

Øivind Andersen, President of the International Union of Academies: “The Academies must guarantee to realize a research in humanities in a long term”

Vicenç Villatoro

“Someone should worry about promoting the basic research in the medium and long term, in the humanities and social sciences, with no immediate goals. Øivind Andersen, Norwegian, born in Oslo in 1944, professor of classical philology and general secretary of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. Today is also the president of the International Union of Academies, a worldwide federation based in Brussels, where the Academies of a long sixty

countries meet up, among which is the Institute of Catalan Studies (Institut d'Estudis Catalans), who has participated since 1922, three years after they formed the initial core of the Union.

Øivind Andersen visited Barcelona around the feast of St. Jordi of the present year, to chair over the ceremony of awards and IEC scholarships. At the headquarters of the Institute, we had a conversation about the role of these institutions in the contemporary world.”

The concept of what the Academy is, has changed over the centuries, from the beginning of Greek distant time. From the Illustration time, becomes the space where is met the best of science and the best of the arts, with a commitment of excellence, to score the highest level of knowledge. The world's best intellectual is projected through the illustrated Academies. Today, from my point of view, the role of the Academy is very important, as independent body of the university system and the world of education and public authorities: it is to ensure consistency in the long-term research, long range, basic research is not influenced by the needs or immediate emergencies. The Academy then, may have more sense than ever." This defense made by Professor Andersen about the role of the Academies, union which he presides, should not be interpreted as a

criticism of the university world , on the contrary.

"The University, the general system of education has a very important responsibility with regard to immediate social problems, poverty, migration, sustainability. The University should provide answers and help in order to implement them. However, as more and best acts the world of education and especially the University in relation to these responsibilities, will be more space for Academies as our, to ensure progress in the knowledge that can not be apply immediately to these urgent objectives. And to guarantee the existence of the minimum resources necessaries for this not be banished completely, continue holding. Therefore the International Academic Union promotes programs for basic research and the creation of background and reference materials. This is not done for University competition, it is done in order to complement it."

– In the 20th century, but especially after the Second World War, an old distinction has been broken between high culture and popular culture, and also appeared intermediate concepts , the idea of the mittelcultura ... The idea of an Academy dedicated just only to high culture may seem anachronistic then ...



From left to right, Øivind Andersen and Vicenç Villatoro, Institut d'Estudis Catalans, (Institute of Catalan Studies.)



Awarded St. Jordi 2014 prizes of Institut d'Estudis Catalans, (Institute of Catalan Studies).
Barcelona , 22nd April 2014 .

— Quite on the contrary. It is very important that there exists a space dedicated just specifically to high culture. In this, the idea of the Academy has not changed. At the beginning, the Academy was a kind of enlightened society from savants, sages corporation. With a very important role in the humanities, but also with an enormous scientific curiosity. Today, popular culture, culture with an enough capacity to attract the masses, can generate resources for itself. There must be a place to find resources for high culture. For example, the applied sciences industry can get resources from the industry, the economic and business world, on a simple relative way. But we must also seek support for high culture in the humanities, it is also necessary. There are certainly many people interested in research in the humanities, in art, in literature, but there is usually no money for that. We pressure in this direction. As wider would be the range, many records the culture would had, they must also ensure that it does not loose any of its essential parts. High culture is essential. The humanities are too. The Academies are heading to the societies and public authorities to remind them that a culture and a country also need this. And you need to look for resources to also go ahead and work.

— *But now it seems not much sense that "Société des savants" of the nineteenth century ...* —

— Academies are not quite that. They are, in fact, research institutes, very specialized, very advanced. Initially, the schools had a national sense, quite often are created through themselves constitutions around the royal powers. Now they are independent bodies, but with the aim of public utility, seeking resources wherever they exist, and try to keep lines of investigation necessary or productive in the long term, but sometimes short-term not appear. Academies have not changed in its essence. In fact they have the same essence as when they were created: a commitment to the knowledge and high culture. But in the circumstances, in the manner and ways of functioning the Academies have been adapted to the nowadays times. At each site according to their own tradition.

— In recent decades, the International Academic Union has experienced deep changes inside the world of reality. Not only the scientific and cultural directly. Also of politic and economic. This has meant, above all, an extension of the map to other growth areas in the world. The union was created in 1919 in Paris to integrate the National Academy specializing in the humanities and social sciences and established its secretariat in Brussels. The concept was very European and Western: the Great War was just left, and was represented in a very specific geography:

France, Belgium, Great Britain, the United States, the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, Greece and Japan and Russia. With the addition of the Academies joined, but not represented, Spain, Norway and Romania. In this climate of immediate postwar period, the Academies of Germany and Austria were not admitted, and could only be admitted fifteen years later. As mentioned, the Institut d'Estudis Catalans was added early in the year 1922, there are eighty schools represented sixty-three countries around the world. There most relevance and important are the Europe and North American ones. But it is known, that has been an important growth in South America, the Far East, Eastern Europe, Oceania ... And large parts of the world are poorly represented in proportion. Relatively very little Africa. Very recently the Middle East. Virtually anything the Arab world, although academics involved common institutions in the Muslim world. In any case, there have been incorporating emerging countries, as well as incorporated the cultural European tradition origin and particularly francophone origin. But the Academic institution, the idea of Academic itself, can not be said to be universal by now.

— Obviously there are different traditions. In some cultural traditions, the idea of Academy practically does not exist. For example, there is a strong

Scandinavian tradition, we could talk about a Scandinavian model. In the old world of the East, there is a very strong tradition of Academies, which were held during communism, but they have not always survived the changes of recent decades. In Russia today there are strong Academies, which in many cases are already Tsarist and did not disappear or become weakened during the communist period, but now, in the new model, they do not have inside the research institutes. There is also obviously a great tradition in French-speaking countries and another quite different from the Anglo-Saxon or German. But the set is very varied. To understand, often the central issue is the funding system. The issue of money. As always, a crucial issue. It is increasingly difficult to raise funds for the long-term research. We are supposed to spend these funds as soon as the immediate challenges of modern society and things that will produce immediate results. I hope the international community and various companies appreciate the efforts made by the International Academic Union keeping and making available the essential elements of the intellectual heritage of the world. Although sometimes, I admit, I have doubts.

— I guess there are a lot nationalized model, where almost all resources are public, and others more open to private enterprise. Are there any risk that

Academies would be paid with public money and then be subjected to ideological and political dependence of the states?

___ There are certainly models exclusively public and there are countries where the Academies have an smooth relationship with the world economy, with industry and the private sector, as all the English-speaking world. Depends on the tradition of each place. As for whether or not to be subjected to political power, often those with public fundings belong to countries with a very strong democratic tradition, where everyone understands and agrees that the Academy should be independent and not subject to ideological criteria e.g. the Scandinavian world, public funding should not be a source of problems.

___ *The International Academic Union helps mainly to carry out research projects and creating essential tools of high culture as dictionaries, encyclopedias, compilations... in the humanities and social sciences topics, shared by several Academies associated. It is therefore essentially an institution of mutual cooperation: each of the Academy together does its activities, but there are shared activities under the umbrella of the Union. To understand the types of projects being carried out, we can go back to the first two of which were launched in 1919 and still active*

now. They are highly knowledgeable represented character and background of the activities carried out by them. In 1920 they began to make a kind of large inventory, and the most complete possible fragments of ancient Greek pottery known around the world and belonging to all sorts of collections, from museums to private. It is known as the Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum. It may seem very specialized activity, and it certainly is, but now involves twenty-seven Academies worldwide and new volumes are published each year, making an enormous service specialists. Also in 1920 the same year began the publication of all sorts of historical texts related to alchemy, and in this case the project is still open. The definition is clear: high scholarship, high culture and instruments of long-range, non-cyclical nature.

— Throughout the history of the International Union Academy has been launched approximately eighty scope of these projects and with a wide variety of topics. The majority, around sixty, there are still open and can be indefinitely. A dozen have been completed and have been suspended or have not been followed. May seem, and are, extremely skilled, but also of the Union must be published not less than 2500 books, with millions of pages. And every year are still appearing new ones.

__ The are a varity of topics within the humanities and social sciences. I guess it must exist a certain systematic, some organized areas ...

__ That's how it is: the EU activities - which are, as I said, cooperation between different Academies__ they are shaped through six areas. The main one, for historical reasons, is of European Languages and Literatures. We believe that until the end of the II World War, but especially to the nineties, the important role of the European Union is very important, almost principal. In such environment there is a very important tool from Latin medieval__ on multiple dictionaries generated by local or regional, which have culminated in a large dictionary of medieval Latin in Europe__ to the complete edition of the Scandinavian medieval poetry of the troubadours coplet or corpus, which, incidentally, plays a major role at the Institute of Catalan Studies.

__ Other areas must be geographically diverse...

__ The importance of Europe is still very valuable. It has been like this for foundational grounds. These are the major issues that the Academies had on hand from the tradition of the nineteenth century began in Union activities. For example, the second level is the ancient Greek and Latin, of course also with a very

importance in Europe. Here is done from a comprehensive cartography of the Roman world __on also has a great weight and participates strongly in the direction of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans__ to studies of the Coptic Egyptian or Phoenician and Punic world, which are decisive contributions of the Russian Academy or the Middle East. But probably it is in the third of the areas, which have more projects in progress right now, about twenty-five, where we left it more clearly to the European strict. Is the scope of Oriental Studies, with very interesting projects on the literatures of ancient India or Annals Korean or Iranian world ... on the other three areas are History of Civilization and Thought History, where we seek especially interest in all areas of the planet. From *Corpus American antiquae* throughout relations between the Chinese world and the Mediterranean or Mexican murals...

The International Academic Union has historically been a good showcase for the international presence of Catalan culture.

National Academies are hosted, but the matter is not to admit one Academy in each state, and this has provided opportunities for Catalan culture, through its national Academy, the Institute of Catalan Studies. There are countries, such as Belgium, which are

present in the EU through multiple Academies, four in the Belgian case. As for Spain, the list of members include, in addition to the Institute of Catalan Studies, the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (National Research Council), the Real Academia de la Historia (Royal Academy of History) and the Real Academia de Ciencias Morales y Políticas (Royal Academy of Moral and Political Sciences) . But the importance of the Institute of Catalan Studies has always been very important. The Institute of Catalan Studies has been participating since 1922, without interruption, and, therefore, under Franco, "when the Institute was in a difficult position and needed more than ever all the international support that could get . " During the thirties, Nicolau d'Olwer who was also the CEO of the Institute of Catalan Studies at Union Academy, was for two years president of the Union. Ramon Aramon was then and now honorary president, Josep Guitart is one of two vice-presidents of the institution. Representatives of the Institute in the exile kept their activities within the Union Academy and their ties have always been very strong. "The General Assembly of the International Union of Academies was made in 1987 and 2004 in Barcelona. Never done in Madrid, for example. "Therefore, the Union, in very different institutional and political circumstances, acted as a showcase in which it was possible to find a direct reference to Catalan culture where Catalan

intellectuals, through the Institute of Catalan Studies could participate and collaborate with colleagues around the world. A very useful instrument of cultural diplomacy, even before the term was invented.

"What about the future? I mention two challenges in which the Union Academy will be facing at this juncture. We would like to develop new projects that have wider scope in the social sciences and again the Institut of Catalan Studies has been and can be of great help. One of our interests in the last year is the concept of human dignity. So far there has not been developed a suitable project of the Academic Union in this field, but it has given place to an important volume __ a Human Dignity manual__ published by Cambridge University Press. Hopefully the idea resumes and have the interest of the Institute of Catalan Studies. Moreover, thanks to the initiative of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans could develop another project in the last two years studying the transformation of cities in the Mediterranean area during the centuries. The project opens a new path for its chronological and geographical scope and its orientation toward what might be called historical sociology. It is still in the initial phase, the first tangible project will be published in the near future, we held a conference in Barcelona. An important aspect of the project is: its intercultural participation

of academics, both in Europe and the Arab world as the Middle East. "

There is one thing that stresses again and again Øivind Andersen during his visit in Barcelona: the objective of the Internacional Union Academic is not be adding more and more Academies worldwide, to maximize the number of members, its purpose is to preserve a certain conception of culture and scholarship in the humanities. "The EU wants to preserve academic and foremost a particular focus on rigorous and ambitious projects, the real work is done in basic research in the humanities without urgency or immediacy. It is not our goal to grow adding a number of members worldwide. It is certainly a fact that some Academies members and especially some members recently in Asia, Africa and Latin America, do not contribute enough to the Academic Union projects and sometimes we do not get involved in ongoing projects We would like that the mentioned countries would get more involved, but even the presence of a number of members not active, or not active enough in a global organization like the EU, can have positive aspects. Thanks to its integration, although it is partially passive in the Union, some Academies in insecurity situation in its country can maintain its independence as institutions and get a minimum of resources. The Academic Union and the academic institutions well

established in our part of the world, such as Institut of Catalan Studies should contribute to promote an academic culture worldwide and support the academic institutions in order to talk and act with independence and authority in favor of excellence in science and scholarship. The Institute of Catalan Studies has a long history of intense relationship with the Union Academy and I am sure that together we will defend our ideals and ambitions shared in the service of science and scholarship, inside its own area of action and abroad, both locally and globally.