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European Idea of the University. To What Extent is it a Model for the Polish Higher Education Act of 2011?

I shall begin the present reflection upon the higher education and university degrees reform, which in a way has already been finalized through the passing of Higher Education Bill and setting up the date it comes into effect to the academic year 2011/2012, by briefly commenting on (recognizable most basic elements of) the features of the Western civilization. Normally, it is recognized as characterized by three fundamental qualities: Greek approach towards pure form (visible in science and art), Roman attitude to the social issues (*Ius Romanum*) and Judaeo-Christian approach to existential problems. Simultaneous setting of different human communities' civilizational development on this triple foundation has led to the shaping of the Western-European civilization's spiritual form — currently stretching away from Vilnius (and Lvov¹) to San Francisco (and Melbourne). And even though Western civilization rests on Christianity and exact sciences, deeply ingrained in metaphysical grounds of reality — in the very nature of things imperceptible and mostly unnoticed in the functioning of European societies, it remains globally recognized by democracy (understood as the respect

¹ Through that I mean the Lvov-Warsaw School of philosophy destroyed by the Nazi and Soviet aggression on Poland in September 1939 — an intellectual formation, initiated by (philosophical) educational activity of K. Twardowski and his students in university centres of Lvov and Warsaw from the end of the 19th century onwards. Even though the war disrupted regular scientific and educational work in Poland, it did not put an end to the school's intellectual activity. Lvov-Warsaw School's philosophers participated in underground education, which led to creation of various published works. After the military operations of the Second World War were over in 1945, its intellectual circle dispersed almost around the whole globe, which led to creation of strong scientific centers, for instance in the United States of America. Cf. J. Woleński, *Filozoficzna szkoła lwowsko-warszawska*, Warszawa 1985; *idem*, *Szkoła lwowsko-warszawska w polemikach*, Warszawa 1997.

for human beings and their civil rights) and by technology (understood as knowledge based on scientific acknowledgement of the rights of nature — *physis* in Aristotelian terms).² Of course — in the issue I am thereby raising — following José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955), it is not essential to notice that although there are many civilizational communities and nations populating the globe — the civilizational world, and that all other continents apart from Europe were populated by developing societies, it was only in Europe that there appeared Universities, which was also of some historical importance,³ as they institutionalized human intelligence and the power of human intellect, at the same time noticing its limitations.

Is it necessary to concurrently remind the reader that it is impossible not to take into consideration the fact that the fundamental elements of culture contained in the antiquity constitute the basis of Central and Eastern Europe's identity? Or that Graeco-Roman heritage remains the common denominator of both the Eastern and Western tradition, which intertwined in this particular area creating a one of a kind dialectic unity of cultural plurality? Or finally, that the specific character of Slavism — usually divided into *Slavia Latina* and *Slavia Orthodoxa* — is characterized not as much by its inner division, but rather by its synoptical diversity?⁴ So, as it is impossible to deny the fact that through Central Europe goes the *limes* between the Latin West and the Graeco-Byzantine East, which still remains the cornerstone of their complex civilizational identities, so — as the consequence of it — it is impossible not to take into consideration the fundamental recognition that the westernization of basic components of classical Poland's culture (XV–XVII century) rules out not only “the shift” to the East, but also the recognition of Poland as the cultural bridge between the West and the East.⁵

² Technology here should not be identified with, for example, Boeings, but rather with the ability or knowledge about how to construct them or make, for example, grapheme; democracy should not be understood as parliament, but with civil spirit; science (understood as exact sciences) cannot be mistaken for laboratories and university facilities, as since Aristotle's times (and his intellectual thought) it is indicated by a scientific sense and its 100 percent accuracy, and Christianity is not only temples and processions, but the continuity of Christian faith in successive generations and therefore the succession of Christian tradition and custom, which gives sense and immortality to the gatherings of the faithful at the Eucharist in the temples and in the processions.

³ Cf. J. Ortega y Gasset, *Misja uniwersytetu*, trans. by H. Woźniakowski, Poznań 1980, p. 729.

⁴ Cf. A.W. Mikołajczak, *Antyczne dziedzictwo Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej*, in: *Narodowy i ponadnarodowy model kultury. Europa Środkowa i Półwysep Bałkański*, Poznań 2002, p. 18.

⁵ Poland in the pre-Saxon times ceased to be the “bulwark” of the West, becoming rather the outpost of the East Cf. J.M. Bocheński, *Polski Testament. Ojczyzna. Europa. Cywilizacja*, Komorów 1999, pp. 58-78.

What is closely linked to the afore-mentioned facts is the uniqueness of the national cultural heritage which has been shaping the identity of successive generations of Poles. It then seems impossible not to mention these values of uniqueness under threat of familiarization of Polish cultural tradition's identity. For should we not recognize fundamental rights of classical Poland not only as Western-European ones, but also as the expression of principles which anywhere else in Europe were adopted much later — not necessarily as their consequence, more probably regardless of them, just later in time?⁶ Is it of little importance that Poland was way ahead of England with respect to the event acknowledged as the turning point in history of the West, namely — the investiture controversy, thanks to which Western Europeans realized for the first time that there existed something that was independent of the state authority? Can we deny the fact that the Polish parliament was recognized as one of the oldest ones in Europe? And so, can the Polish national and cultural identity, shaped by its affinity to the Western world be left unappreciated in any initiative of currently introduced transformations?

It then seems that the fundamental issue here remains to acquire a view from Poland's identity's perspective — not blurred by any kind of ideology.⁷ Recent centuries make us realize the *naked* truth that both invaders and aggressors/occupants made Poland and its society not only a country “on the path of development” and “continuous attempts to become of equal civilizational development” with other nations, but they also contributed to making it a national community (with the ethnically domineering Polish element) — perceived as a “great collective responsibility” (in Norwid's recognition) — systematically deprived of social elites and their whole families — physically exterminated or forced to emigrate.

Having taken into consideration the above — the recognition of Poland's melting into the Western civilization together with its value of creative undertakings (prototypes of principles and socio-communal rights)⁸ in the

⁶ It is impossible not to agree that lawfulness principle (*neminem captivabimus*) and equality principle are fully West-European. Furthermore, in the Jagiellonian era in Poland there was unknown anywhere else freedom of press, best expressed in chancellor Zamoyski's remark to Muscovite envoys: “in this Republic we neither command to print books, nor do we prohibit it.”

⁷ The situation and reality of post-communist or post-totalitarian (or post-colonial) societies, all of which names do not seem to be satisfactory enough in the description of what characterizes Poland in the year 2011, definitely do not allow for a fairly adequate view of Polish identity from a historical perspective by the (political) majority of those deciding about its present fate and the nearest future.

⁸ It is necessary to refer to professors: Paweł Włodkowic and his concepts of: conciliarism and defensive war, Matthew of Cracow — the author of the first medieval theodicy: *Racionale operum divinorum sive quod Deus omnia bene fecit* or cardinal Stanisława Hozjusz — the

sphere of social organization or functioning — I would like to focus on the importance of at least four dimensions of the consequences both included in and stemming from the European idea of the University. For those analyzing the Higher Education Act of 2011, it should be clear that at some points in history the very concept of the university requires rethinking, especially with respect to the question of what is and what should the university be in its essence. It should also be understood that not realizing the value of the European idea of the University and lack of an adequate reference to it in the legislative action or attempts to introduce higher education reform, caused most probably by the excessive infatuation with the possibility of satisfying immediate political and economic affairs and needs (to put it simply) of certain extramural circles, will not result in some unspecified perversion of the concept of the University, as it is bound to be preserved in the evidence of the past — not only as the non-erasable events of the 13th century renaissance, but also as part of the works praising the dignity of the University.⁹ Any attempt to provisionally assign the idea of the University to some particular requirements of the moment — marked by the condition of business or industry, current state of Polish economy and national finance, the scale of national debt *etc.* — or to subordinate its political ideology will only cause disintegration of moral community's cohesion and indicate its civilizational decomposition — dependent, of course, on the degree of its ideological affinity.

Therefore, it's being conditioned by the past — by the creative heritage of the Western idea of the University — imposes the necessity to take the concept of the University into consideration in the Polish thought once again, starting from the year 1989 — the concept inspiring the institutionalized acquiring and transmitting of scientific truth.¹⁰

1. Referring to numerous reflections on the idea of the University¹¹ — undoubtedly omitted and not taken into account in the Polish higher education

chairman of the final conciliar deliberations of Council of Trent as well as the executer of its resolutions and the author of theological theses and treatises widely known in the whole Europe, repeatedly reprinted and translated into national languages, i.a. *Confessio fidei catholicae Christiana*.

⁹ Cf. K. Twardowski, *O dostojęństwie Uniwersytetu*, Poznań 1933.

¹⁰ Cf. J.H. Newman, *The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated*. In *Nine Discourses Delivered to the Catholics in Dublin in Occasional Lectures and Essays Addressed to the Members of the Catholic University*, New York 1968.

¹¹ Cf. i.a.: J. Bocheński, *Autonomia uniwersytetu*, „Znaki czasu”, 6/2, 1987, pp. 47-56; J. Brzeziński, L. Witkowski (eds.), *Edukacja wobec zmiany społecznej*, Toruń 1994; H. Buczyńska-Garewicz, *Dwa wykłady o Jaspersie*, Warszawa 2005; *Idea uniwersytetu u schyłku Tysiąclecia*,

reform of 2011 — it is impossible not to notice that the constructive and creative voices in the debate, plenty of similar to which had previously been held in different European communities as well, suggested transformations which should take place for the universities to be able to execute their duties of educating new generations under the new spiritual circumstances of the time. Those undertakings avoided eliminating distortions or deformations, or introducing reforms, but they constituted almost exclusively an attempt to re-read the contemporary idea of the University as shaped by the ongoing social and cultural realities — in its pure, historically distilled idea¹². Such reading of the idea of the University, in turn, cannot remain uncorrelated with the programme of reformations or postulated transformations at a particular stage of development of a community and its educational needs in view of new civilizational challenges. Does European history not convince us that the power of a particular nation comes into being as a whole? If what dominates in a certain national community or country is political debasement — or, in other words, promotion of those politically correct or “party-loyal” — it does not really matter if one receives their degree from even the best school or university, and their creative skills and moral rightness only become the cause of stress accompanying the social advancement of the average — a narrow group of successful people who have managed to succeed in the society of lowered moral values. Schools and universities — as some of the main institutions of a country — to a larger even degree depend on the public moods displayed in particular societies, than on the educational atmosphere shaped within their walls and the school environment.

Therefore, even if some foreign educational models were more than perfect, they could never be brought to and copied in a different ethnic background, as in those foreign national cultures and societies they constitute merely a small part of the cultural reality created and maintained by that society. Moreover, such procedure — of transferring even the best educational and didactic models of doing science — seems to mean there exists some absolute value of those models and their creators — be it philosophers or scientists. Why then did foreign regimes not give proper attention to the superior — at least in comparison to their own intellectual circles — philosophical output of the Polish Lvov-Warsaw school of logic? Why did they annihilate Jagiellonian University’s teaching staff in the year 1939, completely disregarding the world-famous scientific output those professors had left behind? Why did

Warszawa 1997; W. Stróżewski, *O idei uniwersytetu*, in: *idem*, *W kręgu wartości*, Kraków 1992.

¹² Cf. K. Jaspers, *Die Idee der Universität*, Berlin 1946; *idem*, *The European Spirit*, London 1948; *idem*, *Die geistige Situation der Zeit*, Berlin 1931; *idem*, *Erneuerung der Universität. Reden und Schriften 1945–1946*, Heidelberg 1986.

they display such willingness to do away with the military and clerical elites, the clergy, and the university teaching staff — and even though they did not manage to complete it at a single go, they did attempt to fulfill their mission spreading it over the long years of occupation of the Second Polish Republic? The seemingly rhetorical question, however, still remains: why the then superpowers — both soviet and Nazi aggressors — did not try to copy the Polish educational and didactic models, which had apparently proved extremely successful, judging by the scientific achievements of the Lvov-Warsaw philosophical school? Why did they attempt to annihilate both its representatives — professors and their students, and its scientific output — remaining valuable to science as such in its absolute dimension?

These are all undoubtedly rhetorical questions, which quite clearly state that educational and didactic models present a relative value when removed from their natural environment — the society which shaped them on the basis of its own cultural heritage left by the previous ethnic generations. They always constitute an integral part of some given ethnic culture created in history. That is why it seems essential to relate to people's own cultural heritage whilst re-considering the idea of copying the European concept of the University so that it can represent the model of perfection to any particular community again.

So, should we not sacrificially, or to say the least patriotically, support our national intellectual culture and from it take our moral strength and spiritual culture of our society's development, whilst at the same time taking inspiration from the idea of the University at each stage of development of successive generations of Poles, and never copy foreign patterns of thought — as those strange models, inconsistent with our native cultural heritage, could easily lead to what we might call a cultural self-destruction?

Of course, a global society is bound to experience — and indeed already does experience — a problem of scientific language. Would a good example here not be Alfred Tarski's "The concept of truth in formalized languages", a work published in 1933 in Polish, which during the interwar period was hardly noticed, and the situation of which did not change much when it was translated into German, and only when we lived to see its English version did it reach the wider audience of scientists from behind the Atlantic? Can we remain indifferent to and turn a blind eye on the problem of using almost exclusively English language — both as a tool for creative articulation of scientific questions (in a particular field of science) and as a means of communicating research results by a particular scholar? Is our native Polish language not rich in vocabulary and expressions which render different semantic subtleties which might disappear translated into other languages due to their relative linguistic poverty? It seems impossible for us to offer

just an arbitrary approach towards the question of language choice when we consider scientific publications.¹³ Still, beyond the shadow of a doubt, provincialism exposes any sign of low self-esteem. Was it not what Aristotle had in mind when he raised a similar issue some 25 centuries ago? He called such attitude *megalopsychia*.

The reflections above all let us move on to another consequence, stemming from the concept of the university as re-discovered by the Polish as a national community and an EU member society.

2. What is clearly noticeable in the history of European societies are the endeavors or attempts of some communities to copy solutions invented by members of the so-called centers of civilization. Those are usually made by societies which recognize and describe themselves as belonging to the civilizational peripheries. But contrary to what might believe those who refuse to spare their time to reflect upon the responsibility of the civilizational half-peripheries' "elites", any attempt to emulate certain solutions of practical models does not allow now, nor will it ever allow, for those countries to catch up with the leaders in civilizational progress (to put it simply). Are we not aware of the fact that, as a rule, it takes a generation for any creative idea to be popularized? Any spiritual imitation of ethnically foreign solutions condemns one's own community to a tragic retardation, even if the country's best scholars manage to stay up to date with the achievements of the world's scientific lead in their respective fields.¹⁴ However, the consolidation of cultural retardation in one's own national community in consequence of emulating foreign models, does not seem to be the only tragedy resulting from this type of actions. Apart from the anachronism of imitative nations, even more dramatic appears to be betrayal of cultural heritage and based on it identity, which becomes a creative point of reference in any further

¹³ English or French versions of best publications could be financed for example by some European science foundations, especially that this problem is sooner or later to appear on the EU member states' agenda. For why would only the Polish society enrich others with their own scientific output — and finance it all from their own pockets? Why would they do so at the expense of science development and research in their own language? After all, any case of stagnation means backwardness, or at least one of its forms.

¹⁴ "Out of the spirit of a generation come ideas, evaluations, and so on. The person who imitates them must wait until they have been formulated; or, in other words, until the preceding generation has finished its work. Then he adopts its principles, at the time that they are beginning to decline, and a new generation is already making its reform, inaugurating the regime of a new spirit. Each generation struggles for fifteen years to establish itself, and its synthesis holds together another fifteen years — inevitable anachronism of an imitative, unauthentic people." (J. Ortega y Gasset, *op. cit.*, p. 21).

attempts to shape a unique distinction of own generations in their constant succession.

I have begun this essay with a reflection upon the uniqueness of the Polish society's identity throughout the course of European history, into which it brought its own intellectual effort and its own inimitable model of social organization¹⁵. It thus seems to be a merely rhetorical question when I ask if the current attempt to introduce or emulate foreign models of university structure and the functioning of the scientific and didactic systems takes into account Polish intellectual and cultural heritage? Because it seems that the fundamental problem remains the fact that after the year 1989 there appeared only a radical increase in the range of personal freedoms, which most probably was not so much the result of regained independence, but rather of the disassembly of a totalitarian state. From this perhaps stems that great pressure shown by certain circles towards the concept of privatization of schools and universities. Unfortunately, similarly to the idea of privatization of state institutions or enterprises, it is most often limited to appropriation of national goods and reaping benefits from paid education by the university owners instead of constituting a wanted means of "pumping" financial capital into academic structures by those who decide to start a private school and invest in scientific research projects undertaken by private universities.

3. Raising and developing the third consequence of the idea of the University, I shall once again refer to a remark made by the already mentioned here Spanish culture philosopher and sociologist, professor of the university in Madrid — J. Ortega y Gasset, who commented on the absurd popularization of the term "general culture". He therefore observes that culture can only be general — that one, for instance, cannot be "cultured" in physics or mathematics; in such disciplines it is only possible to be educated. Raising the issue that contemporary, postmodern universities constitute but mere remains of what in the era of incredibly creative ferment of Western societies used to be a shaped in its structure and social need University (in the sense of *universitas magistrorum et scholarum*). Although the medieval university was not a place for specific scientific research to be conducted, it was still filled with "general culture". It did not constitute a mind's decoration, nor was it a means of self-discipline. It was a place where people looked for the truth and could at the same time shape their ideas about the world and humanity,

¹⁵ For a long time Polish gentry did not intend to imitate anyone, let alone transform the Republic into an absolute monarchy.

which were to effectively and creatively indicate ways of life to Christian communities of the European West.

Is it possible that in contrast to the medieval University — shaped in the renaissance of the 13th century — the contemporary university has incommensurably complicated vocational education, hardly offered by the medieval masters, and has at the same time resigned from introducing students to the world of [intellectual] culture, which should be spread in the form of idea or a viewpoint rested on the truth about the reality of *physis* — the *Universum*? Has, even not as much the contemporaneity of the globalized world of the integrating continental societies, as rather the Western civilization, recognized the medieval ideal, and even turned its poles around? Because it turns out that higher education consists exclusively of apprenticeship. So, do advocates or solicitors, GPs or chemists, surgeons or dentists, psychiatrists or social psychologists, civil or metal engineers, Latin or history teachers, administration officers or economists, or even clergymen not have practical occupations? And can we at the same time deny that the society needs many specialists-practitioners, but only few scientists? Does it not happen due to the fact that the scientific calling is in fact an incredibly rare one and of a very particular type? That it is based on the laws of natural selection — ruthless when it comes to the intellectual skills and scientific intuition?

Where then is coming from this unusual need, visible in present-day Poland, for the growing number of PhD holders and independent research workers?¹⁶ Is this privatization-reality forcing us to fill out the gap and cover the insurmountable loss — dramatic extermination of Polish scholarly elites in the not so far off historical past? Unfortunately, it is not possible to compensate for those tragic events by instantly “producing” doctors/ granting PhD degrees¹⁷. It is impossible to achieve it without entrusting their scientific careers to the care of more experienced professors, in whose shadow over the years they can reach their own scientific maturity.

¹⁶ Does the decrease in the required number of teaching staff at universities necessary to run a particular university course, represented by the famous formula: one senior doctor lecturer = two doctors and one doctor — two M.A. or M.Sc. holders, actually conforms to increasing the level of education? Or does it rather evoke connotations of quite popular before the year 1989 jokes about two officers, one of whom could read, and the other write? Unfortunately, science does not know such phenomenon or human conversion rate. One clever professor means more than even a panel of experts — each representing their own discipline. Yet it is impossible not to sense the absurd if one treats elements of the proposed reform seriously.

¹⁷ Unfortunately, such a procedure took place in quite a substantial part of the post-nomenclature circles from before the year 1989.

Does the already mentioned professor Kazimierz Twardowski or professor Henryk Elzenberg or professor Roman Ingarden or many others who have passed away in the last decades of the 20th century not constitute a good example here?¹⁸

Unfortunately, the only chance we as the EU societies have to restore to the idea of the University its cultural radiation and creative effect on the European societies seems to be slipping away. We could avert the catastrophic character of the current EU member states' integration — integration of statistical Europeans who do not display any vital system of ideas about the world or human beings adequate to the contemporary reality.¹⁹ I am afraid, however, that we seem to be satisfied with a strictly consumerist attitude — and are waiting for sciences to methodically and objectively explain the *Universum* to us. In a way we all remain slaves to science, not able to recognize that beyond it there lies human life which enables it — which is actually the opposite to what we believe and to what is thought among most of the European societies.

Furthermore, is it not the truth that culture should include a holistic idea of the world and the human being? That by no means should it stop where methods based on absolute theoretical accuracy happen to run out? There is no real mystery there, the explanation of this regularity is quite simple really. Human life and the present reality of human societies cannot wait for sciences to explain the *Universum* in a scholarly fashion. Everything considered, do all those treating science as a *god* not condemn themselves to a primitive and poor life? Do they not live a life governed by archaic ideas, outdated, trying to follow models of ethnically foreign societies? So, the most basic of questions we should pose here about the proposed Higher Education bill of 2011 in Poland relates to the place of culture (both intellectual and scientific — including the holistic idea of the world and the human being) in the structure of the university and its principal position, so that generations of students internalize the concept of culture before they learn fundamental

¹⁸ What good can scientific careerists, who need their titles only to receive an additional pay, do us? Still, the real problem lies deeper. For, is there a relation between what is being proposed and the idea of the university, or not? Or in other words, do the insistently forced changes fit the idea of the University and the ethos of a researcher-scientist or do they not? And by not respecting the idea of the University and the ethos of those who cultivate scientific thought, do they not in turn annihilate the possibility of development of Polish scientific culture?

¹⁹ Cf. D. Kubicki, *Wokół niewiary w zmartwychwstanie w społecznościach europejskiego Zachodu*, „Ateneum Kapłańskie”, z. 2 (609): 2010, t. 155, p. 350-361; *idem*, *Prognoszowany kryzys społeczno-ekologiczny XXI w. jako konsekwencja procesów globalizacyjnych końca XX w.?*, „Studia Gdańskie”, Vol. XXVII, Gdańsk-Oliwa, pp. 285-303.

professional skills, and some of them decide to take up science as a career and develop the current research.

In the above question of the university as a science institution of education, it is impossible not to raise the issue of the interrelation between formation of elites for Polish society (or any given society for that matter) and hierarchically selective development of academic staff of the University — or, in other words, a strict selection at each level of granting a scientific degree. Is it not the collective voice of individuals willing to promote only those not worse than themselves that in a properly functioning scientific environment should constitute the essence of this environment's self-purifying mechanism from random, unfit students? Is it not so that many a time after the year 1989, the year when system and political transformations were just being initiated, there appeared a commonly formulated postulate to overcome a process later considered to be degrading university education, the process of lowering the scientific requirements?²⁰ Was it not the time that a phenomenon dangerous to the university ethos was first recognized, namely the phenomenon of accepting growing masses of students at contemporary universities and supporting it ideology of modern egalitarianism? The officials responsible for education at that time failed to provide the right solution to the situation, which to my mind would have been strengthening student appraisal system by grading them on the basis of their factual knowledge of the covered material and their intellectual abilities, and sanctioning them by hindering their chances for promotion to a higher year. Did they not make the system become more erratic instead, by “administratively” introducing teaching efficiency statistics — not to evaluate students' performance, though, but to assess their teachers — and to distribute financial means accordingly?²¹ Did hankering after good statistics of education not force promotion of certain pupils and students — even if they were not worthy of it? All things considered, does the low quality of Polish education not have its roots in a cardinal ideological mistake recurring in every education reform — beginning from the primary education level — which makes it virtually impossible not to promote a pupil to the next grade — even if he or she does not deserve this promotion due to their insufficient academic achievements or displayed behavioral problems? Does it not further reflect on the current

²⁰ Cf. J. Brzeziński, *Doświadczenia uniwersytetu europejskiego a przyszła organizacja szkolnictwa wyższego w Polsce*, in: *Idea uniwersytetu u schyłku Tysiąclecia*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 89-104; St. Salmonowicz, *Między hierarchiczności, feudalizmem a brakiem dobrych obyczajów w nauce*, in: *Idea uniwersytetu u schyłku Tysiąclecia*, pp. 53-61; B. Wolniewicz, *Krytyka naukowa i kryteria naukowości*, „Nauka”, 3:1996 (also: *idem*, *Krytyka naukowa i kryteria naukowości*, in: *idem*, *Filozofia i Wartości*, II, Warszawa 1998, pp. 266-274);

²¹ Cf. B. Wolniewicz, *Brońmy szkoły*, in: *idem*, *Filozofia i Wartości*, II, pp. 275-283.

situation in private higher education institutions, supported mainly by their students' money, where any reduction in the number of students through the process of selective examination would directly translate into delimitation of financial means the school has at hand — not only to pay off its lecturers, but also to meet the expectations of its “owners”?

Meanwhile, in the heat of — at times not too sensible or cautious — privatization of anything that could only be privatized in Poland after the year 1989, did we not forget the fact that the functioning of Western private universities is based on the means they receive from private foundations (to put it simply), and that the student fees do not play a crucial role in how they operate?

Furthermore, the idea of the University is definitely distorted, if not completely ruined, by the domination of the political or etatist apparatus in the process of determining what a scientist is to say or what a researcher is to discover. It is of course a wider problem of the University's autonomy and the independence of research, which should be discussed separately, and which constitutes a fundamental feature of the medieval University.²² Another issue, however, is the fact that politicians pay little attention to any postulates formulated by the scholarly or university circles. That, in turn, arouses a legitimate suspicion that any attempt to push a reform of the university or the procedures for granting university degrees is based exclusively on ideologically determined aim, which is contradictory to the ideal of science as scientific research, and, in consequence, conforms to destroying the idea of the University. It should, thus, be considered whether the ideological attitude towards the higher education reform of 2011 is not a result of the ongoing social decomposition, which cannot be controlled and which degrades Polish society?²³

Societies of the Western civilizations had functioned and lived in the mass culture era long before Polish society entered the path of multi-layer

²² Should autonomy of higher education institutions, breaching of the communist-era bureaucracy, and also creation of appropriate financial frames, not serve the appropriate formation of a professors' careers and an optimal use of their creative skills and abilities? (Cf. St. Salmonowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 61.)

²³ It is not difficult to notice that in the proposed reform do not appear numerous and valuable postulates, expressed for example in the already mentioned publication: *Idea uniwersytetu u schyłku Tysiąclecia*, which constitutes a summary of a conference organized by The Foundation for Polish Science (Fundacja na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej) in the year 1996. Let us point the reader's attention to the fact that it was during this very debate that the year 2000 was first mentioned as the year around which many prominent and respected professors, who would otherwise definitely constructively oppose to the ideological manipulations of education, would pass away.

transformations started in the year 1989. Transformational instability and certain lack of completion characterizing different reform projects undoubtedly shaped attitudes of bluntness, and roughness of behavior²⁴ and even some displays of aggression or crudeness — the more so because two decades of new social order after the year 1989 led to the establishment of a very small circle of the wealthy — *successful people* — and masses of others with no prospects for a normal life in their own country. Thus, it is valid to express some concern about the shape of the new university — is there any chance that this new form “imposed” by the Higher Education Act will allow the university to remain an oasis of good manners and decorum²⁵ in this mass culture era?

The above question, I am afraid, brings into the open a whole array of further queries and doubts about cases of seemingly scientific discoveries (made in the pursuit of positive evaluation), laborious compilations or appropriation of somebody else’s works and research results, or plagiarism (which is a common practice applied at private colleges to get a credit). Is it not triggered by the desire to fulfill some sort of a get-rich-quick scheme? For students it means obtaining their degrees faster, which in turn entitles them to higher salaries. For their teachers, on the other hand, it results in additional workload, which in the end also means higher wages, complementing their normal pay, which in most cases is not high enough to sustain a standard of living promoted in the West. Is it not there where the most cardinal mistake of privatization “at all costs” seems to lie then? And amongst many other, smaller mistakes also the issue of acknowledging of the concept of culture and a child’s upbringing in the family? Or the fact that we do not seem to appreciate the creators of the academic culture or researchers and those who conform to shaping creative thought as much as we dote on *pop stars* and respect the alleged authority of *celebrities*?

The above problems that Polish modernity is now facing require formulating an overall solution which would comprise a thorough re-evaluation of the concept of the University with regard to our cultural heritage and dramatic historical events, or else it seems virtually impossible for Polish universities or research facilities to manage to ever appear among the world leading science centers.

4. Both philosophers and sociologists analyzing societies and their reactions to ideological transformations they experience usually notice and recognize the fact that spiritually decaying (in the Platonic sense) societies shape people

²⁴ Unfairly and unreasonably identified with freedom of being, of conduct and so on.

²⁵ A similar question applies to primary and secondary education as well.

who do not believe in truth (in the intellectual sense — to put it simply).²⁶ And since science and technology both assume this type of “faith”, we should consequently soon expect an inevitable crisis to befall such a society, a crisis caused by the lack of moral will and sense of doing science displayed by its most skilled and talented members.

It is common knowledge that science’s objective is cognition in itself and nothing beyond. We also recognize that this cognition, understood as the result of a cognitive act, can be used in various ways. Still, it seems most important to acknowledge that *pure* cognition is possible before any further appraisal even begins. It should then once again be mentioned that the source of European conquest of the world (understood as *physis*) resides in Greek element, using which, in the form of university scholastic culture (to put it simply), shaped the 13th century renaissance University, Europeans managed to create modern science; and consequently, as a result of mathematization of nature (understood as *physis*) — technology. And even though scientific progress entered the path of deeply penetrating physical *micro-* and *macrocosm* reality of research specializations, it is impossible to retain the concept of science and its integral structure stable without resting it on the so-called “pure” science (in Platonic and Aristotelian sense).

All that creates an insoluble problem of continuous interaction between *pure* science and specialist science in its growing plurality. Besides all the more profound development of specialist research and parallel studies of knowledge that is narrowing down within its limits, it seems crucial to create compact syntheses and systematize knowledge. It will and already does require from a scientist to display a rare scientific talent — a talent to integrate. Of course, it would also require a particular type of specialization, namely an ability to build a whole and to crown other scientists’ efforts, “the truth” (intellectual truth about reality; *physis* in *Physis*) — as it was aptly concluded by J. Ortega y Gasset.²⁷

I do not think it would be possible to cease to practice disciplines of the so-called “pure” science. For should higher education really be strictly limited to professional training and research only (carried out in narrow disciplines of applied sciences)? And would that, in turn, mean that theoretical disciplines or “pure” science were of little use? Should their utility then be valued according to the financial outcome brought by research in new technologies applied in industry?

²⁶ Cf. J.M. Bocheński, *Jedyna żywa cywilizacja — cywilizacja europejska*, in: *idem*, *Polski Testament. Ojczyzna. Europa. Cywilizacja*, p. 91.

²⁷ Cf. J. Ortega y Gasset, *op. cit.*, p. 727.

Without a doubt, deprived of disciplines of theoretical science (understood as Aristotelian *theoria*), their days are numbered. At best one single generation of scientists and researchers — specialists in narrow technological disciplines, can function in such a vacuum — without science as described in the Aristotelian concept of *theoria*. We may assume, referring to his concept of science — which we have also adopted ourselves — that their successors will not display similar degree of creative ability to dig deeper in their research, compared to the attentive approach manifested by contemporary scientists.

The idea to link highly specialist technological disciplines of practical sciences to the currently developed industry in order to gain financial means for further scientific research and development of science seems useful only as long as there is a harmonious allocation of funds — to both: disciplines representing “pure” science and specialist sciences (to put it simply). For “sciences” do not constitute the disciplines of specialist sciences only. “Science” does not stand for real (specialist) sciences only. The category thus comprises interdependent universal and specialist science. And this fact is not to be ignored. Any act of reform, therefore, which would express certain preference of one over the other of those two spheres, which, according to Aristotelian theory of science, after all complement each other to construct science as a whole, conforms to destroying this whole — and hence, science as such.

In the discussed issue we cannot overlook the question of quite substantial disproportion in financial profit yielded on the one hand by the so-called pop culture, and original thought or scientific discoveries on the other. We can only assume that those differences are a consequence of consumerism in the society and linked to it economic model. It is also impossible not to notice that a similar financial interrelation appears between specialist and “pure” sciences. However, taking into account the Aristotelian concept of science, does the attitude of intellectual ideologicity not appear contradictory with the idea of the University? When we look with favor on specialist sciences — most certainly due to the fact that their research results (especially technological ones), applicable in industry and economy, yield a calculable profit, and feel distaste for universal science and (intellectual) culture as they not only do not bring in a profit, but also seem to require even bigger capital expenditure?

I would offer quite an easy solution to the discussed problem, especially that, as I have mentioned above, it is widely known that pure and real sciences complement each other (to put it simply), which rules out any potential confusion of wide areas of science with culture, when what they constitute can only be called a pure scientific method, and when a practical application

is found for culture, before science explains the *Universum*. Is it moral in the mass culture of the West for *celebrities* to be granted huge financial means to support various kinds of mass *pop* productions, when at the same time the disciplines of “pure” science, which lay the ground for popular culture and which publicize their research results among the contemporary Western civilizational society, are not entitled to receive adequate fees, proportional to the range and quality of their discoveries? A division of profits could be done in reverse order — starting from pure science.

It seems that consumerist contemporaneity remains at least immoral towards the essence of the civilizational culture of the West, and therefore, towards one of the fundamental elements of the entire European civilization — which is science, grounded in the very idea of the University.

To conclude the present reflection, it would then befit to pose a rhetorical question — is it really necessary for us to remind ourselves that the historic fate of national communities grounded in their developed cultures unfolds and hangs in the balance both on the political level, in the form of struggle or sometimes even outright fight for independence, as well as on the cultural level, in the shape of efforts made to protect one’s identity and the ability to tell right from morally wrong message of cultural heritage to the new, rising generations of the national community?

Now, it may at times appear that in the contemporary politics done after the year 1989 — not only in the Third Republic of Poland, but also in other post-socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe — the ideological attitude of disregard for those fundamental principles of historic being of those societies in their evolutionary changeability and generational succession, seems to have outweighed the cultural identity.

There is no doubt that the views on the idea of the University and on science itself, which seemingly prevail in the parliamentary sessions in 2011, need to be revisited — with reference to at least the above arguments bringing to light the importance of the contemporary Polish reality — morally weakened by two decades of transformational instability accompanying the shaping of the information age and the civil society. In the present-day rethinking of the idea of the University — and in order to overcome the label of civilizational periphery of the West — we then cannot ignore the value of Polish identity, which has not been taken into account in the already passed reform bill, but which is so prominent in the historically unique moral endeavors through which Poland so greatly benefitted the societies of the western part of the European continent.

Translated by Zofia Lebiecka

European Idea of the University. To What Extent is it a Model for the Polish Higher Education Act of 2011?

by Dominik Kubicki

A b s t r a c t

Having taken into consideration cultural and civilizational fundaments of the European West as well as the recognition of Poland's melting into the Western civilization together with its value of creative undertakings (prototypes of principles and socio-communal rights) in the sphere of social organization or functioning — the author focuses on the importance of several dimensions of the consequences both included in and stemming from the European idea of the University. He thereby presents them to those analyzing the Higher Education Act of 2011 in Poland, simply due to the fact that at some points in history the very concept of the university requires rethinking, especially with respect to the question of what is and what should the university be in its essence, and by extension also science itself, in view of the state and nation together with a two-way relation of ministerial structures' servitude to the scientific environment.

Keywords: European idea of the university, model for the Polish higher education.