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The Identity Crisis? Philosophical Questions about the University as a Modern Institution

Let us start with a bit of history of the institution. The university in the form we are familiar with – the modern university – derives from the intellectual work of German philosophers: from Kant and Fichte to Schleiermacher and Humboldt. Being a modern institution, it is relatively new and was born together with the rise in national aspirations and the rise in the significance of Nation-States in the 19th century.¹ A tacit deal made between power and knowledge, on the one hand, provided scholars with unprecedented institutional possibilities and, on the other, obliged them to support national culture and to help with constituting national subjects – citizens of Nation-States. The alliance between modern knowledge and modern power gave rise to the foundations of the modern institution of the university. Both European, as well as American universities were either founded or transformed² on the basis of the project written in 1808 by Wilhelm von Humboldt for the University of Berlin.³

The place, social function and role of the university as one of the most significant institutions of modernity were clearly determined. But currently, when the project of modernity undergoes radical transformations (toward late-modernity,

¹ See Björn Wittrock, "The Modern University: the Three Transformations" in: *The European and American University since 1800* (ed. by Sheldon Rothblatt and Björn Wittrock, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): "universities form part and parcel of the very same process which manifests itself in the emergence of an industrial economic order and the nation-state as the most typical and most important form of political organisation" (p. 305).

² On the complicated relations between the German Humboldtian model and its American counterparts, see an already classical book by Frederick Rudolph, *The American College & University: A History*, published in 1962 (new edition: Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990) and a recent book by Christopher J. Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), or, much more detailed, Carl Diehl's *Americans and German Scholarship 1770-1870*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978.

³ Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Über die innere und äussere Organisation der höheren wissenschaftlichen Anstalten in Berlin" in: *Wilhelm von Humboldt* ed. by B. Andrzejewski, Warsaw: KiW, 1989.

or even postmodernity), it is no longer known what the exact place of the university in society is, for the society itself gets changed. As Bill Readings has observed penetratingly in his breath-taking reflections about the "posthistorical university": "... the wider social role of the University as an institution is now up for grabs. It is no longer clear what the place of the University within society nor what the exact nature of that society is".⁴ The uncertainty about the future location of the institution of the university in culture (as well as – in economy?) grows together with structural changes occurring in economy, culture, and politics: It is often the case that small Nation-States are no longer equal partners for big capital.⁵ The Nation-State as a political and cultural project – but unfortunately not particular nationalisms – is declining in the surroundings determined by globalization (these processes can be clearly seen both in the case of the countries from the European Union, Central and Eastern European countries entering it, as well as in the countries of both Americas).⁶

One could risk the following statement: in the age of globalization, the national identity ceases to be the most important social glue and therefore its production, cultivation and inculcation – that is, the ideals that stood behind the modern project of the university – ceases to be a crucial social task. (And let us remind here what Humboldt wrote in his "Deductive Plan of an Institution of Higher Learning to be Founded in Berlin": What is at stake is "an essential matter of national *Bildung*"⁷).

The traditional, modern social mission of the university as an institutional arm of the Nation-State has been unexpectedly questioned after two centuries of domination in culture. The university as we know it – the modern university – is in a delicate and complicated position at the moment. It may be so that a great cultural project of modernity that has located the university in the very center of culture – in a partner-place for the institution of the Nation-State – is gradually outliving itself. After two hundred years – merely two hundred years! – it is no longer known what the great regulatory idea that the university in search of its present *raison d'être* could refer to is. In its modern beginnings, as Bill Readings shows, in Kant in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, the regulatory idea in question was the Enlightenment reason,⁸ then, in Schleiermacher and Humboldt, the idea was culture (in an active

⁴ Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 2. The present essay could be read as an extended commentary to, and discussion of, that splendid book.

⁵ See e.g. Richard J. Barnet and John Cavanagh, *Global Dreams. Imperial Corporations and the New World Order*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997.

⁶ As the above mentioned Barnet and Cavanagh say: "... no political ideology or economic theory has yet evolved to take account of the tectonic shift that has occurred. The modern nation-state ... looks more and more like an institution of a bygone era", *Global Dreams*, op. cit., p. 19.

⁷ Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Deductive Plan of an Institution of Higher Learning to be Founded in Berlin", in *Wilhelm von Humboldt*, op. cit., p. 233.

⁸ See the English-German edition of *The Conflict of the Faculties*, New York: Abaris Books, 1979.

sense of *Bildung*, cultivating oneself as a subject of the Nation-State, that is as a just citizen of the German Nation-State about to be born).⁹

The university seems to be no longer capable of maintaining its modern role of the cultural institution closely (sometimes very closely, which would require additional comments) connected with the Nation-State of the Enlightenment and Post-Enlightenment Europe. In the globalizing world of today references made to national culture as the *raison d'être* of the university do sound less and less convincing, especially considering the fact that the State itself, the partner and the other side of the agreement, together with transformations it undergoes, disregards – out of necessity? – its past obligations with respect to the university.

All the (university) world is perfectly aware of the fact that there will probably never be a return to the level of financing universities (both in natural sciences and in the humanities) from the Cold War era on the one hand and tough (inter)national competition on the other. The United Europe, it seems, does not need a narrowly national university, for teaching and research are to aim at unification rather than isolation of particular national traditions (in a widely understood "European" or sometimes "global" – that is to say, more or less "American", although some reservations would have to be introduced here – spirit). References to reason or culture are no longer persuasive in society. These ideas are no longer politically and economically resonant because the global configuration of politics and economy gets changed: within a new configuration, economy is increasingly less dependent on politics. Power as such is increasingly seen as merely administration and less and less often as the governance of (national) spirits.¹⁰ References made to (Humboldt's) culture and (Kant's) rationality as regulatory ideas standing behind the functioning of the present institution of the university no longer ring social and political bells, as they do not seem necessary anymore in the era of globalizing capitalism. The idea of national culture ceases to be crucial for the present functioning of the State and the State as such, also out of necessity (for instance, out of fear of economic isolation) seems to be increasingly less national in the classical sense of the term.

Thus, the *raison d'être* of the university as a significant partner of the Nation-State exhausts itself. The university in the traditional modern form is no longer a partner of the Nation-State as it is incompatible with the perspective of global consumerism. Therefore, together with the decline of modernity as a social, political

⁹ See in this context Herbert Richardson (ed.), *Friedrich Schleiermacher and the Founding of the University of Berlin*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984. The texts about the institution of the university written by German philosophers of the turn of the 19th century were gathered in the French volume *Philosophies de l'Université* ed. by Luc Ferry, Alain Renaut *et al.*, Paris: Payot, 1979.

¹⁰ See for instance the chapter about the gap between the state and economy in the era of declining nation-states ("After the Nation-State – What?") in Zygmunt Bauman's excellent *Globalization. The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988) as well as the whole book by Martin Albrow written from the perspective of the end of the nation-state in the face of globalization, *The Global Age. State and Society Beyond Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.

and cultural project the political and economic role of the Nation-State decreases in the global circulation of capital, and the decreasing role of the State goes hand in hand with the decreasing role of its modern ideological arm – the university.¹¹ While we can see quite easily the transformations in economy and politics,¹² it is a bit more difficult to see the changes occurring in the other pole of the power/knowledge relation, the one of knowledge. Power and its character get changed and therefore, out of necessity, knowledge and its character get changed. (The historicity of the two projects was perhaps most fully presented in Michel Foucault's historical-philosophical accounts of modernity: human sciences and social sciences in their current forms appeared at the powerful demand of modern states already born or about to be born. Although Foucault kept asking about criminology, psychology, psychiatry, medicine etc. – perhaps similar genealogical questions could be asked about the institution of the university?¹³)

Perhaps the institution of the modern Nation-State and that of modern university have so far remained in harmonious and fruitful equilibrium because the modern figures of power and knowledge have remained in equilibrium? Two parallel products of modernity, the Nation-State and the modern university, have been in an amazing and long-term symbiosis (and it is worth keeping in mind that before the appearance of the modern university life was not easy for scholars and philosophers: as Krzysztof Pomian claims in his *The Past as an Object of Knowledge*, there was no institutional place for them unless they were directly useful to monarchies or churches. As he described scholars' main activity in pre-revolutionary France: "writing letters was one of the most important action taken by any erudite..."¹⁴).

The awareness of the fact that the university invented and proposed to the world by the nineteenth century German thinkers is a culturally and historically determined product is increasingly common. Nothing determines in advance its shape, tasks, functions, as well as expectations directed to it and requirements

¹¹ Andy Green in his *Education, Globalization and the Nation-State* (London: McMillan Press, 1997) ask about the role of education in "post-national era" and claims that according to globalization theories the system of national education becomes "defunct, at once irrelevant, anachronistic and impossible" (p. 3 ff.).

¹² As Janice Dudley claims in a collective volume *Universities and Globalization. Critical Perspectives* ed. by Janice Newson and Jan Currie (London: Sage, 1998): "The state is cast as increasingly irrelevant when confronted by the 'reality' of ungovernable international/global market forces. Nation-states are essentially ineffective in the face of global market forces, so that the era of the powerful nation-state would appear effectively to be over. National economic management, and national political and social policies are becoming increasingly irrelevant. International markets and international capital markets operate outside of the control of national governments ... The state is reduced to the role of the 'night watchmen' of classical liberalism – maintaining law and order, protecting the sanctity of contract, and providing only the level of welfare necessary to protect property and facilitate the free operation of capitalist markets" (p. 27).

¹³ See texts by David Hoy and Zygmunt Bauman in a book '*Do Not Ask Me Who I Am...*' *Michel Foucault Today* that I edited in 1998 (Poznań: IF UAM, 1998, in Polish).

¹⁴ Krzysztof Pomian, *Przeszłość jako przedmiot wiedzy* [The Past as an Object of Knowledge], Warsaw: Aletheia, 1992, p. 127.

enforced on it by culture and society in which it is immersed. The university in its modern form is a child of modernity. It grows older together with it and is susceptible to political, economic and social transformation as much as any other (modern) institution. The tradition of twenty five centuries of Plato's Academy, or of eight centuries of the University in Bologna, seems irrelevant.

Modern university would not have been invented if Enlightenment thinkers had not been able to show, for the first time in the history of European consciousness, that the progress of knowledge and the progress of politics go hand in hand (as shown by Allan Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind*). According to Bloom, Enlightenment was a brave philosophical undertaking because its aim was to restructure political and intellectual life in such a way that in its totality it should fall under the supervision of philosophy and science. Thus, higher education provided the foundations for liberal democracy and was a reservoir of its principles. But what happens, we may ask, when a traditional political architecture gets changed, silently and irresistibly, together with the processes of globalization? What happens when political progress does not seem to be strictly connected with the progress of knowledge? What happens when knowledge in the sense of knowledge developed at the traditional modern university, according to the best German ideals of the dyad of teaching and research, ceases to be politically crucial?

The question could be the following: What grand narrative, or what universal legitimization set of ideas has to be searched for the university when a grand narrative, within which the university was to be useful for the constitution of the liberal, reasonable subject of the Nation-State, seems to be over? Is it at all possible in more and more postmodern times to find such a firm (and convincing) grand narrative? The scientist – as well as the humanist, the philosopher – has quite long ago ceased to be the historical hero he or she used to be in Enlightenment, and, to an extent, in Positivism.¹⁵

Perhaps, as the idea of "culture" (and especially, but not exclusively, "national" culture) ceases to be effective for the functioning of the institution of the university – the idea of culture worked out by German philosophers and accepted all over the world as a regulatory idea standing behind the functioning of the university – new ideas have to be sought. It turns out, though, that such grand ideas that would not be deprived of social reference, are very difficult, if not impossible, to find in the set of ideas we currently have at our disposal. At the same time – and that is the crucial claim I want to make in the present essay – the ruthless logic of consumerism provides us with the idea that the best American universities greeted with satisfaction: the idea of "excellence in education", behind which there are the ideals

¹⁵ Among philosophers, this decline in social role of these figures is most widely shown by Richard Rorty. Let me suggest here my commentary to this attitude in "After Philosophy: The Novelist as a Cultural Hero of Modernity?" in *Theoria. A Journal of Social and Political Studies*, New York: Berhahn Books, vol. 92, December 1998.

of the fast-reached, most useful and best-selling knowledge. As numerous commentators of the phenomenon write – it is right there that the university as an institution becomes a bureaucratically-governed, consumer-oriented corporation.¹⁶ The crucial words for the description of the university from this perspective are the following: managerial, corporate, entrepreneurial.¹⁷

Thus the university is increasingly free to teach and do research, for as an institution it ceases to function in an ideological manner. Therefore its attractiveness for the State has gradually decreased. And this is crucial in my discussions. We surely know that the degree of scholarization of a society is very important, as it should be well-educated and ready to look for work in a global work market, etc. But the direct link that has existed in the last two centuries, and the direct contract between the State and university, have been broken. It is difficult to say for both sides of the contract; one side is afraid to speak it aloud, the other is never willing to ask not to lose its last illusions. The university seems no longer required for the preparation of citizens of Nation-States for reliable national service as the service itself is getting increasingly less important, and the State itself, in the form we know, is getting less and less significant.¹⁸

Thus: the national consciousness, as we have already indicated, ceases to play a crucial role for the social life of present technologically advanced states, and the national identity ceases to be the most important social glue of the late-modern (or, with the passage of time – postmodern?) society. The hitherto existing social task: taking care of the spiritual life of inhabitants of the rational Nation-State, no longer suffices for the present functioning of the institution of the university. The

¹⁶ The late Bill Readings writes precisely about the "University of Excellence". From a more practical perspective, two other works are more significant: *Wise Moves in Hard Times. Creating and Managing Resilient Colleges and Universities* by David W. Leslie and E.K. Fretwell Jr. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996) and *Reinventing the University. Managing and Financing Institutions of Higher Education* ed. by Sandra L. Johnson and Sean C. Rush (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1995) which do not leave a shadow of a doubt about the general direction in which the university as an institution moves. Its aim is "providing an attractive product at a fair price – giving society value for its money". As the authors of the former book put it explicitly: "The only thing that higher education has to do, it seems, is sell its goods and services in the marketplace like other businesses" (p. 26, p. 31). In the other book one can find such statements as the following: "Higher education will never be the same. Political and corporate America have already responded by fundamentally restructuring the way they operate" (p. 22). The time has come for the universities to respond...

¹⁷ It is important to note the two significant books that have appeared within a decade: Janice Newson, Howard Buchbinder, *The University Means Business. Universities, Corporations and Academic Work* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1988) and Jan Currie, Janice Newson (eds.), *Universities and Globalization. Critical Perspectives* (London: Sage, 1998). Both present a precise report and details interpretation by sociologists and political scientists of the phenomena occurring at the anglophone universities. They show the way the ideology of free market enters the university in the form of practices drawn directly from the corporate world (high-level management, rector as CEO's, nominated rather than elected deans; accountability, privatization, performance indicators etc.).

¹⁸ The modern institution of the university in Poland does not fall under the evolution described here for obvious historical reasons. But it may face, or already does face, the same challenges globalization and its ideology bring about.

university, surely enough, still functions, but in an increasingly defective manner: it either refers to the logic of production and consumption (of knowledge), that is to say, sells its product with better or worse results, or struggles violently with the State that is generally, all over the world, less and less willing to support the university that in turn refers to its rights gained in modern culture. (The fact that the State, in practice rather than in theory, is less and less concerned about the fate of the university derives from its cold calculation, which is rarely affected by a deeper consciousness of the cultural changes to which I am referring here. The university is no longer the partner for the State; it becomes a petitioner, and is treated like a petitioner. As editors of an important recent book *Higher Education Under Fire* sadly remark: *We are no longer a high priority...*¹⁹).

The questions to be asked could be formulated in the following manner: What is the future of the university deprived of its modern culture-, state-, and nation-oriented mission? Does the university really have to drift toward the model of a better and better managed corporation, a bureaucratic structure fighting in the marketplace with the competition of other, similar, isolated bureaucratic structures in search of consumers of educational services they want to keep selling? Is the help in gaining professional knowledge as significant as a social mission as until recently crucial help in gaining national consciousness? What would in a social sense a (potential) university of mere consumers be like?²⁰ Do the current passage to the late modernity and to the information age, the decline of the role of the Nation-State and increasing power of processes of globalization mean the unavodability of the radical reformulation of the social mission and tasks of the institution of the university? Does the university (in North America and in Central Europe alike) come through the transitory crisis of public trust and of its founding values or through the dramatic crisis of its own identity in a radically new global order? Is it so that in the face of globalization and its social practices the process of "corporatization" of the university and the account of its activities in terms of *business* rather than *education* are irresistible? Is the response to the decreasing public trust and financial support of the State to be found in new *ideas* (by reformulating once again the philosophical foundations of the modern university) or in its new *organization* (by following the explicite recommendations by OECD, World Bank, or UNESCO)? Surprisingly enough, these questions are of equal significance for North America and for Central Europe in times of vast social and economic transformations. Therefore in both parts of the world the most common

¹⁹ See Michael Bérubé, Cary Nelson (eds.), *Higher Education Under Fire. Politics, Economics, and the Crisis of the Humanities*, New York: Routledge, 1995, s. 7 ff.

²⁰ See especially discussions about the "unique" place of higher education in society contrasted with its current "survivalist" mood in *The Postmodern University? Contested Visions of Education in Society* ed. by Anthony Smith and Frank Webster (London: Open University Press, 1997). The only option still open for the university to defend itself today is to stress the unique nature of the university experience as such which, to tell the truth, is not enough.

reflection about the future functioning of higher education is the following: "Things will never be the same".

The university in its modern form was invented in order to transform the social world into a more reasonable one with the help of the state and without revolution. What is today's university to do? What can it change when we can hear about the non-alternative character of the present world and when some, like Francis Fukuyama, mention the "end of history" in this context? Is the university merely to cultivate the tradition and to be a source of older knowledge and older wisdom on the one hand and to train the so-called professionals in the most profit-making and most marketable fields?

Present questions about the university can be derived once again from "foundational" texts of this institution: texts by German Idealists. In this context it is worthwhile to return to texts by Newman and Dewey and, closer to us, to Allan Bloom or Richard Rorty in America or to Nietzsche, Jaspers, Heidegger, and more recently Habermas, Lyotard, Derrida or Foucault in Europe (and in Poland to texts by Kazimierz Twardowski, Władysław Stróżewski, Sergiusz Hessen, Florian Znaniecki, Klemens Szaniawski, and most recently, by Zbigniew Drozdowicz, Lech Witkowski or Jerzy Brzeziński). It would be interesting to study Rousseau's attacks on the academe and Nietzsche's attacks on the institution of the university as well.

The questions about modern university are inseparable from a more general question about modernity as a large cultural, social and political project. It is only in this context, I suppose, that we can reach the intentions that modernity ascribed to the university, and try to reformulate them for the purposes of today's, changed and still changing world of late-modernity. It is surely possible to pretend that nothing has happened (and nothing will happen), for higher education is crucial for the civilizational success of, for instance, young, Central European democracies at the moment of their entering the European Union etc. The problem is that these are merely words and no consistent vision of the university can be built on them. The State no longer sees its direct interest in more serious financing of the institution that has already lost its State- and nation-oriented role in society.²¹

²¹ I am leaving aside in this text fascinating, although ideological, discussions that has taken place in the USA in the 1990s about the university. They assumed the perspective of current struggles for the intellectual hegemony between conservatives and the left, and from that perspective either attacked or defended the university. From a philosophical point of view they are not important, although from the point of view of American culture and society they proved crucial for the process of gradual change of attitude of the American public to the institution of the university. Let me mention here three of them: Martin Anderson, *Impostors in the Temple*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992, Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals. How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education*, New York: Harper and Row, 1992, and Dinesh D'Souza, *Illiberal Education. The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*, New York: The Free Press, 1991. Philosophically, more important seemed to be Bruce Wilshire's *The Moral Collapse of the University* (New York: SUNY, 1990) and, especially, Allan Bloom's best-selling *The Closing of the American Mind*, published in 1987.

The institution of the university is not the only one that is affected, or may be soon affected, by the gradual completion of the project of modernity. Another modern product, the figure of the intellectual in the form with which we are familiar, from Zola to Sartre (and perhaps even to Foucault) in France, undergoes an equally radical crisis of identity. It is also the intellectual that turns out to be closely, for better or for worse, associated with modernity.²² Doubts about modernity, incredulity toward it (and toward its metanarratives – the paradesignification of postmodernity according to Lyotard) go hand in hand with doubts about the figure of the intellectual. Therefore, incidentally, one can often hear that "the confidence of intellectuals in their own activities has been reduced and there is no one available to speak for the university".²³ Undoubtedly, in this context it would be interesting to study the relations between the figure of the intellectual and the institution of the modern university – from the perspective of tasks imposed on both by the project of modernity. The history of the university and the history of the intellectual in the 20th century are parallel. It is interesting to see whether the causes of their completion today (or merely reformulation) would not be similar.

The decline of modernity turns out to be a painful process for culture; once again it has to reformulate the aims of its social institutions and the tasks of its cultural heroes. If it is successful, the institutions and cultural heroes in question will regain their cultural vitality; if not, they will fall into cultural sterility. The traditional figure of the intellectual seems untenable in a more and more postmodern cultural surrounding (it was the aforementioned French theorist, Jean-François Lyotard who wrote about a "tomb for the intellectual"²⁴). The modern institution of the university may face a similar choice: either it is going to find a new regulative idea, or it will have to accept the rules of bureaucratic, consumer-oriented corporations, or it will try once again to find a totally new role in culture about which little is known at the moment and which would have to turn out as transformative as the role suggested for the university by Kant, Humboldt, Fichte or Schleiermacher (the differences between them notwithstanding).²⁵ The break-

²² I was writing about this process in a book *Dilemmas of Identity. On the Self-Image of the Philosopher in Postwar French Thought* (Poznań: IF UAM, in Polish) or in such texts as e.g. "Zygmunt Bauman and the Question of the Intellectual in Postmodernity" (Berkeley: Center for Western European Studies, Working Paper Series no. 22, 1997) and "Between the Community and the Text (French Philosophy, Politics and the Figure of the Intellectual – from Sartre to Foucault) in *Trames. A Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, Tallin: Academy of Sciences Press, No. 2, Vol. 2, 1998.

²³ Anthony Smith and Frank Webster, "Changing Ideas of the University" in *The Postmodern University?*, op. cit., p. 5.

²⁴ See Jean-François Lyotard, Jean-François Lyotard, *Tombeau de l'intellectuel et autres papiers*, Paris: Galilée, 1984.

²⁵ Let us remember what was the situation of the university before German ideas came into use. As Björn Wittrock in "The Modern University: the Three Transformations" says, "there can be little doubt that radical German philosophy helped resurrect the very notion of a university at a time when the university in Europe had been more threatened than perhaps at any time before or afterwards" (op. cit., p. 314).

through in conceiving of the university two hundred years ago was an event equal in importance to vast social and cultural transformations of that time. It is hard to tell whether there will appear new ideas about the university comparable in significance to the ideas of German Idealists.

We have to bear in mind, in this context, that the role of the institution of the university proposed by German thinkers at the turn of the 19th century was strictly connected with what was going on in the surrounding world of that time. The idea of the modern university was not born out of nowhere. It can be called the alliance of power and knowledge, following Michel Foucault; it can also be called the alliance of science and politics (the ultimate consequence of which are the relations of American science with American politics during the Cold War, about which Noam Chomsky recently writes as about white pages of the American academe²⁶). But the idea of the modern university can also be recognized as a perfect sense of the needs of newly born, or about to be born, Nation-States and a perfect intrusion of sciences into the changing social surrounding.

Following this theme, one could ask about the following: What can propose today the (postmodern?) university as an institution, in a world that is more and more disenchanting pluralistic, cosmopolitan, multicultural and multiethnic, (and I mean here a strictly determined institution defined by the Great Charter of European Universities signed in 1988 in Bologna²⁷). Suddenly, after two centuries of standing arm in arm with the Nation-State, the modern institution of the university has to look for a new *raison d'être*, new justification, new legitimization of its – extremely high – place in culture. Obviously, it can be said that nothing changes, for the processes I am mentioning here, first, as can be seen from accounts of American sociologists and political scientists, take many years, and second, do not necessarily appear here, in Central Europe. But we do know that the evolution of the social world in Central Europe is very fast indeed and it may turn out that in a moment we will face similar problems that the university already faces in anglophone countries from New Zealand and Australia to Canada and the USA. It is a good idea, I suppose, to think about them in advance, and look for possible solutions even before the very problems are present. (Especially considering the influence supranational organizations currently exert on Central European higher education reforms²⁸).

²⁶ Noam Chomsky (ed.), *The Cold War & the University. Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*, New York: the New Press, 1997, p. 171 ff.

²⁷ It was Zbigniew Drozdowicz who recently reminded us about the contents of that charter in his book *Excellentia Universitatis. Essays on the University* (Poznań: Humaniora, 1995, in Polish) and it was Jerzy Brzeziński who commented on this charter in a Polish context in his "Considerations about the University" in *Education and the Social Change* ed. by Jerzy Brzeziński and Lech Witkowski (Toruń: UMK, 1994, in Polish).

²⁸ What is especially interesting is the comparison between the attitude of the World Bank, OECD, and UNESCO toward higher education in the 21st century and the actions to be taken to get out of the current general crisis. See in particular three books by OECD: *Universities Under Scrutiny*, *Education and the*

To return for a moment to the question what the university today is, for if it no longer provides the legitimization to power by building national identity, perhaps the university could play an important role in supporting (already a bit forgotten) ideals of the civil society? The question arises, who would need these ideals? Surely the society as, paradoxically enough, the society now has no good places to learn these ideals. But how to pass from national ideals to civil ideals that would on principle be deprived of merely local references?

The process of passing of American universities from the ideal of (American) culture to the ideal of an increasingly financially independent big (educational) corporation – commonly referred to as its "corporatization"²⁹ – is surely not worth being copied without modifications. The only question is to what extent there is still a choice in our increasingly homogeneous world. If there were such a choice, and let us assume it optimistically, the university could become a center for pluralistic, multiperspectival thought that would take care of the ideals of the civil society in a more and more corporate-like world of global capital.³⁰

It would be possible to escape the traps of globalization with respect to the institution of the university if the university found some great idea (and a great narrative standing behind it) that it could see as its own. The idea of reason and the idea of (national) culture were such ideas, as Readings convincingly demonstrates, perhaps such ideas could become the ideals of civil society. But how are we to make these ideals not too "grand", so that they would not be rejected together with a general postmodern or late-modern rejection of (or "incredulity toward") grand narratives of modernity? How are the ideals of civil society to be recontextualized so that they do not appear too modern, that is to say, too enchanted and ideological? How are the ideals of civil society to be worked through so that they do not disappear together with large social projects brought about by the Enlightenment and French Revolution? If such a direction of thinking were going to fail, what might be possible for the university is the passage to the pure logic of gains and losses, production and consumption, from which there is nowhere to escape.

The university that accepted to work within the questions determined purely by the logic of (liberal) economy with the passage of time would become a mere corporation (and it would not find its consolation in the fact that it was and

Economy in a Changing Society, and *Financing Higher Education: Current Patterns* (Paris: OECD, 1987, 1989, 1990 respectively), World Bank's *Higher Education: Lessons of the Experience* (Washington: Author, 1995), proceedings of the UNESCO 1998 World Conference on Higher Education. See also selected World Bank's policy papers, such as e.g. Michael Gibbons' "Higher Education Relevance in the 21st Century", Elaine El-Khawas' "Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Recent Progress; Challenges Ahead" or D. Bruce Johnstone's "The Financing and Management of Higher Education: A Status Report on Worldwide Reforms" prepared for the Paris conference (available on-line).

²⁹ See Janice Newson, "The Corporate-Linked University: From Social Project to Market Force", *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 23 (1998), p. 108 ff.

³⁰ See especially Lawrence C. Soley, *Leasing the Ivory Tower: The Corporate Takeover of Academia*, South End Press, 1995.

"educational corporation"). That would be the end of the university as a modern institution. That would obviously not mean the end of the university as such: it would merely be the end of a certain way of conceiving of the university with which we have, over the period of two centuries, become familiar. The university without its State- and Nation-orientation (de-ideologized) seems to be forced by external circumstances to look for a new place in culture, for if it does not find it, it will be given a place of an educational corporation within society that is to train specialists quickly, cheaply, and efficiently. Preferably, surely enough, to train them very quickly, very cheaply, and very efficiently...

One could ask about the relevance of discussions about the university presented at the university, that is, from the inside. No matter who asks, though, it is worthwhile to ask because the discourse of globalization (called "globalization talk" by its enemies) does not take into account the subtleties of tradition that indicate the fundamental place of the university in culture. Social and cultural changes today occur with a speed that was unimaginable a few decades ago. The world is changing faster and faster and the university has less and less influence on the direction these changes take (if it ever had). It is no longer a partner for power (of the Nation-State); it becomes one among several points of budgetary needs that, preferably, should be cut or reduced. One thing is certain: nothing is permanent or guaranteed in culture: no status or place, no role or social task. Two hundred years of tradition of the institution of the university in its modern version is not an advantage in debates about its future in a globalized world. This fact is well known by all those whose influence in culture has been radically reduced.

Thus, to sum up, the potential decline of the project of modernity entails as a result the potential decline of the institution of the modern university that has to search for a new place in culture, new ideas organizing its functioning at the point of the end of harmonious cooperation of power and knowledge – or, more precisely, of the politics of the Nation-State and the national consciousness provided by the university. Globalization brings about the devalorization of all national projects, one of them being the institution of (nation- and state-oriented) university. If behind the university there are no longer the ideas of nation, reason and (national) culture, then either new ideas have to be sought, or the university is doomed to surrender to the all-encompassing logic of consumption. Within this logic the university, free from its associations with power, devoid of modern national and state missions, is to "sell" its educational "product" as a bureaucratic educational corporation deprived of its former tasks imposed by modern Nation-States. The study of the future of the institution of the university is inseparable from the study of it within a large cultural, philosophical, and political project of modernity. What is crucial in this context is the study of "foundational texts" by nineteenth-century German philosophers. What is also important is to look at the status of the university through the status of its most ideologically or culturally significant disciplines in modernity: philosophy, history or literary studies (depending on the period of time

and the country in question). It is not accidentally that these disciplines are in the deepest ferment and it is in them that the most important debates about postmodernity and modernity (as well as another product – the figure of the intellectual) are held.

Present cultural, political and economic transformations undermine the foundations of the modern model of the university. It faces a radical reformulation of its ideas. For two hundred years the identity crisis of the university has not been so serious, but after two hundred years there may come a tectonic shift in the fundamental role played so far by the Nation-States that contributed to the appearance of the modern university in the form we know. Therefore the questions about the cultural future of "Europe" are – in a small part – questions about the university, a child of modernity born of the inspiration provided by German philosophy.

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