

The Epistemic Responsibilities of the University

Universities, as social institutions, bear numerous responsibilities—such as financial responsibilities, management responsibilities, social responsibilities, and other. In this talk I argue that the universities' first and foremost responsibilities are epistemic in nature, i.e. responsibilities pertaining to the acquisition of knowledge, rational belief, insight, understanding, wisdom. In order to shoulder these responsibilities it is absolutely necessary that certain values be acknowledged—values that especially in the university seem to be under constant attack, thus giving rise to what I call 'the university paradox'. This talk presents the paradox, and indicates a solution.

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- (1) The primary responsibilities of the University are 'epistemic' in nature: they have to do with truth, knowledge, understanding, insight, wisdom.

- (2) Responsibilities are grounded in values—values that must be real.

- (3) If there are epistemic responsibilities, there must be epistemic values.

- (4) Values are often screened-off by managerial talk.

- (5) The University should uphold certain values pertaining to research.

(6) But these values shouldn't drown out values pertaining to teaching.

(7) The university also has a responsibility to foster reflection on how the various fields of science as well as of the humanities hang together.

(8) There is a role at the University for theology.

Suggested Readings:

- Rene van Woudenberg & Jeroen de Ridder, *Deze Universiteit*. Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 2014.
- Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Shalom*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.