further proliferate. In this manner they separate the one nation of students, which should have no other spirit than love toward knowledge or education, into states actually arrayed against one another externally, for mutual protection, for war and peace.

What in the world do they want with this? It cannot be denied that they do not want evil, thus they must want good...

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Following all of this it is now quite apparent how the associations, where there can be no talk of anything scholarly or moral at all, insofar as it is conducive to the welfare of the association, and perhaps would like to feature in the law, it is clear how these divisions among the students must adversely affect their character. The political weight of these associations, portrayed by the oldest ones that call themselves representatives there of the nocturnal communities of the university, probably not even highly presumptuously, mutually try to wrest themselves away from each other, by cabals and intrigues, by betrayal and lies, even by public battle in fisticuffs *pro patria*,—one would think! for the honor of the fatherland that wants to know nothing at all of them...

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... And so it is indisputably clear from all that has been discussed how the [regional] associations as forms of academic life of the students are thoroughly contrary to all scholarship, and not a single element of morality can be found in them, as such forms, if one does not perhaps mistakenly and falsely confuse the persons with the thing, and wants to be a respecter that the latter do not want evil but good. They are, insofar as they believe this, highly confused and unclear, and it does not befit them to remain thus in the future. It has

already been shown, and will be even more strongly in what follows, regarding honor and its reacquisition through duels, which the [regional] associations obviously make into their main thing: that the good cannot be attained at all in this fashion, but that the formality of the [regional] associations' nature bears in itself the kernel of the crudeness and wildness, and of a narrow obtuseness—that is to be completely rooted out and quashed in all scholarly communities. As universities these are no respecters of the locality of persons, but only of the declaration of the desire to be a student; thus all locality must be justly rescinded and forgotten in the name of the student, to which the fusion of academic burghers of diverse tribes of the one German nation [*Volk*] thereby instigated could further invite and move us toward a unity, toward a life spirit and its necessarily resulting advantages, and toward abundance. If we are otherwise able to say the truth with consistency to one and all, my brothers and comrades, these associations are thus to be quashed by our activity and our resolve, by our moral will, our courage and our power! These ties full of hostile impulses are to be quashed, so that the development and expansion of the scholarly spirit and morality—in that the obvious causes of these kinds of social ills would immediately fall away—will be given free play, and in this form the opportunity to shape academic life in the spirit of scholarship will be elevated and expanded; in ever wider development, to shape life in general into the realm of scholarship, and to arrange and order it ever more according to the demands of reason!!

[This passage from chapter 5 also stands out.]

The concept of someone who studies is that of a young man who strives in free choice on the path of intellectual activity to achieve as much insight and capacity for action as will be possible for him in the embodiment of a moral man, himself sharp [*klar*] and well-informed, within a certain time interval which he has just determined for this striving, and in which he will be presented and seen as such, as a striver. In this character the student then constitutes for the state, in free number and without all consideration of the nation [*Nation*], a corporation, a community, one in which each one should more or less meet this concept of the student. In keeping with this all activity and initiative of free and noble comrades, above all on the development of intellectual power, goes toward the attainment of insight, and indeed of an insight clear [*klar*] in itself, grounded internally in each one; for they should become firm, independent, immutable men who know in each moment what to do, and why they do it. But on no other path can this kind of being, this kind of insight become their lot as on that of knowledge; they live in it as students, too, and it is this that is their real element...