

Discourses on transformations and the contemporary role of the university in the face of challenges arising from cooperation with the social environment

Dyskursy o przemianach i współczesnej roli uniwersytetu wobec wyzwań wynikających ze współpracy z otoczeniem społecznym

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Introduction

The aim of the article is to show the evolutionary trajectory of the university in Poland and other European countries – from the traditional form to the contemporary form – in the context of its changing social role. The philosophical and pedagogical discourses presented in the article indicate the enormous importance attributed to the traditional university and, at the same time, the need to redefine its function in such a way that it responds to the new needs of humanity at the beginning of the 21st century and in the future.

Universities as social institutions play many important roles. They support and sometimes even initiate processes of a socio-cultural, economic and technological nature. They serve development through educating students and creating knowledge (Goćkowski 1999; Woźnicki 2007; Boguski 2009). Large academic centers, with significant demand and prestige among students, “lead in creating intellectual elites, conducting scientific research at the highest level and with the power of impact” (Szewior 2018, p. 203). Nowadays, the strategy of all universities has transformed towards social responsibility. Smaller academic centres have gained new value thanks to this and have directed their activities towards “building local identity, solidarity, creating local intellectual elites and networks of connections” (Szewior 2018, p. 204).

Although contemporary visions and implementations of the university’s social responsibility are diverse, the authors of this text, following Michał Kleiber (2022, p. 41), consider a number of current global phe-

nomena (“development megatrends”), which require in-depth, scientific reflection and, through education, the involvement of the widest possible circle of conscious and competent people, as one of the important premises for directing the university towards social responsibility. Among these phenomena, we can distinguish: the ecological crisis and the underlying androgenic changes in the natural environment, the spread of armed unrest, civil wars and terrorism together with the economic stratification of the world that underlies them, the ongoing demographic explosion, especially in low-developed countries and the resulting increased migration movements and hence conflicts due to increasing multiculturalism, the dangerous civilization effects of the development of technological innovations, as well as the awareness of common responsibility for the future of the world, which is more of a challenge than reality (Kleiber 2022, pp. 38–40). The university as a place of cultivating rationality, with the possibility of multi-disciplinary research and dissemination of its results through education, is today a key entity that can counteract the negative effects of “development megatrends” and give civilizational progress and changes in the world a well-thought-out, purposeful direction that respects the good of the world as a whole.

In contemporary literature on the subject of the university, the discussion of its social role is accompanied by reflection on the changes in its organizational sphere. The discourses presented in this article refer to both aspects of understanding the university’s identity: functional and structural. The first part of the article is devoted to showing how the functions and organization of the university have been shaped and changed in a historical perspective. In the second part, we present a critical assessment of the condition of the postmodern university in the light of the views of selected representatives of philosophy and social sciences. Finally, in the last paragraphs, we present proposals for capturing the functions and the organizational formula of the university that is conducive to their implementation in the context of its current social significance.

The origins of the university – towards socialization and commercialization of universities

The first manifestations of the academic style of functioning appeared already in antiquity with the philosophically and mathematically oriented Academy, established by Plato in 387 BC, dedicated, according to the philosopher’s intention, to the training of “capable souls” who were to hold important state

functions in the future, Aristotle's Lyceion, founded in 335 BC. Lyceion, which emphasized the pursuit of philosophical and naturalistic studies, and the Stoa of Zeno of Kition, founded in 301 BC. The Stoa of Zeno of Kition, in which ethical education went hand in hand with basic research in metaphysics and theory of cognition (Hadot 2018, pp. 136–146; Laertios 1969, p. 16). Although the first academic forms differed in the importance attached to research or the purpose and leading subjects of education, as well as in their accessibility to potential students (Plato's academy was explicitly elitist, the other two were open to universal access), common to them was the assumption of the school's autonomy (in subject matter and organization) from the state and ruling elites and the needs of the rest of society. Instead, they were guided by the idea of *scire propter ipsum scire* and the formation of enlightened citizens creating social reality anew based on it.

The academic traditions of the ancient philosophical schools, early medieval socio-professional corporatism (primarily guilds) and the way in which the early medieval urban republican communities in northern Italy were organized are considered to be most relevant to the vision that universities emerging in the Middle Ages adopted (Sowa 2009, p. 5) related to nurturing a rational pursuit of truth and teaching based on an intellectual and interpersonal relationship between master and student. At first, the name "university" was used to refer to communities of Latin schools established at churches and monasteries. Over time, the best teachers gathered around them other teachers and students to form what was known as a "studium", in which the study of a selected single subject was dealt with, which eventually led to the formation of forms of multidisciplinary education referred to as *studium generale*, which was to emphasize its broad and systemic nature. The end of the Middle Ages brought these groupings under the name "university" (Haberla, Bobowski 2013, p. 363). The ancient idea of the purpose of the academic community – a focus on the search for truth in a spirit of autonomy and the formation of wisdom regardless of its usefulness to the wider society – gave way in the Middle Ages to the supremacy of the Pope and secular authorities, on whose recognition depended the privileges granted to both university staff and students (Wisse 2005, p. 23). The development of universities during this period was largely driven by the instrumental goals of the Church – fighting heresy by fostering attitudes of obedience to God and his earthly representatives, and the goals of the secular authorities, who benefited from the influx of wealthy overseas students. As a result, both the research and teaching that took place in universities was focused on upholding the legacy of predecessors and training adepts to adhere to Church doctrine.

The modern era associated with scientific breakthroughs in the natural sciences, a number of important inventions, e.g. printing, the doctrinal split of the Church and the development of the experimental method were also associated with strong resistance from university circles, which countered the inclusion of new disciplines in the existing repertoire that included theology, legal sciences, medicine, or the liberal arts, and caused representatives of these disciplines to often operate outside the institution or form other forms of educational groupings dedicated to engineering, forestry, or veterinary medicine (Wisse 2005, p. 29). The proliferation of competing forms of education, as well as the gradual weakening of the Church's position, led in late modernity to a greater openness of universities to incorporate new fields of knowledge having a social pragmatics orientation and linking the goals of science to changing the world for human needs – *scire propter uti*, rather than the ancient ideal of knowing the truth for its own sake.

Despite this breakthrough in understanding the fundamental purpose of the university, later conceptions of it have addressed the question of its mission in different ways. For example, Malcolm Tight, analyzing a wide set of world literature on the subject, pointed to three models of the university that are leading contemporary discussions:

- the Humboldtian (after the originator Wilhelm von Humboldt), which most influenced the shape of 19th-century Central European universities, whose vision is associated with research-based teaching guided by the Enlightenment idea of scientific rationality and the experimental method;
- proposed by John Newman and highly influential in the Anglo-Saxon world, the idea of the university as a place for the dissemination and expansion of universal knowledge, along with a reduced role for developmental research;
- presented by Clark Kerr's idea of a "multi-university" that takes into account the potential and needs of a wide range of participants and stakeholders: from students and graduates, to academic and non-academic university employees, to legislators, businessmen and representatives of other social groups.

It is noteworthy that the models-Humboldt and Kerrovsky-relate the activities of universities to interaction with the social environment and its needs, while Newman's seems to represent the ancient-medieval idea of the exclusively Enlightenment purpose of scientific cognition. At the same time, the Humboldtian concept sees the role of the university as a kind of "incubator"

for broad external change, while the Kerrian version is more of a vision of the university as an inclusive institution embracing the omniverse and able to harness its synergistic effects for the general good and individual stakeholders.

An interesting perspective on identifying changes in the historically viewed development of universities was shown by Mieczysław Malewski (2018) in an article entitled: "On three traditions of studying". There he presented a characterization of the axionormative attributes of three models of the university: the traditional university, the modernist university and the postmodern university. The purpose of the study was to reconstruct the historically evolving patterns of studying, but it was emphasized that it cannot be ruled out that each of these patterns is still alive and present in the attitudes of contemporary students.

According to Malewski, the chief value that guided the activities of the traditional university was truth, which at the social level heralded the possibility of achieving wisdom. Scientific truth was created in a community of people sharing the same ethos based on a strong identification with the duty resulting from the intellectual and contemplative mode of functioning of scholars and students. The effectiveness of the activities of such a university was the result of the degree of initiation into this community activity, done since the Middle Ages in partnership with the church. Already the modernist university brings a change in the axionormative field, as the supreme value of truth gives way in it to the idea of development most often understood as progress, through which social advancement was to become attainable and universally accessible. The main partner of the university became the state, which regulated its functioning through appropriate regulations and identified its performance through the quality of the social reforms it initiated. The university community was replaced by a community of loyal professionals training the younger generations for certain socially desirable professions. And the last figure of the university identified by Malewski – the postmodern one emphasizes primarily market-oriented income and profit, the achievement of which is to be achieved by equipping graduates with the disposition for reflective functioning, intra-university relations, due to its massification, become highly minimized, and the participant in the educational process is treated on a business model as a customer of an open academic service center. Due to the fact that the leading partner of the post-modern university is the market, the university takes over its mechanisms of regulation t.i.e. inspections or audits, and captures its activities as a kind of product, the quality of which is verified by the satisfaction of an external customer. Hence there is a transformation in the attitude of its contributors, who, in line with the market trend, represent a consumerist attitude.

Krzysztof Leja (2008), comparing the traditional university and the post-modern university, which is otherwise known as the entrepreneurial university, pointed out a fundamental contrast between the two in the similarly to Malewski's terms of axionormative conditions. Namely, he stated that the traditional version of the university is characterized by a particularly high level of autonomy and academic self-governance, and leaves issues of marketization, competition, and corporate management at a low level. The entrepreneurial university, on the contrary, shows a low level of academic autonomy and self-governance, while giving high importance to marketization, competitiveness and corporate style.

This modern form of the so-called entrepreneurial university, which is repeatedly adopted by the university, has three main goals: 1) conducting research, 2) providing education, and 3) introducing the commercialization of research and technology. In addition, the entrepreneurial university is characterized by "net-working" (Andrzejak 2015), which involves cooperation of the university with enterprises, companies, financial institutions, which leads to independence of the institution from the state budget. Another characteristic is the use of English – as the language of research and lectures. With the development of the possibilities for rapid transfer of information and remote contact, the potentials for knowledge transfer and the opportunities for creating new knowledge that follow become extremely wide. The process of moving away from linear knowledge creation to creating knowledge interactively is accelerating (Wawrzyniak 2004, p. 287).

Assessment of the contemporary condition of the university

As early as the 1930s, the founder of the Lviv-Warsaw School of Philosophy, Kazimierz Twardowski, pointed to the difficult situation of Polish universities, which he associated primarily with the lack of social understanding of the very idea of the university and its mission, and hence its reduction to the role of "an ordinary school, an institution, intended to teach on an equal footing with a whole range of general and vocational schools" (Twardowski 1930, p. 9). Meanwhile, the university as an institution draws its unique meaning from the very idea of the university, which is associated with its special vocation – the love of objective truth as a truth justified by the laws of logic and the power of argumentation, and the constant focus on striving for it. Hence, the philosopher sees the basic task of the university in active research activities serving to discover new scientific truths and probabilities, as well as testing and promoting reliable methodological solutions. The university owes its dignity in the activity

and attitude of its researchers to this service to objective truth, which should be spiritually independent of any internal or external interests or influences, and which it emanates by remaining “steadfast like a lighthouse that shows ships the way through stormy waves with its light, but never immerses its light in the waves themselves” (Twardowski 1930, p. 11). The fundamental value of truth also determines that philosophy, as the most advanced discipline in inquiries into the conditions of truth of scientific knowledge, should constitute a pillar of the university. This idea of the university gives rise to its supranational character, because scholars guided by the supreme value of truth become participants in one great republic encompassing the entire human civilization. This does not mean that the university should be a structure isolated from the rest of society and closed to its needs. Its socially significant influence results firstly from the aspect of its vocation related to the education and upbringing of young people, aimed at building in them an attention to objective truth and the ability to seek it through critical inquiry. Secondly, the results of scientific research are passed on by scientists to society through scientific creativity. Societies equipped in this way have the chance to use scientific methods, which lead to the possibility of peaceful cooperation for the common good, in all areas of life.

Philosopher Karl Jaspers pointed out similar difficulties faced by European universities – first in the 1920s, then in the period after World War II. Critically referring to the university reality and its growing bureaucratization, the commercialization of the offer, the massification of education and the schooling of its techniques, as well as the crisis of relations and work ethos in the academic community itself (“the behavior of faculty members was compared to the behavior of monkeys in the sacred grove in Benares: a monkey sits on each coconut palm, all of them seem to be peaceful and uninterested in each other; however, if one of the monkeys wanted to climb another monkey’s palm, all of them immediately start organizing a defense by throwing coconuts”, Jaspers 2017, p. 112), he emphasized the need to revitalize the “primordial spirit” of the university (Jaspers 2017, p. 29). He saw it, like Twardowski, in a return to the realization of the idea of *universitas* embodied in a community of scholars focused on the search for and pursuit of truth based on cooperation. In the philosopher’s opinion, for this to happen, the harmonious coexistence of three activities is necessary: scientific research conducted by scholars and teaching and forming (educating) students. Research activity is an existential event and should be conducted in relation to the whole of knowledge, which is defined by the meanings and ideas developed within philosophy: “only ideas... give importance to knowledge, constituting the driving force of the researcher” (Jaspers

2017, p. 78). A researcher functioning in this way will also be the right guide for his students (Jaspers 2017, pp. 80–81), whose education and formation should be based on the maieutic Socratic method assuming the original equality of the teacher and the student, ignorance as an assumed preliminary element and creative dialogue, which will enable students to achieve independence of thought and gain the ability of critical reflection (Jaspers 2017, pp. 86–95). The latter is to be the effect of shaping in students a philosophical disposition as an appropriate basis for formulating ideal goals, relating one's activities to timeless values and maintaining a critical distance from dogmatic decisions.

In the case of isolating these three foundations of the university: research, education and upbringing, as Jaspers notices in the condition of contemporary academic institutions, there is a gradual spiritual withering of science as such and the squandering of the idea of *universitas*. Therefore, it is necessary to return to the “aristocracy of the spirit” and limit access to the university in order to focus on shaping intellectual elites who in the future will be able to actively influence the preservation of the cultural paradigm of Europe. Another necessary condition is the autonomy of universities as institutions against all social and political pressures, technocratic criteria of profit and benefit, or formal and legal statistical requirements. The community of university researchers acting in solidarity for the co-creation of science understood as the pursuit and discovery of truth should be subject to the control only of one's own conscience. Therefore, only and exclusively academic institutions that actively implement in their community such values as the selfless pursuit of truth, interpersonal trust and respect for the autonomy of their participants will be able to realize the vocation related to the idea of *universitas* (Jaspers 2017, pp. 13–14).

The current situation of the university raises similar critical voices in the environment of contemporary Polish thinkers and academic researchers. For example, Jan Szmyd stated that the modern university in many, or even most of its incarnations (domestic and foreign) is losing its classical identity. It is becoming a modern “higher school” that is technological, computerized, commercialized and bureaucratized (Szmyd 2016). Similar doubts were expressed by Marek Kwiek (2006) who asked rhetorically – “The end of the uniqueness of the university?”. The philosopher responds by claiming that higher education is no longer considered a special or exceptional sector, but an ordinary and measurable factor exerting a powerful influence on the development of the economies of individual countries and regions. The future of the university also appears in a unification perspective, which is expressed by the emergence of a common European research and educational space. Currently – as Kwiek cla-

ims – the idea of the university's mission, which was to educate national elites, has lost its significance. A university adapted to modern times is an open university and susceptible to global processes. The main changes are related to the massification of education and the linking of scientific research with the needs of the environment and economy. The creation of knowledge for its own sake and the functioning of the university as a community of lecturers and students are gradually being limited (Kwiek 2006).

Relations in a traditional European university (the exception is British education and hence, for example, American higher education, which, drawing on the British tradition, has shaped completely different patterns of functioning, Jablecka 2016) were based on a specific type of hierarchy – not developed or repeated in any other environment, which is still present but is disappearing. Piotr Sztompka (2014), writing about hierarchical relations at the university, emphasizes the elitism of the institution and the people working in it, which is manifested in wisdom, talent, passion for work and self-discipline. However, the mentioned human virtues are not shared equally – not all academic and teaching staff demonstrate them to the same and high intensity. Scientific and teaching achievements are similarly unequal. Nevertheless, in the university culture understood in this way, the hierarchical relationship applies to the following systems: master – junior employee; professor, lecturer – student. The emergence of the “elite of the best, most deserving and titled” is spontaneous.

This is completely natural and fair, as long as the hierarchy is built according to real merits, according to meritocratic criteria. The transparency of the hierarchy is served by an extensive ladder of academic degrees and titles, provided that they reflect and symbolize the ladder of real achievements (Sztompka 2014, p. 14).

Currently, university environments are increasingly rarely creating communities focused on close cooperation based on the highest social values. The places of traditional academic communities are occupied by groups of various stakeholders most often focused on cooperation that brings benefits to all interested parties. This is visible, for example, in the sphere of everyday contacts between members of the community, which are disappearing. Customary academic communities were characterized by the occurrence of quite frequent and direct personal contacts. Today, the university is a place of study and work, but not of common life. Students leave the university walls shortly after the end of classes. Professors claim that they do not have enough time to talk and debate

after classes. The boldest theses claim that universities are becoming empty – both conceptually and organizationally. They are losing confidence in the ideas that they are supposed to follow and in justifying their continued existence and goals (Barnett 2004, pp. 65–66).

University for the environment, environment for the university

Nowadays, the role of the university goes far beyond its traditional – research and teaching – functions. Innovation functions and related technological functions, as well as support for entrepreneurship, are gaining importance, both from the perspective of the development of the local environment and the entire civilization. Universities play the role of a channel for the modernization of societies. They widely use modern communication technologies and expand their IT infrastructure.

The process of changing a university into an enterprise was predicted over a hundred years ago by Max Webber (1917/1999). In a lecture entitled “Science as a profession and vocation”, he compared the situation of science and the researchers who create it in Germany and America. The text included the words:

We can clearly observe that in many fields of science the current development of the university is heading towards the American model. Large medical or natural science institutes are capitalist state enterprises. They cannot be managed without huge material resources. We are dealing here with a situation identical to the situation of a capitalist establishment (Weber 1999, p. 113).

Thus, even in the sociologist’s times, the university showed a tendency to be subject to processes related to the development of societies towards a capitalist system, sharing in many aspects the same conditions that provide the foundations for enterprises.

Nowadays, many thinkers emphasize that the processes to which universities are subjected are no different from the processes to which the outside world is subjected. For example, in Marek Kwiek’s opinion, these processes include: globalization, changing demographics, ageing society, post-patriarchy as a family model, and advancing individualization (Kwiek 2006). A similar position is taken by Mirosława Marody (2014), who maintains that the transformation of university culture is the result of a crisis that affects the entire society, not the academic environment as such. Piotr Sztompka (2014) adds that the university crisis was also caused by: the decline of the university ethos, egoistic individu-

alism and fierce competitiveness in the environment, bureaucratization, educational mediocrity, other pathologies, e.g. plagiarism, falsification of results, writing works to order, nepotism and even corruption. Gary Rhoades and Sheila Slaughter (2004, after: Mieczysław Malewski 2018) point to the phenomenon called “academic capitalism”, which is defined as the regime of knowledge, learning and consumption practiced by universities. Universities are primarily interested in generating income from educational, research and service activities. This leads to the massification and commercialization of academic education, which is supported by European education policy. The assumptions of this policy are generally very positive, because according to them, broadening access to higher education should gradually lead to a reduction in social inequalities and a deepening of the democratization of societies. The aforementioned commercialization of universities raises concerns due to the fact that the process of transforming the university into a service and trade enterprise is taking place very quickly, leading to such profound changes in the style of university management, methods of work and their goals that these results seem irreversible. Today, no one is surprised by such terms as: knowledge production, scientific and teaching staff, administrative staff, intellectual capital, scientific project management, project group, project budget.

Danuta Dąbrowska (2018) notes the current situation of universities optimistically and claims that European universities are clearly redefining their role. They can no longer be treated solely as places of knowledge transfer. Instead, they are to respond to socio-cultural and economic challenges. This is to be served by the so-called “third mission” of the university, which is to complement these institutions in the dimension of regional development and respond to social challenges such as, for example, sustainable development. Universities are no longer “lonely islands”. They are becoming change makers at the regional, national and international levels. The trends outlined above concern general models and tendencies. However, each Polish university is characterised by different realities in terms of scientific and research, teaching and implementation functioning. Therefore, each university cooperates in a unique way with the social and economic environment in which it is located. Business, culture and education are the main areas of cooperation. The ideal are universities that have the potential to radiate to the entire local environment. Cooperation may consist in directing research to the problems of the region. It may also mean providing expertise, including the creation of joint expert teams. Another issue is the sharing of substantive knowledge in the form of consulting, courses and training.

The optimism that universities should cooperate with their external environment is not shared by Roger Scruton (2015). The philosopher states, first of all, that contemporary universities, with their idea of inclusive education, and therefore accessible to all interested people, focused primarily on developing skills that are useful in the modern world and dictated by the requirements of the labor market, are losing their proper role as a place for cultivating and discovering internal values. In Scruton's opinion,

we are facing the danger of separating the university from its social and moral purpose, which consists in transmitting both a certain body of knowledge and the culture that allows this body of knowledge to be understood" (Scruton, p. 53).

This separation is the result of minimizing education related to transmitting cultural heritage and hence creating and including students in a world of meaning common to humanity. According to the philosopher, the place of positive reception of the cultural past has been taken by its deconstruction and interpretation, in which the cultural past is only a product of the ideologies that dominate in specific times.

So what does Scruton see as a remedy for the current situation of universities? The answer he provides is more of a challenge to academic debate than a solution to the impasse. This challenge is connected with the need to convincingly justify the value of high culture and the necessity of building on it the intellectual and personality foundations of new generations of students. The proposals that exist, which somehow ad hoc grant it the greatest value among the products of humanity or see in it a way to go beyond particularism, are considered insufficient by the philosopher. Although, as he concludes, "we feel the call of the culture, which is our own culture, and we wish to say that in answering this call we leave the world of opinion and enter the world of knowledge" (Scruton, p. 62), until we decide why this is happening and gain certainty about it, efforts to maintain the traditional body of university values will be doomed to failure.

Possibilities of autonomy and challenges to the environment – academics and universities

The university, since its modernist form, has embodied in various dimensions of its functioning the idea of autonomy understood primarily as the freedom of researchers and scientific research, their service to fundamental values and independent of the accidental conditions of the socio-cultural environment. Gi-

ven the phenomena presented in the previous section, are we dealing today with a crisis of university autonomy and its growing dependence on external factors?

We will first consider the autonomy-dependence divergence using the example of the current possibilities of directing the activity of an academic teacher. He can choose to be a researcher developing science without focusing on a practical solution to a specific problem or to be a researcher focused on solving specific real problems. This situation exists, although – especially from university teachers – we are still expected to create purely theoretical science. Jan Szmyd defines it as the most cognitively profound and exploratory science, creative and creating fruitful messages for the entirety of human scientific, philosophical and artistic knowledge (Szmyd 2016). Applied science is still often considered to be a narrowly practical and ad hoc applied science. Hence, it is claimed that its creation should be entrusted to scientists from polytechnic, medical and agricultural universities and academic vocational schools, not to representatives of universities.

Another issue that can be considered in the context of the autonomy-dependence dimension is the connection of an academic teacher with the environment – local and global, or his “detachment” from society. Following Jan Szmyd, it should be stated that a lecturer must be strongly connected with society, the nation, the state and even the entire human community and serve them (Szmyd 2016). His affiliation may be formal, e.g. research institutions, scientific associations, global scientific information system or informal, e.g. internal sense of belonging, sense of professional solidarity. On the other hand, a scientist should maintain independence from ideological, political, business and commercial movements. The correct research attitude is “purely” cognitive and not utilitarian. Other general requirements for academic teachers remain invariably very high. Knowledge workers are expected to adhere to the norms of scientific ethos, which include: community – readiness to share knowledge, exchange of views, readiness to cooperate, ease of establishing contacts, selflessness, deep understanding of the mission of the university, holistic approach to the environment and oneself, or skepticism (Jablecka 2004; Evans 2005).

Academic teachers are traditionally characterized by an extraordinary level of autonomy.

Academic freedom has been a fundamental concept in constructing the identity of both the professors and young scientists since the beginning of the university. In the context of the situation of employees in other professions or institutions, it was an extraordinary phenomenon. It was perceived as the core of the academic ethos and a factor integrating the professorship (Melosik 2019, p. 9).

The loss of autonomy – identified with the extraordinary freedom of academic teachers – is associated with the loss of elitism of this profession.

Maria Czerepaniak-Walczak (2018) notes that the content of Article 3.1. of the Act of 20 July 2018, the Law on Higher Education and Science, is optimistic and promising, and reads: “The basis of the higher education and science system is the freedom of teaching, artistic creation, scientific research and the publication of their results, as well as the autonomy of the university”. At the same time, the author draws attention to the content of Article 9.2. – “The university is autonomous on the principles specified in the act” and notices the obvious paradox of this autonomy, which is “in the frame”. To the greatest extent, this framework can define educational issues, because in this respect the principles of organization and guidelines regarding content are quite clearly specified.

Piotr Dominiak and Krzysztof Leja put forward the thesis that universities in general (although with exceptions, e.g. in the United States) are entities looking inwards rather than outwards. The authors prove their claim by citing data from the Center for Information and Research on Higher Education (CHERI) in Vienna, which indicate that such universities are characteristic mainly of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Polish universities are extremely sensitive on this point, as exemplified by the position of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland, who wrote in the first point of the so-called Krakow Charter:

The fundamental value that Polish universities have managed to achieve over the centuries of historical experience is their full autonomy in the scope of conducting research and teaching, as well as management. Therefore, the principle of autonomy of academic universities cannot be limited in any of the above-mentioned spheres of their activity (Krakow Charter).

However, the UNESCO global declaration Higher Education in the 21st Century emphasized the need for a new paradigm of education, according to which universities are to be based on strong, partnership-based ties with the environment (UNESCO 2018). A university serving the environment is also called a socially responsible university. Nowadays, in addition to the traditional functions of conducting scientific research and educating students, building relationships and cooperation with the environment are defined as the most important function of universities. The transformation of the “temple of knowledge” into an entrepreneurial organization based on knowledge makes it an institution rooted in tradition but dynamic and open to the processes of

modernity. The functioning and development of universities – but only local ones – is largely determined by the policy of local government authorities and local public institutions associated with universities. Support for the immediate environment has a material dimension – e.g. buildings, areas, infrastructure of the area and intangible – e.g. undertaking joint research projects on topics important for the region. Optimal cooperation will manifest itself in mutual benefits and the real rooting of the university in the immediate environment. Aldona Andrzejczak (2015) in his article entitled “Entrepreneurial and socially responsible university” praises the cooperation of universities with external stakeholders. To some extent, this cooperation is dictated by legal requirements. An increasingly common practice is the establishment of stakeholder councils, social councils, conventions consisting of representatives of the local government environment – local, state, business and other scientific organizations (Antonowicz 2018). The connection between research and the economy is closely related to the field of science. In some cases, research can be almost immediately translated into specific results that are important for the region or the wider environment.

Iwona Laskowska and Barbara Dańska-Borsiak in their research assessing the impact of European funds on the investment attractiveness of counties, taking into account spatial dependencies, showed, among other things, the relationship between the importance of the region and social activity and infrastructure. Research shows that the most attractive counties in Poland are: the capital city of Warsaw, the city of Sopot, the city of Kraków, the city of Katowice, the city of Świnoujście (Laskowska, Dańska-Borsiak 2019). Pedagogical research that concerns selected educational, caregiving or upbringing issues may seem rare.

Nevertheless, in recent years, there have been more and more such projects. An example of such projects is the “Ostrołęka Educational Observatory”, which was implemented for the needs of local educational policy and initiated jointly by the President of Ostrołęka and the University of Warsaw (Dolata et al. 2021). In the case of research conducted in Ostrołęka, the situation is specific in that it was “ordered” from a university located outside the community and commissioned to be carried out by a team from the Faculty of Pedagogy of the University of Warsaw. This research was aimed at developing local educational policy and was built in accordance with the evidence-based policy (EBP) approach. The agreement between the city authorities and the University of Warsaw was signed in 2019, for four years (until 2023). This research covers basically all elements of education, starting from kindergarten, primary school, and

in particular monitoring students' skills before the eighth-grade exam, through extracurricular activities, and finally secondary schools in terms of promoting the culture of democracy.

Research conducted in the university environment – both shorter and long-term projects – has the potential to diagnose reality in various aspects and draw conclusions and create ideas for solutions on a regional, national and global scale. An innovative solution is the introduction of so-called university spin-offs, companies created in the university environment, resulting from research conducted there (Bezerra et al. 2017; Mosey et al. 2012; Mustar et al. 2006; Ndonzuau et al. 2002; Pirnay et al. 2003). Very often, these are companies established by students, serving the local community. An example illustrating this issue is the study of spin-offs in the Sergipe region (Brazil), which shows the importance of universities as a central element in creating local networks, because it was thanks to the credibility of the university (as a “parent organization”) that young entrepreneurs overcame the problem of the critical threshold in their newly established companies (Bezerra et al. 2017).

The location of universities in a specific region is related to another important aspect. Universities are very often one of the largest, if not the largest, employers in a given area. In recent years, studies of the best employers in Poland have become popular, the last (third) edition of Poland's Best Employers 2023 published the results in May 2023, this ranking included the education and scientific research industry, and the University of Silesia in Katowice took first place in this category. It is worth emphasizing that universities employ research, scientific and teaching, teaching, but also administrative and service staff. All of these universities and university employees use the services and other products of economic entities operating in the same area. We are therefore dealing with the mutual dependence of the university and its socio-economic environment understood, which, however, in our opinion, does not limit the autonomy of the researcher and scientific research, but only expands the possibility of their influence on the direction of civilizational development, and thus fulfills the vocation contained in the idea of *universitas*.

Conclusion

Leszek Kołakowski (2009, pp. 262–263) speaking about the role of science and the university in society said:

Why does this culture exist at all, which serves neither technical progress nor the multiplication of material well-being? However, there is only one answer to this

question: for humanity to be what it has always been. If culture is a luxury, then perhaps it is because humanity itself is a luxury of nature.

The university is currently subject to global processes, among others, by creating an open research and educational space in Europe and beyond. The transformations that we are witnessing are related to the internationalization of research related to the development of technology. The didactic process itself has undergone profound changes, which in its current form is far from the traditional way of imparting knowledge. This has given rise to a specific crisis that has swept through universities in the form of bureaucracy, poor quality of education and other pathologies.

We are convinced that universities are on the right track to dealing with this crisis, and the phenomena that many thinkers, whose views we have cited in this article, are concerned about the identity of the university, including the fact that the university is currently focused on generating income, which is happening through the massification of education and the commercialization of research, do not mean that it ceases to be a founder of important and universal social and cultural values. We indicated that this is due to the fact that current changes are accompanied by the omnipresent idea of sustainable development and the new role of the university, which is social responsibility. In connection with the above, we see the university as a place of great importance and influence on the environment, a place that equips future beneficiaries of the environment with universal values, knowledge and skills that are adequate for the needs of the current reality.

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SUMMARY

The aim of the article is to present the evolutionary trajectory of the university in Poland and most other European countries from the university described in the literature as traditional to the contemporary form often understood as an entrepreneurial or postmodern university in the context of its changing social role. Selected views of thinkers from the field of philosophy and social sciences on the causes and development trends of the university in the conditions of post-industrial societies are presented. Arguments are presented in support of the thesis that the mutual dependence of the university and its socio-economic environment, although it opens universities to the external influence of patterns of functioning and values of action distant from the traditional university culture, does not lead to the disappearance of the specificity of university culture. It is claimed that the social responsibility of universities, which has recently become their

universal obligation, does not exclude the autonomy of researchers and does not change the ideal of objective truth as a fundamental value for scientific research, but instead enables their multiplied influence on the shape of civilizational transformations.

KEYWORDS: traditional university, postmodern university, autonomy of universities, social responsibility of universities

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie ewolucji uniwersytetu w Polsce i w większości innych krajów europejskich – od uniwersytetu określanego w literaturze przedmiotu jako tradycyjny do współczesnej formy, ujmowanej często jako uniwersytet przedsiębiorczy lub ponowoczesny w kontekście jego zmieniającej się roli społecznej. Przedstawiono wybrane poglądy myślicieli z zakresu filozofii i nauk społecznych na temat przyczyn i tendencji rozwojowych uniwersytetu w warunkach społeczeństw postindustrialnych. Przytoczono argumentację na rzecz tezy, że wzajemna zależność uniwersytetu i jego otoczenia społeczno-gospodarczego, choć otwiera uniwersytety na zewnętrzny wpływ wzorców funkcjonowania i wartości działania odległych od tradycyjnej kultury uniwersyteckiej, nie prowadzi do zaniku swoistości kultury uniwersyteckiej. Twierdzi się, że społeczna odpowiedzialność uniwersytetów, która współcześnie stała się ich powszechnym zobowiązaniem, nie wyklucza autonomii badaczy i nie zmienia ideału prawdy obiektywnej jako fundamentalnej wartości dla badań naukowych, a za to umożliwia ich zwielokrotniony wpływ na kształt przemian cywilizacyjnych.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: uniwersytet tradycyjny, uniwersytet ponowoczesny, autonomia uniwersytetów, społeczna odpowiedzialność uniwersytetu

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