

The Academic World in the Era of the Great War

Veranstalter: Tomás Irish, Trinity College Dublin; Marie-Eve Chagnon, Université de Montréal

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Even in the opening days of the Great War, there was a sense that it was a momentous occasion, one which would shape the future of Europe and of the world. The upheaval the war brought to societies across Europe was reflected not only in politics and military concerns, in economics and social issues, but also in the world of the intellectual and the academic. The rarefied atmosphere of the universities was shattered, the ivory tower of academe was stormed by the real world, and its inhabitants responded, in a variety of ways, to the events unfolding before them.

This response was the subject of the conference held in Trinity College Dublin from the 14th to the 16th August 100 years later. The title was deliberately broad, allowing for an investigation of the complexities both of the ‘academic world’ which was not confined to the universities, and of the ‘era of the Great War’ which spanned far more than five years. In their introduction the conference organisers TOMÁS IRISH (Dublin) and MARIE-EVE CHAGNON (Montréal) emphasised the close connection between scholarship and the War, and the key role played by the academics in defining the nature of the war both during the fighting and after the Armistice. The conference aimed to explore the difficulties of reconciling patriotism and internationalism, the effect of the War on academic networks, and of academic networks on the War, as well as the consequent sense of community and of rupture.

The first panel examined official responses to the War. ANDREW BARROS’ (Montréal) paper on the mobilisation, remobilisation and demobilisation of academics set the scene, discussing the governmental presentations of the causes of the War, and the way in which Blue, Yellow and White Books fixed the history of the war in time as something to be re-

membered but not questioned, even after the War had officially ended. SAKIKO KAIGA (London), looking at the individual response of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickenson, his involvement with plans for a League of Nations and the publication of pamphlets to educate the general public, presented a case study of an intellectual trying both to explain the War and to prevent a recurrence of such an event, and his ‘forlorn hope’ that such action was not in vain. Led by ALAN KRAMER (Dublin), the panel was rounded off with a discussion of the various ways in which intellectuals could influence current events, the challenges of framing official narratives of responsibility and guilt and the ways in which the public role of the academic changed or expanded due to the War.

The second panel dealt with the institutions of the academic world at War. ANDREAS GOLOB (Graz) examined the changes the War brought to the University of Graz, ranging from a loss of students and the appropriation of university buildings for war work, to the professors’ departure from traditional academic neutrality in favour of public lectures on support for the War, underlining the tensions which evolved between submitting to military control and maintaining academic independence. ALEXANDER DMITRIEV (Moscow) presented the complex case of Russia, exploring the changes which the war brought to education in the Ukraine and the ways in which revolution and sovietisation changed the Russian academic world. TOMÁS IRISH (Dublin) paralleled the response of Graz with that of Trinity College Dublin, looking at the internationalism of Dublin University, and the close links with Britain and the Empire which made her cosmopolitan approach unique (and isolating) in an increasingly nationalist Ireland. Chairing, ROBERT GERWARTH (Dublin) started the discussion by drawing out the themes of the papers, emphasising the differences between national and international history and the way in which the war accelerated changes which had begun long before 1914 and continued long after 1918.

The third and fourth panels examined the effect of the war on scholarly disciplines. Opening the third panel with international so-

ciology, ANDREW M. JOHNSTON (Ottawa, ON) demonstrated the impact of the War on American sociology not only as a new subject for study, but also in causing a break with the sociology of France, and a new, internal focus on innovations in the field in America. BRIAN M. FOSTER (Halifax, NS) provided a third facet, demonstrating the involvement of social scientists in government groups to discuss the war and suggest preparations for the future peace in America, Britain and France. In investigating the differing approaches to the involvement of intellectuals amongst the Allies, he showed the difficulties of engagement with the State and he and Johnston highlighted the way in which the War affected international networks of scholarship. CHRISTINA THEODOSIOU (Paris) brought the panel to a close on a more individual level, in her analysis of the effect of the War on the work of the classicist and archaeologist Waldemar Dionna. His interpretation of the War through the lens of his work on the ancient world, myth and folklore shows us the attempt of an academic to make sense of the chaos of the world around him in terms of a familiar academic discourse. JOHN HORNE (Dublin) initiated the discussion with comments on the nature of academic engagement with the political sphere, and the importance of looking at the individual as well as the institution. Further questions raised the issues of the creation of academic networks, the concept of impartial scholarly inquiry, and the generalisation of academic spheres of knowledge through the medium of discussion of the War.

The fourth panel broadened this focus to the natural sciences, beginning with HEATHER ELLIS' (Liverpool) paper on the impact of the War on British science which explored the perception of the War as an opportunity for British science, and the effect of the War on the self-perception of scientists as uniquely situated nationally and internationally, connected with nation and Empire, but at the same time above it in an international scientific community. KENNETH BERTRAMS' (Bruxelles) paper on the Solvey Conferences facilitated an elaboration of the internationalism of science, and the challenges it faced during the War, as nationalism rose to its high-

est pitch, and neutrals struggled to keep scientific debate and collaboration alive. His exposition of the issues of scientific internationalism after the War was taken up by MARIE-EVE CHAGNON (Montréal), who discussed the difficulties of re-establishing the international community after the War, the frustration in the United States with the post-war boycott of German scientists and the fact that the delicacy of relations throughout the 1920s indicates that the War did not end in 1918 for the academics. Responding, ROY MACLEOD (Sydney) noted the ways in which scientists' contribution to the War is often overlooked, ideas prevalent in the 19th century that scientific impartiality was the key to international accord, and ended with the observation that scientists saw themselves as brothers, but not necessarily friends.

The keynote speech by MARTHA HANNA (Boulder, CO) seemed to take a traditional approach to university involvement in the Great War by examining the war service of McGill University's Faculty of Medicine, its mobilization for the Front, and the work carried out in France. Though this is the most familiar way in which universities contributed to the war effort, Hanna's paper also highlighted the less familiar narrative, underlining the ways in which university expertise were put to the test on the front line, and, equally importantly, how this was challenged and expanded by what the Faculty faced there. Furthermore, in exploring the collaboration of medical staff across the Allied lines, Hanna depicted the creation of intellectual networks and academic communities in an atmosphere very different to the scholarly calm of the university.

The fifth panel examined the nature of gender and identity politics, both in practical and literary terms. NORMAN INGRAM (Montréal) drew a distinction between women's history, feminist history and gendered history, using the war to examine the ways in which history can be gendered. Issues of feminism and pacifism led to the conclusion that the War in France was seen as entirely masculine, and the harsh response to feminists opposing the War underscored the fragility of female resistance. PHILIPPA READ (Leeds) utilised the literature of wartime to investigate per-

ceptions of the debate surrounding *l'enfant de l'ennemie* in France in the early years of the War. Her focus on literary sources demonstrated the ways in which the debate could be framed in an approachable way, and drew attention to the difficulties surrounding the issues of female violation and choice in a thoroughly masculine world. MARTHA HANNA (Boulder, CO) opened the discussion with a reflection that the papers allowed us to think about the gendered nature of the academic world at the beginning of the 20th Century and the challenges which the Great War may have brought to cultural assumptions of masculinity and femininity.

The papers of the sixth panel examined academic involvement in propaganda during and after the War. CHARLOTTE LERG (München) explored the activities of German professors in America with a particular focus on Eugen Kühnemann and Kuno Meyer to illustrate the internal perspective of the 'propaganda professor', and the external view and consequences of propagandistic engagement, respectively. AOIFE O'GORMAN (Oxford) presented the opposing side with a paper on the Oxford Pamphlets, investigating the image of Germany as represented by Oxford academics in the early stages of the War. TARA WINDSOR (Wuppertal) looked at the nature of Anglo-German academic exchange after the War, exemplified in the creation of Academic Boards to encourage student exchange and heal the cultural rifts created by the years of conflict. GEARÓID BARRY (Galway), responding to the papers, pointed to the problems of public opinion, critical analysis of propaganda and the importance of 1919 as a founders' period following the War – issues elaborated in the subsequent discussion on the self-assigned role of academics in society, the nature of propaganda, and the varying character of academic relationships.

The final panel dealt with post-war academic demobilisation and ways of making sense of the War. ELISABETH PILLER (Trondheim) considered the impact of foreign relations on German universities in the post-war period, drawing attention to the contradictions of the boycott on Germany and German pleas for foreign aid to ease academic distress. JULIA ROOS (Bloomington,

IN) used Harold D. Lasswell's 1927 critique of atrocity propaganda to reveal the pitfalls of cultural demobilisation and the challenges faced by academics when engaging in critical reflection in the aftermath of the War. Finally, MONA SIEGEL (Long Beach, CA), in a paper investigating the Franco-German Historians' Agreement of 1951 demonstrated the complicated legacy of the Great War and the difficulties encountered by historians attempting to uncover its causes long after the Armistice, bringing the conference full circle as she showed how, in some areas, the demobilisation of academics took far longer than the demobilisation of the armies. NORMAN INGRAM (Montréal) chaired the discussion which followed, touching on the potential conflict between truth and peace, the long-term outcomes of the war guilt debate, and the need to examine international relations both from an internal as well as an external perspective.

ANDREW BARROS (Montréal), JOHN HORNE (Dublin) and ROY MACLEOD (Sydney), led the roundtable discussion to close the conference. They spoke of the nature of the academic world, the way in which it was changed by the War, and of course, the way it changed the War. The importance of examining the nature of academic networks before, during and after the War was a key topic, as was the degree of rupture engendered by the conflict. The opportunities and missed opportunities of the war, the difficulties of a return to normality and the pursuit of disinterested knowledge are all vital concerns, but equally vital is the recognition of the emotional impact of the War on every individual involved regardless of their position on the Front Line or Home Front.

Over three days, the conference provided a forum for a comprehensive investigation of the character of the academic world in the period surrounding the First World War, and the ways in which it engaged with, affected and was affected by the War; on international, institutional, and personal levels. The Conference ended with sincere thanks to the organisers, whose efforts to put together an engaging and rewarding series of discussions demonstrated the interconnected nature of academic networks today, both in their own

Irish-Canadian exchange, and in the diversity of speakers who attended.

Conference Overview:

Introductory Remarks

Marie-Eve Chagnon (Université de Montréal)
/ Tomás Irish (Trinity College Dublin)

1. Mobilizing Intellect from East to West

Chair/Respondent: Alan Kramer (Trinity College Dublin)

Andrew Barros (Université du Québec à Montréal), Echoes, Reverberations and Dissonances: The Mobilization, Remobilization, and Demobilization of History from East to West (Germany, France, Britain, and the United States), 1914-1919

Gabriela A. Frei (University of Oxford), International Law and the Great War. A Discipline in the Crossfire of Critique.

Sakiko Kaiga (King's College London), A Forlorn Hope of Peace: Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, an Intellectual Father of the League of Nations, 1914-1918.

2. Institutional Experiences in a World at War
Chair/Respondent: Robert Gerwarth (University College Dublin)

Andreas Golob (Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz), Propagandistic Popularization and Pure Scholarship. Graz University professors as lecturers of the university-extension movement and academic teachers.

Alexander Dmitriev (Moscow Higher School of Economics), National School, Junior Faculty and Academic Self-Assertion: Russian Scholars and Educational Reforms during Great War

Tomás Irish (Trinity College Dublin), Trinity College Dublin and the Academic World during the First World War

3. Making a better World? The Social Sciences face a global conflict

Chair/Respondent: John Horne (Trinity College Dublin)

Andrew M. Johnston (Carleton University), American Sociologists and international Sociology during the First World War.

Brian M. Foster (Mount Saint Vincent Univer-

sity), The Birth of Non-State International Expert: American Social Science and Preparations for Peace after the Great War.

Christina Theodosiou (Université Paris-1), The influence of the Great War on Waldemar Deonna's work

4. Between the Nation-State and the Universe: Natural Science at War

Chair/Respondent: Roy MacLeod (University of Sydney)

Heather Ellis (Liverpool Hope University), British Science in War: Measuring and Reshaping British Manhood, 1914-1919.

Kenneth Bertrams (Université Libre de Bruxelles), Politics of Nature: World War I and the Solvay Conferences on Physics and Chemistry, 1911-1926.

Marie-Eve Chagnon (Université de Montréal), The End of Scientific Internationalism. The Process of Demobilisation of the International Scientific Community (1917-1924).

Keynote

Martha Hanna (University of Colorado, Boulder), Practical Reason: The Mobilization of McGill University's Medical Faculty, 1914-1918.

V. Identity and Gender Politics of a World at War

Chair/Respondent: Martha Hanna (University of Colorado)

Norman Ingram (Concordia University), Women's History, Feminist History, Gendered History? Feminist Pacifism and the Paradoxes of the Great War in France

Philippa Read (University of Leeds), „Without Scruple”: The *Enfant de l'ennemi* Debate in First World War France.

VI. Scholarly Networks in War and Peace

Chair/Respondent: Gearóid Barry (National University of Ireland Galway)

Charlotte A. Lerg (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München), Fractions of Academic Identity: The German „Propaganda Professors” on the American Campus and Beyond

Aoife O'Gorman (Oxford), Boche Barbarism: The depiction of Germany in the Oxford Pam-

phlets (1914-15).

Tara Windsor (Wuppertal), *Studying (with) the Former Enemy: Anglo-German Academic Exchange after the Great War.*

VII. Cultural Demobilization and the Aftermath of the Great War

Chair/Respondent: Norman Ingram (Concordia)

Elisabeth Piller (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU), „Can the Science of the World Allow this?“ – German Academic Distress, Foreign Aid and International Relations, 1919-24.

Julia Roos (Indiana University), *International Debates over Atrocity Propaganda in the Aftermath of the Great War: A Contribution to Cultural Demobilization?*

Mona Siegel (California State University), *Negotiated Truth: The Franco-German Historians Agreement of 1951 and the Long History of Cultural Demobilization after the First World War.*

VIII. Roundtable Discussion

Andrew Barros (Université du Québec à Montréal) / John Horne (Trinity College Dublin) / Roy MacLeod (Sydney)

Concluding Remarks

Tagungsbericht *The Academic World in the Era of the Great War*. 14.08.2014–16.08.2014, Dublin, in: H-Soz-Kult 08.09.2014.