

# Upholding the Idea of the University in Times of Changing Higher Education

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## Abstract

The nature or *raison d'être* of higher education lies in teaching, learning, and research. Today, however, the purpose of higher education is a contentious issue. The university's commercial turn has not only undermined the authenticity of higher education, but has also begun to dissolve the academics' 'corporative consciousness.' It will take wise academic leadership to restore the authenticity of higher education and the autonomy and spontaneity of the educative and scholarly community in the current university setting. The paper finds the idea of the university—as it has developed from ancient Greece through modern Germany to today—is vital to restoring the authenticity of higher education.

Keywords: the idea of the university, authenticity, the purposes of higher education, commercialization of higher education, academic identity

## I. Introduction

In the last couple of decades, terms such as 'academic capitalism,' 'corporate university,' 'entrepreneurial university' or 'enterprise university' have appeared to describe the phenomena of profit-seeking by universities. In giving his account of the commercial turn by American universities since 1980s, Derek Bok rejects the university's lack of purpose as a likely cause (2003). Attributing such an explanation to philosophers, literary scholars, and other humanists, he says:

Although they talk expansively about the university, their background is chiefly in the humanities. Since these are the fields of study most widely accused of having lost their intellectual moorings, it is not surprising that their professors see a similar aimlessness as the cause of other ills that have overtaken the academy. (Bok, 2003, p. 5)

Of course, the validity of such a remark would depend on whether one can make a convincing argument to show that the humanities as fields of study have indeed lost their intellectual moorings; and that professors of the humanities are aimless.

On the contrary, the humanists' concern about the end of the university is more relevant than ever. Clearly, there is something to be concerned about and sorted out—conceptually at least—in the current workings of universities. If the humanists respond more sensitively to the issues of the changing nature of the purpose of and means to higher education, there are good reasons for this. First of all, higher education, historically speaking, is the child of philosophy which, broadly conceived, includes disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and some of the natural sciences. Second, the humanists tend to be more historically conscious than those in other disciplines and professions. Third, humanists broadly conceived or academics in general tend to concern themselves with the issue of values more than those in business, politics, and other professions.

In this paper, I revisit the idea of the university as developed by thinkers both ancient and modern—thinkers such as Isocrates, Plato, Nietzsche, etc., in the hope of seeing the fruits of their considered thoughts utilized as a source or resource for reorienting higher education.

## II. The Commercial Turn

According to Bok, the recent growth of money-making activity in the

university, the commercial turn as I call it, is best understood as only the latest in a series of steps to acquire more resources. The university by its very nature has a chronic need for ever more resources. To acquire more resources, first, the university began to use aggressive marketing to attract tuition-paying students in the early twentieth century. Second, it moved on to making a determined search for government, foundation, and business funding after World War II, while simultaneously exerting an increasingly sophisticated and intensive effort to coax gifts from well-to-do alumni and other potential donors. Third, the university took advantage of the advances in marketable knowledge, particularly in the natural sciences and medicine, that offered increased money-making opportunities. Adding impetus to the university's search for money was a mounting competition among the United States' research universities, increases in the college-going population (i.e. mass education), and a vast growth in federal funding and philanthropic aid. Meanwhile, state legislatures began to give more help to science and technology at their leading universities. Even the advent of annual rankings (from the early 1980s) such as *U.S. News and World Report* may have played a part. Increased competition in turn produced greater effort to find resources, because almost anything a university could do in order to lift its reputation would cost more money.

Summing up, he says:

Commercialization turns out to have multiple causes. Financial cut-backs undoubtedly acted as a spur to profit-seeking for some universities and some departments. The spirit of private enterprise and entrepreneurship that became so prominent in the 1980s helped encourage and legitimate such initiatives. A lack of clarity about academic values opened the door even wider. Keener competition gave still further impetus. But none of these stimuli would have borne such abundant fruit had it not been for the rapid growth of money-making opportunities provided by a more technologically sophisticated, knowl-

edge-based economy. (Bok, 2003, p. 15)

Bok's argument regarding the commercialization of the university boils down to this: The university needs money. The money-making opportunities presented themselves. So, the university took those opportunities. There is no harm in doing so as long as the university is clear about its academic values. However, Bok seems aware of the corrosive potential that commercialization could have on undermining academic values, when he says:

If there is an intellectual confusion in the academy that encourages commercialization, it is a confusion over means rather than ends. To keep profit-seeking within reasonable bounds, a university must have a clear sense of values needed to pursue its goals with a high degree of quality and integrity. When the values become blurred and begin to lose their hold, the urge to make money quickly spreads throughout the institutions. (Bok, 2003, p. 6)

That is at the heart of Simon Marginson & Mark Considine's *Enterprise University*, a book which appeared three years earlier than Bok's. Marginson & Considine also and independently observe that what is surprising about today's universities is not commercial activities *per se*, which in their opinion have always existed to a certain extent, but the speed and extent of the changes taking place in it (Marginson & Considine, 2000). In line with Bok, who exhorts avoiding bias against the commercialization of the university, Marginson & Considine also think that we should avoid the innocent conceit which thinks any challenge to the university must be a threat to all things great and good (Marginson & Considine, 2000).

Nevertheless, Marginson & Considine find that the battle over the intellectual purpose of the university is fought on increasingly unequal terms (between the university leadership and the academics in general); that ed-

educational and scholarly goals are being challenged and diminished—and sometimes altogether displaced—by the new set of institutional and financial goals; and that even the economic dimension, along with academic one, is subordinated to a more fundamental mission: to advance the prestige and competitiveness of the university as an end in itself <sup>(1)</sup>. The significance of Marginson & Considine's finding is that the academic identities of the university are changing while its end is being subordinated to the mission of the marketing and strategic development of the institution and its leaders (Marginson & Considine, 2000). The commercial turn, indeed, appears to have effected a blurring of values and change of identity of the university.

### III. Authenticity Undermined

What we are seeing amid the appearance of the profit-seeking universities is a *de facto* privatization of higher education. Privatization and private participation involve costs of various kinds. Obviously, there are benefits to be obtained from some forms of privatization of public services. Some scholars think, however, that these benefits are widely rehearsed and sometimes exaggerated, while the costs—primarily social costs—are systematically neglected (Ball, 2004). They also note that in policy rhetoric which lauds 'the private' there is deafening silence in relation to the role of the profit motive, and a systematic neglect of business failures, and of business ethics (Ball, 2004). There is necessity in defending some boundaries between public and private.

One of the social costs of privatization that scholars discuss is commodification, a term which descends from Marx's notion of commodity fetishism, but whose connotations can be traced back to Adam Smith and his deep ambivalence about the moral implications of markets and competition (Ball, 2004). Commodity fetishism "is the simplest and most universal example of the way in which the economic forms of capital conceal underlying

ing social relations” (Marx: Capital 1, ch. 1, sec. 4). The concept of commodity fetishism helps us understand that social relations are often conducted as and in the form of relations between commodities or things (Bottomore, 1991). This is a form of reification, that is, the transforming of human properties, relations and actions, into things that are independent of persons and govern their lives. In fetishising commodities, we deny the primacy of human relationships in the production of value, in effect erasing the social (Ball, 2004).

In contemporary usage, commodification mostly refers either to the displacement of *use values* by *exchange values* or to a more general description of how consumer culture becomes embedded in daily lives through an array of subtle processes (Gottdiener, 2000). Commodification in the first, more important sense has been observed taking place in the recent developments in UK higher education as academic labor as its use value—in the form of its contribution to the development of the student as a person, as a citizen or at least as a depository and carrier of culturally valued knowledge—becomes displaced by a preoccupation with doing those things which will increase its exchange value in terms of the resources that flow, directly or indirectly, from a strong performance on the measures of research output and teaching quality (Willmott, 1995).

In commodified higher education, “students have been explicitly constituted as ‘customers,’ a development that further reinforces the idea that a degree is a commodity that can be exchanged for a job rather than a liberal education that prepares students for life” (Willmott, 1995, p. 1002). Here then, as Ball observes, we have various aspects of the transformation of social relations into a thing. Ball also observes that as part of seeking after new ‘markets’ and the re-orientation to the customer, new forms of ‘delivery’ and consumption of higher education are being created which can result in learning becoming increasingly fragmented; and that the curriculum is reorganized as a sequence of knowledge gobbets which can be transferred as ‘credits’ and combined in novel ways with no guarantee of

internal coherence. Here, both the pressures of corporation seeking profit and the interests of the state in seeking alternative sources of funding are at work (Ball, 2004).

The ensuing struggles of committed academics to obtain funding and the shifting focus of knowledge in academia are probably among the more serious social costs that privatization is exacting. For both of them undermine the authenticity of the commitment of academics and hence the identity of universities as academic institutions. Among academics, there is a “crisis of identity because they feel caught in a tug-of war between the desire for free inquiry and the demands to win corporate sponsorships to bolster tight university budgets.” Ball describes the crisis of identity that is bedeviling academics:

Within all this, individual pre-reform or pre-privatization teachers, researchers and lecturers find themselves struggling for authenticity. A kind of values schizophrenia is experienced when commitment and experience within practice have to be sacrificed or compromised for impression and performance. Here there is a potential ‘splitting’ between the teachers own judgments about ‘good practice’ and students ‘needs’ on the one hand, and the rigours of performance on the other. (Ball, 2004, p. 15)

In the reform occasioned by privatization, there is a potential “disjunction between policy and preferred practice.” The result of this disjunction for many is a kind of “bifurcated consciousness” or “segmented self” or a struggle with “outlaw emotions” as they try to live up to and manage “the contradictions of belief and expectation” (Ball, 2004).

Meanwhile, knowledge is being “exteriorized” or alienated from itself. The issue of knowledge is experiencing a shift from the questions “it is true” and “it is just” to “it is useful, saleable, efficient” (Lyotard, 1984, p. 51)<sup>(2)</sup>. This is the precondition of the knowledge economy, which Lyotard calls

“the mercantilization of knowledge” (Lyotard, 1984, p. 51). Knowledge is no longer legitimated through “grand narratives of speculation and emancipation” (Lyotard, 1984, p. 38) but, rather, in the pragmatics of “optimization” —the creation of skills or of profit rather than ideals<sup>(3)</sup>. Again, as Ball points out following Lyotard, it is economism which defines the purpose and potential of education.

All these are not simply esoteric or abstract concerns about academic freedom but, as Ball emphatically says,

They relate closely to practical matters enmeshed in the clash between business principles and purposes and academic principles. They are implicated in the closing down of the space of possibility for being a public intellectual, for researching, speaking, or ‘finding’ against the grain, against the imperatives of economic necessity, against the ‘useful’ and the ‘efficient’. . . . . There is a fundamental challenge to the possibility of ‘really useful knowledge’ or to simply retaining a sense of independence that serves both indirectly and directly the public good rather than institutional advantage. (Ball, 2004, p. 18)

The profit-seeking corporate university has arisen in the dramatic shifts of globalization, the world-wide knowledge economy, and the neo-liberal movements. Sandwiched between ‘academic capitalism’ and the ‘knowledge economy’ both of which signal strong competition, a university may have little choice but to transform itself into a corporate entity because it is the form of institution that allows it to maximize its efforts, to pool its resources, to advance itself in the world, and to enhance its reputation as a university (Barnett, 2011). The shifts may simply be too big for individual universities to resist. But the corporate university comes inevitably accompanied by bureaucratic procedures that usher in the inauthentic. The bureaucratic procedure not merely stands over academic life, it limits academic life; it even dictates to academic life (Barnett, 2011). Whereas, in

research or teaching, the scholarly procedure opens up possibilities for individuals and groups to be creative, a bureaucratic procedure, which often is its-own-end or a closed system, leaves not much room for spontaneity, for creativity, for nuance, or for personal inflection (Barnett, 2011). Therefore, the bureaucratic procedure denies the possibility of authenticity.

Also, the corporate university requires strong management in developing a strong institutional identity and in ensuring that the university remains solvent (Barnett, 2011). However, there is much anxiety in the academic community over the emergence of management as a key feature of the modern (read 'corporate') university. As a result, the academics' allegiance to their university is declining, which exacerbates the crisis of their 'academic identity,' which further weakens their institutional allegiance.

#### IV. Traditions of Thinking about the Purposes of Higher Education

Stopping this vicious cycle calls for academic leadership. It is not just leadership, but management as well, that is crucial to any fulfillment of the idea of the university. As universities are increasingly seeking funds from multiple sources and attempting to eke out a living in uncertain environments, they need exemplary management. And if they are to be as good as realistically possible, they need to develop systems and manage them efficiently and identify new sources of income.

But the managed university can be legitimized only to the extent that its sources of funding and systems are managed against the horizon of the larger ideas as to the purposes of a university (Barnett, 2011). Thus, as Barnett points out,

It is here that the concept of leadership gains purchase, in identifying possibilities for a university and securing endorsement in taking the identified possibilities forward as collective endeavours. 'Management'

can only secure assent for its activities if it is framed within a concept of leadership, itself couched within an ambitious but realistic sense of a university's possibilities. (Barnett, 2011, p. 55)

To draw a realistic sense of a university's possibilities, a leadership will do well to pay attention first to the roles of higher education as shaped by seminal thinkers, ancient and modern, whose views are lasting and relevant still today. It is about time that current university management took a step back from the thick of the day-to-day operations and find a fresh inspiration for higher education in the views of those who have set the idea or the ideal of the university for us.

Isocrates and Plato established the first models of higher education, which offer much to guide the contemporary debate on the roles of the university. More than two millennia later, Nietzsche set the stage for the discourses on the roles of higher education to unfold not only in his own time but down to the present. Like Isocrates and Plato, his ancient precursors, he paved the way for the subsequent educational thinkers of Germany to follow when developing the modern idea of the university.

### *(1) Isocrates and Plato: First Models of Higher Education*

In the Greece of the 4th century BCE, Isocrates and Plato founded schools, the first organized institutions of higher education in western history, offering detailed descriptions of the program of study and teaching. The purpose of founding these schools was to teach what they considered "true" philosophy. For Isocrates, "true" philosophy was what today we would call 'rhetoric,' the study of speeches that persuade people, particularly those who have key influences on the social and political economy of society. For Plato, it was what today we would call 'philosophy' and 'science' which are investigations into the nature of things: the physical universe, society, language, values, etc. Both rejected all other activities as "false" or "counterfeit" philosophy (Nightingale, 1995, p. 20). For 'philosophy,'

as Plato and Isocrates conceive it, is not just a mode of discourse or a program of study but rather a way of living and thinking that is based on a specific set of social and political values (Nightingale, 1995, p. 21).

A crucial aspect of the “definitions” of philosophy offered by these thinkers is the attempt to articulate the relation of this new cultural practice to the political and social institutions of Athenian democracy (Nightingale, 1995, p. 21). Isocrates’ definition was deliberately forged in opposition to that of Plato. While agreeing that the teaching of philosophy (according to their own conception of it) should train young people for public life, Isocrates and Plato differed as to what degree the teaching, i.e. higher education, should play a social role. Isocrates positioned philosophy as an insider to Athenian politics. In Isocrates’ view, knowledge is valuable to the degree it contributes to the betterment of the social and political economy of society; consequently, higher education should actively involve itself in pursuing things of critical importance for society: politics and economy. On the other hand, Plato positioned philosophy outside the transactions of society. In Plato’s view, knowledge or understanding of reality is more or less an end by itself; consequently, higher education should pursue investigation into the nature of things, limiting its involvement in social and political economy to the minimum.

Despite the fact that their philosophical views derived from diametrically opposed attitudes to knowledge and values in life, Isocrates and Plato nevertheless converge closely in their valuation of the cultural aspect of higher education (D. K. Kim, 1997). In their view, the primary goal of higher education is the maintenance and improvement of culture and civilization, a project that includes the health of practical politics and morality as well as the economy. This is what Nietzsche echoes more than 2,000 years later.

## (2) Nietzsche: *Education as Bildung*

In the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche deplores the entire German system of higher education in his days having lost what matters the most: the

end as well as the means to the end (Nietzsche, 1998). “That education, that *Bildung*, is itself an end—and not the *Reich*—and that educators are needed to that end, and not secondary-school teachers and university scholars—that has been forgotten.” The end of higher education, which Nietzsche called “itself an end” turns out to be culture: “what matters the most—and that always remains culture” (Nietzsche, 1998). The means to that end, for Nietzsche, is educators “who have themselves been educated, superior, noble spirits, proved at every moment, proved by words and silence, representing culture which has grown ripe and sweet” (Nietzsche, 1998).

Nietzsche portrays the relation between culture and the state as antagonistic: “*Kultur-Staat*” (the German government doctrine that the state should protect and promote cultural institutions such as universities) is criticized by Nietzsche as a merely a modern idea. In reality, according to Nietzsche, one lives off the other, one thrives at the expense of the other” (Nietzsche, 1998). Nietzsche goes on to describe the mass education in the service of the state as the use or abuse of higher education: “What the “higher schools” in Germany really achieve is a brutal training, designed to prepare huge numbers of young men, with as little loss of time as possible, to become usable and abusable, in government service” (Nietzsche, 1998). Probably, Nietzsche thought mass education in the service of the state as more the abuse than the use of higher education. However, the thing that troubled him the most about the higher education of Germany in his time was its deteriorating cultural function. For him, education or *Bildung* has become “common”—too common; and teachers, curricula, and teaching aims no longer at ‘educated’ spirited men of culture.

The influences of Isocrates and Plato, through those of Aristotle on medieval universities, were felt by Nietzsche in 19th century Germany and live on in higher education today <sup>(4)</sup>. Given this background, it is not unreasonable for contemporary humanists to question the current status of higher education in the wake of its shifting focus from academic cultural purposes to economic ones.

## V. The Idea of the University

The current higher education reform—particularly, the incorporation of universities and all the initiatives that put into practice the values that incorporation represents—is another manifestation of the privatization of higher education. By undermining the authenticity of academics' commitment to their work and to their institutions, as we have seen in Section III, highly privatized higher education also undermines the mission of the university as an academic institution. Amid the cross-currents of globalization, the world-wide knowledge economy, and the neo-liberal movements that are enveloping them, universities may have little choice but to transform themselves into corporate entities. However, if universities are to be fruitful even in their newly expanded—heightened economic—function while remaining true to their original mission<sup>(5)</sup>, the leadership of academic leaders is vitally important during the reform process and afterwards. It is particularly important that the academic leaders show exemplary leadership in the operationalization of the new frame of governance.

Let's pursue the notion of authenticity a little further. So far, I have discussed authenticity mainly with regard to the crisis of identity that academics are experiencing. Traditionally, however, the point of reference for the authenticity of universities has been 'the idea of the university.'

### *(1) Humboldt and Schleiermacher: Combining Autonomy of Science and Academic Freedom into the Idea of the University*

Humboldt and Schleiermacher associated autonomy of science and academic freedom with the idea of the university. They were first concerned with the problem of how modern science, freed from the supervision of religion and the church, could be institutionalized without endangering its autonomy. The autonomy these thinkers had in mind was modern science's freedom from the authority of the government which secures the exter-

nal existence of science as well as from pressures from the occupational and economic system of society which has a strong interest in the useful applications of scientific work. Humboldt and Schleiermacher saw the solution to the problem in a governmentally organized autonomy of science which would protect the university from both political interventions and economic imperatives. Second, they wanted to explain why it was in the interest of the state itself to guarantee to the university the external organizational form of an internally unlimited freedom.

Both thinkers were convinced that, if only scientific work were turned over to the dynamics of research processes, the universities would serve as focal points for moral culture, and indeed for the spiritual life of the nation generally. These two notions combine to form the idea of the university.

The functions of the university thus ensuing from the original German idea of the university are (1) the unity of research and teaching, (2) the unity of the sciences, (3) the unity of science and general education, and (4) the unity of science and enlightenment. All these functions, which the university has to integrate, are encountered in the founding documents of the German university (Habermas, 1987).

*(2) Jaspers: Return to the Humboldtian Idea of the University  
as a Community for the Scientific Search for Truth*

For reforming higher education in the post-war (first, and then second world war) Germany, Karl Jaspers returned to the Humboldtian idea of the university. In his classic book on *The Idea of the University*, Jaspers referred to the basic assumption originating from the German founding fathers of the university that the institution of the university rests on a *foundational idea*.

Espoused by Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Humboldt at the time of the founding of the University of Berlin, the idea consists of the notion that the university is an institution which pursues “knowledge for its own sake” (Jaspers, 1960, p. 19) and other related notions such as: an aca-

demic's role is to pursue truth "unconditionally and for its own sake" (Jaspers, 1960, p. 19); and the university derives its autonomy from the imperishable idea of academic freedom (Kwiek, 2008). Throughout Jaspers' book, the idea of truth figures prominently, defining the purpose of the university as "seeking truth" (Jaspers, 1960, p. 19), defining research as its foremost concern "because truth is accessible to systematic search" (Jaspers, 1960, p. 21), and defining the unique character of scholars as those "who have committed their lives to the search for truth" (Jaspers, 1960, p. 76).

Jaspers thought that both students and professors should become guardians of this idea of the university, checking whether the institution is performing according to its ideal, serving the purposes it was meant to serve, and functioning properly—i.e. in the way inherently present in its very idea. Students and professors ought to "assimilate the idea of the university" (Jaspers, 1960, p. 88) and be "permeated by the idea of the university as part of a way of life" (Jaspers, 1960, p. 81). For Jaspers, the university exists only to the extent that the idea is institutionalized; and the extent to which the university does this determines its quality. Although the idea may never be "perfectly realized" (Jaspers, 1960, p. 83), the quality of the university is measurable against its ideal. Stripped of its ideals the university loses all value (Jaspers, Jaspers, 1960, p. 83).

Consequently, for Jaspers, the university is an institution "uniting people professionally dedicated to the quest and transmission of truth in scientific terms" (Jaspers, 1960, p. 21). So in this definition of the university, describes Kwiek:

The scholar, in a Platonic manner in which truth, beauty and goodness are united, becomes a special sort of person: he must "dedicate himself to truth as a human being, not just a specialist", so what is required of him is the "serious commitment of the whole man." Also the aim of instruction and research is the "formation of the whole man," "education in the broadest sense of the term." Thus the German ideal

of *Bildung*, which lay at the foundation of the projects for the university of Berlin and was fundamental to German thinkers of the time, retains its force perhaps for the last time so powerfully in Jaspers' philosophy. (Kwiek, 2008, p. 20)

Despite the fundamental role he accords to research, Jaspers nevertheless settles for the core activities or mission of the university thus defined: "Three things are required at a university: professional training, education of a whole man, research. For the university is simultaneously a professional school, a cultural centre, and a research institute" (Jaspers, 1960, p. 53).

In including professional training among the missions of the university, Jaspers may have had the economic interest of the state in mind. This concession may be attributable to Jaspers' understanding of the relationship between the university and the state: "The university exists through the good graces of the body politic. Its existence is dependent on political considerations. It can only live where and as the state desires. The state makes the university's existence possible and protects it" (Jaspers, 1960, p. 132). It is the good will of the state and society through funding that enables the university to exist. Therefore, the modalities of the university's functioning are clearly determined by the state; and the state has economic interest in the university. While the founding fathers believed the relationship had a much more reciprocal nature, imagining the renewal of the German state and the German nation through the medium of the new university, Jaspers is much more moderate in his conception of the university: the institution in his formulation basically serves the state and the nation and is dependent on their good will to keep funding it (Kwiek, 2008).

### *(3) Habermas: Communication or Learning Processes as an Alternative to the Normative Idea of the University*

Some fifty years after Jaspers' return to the idea for the post-war renewal of the German university, Habermas examines the question of

whether the idea of the university is still alive today. Standing more in the Kantian tradition of the university as a site of critique (Delanty, 2001, p. 64), Habermas comments on the status of the university:

Couldn't Jaspers have learned from Max Weber that the organizational reality into which the functionally specified subsystems of a highly differentiated society imbed themselves rests on wholly different premises? The functional capability of such institutions depends precisely on a detachment of their members' motivations from the goals and functions of the organization. Organizations no longer embody ideas. (Habermas, 1987, p. 4)

Habermas' main line of criticism of the idea of the university as formulated by Jaspers is that "organizations no longer embody ideas." Does that mean that Habermas considers the idea of the university no longer valid? Here we may note Habermas' use of the phrase "no longer," an expression indicating his acquiescence in the validity of the idea at some point. Indeed, Habermas thinks that the idea is still alive today, although he is quite prepared to admit that the idea has lost some of its potency.

Yet here Jaspers still proceeds from the premises of that sociology which has been implicit to German idealism: An institution remains functional only so long as it vitally embodies its inherent idea. Should its spirit evaporate, an institution will petrify into something merely mechanical, like a soulless organism reduced to dead matter. . . . . Not even university can continue to form a whole once the unifying bond of this corporative consciousness dissolves. The functions the university fulfils for society must preserve an inner connection with the goals, motives and actions of its members. In this sense the university should institutionally embody, and at the same time motivationally anchor, a life form which is intersubjectively shared by its members, and

which even bears an exemplary character. (Habermas, 1987, p. 3)

Thus, as Habermas sees it, the idea of the university today is not a problem *qua* an idea. Rather, its problem lies in the fact that the university has no longer the power to integrate the ever fractionalizing disciplines or the further differentiating functions of its own.

The essence of the old university ideas was that it was supposed to have been grounded in something more stable than just the content of particular ideas – it was to be anchored, procedurally anchored, in the scientific process itself. But if science or the scientific method is no longer suitable as such an anchor, since the multiplicity of disciplines no longer leaves room for the totalizing power of either an all-encompassing philosophy or even for the mere self-reflection of science arising from the individual disciplines themselves, what could then possibly serve to ground an integrated self-understanding of the corporative body? (Habermas, 1987, p. 20).

As scientific differentiation progresses, the disciplines are becoming specialized and fragmented; accordingly, it is increasingly difficult to see the connection among the disciplines. This development in science has outgrown the integration of the disciplines and associated functions of the university, thus making a normative ideal less suitable as the anchoring point for the idea of the university.

Habermas also points to the improbability of the university fulfilling the four functions that Humboldt and Schleiermacher ascribe to it because, as noted above, there exists no comprehensive science, which “solely through its inner structure would simultaneously make possible and guarantee these four functions” (Habermas, 1987, p. 11). Not even philosophy esteemed so highly by the founding fathers as well as by Jaspers is adequate to fulfilling these four functions.

In the end, Habermas claims to have found in the following writing of Schleiermacher something with which to replace normative ideal as the anchoring point for the idea of university: communicative rationality.

The first law of all efforts aimed at knowledge (is): communication. Nature herself has clearly enunciated this law in the impossibility of producing something, even if only for oneself, without language. Thus, purely from the drive for knowledge itself ..... one can derive all the associations necessary for its satisfaction, all the various types of communication and community necessary for enhancing knowledge. (Habermas, 1987, pp. 20-21, citing Schleiermacher, "Occasional Thoughts on the German Conception of the University")

Borrowing one of Schleiermacher's thoughts quoted above "without sentimentality," Habermas declares that "I seriously believe that it's the communicative or discursive forms of scientific argumentation which in the final analysis hold the learning processes together in their various functions" (Habermas, 1987, p. 21). As Habermas uses "the learning processes" as an explanatory term for the idea of the university (See the title of his paper *The Idea of the University—Learning Processes*), his declaration amounts to the statement that it is the communicative rationality which holds the idea of the university together.

Habermas finds that the idea of the university is still valid today. According to him, although organizations no longer embody ideas, the university cannot exist if its corporative consciousness dissolves; but the normative ideal of integrating various functions of the university, no longer tenable as the anchoring point for the idea of the university in light of highly specialized differentiation of the disciplines, should be replaced with communicative rationality. Although Habermas himself does not dwell much on the state's changing relation with the university, his discussion of the origin of the idea of the university above implicitly indicates the state's

(economic) requirement as pressuring the idea of the university to be re-anchored in something more realistic for a new age. As the state's economic interest in the university looms larger, accordingly as business techniques are increasingly being applied to university governance, the very bond of the university's 'corporative consciousness' is threatened with dissolution. For "the blurring of the traditional boundary of the institution" and the accompanying discontent among academics are none other than the signs of "the university's corporative consciousness" beginning to dissolve (Habermas, 1987, p. 3). In such a condition, education, "a normative matter that suggests that something valuable is being attempted" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2011, p. 9), suffers.

## VI. Concluding Remarks

It is up to academic leaders to protect the idea of the university in the 'corporatizing' environment of contemporary higher education because society and the state *will* pursue their economic interest through the university and may thereby distort or even destroy the idea. In this regard, Jaspers was more perceptive than Habermas when he noted the ever-present historical conflict between the idea of the university and the actual changing demands of society and the state. A wise *academic* leadership is also called for in the higher education reform currently under way across the globe. For if it is true, as Habermas notes, that the blurring of the traditional boundary of the university and the accompanying discontent among academics are signs that "the university's corporative consciousness" is dissolving, the university faces a potentially fatal threat, for the dissolution of the university's corporative consciousness would result in the demise of the university as a culturally significant institution.

I believe it is important to defend the traditional purposes of higher education as a practical device—as well as a cultural legacy—to ensure the progress of science in the service of the humanity. Things in the universe

are determined by a nature. The 'nature' of a thing may be malleable to a great extent as we, living in a highly technical world, experience every day. But there is a point at which the attempt to modify a thing either makes that thing stop being itself or transforms it into something else. Tradition, being a social accumulation of human actions and ways of doing things, also has a 'nature' that is acquired over a long period of development. Although much more malleable than that of a physical thing, the nature of a tradition nevertheless cannot be infinitely modified without undermining its integrity.

The nature or *raison d'être* of higher education, as formed by thinkers both ancient and modern, lies in teaching and learning as well as research. In its development in America during the late 19th to early 20th century, higher education successfully integrated community service into its core functions, thereby enriching the purposes of higher education. In doing so, higher education reached a sort of pinnacle of development, a successful combination of functionality of organization and embodiment of ideals that is well worth preserving. I consider the additional commercial functions that higher education has been assuming since the late 20th century to be value-neutral; they may do good or harm depending on what role they play. Although open to any positive developments in higher education, I still hope to see its new commercial functions serving the well-established traditional ones, not the other way around. That is why I hope to see academic leaders uphold the importance of the idea of the university and allow its ideals to continue to shape the future of academia.

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## Endnotes

- (1) While admitting the legitimacy of the universities' need to play a role in the

economic and social renewal of their communities, Marginson & Considine (2000) nevertheless think that it is by no means self-evident that the ideal of a broad-based public good of the universities is obsolete, or that each university should function as a stand-alone corporation with regard, not for community welfare or social betterment, but only for its own interests.

- (2) The shift in emphasis from the true and just to the merely useful and profitable has deep roots that extend back to the very opening of the modern era in seventeenth-century Europe. It was Francis Bacon (1561-1626) who first turned science and education from the classical tradition to the modern fascination with technology as power. Hence, his declamation “Knowledge is power.” Relegating the ends or purposes of nature (teleology) to theology, he thought that practical men should impose their own wills upon the raw material of nature by better understanding the isolated propensities of the elements and particles making up material things. By displacing the contemplation of essences and final causes from the study of nature, Bacon and his followers ensured the doom of the basis for objective value, thereby unleashing the unprincipled quest of science for power in service of unbridled desire (Koons, 2011).
- (3) The shift in institutional goals from ideals to profit is the result of a disturbing consequence of Bacon’s reorientation of knowledge—a new ethics for both science and the humanities. Koons (2011) follows Babbitt’s 1908 book *Literature and the American College* to note that Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), grasping the “liberating” potential of the ethical nihilism implicit in Baconian science, proposed a new “morality” of feeling to replace the dying morality of reasoned self-discipline. For if Nature (including human nature) is blind and dumb, then each individual being is free to follow its own whims, shrugging off the constraints of conventional morality and sometimes showing an amorphous compassion. Standing on the synthesis of Baconian science and Rousseauan morality, the modern university justifies the hard sciences—be they medicine or natural sciences—almost entirely in pragmatic and utilitarian terms, as the incubators of technology, not as observatories from which to behold and contemplate the music of the spheres. One additional effect that has emerged since the Bacon-Rousseau synthesis is the quantifying and physicalizing of research in the humanities and social sciences. Humanists accepted the dominance of natu-

ral sciences and technology in return for a protected role as junior partner, wrapping the naked pursuit of profit with the robes of academic tradition and the liberal arts. In turn, natural scientists protect the humanists from political pressure, freeing them to pursue Rousseauistic liberationism.

- (4) Until the early twentieth century, most American colleges continued in the ancient and medieval traditions of the seven liberal arts, with a fixed canon of texts. The liberal arts curriculum was the fruit of twenty-five hundred years of maturation and development, beginning with the ancient schools of Plato, Aristotle, Isocrates and the Stoics, and institutionalized by the founders of the European medieval universities in the twelfth century (Koons 2011).
- (5) The original mission of universities is to provide education aimed at the natural perfection of the whole human being. “The aim of the oldfangled college education was ethical, the development of moral understanding and humane leadership; but the method was intellectual, the training of mind and conscience through well-defined literary disciplines” (Russell Kirk, Introduction to the 1986 edition of Babbitt’s *Literature and the American College*; recited from Koons, 2011).

### 高等教育変革の時代に「大学の理念」を保持することの 大切さについて (和文抄録)

高等教育の存在理由は教育と研究にある。しかし、今日、われわれは高等教育の目的が混乱している時代を生きている。大学の商業的転換は高等教育の本来のあり方を歪めているのみでなく、教員・学者における協調の意識を妨げるようになっていく。昨今の大学環境において、高等教育の本来のあり方と教育者・学者コミュニティの自律性と自発性を取り戻すためには賢明なリーダーシップが必要であろう。本稿は、古代ギリシャから近現代ドイツを経て今日に至るまでの思想家たちが開発した大学の理念という発想を、歴史的且つ文化的にきわめて重要な遺産と見なし、高等教育の本来のあり方を復活させるための資源として活用することが重要であると考えている。

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