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# The Traditional Mission of the University – How Should It Be Understood in Our Times?[1]

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## Abstract

*The traditional mission of the university, founded on an academic ethos whose primary value is "truth," assumes a balance between three types of university activity: research, teaching, and direct social service. While taking into account the needs of the environment, especially the labor market and various levels of administration, is necessary, the differences in the fundamental values of these spheres can lead to a degradation of service to truth in research and teaching, and jeopardize the freedom of research and teaching, as well as the institutional autonomy of the university. This is evident in the different characteristics of a research university and an entrepreneurial university, as well as the differences in the motivations for action of the academic community and administration (especially the Bologna Process). A new understanding of the traditional mission of the university assumes that the university should not yield to the demands of the environment, but rather be responsible for its successful development – diagnosing and solving its problems in a manner appropriate for a higher education institution.*

***Keywords***: academic ethos, university mission, university responsibility, university autonomy, Bologna Process

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[1] This article is a very personal reflection on the condition of the contemporary university and, to some extent, also a compilation of the author's views expressed over the last two decades in various forums – see own literature used.

# Introduction

The debate over what constitutes the "traditional mission of a university" and how universities should fulfill it has been ongoing for a long time. It has intensified in the face of threats to this mission posed by universities' excessive subordination to their social environment, particularly the labor market, but also by the limitation of academic autonomy caused by demands from various levels of administration —for example, those related to the so-called Bologna Process. In the discussion initiated by the Academic Forum in 2024, participants were asked whether they were currently experiencing a crisis in the university as an institution in its "traditional form." Most agreed that a crisis was occurring—though they pointed to various symptoms and causes. I myself wrote in this debate series[2] that a crisis exists, although, firstly, it affects all universities, and secondly, it affects them to varying degrees depending on their missions. Let us consider this matter.

The first task before us is to define, or at least approximate, the term "traditional mission of a university." Traditionally, two primary goals are set for higher education institutions: conducting research (first mission) and educating (second mission). These goals are ultimately anchored in the values that constitute the academic ethos. To this must be added the requirement of direct social utility, which this institution pursues in the form of the so-called "third mission" by responding to the wishes of its environment—primarily the labor market, which demands graduates that meet its needs. This also includes maintaining and fostering culture, providing expert services, diagnosing and solving social problems, and more. Universities should, therefore, on the one hand, be guided by the values of the academic ethos, while on the other, be mindful of their role as public benefit institutions. Each university is, on the one hand, an academic community whose primary determinant of action is a universal academic ethos. On the other hand, it is an institution whose actions are determined by a written mission statement indicating the manner of implementing adopted values, a development strategy, and administrative procedures for leadership and management.

The axiological system that underpins the activities of a university thus defined creates a three-level hierarchy. Its foundation is the values that comprise the academic ethos. The ethos, in turn, provides an axiological framework for the university's mission, interpreting its general principles to indicate how the university will im-

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plement them. The strategy adds to this interpretation a record of specific actions that will enable the achievement of the mission here and now and in the near future. Its task is, in particular, to indicate how the university understands and fulfills its fundamental purpose—the creation and dissemination of new knowledge—and how it understands the concept of public service, i.e., how it fulfills its role as a center for creating and maintaining cultural heritage, building social elites, and transferring research and innovation results to the economy. The subordination of university activities to the two aforementioned determinants or regulators: ethos and the requirements of public service, is a source of numerous tensions in the functioning of academic institutions.

Let us first briefly examine the concept of academic ethos. The term itself derives from ancient Greek, in which "ethos" denoted either character (in the sense of what is specific, characteristic of something) or custom or habit, but resulting not from imitation (something adopted from the outside), but from internal motivation, maturation, and self-shaping. In the sense we use today, ethos is a coherent system of an axiological nature: a set of values, ideals, norms, customs, evaluation criteria, etc. It is aimed at realizing a positive and autotelic (non-instrumental) value recognized as superior, thus serving as the ultimate basis for evaluation. This superior value cannot – as it is by definition independent – be subject to instrumentalization, but as it is more fundamental than others, it can be a condition for the realization of other values. It encompasses values subordinate to it – consecutive, instrumental ones. This is precisely the status of cognitive values and consecutiveto them methodological values. Academic ethos, therefore, is the internal axiology of researchers and academic teachers, consisting of values, beliefs, norms, attitudes, and then institutionalized practices that serve to realize cognitive values[3].

Traditionally, truth is considered synonymous with cognitive value, and the fundamental duty of researchers—consistently—is to strive to know and proclaim the truth. One only needs to look at the mottos of leading universities to see this. Harvard University's motto is simply "Veritas"; Yale University's: "Lux et veritas." In Poland, the Jagiellonian University (as well as Adam Mickiewicz University) operates under the motto "Plus ratio quam vis," while Nicolaus Copernicus University operates under the motto "Veritas in omnibus quaerendaest." This pro-cognitive attitude also extends to technical universities, although they are more practically

[3] For more on theseissues, see Andrzej Chmielecki, Ewa Chmielecka: Axiology (e-book), Warsaw 2011, Polish Editorial Workshops, p. 86, (Warszawa 2011, Polskie Pracownie Edytorskie, s.86,) http://doctoralstudies.sgh.waw.pl/images/educational_materials/textbooks/axiology-zm.pdf

oriented: for example, MIT's motto is "Mens et Manus," while the motto of the Poznań University of Technology is "Scientia et Usus."

In short, the value exclusively attributed to the academic ethos is truth, and its mission is the cultivation—expanding and deepening—of true knowledge: striving for it in research, persevering and courageously proclaiming the results obtained in teaching, and bringing it into the public sphere through practical implementation of research results, but also through the discourse that academic communities engage in on the important issues of their times. Regardless of the epistemological stance members of the academic community take on this value—whether they recognize truth in the classical sense or attribute an instrumental character to knowledge (in the epistemological, not axiological, sense!)—it remains a normative idea to which their achievements are referred.

Given the multitude of controversies surrounding the idea of "truth" (including theories claiming its impossibility), it is more practical to consider well-justified knowledge as a fundamental independent cognitive value. As for values that are consecutive to cognitive values, these include impersonal general methodological requirements such as objectivity, criticism, transparency, and the public nature of knowledge-creating procedures, as well as cognitive skills and personal qualities of researchers (e.g., the courage to go "against the grain," willingness to revise one's views, reliability, and truthfulness). The latter two of these personal virtues are related to the fact that practicing science is a team endeavor, in which the principle of trust in the results achieved by others applies (which, of course, does not exclude criticism).

The academic ethos is also permeated by two other sets of values, not unique to the academic community: the ethos of good work and the ethos of responsibility. Their interpenetration creates a rich matrix of values and derived goods: difficult to organize in terms of their height and strength, yet exhaustive. The interpenetration of the ethos of knowledge and good, diligent work in the field of research gives rise to the researcher's conscientiousness and inquisitiveness, their preference for substantive assessment of obtained results, and criticism of research methods and results. The interpenetration of the ethos of knowledge and diligent work in the field of teaching gives rise to the ethos of the teacher, who in the master-student relationship should be a competent guide, a fair evaluator, an impartial interpreter, a moral authority—an educator. Such goods and attitudes as tolerance, kindness, caring, and loyalty come into play here. The intertwining of the ethos of knowledge and responsibility yields benefits such as freedom of research and teaching, university autonomy, the self-governance of academic communities, and the public service of academic work—its

evaluation in light of shared non-academic values. This is the foundation of university missions. However, it's worth reiterating that other values within the ethos of "good academic work" are important only as instruments of knowledge. The ethos of the Jagiellonian University, written in 2004, demonstrates this palette of values and goods, emphasizing responsibility, kindness, justice, reliability, tolerance, loyalty, independence, honesty, dignity, freedom of scholarship, and freedom of scholars. The academic ethos can share these values with other ethoses—cultivating knowledge remains a value uniquely ascribed to it. The ethos lives and thrives when members of the community identify with these values, interpret them spontaneously, and with commitment, implementing its values.

The dissemination of ethos occurs within the academic community, primarily in the master-disciple relationship. Ethos resides in the consciousness of community members, while adherence to its norms appeals to conscience and is based on mutual trust that they will be observed. Ethos is rarely written down, declared, cited, or discussed officially. This is done only on particularly solemn occasions, such as the taking of the doctoral oath. When threats are absent, the internalized ethos persists in the "quiet" consciousness of the academic community. Its writing and "refreshing" in the community's consciousness is usually a sign that it has faced threats to the ethos. This has been the case in recent decades in Poland, when many academic institutions felt compelled to remind their members of the fundamental principles of their community's functioning.

The hope is that the writing and publication of academic ethos will serve as a tool for disseminating and defending academic values. This is to be achieved by inspiring the academic community to reflect on axiology, creating at least some opportunities for it to demonstrate courage in defense of cognitive values, to openly stand on their side. The written ethos serves as a reminder that for the institution and the academic community, the primary determinant of action is not, and should not be, external interests and conditions, but universal values. Adherence to this ethos is an internal obligation, the violation of which is not directly subject to any administrative sanction. The ethos cannot and should not be used as a tool of punishment or reward by university authorities, nor as a tool for enforcing the obligations defined by regulations by the university administration. In short, the written ethos is intended to be neither a whip nor a carrot – it is intended to encourage reflection on values and inspire moral courage.

For centuries, ethos, understood in this way, has been an effective regulator of the behavior of academic communities and the foundation of the traditional mission

of universities. Its values were cultivated and transmitted through the educational process, particularly in master-disciple relationships. Its erosion or weakening is considered one of the most significant threats to the identity of the academic community. An academic institution that, either voluntarily or under external pressure, removes from its mission and activities the values constitutive of its ethos ceases to be an institution of academic life in the traditional sense, although it may be useful for other reasons. When such a threat appears, it typically triggers the activation of the mechanisms already mentioned to "support" the ethos, such as written policies and procedures for systems ensuring the quality of education and research, etc. Unfortunately, these measures can further erode the ethos by replacing internalized values and principles with externally adopted procedures. Such phenomena are currently being encountered, and although they are directly justified, they are causing fundamental transformations in the traditional mission of universities.

If academic institutions wish to reinforce ethos-based motivations with commands and prohibitions that explicitly dictate which behaviors are reprehensible and which are desirable, and to strengthen their oversight of their compliance, they develop codes of conduct. These codes are lists of professional ethical principles for researchers and teachers and take various forms. They may be codes of good manners or principles of ethical conduct in scientific research (see, for example, the regularly published documents of the Polish Academy of Sciences Committee for Ethics in Science). Such principles, adopted by an institution as its official document, can become the basis for regulations resulting in punishment or reward, can be a tool of pressure and repression, and violating them can expose one not only to ostracism from the community but also, for example, to a referral to a community or institutional disciplinary committee. Therefore, the motivations for adopting and adhering to these codes are not strictly selfless and driven solely by a belief in the importance of the values underlying them. Adherence to a code of professional ethics is also in the "interest" of those who implement it; it is an external regulator of conduct to which we submit, also because of the consequences we may face for non-compliance. Let us reiterate: ethos is the axiological stance of a community, distinguished by its system of values. A code of professional ethics, on the other hand, is a set of principles and norms defining how members of a given profession should behave so as not to violate the principles based on its ethos. Ethos, therefore, provides the axiological foundation for the code, which can be invoked to justify the introduction of these principles. Therefore, if we wish to write a code in an orderly manner, we must present a hierarchical system of values and their corresponding goods, as well as accompanying

rules of conduct. Since such an order is an extremely difficult task, it is necessary to be aware of the more or less arbitrary nature of written codes of ethics and their variability, which stems from the need to incorporate factors derived not only from an ideal universe of values but also from the real world. Ethos concerns the academic community, the code concerns the academic institution – both of these elements must work together in the name of the saying that a community without an institution is powerless, and an institution without a community is empty.

## The Traditional Mission of the University and its Transformation: the Research University and the Entrepreneurial University

The traditional mission of the university, based on ethos and derived from the principles of Plato's Academy, carried forward through the Middle Ages, was developed with the establishment of European universities in the modern era. The European modern university was born at the end of the Middle Ages, when "(…) communities emerged in Europe that represented the idea of self-government (…) among them (…) also communities of scholars and teachers, seeking to discover the secrets of human existence, their body and mind, the environment in which they live, and finally the secrets of the universe – time and space. Between Bologna, Naples and Oxford, Leiden and Krakow, Dorpat, Lund and Paris, universities were established or were founded based on the needs of local communities (…)."[4] The Renaissance and the Enlightenment fostered the development of universities, simultaneously making them increasingly institutions linked to national cultures and state bodies.

The 19th century brought new challenges to European universities, particularly those related to the rapid development of technology and the advancement of civilization. In the first decade of the 19th century, Wilhelm von Humboldt founded the University of Berlin, and shortly before, Napoleon established the Imperial University in France. Although each represented a different institutional model and had its own hierarchy of preferences regarding the relationship between research and teaching, public obligations, and the university-state relationship, they shaped the tra-

[4] Samsonowicz H., (2008) Społeczna odpowiedzialność uczelni (Social responsibility of universities) in Społeczna odpowiedzialność uczelni (ed.K. Leja), Gdańsk, pp.9-12.

ditional vision of the continental university (also known as the research university). Its defining characteristics include the link between teaching and research, isolation from external influences, and the state bearing the largest burden of funding research and teaching. It serves as the guardian and guarantor of academic freedoms and institutional autonomy, thus protecting the academic ethos from the destructive influence of the social environment and its interests. The university here is the proverbial ivory tower – focused on its internal goals, creating and disseminating knowledge.

The second half of the 20th century, and especially its last three decades, brought further changes to higher education. The massification of studies, the emergence of numerous non-university research centers, the focus of economic development on knowledge-based societies and economies, and the expansion of the business approach in many domains of social life, previously pursuing different goals, led to the emergence of the *entrepreneurial university* model. These changes are described extensively in the literature.[5] Here, we will highlight only the characteristic, contrasting features of both universities, indicating their understanding of the values inherent to a higher education institution and its mission, and in particular, responsibility for fulfilling its internal and external obligations[6]. In reality, neither of these two university models exists in its purest form; they constitute ideal types whose characteristics can be taken into account when building or evaluating a real university[7].

The research university held a distinguished position as the sole provider of knowledge and elites, bearing full responsibility for its quality. It was the sole producer of a good of universal significance—knowledge. It created and disseminated it, with the pursuit of knowledge as the sole criterion and norm of action. In this distinguished position, it was important "in itself"—it did not have to justify its value by any utility to its external environment. It represented thinking in accordance with the values of the ethos, which was the common good of the academic world and the foundation of the academic community, dominated by attitudes of trust, cooperation, and kindness. It was accountable only to itself in the name of ethos values. It was open, but elitist: access to the community of teachers and learners was conditioned by intellectual abilities and attitudes. Therefore, its regulators were the ethos and internal control of

[5] See, among others, The European Higher Education and Research Landscape 2020. Scenarios and Strategic Debates (eds. Enders J., File J., Husman J., Westerheijden D.) CHEPS, 2005.

[6] Barnett R., (2009) Knowledge Interests and Knowledge Policies: Re-thinking the University In the Twenty-first century in Rethinking the University after Bologna, USCIA, Antverpen, pp.103-120.

[7] For more on this, see E. Chmielecka, Przemiany modelu uniwersytetu we współczesnej Europie (Transformations of the University Model in Contemporary Europe) in *Współczesna cywilizacja Zachodu. Atuty i słabości* J. Osiński (ed), Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH, 2010, p.225-240

the manager, a corporation of scholars—it was here that the idea of academic self--governance developed. Knowledge was treated here as universal property; the fight for rights to it could take the form, at most, of a question of priority of discovery. University funding was generally public, without the need for detailed accounting—the principle of trust and treating the university as a social trusteeship prevailed. The postulated isolation from external influences, especially business and political ones, was well characterized by the slogan that the university is, as mentioned above, an ivory tower in the best sense of the word—an institution focused on knowledge and teaching. All aspects of its operations—an organizational structure based on scientific disciplines, the primacy of scholarly authority, and the treatment of the educational process as a derivative of research—are subordinated to the pursuit of knowledge. This university model is still well-accepted by the traditional academic community, but it is unsustainable as the sole model of higher education in a knowledge society and economy, let alone in recent times dominated by exceptionally rapid technological development culminating in the widespread use of artificial intelligence.

At the other extreme is the entrepreneurial university. The entrepreneurial university model stems from the recognition of the university's connection with its social environment as a fundamental factor in its development and mission. It is difficult to speak of an ethos here, as all the values mentioned here are instrumental in nature, relating to the broadly understood "interest" of an action group, not the community. In 1983, Burton Clark[8] described this by proposing the so-called coordination triangle, which assumed the relative independence of the three main actors (university, state, and society), which allowed for the treatment of knowledge creation as an autotelic value. The development of his idea resulted in Etzkovitz and Leydesdorff's triple helix concept[9], illustrating the close and mutual connection between the university and its environment. The concept of the third-generation university (after the medieval and Humboldtian universities) proposed by J. Wissema[10] is also consistent with this latter understanding of the role of the modern university. The author of this concept argues that universities have two paths: transform into international technology transfer centers or reduce their role to that of local players who are also needed in the education market. The educational functions of a university understood in this way are adapted

[8] Clark B.R. (1983): Governing the Higher Education System, in: M. Shattock, ed.: *The Structure and Governance of Higher Education, Society for Research into Higher Education*: Guilford.

[9] Etzkovitz H., LeydesdorffL., (1997), *Universities and the global knowledge economy. A triple helix of university-industry-government relations,* Pinter, London and Washinghton

[10] WissemaJ., (2005), *Technostarterzy. Dlaczego i jak?*(*Technostarters. Why and How?*), PARP, Warszawa

to the needs created by mass higher education – in the USA immediately after World War II, in Western Europe in the 1960s, and in Poland – over the past three decades[11].

The entrepreneurial university is one of many knowledge providers, competing in the market with other entities that produce it, while the importance of elites and knowledge is declining. Its goal is to meet customer needs; their satisfaction is the fundamental criterion and standard of operation. It must justify its importance by demonstrating its utility, understood as the ability to meet the needs of broadly understood customers (stakeholders). In its pure form, it becomes an institution important "for itself," generating its own profits by satisfying customer needs. It demonstrates instrumental thinking, driven by interests, individualism, and the dominant guideline of action is competitiveness. Its employees and students constitute a group of interests, while it is accountable to its stakeholders. It is an open, generally mass institution, focused on large groups of recipients of its services. Regulators of operation are based on economic efficiency, and the manager is a professional. The knowledge and innovations it creates are subject to intellectual property rights, and there is a market for their exchange, including financial ones. It provides various paid services (research, educational, expert). If it uses public funds, it must be subject to external oversight and demonstrate its credibility. It is one of many social institutions providing services; it does not exist outside of its relationships with clients; it is entirely devoted to them. Society acts as a collective client. It is characterized by flexible structures—based on efficient organization—that enable it to respond to changing market needs. It is difficult for the traditional academic community to accept it, but essential for creating a foundation for a knowledge-based society and specialized technologies—offering education that quickly and flexibly adapts to its needs.

**Table 1 – Characteristics of university models.**

| Characteristics of a Research University | Characteristics of the entrepreneurial university: |
|---|---|
| The sole provider of knowledge and elites. | One of many knowledge providers; declining importance of elites. |

[11] Jabłecka J., Uniwersytet jako organizacja ucząca się (University as a Learning Organization), in: K. Leja, red., Zarządzanie wiedzą w szkolnictwie wyższym, Politechnika Gdańska, Gdańsk 2004; Leja K., Uniwersytet organizacją służącą otoczeniu (The University as an Organization Serving the Environment) in Społeczna odpowiedzialność uczelni (red. K. Leja), Gdańsk 2008;F. A. van Vught F.A., The Humboldtian University under Pressure. New Forms of Quality Review in Western European Higher Education, in: P.A.M. Maassen, F.A.vanVught, eds., Inside Academia. New Challenges for the Academic Profession, De Tijdstroom, Utrecht 1996.

| | |
|---|---|
| Principles of operation: cooperation, kindness, trust, selflessness. | Operating principle: competition, economic efficiency. |
| Regulators: ethos, internal control. Manager: corporation of scholars. | Regulators: efficiency (profit), external control. Governance: professional manager. |
| Important „in itself": Creator of knowledge, norm – truth. | Must justify its importance – demonstrate usefulness for service recipients. Satisfies customer needs; the norm – usefulness. |
| Open, elitist. | Open, mass. |
| Accountable to itself. | Responsible to stakeholders. |
| Community bound by ethos. | A group of stakeholders bound by interests. |
| „Ivory tower" – an institution isolated from external influences. | An institution subordinated to external needs. |

**Source: author's own elaboration**

The above characteristics point to the need to find a compromise between the indicated extremes, each of which has advantages and disadvantages, but is not and cannot be implemented in its pure form, as this would contradict, on the one hand, the idea of serving truth, and on the other, the idea of the university's social service. Universities are finding various ways to address this problem by adopting mixed missions and organizational models, striking the appropriate balance between the components of a research university and an entrepreneurial university. It is worth recalling that in Poland, universities are legally obligated to cooperate with employers and other representatives of the social environment. Naturally, mixed models result in threats to the academic ethos and the "traditional mission of the university," and their displacement by other values and principles representing the interests of the environment.

When defining the mission of higher education or a university and placing it alongside a pure academic ethos, it is important to remember that their sphere of operation is determined by three factors: academicity embodied in the values of the ethos and guaranteed by university autonomy; the state (and its regulations) that requires universities to engage in public activities; and the social and economic environment that demands "products" from universities that are useful to them. The functioning of individual institutions and the entire higher education system depends on the proportions and strength of these factors. Therefore, the modern university cannot adhere solely to the traditional model, whose essence was academic freedom, a focus on research, and its own development, with significant indifference to society, the economy, and the usefulness and applicability of knowledge. At the same time, it cannot be an entity fully subordinated to either the state or the market, because under their overwhelming

influence it will lose its ethos and identity, which means that it will cease to properly fulfill its historically shaped mission of serving truth and knowledge.

Faced with this complex situation of the modern university, the most appropriate solution is to allow the coexistence within the higher education system of universities with different, independently defined missions: from leading research universities focused on basic research and education focused on generating human resources for the knowledge sector, to local universities that serve as advisors and experts for local communities and serve as resource centers for the local labor market through a variety of lifelong learning opportunities. Universities of *various types* should find their place within the higher education system. The former are most closely aligned with the research university model; the latter with the entrepreneurial university model. The development of higher education systems confirms this thesis – they are becoming increasingly internally diversified.

One of the fundamental EU documents from 2003 on higher education, titled "The Role of Universities in the Europe of Knowledge," includes an analysis of the structure of higher education institutions in the USA and Europe. Both regions boast approximately 4,000 higher education institutions, with a striking stratification in America: Ivy League universities and several dozen that receive 50% of the funding for basic research. There are just over 100 universities with formal research status, and approximately 550 offer doctorates. The remaining universities primarily conduct expert and educational activities (primarily at the BA level), sometimes with the mission of helping local communities overcome civilizational backwardness. The usefulness of their efforts is unquestionable, although their activities vary greatly. The European Commission document emphasizes that increasing the EHEA's (European Higher Education Area) competitiveness with other higher education systems does not allow for persistence with a single university model developed in the Middle Ages. We need to diversify, taking into account both the needs of cognitive progress realized by research universities and the needs, even provincial ones, of the social environment of the university.

The characteristics of the "entrepreneurial university" and the "research university" described above point to flawed—because one-sided—understandings of social service and responsibility, as full subordination to market mechanisms or the state, but also limitation to the exclusive pursuit of the internal goals of the academic community. Embracing this responsibility requires adopting a third path—the one outlined above.

# Public Administration and the University Mission

We mentioned that written codes of university good practice emerge when the ethos is threatened, as a form of its defense, when the social environment begins to exert pressure on the academy, demanding unacceptable behavior. Thus, we have conflicting ethoses that have entered into an overthrow, an open war, threats to the academic ethos and the need to strengthen it. The simplest attempt to defend it is to "refresh" it in the minds of scholars, as mentioned above, through a written "appeal" or set of commands and prohibitions, sometimes accompanied by rewards or punishments, thus introducing motivation extrinsic to purely ethos-based motivation. Merton's descriptions of the pressure exerted by the social environment on the university were primarily related to political oppression, especially the totalitarian one, which scholars had to face. Today's descriptions of the pressures exerted on universities are primarily related to their changing social position and the accompanying shift in mission. They are linked either to the pressures of the economy or to major social policies, the implementation of which should subordinate higher education.

For European higher education, these major social policies are primarily the Bologna Process. This Process is a field of collision, a clash of two ethoses and the resulting motivations for action: those specific to the academic community and those characteristic of political and administrative decision-makers (broadly defined "bureaucracy"). It is worth remembering that both of these environments (the third being the broader social environment of universities) are essential factors in the implementation of the Process. If we conceptualize the motivations for action of these two groups, we can present them schematically in the table below.

**Table 2: Motivations for the actions of the academic community and administration.**

| Academic Community | Administration/Political Decision-Makers |
|---|---|
| Actors: academic teachers, scientists. | Actors: politicians and officials. |
| The Bologna Documents and the values they postulate. | The Bologna Process and its tools. |
| The multifaceted nature of academic life. | Linear decision-making. |
| Diversity as a culture-forming value. | Institutional unification facilitating decisions. |

| Academic Community | Administration/Political Decision-Makers |
|---|---|
| Cognitive values: knowledge, reflection, depth. | Demand for rapid and direct effectiveness in research and education. |
| Institutional autonomy. | Compliance with external regulations. |
| Academic ethos, self-governance, and responsibility. | Institutional culture: university credibility and oversight. |
| Master-disciple relationships. | „Customer-oriented" relationships. |
| Striving for excellence in cognition and teaching. | Quality assurance/control, including accreditation. |
| The traditional mission of the university. | Written mission and strategy – documents that underpin university operations. |
| Academic freedom, and with it comes creativity, non-standard and innovative behavior. | Instrumentalization of education and research, uniform procedures for assessing the quality of education and „applying for..." |

**Source: author's own elaboration**

The gap between the motivational systems of both groups of actors is clearly visible here, and this raises the question of whether attempting to force the academic community to submit to the socially justified demands of decision-makers might harm the academic ethos. We are dealing here with a double and paradoxical relationship: first, external decision-makers force universities to comply with their wishes and have appropriate instruments of pressure, including financial ones. Submission to these external demands partially relieves the academic community of the need to ensure proper implementation of ethos guidelines and internal evaluation of implemented activities. This leads to the temptation to abandon ethos values and an attitude of contentment, of "being in line" after fulfilling the procedural requirements imposed by decision-makers on the institution. This favors the recognition of accountability to the social environment as a sufficient measure of the "goodness" of work. This is a concession from purely ethos-based positions in favor of other motivations—and therefore a kind of destruction of ethos. This shift in motivation must lead to a change in the way the academic community ensures the proper execution of its tasks: since it is no longer based on fidelity to the ethos, previously absent elements of external control are introduced. Many of the proposed quality assurance mechanisms in higher education are designed precisely to prevent the negative effects of ethos erosion. This is achieved, among other things, by external procedures for ensuring the quality of education ("accreditation") and research ("evaluation"), as well as procedures for applying for research funds and bureaucratic accountability for achieved results, which often overlook their actual cognitive value in favor of success indicators. Therefore, one of the most important issues in this regard, and one of the

most important questions regarding the Bologna Process, is whether it has deprived (or violated) the institutional autonomy of universities and the self-governance of academic communities. We will return to this issue, attempting to point out its positives and negatives in the context of implementing the Bologna Process.

The complex and challenging relationship between universities and various levels of administration has inspired many authors to attempt to describe and normalize the interdependencies of the two worlds considered here. One of the most interesting documents known to me, in the form of a written "code" organizing the mutual obligations of universities and political decision-makers, was the so-called Erfurt Declaration on the Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions. It was created in March 1996 (i.e., before the implementation of the Bologna Process began) during preparations for the reactivation of the University of Erfurt. The Declaration was intended to help define its mission and relations with its social environment. The Declaration's five "double" points synthetically attempt to balance internal and external factors of university life and describe instruments for protecting against dysfunctions in their mutual relations. This protects the interests (and values) of both "parties," without administrative sanctions. Their guiding principles are rational solutions, respect for academic values, and the pursuit of the public interest. The Declaration is therefore an important contribution to understanding what the traditional mission of the university is in our times.

The first point of the Declaration emphasizes that "*The State must respect academic freedom and autonomy*". According to this document, academic freedom is the freedom of scholars, within the law, to criticize their existing research and to express new ideas and views, including controversial and unpopular ones, without the threat of losing their jobs or the privileges they enjoy within their institutions. Autonomy, in turn, is the right of academic institutions to independently decide on the means of achieving the tasks they set for themselves or that they themselves have adopted. In addition to this postulate, the Declaration states that "*The university must be a responsible and cohesive community, not an anarchistic or irresponsible association*". It is therefore assumed that universities are obligated to organize themselves so that their decisions are made after comprehensive consultation, but without undue delay, and that agreed-upon actions are implemented fully and conscientiously, at the lowest possible cost. As a community of scholars and students, the university bears collective responsibility for actions undertaken by its authorities or on its behalf. Point two of the Declaration indicates that "*The state must allow universities to determine and maintain their own quality of operation and standards*". Quality here refers to the

principles that guide universities in achieving their stated goals while maintaining academic standards, i.e., clearly defined conditions necessary for obtaining individual degrees, titles, and other academically assessed achievements. However, given such autonomy, "*Universities must ensure the transparency and public nature of this self-regulatory process*". All procedures used by universities to oversee standards and ensure quality must be open to public inquiry and criticism, and universities must agree that they are publicly accountable for the manner in which these tasks are carried out. This involves a renewed balance between universities' desire to be guided by their own values and the need for oversight by public authorities. Point three of the Declaration continues this matter, postulating that "*The state must provide universities with stable funding*". The state's sole prerogative is to decide on the amount and purpose of this funding. Nevertheless, this funding should be managed in a way that minimizes significant year-to-year fluctuations, thus allowing universities to plan ahead sensibly. This state function, however, means that "*Universities must make every effort to diversify their funding sources*". It is in both their own interest and the state's interest that universities seek the widest possible range of funding sources, thereby preventing excessive dependence on any one source.

The most difficult issues, related to the very essence of academicity, are addressed in points four and five of the Declaration. They declare that "*The state must allow universities to fulfill their historical, research, and cultural functions*" because academic communities are among the most important bodies for preserving and transmitting intellectual and cultural values. Therefore, universities must be guaranteed the freedom to perform these tasks regardless of the views of state authorities. However, "*Universities must be sensitive to the needs of society, including those related to increasing its prosperity*". Universities have obligations to their own societies, of which they are an inseparable part and from which they derive both current and long-term benefits. Accordingly, universities must play a leading role in recognizing social and economic needs and be helpful in meeting them as quickly as possible. Regarding universal goals, "*The state must liberalize the structure and functioning of universities to allow them to fulfill their universal, supranational functions*". Universities have both national and supranational obligations and functions. Therefore, the state must structure its relations with universities to enable them to fulfill these latter obligations. At the same time, however, "*Universities also bear the obligation to work for the well-being of all humanity*". They must recognize that the impact and consequences of their activities extend beyond the borders of their countries. Therefore, they must commit to recognizing and fulfilling these transnational obligations.

The Erfurt Declaration is not a code of ethics, nor is it a written ethos, although it refers to fundamental academic values and equally fundamental principles of public life. It can be described as a statement of the university's new mission in the form of a set of good practices establishing basic and very general principles of cooperation between two spheres, which, although they have different value systems, must cooperate to fulfill their functions to the best of their ability. Adherence to or violation of the Declaration is not accompanied by any sanctions; it merely serves as an inspiration for reflection. Considerable freedom is allowed in the interpretation of its provisions by universities and social policy institutions. If we compare its theses with the content of the Bologna Communiqués from the last decade of its operation, we will notice many similarities, although the Process itself followed a different path.

## The Bologna Process and the University Mission

Let us return, therefore, to the influence of high-level public administration on the missions and activities of universities and examine the content of the Bologna Communiqués, which are the fundamental tools for implementing the Bologna Process. It is worth recalling that Polish higher education has never had a comprehensive, long-term development strategy. While documents such as the "Higher Education Development Strategy: 2010-2020," developed in 2009 by the Polish Rectors Foundation, were developed, they did not achieve the status of a strategy implemented systematically and over a longer period by public authorities. Systemic changes were introduced rather through the development of successive new acts of the "Law on Higher Education" or amendments to existing acts. In this context, the Bologna Process became the mainstay of decades of policy towards Polish higher education, its only coherent and long-term strategy, to which Poland was committed after signing the Bologna Declaration. The history of the Bologna Process is therefore also "our" history, and it is worth examining its original intentions and how they have evolved over the 25 years of the Process in the context of the university's mission, and perhaps also considering what we owe to them. We will omit here the working documents of the Process (e.g., reports on the implementation status of changes), assessments, and positions of other institutions, which constitute an extensive bibliography of the Process's development. Let us analyze exclusively the Bologna Communiqués – official

documents signed by ministers responsible for higher education, making them a formal commitment of governments and lower levels of administration to implement the reforms proposed therein.

The first "communique" was the Bologna Declaration of 1999, preceded by two documents constituting its Preamble: the Sorbonne Declaration and the Magna Charta Universitatum. These documents presented postulates regarding the tasks of universities that responded to the needs and challenges of our times, and above all, to the needs of a uniting Europe. Their main goal was to create the aforementioned European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In subsequent years, at two-year intervals, conferences of ministers responsible for higher education adopted the so-called Bologna Communiqués, which elaborated on the initial assumptions for the EHEA and redefined the mission of universities – in line with contemporary challenges.

Do the Communiqués differ in their mission statements, given that they are tools for achieving the same goal: introducing changes in national higher education systems that would enable free cooperation between institutions, the flow of staff and students, reliable comparability of awarded diplomas, and so on? Yes. In fact, it is possible to trace the political and social changes taking place in the European Union and globally, as well as the new challenges posed by our times, through the example of the changes in the content and ideological orientation of the Communiqués, including their "missionary" section[12].

In the 25 year long history of the Bologna Process, three stages of its development can be distinguished, characterized by slightly different perspectives on the three missions and different relationships between its main stakeholders: the academic community, the administration, and the university's social environment.

36 Stage 1, which is referred to in the literature as the "tool" stage and with which the Bologna Process is most strongly and most frequently identified, covers the years 1999-2009 and includes the Communiqués from Prague, Berlin, Bergen, London, and Leuven, up to the confirmation of the EHEA's establishment at the conferences in Vienna and Budapest in 2010. This is the phase of building the EHEA in the manner planned in the Bologna Declaration – in the context of implementing tools to increase the coherence of higher education systems in Europe, opening the way for transpa-

[12] I write about this in more detail in E. Chmielecka, „Proces Boloński – to już 20 lat" (The Bologna Process – it's been 20 years) Forum Akademickie 9/2019 and E. Chmielecka: „Komunikaty Bolońskie. Jak zmieniała się strategia rozwoju szkolnictwa wyższego w Europie" (Bologna Communications. How the development strategy of higher education in Europe has changed) in J. Lubacz, Z. Marciniak (eds), Ewolucja kultury akademickiej, IPWC, Warsaw 2025.

rency and comparability of national systems and facilitating the comparison of the achievements of students and academic staff. Consequently, this facilitates their educational and labor market mobility and supports their lifelong learning. This is the time of implementation of the ECTS system, the basic principles of quality assurance enshrined in the "European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance," the Diploma Supplement, the Dublin Qualifications Framework, and later the European Qualifications Framework. Their concepts were developed primarily through the work of the Process Secretariat, the Bologna Follow-Up Group [BFUG], and higher education-related organizations such as the European University Association [EUA] and the European Student Union [ESU]. However, decisions regarding their implementation were made by the ministers responsible for higher education, signing subsequent Communiqués. They were also responsible for implementing the Process's proposals in their countries. Clearly, the leading role here was played by the administration, which was tasked with implementing the Process's solutions into higher education systems and institutions. Completing this task required not only amending legal provisions (including acts in Poland) but also creating tools for monitoring and controlling the correctness of these implementations in higher education institutions, with the establishment and operation of institutions for assessing the quality of education at the forefront. It is no surprise that this generated significant tension between the academic community and the administration, both state and university. The academic community felt a loss of teaching freedom and institutional autonomy, and an abandonment of fundamental academic values in favor of administrative efficiency and "correctness," often implemented without understanding their rationale and considered an unnecessary bureaucratic nuisance. I remember a very pertinent yet painful remark made at one quality conference: "From now on, we will no longer be concerned with the quality of our teaching out of the belief that it is an important value and a teacher's responsibility. Instead, we will strive to meet the requirements of accreditation committees and consider that sufficient." Despite these tensions, the basic tools of the process that form the organizational framework of the EHEA were introduced in all the signatory countries. This was also the case in Poland.

This stage of the Process had a significant impact on the understanding of the educational mission of higher education institutions. The tools described above for organizing the teaching process were not intended to standardize institutions, programs, and methods of education, or to interfere with the content of teaching – these remained the responsibility of universities, and the scope of their freedom was determined by national regulations. Their goal was to ensure the formal comparability of issued diplomas and

other certificates, thereby internationalizing studies and increasing the mobility of both students and labor market participants. Qualifications frameworks – both European and national – played a particular role here, defining generic, very general descriptors of learning outcomes for individual levels of education in terms of "knowledge," "skills," and "social competences," while entrusting the relevant national and university bodies with the task of implementing appropriate content. They thus created a common tool for shaping diverse educational programs within a lifelong learning system.

Stage 2, which in the Bologna analyses is called "consolidation," falls between 2010 and 2019 and is marked by the Communiqués from Bucharest, Yerevan, and Paris. This is a period of familiarization and utilization of the tools implemented in Stage 1, including the principles of validation of learning outcomes acquired outside formal education, the principles of diploma recognition, the development of lifelong learning (LLL), and others. This "familiarization" is led by the administration and the academic community, but with an increasingly strong involvement of external university stakeholders. Although references were made to the needs of the university environment already in the tool phase, the focus was primarily on the labor market and schools adapting to its requirements to improve graduate employability. Now, the university's social environment is beginning to play a significant role in another respect as well. Its growing problems are expected to encourage universities to contribute to building a cohesive society and a democratic state, paying attention to socially disadvantaged groups who do not sufficiently benefit from the benefits of higher education and are therefore less prepared to cope with challenges. This requires universities to open up to the needs of society – recognizing, describing, and analyzing the social challenges and conflicts that are growing during this period (after a relatively calm Stage I of the Process). Recognizing the implementation of lifelong learning (LLL) as a tool for building this cohesion and emphasizing the university's unique role in this process prompts reflection on the meaning of the university's second and third missions. A discussion begins here, focusing on the university's responsibility not "to" its environment, its credibility related, for example, to accountability for public funding for education, but "for" that environment—for its development and prosperity. This is concluded by a new understanding of social easasment, better aligned with the university's traditional dual missions, while not eschewing engagement with its surroundings. These missions take on not only a local or national dimension, but also a global one, as emphasized by the Communiqués' reference to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Here, universities and their social environment, as well as administration at all levels, share common goals, so tensions between the Process

actors are clearly diminishing; on the contrary, their cooperation and shared understanding of the objectives of their actions are strengthening.

The Bologna Process is currently in its third decade and, at the same time, its third phase of development, which began in 2020 with the Rome Communiqué, followed by the Tirana Communiqué (2024). The European academic community has been faced with the need to design a new strategy for the EHEA's development and outline its new mission. Clearly, the leading role here falls to academic communities, which are to be guided by a set of values renewed in the spirit of our times (or rather, the problems of our times), while the administration and their surroundings are to support them in this endeavor. These communiqués particularly emphasized the protection of legitimate knowledge and the fight against "fake knowledge" as the fundamental mission of universities. The introductions to the Rome and Tirana communiqués also refer to the dramatic crises facing Europe and the world, and indicate how universities should respond to them, in accordance with their mission and without neglecting its fulfillment. They should do this primarily in a manner appropriate to a higher education institution, not other institutions, such as charities. Allow me a digression to illustrate this statement. At the conference in Bologna on the 20th anniversary of the Process, discussions were held on, among other things, how universities can participate in solving the problem of mass immigration, which Italy was currently grappling with. Of course, no one forbade universities from providing ad hoc assistance to refugees in the form of the proverbial "cooking soup," providing shelter in university premises, or caring for immigrant children (we remember well how Polish universities opened up to such assistance). Immediately after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine – necessary and valuable assistance, but nevertheless ad hoc. Later, other solutions were needed. The expectations were that universities, using their knowledge in political science, sociology, psychology, pedagogy, medicine, and other fields, would be able to support local and state administrations in diagnosing the refugee problem and finding ways to solve it on a national, and even global, scale. Therefore, it was through scientific research and educational activity (the first and second missions) that they were to demonstrate responsibility "for" the social environment and support it in its actions. Equally profound and dramatic were the calls addressed to universities regarding the climate crisis – its diagnosis and solution, problems related to 4.0 technologies, and later to artificial intelligence, and other contemporary challenges. Responsibility for the social environment is joined here by an appeal for universities' responsiveness to global problems. Let us examine this again.

The first attempts to define a new meaning of the university's mission, related to its involvement and responsibility for the environment, can be found in the preamb-

les of the Communiqués, even in the first stage of the Process – despite the predominance of instrumental content. The Berlin Communiqué [2003] states that concern for the EHEA's global competitiveness must be balanced with the social dimension of higher education, which should serve to enhance social cohesion in many aspects. The London Communiqué [2007] views the university's tasks in the context of the changing global economic and political situation and the challenges posed to humanity by globalization, and focuses on academic values such as institutional autonomy and academic freedom, but also equal opportunities for all students, as the basis for ensuring cooperation between national systems, higher education, and the EHEA's position in the world. The Leuven/Louvain la-Neuve Communiqué [2009] states that higher education is the subject and object of public responsibility for the future of the world, which means the mutual responsibility of the social environment and higher education for its successful and stable development.

In the Budapest-Vienna Declaration [2010], the ministers strongly reaffirmed that the fundamental academic values are freedom of teaching and research and institutional autonomy, but the credibility ("accountability") and responsibility ("responsibility") of higher education institutions should also be remembered: they serve to build—in a manner appropriate for higher education institutions—peaceful, democratic, and cohesive societies. This ministerial declaration was, among other things, a result of protests from the academic community against the instrumental nature of the EHEA guidelines. The Bucharest Communiqué [2012] stated that higher education should be an important factor in overcoming the economic and social crisis, including by educating graduates who will be able to take responsibility for these crises and overcome their negative effects.

The Yerevan Communiqué [2015] explicitly recognizes the key role of higher education institutions in meeting the challenges and dangers of today. The "missionary" priorities are primarily: strengthening academic freedom in teaching and ensuring full and collaborative participation of staff and students in creating programs and managing an autonomous institution – the university, as well as intensifying the university's efforts for intercultural understanding, critical thinking, political and religious tolerance, gender equality, and democratic and civic values. These theses are further developed in the Paris Communiqué [2018], which speaks of mutual trust and understanding between higher education systems based on fundamental academic values: the inviolability of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, the participation of staff and students in the governance of higher education, and the public accountability of and for higher education institutions. The concrete expression

of these postulates begins with the Rome Communiqué 2020. The previously announced vision of higher education refers to the principles of operation of the academic community: it is an area in which students, staff, and graduates are endowed with the freedom to learn, teach, and research, which is based on respect for fundamental academic and democratic values and the principles of law. To achieve these goals, the EHEA must be built with three "INs":

- "Inclusive"—serving social cohesion—everyone wishing to learn should have guaranteed access to studies and receive support to help them complete them;
- Innovative—the content, methods, and practice of education should be closely linked to the latest scientific achievements[13];
- Interconnected—proposing the further development of tools for collaboration, knowledge flows, staff and student mobility, comparability, and recognition, including automatic recognition of diplomas, an educational passport for refugees, and other tools.

To implement this strategy, universities should:

- Explore the "social dimension" of higher education and recognize that, while its understanding may vary across countries, it should strive for a common understanding. The EHEA should develop common principles and guidelines regarding the social dimension of higher education activities and examine the extent to which cooperation within the EHEA can strengthen the social role of higher Collect, compare, and analyze data on national social challenges, monitor relevant social groups. Gather examples of good practices in addressing social challenges by universities, and implement Peer Learning Activities in this area.
- Adopt national institutional solutions for implementing the social dimension in line with the Bologna Agreements, as well as policies addressing immigration, climate, digitalization, etc., conducted in their countries.

The fundamental values already mentioned in the Paris Communiqué include institutional autonomy of universities, academic freedom, independence, and integrity, the participation of academic faculty and students in university governance, and public accountability (including the state) for higher education. The Secretariat of the Process (BFUG) is charged with conducting a debate with the academic community and national public authorities on the meanings of these values and developing a report with proposed definitions. Academic freedom is initially defined as the freedom of faculty and students to engage in research, learning, and teaching, and

[13] This is a return to the old idea of teaching based on the results of the most recent research, and not directly on the demands of the labor market.

to communicate with their social environment without hindrance or fear of reprisal. Finally, the Tirana Communiqué (2024) begins again with the recognition that the world is experiencing complex geopolitical, social, economic, and ecological challenges, including polarization and inequality between people, communities, and regions, culminating in the ongoing war in Ukraine. Higher education is a public good, and its transformative power has an irreplaceable role to play in overcoming these challenges and promoting peaceful, democratic societies. It should be a safe place for open minds and diverse ideas, where teaching and research foster critical cognitive attitudes, tolerance, nonviolence, dialogue based on scientific arguments, and the peaceful exchange of diverse views.

The 45th Ministerial Conference in Tirana focused on academic values. It was agreed that higher education should uphold, promote, and protect, above all, the following values:

- Academic honesty and independence ("integrity"), as a set of principles and attitudes of the academic community, internalized and consequently imposed on the community's ethical principles and professional standards in teaching and learning, research, management, and all other tasks related to the mission of education;
- Institutional autonomy, understood as the ability of higher education institutions to fulfill their mission without undue influence from external factors and to establish their own priorities and policies regarding organization, finances, employment, and academic affairs;
- Community, understood as the participation of academic faculty and students in the governance of the institution, which means their right to organize themselves autonomously, to elect and be elected in open, free, and legitimate elections, to initiate and participate in debates and decision-making on all management matters;
- public responsibility for higher education, which defines a set of obligations defined at the level of the national education system that public authorities must undertake and fulfill as part of their general obligation to the education sector and society as a whole; • public responsibility of higher education for the social environment, which represents the obligations of the academic community towards the society of which it is a part.

Expanding definitions of these values are found in the annex to the Tirana Communiqué. While each is valuable individually, they should be implemented as a coherent whole, creating a renewed academic ethos that underpins a renewed mission of

universities. According to this, EHEA universities, assuming responsibility for global problems, should respond to them (responsibility) and be able to recognize and analyze them (responsiveness).

It is worth noting how well this aligns with the traditional ethos and mission, how appropriately the university's social environment occupies this space, and how aptly the "third mission" is formulated. The university is no longer an "ivory tower"; it no longer isolates itself from its surroundings – it is wiser than them and provides them with attention and care in a manner appropriate to its environment.

## Some Final Remarks

From the above considerations, a model of university emerges, often referred to in the literature as the university of new responsibility (or cooperation and shared responsibility), sometimes the university of the third mission— that is neither a pure research university nor an entrepreneurial university—which, while fully respecting the research and educational mission, recognizes them as a condition for the successful fulfillment of the third mission. All of them share a common idea: they recognize that universities should consider the needs of their social environment, but at the same time, they advocate for various forms of implementing the principle of university responsibility, not only towards stakeholders, but also for the broader social environment—up to and including responsibility for the fate of all humanity. This responsibility is undertaken in collaboration with it, while preserving the autonomy of academic institutions and the freedoms of teaching and research. It is not the social environment that should formulate tasks for universities—it is they who should recognize them and seek solutions. This allows universities to maintain their special role as institutions that, on the one hand, generate change through educating future generations and research, and, on the other, respond to the new expectations of the environment triggered by this change. These expectations include not only the dissemination of knowledge and the transfer of technology to the economy – which is a condition for creating a knowledge-based society and economy – but also the provision of tools for better understanding the complex world and coping with unstable social reality, which is a condition for the success of developed democratic systems and the formation of civil societies.

A separate issue currently plaguing universities and prompting a rethinking of their educational mission is the aforementioned uncertainty and threats related to

an unpredictable future[14]. Traditional components of education—knowledge, skills, and attitudes—require rethinking and redefining. Identifying needs, such as those expressed by the labor market, has short-term utility, as do most of the practical skills sought today. So how do we educate for the future to provide useful employment, but also the ability to understand an unpredictable world in which the 4.0 revolution is taking place (with artificial intelligence at the forefront); in which rapid social changes (migration) and unexpected disasters (pandemic, climate, war) occur. In which every employee, according to predictions, will change professions 12 times in their lifetime—or perhaps professions as we currently understand them will disappear altogether, replaced by clouds of employee competences. In the document "Solving future skills challenges"[15] prepared by UK universities in 2017 we read: "*The fourth industrial revolution could involve 'a revolution more comprehensive and all--encompassing than anything we have ever seen' (*World Economic Forum, 2016*). The combination of multiple changes, such as through robotics, artificial intelligence and the internet of things, looks set to disrupt whole sectors and organizational structures, and is unlikely to leave many jobs untouched....The linear model of education–employment–career will no longer be sufficient… Subject-specific skills will need to be underpinned by a range of transferable skills….The demand for graduates is robust, but in an uncertain environment, it is difficult to predict future demand….*"

Therefore, since the "education-employment-career" model has become outdated, what should we teach? How should we fulfill the educational mission of universities? One solution is to teach "hard knowledge and soft skills"[16]. It is known that the theoretical foundations of knowledge age more slowly than applied knowledge and practical skills, and they can provide "understanding of the world" (including the dilemmas of modern civilization). This is accompanied by a modification of "responding to the needs of the labor market" and a shift from skills directly related to the profession/

[14] Discussions on these issues can be found in numerous literature sources. Among Polish sources, it is worth referring to, for example, J. Czarzasty, Cz. Kliszko (eds.), Świat (bez) pracy. Od fordyzmu do czwartej rewolucji przemysłowej*, Księga pamiątkowa z okazji 70-rocznicy urodzin prof. Juliusza Gardawskiego* (The World (without) Work. From Fordism to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, A Commemorative Book on the Occasion of the 70th Birthday Prof. Juliusz Gardawski), Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH, Warszawa 2018 or S. Kwiatkowski (ed.), Kompetencje przyszłości (Competencies of the future), Wydawnictwo FRSE, Warszawa 2018.

[15] https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2018/solving-future-skills-challenges.pdf

[16] Chmielecka E., Edukacja dla przyszłości – jak ocenić jej jakość? (Education for the future – how to assess its quality?), in *Edukacja dla przyszłości – jakość kształcenia* [red. Chmielecka E., Kraśniewska N.], Fundacja Rektorów Polskich, 2019.

workplace to developing universal competencies (sometimes called transitory, as they are applicable to various employee activities in different workplaces). It is also necessary to develop relatively durable and universal social competencies, the most important of which are: "adaptation to change" (understanding the inevitability of change and coping with it), learning to learn – LLL, criticism and self-criticism, problem-solving, innovation, creativity, cooperation, and communication. The 2017 EUA document summarizes this well[17]: "*(t)he higher education learning experience nurtures and enables the development of learners as active and responsible citizens, critical thinkers, problem solvers, equipped for lifelong learning. Higher education equips people with the confidence and skills to live and learn in a changing world, able to proactively address their own and the world's grand challenges.*" It is also possible that in a "world without work," the humanities will become more useful and desirable, allowing us to find meaning and dignity in life, which today is largely based on our work.

The above example of a problem facing universities today well illustrates the thesis of the "third mission" university. No one but universities themselves will solve the problem of "what to teach for an uncertain future." Instead, a debate on this issue is necessary—within the academic community and with the participation of external stakeholders. This seems to be a recommendation that is not contradictory to the traditional mission of the university, but somewhat richer than it.

[17] European Principles for Enhancement of L&T project EFFECT/EUA – 2017 https://eua.eu/component/attachments/attachments.html?task=attachment&id=1772

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