

WHY THE MEDIEVAL IDEA OF A COMMUNITY-ORIENTED UNIVERSITY IS STILL MODERN

Seek simplicity and distrust it.

- A. N. Whitehead

Achim Köddermann

This essay examines the medieval concept of the university, explores applications and lessons for contemporary institutions, and attempts to show how the maxim “publish or perish” is both a legitimate goal and a dangerous limitation of an enlightenment-oriented university. The modern university runs the risk of falling into “confusion and a cultural chaos which invites new dogmatic creeds of a lower level to bring discipline into life and education.”¹ The university is in a conceptual and financial crisis. This crisis can be overcome by a return to some of its origins. In particular modern institutions of higher education — if they are to survive — must rediscover some very old principles regarding the “public” role of the university. It would be vain to attempt to surpass such historical studies as Hasting Rashdall’s *The Universities of Europe and the Middle Ages*.² However, to hold on to the values of the original university might allow to cope with the current crisis.

The crisis of the university is one of the perennial problems of this century. Views which assert that history has come to an end and that the West is in decline have fueled this crisis. Such “post-post-isms” make a common assertion — all claims have lost their value. The search for originality seems to have stopped; decadence seems to be cherished; history of philosophy has replaced active philosophy; the search for truth has been widely succeeded by the search for funding and money, and the distance between scientific research and life seems to be growing. The more specialized research becomes, the less its results become accessible to the public. Cultural pessimism has become one of the few common attitudes of Western society and its universities. Not even the agreement that we disagree seems possible. The crisis is not in the university, but in Western society itself. The foundation of the university, which

tries in vain to identify the core of its teachings, and the foundation of society, which equally lacks orientation or commonly accepted values, seem to both slip away. The expression of the crisis of the university as an institution no longer takes the form of a student revolt as in the sixties of this century — or the twenties of the thirteenth century. Those who set fire on the tires in 1968 (in Germany or France) very shortly after set fire to their ideas. Assimilation transformed some of the European university revolt leaders into party leaders, show stars, or even conservative professors. In the U.S., Mario Savio e.g. turned into a mail clerk. Yesterdays revolutionary idealism seems to have achieved little for the challenges of tomorrow. Today's financial crisis, linked with a deep crisis of confidence and credibility, urges all universities to reflect on their role in and for communities which are increasingly unable or unwilling to pay for their development or maintenance.³

This situation has been compared by Umberto Eco and others to the “dark” medieval times. The lack of orientation, the belief that we are at the (possible) end of all times, the fear of unmastered plagues, growing violence, the wish for a new world order, and the hope for and belief in new saviors are subjects our time shares with the “times of transition” we like to call the “Middle Ages.”⁴ If we try to trace the roots of modern times, we will have to look for their spiritual roots. For the Western world, these are to be found in the emerging institutions and communities which we still cherish today — the universities. Today, as in medieval times, due to rapid social changes and intense social conflicts, communities look for common public solutions. Then, as now, generally accepted answers could not come from an imposed form of authority, as defined by those in power, but only from authority arising from free exchange and discourse. The crisis of the university today could be seen as a result of its loss of independence, flexibility, and availability for the community. It can be seen as one aspect of a loss of rationality and critical distance which is more problematic today than in the Middle Ages. Today, the concept of participatory democracy is — at least nominally — universally accepted. However, the very capacity required for participation in the democratic process, the capacity for significant choice, seems to be in danger. The paradox to be addressed is the following:

how can we assume equal responsibility in a society which bases its decisions on the findings of an elite of experts? This paper tries to point out how to overcome the following contradiction, which arises from the combination of the concept of the autonomy of every citizen on one hand with the elitist concept of a paternalistic elite of experts on the other hand. It can only be overcome by a reconsideration of the roots of the university.

From the Public Origins of the University to Academies for Elites

It is possible to trace the origins of the idea of the university to two ancient schools of thought. In the Socratic-Platonic form of higher education, the academies had the ideal of knowledge or truth as an aim; this aim remains unchanged in most modern academies. In the Sophist variant of higher education, the focus is on the “know how.” For most sophists, the utility of knowledge was perceived as the high road to success;⁵ today this approach can still be perceived in debating societies or in business and law schools. Despite their differences, all these schools with different aims shared a common interest in providing and teaching generally acceptable answers. In the dialogue *Meno* e.g., Plato calls for more research and teaching in both lines.

However, in order to understand the modern form and purpose of the university, one should examine primarily its origins in medieval society.⁶ The founding of the first Western universities around the year 1200 parallels the coexistence of both the “dark” side of medieval times, and the resurgence of autonomous communities. The foundation of the first “free” university at Bologna and its French and English counterparts at Paris and Oxford helped to reinstall public discourse in the form of public discussion. This discussion, possible in the framework of the early universities, was dedicated not to biased opinions but to the discovery of supposedly “valid,” generally acceptable answers. The university with its quasi-democratic structures was “free” in the sense of guaranteed privileges which sheltered the community of scholars both in and from the larger community in which the university was embed-

ded. In this sense, the German saying “town air makes free” applied to the early universities. Ideally, “might” had to give place to “right.”⁷ As self-governed organizations, universities were granted freedom of research and teaching. In exchange, they spread knowledge which enhanced the reputation — and eventually the wealth and political importance — of the community that sheltered them.

From its beginning, the university had as highest goals the quest for truth and its teaching. The *alma mater* developed, however, in two distinct ways. The institution of Bologna could achieve its position from a loose association of independent legal scholars. Slowly, an autonomous, self-governing law school developed as response to the crisis of authority arising out of a void in orientation. This lack of clear direction was caused by the conflict between the church and the emperor over the ultimate power and command over the Roman Empire.⁸ The French “Sorbonne” grew from different theological schools and developed its teachings in harmony with, or under the direct influence of, the governing authorities. Notwithstanding the differences in standards of academic freedom, a vivid intellectual exchange guaranteed that the standards of knowledge and teaching were equally high at Paris and at Bologna. The extension of the horizon by the inclusion of other faculties in the *studium generale* allowed to broaden what started as isolated research and teaching.

A common feature in the founding of all early universities is their link with the burgeoning communities, through which they could preserve or gain intellectual and material independence as the cities developed. At the end of the twelfth century, universities appeared at different places in Europe simultaneously with the emergence of communities and cities. It is not mere coincidence that the city counsel of Bologna from 1166 to 1177 was called *universitas populi Bononiae*.⁹ The name indicates the origin of *universitas* from a corporation or craftsmen’s guild, not from an aristocratic society. The use of robes and insignia such as the rector’s or chancellor’s official chain are surviving elements of the communal origins of the university structures. The deliberate unification of different groups in a common structure led to the oldest surviving

forms of corporate organization in the West. Many “guilds” of research- and teaching-oriented scholars joined forces; the principle was universality in diversity. This diversity was mirrored by the different “nations” or *nationes* of which the university was composed. Their purpose was to organize both professors and students according to their origin. The diversity of guilds, different in aims but equal in rank, was preserved in the quasi-international and quasi-democratic structures of the universities.¹⁰

It is no accident that universities appeared at a time when the conflict between the “Hohenstaufen” Emperors (Frederick Barbarossa and Frederick II) and the papacy left the entire population without orientation. In this struggle for power among the supreme authorities, a third independent institution was needed in order to fill the gap. The legendary “Four Doctors” (Bulgarus, Martinus, Jacobus, Hugo) helped to establish a reliable authority in the arising university culture. Its force was not built on any form of political power or ecclesiastical dogma, but on the recovery of the principle of “true knowledge” as the yardstick for the acceptance of their research and teachings. Part of this knowledge, however, was not new, but founded in the Roman legal heritage. Their research and teaching linked the partially lost tradition of Roman Law with ‘modern’ medieval legal needs. Their authority was not founded solely on knowledge, but on the capacity of the university to build a bridge between knowledge and the needs of society. The early university gained its value for the community by its independence. The withdrawal from immediate practical responsibilities enabled the universities to fulfill their role for the community — the critical reappraisal, renewal and reorientation of the cultural heritage and its reorientation for both the student and society.

Universitas, in its original meaning, is the name for any corporation with the capacity to have legal standing in court. *Universitas studii* names the association of legally free, independent scholars and masters. In the disintegrating medieval society, the twofold purpose of the university is to provide protection (externally) and order (internally) for its members. As *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, it was not born out of a desire for democracy, but out of the need to give an unstructured

body enough constancy to be able to fulfill these two functions. It can be considered successful in both endeavors. First, most societies, be it in Bologna or Paris, started as private associations — and could uphold the standard of education by the adaptation of the individual needs to a common standard (trivium/quadrivium, rules for the defense of a master's thesis). Second, they achieved a relative independence from both the communities they stemmed from and the authorities under which they lived. The emancipation from authority in Paris had to be fought through against the chancellor of the Bishop, but was widely achieved and documented after less than a hundred years of struggle. In Bologna, the fear of excessive internal stabilization of order and non-scholarly individual interest led to a structure which made the *doctores* employees of the foreign scholars. The structure of the original universities was perpetuated even in the form of later foundations of papal or ducal universities by the governing authorities themselves in order to counter the influence of the free and independent universities. All universities, whether free from or dependent on approval by those in power, had and have to meet the high standards established by the first, community-oriented, free institutions. Together, through competition, they led and lead to a higher degree of scholarship and security without the necessity to sacrifice the freedom of academic research.¹¹

It is interesting to note that the “anniversary” of most early institutions gives the wrong impression of a willed act of foundation. Only those foundations which came later than 1200, as reaction to already existing institutions, were planned.¹² The oldest institutions, however, grew out of a process. They were formed organically and not “founded” in a literal sense. The original idea of the university did not include buildings and fixed structures. As subtenants of churches, convents or hospices, the buildings in which the early universities functioned were spread all over the community. As free associations of interest, universities depended not on aristocratic rule or rigid centralization. Instead, scholars gathered informally, following the simple principles of common interest embodied in a loose convivial structure. In this context, the constant battle of contemporary universities to regain or defend their academic freedom against all forms of centralized administration takes

on new significance. Disputations among scholars served not to annoy the defendant of a thesis, but to assemble all present possible knowledge. The aim was to find through common efforts a better solution for problems of common interest. Under conditions of conviviality, the lonely scholars could find the necessary resources and contacts and uphold themselves against all kinds of external pressures.

The early universities could thus be seen as an appropriate response to the Investiture Contest after 1076. However unplanned, but not unorganized, this form of association of scholars was born out of the crisis resulting from the collapse of public order. In this context, it is important to underline the spontaneous character of such a creation out of local initiative — with the declared purpose not to have an institution for its own sake, but as a counterweight (in the case of Paris) to the most powerful man of the city. The very birth date of the University of Paris can be traced back to the victory of its *universitas studii* over the chancellor. It was codified and documented by King Philip August in 1200. It was slowly widened in 1208 by the official recognition of the independence of all scholars. Here, the word *universitas* was used for the first time in its present sense.¹³ The recognition of full autonomy of the whole body of the university of Paris, as revised charter (*reformatio studii*), followed shortly in the years 1213 and 1215.¹⁴

This relative autonomy could only be achieved through the democratization of the structure of the university. It led first to the election of *boni homines* who served as representatives, legitimized by the authority from those below who had voted them in office. However, since this body formed only a minority in a larger body, the decisions or solutions proposed by this minority were then taken to the whole community — supported by all in the *concivior parlamentum*.¹⁵ This form of collaboration between university and community might not have been — or be — perfect; however, it involved both in a common decision-finding process.

Scholars attempted to systematize legal (and theological) thinking, to elaborate basic ideas with clarity, to integrate new knowledge

into an old framework, and to eliminate irrelevancies. From their beginnings in Bologna and in Paris, the universities fulfilled their role as a marketplace of ideas. These ideas were presented to the general public through public discussions. The results of such discussions were later summarized in a written *Summa*. These written summaries were widely spread and thus publicized by the exchange of teachers and students all over Europe. Thus, the influx of so-called “new” knowledge, coming from Africa or the Latin West, could be incorporated by means of the university into society. Through this exchange of ideas, even remote communities got in touch with the relevant concepts, doctrines and discussions. On the one hand, knowledge had, through the university as medium and agent, a direct impact on the life of the community which was, on the other hand, the condition for its existence. Both sides gained from this symbiotic relationship. The major task of translating the works of Aristotle and others meant not only literally translating from the Greek or Arab into Latin (as *Lingua Franca*), but also the translation of the meaning of these texts into the contemporary context.¹⁶ Furthermore, the university was a place of exchange. Knowledge about everyday life, politics, theology, and science was translated from theory to practice. The results of this academic work benefitted the host community in many ways: it brought fame and income to the city, enlarged the population, increased its political weight and, last but not least, provided guidance.

Urbanization and academic freedom went hand in hand. It was only when this stage of academic freedom in and from an urban environment was achieved that the schools had emancipated themselves (from their origins as law-schools or cathedral-schools) and could be called “universities.” Only a universal, quasi-unrestricted exchange of points of view could produce “objective” answers. The goal of objectivity, based on public discourse, was and is deeply linked with the elaboration of academic rules that guarantee free access to those who accept these rules.¹⁷ The world of the medieval university was far from perfect, but it provided an internationally-oriented frame in which the opposition between local interests on the one hand, and the interest of more globally oriented traveling educators and students on the other led to a compromise acceptable to both.

What were and are the practical gains that the community can derive from an institution focused on scholarly aims? The question “What do WE gain from a university?” was (and is) difficult to answer because in medieval times the university’s goals did not relate the quest for truth to the immediate interests of the community. The mentioned translation never fulfilled the direct wishes or needs of the immediate community. Such a correlation would threaten the “academic freedom” of the university. However, ideally, the university could spread its academic climate, including parts of different racial or national origin into one common structure. In the crisis of a multicultural and diverse society in which the rules were and are quickly changing, the university, as a forum of ideas, could help establish new rules. In fact, the medieval university achieved a core of common teachings that allowed the student and the professor to change universities, places, and even countries without significant problems. The core of teachings, as a result of a steady discussion of its content, was common all over Europe. Conventionally, we would have to assume that such an unanimously accepted core of teachings was not founded in the university as institution, but in the tradition of the Catholic Church. We must not forget, however, that the process of finding the necessary compromise was only possible through long philosophical disputations — which included thinkers of all origins or nationalities. That the possibility of academic exchange outlived the religious wars shows that the universality of the university as institution was not entirely founded on the assumption of a homogeneous Christian culture. From this we could assume that already the original idea of the university was not linked to its immediate host community alone, but also to the community and society at large. The idea of the early university was already linked with a concept of tolerance. Nevertheless, the slow decline of universality emerges with a decline of religious tolerance in communities and universities alike.

The role of the university as a forum for the international exchange of ideas slowly got lost. Starting with the 16th century Protestant Reformation and the later attempts of Counter-reformation, the emphasis changed from the “universal” to the “particular.” The more it became a goal of the university to educate the youth in a particular loyalty to a

nation, an idea or a religious denomination, the less the ideal of independence or “universality” could be upheld. Doctrinal commitments were increasingly a condition for research and teaching, and the free exchange between the universities could not prevent partiality any longer. Loyalty to truth was replaced by loyalty to the goals, aims and denominations of the community of those who governed it. A high tide of intolerance might initially have strengthened the community. However, ‘in the long run’ the elimination of all opposition blocked research and the value of its teachings for the community as well. The more higher education got involved in direct commitments to the immediate goals of the community, which were taught in all forms of narrow-minded nationalism, the more it lost its independence and its impact beyond the limits of its restricted community.¹⁸

A further reason which made the university abandon the open structure, prevalent at the time of its medieval origins, and to adopt its “modern” forms, was an increased emphasis on research. It remains tempting for academics to claim that the quest for knowledge must never be disgraced by contact with the realities of or struggles within society. Furthermore, there was always the temptation to limit and regulate access to knowledge supposing that only those with very special abilities and the required (social or educational) background can and should profit from higher education. As a consequence, it was logical to attempt to limit the highest level of research to the few representing excellence in their field. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, new elitist patterns adapted the hereditary structure of the old feudal system to the university. Birth as guarantee for status in society is replaced by achievement. This leads to the paradoxical ideal of the career open to “talent,” which holds that “everyone should have an equal chance to become unequal.”¹⁹ Aristocracy in research replaced community oriented teaching. During the middle ages, all scholars, from the B.A. to the professor, had to defend and dispute their thesis in public. The new elite of academic research limited research and the *disputatio* of its results to their circle. It was logical as well to push the denial of the importance of teaching one step further. For the benefit of academic research alone the renaissance of “Academies” granted the research elite freedom from the “lower”

duties of teaching. In their modern, not Platonic meaning, “Academies” were — and are — conceived as erudite societies. Their aim was not so much the instruction of the public, but the advancement of culture, literature, arts and sciences through its most brilliant or most powerful representatives. Academies of research, focusing on the progress of sciences rather than teaching, can trace their tradition for more than seven centuries. Following Brunetto Latini’s example in the late 13th century, especially the foundation of the *Accademia Platonica* by Cosimo de’ Medici in 1442 in Florence, all other European academies elevated research over teaching. Most prominent still are the *English Royal Society*²⁰ and the *Académie Française*, dating back to the 17th century.²¹ Both exist today, under a different organizational structure, but operate under the same concept. Their aim is to gather outstanding personalities merely to promote knowledge, without any contact with the community. Consequently, these academies address the public not through public discourse, but solely through their scholarly publications.

Research in academies, in which research implied no teaching responsibilities, offered a model of centralized planning. The concentration of knowledge in the academies allowed both a centralized planning and the organization of society on the one hand and the tighter control on research on the other hand. Due to the aristocratic structure, this form of research seems to safeguard a high standard of knowledge.²² These academies, when understood in an elitist manner, suppose that progress of society is fostered primarily by scientific or scholarly publications. But can this fulfill the quest for knowledge by the citizenry in a democracy? If, as Aristotle puts it in the opening words of the *Metaphysics*, “All men by nature desire to know,” can knowledge be restricted to the small elite of those few ‘capable’ of research?²³ The devaluation of teaching and the elevation of scholarly research is still alive and has led to the principle “publish or perish.” Frequently, this principle, as based on quantitative data, governs American universities more than the appreciation of quality in publication or teaching. The number of publications is often mistaken for their significance as — to a lesser degree — the number of students and their subjective responses are sometimes mistaken for objective quality-standards. The medieval standards focused less on the

quantity, but more on the quality of the results. Fame and recognition depended more on the impact of both publications and teaching than on figures.

Notwithstanding, one sign of — medieval — hope is still to be observed. Even the most extensive number of publications does not lead to recognition by the larger academic community which transcends the specifics of the particular campuses. Utopians could imagine that this international dimension will eventually (re)form the ideal university. In this superior sense, the original *idea* of the university goes beyond the reality of any past or subsisting institution. With Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, the "idea" of the university could claim: "I have not yet come to my time; some are born posthumously." However, optimism has to be limited. Once the flood of publications leads to "tenure" at the desired institution — an unknown security at Bologna — the incentives to search for national or international recognition diminish. If the institution in question is highly regarded, this corrective does not apply at all. Who could dare to compare the judgement of "immortals" from the *Académie Française* or similar institutions with anybody else?

The elitist conception of the role of the university as a "research institution" derives from the conception of elite academies. For the U.S. scholarly tradition, it is mainly rooted in the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810 in accordance with the plans of Wilhelm von Humboldt whose name it bears today.²⁴ Following Berlin and the example of the University of Göttingen, U.S. and English institutions adopted the German research-orientated standards. This "heroic ideal" was always "in conflict with the modern world."²⁵ It tried to overcome the medieval influences which "atrophied in a trade-guild mentality."²⁶ The "Humboldtian" university mastered the tension between the conflicting ideals of aristocracy through elitism on the one side and extension of knowledge through teaching on the other by an appeal to authority.²⁷ The dominance of research over (undergraduate) teaching guaranteed the university that its place would not be endangered by the rise of other academic institutions. The adoption of the academic ideal gives the leading U.S. universities a research atmosphere still close to the German academic ideal.

This German academic ideal is built on the concept of the public use of reason derived from Immanuel Kant's teachings about what "Enlightenment" should mean in a society which tries to escape from the bindings of "self-inflicted tutelage."²⁸ Deeply rooted in this concept of enlightenment is the distinction between the private and the public use of reason. For Kant, the private use of reason by the individual must be limited in ordinary life. From a Kantian perspective, both the soldier and the priest, in their lives as "private" people, should obey first. Everyday life does not leave space for ample reflection. One can alter the circumstances of private life only through criticism after the act. The use of public reason, which is meant to reflect on misuse or misconceptions through "scholarly publications," is supposed to better society and guarantee progress. Thus, it is not the freedom of press or the wide distribution of knowledge, which is hoped to lead to the alteration and improvement of society. The goal is that the *written* dialogue in the erudite society — as in academies or other scholarly institutions — would be sufficient to constitute a new public opinion. It is supposed that the community of scholars with mutual critique by their peers is enough to guarantee public progress. The discussion is limited to scholarly publications as sole representatives of the public to be "enlightened." The paradox of this position is to be found in the hidden claim that one has to be already enlightened in order to achieve further enlightenment. Furthermore, such a position is designed for an authoritarian society with only a small elite of influential scholars. It is a concept unfit for a democracy built on general participation of a broad public in the decision-making process.

This conception of community includes the elitist belief that it is enough for a society's experts to work things out in theory in order for them to work out in practice. Further, it supposes that the aim of research is reached once its results are published. This concept seems to govern the American University-Press system. The Kantian elitist notion of progress in science, through scientific discussion, could be tailored for a society where everybody is already enlightened. However, even for Kant it was impossible to speak about an enlightened age; it would be naive to wish for our present times to aim higher. This is a

problem if we consider that in a democratic society the public should decide on changes and improvements of the future of society. This goal finds itself in an inherent contradiction with the concept of a dialogue of scientists as cherished by the academic community. Furthermore, this common use of the concept of “public discourse” omits the fact that the flood of publications has led to an information glut. Consequently, this information cannot be processed, not even by the most “enlightened” mind. To make the choice of literature more important than its content was certainly not Kant’s aim. Nor is the inflation of articles, arising from the “publish or perish” principle necessary for profound thinking. Rather, it leads to a proliferation of old ideas in new shapes which try to attract attention by non-scientific criteria. The criteria may range from shocking titles to informal arrangements like “I quote you, so you quote me.” Neither of these extremes allows a meaningful discourse. Ultimately, “show” cannot replace content. The results of such research are widely incomprehensible even for an informed public.

It is ironic that the same Americans who founded their country on the rejection of European traditions, intolerance, prejudices and aristocratic distinctions finally accepted an educational system based on modern European, rather than medieval values.²⁹ Key institutions like Amherst considered themselves as “nurseries of piety.” The Christian ministry, not general education, was the sole perspective.³⁰ Similarly, the pre-university education in Europe had seen the *artes liberales* as mere preparation for theology.³¹ Most of these colleges tried to shape young minds only according to the goals of their own community. Whereas the medieval university lived in the steady conflict of ideas, of different “*nationes*” and origins, the early American colleges and universities excluded such conflicts by separation. Even Jefferson, in his attempt to open up education and to reform the university, did not realize the contradiction that was built into the system. On the one hand, we find the rejection of European aristocratic attitudes, or the ideal of an education open to all. On the other hand, the aristocratic aims of higher education (which was copied from European examples, but rejected in theory) were imitated in practice. Jefferson’s *Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge* in 1778 is not to be reconciled with the attempt to “remodel

the alma mater” he attended into a research institution following the “enlightenment”-inspired European model. Education in U.S. universities would be improved, according to Jefferson, if Americans attempted “to draw from Europe the first characters of science.”³²

Medieval Hopes and Fears for a Modern University

If one is ready to accept that it is possible to criticize the modern idea of the university from the point of view of its medieval archetype, the question remains: what qualitative norm does the university as an institution provide today? American universities, as most of their Western counterparts, still cherish a quasi-aristocratic model of education on the one hand and the objective of open access on the other. Quantitative criteria determine the degree of excellence of an institution in both domains. Today, universities often perceive student enrollment figures as well as student data response as the most relevant indicator of quality. Similarly, the number of publications or the percentage of Ph.D.’s on its staff are meant to provide the criteria for its academic qualification. These quantitative requirements are neither compatible with each other nor with the original idea of the university. There is a split in the university between its attempt to popularize culture and the elitist part of its structure. The crisis stems from the inherent contradiction between these two ideals. The contradiction is not that obvious in the modern American university, because, unlike the academy of Athens, which was in a garden close to the city, most U.S. universities today are gardens of quietness outside the city.³³ The parallel of the contemporary university is not to the medieval university, integrated into community life, but to the medieval *monastery* in its total seclusion. The best framework for the “nurseries of piety” mentioned above could be furnished far from a heterogeneous community, in ‘splendid isolation’ As Umberto Eco puts it:

Nothing more closely resembles a monastery (lost in the countryside, walled, flanked by alien, barbarian hordes, inhabited by monks who have nothing to do with the world and devote themselves to their private researches) than American universities.³⁴

The monastic analogy can be pushed further. As a lay brother or monk in a medieval monastery is kept apart from the life of the community at large, most contemporary universities place their undergraduate teaching apart from separately cloistered research. Initiation into true knowledge is reserved to those happy few at very isolated ivy-league schools which will become the next generation of researchers, for themselves, not for the community or the world. Today, however, science and the university as a place of research should contribute more to the community which nourishes them than the mere preservation of knowledge per monastic tradition. There were few exceptions to the monastic rule not to take part in community life. Extraordinary thinkers like scholar and *medicus* Hildegard of Bingen could write books for the community (partially in the generally understood common German language) only because she overcame the borders of cloistered life.³⁵ The rule, as codified by ascetic orders such as the cistercians, allowed no such interference with worldly affairs. Scholarly and medical books were conserved and stored in monasteries, not studied and spread. According to St. Bernard, medical practice would disturb the spiritual order. Monks are monks, and not physicians.³⁶ Analogous the contemporary split between undergraduate and graduate studies, the monastic orders practice a separation between lay monks and those initiated not only in the mysteries of faith, but also those of science. This appears problematic only if modern societies are not willing to accept the medieval consequences of such seclusion of knowledge from the community: even the most skilled writers were mere recorders, including only transcriptions and illuminations as productive activities. Outstanding scholars of the monastic orders like Thomas Aquinas, who were not devoid of any spark of original or new thought as many of their predecessors, could only acquire and distribute their knowledge through the universities. Monastic orders could and can preserve their seclusion because their aim was and is independence and distance from the community. This is not true for the modern or medieval universities. They live from and for the community which finances them, from which the students come and, more important, to which they return. For the original idea of the university, the only substantial change in this interdependent relationship derives from the enlarged definition of community. Instead of the limited sense of town or

city-state, the present understanding includes the community at large.

Before the rise of the university, it was left mainly to the monastic order of the Dominicans to *preach*, not to teach, to the emerging communities what was right and wrong. The medieval alternative to — and predecessor of — free discourse as practiced in universities was the indoctrination of the community by an informed minority. All curiosity, interpreted as doubt in the divine authority, was withheld and had to be replaced by a blind belief in the authorities.³⁷ Even if one could trust such authorities, this form of education allows only for the dissemination and the conservation of obtained knowledge. The spirit of conservation, however, does neither allow the development from nor the adaptation of ancient knowledge according to the needs of modern times. As with any form of dogmatism, this form of indoctrination lacks freedom of discussion.

Similar to the “middle” ages, a modern society, especially one in transition, has a constant need for readjustment. The modern challenges, from technology to social change, can only be met by a university that knows how to reintegrate itself in the community from which it grew. Publications of the monastic type, addressed only to the few readers of other elitist institutions, will rarely be able to have the needed impact on everyday life. The same countries which nurtured the most outstanding universities and scholars have a growing gap between academic knowledge and everyday culture. Reading skills are lost, and an increasingly dyslexic population is unable to appreciate or understand the highly theorized arguments of its scholars. Unwillingly, we are today approaching one undesirable aspect of medieval education. By different reasons, we are lowering the degree of literacy to medieval levels of instruction where only few could read and write. The manipulation of illiterate populations by images, be it through stained glass church windows or TV-commercials, is comparable. In addition, we are losing the institutional ability of the medieval university to communicate knowledge beyond the limits of academia.

The role of the university as systematizer and clarifier could and can be upheld in the following ways: it can overcome the attitude of

splendid isolation and regain its role as architect and builder of bridges between the past and the present, the strange and the familiar. As the ancient universities could translate Greek thought or Arab mathematics or optics into everyday life, the university of today can fulfill its ancient role of translator for the community. However, it can do this only through selected publications. A look at the ancient form of the *Summa* of the work of the *quator doctores* in Bologna could be helpful. They tried to incorporate new knowledge in old forms and made knowledge thus “applicable again in an environment with changed customs and practical needs.”³⁸ The condition for the success of this enterprise is a redefinition of the meaning and form of publication.

The real function of the modern university as derived from its medieval origins is to promote its original egalitarian approach, admitting everyone, notwithstanding his/her social or inherited background. The realm of influence for institutions of secondary education has grown. More students than ever go through a form of higher education, and in the U.S. the percentage is around 60% of the younger population (depending on the definition of what justifies the qualification as “higher”). Since this aspect of influence on society cannot be neglected, the university has to focus more on application of knowledge to “real” life. Thus, the undergraduate-teaching has to find a more important place in the “publishing” practice of the university. Universality of thought implies the universal acceptance of generally discussed ideas — not only of the happy few, but by a broad public. Due to the altered concept of the university today and due to its accessibility to more and more college students, this aim seems achievable by the university itself. Informed consent of the entire voting public is a condition for the existence of a participatory democracy. As the university proceeds with the adventure of increasing human knowledge, it is bound to meet the new challenge of communicating the results to the public. Since the public is not composed of scholars and since the results of relevant research must be distributed nationally, the publishing practices have to be changed.

More attention has to be given to the question: how do we have to publish, lest we perish? The University as a whole must develop a re-

sponsibility to further the understandability of all research. The new aims of a reformed publishing practice should include: publications must be accessible and understandable (if necessary, in summarized “translations” from specialized jargon) to the general public. This could only be achieved if the Cartesian ideal of clearness and distinctness is revitalized — and if rhetoric and logic are revitalized as essential parts of the curriculum. Virtually no faculty of the university would disagree with the view that a basic education in both fields would improve the results of further studies in all fields.

Teaching and Research on Common Grounds

To bring research to the public, the results of inquiry will have to become part of teaching — thus not only revitalizing the teaching on the undergraduate level, but also making it public. If these assumptions are accepted, then it will be necessary to revitalize an academic technique lost since the medieval universities — the ability to summarize arguments in simple words and to dispute them in public. Today as then, the necessary criterion for control of research could be met by these disputations. By exposing new ideas to criticism, they can at the same time become public and be integrated in the core of knowledge common to all. On these common grounds, more specialized research can be founded.

This leads to the question: Do we need a “core program”? Should public and private university education preserve a common ground of knowledge? The multicultural society of today’s universities seems to abandon this idea more and more, claiming that diversity itself is a value to be cherished. But couldn’t we learn from the medieval concept of the university that it was just the common foundation of knowledge, be it in classical texts or in logical skills, which allowed on this common ground the most vivid debates? This attempt to find a new canon does not aspire to regulate the subject matter of research, or to impose new dogmas. Such an attempt was made in the case of Galileo — and had to fail. But it seeks to reinstall a common ground of knowledge on which free research can be built and understood by a broader public.³⁹ The tendency to open up the universities and colleges to wider portions of the population offers the unique chance of spreading knowledge wider and to make

the debate about the fundamental issues of our future accessible to the public. Thus, through teaching and accessible, understandable publications, the impact of the university on the community can grow without endangering either academic freedom or the quality of research. It is only necessary to reemphasize the importance of the forms of diffusion of knowledge.⁴⁰ Therefore, greater emphasis has to be laid on the teaching and practice of written and oral discursive skills. “Thought and speech are inseparable from each other. Matter and expression are parts of one: style is a thinking out into language.”⁴¹ The new imperative will have to include rhetoric, understood as the requirement: write and read in terms that everybody can understand. This leads to the question, “What should be taught?” All possible answers go far beyond the framework of this article, but one core guideline we could learn from the medieval interpreters of Aristotle — both the “liberal arts” and the more “useful or mechanical arts” will have to be combined, without placing one upon the other.⁴²

The emphasis on a more accessible style was part of the medieval university in which the disputations, the defense of one’s thesis and the study of rhetoric for this sake, played an important role. For this endeavor, the standards of academic work will have to be changed. The form of the presentation has to regain its simplicity and the preparation of scholarship has to refocus on this aspect. Alas, I fear articles like this one will have to vanish. The practice of extensive quotation would have to be replaced by concentration on few, commonly accessible messages. A *Summa* of knowledge would help to concentrate on the central problems. Publications, as teaching, should regain simplicity. The principle “publish or perish” has led to a flood of written publications which must be stopped, because it destroys the role of the university as systematizer and clarifier. This vital function for the community can only be preserved if publication is reserved to the few “new” ideas, essential to each subject and time. This would require a longer period of discussion and reflection prior to publication, which would only summarize the essence of the results. A concentration of the publication of research would increase the dialogue between both experts and public because it would help to re-create a common foundation for discussion. One danger is,

however, hidden in the need to summarize. The lack and cost of paper served as filter in medieval times. Recent experiences with the allocation of paper, under the control of censoring academies in former east European states, do not encourage to renew this medieval method.⁴³

It should be recognized that it is possible to incorporate the students at all levels in the process of research and that this combination of research and teaching need not, for a relatively long time, lead to written publications. By this method, the quality of papers or books can be increased and their volume decreased. Problems can be discussed in the community only if the standpoints are clear. This requires a limitation of the material. In the Middle Ages, this limitation was natural: the cost of material and work involved in the reproduction, multiplication and, later, print of books often formed the unjust but effective hurdle. It was difficult to obtain access to literature — and even more difficult to get one's own thoughts published. If the focus will be laid more on the quality of publication than on quantity, the public discussion will be able to grasp the key issues again. A focus on traditional logic and rhetoric should prepare scholars sufficiently. If scholars get prepared not only for research, but also for effective publication, then the university will be able to regain its function as a marketplace of new and old ideas in which the public discussion leads to public teaching and publicly understood and accepted solutions.

The university will also have to focus more on its function as mediator than its role as preserver of knowledge. The knowledge that is presently cloistered has to be spread in order to become socially effective. The university should be able to form and inform for the sake of the community. Its task has to include more and more the help in an orientation of the community. The new challenges, in a scientific and over-informed age, demand similar adaptations from modern universities as the uncertain and under-informed medieval times demanded from their universities. The question of how and where to find knowledge becomes more and more important. These skills have to be taught in order to allow the necessary orientation. The teaching faculty and the librarians have the same duties today as in the middle ages: to provide

the student with an overview, to display the possible directions of research and provide the foundations for later independent research. Furthermore, one classical problem is reemerging: who, if not the universities, could fight again for access to special information?⁴⁴ The supporting material might be different, the problem is not. The so called “electronic super highway” and rare, expensive books must not lead to a seclusion of knowledge in the hands of the few able to pay — if the universities can provide the necessary material, and if they are able to teach students how to use available resources to answer their questions. For this task, contemporary universities have to take over another, slightly expanded, responsibility from their medieval predecessors. They will have to train students not only in writing and reading skills, but also in “information literacy.”⁴⁵

The medieval student had more choices than college students have today. He could change the subject, freely commute to other universities and compare the teachings. Ideally — and the idea of the medieval university, not its reality, is the topic of this article — the student could freely make up his own mind. The mobility to travel from one place to another helped to orient oneself and to gain the independence that both the institutions and the students of today are losing. Independence is here to be understood in the medieval sense of autonomy, both politically and socially. This independence however, built on a solid foundation, is today more necessary than ever. Life in the so-called “multicultural” society is possible only if the confrontation of the student with new ideas is the rule, not the exception — and when he/she learns that everybody is a stranger other than at home.⁴⁶

One point closely linked to the contradiction between the necessity of high-ranking, specialized research on the one hand and “popular” publication and discussion on the other hand can now be solved. The right to know, which no democracy can restrict to an elite, is equal for all citizens. It imposes the serious responsibility to develop pragmatic ways of conveying valuable information to non-experts by experts in science and technology on the one side. This implies, on the other side, that all those participating in the decision making process need to acquire enough

scientific literacy to enable them to contribute to and take part in the public discussion. Regardless of the field of research it can be said today that there is no excuse for passively accepting any form of paternalistic or elitist treatment of any subject. Informed consent in a modern society has to be founded on the revitalized university as an institution in which research and teaching are focused on community needs. This demand for clear and relevant information for the non-experts force responsibilities upon both the specialized experts of the research elite and the general public of non-experts.

Last but not least, one other crucial and lost aspect of the medieval university should be regained — its autonomy. The university's independence made the impact on the community possible which it never could have achieved otherwise. Only the independent counsellor is taken seriously.⁴⁷ We do not have to aim at a structure built on the students alone like in Bologna; but a reasonable change of the institution without endangering its independence seems possible only if those concerned make the necessary steps together, without administrative constraints. "Adapt (to new circumstances) or perish" could be the new motto — which is not so new: it has been a leading principle of the United States and of some early (Italian) universities. The medieval recipe for such challenges was self-administration. We should not forget that medieval universities could teach us another lesson: that universities are not immortal, that they can be advisors or *victims* of their time. To nourish the authority of the university, it has to regain independence from a) the temporal standards of the marketplace, from b) the city it is situated in and from c) the state or the community by which it is funded. Only distance from the community will enable the university to fulfill its role for the community. Too close a fit between a community's demands and the academical response to these needs would be shortsighted. Only a truly independent, self-administered university can fulfill the double role as critic of society as well as its servant. In order to flourish in autonomy, it will have to preserve its medieval ideal and adapt its modern shape. A "great idea changes in order to remain the same. In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be is to have changed often."⁴⁸ In this sense, the surviving idea of the medieval

university can be described in terms of its reformation.

I hope to have shown that the best remedy against some threats of the modern crisis is to regain the *simplicity* present at the origins of the university *in* and *for* the *community*, understood as an association of those who have something in common. In its wider context, “community” has to be interpreted today beyond the limits of cities or nation-states. Not the town or the place where the university is located form today’s community, but the *global* interests of society. The medieval university addressed these problems long before the nation-states were born. The part of the medieval origins we have to overcome today is that which originated in a *guild* system that limits access to members of the research-guild alone. For this, the university does not have to jeopardize its standards — it has just to reconcile teaching and research. The open university, which tries to redefine its role in the community, has to overcome the aristocratic character and become a forum for public discourse relevant to all. The information-age is comparable to the middle ages in its capacity to overcome borderlines. Technically, the “agora,” “forum” or marketplace of ideas can be revitalized by modern technology, involving all members of the growing communities. International exchange, not local research, has to become the rule, not the exception. To fulfill this endeavor, it is not sufficient to allow foreign students on the university campus. Common research goals and projects, transcending national borders, would follow the medieval example. The idea of the university is far older than the birth of border-building nation states. The capacity of medieval universities to transcend questions of national origin — or even race — could serve as an example for an internationalized modern university or society. Modern electronic technology, used responsibly, could provide the necessary infrastructure for such an international exchange. Still free of charge, the “Internet” provides a forum on which all participants are equal. For the medieval forefathers of our current university system, the question of St. Augustine’s African origin was never an issue in his being accepted as a (Western) church-father. In the modern world of global information and global exchange, the temptation to escape from tensions in the declining communities or inner cities by a retreat to a community-alien “ivory tower” of teaching and

research has to be resisted. Instead, the words “community needs” should furnish the goals for teaching and research. Otherwise, the medieval dangers of chaos and the consequent captivity of the public by simplistic answers from dogmatic leaders could become modern again. To prevent this, we should not mourn the glory of those grand old days of the medieval university, but try to save its idea. For the future, we could use some of the old passion and simplicity to push on to the new frontiers.⁴⁹

ENDNOTES

1. Reinhold Niebuhr, “Foreword,” in Arnold S. Nash, The University and the Modern World, New York, Macmillan, 1944, p. xii.
2. Edited by F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden, 3 vols., 2nd. ed., Oxford, Clarendon 1936.
3. For the U.S., the crisis of the nineties is funding. The number of non-traditional students unable to pay their tuition is growing, and outside sources for funding through industry or governmental plans, like “star-wars,” are dying out. When legislators are asked to step in, they have to weight priorities in view of a difficult budget situation. The university, if conceived as engaged in the ‘luxury’ of research, will have to rank after **hot** issues like: public health care, public safety, funding for prisons or secondary education. For a discussion of the need for applicable skills see Richard Eisenbeis, “Contingency Theory, Technology, and the Future of Higher Education” in The Image of Technology, Selected Papers, ed. W. Wright and St. Kaplan, Pueblo, Univ. of Southern Colorado Press, 1994, pp. 288-294.
4. The collapse of the “Great Pax” in which it was easy to determine and distinguish good from evil, civilization from barbarian, and democratic from totalitarian, leads Eco to his comparison. See “The Return to the Middle Ages,” in Travels in Hyper Reality: Essays, trans. by W. Weaver, San Diego/New York/London, HarBrace, 1986, p. 75.
5. Interesting to note that the rise of university-like structures in Greece develops parallelly with the opening of societies and the shifting and alteration of borders. Saving the Sophist from their bad reputation, de Romilly makes a point in showing the universality of their practice-oriented teachings. The fifth century Sophist’s teachings inaugurated “modern” education and included besides *rhetoric* also *grammar* , the nature of *morality* , understood as “ethos” in the Aristotelian sense of common understanding and in the sense of *history of society* . In the diversity of its curriculum and the openness for all contents, the Sophists could claim to have inspired the humanistic ap-

proach of the renaissance more than the classical philosophers could. See Jacqueline de Rommily, Les Grands Sophistes dans l' Athènes de Pericles, Paris, Falletis, 1988, pp. 50-76. Furthermore, the temple-schools in Babylon, Egypt, India and China and the library school of Alexandria could be considered germs of higher educational institutions.

6. The time span between the fall of the Roman Empire, the destruction of the library of Alexandria, and the twelfth century saw a decline of knowledge in the West. The knowledge acquired by the ancient Greeks was cherished more at the caliphs' courts or in Islamic schools than in their Christian counterparts in the West. The research and teachings of Al-Farabi, Avicenna, Al-Gazali, and, especially, Averroes preserved texts and thoughts which later allowed Western universities to regain Aristotelian ideas through Islamic sources. At the same time, the Western world was living through a phase of intellectual stagnation, largely caused by the hierarchical, aristocratic structure of the "Holy Roman Empire." Before the era of the universities, the surviving classical knowledge was merely preserved in palaces or in cloisters and embedded in an atmosphere hostile to independent research or intellectual exchange. Before the emergence of universities, even scholarly life was largely dominated — partially under the disguise of neo-Platonism — by half-knowledge. It consisted of a mixture of scientifically absorbed religious doctrines and popular superstition. Before the rise of the universities in the Western hemisphere, critical thinking all but ceased to exist.
7. For the extent of this freedom — and the first strike at the Parisian university in 1281 due to the violation of the integrity of one of its professors - see Jean-Louis Bataillon, "Les conditions de travail des maîtres de l'Université de Paris au XIII siècle," in Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques 67, 1983, pp. 417 ff.
8. Giorgio di Vergottini, Lo studio di Bologna, l'impero, il papato, "Studi e memorie per la storia dell'Università di Bologna," Bologna, 1956. It is difficult to determine which universities came first, because in Bologna, the transition from a law school to a university was smooth. Interesting to note that the appearance of universities occurs around the beginning of the 13th century all over Europe (from Bologna ca. 1100, Paris ca. 1150, Naples 1224 to Cambridge 1229 as far west as Salamanca in 1215/1243). However, not the date of the foundation, but the freedom from institutions foreign to the university should furnish the distinguishing criterion. On the freedom of Naples as obtained from Frederick II., see Heinrich Denifle, Die Entstehung der Universitäten im Mittelalter, Berlin, 1885, vol. 1, p. 586.
9. Here to be translated as "guild of the people of Bologna," later renamed as

- “populus” (people of Bologna). It has its correspondence in the German “Rat” or council. See J. K. Hyde, “Universities and Cities in Medieval Italy” in The University and the City. From Medieval Origins to the Present, ed. Thomas Bender, New York, Oxford Univ. Press, 1988, p. 16.
10. The number reached from two (at Oxford, founded upon the Parisian model) to more than twenty, depending on the origin of the student body.
 11. See Peter Classen Studium und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter, ed. J. Fried, Anton Hiersemann, Stuttgart, 1983, in Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 29, p. 287-89.
 12. Bologna was counterbalanced by Frederick II of Hohenstaufen with the foundation of the University of Naples. Cambridge became the competing institution of Oxford after the exodus of all Oxford scholars from Oxford due to a violation of the freedom of the “universitas” by the authorities. For the sake of completeness, it has to be mentioned that I present here a condensed version of the three major theories about the origin of the university: I dismiss the “traditionalist” theory, which claims a direct link of the West-European copies with Byzantine, Oriental or Arabic models, but acknowledge the large influx of structural elements and content from such institutions, especially through the reign of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen. The second theory, founded on the thesis that intellectual interest alone led to foundations, and the third theory, claiming as “social theory,” that new elites needed a new standard converge in my claim. See Rainer A. Müller, Geschichte der Universität, München, Callway Verlag, 1990.
 13. Decree of Pope Innozenz III, and 1208 Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, ed. Heinrich Denifle, Émile Chatelain, Vol. I, Paris, 1889, # 8, p. 67.
 14. Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, op.cit. # 14, pp. 73-5 and # 20, pp. 78-80.
 15. See J. K. Hyde, “Commune, University, and society in Early Medieval Bologna” in University in Politics, Case Studies from the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period, ed. John W. Baldwin, ed. al., John Hopkins Press, Baltimore/London, 1972, p. 17-46, especially p. 25.
 16. Translators build a bridge leading from “The Philosopher” to the Aristotelian interpretations by Isidore of Seville, and the interpretation and application of his work in the works of Thomas Aquinas. See Thomas M. Seebohm, “Isidore of Seville versus Aristotle on the Questions on Human Law and Right in the Summa theologica of Thomas Aquinas,” Penn State Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal, Volume 11, no. 2, pp. 87 ff.

17. It has to be added that this free access was questioned from the very beginnings of the university in order to foster the community in which it grew. Throughout the history of higher education, attempts were made to limit learning to a very small proportion of the population. These limitations were often deliberate in order to reserve specific benefits for a particular community, like Bologna or Paris. See Arnold Toynbee, in Education in the Perspective of History, ed. Edward D. Meyers, New York, Harper Publishers, 1960.
18. See Gerald Lee Gutek, American Education in a Global Society: Internationalizing Teacher Education, White Plains, New York, Longman, 1993, p. 20 f. In Italian this community-fixed form of self-interest is called *Campanilismo*, ignoring the world beyond the sight of the church-steeple.
19. John E. Talbott, "The History of Education" in Daedalus, 100, no. 1, 1971, p. 137.
20. It is interesting to note that the "Royal Society" had as its aim not knowledge alone, but its application. So the experimental scientist Robert Hook could describe in 1663 as its goal "To improve the knowledge of natural things, and all useful Arts, Manufactures, Mechanick practices, Engynes and Inventions by Experiments." Quoted in C. R. Weld, A History of the Royal Society, London, J. W. Parker, 1848, Vol. I, p. 146. See also A. Nash, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
21. As example, just the most famous French *Academie des Sciences* should be mentioned, which after its suppression under the French Revolution in 1793 by the Convention was reshaped under the dome of the *Institut de France*. The most prestigious branch of the *Academie Française*, which came under the patronage of the Cardinal de Richelieu in 1635, is considered the highest achievement possible in French society. Thus, its "immortal" 40 members are distinguished as the most famous men of their time without any obligation to teach. What started as a private gathering of men such as Descartes, Gassendi, Pascal and Mersenne was organized under governmental protection under Colbert in the royal library (today's Bibliothèque Nationale of the "rue de Richelieu" which is only now losing its elitist shape) and formally named Academie des Sciences in 1699. The first American parallel structures were founded by Benjamin Franklin under the direct influence of the French philosophical societies. For the Germanic context, the philosopher-diplomat Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz has to be recognized as the key promoter of this concept of an enlightened academy, which can be found in the Prussian *Akademie der Wissenschaften* in Berlin, its counterparts in Vienna, St. Petersburg, or the latest

- re-foundation in 1949 in Mainz.
22. Centralized Academies took control over publishing practices — thus over the content of research and public discourse in virtually all states formerly under Soviet influence. In East Berlin, e.g., the academies controlled not only publications, but even the paper distribution.
 23. Aristotle, Metaphysics, I. 1. 980a.
 24. Wilhelm von Humboldt worked since his nomination as Prussian minister of education in 1809 on common standards of teaching and on the secularization of the educational system. His reform of teacher education and reformed university served as a model for the introduction of the Ph.D. in the U.S. in 1860. Fichte, as Berlin's first rector in the difficult times of the Napoleonic wars, set the standards in general; Schleiermacher installed theology as a new science. See Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Henrik Steffens and Wilhelm von Humboldt, Die Idee der deutschen Universität: die fünf Grundschriften aus der Zeit ihrer Neugründung durch klassischen Idealismus und romantischen Idealismus, ed. H. Gentner, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956. Already in 1853-54, the University of Michigan followed the German example: "The system of public education ... is copied from the Prussian, acknowledged to be the most perfect in the world ..." By the foundation of The Johns Hopkins University in 1876, with the full implementation of the German model of the graduate school, Humboldt's system was generally implemented. See Daniel Fallon, The German University, Boulder, Colorado Associated University Press, 1980, p. 2. Leading the protest against the German influence, see William James, "The PhD Octopus," in Harvard Monthly 36, 1903, pp. 1-3. See also Lynne V. Cheney, Tyrannical Machines: A Report on Educational Practices Gone Wrong and Our Best Hopes for Setting Them Right, National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C., 1990.
 25. See Daniel Fallon, The German University, A Heroic Ideal in Conflict with the Modern World, Colorado Associated Press, Boulder, 1980.
 26. Hans Schelsky, Einsamkeit und Freiheit: Idee und Gestalt der deutschen Universität und ihrer Reformen, 2nd ed., Düsseldorf, Bertelsmann 1971, p. 21. Compare Fallon, op. cit., p. 6. This authoritarian and elitist concept of the university was formed more by the Baron vom und zum Stein (who worked against Napoleon) than by Humboldt. Its implementation, in the framework of the reform of elementary schools and normal school-like colleges by Humboldt allowed to bring all forms of education under close state supervision.

27. Jaroslav Pelikan, The Idea of the University, New Haven/London, Yale Univ. Press, 1992, p.84 f. See also Edgar S. Furniss, The Graduate School of Yale: A Brief History, New Haven, Yale Graduate School, 1965, p. 18, quoted in Pelikan, op. cit., p. 204.
28. See Immanuel Kant, "Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment" in Immanuel Kant: Philosophical Writings, ed. and trans. by Hans Behler, New York, Continuum, 1986, pp. 264-269.
29. Noah Webster's introduction to his now classical spelling book gives a typical justification for rejecting European values: "Europe is grown old in folly, corruption and tyranny. For America in her infancy to adopt the maxims of the Old World would be to stamp the wrinkles of decrepit old age upon the youth, and to plant the seed of decay in a vigorous constitution." See Henry Steel Commager, Noah Webster's American Spelling Book, New York, Columbia Univ., Teachers College Press, 1962.
30. Western Christian Advocate, Vol. I, May 2, p. 2, quoted in Jef J. Mapp, Jr. The City in the Middle Ages, Lanham, Madison Books, 1987, p. 384. The indoctrination for a certain denomination was the origin of most early university foundations: Brown (Baptist), Columbia (Episcopalian), Georgetown (Catholic), Harvard (Puritan & Unitarian), Princeton (Presbyterian), and Yale and Dartmouth (Congregational).
31. See Marie-Dominique Chenu, La Théologie Comme Science au XIIIe Siècle, 3rd ed., revue et augm., Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1957.
32. "Science" is used here in the German sense of "Wissenschaft," including all scholarly work. See Letter of Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Mann Randolph, February 4, 1800, in Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress microfilm, series T, Doc. 18172, Reel 22; quoted in Robert E. Riegel's Young America, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1949.
33. Universities like U.C.L.A. or Yale are geographically close to the city, but keep a life so separate that the campus is perceived as a shelter from the wild world outside.
34. Eco, op. cit., p. 83. However, these modern "monastic" institutions can no more fulfill their ancient task, because the feudal society for which they were constructed is gone.
35. See her Physics and the extensive letters to scholars and leading figures of her time, such as Bernard of Clairvaux. On her practical medical achievements see Benjamin Lee Gordon, Medieval and Renaissance Medicine, New York, Philosophical Library, 1959, pp. 38 ff.
36. Gordon, op. cit., p. 5.
37. St. Augustine's interdiction of post-mortem dissections which was upheld

- by the Catholic church until the end of Renaissance. See Augustine De Civitate Dei, XII 14,4 PL 41, 791, whereas the medical school of Salerno could preserve the unbroken Greek tradition and, through Arab knowledge, apply and develop traditional medicine, which included dissection. See Gordon, op. cit., pp. 5 ff.
38. Seebohm, op. cit., 84.
 39. The standards for the B. A. were fixed, in content and time, as early as 1255. See H. Rütting, Die Mittelalterliche Universität, Göttingen, 1973; see Charter Université de Paris I, p. 276, quoted in Kurt Flasch Das Philosophische Denken im Mittelalter, Stuttgart, Reclam Universalbibliothek, 1987, p. 295. The core was composed mainly of Aristotle's De Interpretatione, Logica Nova, physics, metaphysics and ethics in an "Aristotelian manner" as well as grammar.
 40. See especially John Henry Newman, The Idea of a University, Defined and Illustrated, 1852/1858, ed. with intro. and notes, I. T. Ker, Oxford, Clarendon, 1976. For the application of his thoughts today, see, J. Pelikan, op. cit., offering equally an extensive list of the relevant literature on "The Idea of the University" and its discussion from Newman until today (pp. 190-197, especially 89: the definition of the university as "a place of teaching" with "the diffusion and extension of knowledge" as object is still relevant).
 41. Newman, op. cit., Vol II.ii.4, cited in J. Pelikan, op. cit., 125.
 42. See the essay on revitalizing the spirit of the University by John Henry Newman, op. cit., chapter v, #6. On the dangers of sacrificing the one for the other part of the university, see also Pelikan, op. cit., pp. 19-21. Yet, a return to the split in "trivium" and "quadrivium" can not provide a valid guideline because here rhetoric dominated a very ambiguous choice of sciences. Compare J. J. Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages. A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance, Berkeley, Berkeley University Press, 1974.
 43. In the German Democratic Republic, dogmatic members of Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur (such as M. Buhr) censored effectively by means of paper-distribution. Humboldt's authoritarian model of the university was frequently praised and used for propaganda purposes (see Fallon, op. cit., p. 11 f).
 44. The medieval threats as described by Eco were to be found in restrictions by the church, the monasteries, and the authorities. Today's threats are to be seen in the appropriation of information and technology as property (exclusive property-rights in the intellectual domain, hindering research

- or teaching) and the price to pay for the access to it. Compare Achim Köddermann, "TV as a Moral Medium and as a Moral Factor of Responsibility" in The Image of Technology, *op. cit.*, 365-371.
45. Retaining and understanding skills are in decline. In order to judge or challenge information, students have know how to access information first. See Mary F. Lennox, Michael L. Walker, Information Literacy in the Educational Process, The Educational Forum 57, 1993, pp. 313 ff.
 46. Here, the concept of the "International University," as developed by Rabindranath Tagore, is still tempting. Grounded in a solid knowledge of their own culture and tradition, students and teachers of different backgrounds meet and learn from each other. See K. G. Saiyidain, The Humanist Tradition in Modern Indian Educational Thought, Madison, Wisconsin, Dembar Educational Research Services, 1967, pp. 37-57, cited in Gutek, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-36.
 47. The influx of state sponsored and industry money through projects from space research to environmental or "third" world development projects led to a relative independence of research institutions after the 50's. However, the factors that led to this relative prosperity (cold war, student revolts, rising student numbers, and growing demand for graduates) have changed and led to a yet deeper dependency. In times of social or economical crisis, this can be fatal.
 48. John Henry Newman, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, 1845, reprint Image Books, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, 1960, p. 48. Compare Pelikan, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
 49. For their helpful discussion of earlier drafts of this paper, I wish to thank Michael Green, Michael Koch and Douglas Shrader.