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The myth of indisputable foundations

THE MYTH OF INDISPUTABLE FOUNDATIONS

In the modern age, stakeholders in university and higher education often turn to values which at a specific time have seemed indisputable, fundamental and determining. Even here, however, we can speak of myths, as the four examples chosen demonstrate that although the foundations were often very well respected, this was only within a given time period. We will gradually examine all four of them: religion, national interests, social discipline and liberal education.

Religion

In the pre-modern age, religion created a cohesive foundation for society and the state, which was also reflected in the teaching and training of younger generations.[245] It is possible to look at developments towards secularization in this social segment using the development of universities in the USA. This example is also useful as it was in the USA (and parts of the British Isles) where certain forms of religious culture appeared and have shown themselves to be very resilient, unlike in Europe. A legitimate question, therefore, is which of these "two worlds" is the exception?[246]

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the higher level of education in English settlements was directly related to religion. The Puritans who settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1730s set up a college to promote "scholarship" and preserve it for their descendants. Harvard college was established in 1636 and regular teaching began there in 1640. As in the colleges from Oxbridge, which it

245 Berger, Peter: *Posvátný baldachýn. Základy sociologické teorie náboženství.* Brno 2018.

246 Davie, Grace: *Výjimečný příklad Evropa. Podoby víry v dnešním světě.* Brno 2009.

sought to emulate, it tried to provide a liberal education but with a religious direction: the majority of its graduates continued in their studies designed for religious vocations. Doctrinal conformity was ensured by a group of influential judges and clergymen who supervised the college. The 18th century continued a certain synthesis of liberalism and theology. This trend was strengthened at Harvard college with the creation of a professorship of theology. The professors at this department argued for a more rational and tolerant interpretation of Christianity. By this time Harvard was already a respected educational institute, when William and Mary College in Virginia (established in 1693) and Yale college in Connecticut (established in 1701) were still in their infancy.[247]

Roger Geiger explained it is important to realize that the American colonies were basically provincial outposts of European, mainly English, culture: throughout the first half of the 18th century the college was heavily influenced by the culture of Calvinism. The greatest intellectual upheaval during this period was the Great Awakening of the Evangelical movement in the 1740s, radiating mainly from England and Scotland. Yale was built in an attempt to counter this threat to a unified education and religious orthodoxy. This demonstrates that the intellectual environment at that time was still marked by religious disputes and that it was religion which determined education programmes. However, by the middle of the century, the college was staring to absorb the most important intellectual movements of the age, which, as in Europe, also included the Enlightenment. The influence of the Enlightenment played an important role in establishing the new colleges in New York (1754) and Philadelphia (1755). However, we should not overlook the fact that the self-educated Benjamin Franklin was also a representative American intellectual, who as a young man had nothing but scorn for colleges. In New England, however, the majority of educated people still sought careers in the clergy. Following a long term of service, they could then continue in educational institutes. This was the case for Samuel Johnson, who was appointed rector of the new Royal College (1754–1763), and Jonathan Edwards who accepted a post at New Jersey College (1757–1758). Colleges outside of New England relied mainly on migrants who had been educated in England or Scotland. This applied to for the College of William and Mary, the College of Philadelphia College and the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University).

The College of New Jersey made a significant contribution towards the intellectual life of the colony, when a Scottish Presbyterian minister, John Witherspoon, took over as rector (1768–1794). Geiger mentions that in his inauguration address entitled "The unity of piety and science", he declared the union of enlightened rationalism with Evangelical piety in the so-called moral philosophy of common

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247 The interpretation of this section is based on Roger L. Geiger's apt characterization of American university culture in the book Cayton, Mary Kupies (ed.): Encyclopedia of American cultural and intellectual history. NY 2001, pp. 267–268.

sense. Not only did Witherspoon expand the teaching of science at the college, but he also imparted values to the students which became the basis of the battle for American independence. He was also a clergyman who signed the Declaration of Independence and his college trained generations of political leaders for the new nation. The intellectual synthesis of reason, revelation and morality was in accordance with the religious and political ideas held by gentlemen of that era. These new ideas also helped shape the convictions of the founding fathers.[248]

The years following the American Revolution until the start of the nineteenth century were a time when organised religion found itself in an ambivalent position in universities and colleges. Despite their status as Christian institutions, the colleges became more secular and nonconfessional in spirit. Some campuses were even presided over by people who were not members of the clergy. Well-known themes from the Enlightenment became part of the curricula: a greater integration of science, efforts to include professional specialists, the teaching of modern languages including English, and instruction in civic education which was to mould the citizens of the new republic. These concepts relatively quickly led Americans to think of a new form of higher education – the idea of the republican university. These institutions were conceived of basically as public institutions. The college in Philadelphia and the College of William and Mary were taken over by their respective states at the start of the American Revolution. Harvard was reconstituted as a university institution by the state of Massachusetts in 1870 and even added a medical faculty. Columbia University was restored as part of the University of New York State. North Carolina, Georgie, Maryland and Vermont all included a university within the structure of the state.[249] Columbia University came closest to the republican ideal when a state grant allowed it to appoint professors to four new disciplines (law, chemistry, Hebrew and French). Although this development was accompanied by failures, the trend was already clear.

Religious disputes were commonplace, but they began to have wider resonance. Enlightenment ideas were appropriated by the revolutionaries in France and their radical sympathisers in America – such as the political pamphleteer Thomas Paine, whose *Age of Reason* (1794) contained a caustic attack on the Bible.[250] The opposite extreme was the emotional Evangelicalism of the Second Great Awakening, which also threatened the liberal Calvinism of the Presbyterian and Congregationalist colleges. The most accessible defence against both these fronts was in the philosophy of common sense which had rationalized and refined

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248 Ibid, p. 268.

249 Cf. Frederick, Rudolph: *The American College and University. A History.* University of Georgia Press, 1990.

250 Cf. Paine, Thomas: *The Age of Reason.* Peterborough 2011.

the natural order revealed by science, the moral order experienced by human consciousness, and the theological order advocated by Calvinism.

But these developments were not straightforward. The most noteworthy feature of religious progress in academia in the first quarter of the nineteenth century was the establishment of theological faculties and seminaries which were either connected to the colleges or were independent of them. The first of these schools was founded as a result of teaching being refused in the colleges. The orthodox Calvinists reacted to Harvard's liberalism by establishing a Theological Seminary in Andover in 1807. The Presbyterians were then faced with the apparent decline of religiosity at the College in New York with the creation of the Princeton Theological Seminary, which appeared next to the college but was not part of it. Soon afterwards, Yale and Harvard (1819 and 1822) opened their own departments of theology. More than twenty theological seminaries had been founded by 1825. Geiger considers them to be the first real postgraduate schools. In reality, at least for their professors, they allowed for a certain type of serious intellectual activity which the colleges had basically excluded. For the students, however, they were the main place where they could acquire professional skills. They prepared thousands of students for the clergy. In addition, most of the pre-war professors working outside of the natural sciences studied for a period in these seminaries. These institutions might be an example of both American and European developments – theological seminaries, faculties as well as ecclesiastical universities also emerged in Europe during the 19th century. However, unlike in America, they were associated more with the specifically European "cultural struggles" connected with building individual national identities or opposing them.

Around the mid-19th century, higher education in the USA still offered the world view of the moderate Evangelical Protestants, which was shared by the majority of Americans. As a direct descendant of the moral philosophy of common sense, this world view assumed the unity of the realms of the mind, nature and spirit. As was stated in the most widely read book used in the advanced courses of moral philosophy, "the truths revealed by religion are in perfect harmony with the truths of natural religion".[251] These truths were not only academic – they were presented repeatedly to the adult community in sermons, lectures, pamphlets and other popular works by college and university educators. However, in the last thirty years of the 19th century, the moral and religious support of American higher education collapsed. Developments in academic disciplines transformed the knowledge base of higher education and ushered in an academic revolution of immense scope. The unified world view of the philosophy of common sense and natural theology found itself on the defensive due to inconvenient geological discoveries as well as criticisms of the Bible based on philology and archaeology.

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251 Geiger, Roger, L., *cd*, p. 269.

The matter became critical both symbolically and substantially with the work *On the Origin of Species* (1859) by the English naturalist Charles Darwin and other such studies. Academic opinion was divided between scientific supporters of evolution, those who rejected it on the basis of Biblical arguments, and a large number of academics who tried to arrive at an increasingly distant means of reconciliation.[252] A form of consensus was eventually found: within their own spheres, science and religion would represent separate routes to different forms of truth. But in this scheme it would be difficult for religious truth to be represented by the many dogmas of different denominations. This was to be found more within an academic approach to religion. However, such an approach did not offer much comfort to believers and was more or less irrelevant to those seeking scientific truth. The education historian Julie A. Reuben states that by the end of the century no support remained in academic education for the moral and religious basis of knowledge.[253] However, this intellectual development was only one facet of a wider academic revolution. This involved attempts to imitate European university culture (primarily German), being aware of the importance of "useful knowledge", the professionalization of many disciplines resulting in professional research, and the establishment of new institutions and academic journals, contacts between universities, curricular changes, etc.

In the twentieth century, American universities became part of the system of production and the transfer of specialized knowledge and an inexhaustible source of expertise which inspired Europe. However, when carrying out these roles they were accompanied by problems that were no longer religious in nature. In the USA, though, the religious foundation of university and higher education remains a subject of discussion which can be seen in the public sphere even today (the ongoing disputes between evolutionists and creationists, while at many American universities there are "clashes" between representatives of Christianity and atheism, etc.).

Europe experienced stronger secularist waves and different patterns of development, particularly at the turn of the 20th century and then again after the Second World War. Religion was often expressly banned from higher education as well as from public debate. The exodus from the church and ecclesiastical societies, the loss of their influence on society, the decline in interest in the priesthood, the movement away from religious morality – these are all phenomena which determined the character of the university on the European continent. The British historian Hugh McLeod provides a very fitting description of the situation in Western Europe when he characterized the typical state of conflict between the

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252 Cf. Johnson, Phillip: *Spor o Darwina.* Prague 1996.

253 Cf. Reuben, Julie A.: *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality.* University of Chicago Press, 1997.

clergy and the medical profession in the 1970s in Europe as: "*The conflict between the clergy and the medical profession (...) was most visible in France, where there was probably no other profession as anti-clerical and anti-Catholic as the doctors, and where the students of medicine stood at the head of anti-clerical demonstrations, masked processions and riots. Since the 1970s some of the most prominent figures in the medical profession have come out openly as libertarians (...). Two of the most passionate anti-clerical politicians of the Third Republic, Georges Clemenceau and Émile Combes, were originally doctors, as was Alfred Naquet, who proposed the law legalizing divorce (...) In Germany at the end of the nineteenth century, doctors as a profession supported political liberalism, gaining the reputation for being Unkirchlichkeit.*"[254]

However, the most appropriate example of this modern trend is the establishment of the university in Brno in 1919 without a faculty of theology, which was seen as "old fashioned", a matter for the church to look after itself, and also as an institution which did not suit the new republican ideology. It is easy to assert that the old university tradition was turned on its head here. During the founding era of universities, theology was considered the queen of all the disciplines which united all strands of knowledge. In Central Europe the split between "science" and "religion" was presented by regimes based on a Marxist-Leninist ideology, which radicalized European secularization, leading to utter conceptual confusion. It is possible to view the Marxist-Leninist ideology as a dogmatic system far more rigid than all of the religious systems put together. Paradoxically, Christianity, Christian science and philosophy have become representatives of a far freer and more tolerant world view than ossified Marxism-Leninism. Naturally, this does not mean that the idea has returned to society that religion could be its bond, not even after 1989. This idea seems to contradict the pluralist character of society and the principle of the freedom of religion and belief.

National interests

The nineteenth century is sometimes referred to as the "century of nations" or of "nationalism". We need only look at Central Europe to realize the extent and parameters of this phenomenon, as well as its impact on education and university teaching. The nineteenth century saw the development of "revivalist movements". To begin with, this involved mainly cultural objectives such as protecting the language, promoting the national literature and history, and – of course – various types of primary schools. Meanwhile, the Austrian empire ruled over nations (or ethnic groups) which had different pasts that they referred to in different ways.

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254 Hundreds of publications describe the development of European secularization, cited from McLeod, Hugh: *Sekularizace v západní Evropě (1848–1914)*. Brno 2008, p. 130.

Later there were attempts to form various patriotic organizations and associations, some of which had academic interests. Even the situation within Austria was quite diverse; for example, Hungary prevented the national and political development of the Slovaks and Croats. The position of the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches is also interesting as they played greater or lesser roles in forming modern nations – in several cases they contributed towards the preservation of the language and a historical consciousness. In Central Europe, unlike in the West, we can talk about the prominent formative role of the bourgeoisie and the rural intelligentsia in "creating the nation" from below – nations and later states began to emerge thanks to the cultural elites, the priests and teachers. Differences appear here: whilst the Czechs had lost their original elites over the preceding centuries (the renewal was, therefore, mainly led by rural and urban intellectuals inspired by the spirit of romanticism), in Hungary and Poland this continuity had never been completely broken – however, even in these countries with a local aristocracy it was romanticism which forged the national identity. One consequence of these national aspirations was disturbances caused by secret societies and the activity of political émigrés. The Hungarians, though, had been basically pacified by the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, which guaranteed them complete internal autonomy, even though outwardly they were not independent. The Czechs had already been living in constitutional 'Cisleithania' and could – even with the support of the court – strive to create a modern cultural nation, a horizontally and vertically integrated society. Of these three nations the worst off was Poland as Poles were living in both Prussia and Russia – and in both states (particularly in Russia) there were attacks on their language, traditions and Catholicism. It is also important for educational institutions how the so-called horizontal national identity develops – in Bohemia it defined itself in opposition to German domination, the German language and the strong representation of Germans on Czech ethnic territory. One instrument later became the division of Czech and German institutions, even at the price of a rupture between the two communities. It is possible to observe separatist tendencies amongst the Poles and the Hungarians and the nations which lived in-between them: in the case of Hungary this applied to the Transylvanian Romanians, the Slovaks and the Croats, in the case of Poland – the Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Lithuanians. Unlike the Czechs and Hungarians, horizontal integration in Poland was only a success after the war, when Poland had also gained its independence.

For Central Europe the development of a commonly shared culture was, to a certain extent, essential, as culture was created and maintained in the large cities, and one of those was Vienna, the capital city of the monarchy. The metropolis set the tone. Vienna's influence reached beyond Austria to Germany and other countries in Eastern Europe. Viennese music, architecture and art radiated across the whole of Europe. Krzyzstof Pomian was correct when he wrote that: "*In the*

individual national cultures, the European dimension is maintained thanks to the similarity of the cultural institutions in all of the countries of the ancient Latin territory, to which are added even more countries from the ancient Greek territory. The goal of these institutions is to transfer, reproduce and spread the national culture. Firstly, this involves the educational institutions – the lyceums and gymnasiums whose curriculum was basically the same everywhere apart from national history and literature, and the universities which in the mid-19th century were modernized by the state according to the Berlin model, sometimes even against their own will."[255] Other tendencies described elsewhere can also be attributed to this trend: the importance of religion declines even with this common cultural endeavour while the importance of science increases: biology, geology, physics and so on.

If we look at the situation in Central Europe in terms of establishing universities and institutes of higher education during this period, then we can see that universities, lyceums and institutes of higher education (including technical ones) were influenced by the aforementioned cultural trends. Naturally, this also applied to the "old" universities (Prague, Krakow, Vienna, Graz, Lemberg and Innsbruck), but above all to the newly established ones. These included the university in Chernivtsi (1875) as well as several new technical schools (Graz, Vienna, Brno, Lemberg, Příbram and others); in Hungary there were new universities in Klausenburg (Cluj, 1872), Agram (Zagreb, 1874), Debrecen and Pressburg (Bratislava). The final one mentioned was opened after the war but was founded prior to it – new universities were also opened in Pécs and Szeged as "substitutes" for Bratislava and Cluj. Before the former Polish territory was divided, it was possible to study in Krakow and Lemberg (Lviv), even though many Poles (and Czechs) studied in Vienna. Naturally the situation was tense as the university in Warsaw had been closed (due to the uprising in 1830) and Poles from the former "kingdom" often studied in Kiev or St Petersburg. In 1964 the university in Warsaw was entirely Russified – for this reason many Poles chose exile and universities in Western Europe, particularly in France. To this list could also be added new universities from the margins of Central Europe in the new states of Romania, Bulgaria and Greece, even if these universities did not always have all the faculties (Iaşi, Bucharest, Sofie, Athens).[256]

One common denominator for all of these institutions was that they were based on German (in some cases with a hint of French) models and were influenced by both universal cultural influences as well as the aforementioned national movements and their demands: cultural, linguistic, social and later political.

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255 Pomian, Krzysztof: *Evropa a její národy. Ve znamení jednoty a různosti.* Prague 2001, p. 177.

256 Cf. Rüegg, Walter: *Geschichte der Universität in Europa. Band III: vom 19. Jahrhundert zum zweiten Weltkrieg 1800–1900.* München 2004, chapter by Christophe Charle, pp. 49–51.

A good example is the division of the university in Prague into its German and Czech parts in 1882, which might be considered a specific type of modern "foundation". A leading Czech historian, Otto Urban, described this event as follows: "*It was impossible to justifiably prevent the development of a university style of Czech higher education, all the more so as a separate Czech technical university had existed in Prague since 1869. The heart of the matter lay in whether – and to what extent – existing universities should be split up or whether new ones should be established alongside them. The Czechs explicitly rejected proposals to establish an entirely new university which was not historically or legally linked to the ancient teaching at Charles University, and also initially fought against any comprehensive division – i.e. they wanted to preserve certain common bodies, including the rector as the main representative of the university. The resulting solution, which took into account economic, financial and other practical matters, was a certain compromise. Based on an imperial decree from 10 April 1881, it was decided to divide the university into two schools with German and Czech teaching and entirely separate administrations, whilst both universities adopted, in a historical and legal sense, all the features of the Charles-Ferdinand University, including its name. (...) The implementation of the law then required some time: teaching at the law faculty and the faculty of arts began in 1882/1883, 1883/1884 at the medical faculty and not until 1891/1892 at the theological faculty.*"[257]

Czech and German nationalism could be seen its rawest form in the activities of the students. Even though they were in daily contact, they were becoming increasingly estranged. This was also undoubtedly due to the fact that German teachers came to Prague with their academic and organizational preconceptions, and were often exceptionally intelligent individuals (Konstantin Höfler – František Palacký's rival – and Ernst Mach). The division of the university was not only meant to shackle intellectual Moravia to Bohemia, but it was to expand the national plurality of academic institutions. Up until the First World War the university was criticized as a place which lacked enough prominent academic figures, but by the 1890s it had already managed to overcome its greatest problems. As the historian Jaroslav Marek pointed out, the Czech university emerged during the middle of political disputes and was constantly being drawn into them: "*Its teachers entered into politics, responsible behaviour was required from them and importance was attached to their voice. The flipside to this connection with national life was that its representatives were taken out of their departments and given work which would normally have been carried out by professionals and trained politicians. Political commitment grew when younger people came to the university and became professors. The philosopher and sociologist Tomáš G. Masaryk came from Vienna and joined local prominent figures such*

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257 Urban, Otto: *Česká společnost 1848–1918.* Prague 1982, p. 358.

as the historians Jaroslav Goll and Antonín Rezek, the aesthetician Otakar Hostinský and the classical philologist Josef Král. Jan Gebauer represented the older generation."[258]

As can be seen in the previous example, "national interests" could even be addressed inside a multi-ethnic empire, particularly those which tended towards internal plurality and more liberal forms of government (constitutionalism). The Czechs had much better conditions in constitutional Austria than other smaller nations or ethnic groups within the Russian or Ottoman empires. This began to eventually dawn on nations in South Eastern Europe for whom Slavonic Prague was the closest in terms of geography and emotion. This was aided by the fact that there were not only experts among university teachers, but also people with wider cultural interests.[259]

National interests, therefore, contributed greatly towards the foundation of modern universities, even when they were established within a multi-ethnic empire. However, these interests often represented a "disruptive element" to the ideal of the universality of higher-education institutes. Instead we see here the promotion of particularism and specific national (ethnic) objectives.

Disciplining the youth

There is a common belief that universities and colleges provide young people not only with an education but also an overview of the world, a calming environment and the appetite to work for society. This idea, which is typical for parents and optimistic teachers, is contradictory and sometimes even naïve. Students have always represented a relatively turbulent element, and on two levels in particular.

Firstly, it is necessary to mention their sensitive, critical view of the state of society. This occurred in Europe and elsewhere in both the 19th and 20th centuries during student protests and riots, with the students' involvement in the great revolutions, both national and European wide. Here we can provide a few events and names from the 19th and first half of the 20th century. The modern, and at the same time, ambivalent participation of students in revolutionary politics probably dates back to the Polish support of Napoleon and, on the contrary, the restoration of the Prussian state and the pan-German national uprising. This crucial period is often referred to in the literature as the students' fight for freedom (1800–1834), and radical romantics and "nationalists" are mentioned in England, Poland, France and Germany – the students' Burschenschaften were particularly

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258 Marek, Jaroslav: *Česká moderní kultura.* Prague 1998, p. 200.

259 Cf. ibid, p. 201.

famous in many German universities, especially in Jena.[260] This was followed by the students' involvement in the revolutions of 1848–1849 across the whole of Europe – students who would later emerge as professional revolutionaries. Academic legions are also known from revolutionary Prague. The students' political commitment was not only evident in their radical liberalism, but also in their nationalism and sometimes even conservatism. In terms of ideology, from the mid-19th century a crucial role here was played by the various associations with their national or European objectives – one university could house all of the offshoots of organised ideas and their supporters. In the last twenty-five years of the 19th century, Holland, Belgium, Sweden, France, England, Germany and even Russia were famous in this regard. Russia is often associated with the case from the 1870s when university students left the lecture halls to "go out among the people" in the naïve belief in the power of the word to spread ideas about a just, modern world. It is also well known what happened to the students: "*The peasants continued in their unwavering belief in God and the Tsar and saw nothing wrong in the fact that the Tsar exploited people if he alone was the exploiter. But this fact did not convince the committed radicals to change their minds; instead it spurred them on to violence. In 1879 around 30 members of the intelligentsia formed a secret terrorist organisation called the "People's Will", with the aim of assassinating Tsar Alexander II. It was the first organisation in history dedicated exclusively to political terror.*"[261] With the rise of extreme nationalism and modern ideologies: fascism, racism, communism and national socialism, the student involvement in these movements naturally increased – not least because the supporters and promoters of mass political movements were happy to have the radical youth amongst their ranks. On the other hand, the events of the First World War were to be of key significance as they rent asunder the "old world" with all of its certainties. It is also well known that the impetus for the war came from the Bosnian-Serbian student Gavrilo Princip (1895–1918), who murdered the Austrian successor to the throne. Meanwhile, the French student section of Action francaise demonstrates that the radical commitment of students was not confined to countries affected by Italian or German fascism.

In Central Europe the pre-war and postwar destruction of the old world did not only usher in political ideas. Of equal if not greater importance to the intellectual world of students were the new theories, the most important of which came from the psychiatrist and founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), who was born in Příbor in Moravia, and who not only influenced the world of university lecture halls, but practically all areas where students and other intellectuals were to be found. Most important of all were Central Europe's cafes, the most fa-

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260 Cf. Rüegg, Walter: *Geschichte der Universität in Europa. Band III: vom 19. Jahrhundert zum zweiten Weltkrieg 1800–1900.*, chapter by Lieve Gevers and Louis Vos, pp. 227–299.

261 Pipes, Richard: *Dějiny ruské revoluce.* Prague 1998, p. 38.

mous of which was Vienna's Griensteidel, a favourite haunt of Europe's foremost intellectuals (A. Schnitzler, H. Baahr, H. von Hofmannstahl, J. Brahms, M. Buber and G. Lukács).[262] The traditional idea of "Bildung" collapsed from within as well as from without. This was helped by the transfer of evolutionary theory from biology to the social sciences (social Darwinism), the critique of the old concepts of ethics, and the influence of decadence, aestheticism, new avant-garde styles in literature and art, as well as the aforementioned psychological theories. The assault on young minds was considerable, and it is little wonder that it created ever newer forms of polarization.[263]

The second half of the 20th century did not fare much better – the student revolts in Western and Eastern Europe in the 1960s have received the most attention, but it is possible to offer dozens of other examples. These are also interesting for showing the transformation the younger generation was going through (maturing intellectually, a tendency towards radicalism, attempts to change the "old world"). The philosopher Paul Ricoeur described the student revolts in the late 1960s which he experienced in Nanterre, where he had gone to from the Sorbonne, as he himself said, "to try something where I would have real contact with the students". He described the students' revolt thus: "*It started in Nanterre because of things which were not related to the teaching, for example, the right of the boys to visit the girls in their dorms; the primer was in fact the 'sexual revolution'. Nanterre suffered two handicaps: on the one hand, the faculty of arts and the law and economics faculties were all under one roof. The students of the arts faculty were a strong left-wing group, while the lawyers were right-wing activists, and so a clash was inevitable. The second handicap arose from the catchment areas for the students: some of them came from the middle-class residential quarter of Neuilly XVI and XVII, and others from proletarian Nanterre and other poorer suburbs. The sons and daughters of the middle-class families were left-wing. For the others, the communists, it was important that the institution operated properly: for them the university was a traditional environment providing knowledge and the prospect of social achievement. The middle class began to feel that the university had ceased to be an elevator to the social heights for them: their parents already occupied those positions and so the young middle class joined with those who did not have a realistic chance of completing their studies and began to dream of destroying an institution which they no longer saw as a unique way to future success. When I became rector in March 1969 I was ideologically supported by both sides: by the anti-left communists and by the socially committed Catholics; paradoxically, my opponents were the traditional middle class and the left-wing middle class.*"[264] Ricoeur's other observations are also interesting and at the same

262 Cf. Veber, Václav et al: *Dějiny Rakouska*. Prague 2009, pp. 498–499.

263 A concise characterization of the turn of the 20th century, which had such an influence on intellectual and, therefore, university life, is provided by J. W. Burrow in his book *The Crisis of Reason. European Thought 1848–1914. (Krize rozumu. Evropské myšlení 1848–1914,* Czech edition, Brno 2003).

264 Azouvi, Francois – Launnay, Marc de: *Ricoeur, Paul. Myslet a věřit (rozhovor)*. Prague 2000, p. 58.

time accurate: for example, he talks about how difficult it was to evaluate that year in France. Was it just a "great playful dream" or something much more important which had "cultural significance", a form of "social eruption"? He presents common element's – for both Western Europe and the university campuses in the USA – a sharp and uncontrollable demographic growth, the elitism of university representatives, changes in the youth's morals, a desire for emancipation and the important role of the unions.[265] Ricoeur sees the rise of de Gaulle to power as specific to the French experience, which deepened the ideological rift and radicalized the students who in 1969 "rejected knowledge" and began to identify knowledge with power and power with violence.[266] However, the student movement developed under different circumstances in Central Europe in the 1960s: the objective of the student movement was to obtain greater freedom within a totalitarian communist regime rather than a democracy. This contradiction was once more apparent in Czechoslovakia and other Central European countries at the end of the 1980s as part of the students' "anti-communist" revolutions.[267]

Secondly, there were intergenerational transformations. University students in the modern era not only often protested against the state of the society in which they lived, but they also rebelled against the older generation, against their fathers and grandfathers who had lived under the assumption that the younger generation would follow in their footsteps and share the same values. Social and generational critiques would often merge. This was related to a different understanding of employment, free time, values in life, the growth in individualism and transformations in society. Related to this is also the loosening of traditional family ties and the search for new moral criteria. This was captured very succinctly by the British historian Eric Hobsbawm: "*There were perhaps even more serious consequences to come from the loosening of traditional family ties as the family not only stopped being what it had always been – a tool for its own reproduction – but it stopped being a tool for cooperation. The family had been essential in this last role for the maintenance of the agrarian and early-industrial economy, both local and global. (…) The old moral vocabulary of rights and duties, mutual obligations, sin and virtue, reward and punishments, could no longer be translated into the new language of desired gratification. Once such practices and institutions were no longer accepted as part of a way of ordering society that linked people to each other and ensured social cooperation and reproduction, most of their capacity to structure human social life vanished…*"[268]

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265 Ibid.

266 Cf. ibid, p. 60.

267 For the example of Czechoslovakia, see Otáhal, Milan: *Studenti a komunistická moc v českých zemích 1968–1989.* Prague 2003.

268 Hobsbawm, Eric: *Věk extrémů. Krátké dvacáté století 1914–1991.* Prague 1998, pp. 348–349.

There were some very valuable observations of university life from the Czechs who emigrated in 1948 and 1969. Those who were able to find a position in Western universities all talk about the left-wing boom in the 1960s, albeit with different assessments depending on their ideological preferences. It is interesting to read about their lives either through interviews or biographies. Post-August-1969 émigrés offered some inspiring observations, in particular from Jaroslav Krejčí, an economist and historian (a Czech Arnold Toynbee), in his memoirs on his university life in Lancaster, England; and in the USA,[269] Rio Preisner, a German-studies scholar and philosopher working in Pennsylvania.[270] The testaments of the "Forty-Eighters" have been preserved thanks to an anthology entitled "Separation 1948", edited by P. Hrubý, P. Kosatík and Z. Pousta. The witnesses not only described their diverse fates, but also the conditions in different Western universities. One good example is the Czech German-studies scholar, Antonín Hrubý, who worked at Washington University from 1961 to 1990. He described the 1960s, a period of change, thus: "*These were years when illusions were lost and a period when I came to better understand how American democracy worked. Naturally, I was in a daze during the first few months. Never before had I had so much free space around me, both in a literal and figurative sense. No obstacles – the college, my colleagues and the community welcomed us with open arms. They welcomed us to the wagon rack with music and gifts. But of course Vietnam, marches against segregation, riots in the ghettos and student demonstrations, presidents murdered, corruption and political scandals – that was the other side of America which was difficult to come to terms with. However, time taught me to trust the American system of checks and balances.*"[271] In his memoirs the author also described the American university system and how it differed from that in Western Europe (universities as "business enterprises", the importance of the administrative councils, the independence and activity of the senior lecturers and professors, universities as umbrella organisations for all types of activities, etc.). Another author, the historian and philosopher Zdeněk Dietrich, a professor at the University of Utrecht, compared the situation in Western Europe with his former native country, specifically the example of the university in Brno in the 1960s: "*I picked up signals that something new and important was happening. I had left behind an old friend in Czechoslovakia, the historian Jaroslav Kudrna, who had a career at the Brno university. He became a professor there before I did at Utrecht, and wrote dreadful things about the West European bourgeoisie and putrefying capitalism. It was awful to read, especially from someone who used to be incredibly intelligent and had wonderful ideas. In addition to being an expert on Marxism, which everyone there was buried in, he was also interested*

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269 Krejčí, Jaroslav: *Mezi demokracií a diktaturou. Domov a exil.* Olomouc 1998.

270 Preisner, Rio: *Americana I. a II.* Brno 1992–1993.

271 Českým germanistou v Seattlu. Antonín hrubý a Šárka Hrubá. In: *Rozchod 1948. Rozhovory s českými poúnorovými exulanty.* Interview by Petr Hrubý, Pavel Kosatík and Zdeněk Pousta. Prague 2006, p. 107.

in Spanish mysticism. I remember how he used to go around the university arguing that St Tereza of Avila was a greater materialist than Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. So this Kudrna was making a living there and then suddenly in the 1960s I received a parcel in the post from him with Kundera's The Joke. So I read The Joke and I was amazed. This was such a strong satire on that whole situation..."[272]

Therefore, even the idea of social discipline through university study can be considered more of an ideal than reality. Students have often been volatile elements, rebelling or even being directly revolutionary, and the commonly shared school often intensified this radicalness. In the 20th century, certain types of radical behaviour were promoted by the great ideological systems which the universities greatly influenced, as well as by changes in the social climate and generational conflicts.

The weaknesses of a liberal education

Recently the American political scientist and commentator Fareed Zakaria (1964) came to the defence of liberal education, referring to the situation both in the USA and in Central Europe, where issues surrounding "liberalism" are not completely clear and can also be very sensitive. What did Zakaria understand by "liberal" education? It is a certain type of university education (corresponding to the European Bachelor's course), whose ideal is not specialization but universality. As the author Andrew Lass wrote in the introduction to Zakaria's book: "*To successfully learn about medicine it is without question necessary to acquire an education in the natural sciences. However, our specialization does not only define us as a general practitioner. We will be better doctors (and better members of society) if we have the opportunity to acquire a solid grounding in other disciplines (such as philosophy, sociology and sculpture). It is necessary to distinguish professionality and education, which mutually complement each other, and therefore overlap.*"[273]

As is clear from this assessment, liberal education means a certain idea about the importance of universality and the dangers of narrow specialization, which is connected to an understanding of the mental development of young people around twenty years of age, as well as a specific concept of the role of education in society. This stands in opposition to the older traditions, which in the eyes of the liberal defenders express "obedience" and "discipline" and whose goal is a mature person with good behaviour and a set of skills and knowledge "*symbolized*

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272 Il Divino Boemo: Zdeněk Dittrich. In: *Rozchod 1948. Rozhovory s českými poúnorovými exulanty, p. 134.*

273 Zakaria, Fareed: *Obrana liberálního vzdělání.* Prague 2017, p. 15 (introduction).

in the well-dressed businessman or a cadet in an elegant uniform."[274] The outcome of the liberal approach should not be "*responsible bees acting within a hierarchy of orders and regulations, but a thoughtful and creative individual who has a personal awareness of their citizenship and their rights and responsibilities.*"[275] Such an evaluation resonates within Central Europe, where there already exist many stereotypes as part of the critique of the Austrian empire and its "traditional" system of education.

Zakaria describes liberal history as dating back to the time of antiquity, which is a contentious point. On the other hand, it is true that since time immemorial scholars have wondered what education should look like and what should be given priority. Zakaria rightly points out that the emergence of colleges was of more fundamental importance than the construction of continental universities. Unlike them, the colleges became more important with their internal structure: "*Unlike universities, which often did not have a coherent form, the college was already defined by the character of its buildings. The imposing stone buildings usually had an open courtyard and the student's dormitories were in the side wings. There was a common room inside where the students could meet, a chapel where they could pray, and a library where they could read. This English model of a residential college spread to the whole Anglo-American world and is still the typical environment today where undergraduate students live and study.*"[276] According to Zakaria, this form of college gave Harvard and Yale their liberal character, as these universities combined the idea of the college and the research institute (a combination of study and living). Even the advancement of secularization did little to change this: living together no longer meant praying together but rather playing sports together or watching films together. Although the traditional curriculum also contained specialist subjects, its basic objective was to develop students' abilities in order to maintain their attention, focus their thoughts, awaken their imagination, lead a debate and thus develop their own talents. Zakaria believes that a good example of the struggle for a liberal education was the numerous transformational changes which were difficult to implement: he considers the most important of these to be the work of Charles Eliot, who he believes changed Harvard at the end of the 19th century and with it the whole of America. He did this by introducing more freedom for the students in choosing their curricular programme, which was frowned upon by influential educators at the time. This dispute is still in evidence in the USA today and Zakaria prioritizes a system which emphasizes a "common, broad foundation", which creates shared intellectual experiences and thus has a unifying character. He is a supporter of student motivation, which according to him occurs when the student has input into the choice and structure of the educational programme. He also prefers

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274 Ibid.

275 Ibid, p. 16.

276 Ibid, pp. 39–40.

moves away from the strict evaluation of students, even though he conservatively emphasizes the "reading of books" as one of the surest paths to true knowledge.

The liberal system of education is supposedly an open experiment, equipping graduates with "the ability to connect thinking with writing" (it teaches to think through writing), it links with modern technology and leads to the creation of a natural aristocracy based on ability and talent. The liberal system allegedly allows for the "progress" which medicine and science alone cannot bring and requires the humanities: "*The basic cause of the growth of the non-Western remainder of the world – developing countries have been developing much more rapidly than in previous decades – is the spread of knowledge. When I visit a developing country, I discover practically everywhere that they are governed much more efficiently today than in previous decades. At the helm of the economic policies are usually graduates from some of the Western universities. They might have studied at Chicago or Georgetown or the London School of Economics and then returned to their central banks or ministries of finance to put in place something from what they learned. Health-care systems are also far more sophisticated, based on ideas which have been tried and tested elsewhere. This approach to the organisation of society is behind the ever-wider interlinking of cultures and knowledge through conferences, meetings, publication activities and telecommunications.*"[277]

Zakaria, in the final analysis, does not see any meaningful alternative to the liberal system of education, even though he does admit that it has minor flaws and imperfections. A liberal education has a global perspective. In his book, the author's concept about defending a liberal education is very seductive through its optimism, even in Central Europe. However, it is possible to raise a number of fundamental issues with Zakaria's thesis from a Central European perspective. There is no doubting the fact that American higher education has been enormously efficient and successful. However, it is debatable whether this efficiency can be related exclusively to a liberal education in Zakaria's narrow meaning of the liberal arts. Modern education, particularly in America, has been created from a combination of universal education and academic research, but it is connected just as importantly to the development of American capitalism and its priorities, and also to the system of privately supported universities which is unparalleled in Europe. This support was created on a basic pluralistic (liberal) framework, which was unthinkable in continental Europe, as it had been too closely linked with the state since the Enlightenment and with various ideological concepts in the 19th and 20th centuries. It would, therefore, appear there is a certain problem in the definition of a "liberal education". Liberal in the sense of universal is certainly only one aspect of the whole thing and it is debatable whether it is the key to solving the main problems affecting higher education. It is also no secret that in the

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277 Ibid, pp. 93–94.

American higher-education tradition the liberal arts also have a high standing due to the weaker level of the high schools that it more or less replaces.

On the one hand, Zakaria's optimism is endearing, but on the other, it is necessary to ask whether it might not be misleading in some cases. The idea of openness, interdisciplinarity, cultural exchanges and knocking down stereotypes and prejudices sounds positive, but everything could be completely different in reality. In Zakaria's celebration of university alternatives it is necessary to wait for the new projects to operate for twenty years to see any long-term trends. Based on his experience in India, Zakaria overgeneralizes the possibility of a conflict-free mingling of world cultures which are fundamentally different in their essence. The promoters of liberalism do not seem to take into consideration the various cultural wars and conflicts, which according to all reports are occurring in American universities – and which to a certain degree determine the cultural conflicts in Western and Central Europe. This applies mainly to the influence of political correctness, wrongly understood as multiculturalism and gender philosophy, which appears to be changing the atmosphere in American universities, creating "battle fronts" between progressives and conservatives, and destroying generational bonds. Of course, these ideological positions are related to technological changes. For example, Zakaria does not take into account the fact that technological changes contain within them possible risks and dangers for any generational understanding between teachers and students.

However, from a Central European perspective, like over-specialization, there is a destructive tendency towards constantly introducing reforms favouring different alternatives and ill-considered ideas – all at the expense of the educational theory and practice in the traditions of individual countries and cultural regions. In other words, the transferability of the "American liberal model" to Europe and Central Europe is open to question here. Some caution is required because the transference of "cultural models", as well as educational ones, comes up against problems which the majority do not take into account during the enthusiastic period of the transference. In the 1990s there were also Zakaria-style experiments in the Czech Republic (one good example was the Charles University Faculty of Humanities or some "project" departments), and it is necessary to decide whether the implementation of only one model is needed for further positive development. The fact that "colleges" correspond to the Anglo-Saxon model and social-cultural traditions is self-evident: everyone knows this who has seen or read Harry Potter. After experiments with upper-secondary schools in Central Europe, which were often not granted the right to award Bachelor's degrees and desperately fought for their place in the sun, the whole affair has to be viewed as problematic.

The "liberal arts" as a counterweight to over-specialization is perhaps necessary where specialization is in fact a threat. But is this really the case in Central Europe? In terms of Czech higher education, in the majority of the humanities disciplines,

students acquire a wider overview as part of a dual-discipline programme, which corresponds to a new product in the system – the major and minor programmes. It is also necessary to challenge proposals to replace the traditional disciplines in the curricula. Is it not a part of European academic knowledge that the entirety is, in its way, present in partial understanding? Suggestions to introduce various methodological disciplines in place of factualism may also be misleading. It is also necessary to consider the changes associated with how students and young people mature mentally, i.e. with regard to the results from biological, anthropological and in particular, psychological studies, which suggest that today's young people mature mentally later, and therefore it is difficult to expect qualified decision-making from them regarding their own future.

The Zakaria-style liberal concept undoubtedly has its supporters in Central Europe and the Czech Republic, and it seems that some of them hold positions of influence. It will soon become apparent the extent to which replicating American models will influence Czech and Central European higher education.

Conclusion

These four examples show how the modern age challenges foundations which were originally regarded as permanent and indisputable. Religion has ceased to be a social bond and basis for educational policy – even in societies where religion has remained visible and is publicly active (as in the USA). The national interests which were alive until the mid-20th century are giving way to more universal concepts in both politics and education, irrespective of the fact that universities have always had a certain "international character" and have resisted strong nationalist pressure. Neither was this pressure entirely resisted by the "preservation" regimes of the USSR's Central European communist satellites, which petrified a certain type of nationalism. The notion of disciplining young people by incorporating them into the educational structures was also shown to be spurious in the modern age – it is as easy to talk about disciplining as it is about a potentially revolutionary character which occasionally surfaces. The present debate about the "liberal basis" also shows how problematic it is to transfer different concepts from one cultural environment to another, and how difficult it can be to search for a "middle way" between the old stereotypes and untried alternatives.