

# THE MYTH OF THE UNIFIED UNIVERSITY

In his famous treatise *On the Internal and External Organization of the Higher Scientific Institutions in Berlin* (1810), Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote: “*But if the principle of pursuing science finally becomes dominant in the higher scientific institutions, there is no longer a need to see to anything else in particular. There would then be no lack of either unity or completeness, the one seeks the other by itself and the two will put themselves – and this is the secret of every good scientific method – into the right reciprocal relationship.*”<sup>150</sup> According to some, the unity, the wholeness of knowledge and the synergetic character of the work of all the university’s disciplines are the mainstays of their activities, and none of these attributes can be circumvented when searching for the university’s meaning. According to others this is a chimera. Over the past decades the academic community has become so heterogenous that it is no longer possible to talk about its unity and, therefore, the idea of the academic community has also lost its meaning.<sup>151</sup> In a global comparison, American higher education appears as the most heterogenous, while in Scandinavia they continue to assert that each university and each of its disciplines are an integral part of the community.<sup>152</sup> “*We know the lion by his claw,*” said the ancient Romans: who adheres to the notion of a unified university in Central Europe today and why?

The idea of higher education being the accumulation of all human knowledge has ancient roots, stretching back to the Platonic Academy and to the universal

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150 von Humboldt, Wilhelm: O vnitřní a vnější organizaci vyšších vědeckých ústavů v Berlíně, In: Jirsa, Jakub (ed.): *Idea university*. Prague 2015, pp. 31–39, here p. 34.

151 Prudký, Libor – Pabian, Petr – Šima, Karel: *České vysoké školství. Na cestě od elitního k univerzálnímu vzdělávání 1989–2009*. Prague 2010, p. 63.

152 Barr, Nicholas: Financování vysokého školství z hlediska ekonomické teorie, In: Simonová, Natalie (ed.): *České vysoké školství na křižovatce. Investiční přístup k financování studia na vysoké škole. v sociologické reflexi*. Prague 2005, pp. 19–39, here p. 20.

interpretation of Aristotle's works during the Middle Ages. Philosophy was given a key role here, something which members of the academic community still focus on today, particularly those who feel there is a lack of unity within the disciplines and the university in general. In 1899 the philosopher František Drtina wrote, "*In the Middle Ages, philosophy was the sum of all scientific work (including theology), during the Middle Ages the relationship between philosophy and theology was further shaped into a grand synthesis, during the Modern Age, philosophy had a strangely isolated status because the academic sciences which came from its womb began to function more and more independently, and opposite it stands theology, representing an older view of the world and life based on supernatural phenomena. Such is a brief outline of the intellectual development of European civilization during the Modern Age...*"<sup>153</sup> Drtina was worried by developments within philosophy. He criticized the German speculative (i.e. idealistic – author's note) philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, whom he blamed for the focus on metaphysics, ontology, dogmatism and "*transcendental speculation*" in general. Philosophical inquiry had become overly analytical and had lost sight of the need for synthesis, thus losing contact with the increasingly confident exact sciences. These "*divided the universe according to scientific subjects carrying out their work individually, but the results of their work are transferred to philosophy to create a unified, conclusive world view.*"<sup>154</sup>

According to the mythical narrative, holistic knowledge is the link between the university and scientific truth, and provides the university's basis. This is what distinguishes universities from other higher-education institutes and is its main contribution and service to students and society. A discipline structure worthy of its name in a traditional university – labelled a "bricks and mortar university" in the Czech context – should be comprehensive and the disciplines should show some synergy. The construction of a unified university has been supported by quotations from famous people, where there is no lack of pathos or authority from antiquity. The philosopher František Drtina (1861–1925), a leading Czech expert on higher education, was obviously strongly influenced by a passage from a lecture by Professor Gundling to the professorial corps at Halle in 1711: "*The truth is laid out in the centre, let he who can, approach it, let he who dares, grasp it – and we will applaud him!*"<sup>155</sup> There was no shortage of similarly bombastic speeches during a debate on the governance of Masaryk University in Brno on 28 January 1919. One member of parliament, Otakar Srdínko, was no less histrionic when in the name of higher-educational teaching he formulated a vision for the university. For understandable reasons, the references here were more to Masaryk than to the German university visionaries Kant and Humboldt: "*Masaryk University, never*

153 Cited from Drtina, František: *Universita a učitelstvo. Soubor statí*. Prague 1932, p. 1.

154 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

155 *Ibid.*, p. 244.

*be unfaithful to the principles of your founder, our liberator, spread the love of the truth, defend the truth, preach honesty everywhere and teach pure humanity!*<sup>156</sup>

The myth of comprehensiveness and unity is a historical phenomenon which has been engraved into the identity of the university: during its medieval origins, theology guaranteed generality and contact with the truth, which all the university disciplines were directed towards. With the growth of religious particularism in the 16th century, the position of theology became weakened and with it the unified interpretation of the world, and then in the 18th century, theology passed the torch on to the royal disciplines of philosophy and law. The last third of the 19th century is considered the start of a new era of university development, when the influence of philosophy and the humanities markedly weakened in favour of the exact sciences.<sup>157</sup>

The beginning of the natural sciences' emancipation from the "domination" of philosophy and the arts in Central Europe dates back to the establishment of a separate science and mathematics institute in 1869 at the university in Tübingen, which was followed by other universities: Strasbourg (1872), Heidelberg (1890) and Frankfurt (1914), until subject particularism became widespread during the interwar period.<sup>158</sup> The fragmentation of the disciplines in "bourgeois" universities was the focus of reforms carried out by the communists in the Soviet Union (from 1930) and by the Nazis (from 1933), which in both cases tried to use ideology as a bond to unite the differentiated disciplines.<sup>159</sup>

These experiments came to an end with the collapse of communism in 1989. Influenced by neoliberalism, misinterpreted models adopted from the USA and the development of technology, discipline particularism in universities began to take on a form which is considered a threat to the continued notion of the university itself.

The myth of unity and universalism is today seen in the historicizing, almost nostalgic idea of the possibility of converting all inquiries into either a single or a few formulas. This task is most often assigned by the university academic community to philosophy as the alleged guardian of a pure form of rational thinking and universal knowledge that every university worthy of the name should have. In this sense, philosophy is the most important science. Naturally, in its claims to be universal it competes with other sciences which stylize themselves in the role of the most important science, though without raising this claim in a universal form.

156 <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1918ns/ps/stenprot/022schuz/s022008.htm> (7.1. 2018).

157 Rüegg, Walter (ed.): *A History of the University in Europe. Volume III. Universities in the nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries (1800–1945)*. Cambridge 2004, pp. 16–20.

158 Ibid, p. 19.

159 Connely, *Ztročená*, pp. 331–355; Wróblewska, Teresa: *Die Reichsuniversitäten Posen, Prag und Strassburg als Modelle nationalsozialistischer Hochschulen in den von Deutschland besetzten Gebieten*. Toruń 2000, pp. 39–52.

This attempt to become the “first of all sciences” is most often connected with molecular biology, neurology and sociology.<sup>160</sup> Philosophers in the postmodern era usually respond to universalist expectations by extending their research work into the methodology and ethics of science, i.e. disciplines which are expected to have the most universal applicability. Within a developed university, these types of bonding activities are most often found in academic training in PhD courses. These tend to be quite successful and well-attended series of seminars examining the methods of inquiry of different sciences. It is with the education of young academics and their introduction to comprehensive scientific inquiry that the troublesome feeling arises that only a few experts are capable of stepping outside their own enclosed discipline to look holistically at science, the university, or even the faculty. This narrow specialization is most frequent in the natural sciences, but also in the humanities which are under pressure from systems for evaluating science and academic capitalism, where there is the strong presence of a “fortress mentality” and the defensive withdrawal behind historically proven inquiry and the methods of their own subject, regardless of developments in other disciplines.

## The mission of the Central European university

Analysing the myth of the unity of the university is impossible without looking at the roles of those who commission work from universities – i.e. uncovering the motives of the founders and the financial providers. Their objectives are initially projected into the formal symbols of the university’s existence, such as foundation memoranda, statutes and the organizational structure, and secondly into the institutional culture of the university. Therefore, who did the university “serve” and who does it “serve” today?

This is a very difficult question to answer. The oldest higher education was the result of an agreement between the Holy See and the sovereign, usually to varying degrees of good will from both sides. The Reformation weakened the influence of Rome and increased the power of the rulers who aimed at absolute control over their territory, including the universities. The university’s connection to the ruler began to weaken with the awakening of the national movements in the 19th century, which in many countries separated the national interest from that of the ruler or dynasty, or even placed it against it. With the breakup of the multinational empires at the start of the 20th century, the university strengthened its connections to the nation and the nation state, albeit that for political-ideological reasons this emphasis on the nation was more disguised in successor states to the Habsburg

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160 Hagner, Michael: *Ansichten der Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, In: also (Hg.): *Ansichten der Wissenschaftsgeschichte*. Frankfurt am Main 2001, pp. 7–39, here p. 18.

empire which had diverse ethnicities. This connection of the university to the nation was to be strengthened enormously with the German Nazis' concept of nationalism, which subordinated German-language universities to the ideological vision of a world-conquering German nation. Non-German universities in Central Europe were interpreted simply as oppositional and hostile to German interests, and attempts were made to restrict their activities, though for tactical reasons their approach in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was different than in the occupied territories of Poland and Yugoslavia. The postwar university in Central Europe also kept its links to state power and the nation, but in a different form. This was either determined by the communist plan to build a new society, or the liberal-democratic idea of assigning the university the role as a school of liberal democracy and plurality. In the first case, the initial enthusiasm of the "cultural revolution" gradually waned and the university became increasingly defined as an institution supporting the development of a socialist national economy. In the second case, the role of the university gradually became interpreted as meaning support for the capitalist economy, which was considered the West's main calling card and the central argument for the success of liberal democracy as opposed to other political-economic systems.

After 1989 in Central Europe it became unclear as to the actual purpose and objectives of the university. Historical answers to similar questions were either rejected outright, as in the case of building a communist society, while other conceptual answers were looked at with a certain reserve, as was the case for the definitions associated with national, provincial or regional interests. The arguments linking the university to the European ideal were also rejected as they were seen by the majority of society as too abstract, concealing the specific political interests of some European countries and the power of the Brussels bureaucracy. With increasing globalization, several prestigious Anglo-Saxon universities formed the centre of the international university network, and as a result, the relationship between the university and the interests of global capitalism came to the forefront.

In this setup, which is often described as the "ever closer integration" of states, nations and universities, it is difficult to predict what fate has in store for the historically defined Central European university communities and the different justifications for their existence. This is not merely the result of the dramatic political turmoil that has engulfed Europe since 2005 (France's rejection of a European constitution in a referendum, the economic crisis, the crisis of the Eurozone, the migration crisis, etc.). Therefore, with events still so fresh, a clear and straightforward answer to the question "*who does the university serve today?*" is practically impossible. In Central Europe the enormous political turmoil has resulted in a confusing tangled web, where the university tradition has been in the service of the nation, the region, socialism, capitalism, Europeanness, liberal democracy and neoliberal ideology. It might appear that with such a complicated mixture of

traditions, the Central European university has a particularly difficult role, but it is not the case. We might recall the fates of other parts of the global university network on the periphery and undergoing profound reforms, such as in South Africa. The local universities emerged as ambassadors for the British empire with liberal-humanist subtexts, and gradually this identity overlapped with Afrikaans nationalism and racism, then later with the visions of a liberated black Africa, black racism, and in recent decades with the ideas of neoliberal capitalism.<sup>161</sup>

## The vision of completeness and university organisation

Looking at the issue from a historical perspective, we might ask ourselves the question whether the organisational structure of a university is reflected in the vision of completeness over time. The oldest universities were understood as an association of masters and students seeking general knowledge. The unified organizational structure of the oldest European universities was mainly connected with the University of Paris, which was founded in 1150. General knowledge was the remit of the arts faculty, which was understood as the stage before a professionally oriented education from the theological, legal and medical faculties. After obtaining a bachelor's title, a graduate from the arts faculty could then continue their studies in the professionally oriented faculties or they could remain at the arts faculty and focus on the highest level of education – the master's *artium liberalium*. The arts faculty, the predecessor to the philosophical faculty, was the largest organizational element and often had more students than all of the other faculties combined. However, a general knowledge was not only provided in universities by arts faculties, which were often considered to be less important than the vocationally oriented faculties, but rather as the result of the predominance of philosophical-theological teaching at medieval universities in general. The size and influence of the arts faculties was magnified by the widespread influence of theological education, which in many respects also maintained a universal character, reaching into every discipline and guaranteeing a unified interpretation of the world. We may recall that the medieval university created its organizational regulations based on monasteries, and to a large degree the community of students and masters was seen as a spiritual community, similar to that of a monastic society.<sup>162</sup>

The organizational structure taken from the traditions of medieval universities did not even undergo significant changes during the Early Modern Age. Under pressure from sovereigns, the increasing power of states and the decline in the

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161 Wolhuter, Charl C. – Mushaandja, John: *Contesting Ideas of a University: The Case of South Africa*. Humanities 2015, 4, pp. 212–223.

162 Rüegg, Walter (Hg.): *Geschichte der Universität in Europa*, I., München 1993, pp. 68–69.

influence of papal universalism in large parts of Europe, universities lost their universal character. The newly established universities in Central Europe were clearly defined by their founders as “provincial” (Gießen/1607, Kiel/1665, Göttingen/1734, Bonn/1818 etc.), though this trend was more evident in the university culture than in its organizational structure, which usually remained the same. Firstly, there was an increased emphasis on vocational education focusing on the needs of the state, linked in particular to the legal and medical faculties. Even theological courses in Protestant countries had to respect the absolutist rulers’ demands for the intellectual disciplining of their subjects. And secondly, there was a rise in the confidence of the natural-science disciplines, committed to a “scientific” path which “*has no connection with divinity, metaphysics, morality and politics*” as the Royal Society stated in 1662.<sup>163</sup>

The development of science in the 18th century brought significant changes to the respected hierarchy of faculties and disciplines, and to the general provision of knowledge. This was reflected in Central Europe with the Humboldtian reforms of higher education in German countries (and to a lesser extent in the Habsburg Monarchy), and the reforming work of John Henry Newman in an Anglo-Saxon context. With regard to the issue of a universal knowledge, both reformers of higher education were on a similar wavelength and aimed at the scientization of all disciplines taught at university. The university teacher was first and foremost a researcher, and all researchers, regardless of discipline, had to guarantee objectivity in their relationship with the public. Regarding university teaching, both of these towering figures put forward a claim for the integrity of education, as Immanuel Kant had done some time earlier in his work *Der Streit der Fakultäten* from 1798,<sup>164</sup> and Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher in his treatise *Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten in deutschem Sinn* from 1808. The discourse of the Humboldt-Newman followers contained many statements such as “*love of truth*” and “*the superiority of science over the state*” in the sense of the ancient ideals of the Platonic Academy for selecting statesmen through education from a mass of candidates.<sup>165</sup> However, the implementation of these lofty ideals for humanity was carried out by the Prussian bureaucracy in accordance with a state doctrine characterized by a strained hierarchism, legendary discipline, nationalism and militarism, and thus the Prussian university founded in Berlin in 1810 had features from these two intellectual worlds.

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163 Hüther, Otto - Krücken, Georg: *Hochschulen. Fragestellungen, Ergebnisse, und Perspektiven des sozialwissenschaftlichen Hochschulforschung*. Wiesbaden 2016, p. 25.

164 Kant, Immanuel: *Der Streit der Facultäten in drei Abschnitten*. Leipzig 1880, p. 71 ff.

165 Langewiesche, Dieter: *Die „Humboldtsche Universität“ als nationaler Mythos. Zum Selbstbild der deutschen Universität in ihren Rektoratreden im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik*, *Historische Zeitschrift* 2010, 1, 290, pp. 53–91, here p. 58.

The new flourishing of universities was connected to service to the nation, meaning “*to the nation found within the family of civilized nations in Europe*,”<sup>166</sup> bringing to an end the previous two phases in the history of the university – firstly the medieval phase, formed by religious universalism, and afterwards the phase of early modern age states, characterized by religious and territorial particularism and the absolutism of sovereigns.<sup>167</sup> According to the Humboldtian school of thought, the nation was superior to partisanship, while the service of science and the university to the nation was seen as apolitical, removed from all conflicts in public life, and in this sense the only comprehensive one. The university was called upon to accumulate comprehensive and objective knowledge in the service of the nation, despite the fact that the practical use of this knowledge was not a pressing issue. The decision concerning what was and what was not useful was transferred to the abstract “nation”. This large degree of independence gave university representatives the mandate to look at social phenomena in a balanced manner and formulate appropriate recommendations for the correct actions. The fact that in the world of science the concept of timeless knowledge is very problematic as it constantly leads to formulating, defending or rebutting new theses, was not reflected on in the relationship towards the nation. Therefore, the scientific debate was not perceived as a social and political phenomenon, as the indication of particularistic interests, but as the rivalry between representatives of national science. From the perspective of foreign observers of German Humboldtian education, the legendary Prussian discipline and order, together with fervent nationalism, were evident here because through “*regulations and customary laws the nation shows its will*.”<sup>168</sup>

In the multinational conservative Habsburg empire, statism and the disciplining of the population did not reach the same levels as in Germany. National antagonisms were not imperialist in nature, aimed at vying with the old superpowers for global control, instead they were directed inwardly at trying to secure the best possible deal for their own nation within the empire. The university was, therefore, viewed as proof of a nation’s maturity, and acquiring one was seen primarily as furthering the cause of national emancipation rather than as a progressive step for all of mankind. National antagonisms were also in evidence due to the fact that the foundation of universities which were not German-speaking undermined the hitherto predominant German culture in the Habsburg empire. The relatively calm Austrian Germans accepted the Polonization of the universities in Krakow and Lvov due to the fact there were few German inhabitants living in Galicia. However, the success of the Czechs with the establishment of the Charles-

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166 Ibid.

167 Ibid, p. 72.

168 Ibid, p. 59.



Ferdinand University (1882) was seen by the Germans as at their expense, and was part of a growing trend towards the Czechization of Prague and Bohemia, where there was a large German population.<sup>169</sup> The university became a weapon in the national struggle, and although there was one exception to this in the small Austrian university in Bukovina's Chernivtsi, where the teachers and students from many different nationalities managed to coexist, this did nothing to change this pattern.<sup>170</sup>

However, the interests of the nation were not only promoted through the use of its own language in the university, but also through the comprehensive academic excellence of all the university's disciplines. The standard of academic work in the countries of Central and Central Eastern Europe was traditionally benchmarked against the top research institutes in Germany, which were global leaders in the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th. Matching the new methodologies emerging from Germany and developing a specific Czech response to them became a question of national honour.<sup>171</sup> However, not every discipline was able to easily adapt to the measurements of objectivity in the service of the national interest. Some of the arts disciplines were generally regarded as having been weakened by their unscientific nature and lack of practical application. The emancipation of the natural-science disciplines from the domination of the humanities, hamstrung by metaphysics and speculation, was perceived by the left in particular as the path to progress.<sup>172</sup> The humanities had been left behind in terms of methodology, which had been a very strong part of German science during the 19th century. For a long period in Czech humanities research, the dividing line had been unclear between a rational-scientific approach and an emotionally charged, fanciful, national-historical narrative. There followed unsatisfactory responses concerning the practical dimension of the humanities and their usefulness in general. This opened the door to doubts about the meaning of the entire university – in comparison to the previously integrated system of teaching, research and interpretation of the world, there was now a conspicuous gap caused by the fragility of the humanities. Speeches made by three consecutive rectors at Leipzig University reflected on this contempt for the humanities. In 1891 the traditional philologist Justus Lipsius spoke about the tasks for the future from a defensive position, protecting his and related disciplines against the idea that

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169 Cf. Seibt, Ferdinand (Hg.): *Die Teilung der Prager Universität 1882 und die intellektuelle Desintegration in den böhmischen Ländern*. München 1984.

170 Turczynski, Emanuel: Czernowitz als Beispiel einer integrativen Universität, In: Seibt, Ferdinand (Hg.), *Die Teilung der Prager Universität 1882 und die intellektuelle Desintegration in den böhmischen Ländern*. München 1984), pp. 25–36.

171 Havránek, Jan (red.): *Dějiny Univerzity Karlovy III. (1802–1918)*, Prague 1997, pp. 260–267.

172 *Die Naturwissenschaften als Grundlage der Schule*, *Volksfreund* 10.3. 1887, year 7, no. 5, p. 2; *Die Clerikalen und die Naturwissenschaften*, *Volksfreund* 13.6. 1889, year 9, no. 11, p. 1.

they were merely subjects to be taught and were not research disciplines. In 1893 the chemist Johann Wiscelinus did not ask for support for his own discipline – he did not deem it necessary to have to explain its scientific character and social necessity to his listeners – but support for other disciplines, mainly the humanities, which he argued were important for a comprehensive education. “*Can chemistry address the final principles of matter? No, chemistry alone cannot definitively answer such questions.*”<sup>173</sup> For Wiscelinus, the university was an institution whose internal unity was not allowed to be destroyed by research development in disciplines or increased specialization, as it would then lose its way in scientifically explaining the world in its entirety. In 1910 the historian Karl Lamprecht formulated a position which was common within the humanities and social sciences – that as a result of pressure from the global economy and the ever-closer communication links between continents, the university would have to respond to “*an unusual number of new stimuli, gain a complete understanding of them and build on their foundation a world of shared ideas and moral ideals.*” Allegedly these developments mercilessly targeted outdated and unreformable institutions. Lamprecht, as a leading figure in historical science, called for changes in the approaches in the humanities, which were to focus more on themes which were considered as relevant from the perspective of the exact sciences and were suitable for wider cultural-historical-comparative analyses, which would bring the university together again.<sup>174</sup>

Wilhelm von Humboldt himself saw the humanities as an important part of the *universitas*, as its bond in the scientific search for an integrated interpretation of the world. At the same time, as a linguist, he also contributed significantly towards raising the academic standards in both his own discipline and in the humanities as a whole.<sup>175</sup> In a lecture from 1852, the reformer of English higher education, John Henry Newman, considered the role of the humanities in a similar way: “*..all branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject-matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and the work of the Creator. Hence it is that the Sciences, into which our knowledge may be said to be cast, have multiplied bearings one on another, and an internal sympathy, and admit, or rather demand, comparison and adjustment. They complete, correct, balance each other... Let me make use of an illustration. In the combination of colours, very different effects are produced by a difference in their selection and juxtaposition; red, green, and white, change their shades, according to the contrast to which they are submitted. And, in like manner, the drift and meaning of a branch of knowledge varies with the company in which it is introduced to the student.*”<sup>176</sup>

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173 Langewiesche, *Die „Humboldtische Universität“*, p. 71.

174 *Ibid.*, pp. 75–77.

175 von Humboldt, *O vnitřní a vnější organizaci*, p. 34.

176 Newman, Henry John: *Idea university*. In: Jirsa, Jakub (ed.): *Idea university*. Prague 2015, pp. 40–51, here pp. 40–41.

However, the emphasis on the scientific character of the discipline implied the search for disciplines' specific characteristics and – supported by the personal ambitions of the researcher, the rivalry between universities and their supporting political-economic interest groups – brought with it a dramatic growth in the number of professorships. At that time, the social contribution of the exact sciences was seen as incontrovertible by the public and taxpayers. This was reinforced by the continuous flow of discoveries changing people's everyday lives. In contrast to the “usefulness” of the exact sciences, the humanities were in a weak position and their social prestige came under threat. The secularization of European society in the 19th century had earlier eroded the position of theological courses which had at one point been the most important member of the university's family of disciplines, and the re-division of the university hierarchy of prestige continued, practically always at the expense of the humanities. By 1900 the arts were being accused in Germany and Austria of producing too many “academic proletarians” or people who had a general education but who were practically unemployable due to their lack of specialization and practical knowledge.

Berhard vom Brocke attempted to account for the surge in professorial chairs for the humanities that were established in German-language areas. The development of the portfolio of disciplines in German universities was to a significant degree determined by developments in higher education in the Habsburg monarchy. The main wave which established specialized disciplines was in German states from 1766–1829, while in the Habsburg empire it was markedly slower, with disciplines typically being established after 1850, usually first at the University of Vienna.<sup>177</sup> There was a growth here from the mid-19th century in the number of lectures given in languages other than German; during the second half of the 19th century some universities declared themselves as non-German language (the Jagellonian University in the 1870s, Charles University in 1882). In particular, the arts faculties in the Habsburg empire were incubators for subjects which had not yet developed into fully fledged scientific disciplines, and which did not acquire their own professorships until the 1890s, and then later entirely separate faculties. In 1885 the arts faculty at Graz University represented 42% of the university's capacity, and this was only slightly less in other schools.<sup>178</sup> There were even jibes aimed at arts faculties in German-Austrian areas which spoke of the “*Universitätsrumpelkammer*” or the dumping grounds for the university's flotsam and jetsam, meaning disciplines which were to be avoided by the other faculties.<sup>179</sup>

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177 vom Brocke, Berhard: Die Entstehung der deutschen Forschungsuniversität. Ihr Blüte und Krise um 1900. In: von Schwinges, Rainer Christoph (Hg.): *Humboldt International. Der Export der deutschen Universitätsmodells im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert.* Basel 2001, pp. 367–401, here p. 376.

178 Engelbrecht, *Geschichte*, p. 235.

179 Langewiesche, *Die „Humboldtsche Universität“*, p. 54.

Prague's faculty of arts become significantly more heterogenous in the mid-18th century. 1761 saw the establishment of a professorship of higher mathematics, in 1766 a professorship of political and cameralist sciences, and the third phase from 1774–1792 saw the development of several key professorships for the humanities. Some endeavours at the faculty had more of an experimental character, and a professorship of agricultural sciences was in existence there from 1775 to 1781. After 1803 the foundation of the technical university meant the ambitions to establish the technical disciplines outside of the faculty of arts had been realized, nevertheless, Prague's faculty of arts continued to be very diverse in terms of its disciplines. In the 1880s the number of regular and associate professorships was between 42 and 48, in the school year of 1899/1900 it reached a maximum number of 65 professors divided into the natural-science and social-science sections, which were informally considered at the faculty to be more prestigious and usually demonstrated better scientific results due to better equipment.<sup>180</sup> New professorships were added to physics, geography, anthropology and zoology, while the humanities quickly differentiated between the history and art-history disciplines, which in Central Eastern Europe was a reaction to the boom in German historical science represented by the methodological and organizational work of Leopold von Ranke (1775–1886).<sup>181</sup>

In the mid-19th century the Jagellonian University in Krakow, another of the top research institutes in Central Eastern Europe which was attractive to the Czech lands, had fourteen disciplines in its faculty of arts which had the statute of an independent professorship: philosophy, general history, Polish literature, German studies, two professorships for classical philology and another two professorships for mathematics, one professorship for mineralogy and zoology, and then astronomy, physics, chemistry, botany and geography. The number of specialized philological disciplines increased and we can also see here the rapid division of the history disciplines: three departments existed in 1869 and by the start of the 20th century there were eight professorships in total for history including auxiliary historical sciences and the history of music and art. There was an exponential growth in professorships for the natural-science disciplines from the 1890s, particularly in Earth science.<sup>182</sup> As a result, in the twilight years of the Habsburg empire, Krakow's faculty of arts had 50 professorships, 28 divisions and nine seminaries.<sup>183</sup>

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180 Petráň, *Nástin*, p. 227.

181 *Ibid*, pp. 267–270.

182 Schmidt, Peter: *Zum 100. Todestag von Ernst Ludwig August von Rebeur-Paschwitz*. Nachrichtenblatt zur Geschichte der Geowissenschaften, No. 5, pp. 58 – 59, 1995.

183 Stinia, Maria: *Uniwersytet Jagielloński w latach 1871–1914. Modernizacja procesu nauczania*. Kraków 2014, pp. 98–125.

## The conflict between universal and professional education

The concept of “Humboldtian” university unity began to break apart around 1900 due to two issues which had been part of the idea of the university since its very inception: the relationship between the professionally oriented disciplines and the general-education disciplines, and how disciplines should respond to current political, economic or cultural challenges in order to gain social legitimacy. The potential for conflict in the first issue lay in the fact that professors of professionally oriented disciplines often did not carry out any relevant research and, closed within their narrow discipline specialization, did not engage in the debates and issues of other disciplines. However, the importance of professional education for society and the state was not, and in view of the public financing of the university, could not be doubted. However, this led to numerous important disciplines being torn away from the vision of the “Humboldtian” university, in particular the medical and law faculties which created their own autonomous culture. Therefore, the unity and comprehensiveness of traditional higher education was only an illusion.

The second issue then created lines of conflict between disciplines as well as inside them. In their dominant position, the natural sciences courageously allied themselves to a vision of their contribution towards “dominating the world” through scientific discovery for the greater glory of the nation. Some in the humanities shared this “national commitment”, while some stubbornly defended the idea of pure science standing above political interests and refused to be drawn into the public debate. The conflict often involved personal fights between professors. While the Prague historian Jaroslav Goll (1846–1929) was a leading figure in the strict rejection of submitting science to social-political demands to prioritize research, and refused to update his own work in medieval research,<sup>184</sup> his colleague, a historian of the Early Modern Age, Antonín Rezek (1853–1909), attempted to popularize scientific knowledge through his many publications and activity in public life, which even led to him gaining a ministerial post in the Austrian government.<sup>185</sup> Tomáš Masaryk’s involvement in the Hilsner affair was an extreme example of a university professor stepping into public life and led to dramatic conflicts within academia as well as the general public – Masaryk was loved by some, hated by others. Even if we ignore the extremists’ views in the whole dispute and are aware of the fact that Masaryk had had previous experience dealing with the public, it is clear that the activism of one of its professors was a severe test for the position of the university and the culture of solidarity within

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184 Petrání, *Nástin*, p. 215.

185 Kučera, Martin: *K politické činnosti historika Antonína Rezka*. Východočeské listy historické, 11–12, 1997, pp. 11–33.

academia.<sup>186</sup> There was another test for the apolitical vision of the university in the Czech setting with the conflict over establishing a university in Brno, culminating in the events of 1905. In Germany, meanwhile, there was the political involvement of universities on the side of the nationalist radicals in the dispute over the Baden language reforms from 1895–1899, and the so-called *Wahrmund* affair in 1908 at Innsbruck University, relating to sharp criticism of the Catholic Church.<sup>187</sup>

In relation to the vision of a united university, we can see three basic strategies adopted by the Central European universities in the twentieth century which were founded on the basis of the Humboldtian concept. These were strategies filled with contradictions, each of which brought at least some short-term positives as well as numerous negatives. The first of these was the even more fiercely defended idea of maintaining university unity through grand social projects, whether this was through nationalism, liberal democracy, socialism or racism. It was more or less the repeated claim of the humanities having a leading status in the university and an attempt to subordinate both specialized disciplines and narrowly professionally orientated disciplines to the higher concept of university service to the public. From the perspective of the thousand-year history of the *universitas*, the benefits of this approach for the humanities were more of a short- to medium-term character. The negatives were obvious: in the turbulent twentieth century with its incredibly fast turnover of regimes and ideologies, it was easy to discredit and even liquidate people and disciplines which were too closely linked to some of these ideological concepts. As a result, any similar politicization of the humanities and social sciences was interpreted as evidence of their unscientific character which could lead to doubts as to whether they had the right to exist in the university's community of disciplines – not to mention any claims about its leadership or ability to unite.

The second strategy lay in the refusal to accept the role of the academic worker in public life. The objective was to focus fully on the role of the apolitical civil servant following state-defined scientific tasks, particularly in teaching, where any activities that could be labelled as political would be avoided. It was about modifying the old vision of the university as an accumulator of pure knowledge through the coexistence of the university with a strong state. At the very least, there was to be limited engagement in the education of the public, which was seen as a necessary evil, as a tax on the apolitical scientific and educational activities at the university. The university's declaration of loyalty to the state in all circumstances proved to be an important legitimizing strategy for the unity of the university, which allowed it to bridge periods of growing pressure from political ideologies, and the very dangerous period when their influence was changing. This was an attractive strat-

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186 Rys, Jan: *Hilsneriáda a TGM*. Prague 2016.

187 Trauner, Karl-Reinhart: *Die Wahrmund-Affäre*. Vienna 1992.

egy for the Central European academic faced with political turmoil. It allowed for some basic moral consistency based on the simple apolitical acceptance of state orders, where the task was to carry them out, not to question them. It made it easier to transfer the blame away from yourself if an old political concept collapsed or if it was rejected by society, because someone who was only following orders from their superiors could not be guilty. This strategy of a very close link to the state, inspired by French or Russian/Soviet universities, made the university into a united and internally highly cohesive community, whose culture was very similar to that of the state bureaucracy's priorities. Only the façade remained of Fichte and Humboldt's vision of a struggle for a better person and new humanity; the university had lost its intellectual ethos and become a bureaucratic tool. However, it was able to very effectively defend individual members of the professorial corps from persecution, as well as disciplines that were allegedly socially redundant or politically dangerous, as it was able to respond with a high degree of unity, following the example of bureaucracy. An attack on one member of this community was perceived as an attack on the whole community. The strategy was also compatible with the integration of certain figures who were more prominent in political projects as a result of having accepted academic functions; the first and second strategies therefore had the potential to coexist. The role of academics at the intersection of politics and pure science was interpreted as a personal sacrifice made to maintain the basic apolitical character of a discipline and its scientific activities. The defence of the allegedly largely positive role of these people was part of legitimizing the discipline in times of political change.

In Central Europe the third strategy was most common in Austria and West Germany. It was aimed at a fundamental revision of the concept of the university as an institution which provides education and scientific training in *all* scientific disciplines (*universitas litterarum*). In a certain sense it meant defending the remains of the conservatively conceived notion of the university by being resigned to grouping some disciplines together which were not supposedly compatible with the university and transferring them to specialist colleges or research institutes. The concept of a fully-fledged university was revised in those areas which brought most tension to the traditional hierarchy – the narrowly vocationally focused disciplines were removed from the university (to specialist colleges) as were the technical and scientific disciplines which had the greatest potential of working with the industrial and commercial sectors (to specialist research centres). There was an erosion of the influence of the humanities and the social sciences within the university community, and they demonstrated their inability to maintain their legitimacy when faced with specific demands from doctors, lawyers, technologists and some scientists. The movement of the technical disciplines to technical universities was a precursor to the next development in higher education in German “Humboldtian” circles, and there followed a debate

on the expediency of establishing special colleges for the pedagogical, art and medical disciplines. Then there were deliberations which went straight to the heart of the idea of the university – whether to systematically differentiate academic disciplines characterized by their exact nature on the one hand, and those disciplines which tended to analyse interpretations of reality. It was then easy to see a dividing line between the science and arts disciplines as representing these two fields. The debates on how difficult it was to incorporate all of the traditional areas of the Humboldtian university were mainly connected with how certain aspects of the Soviet and American higher-education system were received. These developments reflected the fact that in the 20th century the culture in Central European universities had been shaped by the Cold War and the pressure from a different political and economic environment which altered university habits.

## The Soviet influence on the Central European university

The Soviet model for higher education was based on disciplines cooperating to achieve a common goal – communism – and in this sense could be seen as reintroducing unity to the university. In order to achieve this the communists used similar measures to those which the Nazis had introduced to Central European universities. The model National Socialist universities included the universities in Prague and Poznań (Reichsuniversität).<sup>188</sup> The Reich university had been designed to replace the old “Humboldtian” university tradition in the name of ideologically committed unified science, which served to educate the “new man”, and also specifically applied science – the Reich universities helped to develop some of the Nazi’s plans for the final solution of Europe following victory in war in terms of racial cleansing, Germanization and incorporation into the greater economy of the Third Reich.<sup>189</sup>

In the countries lying in the Soviet sphere of influence, after the Second World War the conflict lines and ideological pressure were familiar to universities from the Nazi period. The formal role of universities in communist-bloc countries was also subordinate to the goal of building a socialist society and educating the “new

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188 Wróblewska, *Die Reichsuniversitäten*, s. 17–52; Nagel, Anne Ch.: Anspruch und Wirklichkeit in der nationalsozialistischen Hochschul- und Wissenschaftspolitik. In: Reulecke, Jürgen – Roelcke, Volker (Hg.): *Wissenschaften im 20. Jahrhundert: Universitäten in der modernen Wissenschaftsgesellschaft*. Stuttgart 2008, pp. 245–262; Konrád, Ota: *Dějepisectví, germanistika a slavistika na Německé univerzitě v Praze 1918–1945*. Prague 2011, p. 202 ff.

189 Konrád, *Dějepisectví*, pp. 227–230.



man”.<sup>190</sup> The ideological departments helped to inscribe the “cultural revolution” into the identity of every university in the communist era, particularly in smaller and more modern schools, rather than in the case of the large, traditional Charles University. For example, the goal of Olomouc’s Palacký University (re-established in 1946) was described as the struggle against clericalism, agrarianism and the relics of bourgeois thinking in the catchment areas of Eastern Moravia, Těšín and Western Slovakia.<sup>191</sup> The regime’s favoured disciplines (Marxist-Leninist philosophy, the history of the international workers’ movement and political economy)<sup>192</sup> were used as instruments to carry out the “cultural revolution” across disciplines and the entire university community, therefore, “to educate the masses to creatively master the scientific world view and the continuous struggle against bourgeois ideologies whose actions hinder the pace of constructing socialism.”<sup>193</sup>

At the end of the 1940s Zdeněk Nejedlý, the leading ideologist of communist science, described Czechoslovak universities as a bastion of conservatism, as an example of the inability and unwillingness to adapt their work to the new society and political conditions, and to strive to build a socialist society. Nejedlý’s rhetoric was quickly adopted by Communists and the Czechoslovak Youth Associations operating in the universities, who called for the dismantling of the differences in the disciplines and the integration of the university on an ideological basis: “*You only see strict faces in the faculties. Paper, books, bad individualism, academia. Noses held high and intellectual smart alecs. One sighs over ‘old English’, another over ‘yer’, the third over Czech grammar. As though several hundred creatures were enclosed within their shells. The conglomerate of these shells has created a hermetically sealed faculty/fortress. The second year of the Five-Year-Plan is everywhere in motion, yet the faculties act as though they knew nothing about them.*”<sup>194</sup> The principles of the Humboldtian university were treated by the communists as the remnants of a capitalist society which had to be overcome and destroyed. Alongside the empty ideological phrases of the cultural revolution which were in such evidence in the 1950s, the role of the university in the development of the socialist economy was emphasized by communist governments in Czechoslovakia over successive decades: “*The bourgeoisie created a form of education and appropriate educational institutions for its own needs. Communism can never come to terms with them. It will find its own new revolutionary paths and methods, institutions and forms of education, a mass education disproportionately greater than*

190 Connelly, John: *Ztročená univerzita: sovětizace vysokého školství ve východním Německu, v českých zemích a v Polsku v letech 1945–1956*. Prague 2008, p. 166 ff.

191 Ibid.

192 Archiv UK Praha, Ústav sociálně politických věd, i.d. 471, 474.

193 Zemský archiv Opava, pobočka Olomouc, KV KSC, schůze byra, k. 54, zápis z jednání dne 14.11. 1955.

194 Archiv MU, Spolek posluchačů filosofie G1, kart. 1 Jak jsme začínali – vzpomínky na školní rok 1949–1950, příloha k zápisu ze schůze ze dne 5. 3. 1951.

*that of capitalism – the mass march towards education and a new, hitherto unknown increase in production and productivity based on the expansion of mechanization and automation.*<sup>195</sup>

Although in ideological terms the contribution of the individual disciplines and groups of disciplines was defined similarly as building a socialist society, in practical terms there were significant differences. While the humanities and social sciences were systematically treated as being in the service of propaganda-educational work, the science and medical disciplines were spared the worst aspects of ideological pressure due to the practical interests of the regime in industrial production and the health of its population: “*We laugh when a reactionary philosopher or historian emigrates (to West Germany – author’s note). However, it is a different case with a physicist, mathematician or technologist for whom we have no replacements.*”<sup>196</sup> Amongst East German scientists there was the fitting comparison of their discipline to “*a golden tooth in the reactionary muzzle,*” which was used by one of the leaders of the communist regime.<sup>197</sup>

However, during particularly turbulent times for the regime, professional education and the interests of industry were subordinate to ideological education, and in this sense the ideological pressure of the communist regimes covered all departmental differences, strengthened the unity of the university, and in so doing led university education out of a crisis. However, this was only temporary, as the costs for this policy of ideologically supporting the unity of the university were considerable. On the one hand, disciplines (mainly from the arts and social sciences) were selected on the basis of being ideologically suitable or ideologically tainted, suspicious or unnecessary; while some scientific and informatics disciplines were ideologically disparaged for being bourgeois and unsuited to the process of building a socialist society – with a subsequent catastrophic impact on the economic performance of communist countries.

The regime’s ideological pressure on the whole *universitas* in the countries of the communist bloc thus papered over the dispute concerning the social contribution of disciplines when this aspect was redefined according to their own criteria. Entire groups of disciplines (theology) might be rejected. Elsewhere the regime was more moderate in the selection process, where only a few disciplines or subdisciplines were cut back (classic philology, ecclesiastical history, genetics, sociology). In the communist university, the economic criterion of efficiency was

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195 Archiv UK, Fond Vědecká rada UK, zápis ze dne 31.3. 1960, p. 37.

196 Connelly, John: *Ztročená univerzita: sovětizace vysokého školství ve východním Německu, v českých zemích a v Polsku v letech 1945–1956*. Prague 2008, pp. 125–126.

197 Jessen, Ralph: *Von den Vorzügen des Sozialismus und der deutschen Teilung. Kollaborationsverhältnisse im ostdeutschen Wissenschaftssystem der fünfzig Jahre*. In: Weisbord, Bernd: *Akademische Vergangenheitspolitik*, pp. 39–52, here p. 48.

subordinated to the ideological mission and thus lost its strict, pragmatic and dangerous character to the integrity of the university.

## The American influence on the Central European university

During the Second World War and the Cold War, American, British and many other smaller Western European countries combined their resources in order to maintain and increase the West's technological superiority over the fascist and then communist blocs. Understandably, this did not apply to all disciplines, but only to a select few. The humanities and social sciences were also part of the efforts by the USA and its allies to defeat fascism and hold back communism, but only to a limited degree, without the generous funding and support in personnel which the scientific and technical disciplines could enjoy. In the 1950s there also began to appear in Western universities well-financed, ideologically tinged disciplines (such as Sovietology, which was strongly represented by émigré professors from the Eastern bloc).<sup>198</sup> The communists' "cultural revolution" and attempts to enforce their ideology upon universities even had its counterpart in the social disturbances which rocked American and Western European universities in the 1960s, when social-science disciplines were formed which pushed universities towards a more left-liberal, even neo-Marxist, political discourse (Black Studies, Gender Studies, Intercultural Studies, etc.). However, in comparison with the "cultural revolution" in the universities of the Eastern bloc, pressure on colleagues, whether politically indifferent or critical, usually came from "below", i.e. without the support of the university leaders or the regime's security forces. On the other hand, in their fanaticism and aggressiveness, these methods were similar to those used by the activist and avant-garde elements of the communist regime. Overall, it would be wrong to suggest that these political-ideological developments in the academic communities of the USA and Western Europe fundamentally threatened the viability of disciplines or entire universities which rejected the pressure from the left, or remained apolitical. Marc Taylor talks unreservedly about an ongoing cultural war with its main front centred on American universities.<sup>199</sup> Remaining outside the main left-liberal discourse for changing society was possible – this was one of the advantages of the strong democratic institutions of Western universities which had not been weakened by the aforementioned left-wing pressure "from below". The price for remaining outside of the mainstream was to be

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198 Isaac, Joel: *The Human Sciences in Cold War America*. *The Historical Journal*, 50, 3 (2007), pp. 725–746.

199 Taylor, Marc C.: *Crisis on Campus. A Bold Plan for Reforming Our Colleges and Universities*. New York 2010, p. 34.

involved in heated debates and numerous minor inconveniences, but this position was and remains tenable.

In 1981 the American cultural historian Jackson Lears termed the clash over the meaning of the university in the USA as “*an ideological war raging between the politically correct left within the universities and the neoconservative misanthropes outside of it.*”<sup>200</sup> The first of these, who gradually began to dominate in American universities in the 20th century, argue that the curricula and research priorities which are linked to social demand, and the educational role of the university which is aimed at overcoming racism and discrimination of all kinds, are more diverse, open and viable. The second group see the meaning of the university as being threatened by the activities of “*politicized professors with their uptight standards of expression, who had long since rejected the principle of scientific objectivity.*” It might have appeared as though the unity of Western universities had been restored with the firm transfer of the torch to a left-liberal ideology. And this is despite the criticism from outside the university which often perceives the university as a ghetto of left-liberal activism. But Lears believes that this argument concerning the role of the university is a dead end. Despite the fact that the tyranny of all ideologies and their associated activism is stifling, in his opinion the real danger for the unity of the university comes from academic capitalism or “*the application of a market-dictated managerial approach which tends to subordinate universities to quantitative standards of efficiency and productivity, treats education as a commodity, and transforms centres of open investigation into research laboratories for massive corporations and training centres for employees.*”<sup>201</sup> Some disciplines are unable to withstand such challenges and their weakened position or even closure destroys the integrity and unity of the university. With this observation, Lears is, interestingly, in agreement with the critique of American universities from the communist bloc in the 20th century.<sup>202</sup>

What is meant by academic capitalism? It is a way of defining the university in terms of the values of managerial capitalism, such as the quantification of performance, excellence in research, operational efficiency, measurable work productivity, demonstrable social usefulness, quality of management; naturally with an emphasis on the university’s visibility as measured by the “Shanghai Ranking” (Academic Ranking of World Universities).<sup>203</sup> The managerial style of viewing universities first appeared in the USA within a narrow group of elite private universities (Harvard, Princeton, Yale, etc.), but it fitted in well with the American public’s demand for a clear definition of a university as an institute financed by public

200 Lears, *No place*, p. 107.

201 Lears, *No place*, p. 107.

202 Macháček, Jaroslav: *Výzkum na vysokých školách v USA a jiných kapitalistických státech*. Prague 1966; Kocevová, Marie: *Přehled o aplikovaném výzkumu na univerzitách v USA*. Prague 1978; Cipro, Miroslav: *Idea vysoké školy. Studie o vysokém školství ve světě socialismu a kapitalismu*. Prague 1981, pp. 50–57.

203 <http://www.shanghairanking.com/ARWU-Methodology-2016.html> (15.6. 2017).

money and which, therefore, has to respond to the needs of society and the taxpayer. In the cultural context of traditional American pragmatism, the preference for the principle *winner takes all* and the anti-intellectualism of a significant part of the American public shifted the debate about the meaning of the university back in the 19th century towards searching for criteria on which to base a hierarchy of quality and prestige amongst the universities as well as within each of them, naturally with an impact on those departments which for various reasons are unable to survive this competition.

In spite of the ideological rivalry within the academic community, economic pragmatism became the most important threat to university unity first of all in the USA and then later also in Western Europe. It was not the ideological spats between disciplines, nor the squabbling between activist professors and supporters of “pure science”, but the relentless pressure of the market that determined which disciplines in the university were viable and which were not. Characteristically, the demands of the market do not include an overarching grasp of reality, and the priority is the usefulness of a university’s work in relation to the labour market or applied research. The managerial interpretation of the university’s role directly contradicts the conservative understanding of the humanities, and it is striking how incompatible this is with a university which is defined in this sense. Back in 1907, William James (1842–1910), a famous psychologist and philosopher, pointed to the damage which the practical and economic underestimation of the humanities could do to university research: “*You can add the humanities to almost any material if you teach it historically. Geology, economics, even mechanics can become an arts science if you teach it with reference to the successes of their genius founders. If you do not teach it that way, then literature remains grammar, art a catalogue, history a list of dates and science a set of formulas, weights and measurements.*”<sup>204</sup>

Historically, European and especially Central European “Humboldtian” university culture has been shown to be the least able to absorb the elements of a managerial interpretation of the university’s role. The main reason has been the tradition of very close ties to the state budget and perceptions of economic realities which are different to those of private American universities, which have now become the benchmark for university quality. The way in which Central European universities that were established after 1989 reacted defensively to the challenge of academic capitalism referred slightly nostalgically to the Humboldtian ideal of university unity in the fundamental character of the work carried out by disciplines. The humanities have been particularly active in defending the myth of university unity as they are the ones most threatened by a movement towards “Americanization”.

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204 Lears, Jackson T. J.: *No place of grace: antimodernism and the transformation of American culture, 1880 – 1920*, New York 1981, p. 110.

Why did Central European universities look so stubbornly for models in the elite American universities? What happened to their former self-confidence? Innovative tendencies in the 20th century were not an outstanding characteristic of Central European universities, which slowly began to lose out in terms of their high quality and prestige during the interwar period, and even more rapidly post-1945, to the American universities, where a handful of institutions enjoyed exceptional prestige and influence on the global interpretation of the *universitas*. European universities were discredited for indulging in politics and accused of failing to understand the real needs of society; the setbacks for the university mandarins in their ivory towers had significant political potential for conflict in the two decades after the war. One particularly drastic example of crossing the limits in the tradition of the university was that of the German universities and their relationship towards Nazism, including their woefully inadequate response to their own part in Nazi rule, which only began to improve in the 1960s. After 1945, the demise of universities which had once been considered the elite of the “Humboldtian” cultural circle was so evident that the Americanization or westernization of West German higher education was often seen as a liberation from decades of crisis and floundering on the part of Central European universities. One symbolic expression of American influence on German higher education was the establishment of the Berlin Freie Universität in 1948, which was to be the counterpart to the “old” Humboldt university located in the Soviet-occupied zone of the city.<sup>205</sup> Implementing this programme to transform Germany – defined as a “*powerful influence for freedom and democracy in German higher education*” – was the logical result of Hitlerism and an attempt to deal with its causes and consequences; at the same time, it was viewed a priori as suspicious by the entire German university culture.

In public debates about the state of universities, the American example of academic capitalism has thus become something which, from an ahistorical interpretation of the development and achievements of only a handful of American universities, is viewed as the model for the future development of universities in the distinctly different cultural, political and economic environment of Central European educational systems. It is certainly possible to agree with Louis Menand who in 2009 entirely rejected the concept of the “European university”, believing that the university today is a global concept with its centre in the USA.<sup>206</sup> However, this view should not be confused with a rejection of plurality in the interpretation of the university’s role in society and therefore its holistic work. Putting forward American models is more of a way to disguise an unwillingness to provide universities with adequate funding from public budgets, and to apply neoliberally

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205 Paulus, Stefan: *Vorbild USA? Amerikanisierung von Universitäten und Wissenschaft in Westdeutschland 1946–1976*. München 2010, pp. 171–203.

206 Menand, Louis: *Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American Universities*. Norton 2009, p. 96.

inspired political-economic pressure on universities to introduce methods of academic capitalism. In practice this means cutting back the arts and social-science disciplines which are incapable of meeting the demands of open, or more often, concealed academic capitalism. Those disciplines which are connected to industry are adored, while the social importance of the humanities, as well as some scientific disciplines such as biology and physics, is underestimated or hidden. Due to their strong orientation towards basic rather than applied research, they are often held up in Europe as the suffering Cinderella, even though they are a firmly respected part of all the prestigious American schools. Naturally, the American elite universities also have excellent arts and social-science departments, whose work is an important contribution to the school's global renown and attracts the interest of sponsors and patrons.<sup>207</sup>

Even in Germany, which has had the longest experience of the Americanization of its universities, the symbolic images of “German Harvards” appear in the discourse on the future of universities; the largest step carried out in this direction was the attempt to combine the Ludwig-Maximilians Universität and Technische Universität in Munich into one large school, bringing together the best of research to compete with the stars overseas. There were some confused responses, “*A few Harvards, Stanfords and Yales aren't going to help the present higher-education crisis. Rather than magical words, our Oldenburgs (an allusion to one of the few respected German universities – author's note) need more freedom and, above all, a more reliable state.*”<sup>208</sup> Less common were nostalgic voices recalling that Baltimore's Johns-Hopkins-University had at one time presented itself as the “*Göttingen of Baltimore*”. At the same time, it is recalled that in the 19th century the famous north-German university was known mainly for its excellent work in the humanities, in particular philology, whose most famous representatives were the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Pragmatic voices are also to be heard, warning of the large differences in the standards between the top private American universities on the one hand, and many of the public universities on the other, as well as the risks inherent within the utilitarian transfer of university cultural models.<sup>209</sup>

These risks apply to the integrity of the university and the importance of the unity of university education and research for the very meaning of the university. The reductive transfer of the traditional Humboldtian university across the ocean, its adaptation to American conditions and then its ahistorical return appears to threaten the very existence of the university; it raises questions, but so far no satisfactory answers have been forthcoming. The Central European *universitas*

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207 Paulus, *Vorbild*, p. 549.

208 Rubner, Jeanne: *Die Märchen-Universität*, Süddeutsche Zeitung 6.1. 2004, <https://archiv.szarchiv.de/Portal/restricted/Start.act>.

209 Paulus, *Vorbild*, pp. 545–550.

has to contend with public demands for the effective use of resources on the one hand, while respecting academic freedom on the other. The fact that there is relatively little private finance in universities means that the key issue for the successful operation of a university in Central Europe is its visibility amongst political representatives. The tax-payer and voter are not particularly interested in the importance of a holistic education at university, instead preferring a vocational education, and similarly, neither are they interested in basic research or any type of research which fails to present clear results which can immediately be put into practice.

Two anecdotes might serve to illustrate this contradiction. The first is an answer which a British professor apparently gave to a student in the 1960s when asked why he used Icelandic in his research work. The student wondered what the point of all that time and money was when it was only spoken by a handful of people. The professor's reply was apparently somewhat surprising and certainly concise: "*But we are at university here.*" The teacher characteristically did not think it necessary to refer to the richness of Icelandic literature or the democratic traditions of Icelandic culture, but simply and solely to the fact that at university the professor can research whatever he wants, and so the question had no meaning. The second is a paraphrase of writer Gilbert K. Chesterton's famous remark about attending balls – they would probably be more interesting if you didn't have to dance at them...but then they would no longer be balls. In the same way, the university would be interesting for many people "*without the pedantic criticism of colleagues, without the primacy of truth over particular interests and profit, but then it wouldn't be a university.*"<sup>210</sup>

## The special characteristics of the Czech university

Traditionally, the Czech notion of higher education has been strongly tied to the university due to the fact that this type of school traditionally dominates the education system in smaller countries, while the proportion of specialist higher-education facilities is very small compared to Europe.<sup>211</sup> Czech universities, perceived as unified organisations without taking into account their internal differences, have failed to produce a coordinated response to developments in university culture and the relationship with the public, and continue to stress the criterion of measurement above all others. Some clear advantages – such as attempts at university ranking abroad – are enjoyed by universities which are old, large, met-

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210 Machula, Tomáš – Machulová, Helena: Hodnoty na univerzitě, In: Hanuš, Jiří et al.: *Jak mohou přežít hodnoty?* Brno 2017, pp. 59–69, here p. 68

211 Vlčková, Irena: *Reforma vysokoškolského studia v kontextu evropské vzdělávací politiky.* Liberec 2010, p. 50.



ropolitan and have a historically defined socially exclusive position. They usually have no doubts as to whether it is necessary to develop or maintain a comprehensive discipline structure. In the Czech Republic, Charles University is undoubtedly a complete university in the historical sense of the word, which has had all of the traditional disciplines over a long period of time. The Czech university rankings obviously place Charles University into a different group from the university in Brno (established 1919) and Olomouc (restored in 1946), which are part of the group of universities registered in the Shanghai Rankings, albeit with different rankings. The question, therefore, arises of whether these are comprehensive universities.

Olomouc university's portfolio of disciplines has been exposed to more tests and trials than in the case of Prague's university. The university did not take on its comprehensive character until the start of the 1990s. The university was founded in 1573 as a Jesuit academy with graduation rights. The university was closed for a short time in the 17th century and heavily damaged during the Thirty Years' War. Its position within the university system was then greatly weakened by the abolition of the Jesuit Order in 1773, and the state's takeover of the university was evident in its structure and location – from 1778 to 1782 the university was moved to Brno. Olomouc university was closed completely in 1860 with only the Theological Faculty remaining, which was incorporated into the newly established Palacký University in 1946. Although the Theological Faculty provided continuity for the university with its early modern traditions, this was also juxtaposed against the school's left-nationalist postwar character, which was determined by Zdeněk Nejedlý, a communist exponent of transforming higher education along Soviet lines in the so-called national-progressive tradition.

The university in Brno was founded following the emergence of the Czechoslovak state and victory in the long-running Czech-German struggle over the establishment of a Czech-language university in Moravia. The fervent republicanism of the triumphant Czech national movement in 1918–1919 prevented the integration of Catholicism into an imagined Czech (Czechoslovak) national identity. In the spirit of the progressive-left traditions of the latter period of Habsburg empire, the church was seen as an unstable foreign element and even as treacherous, and voices called on cutting ties to the papacy which was viewed as an institution that was against the national interest. The attempt to settle scores with the traditional Austrian alliance of throne and altar was reflected in the effort to construct the university in Brno as a bastion of secularization and even anti-Catholicism. Therefore, unlike the universities in Bratislava, Cluj (the Romanian university in Cluj), Ljubljana and Poznań, which were founded in the same year, in Brno the incorporation of a Catholic theological faculty was unthinkable. Its place in the historical hierarchy of faculties was taken by the law faculty. While the Czech national movement considered this a triumph in the struggle against Roman Catholicism, other

so-called republican universities were less strict in implementing French secular models, and theological faculties were established, albeit occasionally after long periods of uncertainty (Ljubljana 1919, Cluj 1924, Bratislava 1936, Poznań 1974).

During the interwar years, Masaryk University suffered from state-imposed economic cutbacks which prevented the expansion of certain disciplines to the level known in the universities in Prague and Bratislava, which enjoyed political privileges in interwar Czechoslovakia. Although the university managed to prevent dramatic reductions in the number of disciplines and faculties, after the restoration of the university in Olomouc – only 100 kilometres from Brno – the issue of cutbacks or merging the two universities appeared again. Aside from the absence of theological studies, the structure of the disciplines at Masaryk University was affected most by the closure of the law faculty from 1950 to 1969, while other organizational changes were less significant for the integrity of disciplines. No theological faculty was established in Brno even after 1989, despite several debates on this issue in the 1990s. The main obstacle was the uncertainty over the viability of theological studies in a strongly secularized Czech society, particularly with competition from theological faculties in Prague and Olomouc, and more recently in České Budějovice.<sup>212</sup>

For various reasons the other universities, which usually emerged from the transformation of separate faculties of education in the 1990s, do not have a realistic chance of challenging the elite trio, and usually do not even attempt to offer a comprehensive range of disciplines. The criterion of visibility shows that their ambitions are still long-term, despite the fact that some of the schools have excellent research teams and the quality of teaching is not far behind that of the leading trio of universities, albeit greater differences exist within the disciplines. The newer universities have to pay for the state's decision in the 1990s to facilitate an enormous boom in the establishment of universities in the regions. In particular for the fact that the regional focus was on building university-style schools instead of specialist higher-education facilities, which are relatively rare in the Czech Republic in comparison with abroad, and whose position in the system of education and research alongside universities and science academies is unclear.<sup>213</sup>

From a strategic point of view and in light of the experiences in German and Western Europe, it must have been foreseeable that the newly established universities would not be granted the time, opportunity or state support to comprehensively develop a wide spectrum of university disciplines. In the best case scenario, academic capitalism would allow for the establishment of just a few disciplines around some researchers with a special reputation in their field or in the interna-

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212 <https://www.online.muni.cz/udalosti/382-v-brne-zacina-teologicke-studium-na-akademicke-pude> (11.5. 2018)

213 Vlčková, *Reforma*, p. 50.

tional academic community. Therefore, from a historical perspective it was impossible to avoid this uneven development in disciplines in the new universities, and it has proven to be very dangerous for the development of university culture and the whole direction of the debate on the *universitas* as an instrument for the holistic improvement of mankind. Therefore, the experience of the public and politicians was not formed by a view of the overall consistency and comprehensiveness of the academic community in Prague, Brno and Olomouc, where in spite of complicated historical developments and the differing interests of disciplines there still exists cooperation and a vision of integrity. Instead, it was formed by a view of universities with fragmented disciplines, emerging from the momentary demands of the market, where some might occasionally stand out from the ordinary, but in no way does this shift exhibit any formative results for the vision of a university as an instrument for the holistic development of mankind.

The chaotic development of the Czech *universitas* can be illustrated through the stories of two newer schools. The university in Pardubice, created in 1994 around the Institute of Chemistry that was founded in 1950, has gone through its own specific phase of development. The narrowly focused vocational education in chemistry was held in high regard due to the high quality of both the teaching and the research, but the new disciplines added in the 1990s failed to reach those standards. The school was unable to reach the level of a comprehensive university due to the absence of a law faculty and the limited portfolio of science disciplines. There was a similar situation at the Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín, where in 2001 a university was added to the Faculty of Technology (1969).

In terms of the unity and comprehensiveness of the university in the Czech Republic, over the past twenty-five years, as in other countries, the humanities have suffered as a result of the demands for a scientific character which is identifiable with precision and can therefore be subject to measurement. It was symptomatic for Czech university and scientific culture that this had been carried out stealthily over the years without any public discussion or debate between academia, the country's political leadership and various groups of external stakeholders in the educational and scientific process.

Over the years, measures were introduced by the ministry of education and the administrative bodies of Czech science which gradually shifted the concept of science in favour of the technical and scientific disciplines to the extent that the humanities found themselves as an encumbrance, usually portrayed in the discourse as an incompetent or infirm person, an invalid, a discipline on the edge of extinction due to its lack of social usefulness, and even how damaging it could be with regard to the coveted technocratic approaches used in dealing with serious problems.<sup>214</sup>

214 von Erdmann, Elisabeth: *Imagination und Reflexion. Zur Gefangenschaft der Geisteswissenschaften im Nutzen- und Leistungsdenken*, In: Gauger, Jörg – Rüther, Günther (Hg.): *Warum die Geisteswissenschaften Zukunft haben!*, Freiburg – Basel – Wien 2007, pp. 180–191, p. 181.

The science disciplines – viewed by the university’s external stakeholders and later by themselves as the university’s benchmark for the validity and visibility of academic activities – believed that the humanities had been deviating from scientific standards for a long period. However, one fact is hidden in the debate – the fact that the natural disciplines achieved precise standards long before the humanities. Whereas people such as Galileo Galilei, Isaac Newton and René Descartes had been defining natural inquiry as a science back in the 17th century, the humanities had to wait until the mid-19th century, when their scientization is associated with the names of Johann Winckelman, Leopold von Ranke, Wilhelm von Humboldt and Ferdinand de Saussure.<sup>215</sup> Above all, the linguistic revolution in science together with the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, interpreting language as a certain type of behaviour, brought phenomena into the arts and social sciences which were viewed with suspicion by the exact sciences. In place of the values of *truth, justice or balance*, notions such as *interpretation* came to the forefront, which critics saw as only faintly obscuring the values of nihilism and political opportunism in the humanities and social sciences.<sup>216</sup> In 2002 at Masaryk University it was also stated that “*the situation in the natural sciences is relatively clear, where evaluations by quantitative parameters have great weight and are respected to a large degree. But this is the opposite case in other sciences. This is a weakness, according to natural scientists, and there is sometimes the suspicion of low quality and objectivity. From the perspective of social scientists, the reason lies in the relatively simple subject examined by the natural sciences and a lack of respect for the characteristics of other disciplines.*”<sup>217</sup>

## The perspectives of the humanities

The gulf between the interests of the natural-science disciplines on the one hand, and the arts disciplines on the other, is seen as the most serious threat to the unity of the *universitas* today. Other disciplines and groups of disciplines then look for their place on this scale with its two extreme poles. This is based on their ability to respond to the demands of scientometrics (established primarily to suit the needs of the technical and scientific disciplines), in their scientific inquiry and methodology: the problem the subjects of the faculty of arts have in terms of scientific legitimacy are to a significant degree also shared by the didactic disciplines

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215 Gauger, Jörg – Rüter, Günther: *Die Geisteswissenschaften als selbstverständliches Element moderner Kultur. Zur Einführung in die aktuelle Debatte*, In: also (Hg.): Warum, p. 13–65, here p. 15.

216 Schütt, Hans-Peter: Der „Geist“ der Geisteswissenschaften, In: Arnswald, Ulrich – Nida-Rümelin, Julian (Hg.): *Die Zukunft der Geisteswissenschaften*. Heidelberg 2005, pp. 63–76, here p. 71.

217 *Hodnocení a etika vědecké práce*, Universitas (Brno), 2/2002, pp. 40–48, here p. 41.

at faculties of education,<sup>218</sup> legal-science disciplines and theological disciplines. Disciplines from the social-science and economics faculties have a higher degree of compatibility with scientometrics, even though the aforementioned gulf often appears here within faculties and individual disciplines in relation to the different approaches of each researcher.

In the everyday operation of the university, this leads to serious flaws in the thesis of the comprehensiveness of university science and education, and the crisis of the unity of the *universitas* is an important feature in the general debate on the university crisis.<sup>219</sup> This is not a new phenomenon, not even in the Czech Republic, which is very poor when it comes to the theoretical debates on the direction of the humanities. At the start of the 20th century, František Drtina promised to clarify the conditions in the humanities following the establishment of an autonomous teacher-training institute in a separate faculty.<sup>220</sup> Following the separation of the teacher-training institute, the faculty of arts was to become “*an institute focusing all the theoretical work of science, which would be the basis for all the other specialist faculties maintaining an organic relationship with it.*”<sup>221</sup> Unfortunately, education faculties today normally experience their own complicated search for a position in research-orientated universities, without the problems of the legitimacy of the arts disciplines as a whole being overcome.

The humanities cannot even hope to extricate themselves from their precarious and undignified position by going down the route of emphasizing vocational qualifications, which provides legitimacy for the medical and law faculties at the university. The existing attempts to focus education in the humanities on specific professions such as media advisor or literary critic, have been unconvincing and are difficult for many arts disciplines to accept. The path for the humanities is universal knowledge, which its legitimacy is based upon. However, this universality attracts students who are unsure about their future career direction, who are not highly motivated to study one specific discipline, who are not committed to their studies and are thus often less successful than those in medical or legal science. Within the first two semesters, 60% or more of students drop out of their courses in the humanities, and the Czech situation is similar to that of abroad.<sup>222</sup> The humanities often respond to this in ways which further weaken their position

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218 Seichter, Sabine: *Erziehungswissenschaft zwischen Einfall und Vielfalt*, Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Pädagogik, 91 (2015) 2, pp. 171–181.

219 Taylor, Mark C.: *Crisis on Campus. A Bold Plan for Reforming Our Colleges and Universities*. New York 2010, p. 48 ff.

220 Drtina, *Universita*, p. 254–255.

221 *Ibid.*, pp. 258–259.

222 Frankenberger, Peter: Die Rolle der Geisteswissenschaften zwischen Spezialisierung und Interdisziplinarität, In: Arnsward, Ulrich – Nida-Rümelin, Julian (Hg.): *Die Zukunft der Geisteswissenschaften*. Heidelberg 2005, pp. 77–92, p. 85.

in the university – by lowering the requirements in the entrance exams and in the courses themselves in order to maintain students as a source of finance.

The attempt to overcome the significant differences between the interests of the faculties and groups of disciplines leads to the elaboration of the myth of university integrity, particularly by representatives of the humanities and their representatives amongst the university dignitaries. In the Czech Republic there are three basic responses to the myth of university integrity available to the representatives of other disciplines. Undoubtedly the most common response, very often outside of the humanities, is to see the humanities as a historical warning about the erstwhile status of the *universitas*, seen in the best case scenario as an interesting diversification of the historical image of one's own narrowly defined discipline, in the worst case as a period of excessive moaning by those who feel unappreciated. The second response appears less frequently, which asks more profound questions about the identity of the discipline and its position in the university; and although unsystematically and usually superficially, it still looks abroad to the discussions on a similar theme. The third response is rare outside of the arts disciplines. This is how the debate on the role of the humanities in modern society and within the university is received – at times consciously and theoretically grounded, at other times intuitively so. This has been the response to the German philosopher Odo Marquard, who introduced the “compensatory interpretation” for the role of the humanities.<sup>223</sup> Its task is to help people as both individuals and within societies to bear “*the burden of modernization*”.<sup>224</sup> It is a thesis which attempts to bridge a gulf, where on one side stands the confidence of the natural and technical sciences, which contribute fundamentally to dynamic economic and social development. However, even though they “*change the world*”, they are not focused on the future and fail to consider it properly. On the other side of the gulf are the humanities which have not participated in the changes of the modern age, which stand apart from it as observers and critics whose task it is to ask provocative and often unpleasant questions.<sup>225</sup> In their defensive reaction, the humanities indulge in the idea of two cultures of science, of the isolated poles of the natural sciences and the arts, which have never been, and never will be,

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223 Marquard, Odo: *Einheit und Vielheit*. In: also. (Hg.): *Zukunft braucht Herkunft*. Stuttgart 2003, pp. 205–219; Marquard, Odo: *Über die Unvermeidlichkeit der Geisteswissenschaften*. In: also (Hg.): *Zukunft braucht Herkunft*. Stuttgart 2003, pp. 169–187.

224 Summary of the debates, see Arnsward, Ulrich: *Die Geisteswissenschaften – unterschätzte Transmissionsriemen des gesellschaftlichen Wandels und der Innovation*, In: also – Nida-Rümelin, Julian (Hg.): *Die Zukunft der Geisteswissenschaften*. Heidelberg 2005, pp. 111–162, esp. pp. 123–124; Kuhnle, Till: *Die ungeliebten Kernfächer – eine Streitschaft zum Ethos der Geisteswissenschaften*. In: Malinowski, Bernadette (Hg.): *Im Gespräch: Probleme und Perspektiven*. München 2006, pp. 127–146, here p. 131.

225 Arnsward, *Die Geisteswissenschaften*, pp. 127–128.

compatible.<sup>226</sup> Through consequential thinking and an application of the reality of events at universities and grant agencies, Marquard's famous thesis places the humanities into a subordinate or servile position in relation to the natural and technical disciplines, as they are the ones who will set the areas of inquiry and themes whose secondary effect will clearly increase the tension between the humanities and modern culture.

Only very rarely, and practically never outside of the humanities in the countries of Central Europe, has there been greater reflection on the role of the humanities than in Marquard's penetrating and lucid thesis. Apart from a lack of interest on the part of numerous important stakeholders at universities and who form the national policy of academic management, the reason for this lies with those who frequently intervene in the debate over the future of the humanities, i.e. academics working in the humanities. In their contributions they are too strongly attached to the particular issues of their own sciences, they fail to take into account the diverse complex issue of the management of universities and science, in particular the financial consequences. One common viewpoint – as is traditional in the humanities – is the historicizing interpretation of the humanities within the *universitas*, with reference to the medieval *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, Wilhelm Humboldt, and other defenders of the humanities within the university, regardless of financial and managerial aspects. This attitude often adopts an aggrieved tone and occasionally a confrontational one.

The aggrieved responses include the attempt, aided by the mythical narrative of the history of the *universitas*, to turn away from the current problems of the university's standing in society, its financing, etc, and to build or develop a mythical narrative on only one aspect of the university's existence which gives political weight to the humanities' claims. The absence of some important, mainly managerial and economic elements in this mythical narrative about the integrity of the university, is surmounted by an attempt to manipulate the public's emotions in the hope of mobilizing them in the political struggle to maintain the identity of the *universitas*. This mythical narrative does not usually effectively mobilize the entire university community, but it is impossible to overlook its significance for the faculty communities of the disciplines which are affected, where it becomes part of the reflections on their own identity. This often has a distinctly defensive character, sometimes even lamenting their own unfortunate fate in their besieged faculty. But there also exist more combative, or at least optimistic, interpretations. Eberhard Lämmert accepts Marquard's thesis about the compensatory role of the humanities, but *within it* he rejects any kind of emotional lamenting – he prefers an active approach based on sharing the responsibility for dealing with social

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226 Snow, Charles Percy: Die zwei Kulturen, In: Kreuzer, Helmut (Hg.): *Die zwei Kulturen. Literarische und naturwissenschaftliche Intelligenz*. München 1987, pp. 19–58, here p. 35 ff.

problems as part of the entire portfolio of sciences. For example, he sees the humanities as having an essential role in post-industrial societies in non-repressive solutions to social conflicts, in work relating to historical conscience and above all in supervising and humanizing technological projects.<sup>227</sup> The German historian Eva Matthes set out eight points to be fought for using a common approach by the humanities and related disciplines, which would renew the confidence of the humanities and provide the opportunity to go on the offensive:<sup>228</sup>

- a) The humanities must ask for the university's activities to be guaranteed by the state and firmly reject any forms of economism, whether it comes under the label of the entrepreneurial university, academic capitalism or the concept of optimization, as is so popular in bureaucratic jargon.
- b) Request the unconditional interdisciplinarity of research.
- c) Request room for plurality in scientific approaches.
- d) Request the effective combination of work in research teams with solitary research.
- e) Look for the historical contexts in all areas of science.
- f) The humanities are not to be viewed as a prescription for society's ills.
- g) Create motivational mechanisms to loosen the humanities' territorial ties and aim towards a more continental or global approach.
- h) Strengthen the ties to practical work.

Dissatisfied representatives of the humanities train their barbed criticism not on representatives from the science disciplines, but on the state and university administration. According to them, they had "*broken the chain*", as Ingeborg Gabriel described the conditions at the University of Vienna. The university administration began to see itself as the management of the university, transferring rules from the top private American universities without any knowledge of their context, while ignoring the historically shared ideal of the university when applying them, particularly in those areas concerning the ideal of the integrity of the *universitas* and the ideal of academic freedom.<sup>229</sup>

Based on attitudes towards economic aspects, it is possible to divide the arguments within the humanities on the need to maintain the integrity of the *universitas* into two different types. Some of the participants in the debate believe that

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227 Lämmert, Eberhard: Geisteswissenschaften in einer industriellen Kultur. Referat anlässlich der Jahresversammlung der Westdeutschen Rektorenkonferenz 1985 in Bamberg, In: *Anspruch und Herausforderung der Geisteswissenschaften*. Bonn 1985, p. 83 ff., 127 ff., 135 ff.

228 Matthes, Eva: Geisteswissenschaften in die Offensive! Historisch-systematische Reflexionen über Stellenwert und Relevanz der Geisteswissenschaften, In: Malinowski (Hg.), *Im Gespräch*, pp. 147–157, here pp. 155–156.

229 Gabriel, Ingeborg: Im Spannungsfeld zwischen Universitärer Freiheit und kirchlicher Bindung. In: Grochlewski, Zenon – Bechina, Friedrich – Müller, Ludger – Krutzler, Martin (Hg.): *Katholisch-theologische Fakultäten zwischen „Autonomie“ der Universität und kirchlicher Bindung*. Heligenkreuz 2013, pp. 101–105, here p. 103.



complete financing by the state is required to preserve the university's autonomous character, and that it is necessary to renew the social contract which allegedly worked so well during the golden age of the "Humboldtian" university in the 19th century. For this to work, political representatives and the taxpayer have to recognise the social contribution of the university and provide sufficient resources to the university without asking questions about the relevancy and efficiency of the work of its departments or even individuals from the academic community. From this perspective, politicians and the public have to rely on the academic's own moral code to prevent any long-term neglect of educational or research work or the abuse of generous financial resources. Naturally, some academics will only do the bare minimum of work, but they are supposedly only a small minority of academics. The argument tries to convince the public of the irreplaceable role of the humanities either as a mediator between the narrow scientific view of the world,<sup>230</sup> or as a cultural forum aiding cooperation.<sup>231</sup> On the other hand, they are usually sceptical about interdisciplinary cooperation due to the subordinate position of the humanities in research teams,<sup>232</sup> and are in a quandary when searching for an answer to whether the confident, rich and powerful scientific and technological disciplines would be prepared to cooperate with humanities scholars on an equal basis.<sup>233</sup> This scepticism is based on several very enterprising concepts, one example of which is a text by Konrad Liessmann who presents the humanities as a "monastery", and an "island of the spirit" inside the university, which continues in the reading and understanding of text despite encroaching subject specialization, digitalization and economization of the university, which will be further separated into specialized research centres and professionally oriented academies.<sup>234</sup>

The second type of argument is heard more often in debates and is more pragmatic, though whether it has the support of the majority of academics in the relevant arts faculties is uncertain. It does not shy away from openly talking about the current profound crisis of legitimacy that the arts and social sciences find themselves in.<sup>235</sup> The ideal of the stability of the "Humboldtian" university in the 19th century is not discussed here; the argument is less historicizing and responds

230 Breidbach, Olaf: Brauchen die Naturwissenschaften die Geisteswissenschaften?, In: Gauger, Jörg – Rüter, Günther (Hg.): *Warum die Geisteswissenschaften Zukunft haben!*, Freiburg – Basel – Wien 2007, pp. 136–179, here pp. 149–150.

231 Brandt, Reinhard: Zustand und Zukunft der Geisteswissenschaften, In: Arnsward, Ulrich – Nida-Rümelin, Julian (Hg.): *Die Zukunft der Geisteswissenschaften*. Heidelberg 2005, pp. 29–61, here 61 ff.

232 Honecker, Martin: Welche Zukunft steht den Geisteswissenschaften bevor?, In: Gauger, Jörg – Rüter, Günther (Hg.): *Warum die Geisteswissenschaften Zukunft haben!*, Freiburg – Basel – Wien 2007, pp. 358–372, here p. 370.

233 Breidbach, *Brauchen die Naturwissenschaften*, p. 149.

234 Liessmann, Konrad Paul: Das Kloster. Über die Zukunft der Universität, In: Kovce, Philip – Priddat, Birger (Hg.): *Die Aufgabe der Bildung. Aussichten der Universität*. Marburg 2015, pp. 103–114.

235 Menand, *The Marketplace*, p. 13.

more to other situations than just those of the humanities. Peter Frankenberg aptly compares the role of humanities in the university to that of a lawyer who takes on a very difficult, practically hopeless case, and so opts for a strategy of minor concessions, defending the viability of its position in at least the fundamental points, which should protect it from being completely cast off by inscrutable political elites and supporters of academic capitalism.<sup>236</sup>

It does not hesitate to openly discuss the deficits in the work of the humanities, above all the low level of communication with the other disciplines in the university, the overly tight territorial bonds and the lack of international cooperation. On the other hand, narrow vocational training is seen as an uncrossable line, which the humanities consider to be fundamentally unacceptable, while the importance of the Humboldtian ideal of connecting teaching and (basic) research, which is the university's most important code, is held up as sacrosanct, and the guardian of which is the humanities. This line of argument states that it has to be accepted that those who finance the running of the university – i.e. political representatives of the taxpayer – have the final say. It also accepts the thesis that in a rapidly changing world with numerous calls for modernization, the state is the purchaser of services from the university, and that these orders must be clear and understandable as they may also change over a relatively short period of time. The humanities have to try to adapt to this and hope that any accommodation will not be at the expense of the identity of the humanities, and will not place it into a service role for the scientific and technical disciplines of the university community. The vision of interdisciplinarity plays an important role here, and an important element of this argument is progressivism which draws on its support from recent changes in the relationship between disciplines and interdisciplinarity, and the cooperation between the humanities and science, medicine and technology – for example, the increased cooperation between archaeology and botany and anthropology, or the development in computer linguistics.<sup>237</sup>

Interdisciplinarity as a scientific concept is approximately one hundred years old. It is a natural response to the fact that the structure and range of a discipline's inquiry does not correspond to the structure and range of the issue under examination. The testing ground was mainly in the arts and social sciences where attempts to link disciplines appeared in the works of Gustav von Schmoller (history and economics), Werner Sombart (economics, sociology, history) and Karl Lamprecht (history, psychology). Today they are considered to be from the prehistory of interdisciplinarity as they were not based on a balanced and deep understanding of one or more disciplines, but rather attempts which were eclectic and unsystematic. The true pioneers are seen as those from the American debates of

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<sup>236</sup> Frankenberg, *Die Rolle*, p. 78.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85–89.

the 1920s and 1930s (John Dewey and George Mead, etc.), and for Central Europe the advocates of the concept of “Vollksgeschichte” as part of the nationalist school of German and Austrian science. They promoted a comprehensive interpretation of German-settled territories with a sense for the interdisciplinary interpretation of family and settlement structures, geography, history, folk culture and language. Due to its association with the goals of Nazi science it was largely discredited, but it can also be seen as an expression of the untenable situation for narrowly specialized scientific analyses, rather than just an opportunistic response to a political request. There were similar trends amongst liberal- and left-oriented humanities scholars, but which they were prevented from developing.<sup>238</sup> The present calls for interdisciplinarity are seen by Jürgen Kocka as a challenge to bring research and practical work closer together. If the affinity here is far from complete, interdisciplinary-based research still opens up non-academic expectations and initiatives which help to increase science’s acceptance by society. The new trend is not seen as weakening academics’ resistance to political and commercial pressure, instead “*the crossing of disciplinary borders implies that those involved clearly define and profoundly understand them.*”<sup>239</sup>

Interdisciplinarity is not an obstacle to academic learning, rather it pushes it forward to analyse issues in the real world of today.<sup>240</sup> Naturally, a successful trans-disciplinary researcher has to be acquainted in detail with at least two disciplines, with their techniques, methodologies and organizational work in order to develop an interdisciplinary culture of research, thereby defending the integrated nature of university science. Kocka proposes that a hybrid approach be used more often which draws on two academic methodologies.<sup>241</sup> In 2000, Patricia J. Gumpert suggested that the issue of maintaining the comprehensive character of the university would become an area over the coming decades which would undergo the most changes.<sup>242</sup> She presented four possible scenarios for future developments:

- a) Optimistic (and obviously unrealistic – author’s note.) – as a consequence of attempts to rationalize problem-solving in society, there is a sharp rise in the demand for expert analyses of a comprehensive character which can

238 Klein, Julia T.: *Interdisciplinarity. History, Theory and Practice*. Detroit 1990, p. 24 f.f.; Oberkrome, Willi: *Methodische Innovation und völkische Ideologisierung i der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft 1918–1945*. Göttingen 1993.

239 Kocka, Jürgen: Disziplinen und Interdisziplinarität. In: Reulecke, Jürgen – Roelcke, Volker (Hg.): *Wissenschaften im 20. Jahrhundert: Universitäten in der modernen Wissenschaftsgesellschaft*. Stuttgart 2008, pp. 107–117, here pp. 116–117.

240 Bammer, Gabriele: *The Relationship of Integrative Applied Research and I2S to Multidisciplinarity and Transdisciplinarity*; retrieved from : <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jbjk5.37> (25.9. 2017).

241 Bammer, *The Relationship*, p. 217; also Tuunainen, Juha: *Hybrid Practices? Contributions to the Debate on the Mutation of Science and University*. Higher Education, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Sep., 2005), pp. 275–298.

242 Gumpert, Patricia J.: *Academic restructuring: Organizational change and institutional imperatives*. Higher Education 2000, Volume 39, Issue 1, pp. 67–91.

only be provided to customers by the university, thereby increasing their prestige.

- b) Pessimistic – the university community transfers its expertise into the hands of managers and bureaucracies, leading to a loss of social prestige for universities and professors; academics become disillusioned with their mission in society and there is a subsequent loss in the traditional values and standards which form the foundation of a university's identity. This trend destroys the unity of the university as it creates dramatic differences between those disciplines which are able to respond to the challenges of the commercial sector and those which are not.
- c) Catastrophic – universities will become marginalized in their role in society and their respect dramatically reduced, some of their work will be transferred to other institutions (vocationally oriented academies, non-university research centres, social networks, etc.).
- d) Realistic – the traditional role of the university will undergo fundamental changes related to the demands of a post-industrial digital society. Academics will no longer cultivate the fundamental cultural features of the university, above all they will give up on the notion of a holistic interpretation of the world. Teaching and research will be very specialized, applicational, transdisciplinary and non-hierarchical in character, the criterion of the discipline's usefulness will increase dramatically as will its ability to respond to specific demands from external, commercial partners. This will lead to an erosion in traditional, authoritative science in favour of relativism and multiprofessionality.<sup>243</sup>

## Conclusion

What remains at the start of the 21st century of the calls for the completeness and unity of the university? Our understanding of the complexity of the issue in front of us has certainly increased and is much greater than in the time of Kant, Humboldt and Newman. Understanding a complex and chaotic world through an integrated concept of science is a challenge of exceptional significance and is an undertaking first and foremost for universities. The narrators of the myth of the unity and comprehensiveness of the university see the solution to the issue as a *conditio sine qua non* for the future of the university as a form of higher education, thereby attracting the attention of the academic community which is otherwise engrossed in its own particular interests whether professional, politi-

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243 This thesis is applied to Central European universities in Melosik, Zbyszko: Uniwersytet i komercjalizacja. Rekonstrukcja zachodniej debaty. In: Drozdowicz, Zbigniew (red.): *Uniwersytety. Tradicje – dzień dzisiejszy – przyszłość*. Poznań 2009, pp. 97–109, esp. pp. 107–109.

cal or personal. In this light, the mythical narrative about the completeness of the university is an ambitious attempt to overcome the chaotic concepts of state higher-education and research policy, as well as the ever-present particularism of academia, and once again place the university at the heart of the debate on solving the most pressing problems faced by society today – and thereby rescuing the university as an institution and a distinctive culture.<sup>244</sup> However, the mobilizing potential of the mythical narrative has been critically limited by the fact that the centre of the narration has moved markedly towards the arts and social sciences. There is little interest in this subject from the medical, scientific, economics or informatics disciplines. Therefore, the arts and social sciences find it difficult to find partners and opponents amongst the university community who would, on the one hand, temper the pomposity of their interpretations, their professional limitations, typical historicism, mistrust of modernity and frustration at their long-standing retreat from a golden age within the academic world, and on the other hand, provide an honestly shared concern about the cardinal issue of the complexity of scientific inquiry, in truth the foundation stone of the identity of the *universitas*.

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244 Elkana, Yehuda – Klöpfer, Hannes: *Die Universität im 21. Jahrhundert. Für eine neue Einheit von Lehre, Forschung und Gesellschaft*. Hamburg 2012, pp. 112–113.