The Perceived Legitimacy of Academic Freedom

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Only his head peeping out of his chamber.
He sits, as if looking out of a window
At the world; to himself he is enough.
Henrik Ibsen, Peer Gynt

Introduction

There are good reasons to protect and promote free speech and academic freedom. As liberal democratic values should not be taken for granted, neither should academic freedom be considered a given. Indeed, there is cause for concern. I believe that in our increasingly volatile world, with rising populism and an

abundance of 'fake news', academic freedom and the autonomy of our academic institutions are more important than ever.

Free speech and academic freedom are defining characteristics of liberal democracy. Free speech and academic freedom play an active and constructive role by contributing to an open and informed public debate (Post, 2015) and by exposing uses and abuses of power. Moreover, academics and academic research play an important role in giving voice to underprivileged groups and their interests.[1] Thus, free speech and academic freedom constitute a constant threat to authoritarian regimes and counteract authoritarian tendencies. Hence, it is to be expected that when countries move in an authoritarian direction, free speech and academic freedom not only become collateral damage, they also become targets.

A society in which academic freedom prevails is also a society where information and knowledge flow freer than in societies where free speech is curbed and knowledge is subject to tight governmental control (Lipsey et al., 2005; Mokyr, 2005). Indeed, in the terminology of Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), modern universities with academic freedom are politically inclusive institutions that also drive economic inclusion. Wide dissemination of knowledge contributes to higher living standards, and academic debate is often conducive to concern for the welfare of the wider society.

Back in 1989, Francis Fukuyama saw signs of 'the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government' (1989). Since then, Fukuyama has been rethinking (2014) and is now deeply worried that liberal democracies are being challenged by populist nationalism and identity politics (2018). Indeed, current developments provide a stark correction to earlier optimism: the growth of authoritarian regimes in Russia, Turkey, Hungary, and other countries; the rise of militant

Islamic organizations and ideology; the emergence of Trumpism in the US and populism in many European countries; and the general notion of a post-truth society (Marmot, 2017; McIntyre, 2018); these trends all point in the wrong direction.

With this essay, I hope to contribute to the dialogue between academia and the wider society on the role of academia in society. This dialogue must reflect on the social contract between academia and society, including which prerogatives and resources are necessary for academia to fulfil its functions. When academics are rightly worried about the future of academic freedom, we must ask: what can academia and academics do to safeguard academic freedom? That question is at the heart of this essay.

I propose that two viable strategies complement each other and must be employed in balance. The first is to sound the alarm and protest abuse. This is already being done: assertions abound that academic freedom and free speech on campus are under threat, even in liberal democracies (Ben-Porath, 2017; Chemerinsky and Gillman, 2017; Collini, 2018; Hammersley, 2016; Ignatieff and Roch, 2017), including in Norway (Forskerforbundet, 2017; Tjora, 2019). As academic freedom is critical for liberal democracies, these assertions should be taken seriously by politicians as well as by society at large.

The second strategy is to improve academia's resilience to external pressure by strengthening the perceived legitimacy of the prerogatives and resources academia need. These prerogatives include academic freedom, discretionary power, and autonomy. These prerogatives must be under constant and demonstrable stewardship by academia itself in order to maintain perceived legitimacy in wider society. I am deliberately using the qualifier perceived here because the widespread *perception* of legitimacy is crucial for academia's standing in the wider society.[2]

Central to the second strategy is the responsibility to actively engage with society's needs. Too many external observers and

opinion-makers see the academic prerogatives as privileges, and too many see academia and academics as unconcerned with the needs of society at large. To be blunt, just as the external threats to academic freedom are real and should be taken seriously by politicians, so should academics acknowledge that episodes, attitudes, and practices within academia sometimes undermine academia's perceived legitimacy.

When academics are seen as aloof from the everyday concerns of ordinary men and women and as more concerned with their own privileges than helping to solve current societal challenges and contributing to economic wealth and welfare creation, that impression undermines the perceived legitimacy of academia, affecting, in turn, the basis for academic freedom.

In this essay, I will concentrate on the balance between the protection of academic freedom and autonomy on the one hand and engagement with society's current needs on the other. I sincerely believe that the debate on academic freedom must be complemented by an equally vigorous debate on academic duty and responsibility (Kennedy, 1997). We need academia to take an active part in responding to the grand challenges of our time: climate change and the need to find more sustainable sources of energy; the decline of old industries and the need to create new jobs; new threats to public health that cannot be addressed by old remedies[3]—to name but three examples.

Academic freedom cannot be freedom from engaging with society's most pressing problems, nor an excuse for academics to look out of the window at the world and to themselves be enough, to paraphrase Ibsen. On the contrary, academic freedom entails a collective responsibility to contribute to a better society. That, to some extent, includes an obligation to engage in issues that are given priority by elected politicians.

I am writing this as a former state secretary with responsibility for higher education and research policy in Norway (2001–2005

and 2013–2018). I have also served four years as Research Director at the University of Oslo. I have thus had my share of joys and frustrations, conflicts and collaborations within and with Norwegian academia. In writing this essay, I have endeavoured to take an analytic rather than subjective approach and to strive for balance, using my external (as a politician) as well as internal (as a researcher and research administrator) experiences with academia.

I ask the reader to believe me when I say that I am an ardent believer in, and defender of, academia and academic freedom. If the tone of my critique sometimes seems a bit harsh, it is due to a sincere concern for the long-term well-being of academia in Norway and elsewhere. Not only for academia's own sake but also because our common future depends upon it.

The reader should also be aware that I am writing in a Norwegian context. There are good reasons to suppose that the conditions for academic freedom in Norway are comparatively good: academic freedom is safeguarded by the Act relating to universities and university colleges,[4] based on an Official Norwegian Report commissioned in 2005 by then Minister of Education and Research Ms Kristin Clemet.[5] According to the European University Association's Autonomy Scorecards, Norway ranks high on academic autonomy.[6] The high level of equality[7] and trust[8] in Norway, including trust between people and trust in government,[9] is probably conducive to academic freedom as well. Thus, academic freedom is probably under more pressure in other countries than in Norway.

Nevertheless, there are concerns amongst Norwegian academics regarding academic freedom (Hessen, 2018; Osmundsen and Olsen, 2017), and those concerns deserve to be taken seriously. I will argue that now is the right time to insist that academia maintains a conscious and even humble approach to academic freedom, the prerogatives academic freedom contain, and indeed, the responsibilities that academic freedom entails.

In the following, I will first discuss assumptions, prerogatives, limitations, and obligations related to academic freedom. I will then identify and discuss three threats to academic freedom: threats to the very legitimacy of academic freedom, inadequate resources to make academic freedom a reality in practice, and downright infringement of academic freedom. I will illustrate the threats with some examples but will not provide an in-depth analysis of any cases. In a few instances, a lengthier discussion would allow for more nuance; however, I take responsibility for the priorities made. In the conclusion, I will emphasize what academia can do to safeguard academic freedom.

What is academic freedom?

Two sets of beliefs form my thinking on academic freedom; one is ideological, and the other is instrumental. Ideologically, I believe academic freedom is a *sine qua non* of a true liberal democracy, in the sense that I cannot conceive of a liberal democracy without universities where academic freedom is granted. The instrumental belief is that academic freedom provides for higher quality of education and research, and that it in the long run also provides for more useful knowledge,[10] even if some of that knowledge may appear 'useless' at the time (Flexner and Dijkgraaf, 2017). An early advocate for the instrumental as well as the ideological sets of beliefs is Michael Polanyi. In 'The Republic of Science', he states that under certain plausible conditions '. . . the pursuit of science by independent self-coordinated initiatives assures the most efficient possible organisation of scientific progress' (Polanyi, 1962b, p. 56). In her discussion on academic freedom, Joanna Williams shows how Immanuel Kant as well as John Stuart Mill argued that academic freedom is essential for developing new knowledge (Williams, 2016, p. 5–6).

There are many definitions of academic freedom, yet with a healthy degree of consensus.[11,12] Core elements of most definitions are the freedom to question and inquire, freedom to decide what material and methods are relevant to pursue answers, and freedom to publish.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, academic freedom is 'a scholar's freedom to express ideas without risk of official interference or professional disadvantage'. This succinct definition underlines the close connection between academic freedom and freedom of speech. In fact, academic freedom without freedom of speech seems meaningless, whereas most definitions of academic freedom go beyond freedom of speech.

The first sentence of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure reads as follows: 'Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties ...'[13] The definition also makes clear that 'Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject'. A footnote underlines that this passage is not meant to discourage controversial issues, but simply 'to underscore the need for teachers to avoid persistently intruding material which has no relation to their subject.' A more recent description, albeit with the same sentiment, can be found in the declaration made by the Global Forum on Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy, and the Future of Democracy in June 2019.[14]

Although most definitions are formulated positively, academic freedom is basically a negative freedom in Isaiah Berlin's (1958) sense.[15] It is freedom from obstructions to questioning and inquiring, choosing methods, and publishing. It is, however, not formulated as a right to have particular resources available. Of

course, for academic institutions and individual academics, the freedom to inquire, research, and publish can only be exercised with adequate resources available. Funding is thus intrinsically important for how academics experience academic freedom in practice. I will discuss the implications of this further in the section on funding.

I will in the following discuss assumptions that underpin the legitimacy of academic freedom, prerogatives that are necessary for academic freedom to function, some limitations to academic freedom, and certain obligations that academic freedom calls forth.

Normative assumptions

I propose that the legitimacy of academic freedom, that is, the granting of the prerogatives that academic freedom entails, rests upon several normative assumptions on behalf of the wider society.

The first overarching assumption is that the prerogatives academics enjoy exist for the greater good, not for the benefit of individual academics. This is the case, even if one must acknowledge that academic freedom is 'played out' at the level of individual academics.

The second assumption is that there are proper practices of self-governance in place, including practices of quality assurance. Whereas 'society' acknowledges it lacks the capacity to judge the quality and relevance of research, it assumes that the academic community has such practices in place and that it weeds out research of low quality. These practices of quality assurance, including a 'healthy' level of competition for resources, ensure that resources are reasonably efficiently used. One conspicuous indicator for the population at large is examples of dubious research, leading to sentiments such as, 'If they can

afford to fund *that* with taxpayers' money, they obviously have too much money'.

Third, academics hold themselves—and each other—to a higher standard of discussion than the rest of society. In fact, academia should provide the 'gold standard' for exchange of arguments in pursuit of new insight, roughly as delineated by Habermas on ideal speech situations.

Fourth, academics are by and large hard-working. They 'pay' for their prerogatives with extraordinary commitment and hard work.

Finally, academics are by and large concerned with the welfare of society at large.

Episodes or practices that seem to contravene these assumptions undermine 'society's' support for academia. 'Society' is, of course, a problematic and imprecise term in the sense that society as such has no opinion. I thus use 'society' as a synonym for 'mainstream public or political opinion'. Even 'mainstream public or political opinion' could be discussed, but I believe it makes intuitive sense.[16,17]

Prerogatives

Academic freedom necessitates certain prerogatives, such as a high degree of self-governance and work autonomy, discretionary power to commit considerable institutional resources (including their own time) without consulting superiors, and freedom to freely and publicly criticize each other, their own organization, and senior management. It is important to acknowledge that these are indeed prerogatives that set academia clearly apart from most other work organizations (Whitley, 2000).

The nature of scholarly work implies that academics need considerable work autonomy and discretionary power in order to be effective (Polanyi, 1962b; Whitley, 2000). They also need

the power to commit considerable resources on behalf of the employer and freedom to make decisions that in most other organizations would be considered 'strategic' and hence the responsibility and mandate of upper echelons of management. Another example of a prerogative that many outside academia find difficult to comprehend is the freedom to publicly criticize and question decisions made by the employer.

These are not prerogatives that academics should be grateful for, for they are not granted because researchers deserve them, but because they are necessary in order for academia to fulfil its functions. What academics could do, though, is to acknowledge that these prerogatives may be seen as privileges, and that privileges granted in a democracy must be stewarded with care if they are to be sustained. Moreover, academics could individually and collectively ask whether their actions underpin or undermine the legitimacy of academic freedom. Furthermore, as most of the funding, at least for Norwegian higher education institutions, stem from the public purse, these are prerogatives that are granted from society. If these prerogatives appear unreasonable, the repercussions to the public's willingness to provide adequate funding may be severe.

Limitations

The right to academic freedom is not absolute. There are certain important limitations, such as libel and hate speech, research ethics, and conflicts of interest.

As free speech generally is moderated by libel laws and laws against hate speech, libel is no more legitimate if it comes from a reputed academic than from an ordinary citizen. A recent trend is the rise of debates on free speech on campus, where many see a contradiction between free speech and the right to welfare for marginalized groups in particular (Ben-Porath, 2017;

Chemerinsky and Gillman, 2017; McIntyre, 2018; Williams, 2016). Hate speech is prohibited by law in many countries, but it is not uncontroversial who defines hate speech in practice (Parekh, 2017)—the debate is full of grey areas. However, I think it safe to argue that academics must enjoy at least the same degree of freedom of speech as others do due to academics' role in challenging received knowledge and conventions.

Academic freedom is also moderated by ethical reasons, including the dignity and welfare of live research subjects. Some would also include concern for the purpose of research or even potential misuse of research results. There are numerous historical examples, some of which also illuminate the development of research ethics. Ignaz Semmelweiss did not breach any contemporary ethical codes of research. Yet, he would have been in deep trouble with any research ethics committee today with his experimental approach. At the same time, when the Norwegian Research Ethics Act was revised in 2017, it was changed into an Act on the organization of research ethics, in order to emphasize the principle of academic self-governance.[18]

Research for the purpose of extraction petroleum resources presents an interesting Norwegian case. In 2014, interest groups challenged Norwegian universities on their cooperation with oil companies, including the Norwegian company Statoil (now Equinor). The Rector of the University of Bergen, Dag Rune Olsen, asked the National Committee for Research Ethics in Science and Technology (NENT) to discuss the case. The conclusion was not unequivocal but did not preclude universities from collaborating with oil and gas companies.[19] Of course, a conclusion that precludes Norwegian universities from such collaboration would have been controversial, given that Norwegian universities are overwhelmingly funded by public money, which to a substantial degree stems from the extraction of oil and gas.

Conflicts of interest may also limit the freedom of academics to pursue research at their own discretion. The requirement is, usually, that possible conflicts of interest should be publicly declared, but sometimes conflicts of interest limit what research individual academics can engage in. Handling of conflicts of interest is also an example where academics are subject to the same regulations as other civil servants, sometimes to the academics' dismay.

Obligations

Academic freedom entails obligations and responsibilities. I will argue that academia's overarching responsibility is to ensure that the normative assumptions underlying the legitimacy of academia and academic freedom are being fulfilled. I will emphasize four obligations that complement the overarching responsibility:

The first obligation is to always pursue the highest possible quality according to the prevailing academic standards. This obligation is rooted in the instrumental motivation for academic freedom, that it enables the highest possible quality of research and learning.

The second obligation is for academics to hold themselves to a high standard of integrity in public debates, as, for instance, expressed by AAUPs 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure:[20]

> When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public might judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence, they should at all times be accurate, should exercise

> appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

The third obligation is related to the second. Academics enjoy considerable authority as supervisors and lecturers. This authority stems from their assumed expertise and from their formal position. Furthermore, as Polanyi argues, effective learning often requires that the learners '. . . submit to authority. You follow your master because you trust his manner of doing things even when you cannot analyse and account in detail for its effectiveness' (Polanyi, 1962a, p. 53). At the same time, lecturers and supervisors are also charged with a responsibility to encourage students to think independently and to learn how to think critically. The principle of *Lehrfreiheit* provides individual academics with considerable autonomy and should be at the core of students expected learning experiences at a university (Altbach, 2016; Josephson et al., 2014). However, this authority is also a cocktail that can effectively be used to manipulate young minds as academics are in a position to exert undue influence over students' political opinions. The AAUP definition cited earlier must be read as emphasizing the obligation to avoid such manipulation.

The fourth is a responsibility to pursue research that is scientifically relevant but also relevant for society at large. This position has been eloquently elaborated by Donald Kennedy, former president of Stanford University, in his exposition of the relationship between academic freedom and academic duty (Kennedy, 1997).

The societal relevance may not be short term, and I am not suggesting that all researchers must perform research of visible societal relevance all the time. However, the academic community bears a collective responsibility, and those who

choose to pursue only curiosity-driven research have a responsibility to support the prestige of those inclined to more applied research.

It can be argued that whereas academic freedom must be an individual right for it to have any meaning, the responsibility it comes with is fundamentally collective. It is academia, that ill-defined and elusive body of scholars, that collectively shoulders the responsibility that comes with the rights and privileges of individual academics. The reason is that the prerogatives bestowed upon academics are a common pool resource (Ostrom, 1990). It is thus vulnerable to free-riding and the tragedy of the commons (Hardin, 1968; Schelling, 2006).

There are two important consequences of this. First, for some of the obligations, such as contributing to solving societal problems, it is futile or even disingenuous to make individual academics accountable. For other obligations, such as to act with integrity in the classroom and in public debates, it makes perfect sense to hold individual academics accountable. Even so, when individual academics are seen to fall short on expectations of integrity, the fallout is collective because of the tendency to generalize from conspicuous examples. This is the reason why the legitimacy of academia is a common pool resource (Ostrom, 1990). Second, for this combination of individual rights and collective responsibilities to work, academia must have credible mechanisms of self-governance, of which peer review is a prime example.

Threats to academic freedom

I will discuss three sets of threats to academic freedom. First, threats to the very legitimacy of academic freedom. The legitimacy of academic freedom, as acknowledged by society, is fundamental to the protection and preservation of academic freedom.

Without perceived legitimacy, it is difficult to see how the prerogatives and funding necessary for making academic freedom a reality will be safeguarded. Legitimacy is also the best protection against populist attacks. Moreover, the perceived legitimacy of academic freedom is something academics and academia can influence profoundly through their own practices and makes academia more resilient towards such attacks. I have identified five such threats to the perceived legitimacy of academic freedom: populist attacks on 'experts' and academics; pressure on free speech on campus; misuse of privileges or lack of engagement with society; misuse of professorial authority in public debates; and strong epistemic relativism, including postmodernism.

The second threat to academic freedom is a lack of adequate resources, whereas the third is the downright infringement of academic freedom as a negative liberty.

External threats to academic freedom may not only emanate from governments but also industry (economic interests) or pressure groups (ideological interests).

Misuse of academic authority

Academics are expected to participate in public debates in order to provide facts and perspectives that enlighten the debate. Indeed, as discussed earlier, academics' contribution to public enlightenment and democracy is fundamental to the justification of academic freedom. At the same time, academics are expected to promote integrity in public debates by way of example. Moreover, academics enjoy extra authority due to their purported expertise and position in society.

Many also expect academics to be 'neutral' and 'objective', an expectation that is misguided and rooted in a simplistic conception of science. Pielke (2007), emphasizing 'honesty' rather than 'neutrality' and 'objectivity', comments upon the linear

model of science and politics which many scientists and politicians still adhere to. According to this model, science precedes and compels political decisions. First, let scientists get the facts straight, the linear model says, then require politicians to implement policies based on them. Pielke, and many with him, have long argued that this model is false: there is no such straight linear relationship between science and politics. He points out that the linear model supports the idea of science as impartial and elevated over the political struggle. Furthermore, academics may of course hold political opinions and use their expertise to further their political agenda. However, it is deeply problematic when that engagement leads academics to politicize science: 'In many instances science has become little more than a mechanism for marketing competing political agendas, and scientists have become leading members of the advertising campaigns' (Pielke, 2007, p. 117).

The gravest example is of course when scientists engage in deliberate misinformation, for instance when accepting money from the tobacco lobby to confuse the relationship between tobacco and cancer or accept money to create doubt regarding the relation between climate gas emissions and climate change (Oreskes and Conway, 2010). Whereas such conduct is profoundly worrying and undermines public trust in scientists, I will not dwell on these examples in this essay, simply because this conduct is obviously a case of malfeasance and should be treated as such.

I find it more relevant to underline that it is perfectly legitimate for academics to be politically engaged, as long as that engagement neither distorts their professional judgement nor undermines their integrity. Indeed, contrary to Merton's (1973) ideal of disinterest, I think it can be argued that academics that pick their research topic based on a social engagement may produce better science precisely because they are engaged. It is also important that professors participate in public debate.

However, they are undermining the authority of academia when they misuse their titles to pose as experts on something that they do not know better than an ordinary, enlightened non-professional. Or when they let their research become politicized and participate in public debate under false pretences as representing 'The Voice of Science' (with capital v and s) when scientists may indeed disagree profoundly over the issue under debate (Hammersley, 2015). I will not provide concrete examples of this practice, simply because it is so frequent.

However, an interesting and less frequent variant is when academics publicly accuse other scholars of being politicized and unworthy of research funding. For instance, the Norwegian research community on kindergartens appears so heavily ideological and dominated by one tradition within pedagogy that researchers from other disciplines (economics in particular) are seen as intruders and treated as barbarians at the gate. In the leading newspaper *Aftenposten*, one could read an op-ed from two leading researchers condemning the funding of other researchers by the Norwegian Research Council (Østrem and Pettersvold, 2014). The apparent problem was that the research proposal was championed by an economist. That the research proposal had undergone standard procedures, including rigorous peer review, was disregarded, apparently not making an impression.

As lecturers and supervisors, academics are in a position of authority and power, as discussed earlier. Thus, the lectern can be an effective platform for indoctrination and political propaganda. I will provide one illustrative example related by students over a cup of coffee in my office a few years ago. They were students at the teacher training program at a Norwegian university. In an ordinary lecture, they had been introduced to a so-called comparison between rightist and leftist education policy in Norway. It was quite obvious that everything the lecturer deemed as good, such as community, care for the

weaker pupils, and so on, was promoted by leftist politicians, whereas rightist politicians were responsible for competition, new public management, and a purely instrumental approach to learning and knowledge. These claims are far too sweeping to have any credit in a Norwegian political context. For instance, it was a labour government that introduced important elements of new public management, and several conservative or Christian democratic ministers have introduced initiatives aimed towards underperforming students or anti-bullying measures in schools.

The students showed me the presentation, which was so lopsided that most leftist politicians I know would have refrained from using such arguments simply out of self-respect. Some students reacted strongly to this highly politicized presentation, but fear of reprisals kept them silent. Much of their reaction was due to the lecturer presenting the comparison as based on neutral professional judgement that was somehow independent of the lecturer's personal political sympathies. Of course, as one of the tasks of university education is to cultivate free and critical thinking in young minds, the very same presentation could have been used to elicit a discussion among the students and to make the students aware that education policy and research is politically contested. Thus, where the lecturer failed in maintaining professional integrity was in conflating personal political opinions—which the lecturer is entitled to hold and promote—with a neutral scientific point of view and as shared knowledge among education researchers.

Strong epistemic relativism and postmodernism

There are two main problems with epistemic relativism and postmodernism in academia. The first is that postmodernism and strong epistemic relativism paved the way for populist

attacks on truth. A path can be traced from postmodernism to 'alternative facts' and the post-truth society. Two current collaterals are the debates on climate change and vaccinations. The second problem is related to public trust in science.

Strong epistemic relativism is succinctly summarized by Paul Boghossian thus: 'There are many radically different, yet "equally valid" ways of knowing the world, with science being just one of them' (2006, p. 2). If one takes this position seriously, then there is really no reason to provide academia with its special prerogatives.

As for my own stance on ontology and epistemology, I am a firm believer in John Searle's outline of the construction of social reality (Searle, 1995). However, I do not find any inherent contradiction between Searle's construction of social reality and Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality. Much of what we recognize as reality, that has 'an existence beyond that of the observer' (Berger and Luckmann, 1967), is indeed socially constructed. The truth criterion then becomes not that of objectivity, but that of intersubjectivity[21] or what Searle refers to as ontological subjectivity combined with epistemic objectivity (Searle, 2001). This intersubjectivity is crucial for society to function, and, indeed, for scholarship to move forward. This does not mean that academics should not challenge socially accepted 'truths', but they must accept that doing so must be acknowledged as socially relevant and more than an academic pastime.

In his book *Post-Truth*, Lee McIntyre (2018) argues that the postmodernists' rejection of the notion of truth has provided right-wing populists with useful arguments for their attacks on science and expertise. McIntyre is by no means alone; Jon Elster has launched several blistering attacks on postmodernism and what he calls obscurantism (Elster, 2015), whereas Alan Sokal cites as one of his main reasons for instigating the

whole 'Sokal affair' a fear for what postmodernists would do to the legitimacy of science (Sokal, 1996a, b; Sokal and Bricmont, 2003). As a political leftist, he is exasperated because '. . . this silliness is emanating from the self-proclaimed Left' (Sokal, 1996a).

There is a vast difference between acknowledging that most scientific 'truths' are preliminary and open for discussion and even different opinions, on the one side, and on the other side undermining the very notion that there actually exist sound criteria for judging the verisimilitude of arguments and propositions. If the epistemic relativists should gain widespread support for their view, I think it is safe to predict that public and political support for science and research would take a heavy blow. I am not questioning that there may exist meta-narratives in society that could legitimately be challenged. I do, however, claim that the basis for such challenges must be a convincing proposition arguing that the prevailing meta-narrative is founded on dubious premises or simply wrong. If the proposition is basically that 'I like this narrative better', then we are beyond the realm of academia and scholarship.

The second problem is that much of what is published from epistemic relativists, or slips through their peer review, simply undermines public trust in science, or public trust in the academic community being willing and able to ensure proper quality assurance and self-governance (Mounk, 2018).[22] Some of this scepticism is undoubtedly caused by simplistic notions of the nature of science and academia. However, as the Sokal affair and other debates demonstrate, there is simply too much being published that has no discernible value outside a narrow circle of like-minded academics.

An interesting Norwegian example was provided by the newspaper *Morgenbladet* investigating research on post-humanism and kindergartens (Time, 2017). The gist of the article

was that much of Norwegian research on kindergartens have very little, if any, relevance for children or for those working in kindergartens, or indeed for anyone else trying to understand what is going on in kindergartens. The article provided ample examples that underscored the view of research and researchers as detached from any concern with their research being relevant beyond their self-referential circle of scholars and enrolled practitioners. An engaged debate ensued in which the head of the largest teachers union stressed the need for research to be relevant for practitioners (Handal, 2017) and a leading scholar engaged in a heated response (Greve, 2017).

So, what is the problem underlying this debate? In my mind, this discussion should have been held earlier, as part of the internal quality assurance process, that is, through peer review. That this debate became public demonstrates that the self-governance principle of academia had partially failed. The true danger is not that some research of dubious value is being performed and published. The true danger is that such examples may undermine public and political trust, with potential repercussions for funding and, much worse, inducing political interference in quality assurance in academia.

Lack of engagement with societal challenges

One of the most serious threats to the legitimacy of academic freedom is when it is being used as an ideological platform for self-serving self-sufficiency and as a defence for not engaging with societal challenges. Too often we discuss as if there is an inherent contradiction between quality and relevance— as if basic research, bottom-up, curiosity-driven is one thing and usually of high quality at one end of the continuum, whereas applied research, top-down, thematic, and often of dubious quality is at the other end.

The purported contradiction between the quest for understanding fundamentals and considerations of use is simply false (Stokes, 1997). This by no means precludes basic research without considerations of use but makes it clear that it is possible to have an eye for potential usefulness when choosing fundamental research questions. And that is exactly what is needed in a time with so many 'grand societal challenges' looming.

Each hour of work carried out by a Norwegian professor is paid for by the taxes from four to five hours' work of an average wage-earner. This represents a substantial investment of society's resources. I believe this gives society the right to expect contributions in return in the form of economic value creation, upholding a sustainable welfare-state, and solving the grand societal challenges of our time.

The current societal challenges provide an abundance of interesting problems for research. One example is the nexus of climate change, energy security, and energy affordability. Solving the climate change problem while providing much-needed energy for a growing global population, of which billions are pursuing better living standards, is extremely challenging. These issues require a massive mobilization of academic resources from almost every discipline and present an inexhaustible source of interesting and challenging research questions. Of course, climate change is only one, albeit fundamental and formidable, grand societal challenge among many.[23] Again, for most disciplines it should be possible to combine curiosity with a penchant for usefulness. Thus, this is the time for our best and brightest scientists to use real-world problems to filter their own curiosity. The more they do so on their own accord, the less they will feel that politicians and bureaucrats are pushing them in that direction. And, by doing so, they provide evidence for the usefulness of curiosity-driven research.

Free speech on campus under threat

Google 'free speech on campus' and you will get about 452,000 hits (as of April 2019). There are recently written several books on the subject (Ben-Porath, 2017; Chemerinsky and Gillman, 2017; Williams, 2016). *The Economist* has published a series of articles on episodes where free speech is under threat.[24]

Joan W. Scott, former chair of the AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, claims in an interview that in some ways, the situation on American campuses is even worse than under the McCarthy period. Whereas Scott is clearly most worried about the situation for left-leaning academics,[25] *The Economist* provides examples where leftist students effectively block the right to free speech for conservatives. There are even cases where students sabotage university courses they deem as 'Eurocentric' or even 'white supremacist'[26] without presenting any convincing arguments for such labels.

It is tempting to dismiss this as an American problem, fuelled by the stark polarization of public debate in the US, the rise of Trumpism, and so forth. Yet, there are striking similarities to the situation at some Norwegian university campuses in the early 1970s where Marxist students demanded to dictate the curriculum in certain university courses.[27] There are worrying signs at Norwegian universities at present as well. One example is an episode that occurred at the university in Trondheim, NTNU, where a lecturer was condemned by colleagues for agreeing to an interview by a Norwegian right-wing populist Internet site, Resett.[28] Students who were offended by the interview created a petition in the aftermath of the interview. The lecturer was even reprimanded by the head of the department. The criticism was not primarily about what the lecturer had said, but rather that he had agreed to the interview at all.

A robust discussion ensued. While very few argued that Resett is a valuable contribution to Norwegian public debate,

even fewer would question the rights of academics to give an interview to whomever they choose. Many argued that the statements the lecturer made in the interview were academically weak, but that the attempts to silence him were contrary to the academic value of the free exchange of ideas and viewpoints. The episode reached a preliminary closure when the rector of NTNU publicly made it clear that academics must be allowed to be interviewed by a website operating within the law. What is at stake is the fundamental idea of academia as a community committed to free pursuit of knowledge and free exchange of ideas, even when these ideas are unpalatable or even distressing to some.[29] In societies where populism is on the rise, university campuses should be the place for exchange of ideas and opinions in a civilized way, without censure.[30]

Populist attacks on science and expertise

The pendant to censure from within, as discussed above, is external populist attacks on science and expertise. Such attacks on science often occur when scientific insights contradict strong political or commercial interests. At present, attacks on climate science and climate scientists are perhaps the most pressing examples, both because of the ferocity of the attacks and because of the severity of the underlying problem, climate change. However, there are many more examples. The Brexit debate provided overwhelming empirical data on how science can be caught in the line of fire, and of course many would point to Michael Gove's assertion 'Britain has had enough of experts' (Mance, 2016) during the Brexit debate as an illuminating example (Clarke and Newman, 2017).

However, the problem is not as simple as the refusal of politicians and interest groups to heed science. As the very nature of science is progress through questioning and dispute, politicians

and the population at large are often not provided with the clear-cut answers they hope for. Indeed, what should politicians do in an age of post-normal science when 'facts [are] uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high and decisions urgent'—to use the words of Silvio Funtowicz and Jerome Ravetz (1993)? This situation creates a continuous need for academia to educate politicians and the population at large on what to expect from science and to translate the jargon of academia into language that laypersons can relate to. For instance, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is doing a tremendous job in that respect by providing a summary for policymakers, and by being explicit about the probabilities and confidence in their findings.

I have no ambition to do justice to the problem of populist attacks on science and scientists in this essay. My main concern is rather to point out that previously discussed threats to the legitimacy of academic freedom make academia more vulnerable to populist attacks. A useful consideration for any academic would thus be whether their own conduct is adding to academia's resiliency against populist attacks, or to the opposite.

Lack of adequate resources

Most researchers have experienced lack of resources as a major impediment to pursue research they considered important or interesting or both. For academic freedom to have real value in practice, there must also be adequate funding available. Adequate funding consists of two elements: the level of funding and the share of that funding which comes without strings attached. This implies that universities and individual academics must have some discretionary power to prioritize research they consider important, irrespective of current political priorities. For the purpose of this discussion, I will distinguish between

three forms of funding: direct block funding of research institutions, competitive funding based purely on academic merit, and mission-based or 'thematic' competitive funding. The first two are most important for enabling researchers and scholars to pursue curiosity-based research irrespective of political priorities. Arguably, the direct block-funding, combined with tenure, is most important to ensure academics' freedom to make their own priorities. Yet, also with mission-based funding, academic freedom is important, for instance through the protection from undue meddling with research results, and the right to publish.

Again, Norwegian universities and university colleges are at an advantage. They are funded primarily by a large block grant, meaning that they have full control over most of their resources. Moreover, their resources have been growing steadily in real terms for the past 15 years. Most academics at universities and university colleges are also allocated 'research time' that is not supervised by the institution.

The public funding of Norwegian universities and university colleges is generous compared with most other countries. The basic funding ensures the institutions' ability to set their own priorities for research. For instance, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim (NTNU) receives 73 per cent of its total income as a direct block grant from the government, whereas 12 per cent is competitive funding from the Research Council of Norway and the European Union's Horizon2020.

On average, 87 per cent of the income of public higher education institutions in Norway stems from the domestic public purse.[31] In 2018, NOK 24,3 billion out of NOK 35,7 billion in direct block funding was provided as so-called basis funding, whereas NOK 11,4 billion was provided as performance-based funding according to a set of indicators.[32] The indicator that has

received most criticism is based on the number of peer-reviewed publications. The indicator carries NOK 0,56 billion, which was 1,6 per cent of direct block funding in 2018.[33]

That this publication-based incentive is rather moderate has not precluded intense debate and worries about the potential corruptive effect upon individual academics. This debate has mainly been driven by academics rather than by politicians or other stakeholders. My own view on the matter is that if Norwegian academics really feel that their own integrity is at stake by such a modest incentive, then we probably have a more fundamental problem than this indicator. Insofar as this poses an incentive for cheating, then one would hope that the integrity of the Norwegian academic community is able to pass this test. According to this reasoning, knowledge workers in general are subject to much stronger incentives for cheating.[34] As Norwegian academics generally demands to be trusted, it is probably not wise to imply that the integrity that underpins this trust is in danger of being corrupted by very modest economic incentives. Indeed, a claim to professional integrity and a professionally policed code of ethics is a hallmark of every profession seeking public recognition as such (Abbott, 1988; Kasher, 2005).

Furthermore, the formal governance structure of Norwegian universities and university colleges adheres largely to what Kerstin Sahlin describes as the collegiate model (Sahlin and Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016). The university board consists of eleven members, of which seven are elected by and among students and staff of the university. The higher education act also provides universities with the authority to decide their own internal organizational structure, including whether the rector is appointed by the university board or elected by students and staff.

This does not imply a laissez-faire attitude from the government. The overwhelming majority of Norwegian universities

and university colleges are public institutions and formally organized as public agencies. The Minister of Higher Education and Research is constitutionally responsible for the institutions and is regularly summoned to the Parliament to answer questions. Such questions can be about anything and everything. The point here is that Parliament, in addition to passing relevant legislation and providing funding for universities, also takes a real interest in the affairs of universities. Importantly, the higher education act protects universities from political interference in academic affairs, and there are numerous examples of the practical significance of this protection.

Whereas the autonomy of universities and the academic freedom of academics is important, society has a legitimate need for academic research on a number of concrete issues. That is one reason why about a quarter of public funding for research is channelled through the Norwegian Research Council. Another reason is that the Research Council provides for healthy funding competition, thus contributing to higher quality as well as ensuring that research is performed within high priority areas. Thus, the Research Council is responsible for mission-based funding as well as competitive funding based purely on the academic merit of the proposals. Norwegian funding and governance of universities and university colleges are thus an act of balancing of partly conflicting considerations, but foremost it is based on trust.

Even though international comparison would show that Norwegian universities are relatively well endowed with resources from the government; that a comparatively generous share of these resources are provided with few strings attached; and that the general level of competition for resources is less than in most other countries, there is still an ongoing debate on funding. Some interest groups, the industry federations, for instance, tend to argue that universities should be steered

towards 'useful' research and education with a firmer governmental hand. Individual academics and their unions tend to raise opposite concerns, complaining that the governance is too instrumental and short-sighted.

A few years ago, these complaints became so vocal that then Minister of Higher Education and Science, Ms Tora Aasland, appointed a commission to look into the situation. The paradox was that the government was able to show irrefutably that Norwegian universities and university colleges enjoyed real growth in state funding, and at the same time individual academics were convinced and argued convincingly that the competitive pressure was increasing. Unfortunately, the commission failed to produce a report that reconciled the antagonists.[35] One reason is probably that the commission overlooked the insight presented by John Ziman in *Prometheus Bound* (1994), in which he shows how the organization of academia requires an exponential growth of resources if individual academics are not to experience a real tightening of resources. Ziman thus effectively dismisses the existence of a real paradox between overall growth of resources and increased individual pressure. Furthermore, as members of reputational work organizations, academics are constantly involved in battles for recognition, resources, and priority (Whitley, 1982). Hence, the feeling of pressure is part of the nature of academia.

Sometimes researchers experience that research proposals of high quality are rejected due to lack of funding, and sometimes the competition is so fierce that peer review is effectively unable to distinguish which of the excellent proposals should receive funding. Although I do sympathize with the researchers' frustration in these situations, I will claim that for the legitimacy of science to prevail, scarcity of funding is better than scarcity of high-quality research proposals. The somewhat bland conclusion of this discussion must be that it is a question of balance.

The important question then becomes who should have a say in finding that balance, and which criteria should apply. I venture that this will always be a struggle between different legitimate interests.

Downright infringement of academic freedom

Notwithstanding the previous discussion, the Parliament and government in Norway are largely seen as guarantors rather than threats to academic freedom, due to formal protection of academic freedom through the higher education act and due to the provision of funding without strings attached.

Yet, even in Norway, there have been several occasions where members of the academic community have challenged leading politicians on their commitment to, and understanding of, academic freedom. Some politicians have been accused of challenging academic freedom; others have been accused of unwarranted use of research—so-called cherry-picking—when backing a political argument. Furthermore, public authorities are not only protectors and funders of research, but also essential users of research. This user role includes commissioning contract research for specific purposes. In November 2010, the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* published a series of articles about attempts from several ministries to edit the conclusions in commissioned research, allegedly in order to be able to influence the publication of results that were politically controversial. Researchers also reported pressure from ministries to accept the use of a consultancy assistance agreement, according to which 'copyright and all other relevant intellectual property rights, associated with the Assistance shall accrue to the Customer,[36] rather than the standard agreement for research and report

assignments, which have explicit clauses on academic freedom and publication.[37]

In 2012, then Minister of Research and Higher Education, Ms Tora Aasland, strengthened the government's standard contract for contract research,[38] and she enjoined ministries to use the standard contract for research, which includes the paragraph: 'The Assignment shall be founded on the principles for academic freedom within the framework of what has been agreed as regards topics and methods in this agreement. This entails inter alia that the Commissioned Party cannot be subject to the imposition that the Assignment shall lead to a specific conclusion.'

Furthermore, there have been episodes where researchers in public research institutions complain that conclusions in their research have been unduly edited by management in order to fit a political agenda. One such example is senior researcher Erik Nord in Norwegian Institute of Public Health who claimed that his conclusions on the net health effect of e-cigarettes were altered.[39] Of course, it is not only public authorities that may find research conclusions to be troublesome for their own interests and agenda. Research on salmon aquaculture is but one example where Norwegian scientists find their research findings severely challenged by industry interests.[40]

I am not in a position to judge the substance of these episodes, but I would nevertheless like to offer two comments. First, there will always be grey areas between a legitimate challenge of findings and an illegitimate attempt to silence inconvenient conclusions. There is nothing that can replace an honest and open debate when navigating these grey areas, based on the parties' good faith. Second, the challenges and counter challenges in these episodes were such that they might undermine public trust in science and public trust in the proper use of research results.

However, some of the criticism from academics towards politicians or industry is also political rather than academic. Political in the sense that it is obvious that the academic levelling the critique has a political agenda—which is legitimate as long as one is honest about it. Accusing someone of misuse of research in a public debate is powerful rhetoric, irrespective of the soundness of the accusation. It is a very comfortable and often effective discussion-stopper when dealing publicly with politicians. It is precisely because such accusations are so effective that they should not be misused.

Conclusion

Academic freedom and free speech are under no immediate or grave threat in Norway. However, that does not mean that they should be taken for granted. Indeed, during the months that have passed in preparation of this very anthology, new episodes that challenge free speech and academic freedom have occurred. Thus, academic freedom must be protected and promoted every day.

I propose two strategies that should be pursued to that end. The first, and obvious, is to point out actions and patterns of actions that pose an external threat to academic freedom. My impression is that this is being done. However, there is a temptation, which should be resisted by academics, to use academic freedom as a political tool and an easy way out in challenging debates. Sometimes there is a non-trivial element of crying wolf, with the associated dangers that tale illustrates.

The second strategy is to invest continuously in the perceived legitimacy of academic freedom. That includes heeding the normative assumptions, limitations, prerogatives and obligations relating to academic freedom that have been discussed in

this essay. My plea is to take the need for continuous dialogue with the wider society seriously. To paraphrase a cherished quote from US president Kennedy's inaugural speech: 'Ask not what your country can do for academia—ask what academia can do for your country.' Furthermore, academics may underestimate the differences between their own sphere and the rules and norms applying to other employees, and thus the public at large. Be prepared to explain for the umpteenth time, in a non-condescending tone, why academic prerogatives and seemingly esoteric practices are necessary for academia to fulfil its functions in society. Demonstrate real concern for society's grand challenges and acknowledge openly that questions about the usefulness of academic research actually are legitimate. You should at least be able to provide an explanation of why a piece of research is useful for other academics and thus for advancing the frontier of academic knowledge. I believe the job of pursuing this strategy falls mainly on the academic heavyweights, simply because they are the role models for younger academics, and they have most clout with the wider society. And, indeed, quite a few are taking that responsibility seriously! They could do with more support, though.

Investments in the perceived legitimacy of academic prerogatives and practices are most effective when the observed practice is well aligned with the rhetoric. If I am allowed to give advice to the academic community, it is to exercise some restraint on the first strategy and emphasize the second. I emphatically do not suggest that academics should let transgressions of academic freedom pass unchallenged. I do, however, propose that public claims of an alleged infringement of academic freedom come at a cost when the accusations are revealed as dubious. As for the episodes of controversial speech on campus, my best proposal would be to take this as an opportunity to launch a serious and probably difficult discussion on the role of free speech on

campus, acknowledging that between the polarized examples there is the much more interesting and intellectual challenging task of how academia can lead through example when it comes to difficult exchange of ideas and opinions.

Notes

1. This function is by no means restricted to academics in liberal democracies; to the contrary, many academics in authoritarian countries show great courage in supporting the oppressed and challenging the authorities.
2. I consider academic freedom to be legitimate irrespecitve of popular opinion for reasons that will be elaborated upon later in the essay. However, academics ignore public perception of the legitimacy of academic freedom at their peril.
3. At the time of writing, the Covid-19 crisis provides ample demonstration of the role academia play in coping with unexpected threats to humanity.
4. Act relating to universities and university colleges, §1-5 Academic freedom and responsibility. Accessed 030420, https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/act-relating-to-universities-and-univers/id213307/
5. Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 'Briefing on academic Freedom', 2006, accessed 050420, https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kd/vedlegg/uh/vedlegg/nou_akademisk-frihet_orientering_engelsk_ny.pdf
6. European University Association, 'University Autonomy in Europe III: The Scorecard 2017', accessed 030420, European University Association, University Autonomy in Europe II: The Scorecard, (2011), accessed 030420 http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications/University-Autonomy-in-Europe-2017, European University Association, University Autonomy in Europe II: The Scorecard, (2011), accessed 030420 http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications/University_Autonomy_in_Europe_II_-_The_Scorecard.pdf?sfvrsn=2
7. *The Guardian*, 'Inequality index: where are the world's most unequal countries?', 2017, accessed 030420, https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/datablog/2017/apr/26/inequality-index-where-are-the-worlds-most-unequal-countries
8. Esteban Ortiz-Ospina and Max Roser (2020): 'Trust'. Published online at OurWorldInData.org. Retrieved from: https://ourworldindata.org/trust [Online Resource], World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2017–2018*, accessed 030420, http://reports.weforum.org/

global-competitiveness-index-2017-2018/?doing_wp_cron=1529576279.0473530292510986328125

9. Nordic Council of Ministers, 'Trust – The Nordic Gold', 2017, accessed 030420, https://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1095959/FULLTEXT02.pdf
10. I am not blind to the fact that there are several highly ranked universities situated in countries not renowned for their freedom of speech. These universities (or rather, their researchers) are demonstrably able to produce research of the highest quality as assessed by peer review. I still believe some important part is missing. I will however not discuss that further, given that my topic is academic freedom in Norwegian universities as exemplars of universities in a liberal western country.
11. Unesco provides this definition: 'academic freedom, that is to say, the right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies.' Unesco, 'Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel', 1997, accessed 030420, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13144&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
12. Encyclopedia Britannica: Academic freedom, the freedom of teachers and students to teach, study, and pursue knowledge and research without unreasonable interference or restriction from law, institutional regulations, or public pressure. Its basic elements include the freedom of teachers to inquire into any subject that evokes their intellectual concern; to present their findings to their students, colleagues, and others; to publish their data and conclusions without control or censorship; and to teach in the manner they consider professionally appropriate. https://www.britannica.com/topic/academic-freedom
13. American Association of University Professors, 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, accessed 030420, https://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure

14. Global Forum On Academic Freedom, *Institutional Autonomy, And The Future Of Democracy*, Declaration, 2019, accessed 030420 https://rm.coe.int/global-forum-declaration-global-forum-final-21-06-19-003-/168095523e5
15. '"the negative sense" [of liberty] involves an answer to the question: "What is the area within which the subject—a person or group of persons—is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons"'. (Berlin et al., 2016 p. 169).
16. Sometimes it is the responsibility of political leaders not to follow majority public opinion, but in democracies that tend to be unsustainable in the long run.
17. No pun intended on the populist notion of 'mainstream media'.
18. Ministry of Education and Research, Prop. 158 L (2015–2016) Lov om organisering av forskningsetisk arbeid (forskningsetikkloven), accessed 030420, https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-158-l-20152016/id2511345/sec1?q=forskningsetikkloven#match_0
19. De Nasjonale Forskningsetiske Komiteene, Forskningsetisk vurdering av petroleumsforskning (Saksnr. 2014/3), accessed 030420, https://www.etikkom.no/hvem-er-vi-og-hva-gjor-vi/komiteenes-arbeid/Uttalelser/NENT/Vedrorende-forskningsetisk-vurdering-av-petroleumsforskning-Saksnr-20143/
20. American Association of University Professors, 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, accessed 030420 , https://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure
21. Intersubjectivity. Oxford Reference. Retrieved 4 Apr. 2020, from https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100008603
22. *The Economist*. 2018. 'Another set of fake papers takes aim at social science's nether regions', accessed 030420, https://www.economist.com/science-and-technology/2018/10/06/another-set-of-fake-papers-takes-aim-at-social-sciences-nether-regions
23. United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, accessed 030420, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300
24. *The Economist*, 2017, 'Free Speech at American Universities is under Threat', accessed 030420,

https://www.economist.com/united-states/2017/10/12/free-speech-at-american-universities-is-under-threat

25. But by no means defend attacks on the right to free speech for conservatives.
26. *The Economist*, 2017, 'Arguments over Free Speech on Campus are not Left v Right', accessed 030420, https://www.economist.com/united-states/2017/09/07/arguments-over-free-speech-on-campus-are-not-left-v-right
27. Former Norwegian minister for culture and science, Lars Roar Langslet, in his autobiography *På innsiden*, describes how students demanded that he lectured on Marxism rather than what was scheduled (Langslet, 1994). Being a well-known conservative having written a thesis on Marx, Langslet rose to the challenge, seeing it as a bit of academic sportmanship, only to be criticised by colleagues for relinquishing control over curriculum to a student mob.
28. The university news site Khrono has covered the episode quite closely. Accessed 040320, https://khrono.no/emne/eikrem
29. As this manuscript is on its way to print, a new episode has erupted, this time the lecturer in question has allegedly used a 'secret' Facebook profile to spread populist propaganda. The lecturer denies the allegations of being behind the Facebook profile in question. Should the allegations be confirmed, I think it safe to say that the academic credibility of the lecturer will be in jeopardy.
30. Just to make clear, I do not extend this right to hate speech or Holocaust denials or that sort of extremism, but that is so well beyond the episode at NTNU that the point is hardly relevant in this case.
31. The Ministry of Education and Research, 2018, Tilstandsrapport, accessed 030420, https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/eb4e02ae65134e42bba060e879536675/vedlegg-tilstandsrapport-2018_trykkefil2.pdf
32. The Ministry of Education and Research, 2018, Orientering om Statsbudsjettet for 2018, accessed 030420, https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/31af8e2c3a224ac2829e48cc91d89083/orientering-om-statsbudsjettet-2018-for-universiteter-og-hogskolar.pdf (page 47).

33. The Ministry of Education and Research, 2018, Orientering om Statsbudsjettet for 2018, accessed 030420, https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/31af8e2c3a224ac2829e48cc91d89083/orientering-om-statsbudsjettet-2018-for-universiteter-og-hogskolar.pdf (page 76).
34. See for instance Jean Tirole's discussion of credence goods (Tirole, 1988).
35. The Ministry of Education and Research, report from Working Group , 2011, accessed 030420, https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/handlingsrom-for-kvalitet/id594052/
36. Anskaffelser.no, 'Fagsider om offentlige anskaffelser', English Simplified Ssa-b-2015_eng, accessed 030420, https://www.anskaffelser.no/sites/anskaffelser2/files/ssa-b_simplified_2015_eng.docx
37. Paragraph 3.1 'Scientific integrity': 'The Assignment shall be performed in compliance with recognised scientific and ethical principles. The Assignment shall be founded on the principles for academic freedom within the framework of what has been agreed as regards topics and methods in this agreement. This entails inter alia that the Commissioned Party cannot be subject to the imposition that the Assignment shall lead to a specific conclusion. The results the Assignment leads to shall in principle be made public upon handover to the Principal.' The Ministry of Education and Research, Standard agreement for research and report assignments, accessed 030420, https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kd/vedlegg/forskning/avtaler/standardavtalenfeb2012_en.docx
38. The Ministry of Education and Research, Standard agreement for research and report assignments, accessed 030420, https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kd/vedlegg/forskning/avtaler/standardavtalenfeb2012_en.pdf
39. Forskning.no, '– Folkehelseinstituttets ledelse har gjort grove overtramp', accessed 030420, https://forskning.no/2017/12/folkehelseinstituttets-ledelse-har-gjort-grove-overtramp
40. *Morgenbladet*, 'De forbannede lakseforskerne', accessed 030420, https://morgenbladet.no/aktuelt/2017/06/de-forbannede-lakseforskerne

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