

**THE MALAISE OF THE MODERN UNIVERSITY:  
AUTHENTICITY FOR UNIVERSITIES  
IN AN AGE OF INSTRUMENTALISM**

by

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## Abstract

Universities since their inception have responded to and been guided by the societies in which they were situated. A key question that arises is as follows: are the goals and purposes of Canadian universities in today's more market driven and globalized environments being fundamentally changed in a manner that represents a radical break with past ideas about liberal education and the role of the university in society?

Charles Taylor's method of conceptual retrieval is used in conjunction with an historical survey of the ideals of the university throughout history to present the issue. Based on these historical ideals and the current context, a set of ideals for university education today is proposed.

Further use is made of Taylor's and Jurgen Habermas' critiques of modernity in combination with Paul Ricoeur's ethical theories to provide a comprehensive analysis of the present situation in contemporary universities. Taylor's notions of authenticity and the modern social imaginary are applied to the situation of the university, as are the concepts of lifeworld and system in Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* and Ricoeur's 'just institutions'.

Using the ideals for university education for today as a foundation, these aspects of the work of Taylor, Habermas and Ricoeur are utilized to suggest the framework of a covenantal organisational model for universities for the future. Covenantal models rather than those based on social contracts are shown to provide a foundation for public institutions in Canadian society which can counteract the current market driven trend in society. In the case of universities in particular, a covenantal model based on higher ideals contributes to the development of 'good citizens' and the continuation of democratic ideals for our larger society.

## **Dedication**

To my children, Kari and Rob: There is no title or honour I could ever earn which means more to me than that of "Your Mom". You both remain a constant source of inspiration for me.

To Ted, my friend, mate and life partner: Your unwavering support through the trials, tribulations and frequent grumpiness of the process of dissertation writing means more to me than you can know.

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## **CHAPTER 1.**

### **Introduction**

#### **Opening Reflections on the Journey to This Dissertation**

“The geek shall inherit the earth”. So proclaimed a huge poster on the bus shelter I drove by each morning on my way to my job a half a dozen years ago as the coordinator of student recruitment and communications at the small graduate school of theology on the campus of a large local university. It was an interesting word play on the Beatitudes of Jesus found in the New Testament (“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” Mt 5: 5). Little was I aware at the time of just how significant that poster would become in terms of my understanding of today’s university. I had taken more note of the poster that particular morning because in my briefcase was an application to the organization behind that poster, a brand new university meant to be not only “new” but a “new kind” of post-secondary institution. In doing the research to create my resume and cover letter, I learned that this university would be unlike any other. It would be focused on the students, who were called ‘learners’ rather than students. Their programs of study were to concentrate on the world of high-tech, to create graduates who were not ‘merely’ theorists, but had strong applied skills in leading edge technologies. It was meant to be a ‘win-win’ situation: graduates would get jobs and having trained people available would attract and retain high-tech companies for this area, thus stimulating the local economy as well. To help achieve this, the government had consulted very early

on with industry. Before any curricula were developed, when philosophies and pedagogical approaches and mission statements were still being worked out, industry advisory panels were set up to provide input into these processes. The purpose of this was to make sure that this new university had a strong grounding in 'the real world' as opposed to the common understanding of the traditional ivory tower university. Industry strongly supported the concept. This was, I was to understand later, a sign of the times, that universities were moving towards more connection with industry and, often through priorities set by government funding, towards more direct support for the economy (Aronowitz, 2000).

I was quite interested in this position with the brand new, small, student-focused institution. Traditional undergraduate education, with five hundred person lecture theatres, one-size-fits-all student advising, and being treated as a number rather than a person had not served me well. I had had an unsuccessful experience in another province when trying to move from a community college to a university to complete a degree. Moreover, it took only a few years of employment in the post-secondary world to be frustrated by working with academics doing various administrative tasks for which they had no education or training whatsoever. The idea of a non-traditional academic institution was quite appealing.

I got the job, and once there, discovered even more non-traditional aspects to this place. Faculty members were not to have tenure, but were to work on contracts with regular evaluations for teaching as well as research. They were also to provide, via consulting and commercialization of research, an equivalent of about one third of their salaries back to the university, thus minimizing costs to the taxpayer. There was an

independent branch of the university, known as “The Corporation”, which would facilitate such projects as well as partner with industry and look for opportunities for business development of all kinds. Any type of service or product we could market to produce revenue would be developed through “The Corp”. It all seemed like a good idea at the time.

In my recruitment work, I interacted with a large number of high school students and their parents. The parents who came to our recruitment sessions were overwhelmingly in favour of the whole concept of this new university. For them it meant an efficient use of their tax money and an education for their children which would ensure gainful employment after graduation. The parental desire for a definitive career path for their children was the overriding concern. Our curriculum did not include the typical first year courses such as English, History, Biology or Chemistry and I began to notice how often both parents and students commented favourably on the lack of these ‘useless’ courses in our curriculum. People wanted the cachet of a university degree, for career advancement purposes, but at the same time were looking for the very practical, applied skills usually found at a college. Being a good marketing person, I recognized the needs of my target market and how to reach it. At the same time I couldn’t help but reflect on how much these ‘useless’ courses had enriched my own undergraduate education in administration. I had also recently completed a graduate degree in theology, studying philosophy, history, and the ‘canon’, essentially a classic liberal education with endless classroom seminar discussions typically continued in the student lounge or the pub, and I considered this experience enormously formative, both

professionally and personally. I was beginning to have some problems with the notion of the 'useless' university education.

Interestingly, this business-model university established for largely economic purposes and designed to prepare people for high tech jobs to support the developing high tech sector in the province and spur economic growth, had been started by a left-wing government, historically socialist in its orientation, which had traditionally championed public education, the public sphere and the role of government in a good, caring society.

It was only in retrospect that I recognized the hallmarks of neoliberalism (defined as a belief in the market as an end in itself) in the founding philosophy of this university. As in many western liberal-democratic jurisdictions, the government was moving towards a view of the province as a business firm, with a market orientation, high value placed on the concerns of the business community, and an emphasis on entrepreneurial activity. This new university was 'exhibit A' of a neoliberal worldview: the public institution the *raison d'être* of which was to be entrepreneurial in its activities, to develop curricula based on the needs of the marketplace, taught by faculty who were entrepreneurs themselves, and creating a new generation of professionals who were properly prepared to market their skills.

Politics being what they are, a change in government brought a threat to the university, which was a project strongly associated with the outgoing government and which the new government, while in opposition, had frequently and soundly criticized. Ultimately, we were taken over by a larger institution, making most of our jobs

redundant. During this period, I went to work as an advancement officer in the applied sciences at a traditional university. I was part of the dean's executive committee, and as such, had an inside look at the realities of a large university department and the opportunity for more of the kinds of observations begun in my previous job.

In these executive meetings, students were seldom mentioned, except as full-time equivalent units and in regard to their effect on budgets and funding. Students' experiences in the faculty were never discussed. Grants and research money were extremely important, as was finding the funding to pay premiums to faculty in areas of high market demand. Research was king, especially applied research which might be supported by industry or sold to industry. Whenever a large grant came in, the first thing done by the faculty involved was to buy out their teaching time, leaving the teaching to sessional instructors. External fundraising from industry and private donors was moving from being an extra to being a necessary part of budgeting. The dean's performance evaluation gave a significant weight to his ability to raise money. I began to feel quite uncomfortable with the focus of my job. While I recognized the very legitimate challenges facing those responsible for running the university in a time of declining government funding and the pressures of accountability and efficiency, I felt an alarming disconnect between my own thinking and experience of what a university education ought to be and ought to mean and what I was encountering professionally.

Through my professional work (attending conferences, taking professional development courses and reading the literature in my field) it was clear that my experience in these two universities was not unique nor was it new. People have been going to university for training for particular jobs for centuries. The first universities in the

11<sup>th</sup> century were created for the training and education of doctors, lawyers and theologians (Kerr, 2001, p. 8). University collaboration with industry and technology transfer have been in place since the development of the modern university in Germany by Humboldt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (McClelland, 1980, p. 9) Most universities are dependent on grant and research money and increasingly, donations. Research is an important part of every tenure track process and much more important than teaching. Nearly every university in the country has a marketing and recruitment strategy; nearly every parent I know wants her children to secure a good job at some point in their lives.

It appeared to me that some kind of shift appeared to be happening in our universities, a shift which I had only become aware of through my own personal and professional experience. In doing some cursory research to analyse my 'disconnect', I ran across many books and articles with alarming titles, such as: *No Place to Learn* (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002); *The Kept University* (Press and Washburn, 2003); and *Universities for Sale* (Tudiver, 1999). A walk through the higher education leadership section of the library revealed shelf upon shelf of books on management, entrepreneurship and fundraising.

"What was happening", I asked myself? I had many questions as I thought about my own ideas and experience of a university education and what I had encountered professionally. Is this something new, or simply another iteration of universities adapting to their contexts? Are today's universities in danger of losing the traditional ideals of higher education as a good for society and becoming yet another profit-oriented enterprise in a consumer-driven market? And if the answer is 'yes', why does it matter?

## **Research Problem and Questions**

Many members of the academy would give an unqualified 'yes' in answer to questions about lost ideals. The increasing focus on profit-making activities such as the commercialization of research, the implementation of business models of management, and the increasing dominance of business, science, and technology programs is leading to the conclusion that universities are changing in a fundamental way, and not for the better. Critics, usually faculty members themselves, call for a halt to such activities and a return to more traditional values of academia.

This criticism does little to address the challenges of declining public funding, increased government focus on accountability, and high demand for an education which leads directly to employment which face nearly all universities. Nor does it answer the question of why this purported loss of ideals matters. In this dissertation, I propose to examine the following questions:

- What is happening in our universities today?
- Is this something different from the past?
- What are the ideals of higher education today?
- If they are being lost, why does this matter?
- What should be happening in higher education today?

## **Current Research**

Many commentators describe the recent phenomena I observed in my professional work in universities as 'academic capitalism'. Academic capitalism is



defined as direct market activity, which seeks profit, such as patents, licenses and spin-off firms, and market-like behaviour, which entails competition for external funding such as grants, research contracts and donations (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Ylijoki, 2003). Along with a market orientation comes a move towards corporate managerialism within the university, since business-like internal practices are necessary to attract corporate funding and partnerships (Currie and Vidovitch, 1998; Martin, 1998; Newfield, 1998; Rhoades and Slaughter, 1998; Buchbinder and Newson, 1990). Canada's universities are now firmly set in the practice and ideals of academic capitalism. For example, the University of Manitoba's Industry Liaison office produced in 1997 a "best practices for invention disclosure" document. The "worst practice" for invention disclosure, described as "1. Invent; 2. Publish or talk; 3. File invention disclosure; and 4: File patent protection" is the traditional model for good research, in which investigators discuss their ideas and publish tentative findings before finalizing anything (Tudiver, 1999, pp. 174-5).

Since the 1990's, the relative proportion of university research funded by industry and the federal government has shifted in favour of industry (Fisher and Atkinson-Grosjean, 2002). Buchbinder and Newson (1990) and Buchbinder and Rajagopal (1993, 1995), studied the Canadian university environment and found that the ethos of the academy has shifted from a liberal arts core to an entrepreneurial one, with an increasing 'marketisation' of the academy and a focus on research and development with commercial purpose. Corporations have shifted the focus of the money they paid to universities from pure philanthropy to investments and commercial partnerships, with Ottawa's support and encouragement (Tudiver, 1999). With decreased government support, universities must also produce more of their own revenue, through fund-raising,

corporate matching grants, market-driven for-profit programs, and commercialization of research. Income from university licensing and patents nearly tripled in Canada between 1991 and 1997 (Tudiver, 1999, p. 5). Industry liaison offices have become an established part of the infrastructure of Canadian universities (Fisher and Atkinson-Grosjean, 2002). Across North America, many university programs resemble MBA degrees: the emphasis is on acquisition of work-related skills and relevance to employability (Slaughter, 1990). "Canadian universities now place heavy attention on preparing students for the economy" (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002, p. 145).

## **Leadership and Academic Capitalism**

Universities in Canada have become comfortably ensconced in their role as economic drivers and seem firmly entrenched in the business model. Martha Piper, current president of the University of British Columbia, and arguably one of the most influential university president in Canada today, gave the 2002 Killam Annual Lecture in Ottawa, in which she argued for the role of the university in creating a vigorous citizenry, nurturing creativity and innovation, and encouraging social and cultural diversity. Her argument focused on their importance to a robust and innovative economy (Piper, 2002). Michael Stevenson, president of Simon Fraser University, while citing in a recent address to the university the need to "revitalize the core content and meaning of a liberal arts and science education at SFU" and the way in which targeted public funding was eroding the autonomy of universities, in the same speech pointed out how the newly created faculty of health sciences would allow the university to access an important area of research and education funding (Stevenson, 2004). A recent article in the *Vancouver*

*Sun* by President Stevenson was entitled “Diversity is the path to economic growth”, and focused on cultural diversity as promoting creativity, which is “the crucial well spring of economic growth” (Stevenson, 2005). Bob Rae, in his recent report on higher education for the Government of Ontario, gave three overarching goals for higher education in that province: great education for students and in terms of research and innovation, improved access for improved opportunities, and a secure future for higher education through more government funding and increased support from the private sector (Rae, 2005, p. 27). The report noted the importance of this for very pragmatic reasons, such as Ontario’s ability to compete globally, the role of a highly trained workforce and research in a strong economy, and that fact that people with university educations tend to cost the system less in health care and other social costs. For example, the educated are much less likely to go to jail (Rae, p. 12). Currie and Vidovitch (1998) describe the ‘global trend’ of corporate managerialism in university governance and note the hegemony of corporate discourse in universities today.

“The key to developing corporate-friendly practices lies in managing a university like a business. Trends in this direction are evident, with pyramids at the top, presidents being redefined as chief executive officers, and business-like merit incentives for faculty” (Tudiver, 1999). This is borne out by an overview of just some of the current work in university governance and administration. University boards and senates are increasingly focused on budgetary matters; fiscal pressures take precedence, and the discussion of values, philosophy, and meaning are seen as a time-consuming luxury (Fryer and Lovas, 1991). Often board members are there because of their business acumen or connections, or their fundraising abilities, rather than because of any

connection to the particular institution or with university education in general.

*Management and Leadership in Higher Education* (McCorkle and Archibald, 1982)

suggests that the management model is necessary for multi-year resource management

in order to maintain quality at a time of scarce resources. *Higher Education Inc: The*

*Rise of the For-Profit University* (Ruch, 2001) defends profit-making in post-secondary

institutions and says that public universities could take a few lessons from the private

institutions in customer focus and resource management. *The Advancement President*

*and the Academy* (Murphy, ed., 1997) provides a primer for the would-be university

president on how to be an effective fund-raiser, a skill considered essential for the

university president/CEO of today. While Canadian universities have been slower to

adopt the entrepreneurial model and its attendant governance structures than American

universities (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997), it seems that we have now caught up with the

U.S. system.

With managerial value systems in the ascendant, corporate structures and extensive, CEO-style presidential offices are becoming the norm in Canadian universities. In place of traditional academic leadership, we now see a growing cadre of professional managers and administrators (Newson, 1998; Cassin and Morgan, 1992). Responsibility for research management has been institutionalized in the most senior ranks of the administrative hierarchy, generally under the direction of Vice-Presidents, Research (VPRs). Often these are scientists who have moved from the laboratory into full-time, senior management, thus emulating the promotion trajectory of their industry counterparts (Ziman, 1994. In Fisher and Atkinson-Grosjean, 2002, p. 452)

In summary, while some critique of academic capitalism exists, most notably among academics in the humanities and social sciences, university leaders, governments, and the private sector appear to be comfortable with current market-like practices in our publicly-funded higher education system. However, it is important to

note that entrepreneurial universities with strong corporate ties did not suddenly appear in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As will be seen in my narrative of the history of university practices, the university as a centre of knowledge production, industry-university co-operation, and the shaping of the role of the university by governments is hardly new.

The philosopher Michael Oakeshott, himself a university administrator in his role as chair of the department of political science at the London School of Economics and Political Science from 1951-1969 (Archives, LSE), warned universities not to become places the function of which is to contribute to activity in society but to “be itself and not another thing” (Oakeshott, 1950, p. 117). What a university is to be is a place of learning. More than 50 years ago he had concerns about the university becoming simply a training institute to prepare people for their niche in society.

It would seem that his fears were well-grounded. “Academic institutions nowadays are often little more than weak alliances among intellectual entrepreneurs who welcome the intervention of extrinsic goals and values and the money that supports them from foundation and government grants” (Fuller, 1989, p. xviii). In an era of globalization and the new public management, perhaps it was inevitable that the trajectory that started many years ago should end up in the entrepreneurial university. However, we might reasonably wonder if the apparently unopposed entrepreneurial agenda for post-secondary education might benefit from intentional discussion among all stakeholders, and whether the soul of the university is being sold out for the sake of the balance sheet. Renner in his 1995 book *The New Agenda for Higher Education*, which focuses on the Canadian context, says that while some managerial direction is

appropriate to address the financial constraints faced today, we must also consider a holistic approach to these challenges, and begin an internal process of critical examination and reflection of beliefs around the issues being faced (p. 17). Years ago the Massey Commission of 1951 issued a warning which is perhaps even more necessary today:

[If the university]...denies its intellectual and moral purpose, the complete conception of the common good is lost, and Canada, as such, becomes a materialistic society. (Massey Royal Commission, 1951)

The 'intellectual and moral purpose' of the university and its role in the common good will be a major focus of this dissertation.

## **Conceptual Framework**

To determine if academic capitalism and corporate-like behaviour is indeed an issue with different consequences for the university and society than past evolutions in higher education, it is essential that the history of higher education and the institution of the university be revisited. Paul Terry, in his article *Habermas and Education* (1997), says that theory and structure are two facets of the same structure. If either is removed, the structure collapses. As this dissertation is focused on examining the current structure, in philosophical terms, of higher education and its place and function in society, the role of theory is equally important. This dissertation will therefore take an historical and philosophical approach to exploring the research questions, with an aim to developing a framework and rationale for the role of the university and its institutional life in today's instrumentalist context, with a focus on public universities in Canada.

I will first look at the history of the university, focusing on the evolution of the philosophy of higher education and the institution of the university. By doing this, it will be possible to compare changes in the past with what is taking place today to determine if the present is indeed a sea change for higher education or simply another step in the long history of the university. Beginning with Ancient Greece, Chapter Two will move from the Stoics and Plato, to the Middle Ages and the role of the monasteries, the Enlightenment, Cardinal Newman, Humboldt and the Industrial Revolution, and then to specific influences in the Canadian context, namely Oxbridge, the Scottish model and the United States model. The middle section will focus on the present and provide a literature review of commentary on current practices and observations from 'the field', and the chapter will close with suggestions for a purpose and ideal for higher education and the university today.

Chapters Three through Five will provide the philosophical framework. Aspects of the work of Charles Taylor, Jurgen Habermas, and Paul Ricoeur will be used as analytical tools to explore the present situation and its implications for the university and society. Each of these thinkers brings a different perspective to the exploration: Taylor offers philosophical and historical analysis of the context of today's university, modernity (defined as a capitalistic economic order and formation of a distinctive kind of state and structures of information, Giddens, 1998, p. 96), Habermas brings socio-cultural theory, and Ricoeur, ethics. By using the three of them together, I hope to enable a holistic analysis, my aim being to create a dialogue which will result in the delineation of a future direction for the university. Habermas tends to give less weight to history and tradition, which are brought by Ricoeur and especially Taylor. Taylor is tends to be more

teleological, where Habermas is more deontological, based on morality formed through rational discourse. Ricoeur blends the two. Habermas provides an analysis of power not sufficiently considered in either Taylor or Ricoeur.

Taylor, Habermas and Ricoeur all focus on intersubjectivity and linguistic/dialogical relationships to varying degrees and were deliberately chosen. This reflects my own philosophical approach to this work as a theologian and a member of a faith community. Each of these characteristics give me an orientation towards both the transcendent and the idea of community. Regardless of the distortions which may be seen in organized religions, for Christians, Jews, Muslims and Buddhists, the precept 'love one's neighbour', or some form of it, is a fundamental concept. It is not possible for the believer to consider life, society, ethics, or institutions outside of a framework of relationships with others. We are called to live in community, not only within our faith groups, but within the larger world and society as well. Caring implies a justice-and-ethics focus for any institution, but particularly for public institutions which by definition serve the public good. My approach to defining that good and the framework to achieve it come from my own communitarian and ethical orientation. I have therefore chosen philosophers whose work encompasses aspects of this.

The linguistic aspect of their work also reflects my own faith background. The Greek word *logos* is highly significant in Christianity. This philosophical term, attributed originally to Heraclitus, was notably used by the Alexandrian (i.e., Greek speaking) Jewish philosopher and theologian Philo in the 1<sup>st</sup> century to reconcile Greek philosophical thinking about the origins of the universe with biblical accounts of creation.

The Hebrew word **דָּבָר** which means "word" or "to speak" is critical to the Genesis



creation story. When God speaks, things happen. "And God said 'Let there be light' and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). In the Hebrew scriptures, to say something is to do something, particularly when it is God doing the speaking. Creation is a linguistic event. Similarly, in the New Testament (especially the Gospel of John) Jesus is seen as *logos*, in the Greek sense of being the divine principle of reason and creativity which links humanity to God, and in the Hebrew sense of creation and action. Jesus is God's speaking/Word in action in the world. *Logos*, i.e., *Word/word* and action, is a linguistic principle, the vehicle of God's dialogue with the world. Taylor, Ricoeur and Habermas all work with language, narrative and dialogue, which make them particularly appropriate to my own philosophical framework.

Chapter Three will look at the work of Charles Taylor. Taylor, in *Sources of the Self* (1987), felt by many to be his most significant contribution to modern philosophy to date, diagnoses modern Western society as being in "malaise." This malaise is caused by three interrelated factors: 1) individualism; 2) the primacy of instrumental reason; and 3) and the loss of freedom, or "soft despotism" (Taylor, 1991). These factors and their effect on the university will be explored in this chapter. The rise of instrumentalism and the influence this has had on society and its institutions, including the university will be traced using these concepts.

Taylor uses the term 'authenticity' to describe a kind of antidote to the malaise of modernity. The concept of authenticity was worked with earlier by Heidegger, whose basic principle was that a human being is fundamentally a being in the world and with others. Authenticity is achieved by the individual through reflection on the prospect of death (Mullin, 1996, p. 522). Taylor has re-worked this concept and focused authenticity

on a transcendent idea of 'the good' which we find within some type of community. Authenticity itself is defined as a moral ideal, a "picture of what a better or higher mode of life would be, where 'better' and 'higher' are defined not in terms of what we happen to desire or need, but often a standard of what we ought to desire" (Taylor, 1991, p. 16). According to Taylor, such an ideal is worthwhile, but to 'go along' with this requires three beliefs: 1) that authenticity is a valid ideal; 2) that you can argue in reason about ideals and about the conformity of practices to these ideals; and 3) that these arguments can make a difference.

An in-depth discussion on the validity and meaning of authenticity is beyond the scope of the dissertation; however, in a society experiencing the malaise described by Taylor and felt by many, we can in a broad sense put forward 'the common good' as an ideal, and therefore a need for authenticity in our institutions and a focus on something other than economics in order to achieve the common good. The university has a role in the ideal of the common good and thus; "It is not by any means senseless to maintain that conditions within the universities will have repercussions throughout society" (Dion, 1971, p. 68).

This leads directly to Taylor's work on the concept of the modern social imaginary, and specifically, the role of the public sphere. A social imaginary encompasses the "ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (Taylor, 2002, p. 105). It is a social 'imaginary' because it is a way ordinary people imagine or think about their surroundings: through images, stories and

legends. It is 'social' because it is a common understanding of the way in which to make sense of things. Our practices are embedded within particular social imaginaries. The university and its practices are part of a social imaginary.

A social imaginary has a moral order at its core. As in *Malaise of Modernity*, from his 1991 Massey Lectures series based on his much larger work, *Sources of the Self*, Taylor contends that we have lost the basis of our moral order. We have been 'disembedded', as he calls it, from the metaphysical grounding which was once provided to us via religion. One of the 'mutations' of this disembedding is the loss of the public sphere.

The public sphere is the common space where people discuss and form rational ideas which guide government. It is essential to a free society and is composed of any kind of space where people can 'meet' and issues can be discussed: the media, the Internet and other public fora. I will propose that the university is a key element in the public sphere, and as such, has an obligation to be an authentic institution dedicated to higher ideals as opposed to being one more market-driven entity in a market-drive economy. Taylor's philosophy will provide the focus for these proposals.

Chapter Four will look at the work of Jurgen Habermas and *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Habermas was a student of the Frankfurt School, which sought to take Marx's transformation of moral philosophy into social and political critique while at the same time rejecting orthodox Marxism (Bohman, 1999, p. 324). Its members focused attention on what they considered to be the "dangerous predominance of instrumental reason in contemporary society" (Sitton, 2003, p. xiii). Habermas,

stimulated by the work of Max Weber, redefined critical theory with a new emphasis on normative foundations and interdisciplinarity. From this Habermas developed his *Theory of Communicative Action (TCA)*, which is meant to be a 'critical theory of modernity' on the basis of a "comprehensive theory of communicative (as opposed to instrumental" rationality" (Bohman, p. 359). In *TCA*, Habermas incorporates insights from other sociological and philosophical schools with systems theory, which Habermas did not consider to be comprehensive enough to analyse society.

*TCA* conceptualizes society as composed of 'lifeworld' and 'system'. Lifeworld is a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns that sustains collective identity and is to be understood as a "totality of what is taken for granted" (Habermas, 1987, p. 132). System is the ordering of society including its economic and material functions. Society cannot exist as lifeworld alone; it must also have material reproduction to carry out and order the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services (Baxter, p. 52). Habermas' system is concerned with *material* reproduction, such as the economy, corporations and administrative systems, as opposed to the lifeworld which is concerned with *social* reproduction.

Lifeworld is maintained and reproduced by discourse, namely, communicative action. Communicative action is based on communicative rationality, which is "expressed in the unifying force of speech oriented towards reaching understanding, which secures for the participating speakers in an intersubjectively shared lifeworld, thereby securing at the same time the horizon within which everyone can refer to one and the same objective world" (p. 315). An important component of the lifeworld is mutual understanding of meaning, known as communicative action which is formed

through the tightly interwoven relationship between language and understanding. System is maintained by strategic action and guided by the steering media of money and power (Habermas, 1987, p. 154).

An important concept for the purposes of this dissertation is Habermas' idea of the colonisation of the lifeworld by system. In colonisation, local meaning-making cultures are destroyed by an imperial culture pursuing its own narrow designs (Sitton, p. 84). System pushes aside and dominates lifeworld, a situation Habermas sees in modern society. "Through this one-sidedness, the project of enlightenment has entered into a self-destructive course, in which the spread of a life form based on instrumental and success-oriented reason is about to destroy its own social and normative basis" (Eriksen and Wiegard, p. 101).

Colonisation affects the public and therefore the political sphere. Habermas divides the political sphere into the socially integrated public sphere, where our political opinions are created, and the administrative system sphere, where the decisions are made. In this sphere are the bureaucratic and power structures which 'run' our modern society and which are influenced by political parties and special interest groups. The basis for interaction in this sphere is not communicative action, but steering media (Eriksen and Wiegard, p. 8). When lifeworld is colonized, the public sphere loses its rigour and its role in society, and we experience the loss of freedom described by Weber. Individuals in society move from being citizens to being taxpayers and consumers.

Because of its comprehensive approach, I think *TCA* offers a helpful model for the consideration of the university within its context. The concepts of lifeworld and system have been used to analyse issues in fields as diverse as groupware software (Sharrock and Button, 1997), law (Deflem, 1996), accounting (Lodh, 1996) and engineering (Moriarty, 2000) and is widely used in organizational behaviour and philosophy, proving its use as a model.

Habermas considered communication as the “first law of the University” (Reading, 1996, p. 83). He argues that “in the last analysis it is the communicative forms of scientific and scholarly argumentation that hold university learning processes in their various functions together” (Habermas, 1970, *Idea of a University* in Reading, p. 83). *TCA* is based on a deontological approach, which sees moral principles as laws which issue from reason, and has been criticized for giving priority to the right over the good as well as for being too universalist in its orientation. This is where the work of Taylor and Ricoeur will complement that of Habermas. In the case of Taylor, there are many overlaps between the ideas of authenticity and communicative action. Both are based on intersubjectivity and the desire to reach understanding on what constitutes norms and values, based on the ability to reasonably argue these understandings. Each identifies the importance of a group/community with commonly-held understandings. The idea of colonisation is similar to the malaise of modernity described by Taylor; each sees similar consequences for the disruption of lifeworld/loss of horizon of significance. Taylor, however, takes a much more teleological approach, and emphasizes the need for some higher ideal, an essential in the concept of authenticity (Taylor, 1991, p. 16). He also gives somewhat more emphasis to the role of history and tradition than does

Habermas. Taylor, on the other hand, does not use systems theory (Abbey, 2004, pp. 8-9). By using Habermas' more systematic approach together with Taylor's historical/teleological approach, the weaknesses of each can be overcome.

Chapter Five will look at the 'little ethics' of Paul Ricoeur, which represents in ethical terms an amalgamation of the deontological and teleological approaches with an emphasis on our intersubjective relationships. Ricoeur's ethical aim can be stated quite simply: to live with and for others in just institutions. It is a 'three-cornered' approach to ethics: a system of *discourse* joining the speaker, the interlocutor, and the institution of language; a system of *action* bringing together coordinating agent, helper or adversary, and a system of practice; and a system of *narration* which connects the history of each with the history of others woven together with the history of the institution (Ricoeur, 1995a, p. 52).

The work of Ricoeur helps to bring together the work of Habermas and Taylor. He offers the same focus as does Habermas on intersubjective communication, while also sharing an emphasis on the historical with Taylor. Ricoeur also provides a model for integration of a personal faith into secular thinking. In Taylor, who is a practicing Catholic, a metaphysical belief is an intrinsic requirement. Ricoeur, a practicing Protestant, while influenced by his faith, has sought to articulate a common morality which is put into a different perspective by a biblically based faith. Pre-existing faith of any kind is not therefore a requirement for understanding or applying the good or the obligatory as defined by Ricoeur. In a diverse and secular society, I think this approach is important, particularly for public institutions and the public sphere. While a person of faith may have a different motivation for living the good life, no citizen in society is

*required* to accept, reject, or suspend anything with regard to God as a philosophical question or with regard with to biblical faith (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 24). At the same time, like Taylor, Ricoeur's thinking provides a point of view which always incorporates the transcendent, which is inescapable.

Ricoeur as well offers a consideration of power, particularly in institutions. Taylor does not really consider questions of power in his work. Habermas, through his work with steering media and system and acknowledgement of the need for free agency of participants to make communicative action function, provides some broad discussion on the use of power. Ricoeur, however, offers a more detailed discussion of power particularly as he considers the problems inherent in justice and the relationship of one to another within institutions.

Chapter Six will bring together the discussions from the previous chapters to provide conclusions on the situation in universities today and suggest a direction for the future. In this final chapter, I will also provide a broad sketch of an institutional framework for living out this future direction.

## **Contribution to the Field**

Many writers have been highly critical of "narrow minded management models" (Giroux, 2001) and entrepreneurial activity in today's universities. The solutions offered, if any, are not realistic, such as significantly increased funding from government and the cessation of entrepreneurial activities. Others call for a return to the "good old days" when funding was plentiful, and academic rather than budgetary or external relations



concerns governed the day. A brief look at the history of universities in North America shows this to be a romantic view of a past which has never really existed. Moreover, most of the criticism of current practices, while important in identifying and articulating what I believe are fundamental changes to the very nature of the university, fail to take into account the obligation of the public university to make good use of taxpayer money and to be itself a public “good” which may involve supporting in part the economic goals of that society.

The question for me then becomes how to serve responsibly the goals and aspirations of society without becoming completely subsumed by current societal values, and, in turn, to provide a service by creating a public space where instrumental and economic values are not the *only* values. At the same time, present day realities around government funding and accountability models cannot be ignored. As Henry Giroux proposes, it is important that higher education, while recognizing the need to make money in order to survive, not be reduced to a simple entrepreneurial function (Giroux, 2001). I therefore hope to offer some reflection on what it means to be a public university in Canada today and how institutional practices might be reformed in order to meet those ideals.

As mentioned earlier, there are already many commentators writing on corporate activity in our universities. Some simply provide observations, whereas others only criticize, and many others support *without* criticism. As Bill Readings said in the introduction to his 1996 book, *The University in Ruins*, “[i]t is far too easy simply to critique the University, and there is hardly anything new in doing so” (p. 6). My aim is to go beyond observation, criticism and critique to analysis, with the intention of discovering

a framework, both philosophical and institutional, for the modern university in Canada today.

Ironically, given his comment above, my own take on Readings was that he was essentially fairly pessimistic about the future of the university. “[W]e need to recognize that the University is a *ruined* institution, one that has lost its *raison d’etre*” (p. 19) and move to a more pragmatic model which does not aim for unity, consensus or community but becomes a place where the fallacy of such ideals can be discussed. Clark Kerr, writing in the preface of the 2001 latest edition of *The Uses of the University*, talks of being attacked for merely observing changes in the university. He calls the period from 1980 to the present “the Great Academic Depression” (Kerr, 2001, p. ix). Looking to the future, he sees “ [a road] filled with potholes, surrounded by bandits, and leading to no clear ultimate destination” (Kerr, p. vii).

This is where my own background as a theologian and member of a faith community again influences the approach of this work. Faith is essentially a disposition of hope and a commitment to a good greater than ourselves. For me, Readings, Kerr and similar commentators offer little or no hope for higher education, its institutions, and, as a result, for society as a whole.

This does not mean that I am proposing a romantic view of the university which ignores the practicalities of institutional life in a complex context. Nor am I harkening back to a faith- or religion-based notion of higher education *a la* Cardinal Newman. I am, however, arguing for a teleological approach to this dissertation and to higher education. I believe there is a ‘greater good’ for the university and society to aspire to, a good which

goes beyond the values of the marketplace. In the final analysis, my goal is to offer a practical direction, to reclaim the idea of accountability from instrumentalist ideals, and ultimately, to give hope for the future.

## **CHAPTER 2.**

### **The University: Past, Present, and Possible Future**

In this chapter, the evolution of the philosophy of higher learning and the institution of the university will be discussed, present day practices in the university will be examined, and a possible future role for the university will be explored. The chapter is divided into three main sections: the past, beginning with the ancient Greeks and moving through history to the present time; the present period, in which practices of the modern university will be explored and analysed to determine if these practices are simply yet another stage of evolution or point to a fundamental change in the nature of the university; and the future, in which an alternative to an economic *telos* for university is explored.

### **Ancient Greece: The Sophists, Plato and Their Legacy**

In the latter half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE when the Greek schools, particularly those in Athens under the Sophists, were beginning to develop, the focus of the education of young men underwent a shift. Where previously the emphasis had been on physical education, practical skills and the inculcation of traditional religious and moral values, the Sophists sought to cultivate the mind and develop the intellectual gifts of speech, rational analysis and debate. Their goal was quite practical: “to produce citizens

equipped to succeed in the circumstances of their society [using] new methods focused on brain power and on well-honed powers of speech and reason” (Mitchell, 1999, p. 16).

One of the most elaborate expressions of a philosophy of education during this period came from Plato, a student of Socrates, who built on Socrates’ work. Socrates’ philosophy of education was built around the relationship between good knowledge and morality. He believed that “the cure for ignorance was knowledge [and] in addition to showing that conventional moral notions were frequently confused and contradictory, [he] insisted on the importance of morals in knowledge...if we knew what justice was, then the problems of being just would be comparatively simple” (Jensen, 2000, p. 19).

Plato took this concept further in *The Republic*. Since justice, knowledge and morality were connected, education should benefit more than just the individual; the educated individual had a moral responsibility to assist and advance society. Education, therefore, had an important role in the preparation of leaders. Those who have been educated

have seen the truth of what is beautiful and just and good. In this way the government of the city, for us and for you, will be a waking reality rather than the kind of dream in which most cities exist nowadays, governed by people fighting one another...as if ruling were some great good. (*Plato’s Republic*, Ferrari, p. 226)

Once the “best natures” have been compelled to go as far as possible in their studies, they were not to be allowed to remain outside of public life. “We produced you as guides and rulers both for yourselves and for the rest of the city...” (ibid).

As there is benefit to the state in the education of leaders, Plato's view was that education was the responsibility of the state and should not be a private initiative (Jensen, p. 20). Plato provided the "most elaborate expression of...university education...in *The Republic*" (Jensen, 2000, p. 18). Schools offering a collective mode of instruction for young free men began to appear in 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE Athens (Oakley, 1992, p. 12). Developed as training schools for rulers and the elite, this model was adopted by the Romans after their conquest of the Greek speaking territories in 2 BCE. By 4 CE a network of schools existed in the Graeco-Roman world, with 'advanced education' schools in the larger urban centres (Oakley, p. 12-3).

Cicero, a Roman intellectual of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, wrote extensively about the purposes of education and how to achieve those purposes. It was Cicero who gave us the terms "humanities" and "liberal education" (Mitsis, 2001, p. 143). For Cicero, the purpose of education was to develop *humanitas*. This alone provides the foundation for constitutional governments and is developed through the study of *artes liberales*, the study of rhetoric, literature, debate, law, history and philosophy. "No man can be an orator possessed of every praiseworthy accomplishment, unless he has attained the knowledge of everything important, and of all the liberal arts" (Cicero, Book 1, *De Oratore*, in Davis and Ryken, p. 4). This would provide the "secure moral moorings of the good citizen" (Mitchell, 1999, p. 17) as well as develop the full potential of the mind. "The Greco-Roman genius of the classical age articulated first principles of university education that were to become abiding influences on Western educational thought and that were again memorably reaffirmed by Cardinal Newman 1,900 years after Cicero's

death” (Mitchell, p. 18). Newman’s philosophy of education will be discussed further in a later section.

Oakley, however, cautions against seeing too much of today’s universities in these schools of the past. An ancient school was not an ‘institution’ in the modern sense of the word, but rather a geographical location, a place where several teachers found it convenient to teach (Oakley, p. 13). Nonetheless, these ‘schools’ were funded and supported by Roman imperial policy, in keeping with Plato’s philosophy that “education was the responsibility of the state and could not be left in the hands of a private initiative” (Jensen, p. 19).

These schools ceased to exist in the West by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, when the Roman Empire began to fall apart. However, thanks to St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), himself a Neo-Platonic philosopher who sympathized with the Platonic idea of a liberal arts type of education, intellectual life in the Western world carried on. As one of the most important early architects of Christian theology, Augustine concentrated on bringing classical learning into the service of Christianity, incorporating the seven traditional liberal Arts—the *quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music, and the *trivium* of grammar, rhetoric and logic—into the training of priests for the church (Lawton and Gordon, 2002, pp. 40-42). In his work *On Christian Doctrine*, he particularly highlighted the need for “information about objects, either past or present, that relate to the bodily senses, in which are included also the experiments and conclusions of the useful mechanical arts, also the sciences of reasoning and of number” (Book 2, Chapter 39, Section 58). These would be an aid to proper interpretation of Scripture and provide wisdom to the Christian teacher, while cautioning that “in regard to all these we must

hold by the maxim, 'Not too much of anything'" (ibid). However, he fully supported the use of 'heathen' knowledge. "Moreover, if those who are called philosophers, and especially the Platonists, have said aught that is true and in harmony with our faith, we are not only not to shrink from it, but to claim it for our own use" (Book 2, Chapter 40, Section 60). Thus began the long association between the church and higher learning.

## **From the Monasteries to the Middle Ages**

These educational philosophies were kept alive through the period after the fall of the Roman Empire and into the early medieval period by the monasteries, where libraries were maintained, books copied and the concept of the 'school' preserved. This was particularly true in Ireland, where Rome had not had as much influence as in the rest of Britain. Irish monks preserved secular as well as religious texts, and acted as cultural missionaries bringing learning to England and other parts of Europe (Lawton and Gordon, p. 46). Study of the liberal arts became an integral part of the monastic life. "The independence, economic self-sufficiency, and frequent rural isolation of the great landed monasteries fitted them admirably to be the principal bearers of learning during the turbulence of the early Middle Ages, and the monastic schools retained their preeminence in educational matters until the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century" (Oakley, p. 15-6).

As populations and public order increased in Western Europe, the ties between monastic life and education began to unwind, and centres for learning sprang up in major urban areas such as Paris, Bologna, Oxford and Cambridge. The university, however, was still a rather informal concept. "...university education had no formality, no



specific location and no administrative structure...[it] was formed around groups of students who hired a master to teach them...university education was basically an individual contract established between the students and the master” (Jensen, p. 23). Universities were groups of people rather than institutions; they were guilds of masters and students, which began to appear *at* those schools. By the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, what we might recognize as the institution of the university began to develop. A few centres in Europe found it expedient for a bishop or cathedral chancellor to license groups of teachers for the teaching of higher-level studies as training for clerics. These groups were able to “run their own affairs without interference from civil authorities or others” (Lawton and Gordon, p. 49). However, “[n]ot until the 15<sup>th</sup> century did it become common for the term *universitas* to be used as a synonym for the *studium*, school, or place of study” (Oakley, p. 17). While the term has been used for schools in non-Western civilizations, universities were, strictly speaking, a European and a medieval invention.

These guilds, like other guilds, joined together for mutual protection and support, elected rectors to lead them, and eventually developed corporate powers. Like the commercial and craft guilds, the university guilds were a response to the needs of large numbers of groups of masters and students living and working in cities where they were not citizens and thus did not enjoy the rights of citizens (Oakley, pp. 17-18).

As the structures of the new universities matured, they developed into separate areas or faculties, with studies in the faculty of arts being regarded as preparatory to studies in medicine, law and theology. Academic standards and policies were developed; degrees were only given to the qualified, for example. Qualifications were

measured by examinations, which, of course, presupposed a relatively standard curriculum, organized teaching and a regulated course of studies (Oakley, p. 19).

“As these higher scholastic endeavors increased in prominence, the crown saw university education as a resource for a strong contingent of educated graduates whom it could use to support its growing national infrastructure” (Jensen, p. 24). At the same time, the church also needed a growing number of educated people. The state was also looking for institutions which would bring educational and cultural prestige to their countries. “Staggering numbers of students pour[ed] into the universities” (Oakley, p. 21). As a result of these factors, medieval universities flourished and many were established with close connections to both the state and the church (Jensen, p. 25).

Both entities were in need of educated individuals who could provide the range of skills and knowledge required in a time of rapid change. The way to achieve this, reminiscent of Plato and Cicero, was through the education of the individual. “Although the state was looking for trained individuals to run a growing political and economic infrastructure, the pursuit of knowledge was deemed an end in itself. Knowledge did not have to serve a political, economic, or pragmatic purpose” (Jensen, p. 25). Education as a means to create ‘right thinking’ citizens was also still important, as “medieval educational philosophies perceived students as vessels waiting to be filled by the expertise of the master” (Jensen, p. 25).

Lawton and Gordon suggest that many historians underestimate the role of outside influences, particularly Islam, during this period. It was Muslim scholars who preserved and developed the classical heritage of Greek and Rome (p. 50) during this

period, as well as Muslim scholars who began to discuss the value of secular and foreign knowledge. The classical cultural traditions were encouraged by leaders in the Arabic world and many Greek texts were made available through them to the West (ibid). Some historians argue that the Islamic influence on Western ideas were an important factor in sewing the seeds of the Renaissance (ibid, p. 56).

There were few fundamental changes in educational philosophy during this period. However, it was during this period that many of the features of the institutional university which prevail today were developed: a name and a central location, masters with a degree of autonomy, students, a system of lectures, a procedure for examinations and degrees, and an administrative structure (Kerr, 2001, p. 8).

## **Renaissance and Reformation**

The effect of the Renaissance on education was enormous. “To speak of the Renaissance at all (at least in its early phases) is to speak of the recovery of classical writings—Latin at first, then Greek and Hebrew...” (Kirkpatrick, 2002, p. 73). Together with the Reformation, which overlaps the Renaissance in both time and influence, this period had a profound influence on the theory and practice of education at all levels. Humanist thinking, which included a belief in the free will of human beings and their power over nature, was fueled by the emergence of individualism, the rise of Protestantism and the printing press, all of which made knowledge available to a much broader segment of society.

At the time of the Renaissance these humanistic studies spread through the upper and middle ranks of society and became a formidable part of

education of those who were to wield power and authority. The timely invention of the printing press not only multiplied the works of antiquity so that they were readily available to hundreds and thousands of men and women, but also helped create a public for their study. (Lawton and Gordon, pp. 58-59)

The first public library independent of a monastic institution was opened to scholars in 1444 in Florence, under the patronage of the Medicis although many private libraries existed by this time (Kirkpatrick, p. 74). Education particularly flourished in 15<sup>th</sup> century Italy, where the rise in prosperity caused an increased demand for the educated and qualified which the already established universities could not handle. As a result, many private schools or academies were founded, often in the homes of scholars. The traditional liberal arts were balanced with instruction in literature, philosophy, and physical education. "Moral education pervaded the curriculum and everything studied was considered to have a positive moral effect on the learner" (Lawton and Gordon, p. 58-59).

One of the most important differences between Renaissance education and the traditional *trivium* and *quadrivium* of the medieval world was that in all aspects of the curriculum, pupils were encouraged to think critically and to understand rather than simply memorize (Lawton and Gordon). This was furthered by Reformation ideas of the need to read and understand the Bible for oneself, as opposed to accepting official doctrine without question. Luther in fact was one of the most vigorous advocates of compulsory education for the young, under secular authority and in their vernacular, in order that they might read and understand Scripture for themselves (Maag, 2000, p. 535).

This resulted in the development of Latin or grammar schools, which provided a curriculum focused on Latin grammar and composition, some Hebrew and Greek, and the study of scripture and catechism, for boys aged seven or eight to their mid-teens. These Latin schools eventually spread throughout Europe and England, and provided an education for the male children of secular leaders in their local areas (Maag, p. 539).

As the Reformation spread, and with it the emphasis on university-level education particularly for clergy, the demand for a level of education beyond the Latin schools increased. "This included members of the clergy, lawyers, and medical doctors and professors, in short, those who would later occupy significant positions in their societies (Maag, p. 540). New universities were established, existing universities altered their curricula, and in areas where a papal or imperial charter could not be obtained, academies were opened. Even the Catholic Church recognized the need for change. Most notably the Jesuits, but other orders as well, became "famous for efficient teaching methods, especially the systematic organization of curriculum and encouraging competitive motivation" (Lawton and Gordon, p. 85).

In the Holy Roman Empire the situation was slightly different. Local universities had been established in the 15<sup>th</sup> century so that young men of the local duchy need not go abroad to study. "German universities were thus bound up with understandings of national identity" (Methuen, 2002 p. 526), a trend which continued with Humboldt in the Enlightenment. After the Reformation, which was as important a political cause to the princes as a theological one, the local universities became the places to train loyal pastors, teachers and clerks "who had been versed in doctrine approved by the local

church" (ibid, p. 527). Universities were thus given a new and important status in identity building.

## **The Enlightenment**

The Enlightenment, with its emphasis on science and scientific method, coupled with religious skepticism, brought another great wave of change to university education. Philosophical thinking took a profound shift. Descartes' emphasis on reason and intellect spawned a growth in the natural sciences and a turn from abstract theorizing for its own sake to knowledge that was "useful in life and that will one day make us masters and possessors of nature" (Cottingham, 2001, p. 225). Scientists of the period began to employ objectivist paradigms and to see the world and nature largely in terms of objective truths which could be discovered through observation and reason. The tie between morality and knowledge was cut by the adoption of the scientific method. It was through individual scientific inquiry, such as Newton's laws of gravity, Descartes philosophy and Darwin's theory of evolution, that academics believed they could "describe, explain, define and categorize reality" (Jensen, p. 29).

Empirically-based methodologies appeared in the universities at this time. As opposed to the Greco-Roman models in which students were active participants in their learning, lecturing became the common mode of instruction during the Enlightenment. Subjectivity was to be avoided at all costs; it interfered with objective, scientific results. This separation between the physical (or scientific) and the subjective (or moral) aspects of the subject of observation was the direct result of the philosophies of the Enlightenment which created this separation between the scientist and the world.

[T]he university was one of the primary institutions where the modern, positivistic voice was given legitimacy. It was within the confines of these sacred, modern institutions where future generations were educated to carry on the traditions of modern scientific inquiry. Universities developed into privileged places where knowledge, truth, and expressions of culture became legitimized. For the first time in history, the university institution became a center where research was a primary focus. (Jensen, 2000, p. 34)

Empirical methodologies began to appear in universities (Jensen, p. 29) which fostered specialized study in the natural sciences, mathematics and medicine. It was during this period that the Scottish university model appeared, which was distinctly different from the Oxford-Cambridge model. Because of the influence of the Scottish and Oxford-Cambridge types of institutions on early university education in the United States, and subsequently, in Canada, it is worthwhile to explore this in more depth.

By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Scottish system was distinct from Oxford-Cambridge, which largely reinforced the class and status distinctions that had been present in the medieval universities. Only the wealthy, upper class families sent their sons to university, more for socialization into the 'elite' strata of which they were a part than for any vocational purposes. As a result, academic performance and the earning of degrees was not a high priority and discipline problems were rampant. The purpose of sending sons to university, i.e., to make good connections with other families of rank and privilege, was being eroded. In response, Oxford-Cambridge dons began to develop meritocratic policies, and examinations, scholarships and rankings became important.

But because many who were admitted were there because of status rather than intellectual or academic ability, and because the curriculum was largely unstructured and

tutor driven, the curriculum itself could not adequately prepare students for the meritocracy. An extensive system of private tutoring and coaching, for an extra fee, developed: "...there can be little doubt that coaching was a market response, demanded, providing undergraduates with a variety of needed (or imagined) assistance" (Rothblatt, p. 226).

These market forces had a further effect in England. Private tutors and private institutions proliferated. As competition for students grew, families outside of the traditional high status groups were courted with more 'modern' and applied curricula for their sons. These private institutions were considered a 'lower' form of university education. An open market for education developed. This market-driven situation for university education reached its peak with the opening of London University in 1820, in direct competition with the Oxford-Cambridge monopoly. Non-denominational, its curriculum was applied and flexible, and its market was the commuter student. In this way costs would be kept down (for families as well as the institution), as no residences were needed, nor would the university have an interest in or influence on student behaviour outside the classroom. London University even developed a 'feeder school' or college, a strategic decision that would be typical of new foundations both in England and the United States" (Rothblatt, p. 230).

Throughout this period, Scotland had a separate education system, having retained the autonomy of its church, universities and legislation in the 1707 union with England (Rhyn, 1999, p. 10). While attempts had been made to establish a national network of institutions in smaller centres, this had been initially thwarted by the Church of Scotland, which was Presbyterian. In urban centres, however, as in England, smaller



private colleges had developed as a result of market demand, although the quality of education was suspect (Robbins, pp. 132-5). Scotland, however, had a history of a strong and meritocratic intellectual culture, closely tied to its national identity (Castiglione, 2000; Philipson, 2000). It had its own fully developed school system, owed in large part to John Knox in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and, at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was one of the few countries in Europe that had compulsory school attendance for *all* children, male and female, which was unusual for the time (Rhyn, p. 10). As in England, the private colleges would influence the situation in the universities. Much of Scottish university education became directed towards very practical, utilitarian studies. Most students lived within the community, as at London University, which provided a stronger connection between the university and the general populace, as opposed to Oxford and Cambridge, where students and the university were isolated from the general population. Because of the practical nature of the curriculum, acquiring a degree was not essential. The prevailing attitude in Scotland was similar to what one would encounter in the United States in much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, namely that some university education was better than none at all and those who could not finish a degree, because of financial or other circumstances, should be given maximum flexibility to make choices in their curriculum. Unlike England, the universities in Scotland were decisive promoters of new educational concepts, including a liberal education which included science. The social life, defined as the good life in a civil society, was part of the socialization experience of a university education (Rhyn, p. 12). "The Scottish university community could with justification claim they had a major and decisive role in shaping the structure and curriculum of North American universities and colleges. The oldest of them, Harvard, had embraced the Scottish School of Common Sense in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century" (Rothblatt, p. 233).

These developments in Britain, and especially Scotland, would have an enormous impact on university education. The Scottish system (and London University) had much less class-oriented admissions criteria, non-residential students, professors rather than tutors, and less religious influence, although it should be noted that there was still influence by the Church of Scotland, which was part of the social fabric of the country and therefore part of the cultural heritage passed on through university education. However, liberal education was less politicized in Scotland than in England because the English state church had no influence in Scotland (Rhyn, p. 12). Eventually, there developed a strict division between colleges and universities in both Scotland and England. Colleges were considered as private, and were thus free to develop curriculum, structure and influence on the life of students in whatever fashion they wished, which at this time usually meant a strong affiliation with a denomination or state church. Universities would now be free of this influence but have more government influence. It was the development of the 'godless' university which prompted John Henry Newman to write his *Idea of the University*, which will be discussed later (Rothblatt, pp. 240-1).

While this system did not prevail, with the state ultimately taking away some of autonomy of the colleges and the universities developing more autonomy from the state, this was an important and influential period in the history of university education.

Other and arguably more important developments in terms of influence on the modern university as an institution were simultaneously taking place in Prussia, particularly at the University of Berlin, established by Wilhelm von Humboldt in 1810 (McClelland, 1980). Research was increasingly specialized, not just in the natural

sciences, but in law, modern languages and public administration. The language of instruction was in the vernacular rather than in Latin. "Universities developed into privileged places where knowledge, truth and expressions of culture became legitimized. For the first time in history, the university institution became a center where research was a primary focus" (Jensen, p. 34).

It is important to note that this major development in university education was a "long process rather than an explosive event" (McLelland, 1980, p. 1) and had a particularly significant place in the development of the modern nation of Germany. As noted earlier, the Germans of the 15<sup>th</sup> century had already begun to develop local centres of learning so as not to need to send their sons abroad. During this period of Humboldt, when scientific research moved away from the private academies of science and into universities, the German universities "served as breeding ground for a particular social stratum, an academic bourgeoisie...the recruiting pool for both cultural and administrative elites" (McLelland, pp. 2-3), and as a result, played an important role in national life.

The German universities were very closely tied to the power of the state and the interests of social groups, having been placed under the protection of the state earlier than most European institutions. "Although this tendency was strong in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it became the universal relationship between state and society in the wake of the reorganization of Germany during and after the Napoleonic wars" (ibid, p. 5). Private universities were actually forbidden. In the larger states, like Prussia, the state educational bureaucracy was large and imperious. As the universities provided virtually

all of the civil servants to the state, the development of each was strongly influenced by the other.

The German universities also played a strong role in the life of German churches. As will be again recalled, local institutions of education in the 15<sup>th</sup> century were under local church control. From the Reformation onwards, the universities were a strong force countering church and religious orthodoxy. German clergy were exceptionally well-educated, and faculties of theology had extremely high standards. It is no surprise that modern critical Biblical scholarship was 'born' in the German universities of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Because of this level of scholarship and clergy training, the interests of the churches continued to be represented in the universities, in spite of the constant struggle with orthodoxy.

In the period of Humboldt, both the German economy and the university system grew rapidly. The universities played a significant role in the shaping of "German" society because they were among the first institutions to foster a sense of national community (ibid, p. 9).

## **The Industrial Revolution and Cardinal Newman**

The massive societal change caused by the Industrial Revolution had an equally significant impact on the university. There was increased pressure for more professional training beyond the 'learned professions' of law, theology and medicine. Schools of engineering were established. Society also needed accountants, politicians, scientists and doctors. Research became even more applied in attempts to meet the needs of a

growing industrial sector, and universities assisted in developments such as the harnessing of steam, the discovery of the heating power of coal and mass production techniques (Jensen, pp. 34-5). The Scottish universities, as discussed previously, were particularly well-known for their 'applied research' and influenced the development of many American and Canadian universities of the time.

At the same time, the German university ideal, with its focus on research, was also gaining prominence. The Humboldt model, with distinct faculties and fields of study, and the understanding that research was the prime mission of the university, influenced a number of universities in Europe and North America, most notably, Johns Hopkins University, which in turn had an enormous impact on university education in both Canada and the U.S. "...a growing number of academics [of the time] were committed to an essentially 'liberal free' ideal of university education which they powerfully embodied" (Oakley, p. 61). Influential education critic of the time, Abraham Flexner, who was a product of Johns Hopkins, saw undergraduate training as an 'appendage' which interfered with the central mission of research and bore no particular relationship to the university as a seat of learning (Oakley, p. 110).

Into the midst of this new style of university education came the critical voice of Cardinal John Henry Newman. During this period, liberal arts and humanities in general, and theology in particular, had been moved to the sidelines of the university curriculum. His well-known work, *The Idea of a University*, was originally a series of lectures given in 1851 in his capacity as the first president of the just-founded Catholic University of Ireland in Dublin. The lectures, together with several later essays, were published in 1873 as *The Idea of a University* (Bunting, 1999, in Newman, *Idea of a University*, p. xii).

In these lectures, Newman argued against the marginalization of theology in the modern academy and the need for a careful scrutiny of the repercussions of this on the intellectual life. "Newman's bifocal view of the Greek and Judeo-Christian heritage of the academy alerts readers to the critical role of theology in the emergence of the European university and in the evolution of Western academic discourse" (Cere, 1994, p. 4). To quote Newman himself:

The view taken of a university in these Discourses is the following: That it is a place of *teaching universal knowledge*...Such is a University in its essence, and independently of its relationship to the Church. But, practically speaking, it cannot fulfil its object duly...without the Church's assistance; or, to use the theological term, the Church is necessary for its *integrity*. (Newman, p. xvii)

Newman was not arguing for a retreat from science or human progress and a return to the church as the sole arbiter of knowledge as in the Middle Ages. His viewpoint was rather that the university ought primarily to be a place of liberal education and that theology had an important role in a liberal education. A university was meant, by its very name, to be a place of professing universal knowledge; how is it then possible to exclude entirely one branch of knowledge, namely theology? (Newman, p. 20). Moreover, theology does not exist in isolation but must engage critical developments in philosophy and the sciences. "It positions, and is positioned by, other scientific discourses...the discipline of theology ensures that there is a substantive debate about the question of the supreme good within the academy. Newman insists on the importance of an articulation of this crucial background ontology in intellectual debate" (Ceres, p. 7). (This relates to Charles Taylor's contention of a need for an exploration

and articulation of background ontologies that are presupposed in moral argument for the sake of a more substantive academic discourse about morality; SS, pp. 8-11.)

For Newman, knowledge is an end in itself; it is its own reward (Newman, p. 93). All knowledge need not have a practical use. Newman was not suggesting that professional schools had no place in the university, but that professional training “must be preceded by a liberal education that provides the individual with the intellectual capacity and body of theoretical knowledge that can link his professional training to the broader world of learning and bridge the gap between craftsman and intellectual” (Mitchell, p. 18).

In giving a high value to liberal arts education, Newman was hearkening back to Greco-Roman philosophies of education. Newman also recognized that Christian theology retrieved and continued the debates started by Greek philosophy. His point went beyond the promotion of theology as a relevant discipline to the university. Universities, he said, have a responsibility to be ‘seats of universal knowledge’, and as such, should enlarge their range of studies for the sake of students.

[T]hough they [students] cannot pursue every subject which is open to them, they will be gainers by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle...This [is] the advantage of a seat of universal learning...an assemblage of learned men [sic] zealous for their own sciences, and rivals of each other, are brought, by familiar intercourse and for the sake of intellectual peace, to adjust together the claims and relationship of their respective subjects of investigation. They learn to respect, to consult, to aid each other. Thus is created a pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes, though in his own case he only pursues a few sciences out of the multitude. He profits by an intellectual tradition...he apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests...Hence it is called ‘Liberal’. A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life...(Newman, p. 93)

The prestige of the German universities, particularly after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, led to similar adaptations in institutions throughout Europe (McClelland, 1980). The largest impact of the German universities, however, was in the United States. The U.S. established its first universities in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had a large number of institutions for a relatively young and unpopulated country. Most were general liberal arts universities with varying degrees of church affiliation. However, this would soon be changed by the “American university revolution of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century” (Oakley, p. 27), which was fashioned on the prestigious German university model. This model, started by Humboldt in 1810, was characterized by a marked specialization in curriculum, elective freedom for students, and for faculty, research and the training of future scholars as priorities. One of the first American universities established on this model was Johns Hopkins, which soon become ‘profoundly influential’ in the U.S. (Oakley, p. 28).

While the German university model with its focus on research was to have a strong influence, it was not the only influence acting on university education in the United States. The German universities typically were not concerned with student life outside the classroom. American universities had a much stronger emphasis on student residential life. Many American universities also had a strong commitment to practical research for the community, which was further fostered by public policy at the time which provided free land for institutions which would offer applied sciences (such as agriculture and engineering) to their local communities.



## Early Influences in the Canadian Context

Canadian universities have been influenced by university education philosophies and practices from England, Germany, Scotland, and the United States (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002). The English tradition, most specifically influenced by Oxford and Cambridge, sees knowledge, defined as a deeper understanding of the human condition, as an end in itself. The university transmits humanity's store of knowledge through teaching (Pocklington and Tupper, p. 21). In *The Idea of the University*, John Henry Newman wrote that the university is "primarily a place of teaching universal knowledge" (p. 7) and the purpose of that knowledge is to produce more intelligent members of society by fostering 'cultivation of mind' and formation of intellect (p. 5, 7, 10, 12). The 'Oxford-Cambridge' mission, firmly based in Platonic pedagogy, was to "educate elites and build character and leadership" (Pocklington and Tupper, p. 21). Universities were seen as places of retreat, sanctuaries of scholarship (Wolfe, 1969). Newman, as discussed earlier, believed that universities were rightfully separated from the "necessary cares" of the world, and dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake (Newman, in David, 1997). He summarized the role and purpose of university education in mid-Victorian Oxford-Cambridge when he wrote:

A university is not a birthplace of poets or of immortal authors, or founders of schools, leaders of colonies or conquerors of nations. Nor should its purposes be limited to the training of professional men, although this too falls within its scope. A University education gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in expressing them and a force in urging them...Liberal education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman. (Newman, in Jaspers, 1960)

Pocklington and Tupper (2002) note that while the English ideal was influential in North America, it was not dominant. Conditions in developing North American society of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century could not easily duplicate the serene life of Oxford or Cambridge. More influential were the philosophies and traditions of the great Scottish universities, where, far from being academic havens, the universities were part of a “bustling commercial culture” (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002). The University of Edinburgh, for example, had a curriculum which was very practical. Research was seen as a primary university practice, and science—then called natural philosophy—was very important (Waite, in Pocklington and Tupper, 2002). Scottish patterns and ideals directly influenced the development of three of Canada’s major universities: Dalhousie, McGill, and Queen’s.

American and German philosophies also played a major role in shaping Canada's universities. In Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Humboldt model established “two significant new ideas in university education: that professors were researchers, and that advanced scientific research was central to a great university” (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002). As shown earlier, this thinking had a significant impact on university education in the United States and consequently, in Canada. Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore was set up as a replica of the University of Berlin, dedicated to scientific and medical research and graduate studies, which in turn heavily influenced the University of Toronto and McGill. “While heavily contested in Canada, the German model grew in prestige, especially among university-based scientists, who began to define research as their mission.... But the German university had an even deeper influence. It embodied

an idea, revolutionary to human civilization, that knowledge was something that could be 'produced' at a university" (Pocklington and Tupper, p. 24).

At the same time, legislative action in the United States Congress created another notable influence on university education. In 1862, the Morrill Act was passed, which provided for the transfer of public lands to educational institutions. The "land grant universities", which would become such renowned institutions as the University of Michigan and Berkeley, were designed to teach agriculture and the mechanical arts, business management, and engineering. They were also dedicated to applied research, community outreach in the form of university-industry collaboration, and teaching large numbers of students, whose admission into these universities was based on merit and not on social class (Noble, 1977; Press and Washburn, 2000; Pocklington and Tupper, 2002). The land grant universities served the rapidly growing industrial economy of the U.S. at the turn of the century, and their creation established a strongly utilitarian stream in American public post-secondary education. In Canada, "(l)and grant ideals shaped the universities of Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan" (Pocklington and Tupper, p. 23).

### **The Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Canada: Science and Progressivism**

The influence of medical education on the development of the modern university cannot be overlooked. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, universities seldom had medical schools attached to them. However, this changed early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after a report was commissioned by the Carnegie Foundation in 1910 to examine the state of medical

education in North America. This report prompted significant change in medical education, with many existing schools being closed, and those that were left undergoing major reform, including the University of Toronto and McGill. Its author, Abraham Flexner, was a proponent of the ideas of the German research universities, and the report reflected this bias. Medicine became a major field of scientific study underpinned by advanced scientific research. Faculties of medicine, and the research associated with them, gained both prestige and power, and in the process, many major universities were transformed. University priorities—and budgets—were strongly influenced by the needs of medicine and science, more ties to the community were developed as teaching hospitals were affiliated with universities, and the university became a more complex environment (Pocklington and Tupper). In Canada, the importance and prestige of the sciences was even more firmly entrenched by the discovery of insulin by Banting and Best at the University of Toronto in 1923.

### **The Influence of War: University and Industry Collaboration**

In 1916, Ottawa established what has become the National Research Council (originally known as the Honourary Advisory Council on Scientific and Industrial Research), which was responsible for funding research and graduate fellowships (Tudiver, 1999). During the period between the two world wars, graduate enrolment at Canadian universities tripled, almost exclusively in the sciences (*Ibid*). World War II brought about an increase in public support. The role of university scientists and their research in the Manhattan Project, the development of penicillin and streptomycin and

other wartime initiatives, convinced public officials of the importance of universities, and spurred a significant increase in public funding to universities in the post-war period (Press and Washburn, 2000). In Canada, the federally-funded National Research Council was greatly expanded in the period immediately following WW II; 21 new research labs, many of them associated with universities, were established and funded (Tudiver, 1999). By the end of World War II, applied research was firmly entrenched as a major function of the university in both the U.S. and Canada.

At the same time, the return of hundreds of thousands of soldiers from the war, and programs such as the G.I. Bill in the U.S. (no similar program existed in Canada) meant that even more emphasis was placed on educating large numbers of students. Again, the ideals of the land-grant university were reinforced. This may have been the tipping point in the struggle for which model would prevail: German or American. German educational philosophers, while supporting the idea of the university as a centre of research and knowledge generation, argued that research should be largely separated from any practical applications. Kant, Fichte, and von Humboldt were united in their stance against the university as a place of fulfillment through the education of reason. The purpose of the university, as they understood it, was “the creation of a community of scholars, or teachers, and students who are devoted to the same ideal of scholarship, learning, and science” (Perelman, 1972, p. 62). Karl Jaspers, an influential German scholar who was instrumental in rebuilding Germany’s university system after World War II, wrote in his 1960 book, *The Idea of the University*, that his aim was to reaffirm the basic purpose of the University as an institution devoted to the quest of knowledge, and to stress that all worthwhile education demands the active stimulus of

original inquiry (Jaspers, 1960, p. 10). He believed that in any 'true' university, three functions are indissolubly linked: academic teaching, scientific and scholarly research, and creative cultural life. Each of these activities will decline in the long run if separated from the others (Jaspers, 1960).

However, in the period immediately following World War II, the importance of the sciences, the increase in numbers of students, the emphasis on applied research, and the influences of progressivism and government funding were pushing the ideals of the university away from the German model and towards the American land-grant model (Perelman, 1972). With this came a tendency for universities to "accept and extrapolate the tendencies of the time" (Oakeshott, 1950, p. 111).

[T]he essential part of scientists in winning the war, combined with the incipient democratization of the universities, has produced in the public mind a more lively and sympathetic interest in the universities and a new sense of their value to the nation. The process has been slow, hesitating and inconsequent; but it has begun. To make the universities a reflection of the world means that the basic assumptions of the universities must be those of the nation, it means that they must have a more lively understanding of the major communal needs and of the significant communal changes actually occurring. (Oakeshott, p. 111)

While universities, as have been shown, have generally responded to the tendencies of the time, this period may have begun the redefinition of the university as essentially an economic driver and professional school.

## **World War Two and After**

The last sixty years have brought yet another transformation to the university. While liberal arts philosophies were predominant in the founding of many universities in

North America, the WW II period brought a renewed round of pressure on the liberal arts. Because of the successful relationship which had been established between the state and universities during the war years, federal governments realized they could use universities to educate and train returning veterans (Jansen, p. 38) to meet the needs of post-war society. Karl Jaspers (1965), who was charged with the rebuilding of the German university system after the war and was an influential commentator on university education in North America as well, proposed that university education should serve the individual while at the same time responding to national needs. He wanted to strike a balance between the liberal arts notion of knowledge as an end in itself with knowledge serving very practical purposes, and felt this could be accomplished by developing both liberal arts and professional faculties in universities.

Thanks in large part to the many research projects of the war, including such notable ones as the development of the atomic bomb, "new epistemological and ontological questions" were being asked (Jensen, p. 41). Positivism as the only approach to academic research was being questioned; new research theories suggested that knowledge and truth could be created rather than simply discovered by the mind. Universities became places which did not just discover knowledge, but created it.

In spite of the new value of the university in the eyes of the public, thanks to its role in WW II, federal governments began to cut back on their support for universities almost immediately after the war ended. The 1951 report of the Royal Commission on the Arts, Letters, and Sciences, also known as the Massey Commission, found that Canadian universities were being threatened by severe under funding. "Our universities are facing a financial crisis so grave as to threaten their future usefulness" (Massey,

1951, p. 142), a situation which would be echoed by the *Rae Report* in Ontario more than 60 years later. The Massey report recommended increased spending, particularly for the liberal arts. Massey found that what he considered to be the excessive focus on the sciences and professional training was happening at the expense of the liberal arts. His warnings, however, had little effect, as will be seen. The report did result in a major alteration in the role of the federal government in post-secondary education, and thrust government squarely into the funding of post-secondary through direct grants (Jones, 1997). With funding, however, came influence; rather than simply reflect communal needs, governments would use universities to shape them, and in doing this, would also shape the practice, and subtly, the ideals of the university.

While the immediate period following WW II is considered in general as an “important watershed in the evolution of Canadian higher education” (Jones, 1997, p. 329), this was not true in Quebec. Most universities in Canada were significantly increasing their research responsibilities; the francophone institutions resisted this change. They saw the role of the university as “preserving and transmitting knowledge rather than increasing it and did not consider research an essential activity” (Jones, p. 163). These classical colleges were organized to provide a classical and general education rather than to meet the postwar societal needs of the time of more people educated in science, technology and commerce. These colleges were largely under the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, and tended to be available only to a limited sector of the francophone population. Compared to English Quebec and the other provinces, the participation rate in post-secondary education by francophones was quite low (Jones, pp. 162-3). This was the case until the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, when



the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Quebec in 1963 strongly recommended an expansion of universities and professional education, more widely accessible, to allow Quebec to participate fully in an expanding economy (Parent Commission, 1963).

### **The University as Economic Driver: The mid-60s to Today**

In 1960, the Royal Commission on Government Organization, headed by J.G. Glassco, chastised Ottawa for being too lax in directing scientific research (Tudiver, 1999). The result was the establishment of the Science Council of Canada, formed in 1966 to advise government on “applying science to Canada’s economic and social problems” (Tudiver, p. 143). The Science Council became an influential advocate of using university research to serve industry (Eggleston, 1978). A Senate inquiry in 1967 argued that research efforts in science should serve national economic and social objectives, and recommended more support for applied research and less for basic research (Canada Senate 1970). By the late 1960s, the federal government was putting \$100 million a year into university research, 63% to science and engineering, 21% to medical research and only 15% to the humanities and social sciences (Tudiver, 1999).

The 1960s and 1970s were an expansionary and formative time in Canada’s post-secondary system (Jones, 1997, p. 335). A number of new institutions were formed to meet increased demand for university spaces. At the same time, while the federal government, through various commissions and councils, continued to exert considerable influence on the vision for universities, it changed the funding formula from direct grants

to the universities to block grants to the provinces for health, education, and other social programs (Jones, 1997). The provinces now had considerable ability, through funding, to steer the universities in their jurisdictions. In 1974 in British Columbia, for example, the New Democratic Party provincial government created the Universities Council, a government-appointed body with the legislated power to require universities to submit long-and short-term plans, and approve new programs, degrees and faculties. This same government, through passage of the Universities Act, required universities to have staff, student, and faculty representatives on their boards and senates (Jones, 1997).

Jurgen Habermas, writing at the same time on similar trends in the German university system, said this:

Universities must transmit technically exploitable knowledge. That is, they must meet an industrial society's need for qualified new generations and at the same time be concerned with the expanded reproduction of education itself. In addition, universities must not only transmit technically exploitable knowledge, but also produce it. This includes both information flowing from research into the channels of industrial utilization, armament, and social welfare, and advisory knowledge that enters into strategies of administration, government, and other decision-making powers, such as private enterprises. Thus, through instruction and research, the university is immediately connected with functions of the economic process. (Habermas, 1970, pp. 1-2)

This was a shift from the position of the earlier German educational philosophers who firmly believed that knowledge need not have any practical application and that the universities' main purpose was to be community of scholars serving the scholarly community.

Habermas also listed three additional responsibilities of the university: to prepare graduates for professional careers; to transmit, interpret, and develop the cultural

tradition of the society; and to form the political consciousness of its students (Habermas, 1970). However, with similar trends occurring in university-industry liaison in the U.S., the emphasis world-wide at this point was clearly skewing towards the university's role in the economy.

As the 1970s and 1980s unfolded, further developments took place which strengthened the university's economic role. In both Canada and the U.S., university research parks, which promoted technology transfer to industry, were springing up (Jones, 1997; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). In B.C., one of the early acts of the newly-elected Social Credit government of the mid-1970s was the establishment of research parks affiliated with the universities (Jones, 1997). As the economy slowed down, later in the 1970s and into the 1980s, and more provincial monies were going to entitlement programs at the expense of university education, both federal and provincial governments began to utilize university-industry research as a way to stimulate regional economic development (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997).

The 1980s were a turning point. In the U.S. the Bayh-Dole Act was passed, which, for the first time, allowed universities to patent the results of federally funded research (Press and Washburn, 2000, p.7). The march towards academic capitalism, i.e., the entrepreneurial university, suddenly went into double-time. In the first eight years after Bayh-Dole was passed, industry funding for university research in the U.S. increased eight-fold over levels of the previous twenty years, and university patents increased more than twenty-fold. "What is undeniable is that Bayh-Dole has revolutionized university-industry relations" (Press and Washburn, 2000).

In Canada, the Corporate-University Education Forum was organized in 1984 by the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney. Consisting of corporate executives and industry leaders, its goal was to “optimize the use of Canada’s limited human, financial, and physical resources in research and education while tuning the research effort and the university curriculum more closely to the needs of the marketplace” (Maxwell and Currie, 1984, p. 2). The federal government also began tying university research support to corporate matching contributions and worked with provincial and local governments to develop centers of excellence, which were university-industry research centres (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997, p. 53). Studying trends in university entrepreneurship in Canada, United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, Slaughter and Leslie (1997) found that

Despite the very real differences in political cultures, the four countries developed similar policies at those points where university education intersected with globalization of the postindustrial economy. Tertiary education policies in all countries moved toward science and technology policies that emphasized academic capitalism at the expense of basic or fundamental research, toward curricula policy that concentrated moneys in science and technology and fields close to the market (business and intellectual property and law, for example), toward increased access at lower government cost per student, and toward organizational policies that undercut the autonomy of academic institutions and of faculty. (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997, p. 53)

While entrepreneurial activity did not proceed as quickly in Canada as it did in the U.S., possibly due to our highly decentralized system of university education and different cultural and economic contexts (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997), nonetheless, today many Canadian universities are quickly becoming as entrepreneurial as their American counterparts.

The university has thus changed from a liberal-arts philosophy as expressed by Newman, based on Greco-Roman ideals, of knowledge for its own sake and for the development of the ethical and moral individual which leads to the benefit of society, transmitted to the student through a community of scholars. Today, the university is no longer one educational community, but many, with many 'stakeholders' (Kerr, 1982). A common, integrative, educational purpose has been lost (ibid). Educational philosophy has become functionalist, with the university seen as an instrument of government and corporate economic policy and a credentialing body for the education of professionals. There have been benefits to society from this change: for example, increasing involvement with the public, business and industry has helped to shed the 'ivory tower' image of the university, which has itself gained from this contact with the wider community (Mitchell, p. 21). However, as will be discussed later, this change in philosophy also has a cost.

### **Summary:**

## **The Development of Canadian Universities**

As noted by Glen A. Jones in the 1997 book he edited, *Higher Education in Canada*, the evolution of university education in Canada has been influenced by geography, federalism, regionalism, language and culture. Moreover, there is no "Canadian system" as each province and territory has created a unique network of postsecondary structures and policies (Jones, p. 1), although the influence of the federal government has also been significant. It is possible, however, to trace broad developments in the history of university education in Canada.

While nearly all the formerly denominational institutions in Canada have become public institutions either within the framework of a larger university or as autonomous universities, it is important to remember that the churches played a significant role in the development of university education in Canada. In Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick for example, religion and religious rivalries are described as a "particularly persistent factor" (Skolnik, 1997, pp. 327-329). While accommodations were reached early on in Toronto and Winnipeg, whereby the universities granted the degrees while the instruction was provided by denominationally controlled, federated colleges, in some areas, such as Nova Scotia, these agreements were never reached. Nova Scotia "continues to be held hostage to religious factionalism" (ibid), while in Ontario, by contrast, denominationalism gradually ceased to be a significant force (Jones, p. 140).

The post-WW II period was a notable time of change, as the federal government became much more involved in university education through the recommendations of various Royal Commissions. The period from the early 1950s to the early 1970s was a time of "identification and elaboration of provincial needs, innovation and expansion, and the establishment of what might be called a provincial system of post-secondary education" (Skolnik, p. 329). The Massey Commission in particular resulted in a major change in the role of the federal government in university funding, most notably in research. Recommendations regarding the liberal arts and the role of the university in a democratic society, however, were ignored. With increased federal funding came increased influence by the federal government on university priorities and direction. The late 1980s to the present day show a marked move on the part of universities in general

towards more market-oriented behaviour, generally supported and encouraged by the universities themselves, as well as federal and provincial funding agencies (Cameron, 1997).

It is interesting to note that among the various jurisdictions in Canada, British Columbia is known for its new forms of post-secondary education which fit the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Skolnik, p. 341), while Nova Scotia is “dealing with organizational issues from the nineteenth century” (Christie, 1997, p. 242). Yet, in terms of participation in post-secondary education, Nova Scotia leads the country, while B.C. has performed very poorly (Dennison, 1997, p. 52).

### **The Present: Universities Today**

A brief review of the titles in any ‘university education’ library search is a good indicator of the current mood of many commentators. Starting with *The University in Ruins*, written by the late Bill Readings in 1996, we quickly move through titles such as *Slaughter* and Leslie’s 1997 *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies and the Entrepreneurial University*, *Chalk Lines: The Politics of Work in the Managed University* (Martin, ed., 1998), *Universities for Sale* (Tudiver, 1999), *Saving University education’s Soul* (Newman, 2000), *The Knowledge Factory* (Aronowitz, 2000), *No Place to Learn* (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002), and *Beyond the Corporate University* (Giroux, ed., 2001). Journal articles and other books in a similar vein abound.

A common theme runs through these writings: that the present day practices of the university are corporatist and entrepreneurial, and that they threaten the concept of higher learning for its own sake and educating people for participative engagement in democratic society. Kerr in *The Uses of the University* (1982), wrote that the university should exist for the benefit and use of society. This philosophy, a shift from the liberal arts model, has become more entrenched by the changes of the last several decades and has taken on a decidedly economic interpretation. The 'multiversity', as Kerr calls the modern university, is thus a mechanism held together by administrative rules and powered by money (p. 79).

Readings (1996) suggested that the grand narrative of the university, which centred on the education and thus creation of a liberal, reasoning subject is being lost. Instead, "everything in the lives of students encourage[s] them to think of themselves as consumers rather than as members of a community" (p. 10). Giroux (2002) says that as civic discourse in society gives way to the language of commercialization, privatization and deregulation, the way we address the meaning and purpose of university education changes. Williams (2001) argues that as universities are reconfigured as the direct training grounds for the corporate workforce, they become more and more like 'franchises' delivering a name brand product. "The traditional idea of the university as a non-for-profit institution that offers a liberal education and enfranchises citizens...not to mention...foster a socially critical if not revolutionary class, has been evacuated without much of a fight" (p. 18).

Kerr, in the latest edition of *The Uses of the University*, observes a number of major trends from 1962, when he was first writing on this topic, to today. There is less



attention to undergraduate teaching and an increased use of teaching assistants; research, health, industrial and military, has taken particular priority; the split between the 'advantaged' faculties, such as medicine, engineering and the sciences, and the 'disadvantaged', the humanities and social sciences, has widened; short term projects take precedence over longer term projects because of funding concerns; there is more managerial activity; federal funding for research and development have a greater influence on individual universities; and faculty spend a substantial amount of their time and efforts on securing grants (Kerr, 2001).

This entrepreneurial, for-profit activity by universities, often known as 'academic capitalism', is defined as not-for-profit academic institutions taking on the characteristics and activities of profit-making organizations (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997, p. 13). Academic capitalism consists of both direct market activity, which seeks for profit, such as patents, licenses and by creating spin-off firms, and market-like behaviour, which entails competition for external funding without the intention to make a profit, such as grants, research contracts and donations (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Ylijoki, 2003). Along with an increasing market-orientation comes a move towards corporate managerialism within the university, as business-like internal practices are necessary to attract corporate funding and partnerships (Currie and Vidovitch, 1998; Martin, 1998; Newfield, 1998; Rhoades and Slaughter, 1998; Buchbinder and Newson, 1990). This has increasingly meant that non-faculty administrators and managers assume more and more decision-making within the institution; "...in both the public and private university sectors, power has slowly but surely shifted to administrators, who retain final determination of nearly all university issues. Faculty senates and academic committees

are really advisory bodies whose recommendations are no longer routinely approved by higher authorities...” (Aronowitz, 2000 p. 66). Giroux (2001) suggests that this governance of organizational life in the university through senior management control produces “compliant workers, depoliticized consumers, and passive citizens” (p. 30). He also notes that while corporate culture is a dynamic, ever-changing force, which does have good points, it rarely challenges the centrality of the profit motive (pp. 42-3).

Canada's universities, strongly influenced by U.S. trends as shown in the previous sections, are also firmly entrenched in the practice and ideals of academic capitalism. In 1997, the University of Manitoba's Industry Liaison office produced a “best practices for invention disclosure” document. The “worst practice” for invention disclosure, described as “1. Invent; 2. Publish or talk; 3. File invention disclosure; and 4: File patent protection” is the traditional model for good research, in which investigators discuss their ideas and publish tentative findings before finalizing anything (Tudiver, 1999, pp. 174-5). In a 1997 speech by then premier of Ontario Mike Harris, whose topic was the role of a highly educated workforce in a vibrant economy, he said, “...there are questions of system-wide service, value and efficiency...our government respects the autonomy of universities...but I suggest that there are no avenues for change to rule out as we face the challenges of the next century. Decisions must be made about ensuring good value for students and taxpayers in their investment in post-secondary education” (1997 speech to the Council of Ontario Universities Summit, quoted in Simon, 2001, p. 49).

Martha Piper, current president of University of British Columbia, was cited in the introduction to this dissertation for her comments on the importance of a university

education for a robust and innovative economy. Michael Stevenson, president of Simon Fraser University, also cited the need for increased profitable commercialization of research in his state-of-the-university address in January 2003. Currie and Vidovitch (1998) describe the 'global trend' towards corporate managerialism in university governance and note the hegemony of corporate discourse in universities today.

Since the 1990's, the relative proportion of university research funded by industry and the federal government has shifted in favour of industry (Fisher and Atkinson-Grosjean, 2002). Buchbinder and Newson (1990) and Buchbinder and Rajagopal (1993, 1995) studied the Canadian university environment and found that the operative center of the academy has shifted from a liberal arts core to an entrepreneurial one, with an increasing marketization of the academy and a focus on research and development with commercial purpose. With decreased government support, universities must also produce more of their own revenue, through fund-raising, corporate matching grants, market-driven for-profit programs, and commercialization of research. Corporations have shifted the focus of the money they give to universities from pure philanthropy to investments and commercial partnerships, with Ottawa's support and encouragement through various matching programs and initiatives, such as the Canadian Fund for Innovation (Tudiver, 1999). Income from university licensing and patents nearly tripled in Canada between 1991 and 1997 (Tudiver, 1999, p. 5). Industry liaison offices have become an established part of the infrastructure of Canadian universities (Fisher and Atkinson-Grosjean, 2002).

"Canadian universities now place heavy attention on preparing students for the economy" (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002, p. 145). Across North America, many

university programs resemble Masters of Business Administration: the emphasis is on acquisition of work-related skills and relevance to employability (Slaughter, 1990).

The knowledge-based economy (perhaps 'technology-based' is a more accurate term) has spurred a need for highly specialized technical people and very practically-focused, innovation oriented research to sustain technological progress. This emphasis on preparing students to participate in the economy (as opposed to participating in democracy) has the tendency to reduce university education to the acquisition of work-related skills (Pocklington and Tupper, p. 145). "The key to developing corporate-friendly practices lies in managing a university like a business. Trends in this direction are evident, with pyramids at the top, presidents being redefined as chief executive officers, and business-like merit incentives for faculty" (Tudiver, 1999). This is proven out by an overview of just some of the current work in university governance and administration. University boards and senates are increasingly focused on budgetary matters; fiscal pressures take precedence, and values, philosophy, and meaning are seen as time-consuming luxuries (Fryer and Lovas, 1991). Often board members are there because of their business acumen or connections, or their fundraising abilities, rather than because of any connection to the particular institution or with university education in general. *Management and Leadership in University education* (McCorkle and Archibald, 1982) suggests that the management model is necessary for multi-year resource management in order to maintain quality at a time of scarce resources. *University education Inc: The Rise of the For-Profit University* (Ruch, 2001) defends profit-making in post-secondary institutions and says that public universities could take a few lessons from the private institutions in customer focus and resource management.

*The Advancement President and the Academy* (Murphy, ed., 1997) provides a primer for the would-be university president on how to be an effective fund-raiser, a skill considered essential for the university president/CEO of today. While Canadian universities have been slower than American ones to adopt the entrepreneurial model and its attendant governance structures (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997), it seems that we have now caught up with the U.S. system:

With managerial value systems in the ascendant, corporate structures and extensive, CEO-style presidential offices are becoming the norm in Canadian universities. In place of traditional academic leadership, we now see a growing cadre of professional managers and administrators (Newson, 1998; Cassin and Morgan, 1992). Responsibility for research management has been institutionalized in the most senior ranks of the administrative hierarchy, generally under the direction of Vice-Presidents, Research (VPRs). Often these are scientists who have moved from the laboratory into full-time, senior management, thus emulating the promotion trajectory of their industry counterparts (Ziman, 1994). (Fisher and Atkinson-Grosjean, 2002, p. 452)

In summary, while some critique of academic capitalism exists, most notably among academics in the humanities and social sciences, university leaders, governments, and the private sector appear to be comfortable with current market-like practices in our publicly-funded university education system. It is important in this connection to note that entrepreneurial universities with strong corporate ties did not suddenly appear in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As can be seen in the narrative of the history of university practices, the university as a centre of knowledge production, industry-university co-operation, and the shaping of the role of the university by governments is hardly new. "In the long run, no doubt, universities will always come to be some sort of a reflection of the world in which they exist. They cannot be insulated from that world, and the world is likely to have a final voice" (Oakeshott, 1950, p. 114).

In an era of globalization and the focus on economics and economic measures, perhaps it was inevitable that the trajectory that started many years ago should end up in the entrepreneurial university, with the university becoming what Kerr calls the 'multiversity'. This began in the 1800s with university education taking on a practical and professional focus to meet the pragmatic needs of the state and evolved into the many-faceted institution that is the university today, although it should be noted that when von Humboldt, the 'father' of the modern university, spoke of the university as a place "devoted to science", he did not mean it in a completely positivistic or empirical way. "The full development of the personality and of a supple, wide-ranging habit of clear, original thinking was the goal" (McClelland, p. 125). Kerr comments that the multiple internal and external goals of today's universities have led to an uneasy balance regarding the university's internal educational goals and its responsibility or relationship to the external social community (p. 79). "In the last half-century, universities have tended to grow too big, grasping every opportunity for new activity...as a result, the mission has become fuzzier, the institutions more impersonal and fragmented..." (Mitchell, p. 21).

We might reasonably wonder if the entrepreneurial agenda and "fuzzy mission" of the university might benefit from intentional discussion among all stakeholders, a discussion which has not taken place. Renner in his 1995 book *The New Agenda for University education*, which focuses on the Canadian context, says that while some managerial direction is appropriate to address the financial constraints faced by universities today, we must also consider a holistic approach to these challenges, and begin an internal process of critical examination and reflection of beliefs around the

issues being faced (p. 17). The Massey Commission issued a warning in 1951 which is perhaps even more necessary today:

[If the university]...denies its intellectual and moral purpose, the complete conception of the common good is lost, and Canada, as such, becomes a materialistic society. (Massey Royal Commission, 1951, p. xx)

## What To Do? The Future

Frank Newman, author of a series of articles in *Change*, a publication of the American Association of University Education, wrote of his concern with the erosion of traditional academic values and the adverse effect he sees this having on both university education itself and the institution of the university. More importantly, Newman asks a highly significant question: "It is critical to ask what is the soul of university education that needs to be saved. We need to identify those attributes that are essential to preserving university education's role as servant to society so as not to lose them forever in the heat of competition" (Newman, 2000, p. 16). Kerr (2001) quotes a dean of applied sciences from Harvard, Henry Rosovsky, who said, "When it concerns our more important obligations—faculty citizenship—neither rule nor custom is any longer compelling...It is my distinct impression...that there has been a secular decline of professorial civic virtue in FAS [Faculty of Arts and Sciences]" (p. 167).

Henry Giroux expresses similar concern in *Beyond the Corporate University* (2001) in a 2002 article, *The University as a Democratic Public Sphere*. In commenting on the pervasive corporate culture and ethos at many universities today, he said: "As a society defined through the culture and values of neoliberalism, the relationship between

a critical education, public morality and civic responsibility as conditions for creating thoughtful and engaged citizens are sacrificed all too willingly to the interest of financial capital and the logic of profit-making” (2002, p. 427).

He points to the diminishing of the ‘noncommodified’ public sphere and the loss of public voice which are the sequels of this: market liberties replace civic freedom and consumers do the work of citizens. Culture in the corporate model becomes an “all-encompassing horizon for producing market identities, values and practices. The ‘good life’ in this discourse is constructed in terms of what we buy and public spheres are replaced by commercial spheres “(2001, pp. 30-1). Giroux emphasizes the value of the traditional public sphere as a place where issues of importance are discussed and debated, and information critical to citizen participation in community life is presented. “In the absence of such a public sphere it becomes more difficult for citizens to challenge the neoliberal myth that citizens are *merely* consumers...” (2002, p. 428). Democratic values give way to commercial values, intellectual ambitions are reduced to entrepreneurial ventures, social visions are considered outdated, and being a good citizen means being a good consumer.

Giroux argues strongly that university education is a resource vital to democratic life and therefore must be safeguarded as a public good and organized around a sense of critical public citizenship (2001, p. 2). Educators in the academy need to take their ‘civic duty’ as public intellectuals seriously and consider themselves as providing an important public service in maintaining the vitality of the public sphere (2001, p. 41).



The university has a critical role in our society as a key element in the public sphere. “Struggling for democracy is both a political and educational task...Reducing university education to the handmaiden of corporate culture works against the critical social imperative of educating citizens who can sustain and develop inclusive democratic public spheres” (2001, p. 33). For Giroux, the struggle to reclaim university education (from market imperatives) is part of a broader battle over the defense of the public good.

The university is uniquely situated to be an important part of the public sphere. The public sphere must be beyond the control of the state. It is important to remember that the university is an institution which predates the modern state. Kerr (1982) points out that 85 institutions in the Western world existent in 1520 still exist in recognizable forms with similar functions and unbroken histories: the Catholic Church, the Parliaments of the Isle of Man, Iceland and Great Britain, several Swiss cantons, and seventy universities” (p. iv). Although publicly funded to various degrees over history, the university (until very recently) has been immune from direct market-economy pressure and has largely avoided partisan political influence. The university is not *owned* by any particular private group or publicly-traded consortium. It has been a place of intellectual discourse and academic freedom, and as such, has been able to engage in critical reflection. All of these factors are critical in the public sphere.

Concern for the link between the university, the public sphere and therefore the democratic state are, however, on the rise. In a recent article entitled *Public Goods, Private Benefits and the University*, Gordon Brittan, an American professor of philosophy, argues that the role of the university as economic driver is a recent and potentially damaging one for both the university and society; “...if we look at universities

in general in long historical perspective....they have long played other social and...moral roles in virtue of which they are public goods, although the specific nature of these roles has varied as a function of their cultural content” (Brittan, 2003). He goes on to identify three critical roles for the university in a liberal, democratic society.

First, the university is the ‘safeguard’ of our culture’s past and transmits a body of practice and belief which is a source of values for our understanding of ourselves as members of a democratic community. In a modern social imaginary where we have lost our metaphysical grounding, I think this becomes even more important if we are to maintain the legitimacy of the public sphere. Brittan says that because of this it is fundamentally important that the *public* university not be ‘owned’ or otherwise privatized. The public good of university education must directly and indirectly, benefit all members of the society. A public good he defines as any good which makes possible the effective functioning of democracy.

Second, because the university is somewhat isolated from political and economic pressures, it is the forum for the informed and articulate criticism of that same body of practice and belief. This self-criticism, Brittan says, is not only part of the western intellectual tradition, but the essence of democracy.

Third, the university more than any other institution not only allows for but encourages (at times even forces, he says) the development of a fuller range of interests and abilities in the individual. While this does benefit the individual, the whole community can benefit from it.

Over their long history, universities...have held a privileged position because of their focus on the needs of society rather than on self-gain. With that position have come certain responsibilities. But today, as university education becomes more closely linked to for-profit activities...there is a new danger that the public and its political leaders will view university education as just another interest or industry devoid of attributes that raise its interest above those of the market place throng. (Mitchell, 1999, p. 16)

The Futures Project, a organization begun in 1999 and sponsored by Brown University's Center for Public Policy and American Institutions, is studying the role of the university in today's society, and identifies three main ideals for the university today: 1) to create the skills and attitudes in students to prepare them to be contributing citizens; 2) to provide as much access as possible to create a more inclusive society; and 3) to be a home for disinterested scholarship and for open and unfettered discussion of critical issues. Their concern is not so much for the application of business principles in academic institutions, but that the 'thoughtless drive for revenue' does not take into account these broader purposes for university education.

In order to meet these ideals, the university must focus on the aspects of its practice which can be sidelined in a thoughtless drive for revenue. In order to prepare students for being participating citizens in a democracy, a sense of academic community must exist, a sense often lost in large classrooms and in environments in which there is a lack of importance given of teaching. Harkening back to Newman and to Plato before him, the community-of-scholars' concept creates an atmosphere of thought which the students breathe. It is an orientation to the intellectual life, which in a university context should mean "introducing the student to sophisticated intellectual concepts and giving him or her a lifelong ability to think critically" (Newman, 2000, p. 18). Students also need

to be socialized or oriented to 'the practice' of whatever field they choose to follow. This is of paramount importance since an understanding of the community of practice and its traditions and norms, as per Charles Taylor, Alistair MacIntyre and others, is essential to ethical practice. Again, the role of the university is to provide something other than economic values as a foundation. George Fallis, former Dean of Arts at York University, recently wrote in a submission to the Rae Review of Post-Secondary Education on Ontario:

The university serves many purposes for society: the university provides mass university Education and opportunity for social mobility; it is the centre of society's organized research Enterprise; it provides liberal education for citizenship and trains the future, self-regulated Professionals; it is both the means to pass on a shared culture and the means to re-define this culture. These are the responsibilities given to the university by society. (Fallis, 2004, p. 32)

The other ideal for the university today is in its role in the public sphere. Noam Chomsky, quoted in the Giroux article, says: "...the social and intellectual role of the university should be subversive in a healthy society...[and that] individuals and society at large benefit to the extent that these liberatory ideals extend throughout the educational system—in fact, far beyond" (Chomsky, in Giroux, 2002, p. 452). The public sphere, as previously discussed, has a tremendously important role in a free society, and the university has a key role in that public sphere.

In a society where the marketplace has become the primary source of values, "...the role of university education as a source for trusted knowledge, open debate, and reasoned critique is more important than ever" (Newman, p. 5). Giroux sums up well the rationale for the ideals of preparation of citizens and participation in the public sphere:

I believe that intellectuals who inhabit our nation's universities should represent the conscience of this society not only because they shape the conditions under which future generations learn about themselves and their relations to others and the outside world, but also because they engage pedagogical practices that are by their very nature moral and political, rather than cost-effective and technical...[these practices] bear witness to the ethical and political dilemmas that animate the broader social landscape and are important because they provide spaces that are both comforting and unsettling, spaces that both disturb and enlighten [and] not only work to shift how students think about the issues affecting their lives and the world at large, but potentially energizes them to seize such moments as possibilities for acting on and engaging in the world. (Giroux, 2002, pp. 452-3)

Fallis agrees and says the university has an important role in counteracting the concentrations of power in government and business. The link between democracy and education is as old as the discussion of each. It can be argued

that all educational theory is at the same time political theory. Educational theory asks: what kind of person do we seek to create through education? Embedded in this question is another question: what kind of citizen do we want? (Fallis, p. 44)

In fulfilling these ideals, the university maintains its role of benefiting society and being a public good. This is important for an ongoing free society, one that is built on more than market-driven values, where citizens think critically as participate in democracy rather than simply consume. In the absence of any other metaphysical foundation, and in a pluralistic society in which Christian theology is no longer acceptable as a grounding for all of society, the university can also fulfill an important role in going beyond instrumental, economically-driven values, and provide a foundation for the good life and the public good which goes beyond material goods and the values of marketplace.

## **CHAPTER 3.**

### **Taylor: Modernity, Authenticity, and the University**

#### **The Malaise of the University and its World: Charles Taylor**

In Chapters One and Two, the university was seen to be gradually changing the focus of its activities towards revenue-making. In following the development of this activity, we might reasonably ask if the teleological notion of 'the good' in higher education is being lost, and exchanged for economic 'goods'. In the process of 'colonisation', is the university losing its historic institutional identity and thereby irreversibly altering its traditional role and obligation to the wider society?

Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor has focused much of his work on the problems of modernity both for the individual and society with an emphasis on the way in which individuals and society make meaning, and the need to reclaim (or at least acknowledge the need for) a teleological orientation in the quest for meaning-making. In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor looks at the individual in modernity and how shifting contexts have affected our ability to form our identities. In *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Taylor analyses the 'social surroundings' of the modern individual, in a very broad way: "...how we stand to each other, how we got to where we are, how we relate to other groups, and so on" (Taylor, 2004, p. 25). In other words, Taylor seeks to provide to his readers an

awareness of the history and construction of the structures in our immediate social spaces which help us to understand and interpret ourselves, our histories, our communities, our society and our place in each of those.

The university is an inextricable element of modernity for several reasons: the role it has traditionally held in society for the last 500 years, its effect on shaping the identities of the individuals who attend it, and its functioning as one of the key components in an important aspect of modernity as identified by Taylor, i.e. the public sphere. This chapter will trace the development of Taylor's thinking and explore the concepts of authenticity and the modern social imaginary. Each of these concepts will then be applied to the modern public university.

## **Taylor: History and Background**

Charles Taylor studied history at McGill University in Montreal from 1952 to 1955 and philosophy, economics and politics at Oxford University where he received his doctorate in 1961. Growing up bilingual in Montreal, the son of a francophone mother and anglophone father, Taylor experienced first hand the importance of language in constituting and expressing identity, an idea that continues to play a key role in his philosophy (Smith, 2002, p. 12). In an interview in 1992 in the French language Montreal daily *Le Devoir*, Taylor said that as a child he found that the two languages played very different roles. The anglophones regarded speaking English as a useful skill which enabled them to do many other things, but they did not see the speaking of English itself as intrinsically important. For the francophones, on the other hand, French

was indispensable to their identity; speaking French had an existential significance for their 'way of being' in the world (Smith, p. 12). This idea of identity formed in different ways struck Taylor from his earliest days.

Taylor was influenced by the work of others at Oxford in the 1950s, especially Elizabeth Anscombe and Iris Murdoch (Abbey, 2004, p. 84-5). Murdoch in particular had a strong influence on Taylor's *Sources of the Self*. On the first page, he describes his own work as focusing on the nature of the good life and the notion of the good as the object of love and allegiance as portrayed in the work of Iris Murdoch (Taylor, 1987, p. 3). His purpose in *Sources of the Self* is to "locate moral sources outside the subject...to make room for or (rather) find the already existing place, in our workday conceptual systems, for the "sovereignty of the concept of the good" " (Abbey, 2004, p. 90-1). This moves us beyond the question of what it is right to do and takes us to consider what it is right to be, i.e., the nature of the good life (Taylor, 1987, p.3). I suggest that with today's pressures on the university and the importance of the role of the university in society, it is equally important for the institution of the university to consider these things.

The idea of the modern social imaginary, together with the notion of authenticity, offers a complementary lens through which to view the university. Authenticity, in short, is dedication to a higher ideal. "The social imaginary is not a set of ideas; rather, it is what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society" (Taylor, 2004, p.2). Both of these concepts will be discussed further in following sections. Universities have a role in enabling us to make sense of the practices of our society, both communally and as individuals. I believe this re-emphasizes the need for the university to be itself an authentic institution and to take a role in shaping our modern social imaginary.



## Sources of the Self and Authenticity

In the opening pages of *Sources of the Self*, Taylor chastises contemporary society for giving too narrow a focus to morality. "This moral philosophy has tended to focus on what it is right to do rather than on what it is good *to be*, on defining the content of obligation rather than the nature of the good life; and it has no conceptual place left for a notion of the good as an object of our love or allegiance..." (Taylor, 1989, p. 3. Italics added). One of the major problematic issues in the modern world is the concept of frameworks. Frameworks are the way in which we judge our lives to be meaningful, which may be "the space of fame in the memory and song of the tribe, the call of God as made clear in revelation, or...the hierarchical order of being in the universe" (p. 16). Many frameworks are no longer accepted, religious frameworks among the secular, for example, and many feel frameworks are completely optional for life today. Taylor, however, argues that frameworks are inescapable; "I want to defend the strong thesis that doing without frameworks is utterly impossible for us....living within strongly qualified horizons is constitutive of human agency...(p. 27). Moreover, this orientation within a framework is an essential link to our identity. "To know who you are is to be oriented in a moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary" (p. 28).

These frameworks are developed and maintained by some sort of community. A self cannot be a self on its own. A self exists only within what are called 'webs of interlocution' (p. 36). These communities have a connection to their history and ways of making meaning and understanding themselves which arise out of the lived experience

of the community. The notion of what is good and what is right is not set for all time, but rather evolves. As opposed to a Platonic conception of the rule of reason, Taylor holds to an Aristotelian model. Where Plato made a strong connection between the awareness of right order in our lives and the order of the cosmos, Aristotle argued that our grasp of the right order and priority of ends in life is not based on eternal truths. Rather, it is an “understanding of the ever-changing, in which particular cases and predicaments are never exhaustively characterized in general rules” (p. 125). *Phronesis*, or practical wisdom, cannot be fully articulated in or reduced to a knowledge of general truths, although that knowledge is necessary. It is the way of knowing how to behave in each particular circumstance; this is more than rationality, and requires a framework within which we know and understand our moral orientation.

Taylor criticizes much moral theory of today which tries to reconstruct ethics without any reference to the good. While it is possible to start an understanding of ethics based on agreed intuitions about what is right, proceduralist ethics are often motivated by other factors as well. “...proceduralist ethics are sometimes motivated by a strong commitment to central modern life goods, universal benevolence and justice, which they wrongly believe can be given a special status segregating them from any special consideration about the good” (p. 496). Taylor suggests that this attempt at a ‘disengaged instrumentalism’ is incompatible with richer fulfilment and that this type of morality extracts a high price from us in terms of our wholeness (p. 499), i.e. our authenticity as individuals.

Taylor defines authenticity as a moral ideal, a “picture of what a better or higher mode of life would be, where ‘better’ and ‘higher’ are defined not in terms of what we

happen to desire or need, but offer a standard of what we ought to desire” (Taylor, 1991, p. 16). The higher life requires mediation: it must be “kept alive or nourished by practice” (Smith, p. 4). We need to participate in this higher life, Taylor thinks. In one form or another, the dedication to a higher ideal has always existed, but it is particularly important in modernity to help us make sense of the social and political predicaments of today (Smith, p. 140), one of which, I suggest, is the situation of higher education and the university.

According to Taylor, the authentic ideal is worthwhile, but support of this ideal requires three beliefs: 1) that authenticity is a valid ideal; 2) that you can argue in reason about ideals and about the conformity of practices to these ideals; and 3) that these arguments can make a difference. He offers authenticity as a kind of antidote to the malaise of our modern Western society.

Taylor diagnoses society as being in a ‘malaise’ caused by three interrelated factors: 1) an excess of individualism; 2) the primacy of instrumental reason; and 3) and the loss of freedom, or “soft despotism” (Taylor, 1991). The last two in particular have most affected the “ideal” in universities.

In brief, individualism refers to the right to choose one’s own patterns of life. This is not negative in and of itself; indeed Taylor points out that many see this as one of the finest achievements of modern civilization (Taylor, 1991, p.2). However, it has a dark side: people tend no longer to see themselves as part of a larger order, or have a sense of higher purpose. The negative expression of individualism sees people as concerned only with themselves and their lives, and less concerned or even unconcerned with

others or society. 'What will I gain from this?' becomes the salient question for life decisions.

Taylor calls the primacy of instrumental reason a "massively important phenomenon" (1991, p. 5). Instrumental reason refers to the kind of logic which calculates the most economical applications of particular means to a given end: maximum efficiency is the measure of success. In such a view, there is little room for moral considerations. Like individualism, instrumental reason is not, in and of itself, negative. It is rather when decision-making and planning are *dominated* by ideas of efficiency, or cost-benefit analysis, with no other considerations taken into account, that instrumentalism becomes a negative. Taylor also points to a "companion" of instrumentalism: the prestige and aura that surround technology. In addition, says Taylor, "our technocratic, bureaucratic society gives more and more importance to instrumental reason. This cannot but fortify atomism, because it induces us to see our communities, like so much else, in an instrumental perspective" (Taylor, 1991, p. 59). We might also put the words 'public institutions'—such as education, health care, and other social services—into this sentence. We need only look to recent government actions across Canada to see the force of instrumentalism at work in decisions about these areas. Henry Mintzberg, a renowned expert on management and organizations, takes exception to the idea of governments becoming like businesses, and the citizenry seen as customers. He asks:

Couldn't the current malaise about government really stem from its being *too much* like business rather than not enough?...I am not a mere customer of my government...when I receive a professional service...like education. I expect something more than arm's-length trading and something less than the encouragement to consume...If we are to

manage government properly, then we must learn to govern management. (Mintzberg, 1996, pp. 76-77)

This leads directly to the third factor in malaise: loss of freedom. The consequence to political life of individualism and instrumentalism is that “the institutions and structures of industrial-technological society severely restrict our choices...they force societies as well as individuals to give a weight to instrumental reason that in serious moral deliberation we would never do, and which may even be highly destructive” (Taylor, 1991, p. 9). We lose freedom in such a system, both as a society and as individuals. Few choose to participate in government, which leads to soft despotism, even in democratic systems. A recent article in the *Vancouver Sun* by British Columbia’s chief electoral officer noted that while 70% of eligible voters participated in provincial elections in 1983, only 55% voted in 2001 (Neufeld, March 2, 2005). Everything is run by an “immense tutelary” (Toqueville, in Taylor, 1991, p. 9) over which people have little control. Many leaders in higher education could identify with this statement: with cuts in funding creating more pressure to produce revenue, and other funding tied to efficiencies and outcomes, or corporate matching funds, “choice and control” may appear to be limited commodities.

To a considerable degree the dominance of instrumental reason is not just a matter of the force of a certain moral outlook. It is also the case that in many respects we find ourselves pushed to give it a large place in our lives...in a society whose economy is largely shaped by market forces, for example, all economic agents have to give an important place to efficiency if they are going to survive. And in a large and technologically complex society as well as in the large-scale units that make it up—firms, public institutions, and interest groups—the common affairs have to be managed to some degree according to the principles of bureaucratic rationality if they are to be managed at all...we are forced to operate to some degree according to the demands of modern rationality whether or not it suits our own moral outlook. (Taylor, 1991, p. 97)

As Taylor said above, we are forced to operate under the demands of modern rationality regardless of our moral outlook. Indeed, it would be very difficult for a large and complex organization of any type to operate without some instrumentalist or bureaucratic processes, and the university is no exception. However, I think the salient question is *to what degree* instrumental and bureaucratic practices should have control in any public institution. How much instrumentalism can be employed before authenticity is lost? Through Taylor's lens, we can trace the rise of instrumentalism and the influence this has had on society and its institutions, including the university, and critique present entrepreneurial practice to determine if the entrepreneurial university can be authentic.

In Taylor's analysis, there is a strong reciprocal relationship between meaning and practice. Meaning arises from the community of practice, which in turn provides the context for the practice, a context which is based on history, tradition and values. The community determines what is right and what constitutes the good. From his notion of inescapable frameworks, Taylor further developed this thinking in his later work on social imaginaries from which our frameworks originate, which also has significance for the university.

## **The Modern Social Imaginary**

Taylor uses the term 'social imaginary' to get beyond the idea of social theory. Theory is the possession of a small minority, while the social imaginary is shared by large groups of people and, at times, the entire society. Social imaginary is therefore a much broader and more 'democratic' concept than social theory.

What I'm trying to get at with this term is something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am rather thinking of the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations. (Taylor, 2002, p. 105)

It is the common understanding made possible by sharing a social imaginary which makes it possible for us to have common practices and a common sense of legitimacy. Taylor uses the term *imaginary* because he conceptualizes this notion as the way ordinary people imagine their social surroundings. Ordinary people do not think of their context in theoretical terms, but rather understand it through images, stories and legends.

The social imaginary is also tied to practice; our practices are embedded within particular social imaginaries and the practice itself helps to reproduce or maintain the social imaginary. "If the understanding makes the practice possible, it is also true that it is the practice that largely carries the understanding" (Taylor, 2004, p. 25).

The social imaginary goes beyond a background that makes sense of things or an understanding of the norms underlying our social practice. The social imaginary is founded on an image of a moral order. A moral order is what tells us how we ought to live together in society (Taylor, 2004, p. 3). Our Western conceptions of moral order have changed since pre-modern times, when they were based either on the idea of the "law of the people, a law that has existed since time out of mind" (Taylor, 2002, p. 94) or on the notion of hierarchy, ranging from Platonic-Aristotelian Forms to the three different orders of medieval society.

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About four centuries ago the moral, or normative order began to change. While pre-modern societies hierarchies were complementary, the new moral order was focused more on mutual respect and mutual service of the individuals who made up the society. While society was still very much hierarchical, the actual structures were meant to serve the ends of mutual service. The divisions within society, such as that between clergy and laity, were considered an effective way to deliver this mutual service (Taylor, 2002, p. 96). Most importantly, the order of society was not seen as constructed by humans, but rather as God-given. Taylor refers to the evolution of this social theory into the modern social imaginary as the 'long march'. During this march, our understanding of mutual service and benefit 'morphed' into stronger individualism and less community-orientation. The Reformation, with its sanctification of 'ordinary' life and its anti-elitist thrust, further fed the development of individualism. The rise of a mercantile middle-class in Europe helped to promote the economy as an important part of the normative order, an order, it must be remembered, which was still considered to be ordained by God.

Taylor suggests that we are only now possibly at the end of this long trajectory. As our social imaginary has moved in the direction of the individual, it has also 'disembedded' us from the cosmic sacred, or, to use a phrase from *Sources of the Self*, we are disconnected from our horizon of significance. Because it is so easy for us to take our modern social imaginary as 'the way it has always been', we forget what was the original grounding of that imaginary. "The mistake of moderns is to take this understanding of the individual so much for granted that is it taken to be our first self-understanding" (Taylor, 2004, p. 64).



As a result, we have shifted the original idea of mutual service to that of mutual *services*: "...the first big shift wrought by this new idea of order, both in theory and social imaginary, consists in our coming to see our society as an economy, an interlocking set of activities of production, exchange, and consumption..." (Taylor, 2004, p. 76). By disembedding ourselves from any Platonic-Aristotelian teleology or any sacred grounding, we have allowed the economic to become one of what Taylor calls one of the three great mutations of the disembedding which constitute modern society the other two being the public sphere and the sovereignty of the people. For the purposes of this study, I will concentrate on the public sphere, and the role of the university within the public sphere.

## **The University and the Public Sphere**

The public sphere "is a common space in which the members of society are deemed to meet through a variety of media:...to discuss matters of common interest; and thus to be able to form a common mind about these" (Taylor, 2004, p. 83). It is a central feature of modern society, and, as a locus in which rational views are elaborated which should guide the government, the public sphere is essential to a free society (p. 89). Taylor first posited this in *Philosophical Arguments* in 1995. "...an inclusive and flourishing public sphere is essential to democracy" (p. 279) and endangered in contemporary mass societies. Taylor rejects the 'old model' which defined the public sphere as singular and external to the political system. The 'hypercentralization' of many of today's governments makes them seem remote from ordinary citizens and impinges on the public sphere. Centrally controlled media corporations, another type of

hypercentralisation, have their own agendas, and this is bad for democracy. “In modern societies, Taylor thinks democracies are better served by decentralized, more inclusive, multiple public spheres in a dynamic interaction with the political system, rather than, as traditionally imagined, a single sphere external to the state and watching over it” (Smith, pp. 169-70).

The public sphere is a common space (as opposed to merely convergent) because people are coming together for a common purpose, for example, assembling in small numbers for conversation or large numbers to attend a performance. Taylor calls this “topical common space” (Taylor, 2002, p. 113). The public sphere, however, transcends topical common space. “...it knits a plurality of spaces into one larger space of nonassembly” (p. 113-4), which Taylor calls “metatopical common space.” The church, until recently, and the state have existed in metatopical common space. Taylor identifies three unique features of the public sphere that mark it as a “mutation in the social imaginary, inspired by the modern idea of order” (p. 114).

First is that the public sphere exists independently of politics. The second is its force as a benchmark of legitimacy. “With the modern public sphere comes the idea that political power must be supervised and checked by something external. What was new, of course...[is that] it is not defined by the will of God or the law of nature...but as a kind of discourse emanating from reason, not from power or traditional authority” (2004, p. 90). This leads to its third feature of the ‘new’ public sphere, its radical secularity. By secularity Taylor does not mean the removal of God or religion from the public space, but rather the shift in understanding of what our society is grounded on. Taylor calls this notion ‘radical’ because not only have we ‘lost’ our notion of a divine grounding, but

because we have also lost any *idea* of society as grounded or constituted in something that transcends ourselves or any common action (2004, p. 93). Modern society is without any metaphysical framework. As a result, we are vulnerable to being guided entirely by other factors, such as the economy, and short term values.

I propose that the university is a key participant in the public sphere, and, as such, has both an obligation and responsibility to shaping the social imaginary. The university predates the modern state and as such is not technically part of modern polity. Although significant funding has come from public sources in the last century, the university has largely maintained an independence from partisan political influence. In its traditional role as creator and disseminator of knowledge the university has provided considerable input into public discourse and into the sustaining of our social imaginary.

With the recent emphasis on revenue-producing activities in universities, as discussed in Chapter One, we run the risk of defaulting on our responsibilities in the public sphere to focus on private, economically based activities. In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor warned of the consequences of an instrumentalist reading of the public. Self-governing societies required that an important set of conditions be met, one of them being a strong identification of the citizens with their public institution and political way of life (p. 505). With universities moving away from their traditional roles and connections to the community and towards simply being yet another market-based corporate entity, they risk the support of the public both in terms of funding and in the sense of being truly public institutions. Instead of being a centre for questioning, critique and non-status-quo thinking in an economically- and instrumentally-based social imaginary, the university becomes just another unit in the market economy. Instead of providing a locus for the

public sphere, the university is in danger of abandoning it. And 'to whom?' is the worrisome question.

In order to maintain this key role in the public sphere, the university must be an authentic institution. It must be based on a higher moral ideal than the market economy can provide and be grounded in teleology rather than deontology or instrumentalism. By this I do not mean that higher education should return to a basis in a particular religion. This is impossible, impractical and undesirable in a time of pluralism. Rather, I would suggest that universities ground themselves in a *telos* of "the good", as defined by the traditional ideals of higher education. This grounding is essential to their once again becoming authentic institutions, and authenticity is essential to the university's role in the public sphere.

## **Authentic Living for Universities**

Bureaucratic rationality has become the corporate model of management in many universities, and this has further pushed the university towards an entrepreneurial focus. Where previously the university was organized on a guild-like model, in which groups of students and their masters grouped together to form organizations, societal forces, as outlined by Taylor above, have pushed universities towards a corporate model (Fisher and Atkinson-Grosjean, 2002). In the guild model, specialized professionals/masters (faculty) write, teach, undertake basic research and provide public service working with their own students and groups of other students and masters. The corporate model takes a business-like approach; profit and efficiencies are central. Work becomes specialized along functional lines, and individuals compete with one another

for research money, grants, and outside financial support. Corporate administrative structures proliferate; there is a growing cadre of managers and administrators (Newson, 1998), with a CEO-style president. The institution becomes an 'enterprise that is part of the knowledge industry' (Fisher and Atkinson-Grosjean, 2002).

A vicious circle may develop; the corporate managerial structure further promotes an entrepreneurial institution and limits the role of considerations that are other than economic. The funding bodies, mainly the federal and provincial governments, are also operating under instrumentalist philosophies, tying dollars to outcomes, efficiencies, and corporate partnerships, and using universities to stimulate the economy through technological and knowledge development. The prevalence and prestige of technology in society and in our universities, and the view that the knowledge industry is the economic messiah, further reinforces instrumentalism. Thus a self-perpetuating troika of forces exerts ever-increasing pressure on universities to become more entrepreneurial, further feeding the instrumentalist cycle and pushing out moral ideals.

What is ultimately most striking about today's academic-industrial complex is not that large amounts of private capital are flowing into universities. It is that universities themselves are beginning to look and behave like for-profit companies. (Press and Washburn, 2000, p. 7)

In a society of increasing environmental degradation, increasing disparity between 'haves and have-nots', and the 'malaise', including the focus on instrumentalism and economic factors Taylor describes in both *Sources of the Self* (1987) and *Modern Social Imaginaries* (2004), we can in a broad sense put forward 'the common good' as an ideal, and therefore the need for authenticity in our institutions and a focus on something other than economics in order to achieve the common good. The

university has a role in the ideal of the common good: “It is not by any means senseless to maintain that conditions within the universities will have repercussions throughout society” (Dion, 1971, p. 68). The president of Berkeley, the public American university with the most patents filed to date in the U.S., lamented a major financial agreement between the institution and a pharmaceutical company. “This deal institutionalizes the university’s relationship with one company, whose interest is profit. *Our role should be to serve the common good*” (Press and Washburn, 2000, italics added).

Can the entrepreneurial university serve the common good and be authentic? “It is the *telos* of man as a species which determines what human qualities are virtues” (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 184). Translated into an institutional context, if the purpose of practices is the production of profit, is this a ‘virtuous’, or ‘ideal’ *telos*? Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue*, would answer ‘no’ to this question. As defined earlier, according to MacIntyre, a ‘practice’ is any coherent and complex form of socially established human activity through which goods internal to that activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve these standards of excellence (1984, p. 187). A characteristic of internal goods is that their achievement is good for the whole community which participates in the practice. In the case of a university, the production of knowledge through inquiry can be seen as an internal good, as can the transmission of that knowledge through teaching. The whole community benefits in terms of the development of a community of scholarship, which in turn is shaping the students who will become active participants in the larger society (Habermas, 1970). The knowledge developed is shared with the larger community of scholars, and will inform their research for the further development of knowledge. And so on and so on.

On the other hand, external goods when achieved are always some individual's property and possession. "Moreover, characteristically they are such that the more someone has of them, the less there is for other people" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 190). Knowledge seen as intellectual property, with patents owned by the individual professor and the university, is in this category. The profit goes only to those in disciplines with marketable research. Profits, either from the research, or in terms of revenue from corporate partners, typically flows back to those disciplines which originally produced it. The focus is on production of intellectual property, which by its very nature, cannot be freely transmitted either in the classroom or in the community of scholars. It is now proprietary. When the focus of activity becomes the production of profit and revenue, then the practice has become solely focused on external goods, and is not a virtue. It cannot then be an ideal, and the university cannot be authentic.

This does not mean that any activity which has industry partnerships or produces a revenue is inauthentic: the problem comes when the *sole* criterion is economic, when economic instrumentalism is the *only* criterion for decision-making, and when there is *no opportunity for reflection* on the ideal and how an activity might support or detract from it. Taylor suggests we seek out an alternative framing of technology, for example, and place it in the moral frame of the ethic of practical benevolence, in

...the service...towards flesh and blood people; technological, calculative thinking as a rare and admirable achievement of a being who lives in the medium of a quite different kind of thinking; to live instrumental reason from out of these frameworks would be to live our technology very differently. (Taylor, 1991, p. 107)

Entrepreneurial activity in universities, like technology, needs to be lived out of a framework not solely constructed from instrumental reason. Undoubtedly, as can be seen from the history of the development of universities, they are “made in the likeness of the society in which they dwell” (Dion, 1971, p. 68). Partnerships between universities and industry, for example, or the focus on professional training, are hardly new. Indeed, many universities were founded on such philosophies.

However, there is a difference between then and now. Whereas in the past, such activities could be seen as contributing to the common good by educating people not only for careers but to be a part of society, or by stimulating the economy, or by working with industry to support the Allied war effort in World War II, or by developing new drugs, for example, today’s activities have a different *telos*. The goal has become to produce revenue for the university itself, with the university taking on the characteristics of a for-profit enterprise. This is a fundamental shift away from ideals, regardless of which set of ideals—the German university model, the American land grant model, or others—were foundational to a particular institution.

Society has played a large role in this; the university does not function separately from its context. However, neither is it completely lacking in control of its own destiny, and it has a particular responsibility in offering critique and alternatives to the very society which is pushing its towards being inauthentic. While it is not possible to ignore societal forces completely, it is possible to put more focus on the ‘higher’ ideals of higher education. To become authentic would mean developing the kind of alternative framework posited by Taylor, a moral horizon against which practices might be



measured. If not, then universities risk their very existence, according to Michael Oakeshott. Writing, farsightedly, in 1950, he said:

A university will have ceased to exist when its learning has degenerated into what is now called research, when its teaching has become mere instruction and occupies the whole of an undergraduate's time, and when those who come to be taught come not in search of their intellectual fortune but with a vitality so unroused or exhausted they wish only to be provided with a serviceable moral and intellectual outfit; when they come with no understanding of the manners of conversation but desire only a qualification for earning a living or a certificate to let them in on the exploitation of the world. (Oakeshott, 1989, p. 104)

## **Taylor, Authenticity and the Lifeworld**

In *Communicative Action: Essays on Jurgen Habermas' The Theory of Communicative Action* (Honneth and Joas, 1991), philosopher Charles Taylor's essay on "Language and Society" presents some substantial disagreement with the *Theory of Communicative Action*, hereafter referred to as *TCA*, based on his difference with Habermas over the philosophy of language, an argument which I choose to put outside the scope of this paper. What I do believe to be relevant to this discussion, however, is the criticism that flows from this disagreement over language, and that is in the ethical foundations of communication action. "His [Habermas'] analysis is bereft of any foundations if coupled to a merely procedural ethics" (Taylor, 1991a, p. 31). For Taylor, reaching rational understanding using merely (sic) the formal ethics of rationality is a weakness of *TCA*. This Kantian approach, Taylor says, while having some strong points, falls down in the area of justification. He asks why, in this theory, an individual would choose to reach the rational understanding necessary for communicative action (Taylor, p. 30). If the norm of rational understanding is based in the speech act, and that

rational understanding is the appropriate manner for overcoming disturbances in mutual understanding, then we as individual human beings nonetheless have other aims and interests which might preclude us from choosing rational understanding, which would prevent communicative action from taking place. Thus the lifeworld could not be maintained.

Taylor takes exception to Habermas' definition of what constitute moral questions: for Habermas, "(o)nly those questions which can be decided on the basis of a criterion of universal processes of reaching rational understanding are in his eyes actually moral questions" (Taylor, p. 32). Other questions, which refer to our understanding of what constitutes the good life, while important, are to Habermas, more clinical than moral.

Taylor cannot make this distinction; the good life for him is firmly tied to the moral life. How we weigh mutually competing claims belongs at the centre of moral life, he says. In Habermas' theory, only virtues connected with charity have a moral character. But our deliberations over competing claims and other important questions cannot be done "factually...or in a process of reflexion that addresses questions of objective truth only indirectly" (Taylor, p. 33). Rationality as a fundamental ethical principle must be supplemented and expanded. In this expansion, "language would also possess the function of disclosing the morality involved and would not just serve or enable understanding to be reached...we must try to articulate what in our form of life is both good and has proved itself in intersubjective terms" (Taylor, p. 34). Taylor does not see language as situated in a separate domain of rationality. A major critique of *TCA*, according to Taylor, is that the expressive domain of language is hidden. In the

expressive domain, language serves self-knowledge and the presentation of self, and “contributes nothing to determining what is normatively right” (Taylor, p. 34). This is a severe weakness in Habermas’ theory, for language is important in practical reason and plays a constitutive role in the formation of ends, norms and customs. However, language does this ‘only by disclosure’ and the disclosure dimension is hidden in a “theory of society geared to proceduralist ethics” (Taylor, p. 35), which is how Taylor sees *TCA*.

In spite of Taylor’s critique of Habermas, I see more commonality than difference between them, particularly when looking at the concepts of colonisation of the lifeworld and the malaise of modernity. Using them together will, in my mind, overcome the weakness of Habermas’ theories, as discussed above, as well as bringing a more systematic approach to Taylor. Taylor, in turn, can help to address some of the weaknesses in Habermas’ theories. We therefore go on to discuss the work of Jurgen Habermas and his *Theory of Communicative Action*.

## CHAPTER 4.

### **Habermas: The Theory of Communicative Action and the University**

In the context of the increasing market-like activities in universities in Canada discussed in the previous chapter, Jurgen Habermas' *TCA* offers one system of analysis for exploring the phenomenon of the modern university. In this theory, Habermas is attempting to construct a critical theory of society which incorporates a number of sociological and philosophical schools of thought as well as address what he thinks are the limitations of system—and action-theoretical approaches to social theory. These other theories, in Habermas' mind, have too much focus on rationality, i.e., our effectiveness in controlling our surroundings. He intends *TCA* to provide a profound understanding of a wide variety of social conditions by, "among other things, putting the different phenomena into a larger context" (Eriksen and Wiegard, p. 10).

Many who write on Habermas point out that *TCA*, like much of Habermas' work can be difficult to access. However, my reason for using *TCA* to analyse the situation of the university today is precisely because of its capacity to consider a wide variety of issues in their contexts. *TCA* not only provides a helpful lens of analysis through which to look at the phenomenon of academic capitalism, but to do so within a larger context. This chapter will first examine the notions of lifeworld, system, communicative action and colonisation in *TCA*, including the sources of Habermas' thinking. These concepts will then be applied to the context and situation of the modern university. Possible

implications for organizational life and culture for the university within the framework of lifeworld will also be examined with the intention of beginning to answer the question of what leaders in universities can do to respond to contemporary pressures.

## **Habermas and the Frankfurt School**

Jurgen Habermas is considered one of the leading figures of the second generation of the Frankfurt School. The Frankfurt School, a group of philosophers, cultural critics, and social scientists associated with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, was founded in 1929, and includes such prominent figures as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse. They are known mainly for their work in critical theory, which sought to continue Marx's transformation of moral philosophy into social and political critique while at the same time rejecting orthodox political Marxism (Bohman, 1999, p. 324).

The first generation of the Frankfurt school went through three major phases. In phase one, illustrated mainly in the major works of Horkheimer, the relationship between philosophy and social science was examined. Horkheimer proposed that the normative orientation of philosophy should be combined with the empirical research of the social sciences in order to develop a 'critical' rather than a 'traditional' theory. For example, "a critical theory seeks to show how the norm of truth is historical-practical, without falling into the skepticism or relativism of traditional sociologies of knowledge..." (Bohman, p. 324).

The second phase of development of the Frankfurt School, also known as the 'critical theory' phase saw "the abandonment of Marxism for a more generalized notion of critique" (Bohman, p. 324), characterized mainly in the writings of Adorno, who criticized the 'false totality' of modern society caused by the spread of a one-sided instrumental reason based on the domination of nature and other human beings.

Through the second and into the third phase of development, the work of Max Weber also stimulated the Frankfurt School (Sitton, 2003, p. xiii), as did the experience of Nazi rule in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Adorno himself was forced into exile by the Nazis in 1933, spending 16 years in Britain and the United States before returning to a chair in philosophy in Frankfurt. The Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt, 'home' to the Frankfurt School, also spent a period of exile in the United States, returning to Germany in 1949. "In their writings after World War II, Adorno and Horkheimer became increasingly pessimistic, seeing around them a 'totally administered society' and a manipulated, commodity culture" (Bohman, p. 324). They saw the dangers of the predominance of instrumental reason in contemporary society not only in terms of dominating nature but also its potential to manipulate social life, with our very language itself predisposed to further this manipulation. For them, this raised the spectre of an "administered world populated by monads who have lost their capacity to live or even conceive of a more emancipated and humane social life" (Sitton, p. xiii), or as Weber said, quoting Goethe, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, "(s)pecialists without spirit, sensualists without heart..." (Sitton, p. 17).

In response to this third phase, the second generation of the Frankfurt School, led by Habermas, redefined critical theory with a new emphasis on normative

foundations and a return to interdisciplinary research. From this Habermas developed his *TCA*, which is meant to be a 'critical theory of modernity' on the basis of a "comprehensive theory of communicative (as opposed to instrumental) rationality" (Bohman, p. 359). In *TCA*, Habermas wanted to show that there was a more positive way to interpret modern society than that put forward in the post-WW II writings of the Frankfurt School (Eriksen and Weigard, p. 6).

The work of Weber had considerable influence on Habermas' thinking, with *TCA* being described as "a reconsideration of Weber's diagnosis [of contemporary society] in light of later social theories and present political dilemmas" (Sitton, p. 1). In addition to Weber, Habermas was also trying to incorporate insights from other sociological and philosophical schools, such as the critical Western Marxist tradition (Marx, Adorno and Horkheimer), the analytical tradition of the philosophy of language (Wittgenstein and Searle), Durkheim's normative theory of society, the systems-theoretical approach of Parsons and Luhmann, the philosophy of the right in the traditions of Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and Schmitt, and Rawls' and Dworkin's interpretations of liberal political theory (Eriksen and Weigard, pp. 9-10).

The first volume of *TCA* focuses on communicative rationality based on the 'formal pragmatics' which take place in everyday speech as well as in formalized practices in science, law and criticism. The second volume "develops a diagnosis of modern society as suffering from 'one-sided rationalization' leading to disruptions of the communicative lifeworld by 'systems' such as markets and bureaucracies. Both communicative action and lifeworld/system are helpful in analyzing the university, as will be discussed in the concluding section of this chapter.

## Communicative Action and Lifeworld

Habermas was not the first person to talk about the lifeworld. He drew on the work of Albert Schutz, who himself drew on a phenomenological approach to lifeworld, in contrast to Habermas' communication-theoretic concept (1989, p. 126). Schutz had followed Edmund Husserl, who, in the decade from 1900-1910 had developed the idea of *Lebenswelt*, or lifeworld. Considered the founder of phenomenology, Husserl was a mathematician as well as a philosopher. He claimed that science and mathematics had their roots in the pre-scientific world, that is, the world in which we actually live. "This world has its own structures of appearance, identification, evidence, and truth, and the scientific world is established on its basis" (Husserl, in Sokolowski, 2001, p. 407). One of the tasks of phenomenology is to describe the structures and evidences of the lifeworld itself (Sokolowski, p. 407). Husserl used phenomenology to find 'evidence' of lifeworld and to describe its structures. He saw lifeworld as a *collective* rather than an individual experience.

There are strong links between lifeworld and phenomenology. Philosophical thinking in the modern western world has been heavily influenced by Descartes. Reason was given precedence over actual experience; the quantitative reigned (and often reigns) supreme (Cottingham, 1999, p. 227). Phenomenology reconnected the mind and the real world, which had been disconnected in philosophical thinking by the predominance of Cartesian thinking. This orientation distinctly separated reason from experience and created a duality between the material world and thinking, which was considered entirely independent of matter. This was furthered by the Enlightenment's



focus on human reason, which created the foundation for the primacy of a scientific worldview.

Science has great authority in our culture because people think that it tells us the truth of things. Even human things like consciousness, language, and reasoning, will, it is said, be ultimately explained in terms of the brain sciences, which in turn will be reducible, in principle if not in fact, to the physical sciences of physics and chemistry. We have two worlds, then, the world in which we live and the world described by the mathematical sciences, and it is generally thought that the life world is a mere phenomenon, totally subjective, while the world of mathematical science is the truly objective world. (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 147)

This is the gap which Husserl was bridging, by arguing that the mathematical sciences took their origin from the lived world; rather than be in competition with the lifeworld, the sciences are nested within it. Moreover, the phenomena of the lifeworld are not simply a collection of individual experiences, but rather what we see others experiencing and what they see us experiencing. Lifeworld is a collective experience.

Schutz took this concept a step further and added a social and political dimension (Sokolowski, p. 200). The lifeworld is intersubjective; Sokolowski explains it as "a world held in common" (p. 152). Without that intersubjectivity, that commonality, we would be unable to communicate with or understand one another. "This totality [of experiences which constitute the lifeworld] is not graspable as such but is co-given in the flow of experiences as a certain, familiar ground of every situationally determined interpretation" (Schutz and Luckman, 1973, p. 9). "This intersubjectivity also implies a structure of some sort in the lifeworld, and a structure implies some sort of historical development of the lifeworld, built on the experiences of others. Thus, the lifeworld for Schutz is a social world and a cultural world" (Gurwitsch, in McConnell, 2002, p. 45).

We are not neutral observers of the lifeworld; we cannot stand apart from it. We can only become aware of its structures and of our place within it.

Habermas, using Schutz as his foundation, argued for the role of intersubjective understanding through communication. "Communicative action relies on a cooperative process of interpretation in which participants relate simultaneously to something in the objective, the social and the subjective worlds..." (Habermas, 1987, p. 120). The concept of communicative action refers to at least two subjects who are capable of speech and action, and who establish, by verbal or non-verbal means, an interpersonal relationship (Eriksen and Wiegard, p. 36). Their aim is mutual understanding in order that they may be able to coordinate their actions. This is done in a linguistic process where each has the opportunity to present their respective interpretations of the situation to ascertain that they understand things in the same way (Habermas, 1984, p. 86). These interpretations will be presented as criticisable utterances which other participants may accept or reject as valid. Other participants can try to influence one another's interpretations by presenting new criticisable utterances, always with a goal of arriving at a definition of an issue or situation which is shared by everyone and which is defensible.

This forms the basis of what Habermas called formal pragmatics, which can be described as " a theory about how certain formal qualities of language and the relations which are established when we use it implicitly have an action-coordinating and thus socially coordinating function" (Eriksen and Wiegard, p. 36). In order for a conversation to be considered meaningful, the utterances must have certain built-in validity claims. Habermas says there are three different validity claims implicit in speech acts:

- a) that the statement is true;

- b) that the speech act is right in relation to the current normative context; and
- c) that the speaker's manifest intention is meant as it is expressed.

(Habermas, 1984, p. 99)

In *TCA* Habermas identified two types of action, distinguished by the pattern of the interaction.

Concepts of social action are distinguished...according to how they specify the goal-directed actions of different participants: as the interlacing of egocentric calculations of utility (where the degree of conflict and cooperation varies with the given interest positions)...or as reaching understanding in the sense of a cooperative process of interpretation.  
(Habermas, 1984, p. 101)

The former type of communication Habermas calls 'strategic' communication, where the actor is aiming for success in achieving some end, as opposed to communicative action, in which the actor's aim is to build mutual understanding. There are two types of strategic action: open, where all participants are proceeding strategically and all are aware of this, and concealed, where at least one participant falsely believes all sides are acting communicatively (Baxter, 1987, p. 40). Strategic action does not contribute to lifeworld, which is dependent on the relationships built through communicative action.

In his 1998 work, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, Habermas further developed the idea of communicative action, dividing it into two subcategories: strong, in which action is coordinated through the actors' agreement about the basis for the cooperation, and weak, where the actors merely recognize and understand each other's respective, self-related reasons for acting in a particular way (Habermas, 1998a, pp. 326-7). In strong communicative action, "the participants refer to intersubjectively shared value orientations that—going beyond their personal preferences—bind their

wills" (p. 326). Participants are oriented towards the intersubjectively recognized 'rightness' of the validity claims. In weak communicative action, actors are oriented solely towards claims to truth and truthfulness (i.e., the facts). These actions are often a one-sided expression of will.

Habermas also identifies the 'peculiar rationality' which exists in strong communicative action.

This communicative rationality is expressed in the unifying force of speech oriented towards reaching understanding, which secures for the participating speakers an intersubjectively shared lifeworld, thereby securing at the same time the horizon within which everyone can refer to one and the same objective world. (Habermas, 1998a, p. 315)

Broadly speaking, rationality for Habermas is the justification of wishes and actions as well the justification of life-conduct of persons and forms of life collectives. "Such forms of life consist of practices and a web of traditions, institutions, customs and competencies that may be called 'rational' to the degree that they are conducive to the solutions of problems which arise" (Habermas, 1998a, p. 335). Language, when it is within the context of the background consensus of the lifeworld, makes a contribution to the enabling of rational behaviour.

In reaching understanding with one another about something in the objective world, communicative actors always already operate within the horizon of their lifeworld...in this way, the lifeworld, which itself is articulated in the medium of language, opens up for its members an interpretive horizon for everything that they experience in the world, about which they reach understanding, and from which they can learn. (p. 335)

This rationality, which Habermas calls communicative rationality, is "expressed in the unifying force of speech oriented towards reaching understanding, which secures for

the participating speakers in an intersubjectively shared lifeworld, thereby securing at the same time the horizon within which everyone can refer to one and the same objective world” (p. 315). In communicative rationality, participants pursue their individual goals under the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions (1984, p. 286). There is, then, an interdependent and synergistic relationship between lifeworld and communicative rationality; lifeworld is dependent on communicative rationality which is oriented towards common understanding, and in turn, lifeworld provides the shared horizon which fosters communicative rationality. We might reasonably ask what it is which motivates or requires the speaker/actor to *wish* or *aim* to reach mutual understanding in the first place. Habermas acknowledged in a later work that this desire is not necessarily a given. Lifeworld “by no means offers an innocent image of ‘power-free spheres of communication’” (1991, p. 254). Lifeworld has socially, communicatively structured norms, which in Habermas’ theory go beyond objective facts and subjective statements of will. Norms are constantly checked for validity, i.e., rightness, by members of society through their daily practices (1987, p. 38).

But what is it that gives norms a morally binding character in a society? For this, Habermas draws on Durkheim who established a “distinct structural similarity between fundamental religious attitudes and moral attitudes” (Eriksen and Weigard, p. 63). When we enter into the ‘lifeworld’ of a religious sphere, we respect an impersonal and super-individual power, according to Durkheim. In the same way we have respect for moral standards oriented toward the collective and impersonal, which take precedence over personal considerations of utility. In addition, just as believers feel positively about

fulfilling religious duties, so do morally acting agents feel positively about fulfilling social norms which are perceived as superior principles. There are also punishments in both spheres for going against these superior principles. When breaking moral norms makes us feel guilt, it is a reaction which was originally triggered by offences against the sacred (1987, p. 48).

Norms have kept their binding character despite being uncoupled from the sacred through the linguistification of the sacred. "To the degree that the basic religious consensus gets dissolved and the power of the state loses its sacred supports, the unity of the collectivity can be established and maintained only as the unity of a communication community, that is to say, only by way of a consensus arrived at communicatively in the public sphere" (1987, p. 82). In communicative rationality, moral questions are as open to rational assessment (and indeed, require it) as any other type of question.

An in-depth discussion of Habermas' discourse ethics are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Briefly, however, Habermas follows the work of Rawls in supporting a deontological outlook and the priority of the right over the good. According to Habermas, the transition to modernity and the subsequent destruction of a teleological worldview means that moral theory can *only* be deontological and must focus on questions of justice (Benhabib, 1992, pp. 42-3). Judgments of justice are the core of all moral judgments. "Such an ethic...stylizes questions of the good life, and of the good life together into *questions of justice*, in order to render practical questions accessible to cognitive processing by way of this abstraction" (Habermas, 1982, in Benhabib). For Habermas, judgments of the good are amorphous and do not lend themselves to formal,

criticisable analysis. Communicative ethics, on which the judgments of justice are based, suggests that “the integrity of moral values can be established by moral argumentations” (Benhabib, p. 44). Intersubjective validation of morals is essential.

The priority of the right over the good has been a criticism of communicative ethics and *TCA*. However, Habermas acknowledged in later work that “morality detached from its religious foundation and re-established on a purely rational basis will lead to a motivational deficit” (Eriksen and Weigard, p. 66). Those who believe that certain moral commands should be followed because they are the right thing to do rather than the good thing to do have a weaker motivation. “There is no direct route from discursively achieved consensus to action” (Habermas, 1998b, p. 35).

While Habermas still privileges what is right (norms and actions determined through communicative rationality) over what is good, he does acknowledge the “remnant of the good at the core of the right” (1998b, pp. 28-9). The fundamental normative questions can be interpreted as the Aristotelian ethical problem of what is good—the good life and the good society—but “the question [cannot] rest with every single group or cultural community and their definition of what is good according to their specific values” (Eriksen and Weigard, p. 79). Rather, these groups must extend the question to a wider circle and ask what is equally good for all, i.e. what is just.

## **Lifeworld**

Habermas sets communicative action within the concept of lifeworld, “...the horizon within which communications actions are ‘always already’ moving” (1987,

p.119). Lifeworld, in short, is the reservoir of taken-for-granted and shared knowledge which we as members of a society all have a part of. It is the “inescapable context of knowing and acting; as an encompassing whole it cannot be seen and therefore is beyond doubt. We are always standing somewhere” (Sitton, p. 63). “For members, the lifeworld is a context that cannot be gotten behind and cannot in principle be exhausted. Thus every understanding of a situation can rely on a global preunderstanding” (Habermas, 1987, p. 133). The lifeworld is not a private world; it is intersubjective. The fundamental structure of its reality is shared by the members (1987, p. 131). “Collectivities maintain their identities only to the extent that the ideas members have of their lifeworld overlap sufficiently and condense into unproblematic background convictions” (1987, p. 136).

Lifeworld is built upon and maintained by language. Through the background of lifeworld, our life together as a society is created and reproduced through a network of communicative action. “To put it another way, lifeworld fulfills certain functions in reproducing society as a coherent whole” (Sitton, p. 65). Habermas identifies three components of the lifeworld: culture, society, and personality. Lifeworld is maintained by the functional aspects, or reproductive processes, of these three components.

Under the functional aspect of *mutual understanding*, communicative action serves to transmit and renew cultural knowledge; under the aspect of *coordinating action*, it serves the formation of personal identities. The symbolic structures of the lifeworld are reproduced by way of the continuation of valid knowledge, stabilization of group solidarity, and socialization of responsible actors. (Habermas, 1987, p. 137)

By culture, Habermas means “the stock of knowledge from which participants in communication supply themselves with interpretations as they come to an understanding



about something in the world” (Habermas, 1987, p. 142). Culture is reproduced through the function of “cultural reproduction” which provides interpretive schemes for the validity of knowledge and ensures that new situations are connected with existing situations in the world in the semantic dimension.

The second component of lifeworld, society, consists of “the legitimate orders through which participants regulate their memberships in social groups and thereby secure solidarity” (1987, p. 138). It is reproduced through social integration, or the coordination of actions via intersubjectively recognized validity claims. New situations are linked with existing situations in the world in the dimension of social space: “...it [society] takes care of coordinating actions by way of legitimately regulated interpersonal relations and stabilizes the identity of groups to an extent sufficient for everyday practice” (Habermas, p. 140). Society is a broader concept than culture.

The third component is personality, which is reproduced through the interactive capabilities and the formation of identity. Newly arising situations are connected with existing situations in the world in the dimension of historical time, securing for succeeding generations “the acquisition of generalized competencies for action and sees to it that individual life histories are in harmony with collective forms of life. Interactive capabilities and styles of life are measured by the responsibilities of persons” (1987, p. 141).

The structural components of lifeworld are formed and maintained by the interaction of these individual reproductive processes, as shown diagrammatically below.

**Table 1. Contributions of Reproduction Processes to Maintaining Structural Components of Lifeworld**

Reproductive process (comm. action)	Structural Components			
	Culture	Society	Personality	Dimension of Evaluation
Cultural reproduction (provide new knowledge compatible with the big picture created by tradition)	Interpretive schemes fit for consensus: what is valid knowledge	Legitimations (which institutions are legitimate?)	Socialisation patterns Educational goals (the means by which individual behaviour patterns are acquired and internalized)	Rationality of Knowledge
Social Integration (primary function to keep society Together)	Obligations (culturally instituted ideas about normative obligations)	Legitimately ordered interpersonal relations (what we are expected to do or not do in different situations)	Social membership (create a social identity)	Solidarity of members
Socialisation	Interpretive accomplishments	Motivational for actions that conform to norms	Interactive capabilities (personal identity: ability to act and interact passed on to new generations)	Personal Responsibility

*Note.* Sources: Habermas, 1987, pp. 142-3; Eriksen and Wiegard, p. 88.

Each of the reproductive processes contributes to each of the structural components of lifeworld; the core function of each of the reproductive processes is represented in bold in the boxes above.

Lifeworld relies on the use of language, and more specifically, discourse. In order to understand fully the three components of lifeworld, Habermas says we need to ask

ourselves what tasks or functions require language as this medium. Habermas identified three functions:

- 1) We need language in order to arrive at mutual understanding of an issue. While doing this, the stock of cultural knowledge is both passed on and renewed.
- 2) Understanding-oriented communication coordinates action and contributes to social integration and the establishment of relations of solidarity; and
- 3) Language is the medium through which socialization takes place and is therefore instrumental in the formation of personal identity.

These three functions of language help to maintain the three structural components of lifeworld (1987, p. 137).

Although Husserl and Schutz found the concept of lifeworld rich enough for an analysis of society, Habermas does not agree, and finds lifeworld alone too narrow and idealistic a concept (1987, p. 147). A systems theory understanding of society was also inadequate as it did not allow for the meaning-related aspect of social life. His solution was to combine the two perspectives and to emphasise the long-term dynamics in the relationship between the two (Eriksen and Wiegard, p. 90-91). He therefore conceived society as “simultaneously as a system and as a lifeworld” (Habermas, 1987, p. 120).

## **System**

The starting point of an understanding of system is systems theory, the origin of which lies in biological models which see society as a series of self-regulating subsystems mutually dependent on each other (Sitton, p. 71). “Systems represent an ordering structure in an otherwise chaotic world; they reduce the complexity of the action

environment and thereby pave the way for success-oriented actions. The systems have survival as their superior goal" (Erksen and Weigard, p. 90).

Society as lifeworld cannot only be reproduced symbolically; it must also have material reproduction to carry out and order the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services (Baxter, p. 52). Lifeworld also needs system. Habermas' system is concerned with material reproduction, such as the economy, corporations and administrative systems, as opposed to the lifeworld which is concerned with social reproduction. While the components of lifeworld are maintained by discourse, namely, communicative action, system is maintained by strategic action and guided by money and power (Habermas, 1987, p. 154). These steering media can be used to influence others to act in particular ways, as opposed to communicative action, which relies on mutual understanding reached through discourse to guide action. "Power or money can only give an empirical motivation to act; these media we can relate in a purely success-oriented and strategic manner" (Eriksen and Wiegard, p. 97). Since this rational action motivation cannot be separated from lifeworld, a systems orientation is suitable only in areas where the steering media of money and power have become institutionalized (Habermas, 1987, p. 183). These 'delinguistified media', i.e., not established through language and communicative, systematic mechanisms, such as money, "steer a social intercourse that has been largely disconnected from norms and values...[they] have become independent of their moral-political foundations" (1987, p. 154).

Habermas aimed to emphasize the dynamics in the relationship between lifeworld and system. Actors can take an objectifying attitude when they act only in relation to steering media; in other areas of life they must continue to assume they can relate to a

lifeworld context consisting of shared cultural knowledge, valid social norms and responsible personal motivations (1987, p. 183). "...the lifeworld remains the subsystem that defines the pattern of the social system as a whole. Thus, systematic mechanisms need to be anchored in the lifeworld: they have to be institutionalized" (1987, p. 154).

However, Habermas sees in modern society a tendency for lifeworld to be shunted aside by system. Purposive rationality, as opposed to communicative rationality, has extended beyond its natural borders. "Through this one-sidedness, the project of enlightenment has entered into a self-destructive course, in which the spread of a life form based on instrumental and success-oriented reason is about to destroy its own social and normative basis" (Eriksen and Wiegard, p. 101). Habermas calls this the *colonisation* of the lifeworld by system.

System, however, should not be seen to be of lesser value than lifeworld; it is essential to the smooth operation of society. As long as the purposive-rational attitude is limited to those areas concerned with material reproduction, such as the economy and administration, there is no real danger to lifeworld. Indeed, within these areas rationality is essential for efficiency (Eriksen and Weigard, p. 101). But when the purposive-rational attitude penetrates lifeworld and *dominates* relations there, as Habermas sees happening in modern society, the lifeworld is said to be colonized by system (1987, p. 186).

## **The Colonisation of Lifeworld by System**

The current situation with regard to the balance of lifeworld and system was not always this way. Habermas argues that while the pre-modern world held lifeworld and system together, the market-driven, bureaucratic state uncoupled the two, creating a system-driven society (Habermas, 1987, pp. 152-4). What characterizes modern society is that action within comprehensive areas, such as the marketplace and political-administrative systems, are relieved from the demands of justification which are otherwise implicit in the validity claims raised in communicative action. Instead, relatively autonomous systems of action have been developed and are coordinated through success-oriented behaviour typically expressed through profit and utility maximizing actions (Eriksen and Weigard, p. 86). This 'uncoupling' represents a danger for the lifeworld, which he calls "rationalization of the lifeworld". Rationalization "makes possible the emergence of growth and subsystems whose independent imperatives turn back destructively on the lifeworld itself" (Habermas, 1987, p. 186). Habermas says that society will inevitably disintegrate if we do not make room for actions oriented to reaching understanding, and operate with a lifeworld which is communicatively integrated and which establishes the necessary foundation on which system is built (Eriksen and Weigard, p. 86).

While communicative action and mutual understanding are essentially social and lodged in the lifeworld, system is instrumental and functions through the steering media of money and power, attached to empirically motivated ties (1987, p. 182). We can see evidence of this today in public education in the accountability and efficiency movement affecting both K-12 and post-secondary education. The lifeworld is being pushed aside.

The transfer of action coordination from language over to steering media means an uncoupling of interaction from lifeworld contexts. Media such as money and power attach to empirical ties; they encode a purposive-rational attitude towards calculable amounts of value and make it possible to exert generalized, strategic influence on the decisions of other participants while *bypassing* processes of consensus-oriented communication....[and] replace it with a symbolic generalization of rewards and punishments...the lifeworld contexts in which processes of reaching understanding are embedded are devalued in favour of media-steered interactions; the lifeworld is no longer needed for the coordination of action. (Habermas, 1987, p. 183)

Habermas calls the transfer of action from communicative to steering media the “technicizing of the lifeworld” (1987, p. 183). Even public administration has interchanges similar to the economy, with ‘citizens’ becoming ‘*clients*’, a clear correspondence to an economic, consumer-oriented model (Sitton, p. 77).

This domination of system over lifeworld in modern society has created problems, namely, the colonisation of the lifeworld (1987, p. 196). Habermas compares the process of colonisation to the destruction of local meaning-making cultures by an imperial power pursuing its own narrow designs. As the media of money and power extend their domains, there emerge “more and more complex networks that no one has to comprehend or be responsible for” (Habermas, 1987, p. 184). Aspects of life ‘burst the bounds of the lifeworld’; these activities are ‘deworlde’d’ and people increasingly find themselves in a web of social relations that appear objective. They experience a loss of freedom, like Weber’s famous ‘iron cage’ (Sitton, p. 84). The term ‘iron cage’, first coined by Talcott Parsons in his 1930 translation (the first in English) of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, is used by Weber to point to the domination of material things in contemporary social life. Habermas interprets the iron cage as a loss of

freedom due to the emergence of narrowly rational organizational frameworks, such as found in the capitalistic economy and bureaucracies (Sitton, p. 19).

Habermas points us to the danger of colonisation, of imbalance, between lifeworld and system, by quoting Weber, who describes the possibility of living our lives in a "shell of bondage" if "a technically superior administration were to be the ultimate and sole value in the ordering of [our] affairs" (Habermas, 1987, p. 302). Individuals become increasingly alienated when "spheres of life that are functionally dependent on value orientations, binding norms, and processes of understanding are monetarized and bureaucratized" (2001, p. 153). The structures and reproductive processes of lifeworld suffer when individuals are alienated; background consensus shrinks, and the binding nature of norms is weakened.

Habermas first explored this concept in an early work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, in 1962, long before TCA emerged. In this work, he concluded that the public sphere has lost much of its critical function, caused by a transition to a more power-based politics. This has led to phenomena such as political propaganda and marketing, which, rather than enlightening people, are used to manipulate public opinion. One need only recall recent election campaigns to be assured that Habermas' conclusions of 1962 still hold. In *TCA*, he further developed his ideas, dividing the political sphere into the socially integrated public sphere, where our political opinions are created, and the administrative-system sphere, where the decisions are made. In this sphere are the bureaucratic and power structures which 'run' our modern society and which are influenced by political parties and special interest groups.



The basis for interaction in this sphere is not communicative action, but steering media (Eriksen and Wiegard, p. 8).

With colonisation, we can see Weber's loss of freedom, as the public sphere, lodged in the lifeworld, loses its ability to steer the administrative system, and instead, becomes steered by it. We move from being citizens to consumers. This erosion of the public sphere, with its attendant loss of meaning - which Habermas called a one-sided style of life - was predicted by Weber. Habermas argued that the uncoupling of lifeworld and system alone did not cause this phenomena; colonisation is the cause.

Habermas identified other 'benchmarks' of colonisation, such as the "formalization of relationships in family and school [which] means, for those concerned, an objectivization and removal from the lifeworld of (now) formally regulated social interaction in family and in school" (1987, p. 369). He also sees the dangers of colonisation in an educational system too tied in with economic imperatives, such as training for the workplace. Habermas speaks of the economic system-imperative to uncouple the school system from the fundamental right to education and to "close-circuit" it with the employment system (1987, p. 371). "From the perspective of social theory, the present controversy concerning the basic orientations of school policy can be understood as a fight for or against the colonisation of the lifeworld" (1987, p. 371).

## **The Colonisation of the Lifeworld and the University**

We now turn to the notion of colonisation of the lifeworld in the university.

Habermas wonders why modernization follows “a highly selective pattern that appears to exclude two things at once: building institutions of freedom that protect communicatively structured areas of the private and public spheres against the reifying inner dynamics of the economic and administrative systems, and reconnecting modern culture to an everyday practice that, while dependent on meaning-bestowing traditions, has been impoverished with traditionalist leftovers” (1987, p. 328). The university has not escaped this pattern.

The university, discussed through the lens of *TCA*, has several important functions. It is a means of cultural and social reproduction, and as such, should itself be maintained and reproduced through communicative action. It is a place where knowledge and traditions can be critiqued and re-evaluated, and possibly rejected, through, of course, communicative rationality (Terry, 1997, p. 278). The university can also be an important part of maintaining a strong public sphere by providing both the “place” where public discourse might take place as well as the individuals who might be socialized to participate in such activities. Genuine communication is “the lifeblood of political democracy” and discursive rationality is the primary way societies can adapt and remain healthy (Geren, 2001, p. 196). Habermas has been one of the key proponents of a free public sphere and political participation within the notion of the traditional civil society, as inherited from Aristotle, which “implies the unity of society and state, of civil and political society” (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 123). While Habermas criticised the ‘utopian idea of a critical public’ in *The Transformation of the Public Sphere*, he also insisted that the idea should not be entirely abandoned. The institutional reconstruction of public life is both possible and desirable. He did, however, recognise the difficulty of

developing freely-associating- and-communicating individuals within structures which were bureaucratically- and monetarily-based (Cohen and Arato, 1992). This thinking led him to the development of *TCA*, heavily influenced by his personal experience of a totalitarian state in Nazi Germany. According to Habermas, a distinction between civil society, state and economy is a necessary requirement for a strong public sphere and for citizens who are free to think critically and to participate. “[this distinction] must be reformulated in a way that indicates both the embeddedness of economic and state institutions in the lifeworld and the need in a modern society for these institutions to create and maintain the preconditions for the differentiation of a media-coordinated market and administration” (Cohen and Arato, p. 134). Thinking within the structure of Habermas and *TCA*, the public university, as a ‘training ground’ for citizens and an important means of reproduction of culture, has not only the ability, but the obligation, to maintain this differentiation rather than blurring boundaries through becoming a primarily economic institution.

Paul Terry, in his 1997 article “Habermas and Education: knowledge, communication and discourse”, argues that discourse ethics and communicative action hold the key to the ability of our current society to overcome the “unduly empirical orientation” of our modern education system. It is this empirical orientation, he feels, which ultimately threatens democracy.

The foundation of modern, post-Enlightenment societies lies in their commitment to the ideals of truth, justice, emancipation, rights and virtues. These moral aspects can best be addressed through a discursive ethics grounded upon self-reflective communication...in both the individual and in society...through the general processes of learning, and assisted by the institutional form of the education system. From

Rousseau to Kant to Dewey, the connection between education and democracy is implicit... (Terry, 1997, p. 278-9)

More suggestion of the connection of the university to TCA comes in the metaphor of learning as conversation in the work of philosopher Michael Oakeshott. In his essay "The Idea of a University" (1950) in *The Voice of Liberal Learning* (1989), Oakeshott describes the university as both a conversation and a place where one learns how to join in the larger conversation of one's inheritance of human self-understanding. This is the work of becoming human, which requires us to claim, appropriate, and then dwell in our heritage: the world of meanings, not of things. To initiate a younger generation into this heritage, society has set aside universities as one of the critical places where this work takes place. This conversation has many voices; no one voice should dominate.

John Bennet has continued the use of this metaphor, calling it the "root metaphor for higher education" (2001, p. 2). One does not merely listen to this conversation, but must be active in it. Conversation requires the other; it is not soliloquy. It must also be open and undertaken in an attitude of hospitality, i.e., concern and care for the well-being of the other, in order to build the kind of community which involves creating relationships with others (2001, p. 4). Both Oakeshott and Bennet would appear to be speaking of what Habermas would call communicative rationality, which aims for mutual understanding. The 'lifeworld' of the university is a place where cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization of the participant take place through communicative action. Bennett and Oakeshott are both identifying the same three functions of which Habermas spoke as requiring language as a medium.

Understanding the university as a lifeworld maintained by communicative action and the process of education as a linguistic 'practice', we can now look at current context within and around the university through the lens of *TCA*. Chapters One and Two outlined many examples of what is known as 'academic capitalism'. This is defined as both direct market activity which seeks a profit, such as commercialization of research, and market-like behaviour, which involves competition for things such as grants, donations, and research contracts. Included as well is the trend towards market-driven programs and the emphasis on training for the work place, and the increase in business-type practices throughout the university.

These phenomena are clearly the system to the university's lifeworld. As Habermas suggests, system in and of itself is not undesirable. It is important that we have an organized means of material reproduction. Large and complex institutions such as universities need system for the movement of goods and services, the maintenance of physical plant and the responsible use of public funds. However, as in Habermas' descriptions of colonisation, academic capitalism represents system, driven by money (revenue) and power (increased bureaucratization and politicization) colonizing the lifeworld of the university. Instead of system being embedded in the lifeworld of the university, which Habermas feels is the ideal situation, system is instead altering the lifeworld, compromising communicative action and ultimately affecting lifeworld's ability to reproduce itself. Without communicative action and communicative rationality, the university loses its ability to educate.

Individuals are affected. "Alienation effects increasingly emerge when spheres of life that are functionally dependent on value orientations, binding norms and the process

of understanding are monetarized and bureaucratized” (Habermas, 2001, p. 153). This alienation further compounds the problem. Communicative action must take place within a relationship. Increasingly alienated individuals in a lifeworld dominated by system lose any motivation for seeking communicative rationality. As Bennett states, the conversation of learning requires the other and an open and hospitable relationship with the other. Alienated individuals now guided by the steering media of money and power rather than the binding norms of the lifeworld move from being citizens to being consumers. The declining lifeworld results in a loss of meaning, with little motivation or sense of ‘the good’ for its members. Communicative rationality, i.e. the aim or wish for others to understand, is lost. This in turn contributes to a declining public sphere, which ultimately, will affect democracy.

## **Habermas and Taylor**

Habermas’ lifeworld consists of three components, culture, society and personality, which together maintain the lifeworld through the interaction of the reproductive processes of each group. Coordination of individual actions via intersubjectively recognized validity claims is an important aspect of lifeworld. Socialization provides for the internalization in the individual of the norms agreed to by the group/community/society, which is formative for the identity of the individual. The importance of the connection of the individual to the group, or larger order, to use Taylor’s terms, is clear and essential for the maintenance of the lifeworld.

The concept of lifeworld in Habermas is quite similar to Taylor’s framework and the social imaginary. It is the ‘context’ in which the individual is immersed and from

which they cannot escape. Taylor calls this the 'inescapable framework'; Habermas acknowledges that one cannot 'get behind' this context, which relies on a global pre-understanding. Taylor also conceives frameworks as developed from a set of common understandings. In this way, both frameworks and lifeworlds are linguistically constituted.

The primacy of instrumental reason as understood by Taylor broadly coincides with 'system'. Instrumental reason is dominated by economic considerations, and has little room for the moral. Efficiency and cost-benefit analysis are the norm. Technology is a companion of instrumental reason. "Our technocratic, bureaucratic society gives more and more importance to instrumental reason. This cannot but fortify atomism, because it induces us to see our communities, like so much else, in an instrumental perspective" (Taylor, 1991b, p. 59). Habermas' systems are instrumental and function through media such as money and power attached to empirically motivated ties (Habermas, 1987, p. 182). These systems, like money, steer a social discourse which has largely been disconnected from norms and values; these subsystems of purposive rational economic and administrative action become independent of their moral and political foundations (1987, 154). A colonized lifeworld, in which systems are 'taking over' is one of the symptoms of Taylor's malaise.

Taylor talked about a third factor in malaise, the loss of freedom. The consequences of individualism and instrumentalism for political life are that "the institutions and structures of industrial-technological society severely restrict our choices...they force societies as well as individuals to give a weight to instrumental reason that in serious moral deliberation would never do, and which may even be highly

destructive” (Taylor, 1991b, p. 9). We lose freedom both as a society and as individuals. The colonisation of lifeworld which Habermas sees as an outcome of the growth of an economic-bureaucratic society has much the same effect. As money and power extend their domains, we become part of complex networks which we can no longer understand or control as individuals or as a society (Sitton, p. 84-5).

The outcome of malaise is a loss of meaning, and meaning is essential to living the authentic life. Habermas, too, sees the potential for loss of meaning in modern life, because of the emergence of “logically independent value spheres and the life orders that crystallize around them [and the] disruptions of social life caused by the expansion of economic and bureaucratic networks” (Sitton, p. 19). One of the key causes of loss of meaning for individuals today, according to Taylor, is the loss of a ‘horizon of significance’, i.e. a narrative or tradition, bigger than one’s self, which explains the world. Horizons of significance offer a framework within which we develop our beliefs, values, communities, and individual identities (Taylor, 1989, Chapter 2). “...from the perspective of participants the lifeworld appears as a horizon-forming context of processes of reaching understanding...” (Habermas, 1987, p. 135). While Taylor and Habermas may disagree on the exact outcomes of *TCA*, I think both are identifying the importance of a group with commonly-held understandings, be that Taylor’s community with a common set of beliefs and values or Habermas’ society formed by communicative rationality.

It is interesting that both philosophers come up with similar consequences for the disruption of lifeworld/loss of horizon. Taylor notes the ‘recent shift in style of pathologies’, which have changed from hysterics, phobias and fixations in earlier times, to issues around ego loss: a sense of emptiness, flatness, lack of purpose and loss of



self-esteem (Taylor, 1989, p. 19). This compares with the symptoms of the disruption of the reproductive process of the lifeworld for the individual: crisis in orientation, alienation, and psychopathology (Habermas, 1987, p. 143). Colonisation of the lifeworld and malaise of modernity have much in common.

Neither Taylor nor Habermas are suggesting that the modern world or systems are inherently negative. Habermas acknowledges that system is needed for material reproduction. In an increasingly complex and bureaucratic society, systems are essential. Similarly Taylor sees the positive aspects of modernity, such as individuality and technology, to name two examples. What Taylor is concerned about is the primacy of instrumental reason, by which decision-making and planning are dominated by ideas of efficiency or cost-benefit analysis with no other considerations taken into account (Taylor, 1991). Similarly, Habermas calls for systems to be embedded in the lifeworld. It is when systematic mechanisms replace social integration and communicative action as the modes of reproduction that lifeworld is colonized.

A difference between the two, however, comes in their approach to ethics. Habermas takes a Kantian perspective, often criticized by commentators (Sitton, 2003; Eriksen and Wiegard, 2003; Rasmussen, 1990) as well as by other philosophers such as the more teleological Alistair MacIntyre, and Taylor, as being too universalistic. Norms have validity from a moral point of view if they meet the agreement of all those affected by them in a practical discourse. Taylor asserts that this is a weakness, which Habermas acknowledges (1991), because procedural ethics provide no motivation to participate in a practical discourse. We might summarize this by saying that in Habermas, ethics and meaning-making are based on practical reason, i.e., a

deontological approach, while for Taylor, they are based on practical wisdom, which is teleological in nature.

For Taylor, the validity of norms is based on an orientation to the good as developed by the community/framework in which the individual lives in which the individual's identity is formed. "People have to *be* a certain way—they have to have some orientation to the good—*before* they can respond to the claims of right" (Smith, p. 111). This orientation comes in part from the practices and the interpretation of practices embedded or nested within the social imaginary. This interpretation, or meaning-making, is strongly connected to the history and traditions of the community, factors which do not really come into play in Habermas' theories.

One criticism of Taylor's thinking is that it is not well-suited to the use of practical reason. "If we want our model of practical reason...to supply a rationally grounded means of testing the 'moral' status of normative claims—with all that implies for their obligatory force—we will have to look elsewhere" (Smith, p. 109). I suggest that Paul Ricoeur is the 'elsewhere' to which we can look, as I will do in the next chapter.

## **Antidote to Colonisation**

The colonisation of the lifeworld need not be an unalterable course. *TCA* shows that a strong lifeworld built and reproduced through communicative action provides an 'antidote' to colonisation. The question is how this ethic of desiring others to understand, which would provide a foundation for communicative rationality and a strong lifeworld, might be established or re-established.

I believe that part of this answer lies in the university reclaiming its past ideals, discussed in Chapter Two. It is upon these ideals that the university can begin to re-establish the notion of 'community of learning' and socialize its members into living as members of such a community. This then, becomes the 'place and conversation of learning' described by Oakeshott (1950).

Bennett (2001) suggested that 'hospitality...is the cardinal rule in academe, however much it may be [currently] neglected or abused" (p. 4). The conversation of learning requires a relationship with the other. Hospitality requires offering oneself in that relationship. Bennett offers the idea of a covenantal educational community to create that responsibility towards conversation and hospitality. "Conversation suggests the root character of educational activity. Covenant points us toward the relationship in this activity of teacher to student, of colleague to colleague, and of educational institution to its members. A covenant relationship is one in which each person is committed fundamentally to the welfare of the other as a partner in the conversation" (pp. 4-5). Its key focus is on the other.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how *TCA* is a helpful tool of analysis for the situation of the university today. Using *TCA*, the phenomenon of academic capitalism can be seen as more than a trend or 'blip' in the life of the university based on our current society. It is a clear example of system colonizing lifeworld, a situation which can bring about fundamental and unalterable changes to lifeworld of the university, in this case by

degrading its ability to reproduce itself. When motivation towards communicative rationality is lost, lifeworld is lost.

Communicative rationality and ethics have been criticized on the grounds of being too universalistic and deontological. Habermas has focused moral attention on the question of justice. "Viewing justice as the centre of morality unnecessarily restricts the domain of moral theory, thus distorting the nature of our moral experiences" (Benhabib, p. 47). But a model of communicative ethics that views moral theory as a theory of argumentation need not restrict itself to questions of justice...we [can] view our conceptions of the good life as matters about which intersubjective debate is possible" (*Ibid*). Thus, the communitarian and teleological work of Charles Taylor and Paul Ricoeur, together with *TCA*, provide a more complete view of the situation of the university today and a possible direction for the future. The lifeworld of the university can be strengthened if a different way of institutional 'being' can be brought about. A focus on a community of learning based on covenantal relationships offers the potential to re-vitalise the lifeworld of the university.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Ricoeur's Ethics as Institutional Framework for the University

In the previous chapter, I suggested that the ethics of Paul Ricoeur might provide a *via media* between the Kantian, deontological approach of Habermas and the teleological ethics of Taylor. 'Deontological' refers to 'right action' which constitutes the moral code by which we live together. This moral code defines our duties and is formalized into laws. Kantian ethics exemplify this principle. 'Teleological', on the other hand, might best be defined as the question of what is good, or what ends (*telos*) we ought to pursue. A teleological ethic will generally include some reference to metaphysics or the transcendent.

This chapter will discuss Ricoeur's ethics, which are both deontological and teleological, and examine the background and some of the sources which influenced their development. His definition of ethics will then be parsed with the aim of bringing a greater depth of understanding to his seemingly simple statement: aiming at the good life, with and for others, in just institutions. Lastly, the university as "just institution" will be discussed and Ricoeur's thinking will be taken together with that of Habermas and Taylor to point towards a structural framework for the university which would enable it to be both a just and an authentic institution.

For Paul Ricoeur, the term 'ethics' have a specific meaning. His use of the term 'ethics', the *aim* of an accomplished life, must be distinguished from morality, which is

the “articulation of this aim in *norms* characterized at once by the claim to universality and by an effect of constraint” (Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 170; *OAA*).

In his view, ethics have primacy over morality. This does not mean that morality has no place in the ethical life. Rather, the ethical aim must pass through the “sieve of the norm”. Whenever the norm leads to impasses in practice, it must give recourse to the aim (*OAA*, p. 170).

Given the primacy of the ethical aim over the moral norm, Ricoeur summarizes his definition of ethics in one sentence: “...aiming at the ‘good life’ with and for others, in just institutions” (*OAA*, p. 172). This forms the basis for Ricoeur’s ethical thinking, which was developed in *OAA* (1992) and continued in *The Just* (2000). This quotation, which comes from *OAA*, is the essence of what is known as “Ricoeur’s little ethics”. The ‘little ethics’, however, is hardly little. Ricoeur has brought together many strands of ethical and moral philosophy from sources such as Aristotle, Kant, Levinas, Arendt and Rawls, to name a few.

## **Background and Influences**

Paul Ricoeur, orphaned in early life and raised by his devout Protestant grandparents and aunt in predominantly Catholic France, began his study of philosophy at the Sorbonne in 1934. He was drafted to serve in the French army, and when Germany defeated and occupied much of France in 1940, his entire unit was imprisoned. His five years as a prisoner of war, however, were well spent, considering the circumstances. The camp was filled with intellectuals, with classes and organized

readings sufficiently vigorous that the Vichy government granted the camp degree-conferring status. During his time in the camp, Ricoeur read Jaspers and Heidegger, and began a translation of some of Husserl's work. He describes his time in captivity as "extraordinarily fruitful from a human as well as intellectual standpoint" (Ricoeur, *Intellectual Autobiography*, p. 10) and credits Jaspers "for having placed my admiration for German thinking outside of the reach of all the negative aspects of...the "terror of history" (p. 9).

Ricoeur went on to write and teach after the war, and taught philosophy at the Sorbonne from 1956 to 1967. While he describes this period as fulfilling, despite the difficulty of balancing teaching and research, during his time at the Sorbonne he grew disenchanted with the institution of the university, which he found to be " increasingly incapable of facing the demographic explosion and of creating the types of instruction required by the conflicting constraints of teaching massive numbers and retaining a standard of quality" (*IA*, pp. 24-5).

As Ricoeur's thoughts on the institution of the university resonate with the themes of this dissertation, Ricoeur's history of interaction with the institution of the university, while not directly related to his ethics, is relevant to the ultimate purpose of this work. As a result of his opinions of the traditional university, Ricoeur left the Sorbonne in 1967 to participate in the creation of a new university in Nanterre, a suburb of Paris. Ricoeur hoped that "the size of the institution would allow less anonymous relations between teachers and students, following the ancient idea of the community of masters and disciples" (*ibid*, p. 26), echoing Karl Jaspers' in *The Idea of the University*.

definition of the university as a community of scholars and students engaged in the task of seeking truth.

Nanterre, where Ricoeur was elected to serve Dean of the School of Letters (philosophy) in 1967, was unfortunately not able to become what Ricoeur envisioned, an outcome he attributes to the tumultuous events in France in May of 1968. However, commentators on what became known as 'The May Movement' point out that it really began with the students at Nanterre. "[T]he real inspirers of the idea of transcending political nuances through action were the students of Nanterre..." (Singer, 1970, p. 271). For months prior to May, there had been conflicts between students at Nanterre and the administration, including Ricoeur, reflecting not only the kind of general ferment seen in students around the world at this time, but issues distinctive to Nanterre. It was poorly designed, the library remained unfinished a year after opening to students, and it was set in a "semisuburban slum with no life of its own and no attractions...there was no scope for any social life; as to political debates, they were forbidden...on the hypocritical excuse that the university was allegedly neutral" (*IA*, p. 60). The university had by 1967 become overcrowded; 'disorderly reforms' in syllabuses in teaching caused a climate of anxiety among the students, and in November of that year, students went on strike. Administration, which of course included Ricoeur, attempted to deal with these issues through student-teacher commissions which granted students a small say in running the institution. However, little changed and students quickly became frustrated at the authorities lack of commitment to radical reform or serious concessions (*IA*, pp 60-1). Student demonstrations grew to the point where police action on campus was a regular occurrence and quickly grew to anti-riot squads. Groups who were agitating outside of



the campus, such as the Maoists and the Marxists, saw the student uprisings as an opportunity for a more general insurrection. "Nanterre was not so much a microcosm of French academic life as a hothouse in which the revolutionary plant grew somewhat faster than elsewhere" (*IA*, p. 65).

Ricoeur, in his autobiography, seems genuinely taken aback by this turn of events, which resulted in Nanterre being shut down on May 2, 1968.

I attempted to resolve the conflict by means of discussion alone. But the attack was not confined to the defects of the institution but touched on its very principle. I failed in my peacemaking mission. I attributed my failure less to the detestable nature of the attacks made against me than to unresolved conflicts within me between my willingness to listen and my quasi-Hegelian sense of the institution. (Ricoeur, *IA*, p. 26)

The closing of Nanterre prompted a much larger protest by students at the Sorbonne, causing the de Gaulle government to initiate a police occupation of that university. This led to further protests, which eventually moved beyond students to a general strike and a march by more than a million people in Paris on May 16. By the following week, more than two million French workers were on strike. By June, the crisis had faded, and De Gaulle was re-elected (Chalaby, 2002).

For Ricoeur, however, the May 1968 crisis had lasting effects. He was derided by many both inside and outside academia, and actually left France for a time. After he resigned as Dean, he taught for a time at another institution, returning to Nanterre, now a part of the University of Paris/Sorbonne, three years later. He also taught regularly at the University of Chicago, but never again made any attempt to be involved in any kind of administration. He appears in his autobiography to feel a great sense of personal

responsibility for Nanterre and the events which marked its early history. One can only speculate at this point how this feeling of failure may have influenced his own work on language, practical wisdom and the way in which we make choices in a complex society where there are 'conflicts of duties' and "where choice is most often between grey and grey than between black and white...and those situations of distress in which the choice is not between good and bad but between bad and worse" (Ricoeur, *IA*, p. 52). It was his thinking about the interaction between ethics, morality and practical wisdom, the difficulties in the *idea* of justice, and the paradoxes of political power which prompted his 'three cornered ethics' (*IA*, pp. 51-2).

Ricoeur's "little ethics", as they are often known, are found in Chapters 7, 8, and 9 of *OAA*, which was developed from the Gifford Lectures delivered by Ricoeur in Edinburgh in 1986. However, the book differed from the lectures on a couple of important points. The first is that the little ethics studies were not part of the lectures and did not even exist when the lectures were given. These studies came out of a double tragedy in the life of Ricoeur: the suicide of his son and right behind it, the death of a close friend and colleague, Mircea Eliade, with whom he had taught at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. The impact of these events is evidenced by the fact that Ricoeur, in spite of another pledge to himself to keep his private life and his intellectual life very separate, writes about both these deaths in his autobiography, referring to them as "this Good Friday of life and thought" (*IA*, p. 51). He drew some solace from an essay he had written the previous autumn, before his personal 'Good Friday', entitled *Evil: A Challenge for Philosophy and Theology* (Labor and Fides, 1986), which in its conclusion sketched out the stages of consent and wisdom. In making

sense for himself of the suicide of his son and the death of his friend, and influenced additionally, I think, by the events of Nanterre, he extended the study of language, action and narration from the Gifford lectures into an investigation of “the three moments of ethics, morality, and practical wisdom” (*IA*, p. 51).

The ‘three-cornered ethics’ allowed Ricoeur to project back upon the first six chapters of *OAA* his three-cornered thinking: a three-cornered system of discourse joining the speaker, the interlocutor, and the institution of language; in a three-cornered system of action, coordinating agent, the helper or adversary, and the field of practice; and in a three-cornered system of narration which connects the history of each with the history of others all woven together with the history of institutions themselves (*IA*, p. 52).

The second point comes in the exclusion of two significant lectures. While the original Gifford lectures contained two on Ricoeur’s biblical hermeneutics, he decided not to include these in the book, a decision he calls “debatable and even regrettable” in the introduction to *OAA* (p. 24). In these lectures Ricoeur focused on the features of understanding of self which respond best to the kerygmatic dimensions of Jewish and Christian scripture, i.e., the relation between call and response for the individual.

One might reasonably assume that for a believer of Christian, Jewish or any other faith background, a study of ethics and morality would include a strong theological and biblical influence. Ricoeur, however, intentionally brackets his biblical faith. While he does not claim that this faith has no influence or motivation on his thinking about ethics, he does say that “even on an ethical and moral plane, biblical faith adds nothing to the predicates “good” and “obligatory” as these are applied to action” (*OAA*, p. 25).

Rather than a Christian morality, which Ricoeur says does not exist, he seeks a common morality which biblical faith places in a new perspective. Finally, in all his work he has sought to separate his philosophical work from his theological work. His aim is for an 'agnosticism' in his philosophy which does not require of his readers to accept, reject, or suspend anything with regard to biblical faith or God as a philosophical question (OAA, p. 24). In his autobiography, Ricoeur describes this as "the old pact I had made that the non-philosophical [i.e., theological] sources of my conviction would not be mixed together with the arguments of my philosophical discourse" (IA, p. 50).

What, then, does inform Ricoeur's ethics? Broadly speaking, Ricoeur draws from Aristotle, Kant, Levinas and Hegel for his analysis of the ethical intention and the self and ethical intention. His ethic of justice and just institutions is worked out in dialogical fashion with Arendt and Rawls, and "unsurprisingly, this little ethics turns out to be a 'third way' that works to reconcile the oppositions that appear to hold the views of these thinkers apart from one another" (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 142).

### **Aristotle**

The Aristotelian heritage understands ethics from a *teleological* perspective, i.e., that the 'good life', or 'living well' is the very object of the ethical aim. It is the ultimate end of our action. Ethics are a question of doing what is best for us, rather than aiming for a transcendental Platonic 'good' (OAA, p. 172). Aristotle rejected Plato's Form of the Good, forms being eternal, changeless, and incorporeal. The good life for Aristotle was not simply a matter of choosing and doing right actions, but of choosing and doing them in the right way. This is practical wisdom, which involves skill at calculating the best way

to achieve one's ends. This is an intellectual virtue, and the presupposed ends, based on moral virtue, are arrived at through deliberation (Wedin, 2001, p. 50), or as Ricoeur said in *OAA*, "inventing conduct that will best satisfy the exception that solicitude requires by breaking the rule to the smallest extent possible" (p. 269). Practical wisdom, in Greek, *phronesis*, is more than a matter of doing the right actions; it is doing the right actions in the right way. For both Aristotle and Ricoeur, practical wisdom never denies the principle of respect for persons; it considers how to express this respect in the case at hand and always searches for the Aristotelian 'just mean'. That is, practical wisdom avoids arbitrariness and looks for a way to reconcile opposing claims rather than compromise them (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 195).

Politics and ethics are closely related; politics, taken in a large sense, constitute the framework for ethics (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 143). Like Aristotle, Ricoeur believes that the political institution is the most comprehensive of social institutions as it provides the social space for other institutions (religious and economic, for example) and protects each of them from encroachment by others.

Thus, the political institution, especially if it unites people as fellow citizens in a state, embodies the power that makes possible the full expression of all basic human capabilities....[t]he defining task for any defensible politics is to learn what justice calls for and to establish and protect the institutions that make justice effective. (Dauenhauer, 1998, 2003)

### ***Kant***

In the Kantian heritage, morality is defined by a *deontological* point of view, which is the obligation to respect the norm (OA, p. 170). Kant believed firmly in the authority of

reason; the moral life must be based on a rational and universally accessible self-legislation (Ameriks, 2001, pp. 460-466). Deontology has three main elements which distinguish it from teleology. They are: i) good will, as that which determines the good without qualification, ii) universalism, which demands that all legislation have the same basic form; and iii) autonomy. Kant sought to move beyond a morality of constraints, and concentrated on the will as the expression of a practical reason conceived as self-legislating or autonomous (Dauenhauer, 1998, pp. 162-163).

The greatness of Kant, according to Ricoeur, was his conception of freedom as a personal autonomy, an idea that none of the Greek thinkers had envisioned, and the use of practical reason to determine freedom. However, Ricoeur criticized Kant for bringing freedom and law together in such a way that ethics became a morality devoid of desire. This resulted, for Ricoeur, in a series of dichotomies fatal to the notion of action: "Form versus content, practical law versus moral maxim, becoming versus desiring, imperative versus happiness...Aristotle renders a better account of the specific structure of the practical order, when he forges the notion of deliberative desire, joining legitimate desire and just thought in his concept of *phronesis*" (Ricoeur, in Kemp, 1989, p. 69).

Ricoeur also criticizes Kant for an idea which was an anathema to Ricoeur, namely, that there is a science of morals in which a moral reason operates that can articulate itself as a critique of *praxis* in the concrete ethical life of society (Kemp, p. 69). When this happens, the origin of ethics, that is, the Aristotelian notion of 'the good life' is lost and the severity of moralism begins (Ricoeur, in Kemp, p. 68). The good life must be lived not only in individual situations, but in the unity of a lifetime. The price of such

an existential reflection on ethics as practiced by Kant is the “impoverished reduction it provides, as though the ethical identity of a whole life does not count for the human being and the life of a community” (Kemp, 1989, p. 74).

But Kant also makes a positive contribution to Ricoeur’s ethical theories. Ricoeur recognized that the ethical aim was not a sufficient motivation to proper conduct. To act is always to impinge upon another, and therefore, because we have the capacity to act, we also have the capacity to inflict violence, whether intentional or not, on one another. “This danger calls into question the adequacy of both our aims and the practices, values and institutions that our society supports” (Dauenhauer, 1998, 2003) and “by reason of the fact of violence, morality must not be ignored. One must pass on to the imperative, the duty, to interdiction....Every actual aim must be submitted to the ‘sieve of the norm’” (OAA, p. 170). This sieve is made up of two components: Kant’s principle of the universality of genuine moral norms and Rawls’ principle that any just allocation of goods must satisfy.

### **Rawls**

Ricoeur brings John Rawls into the dialogue in the final section of his ethics, which focuses on justice and distributive justice in particular and is most fully developed in *The Just*. Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* provides Ricoeur with a major foil against which Ricoeur develops his thinking on justice, equality and the self. Although Ricoeur’s little ethics is in direct opposition to Rawls’ claim that the right is prior to the good, Ricoeur does not simply refute Rawls. “Rather, he seeks to salvage Rawls’ contribution and incorporate it into his own” (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 144).

Rawls, a 20<sup>th</sup> century American political philosopher, following on the liberal and democratic social contract traditions of Locke, Rousseau, and Kant, and “clearly situate[d] in the line of descent leading from Kant rather than from Aristotle” (Ricoeur, *The Just*, p. 36) argued that the most reasonable principles of justice are those everyone would accept and agree to from a fair position (Freeman, 1999, pp. 774-775). The concept of just or fair distribution, however, has many ambiguities. How do we determine ‘fair share’? How should it be measured? Is fair share based on an individual or collective definition? What is a just procedure for dividing and distribution?

Rawls sought to overcome these difficulties by developing a fully formalized procedural conception of justice which was wholly detached from any particular conception of the good. To effect this detachment, Rawls makes use of the idea of a social contract established behind a ‘veil of ignorance’ (a set of constraints on society’s participants designed to block the possibility of particular groups or individuals being used as scapegoats or becoming a permanent underclass) about what one’s own share or allotment of society’s benefits and burdens will be (Dauenhauer, 1998, pp. 177-78). The social contract is to institutions what autonomy is to individual morality. Rawls’ approach to justice might be summed up in the words ‘reasonable fairness’; in opportunities for individuals, in distribution of resources, and in the procedures to achieve these.

Ricoeur counters that “fairness itself gets its sense and importance from its connection to the respect that we are to have for every person who is an equal partner in the procedural enterprise. “This respect demands that no person be treated as a thing”



(Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 179). Rawlsian fairness presupposes the kind of respect for persons that Ricoeur found to be resident in the ethical aim (ibid).

Rawls' theory has two main principles of justice.

First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others. Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and b) attached to positions and offices open to all. (Rawls, 1971, p. 60)

Ricoeur raises questions about the adequacy of these principles. While acknowledging that they are more fruitful than Kantian imperatives to respect persons, he nonetheless finds the principles very abstract and the product of an ideal context. In actual public life, there are inequalities, people are excluded from citizenship, and there are many plausible ways of distributing advantages and disadvantages. There is a constant need in every society for reasonable debate on methods of distribution and who should be granted citizenship. "Rawls' lexical ordering of his principles leaves him with no formalized way to address this issue" (Dauenhauer, 1998, pp. 179-180).

Rawls' second principle attempts to deal with inequality, but Ricoeur again finds it too abstract to be workable in any actual society. The theories cannot be formalized, and must rely on convictions, a point which Rawls himself made (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 180). Ricoeur counters that such convictions are founded in the 'Golden Rule', and that Rawls' principles amount to "an application of the Golden Rule to institutions instead of interpersonal relations" (ibid). Without 'considered convictions' (or the Golden Rule) Rawls' theory cannot stand on its own. "Is it convictions themselves that buttress the case? Or is it the fact that they are convictions that have been subjected to

consideration? "(ibid, p. 181). For Ricoeur, working with Rawls' theories confirmed his opposition to a 'science of praxis' and the need for a critical assessment of convictions. Or, in other words, ethical convictions must be submitted to testing by moral norms. Ricoeur would further develop his thinking around the Golden Rule and the potential problems he saw associated with it in *Love and Justice* (1996), which will be discussed in a subsequent section.

### **Levinas**

Levinas appears at what one commentator calls one of the two 'culminating moments' of *OAA*, namely, the beginning of Chapter 7, where Ricoeur considers the moral dimensions of selfhood (Cohen, 2002, p. 128). Levinas' thought centers on selfhood, alterity (or 'otherness'), and the ethical. "The overemphasis of openness is responsibility for the other to the point of substitution, where the for-the-other proper to disclosure turns into the for-the-other proper to responsibility. This is the thesis of the present work" (Levinas, 1981, p. 113). Levinas gives primacy to sociality, while Ricoeur sets moral character over moral sociality. "One has to grant a capacity of reception to the self that is the result of a reflexive structure, better defined by its power of reconsidering preexisting objectifications than by an initial separation" (*OAA*, p. 339). Ricoeur equates moral sociality with normativity; for Levinas, moral sociality does manifest itself as normativity. Normativity is a conditioned development which appears later at the level of justice. While laws are a part of a developed morality, they are not its initial moments. For Levinas, giving priority to moral sociality means giving priority to moral norms, hence reducing alterity to moral law, and moral selfhood to obedience to

duty, a position rejected by Ricoeur as will be discussed further on (Cohen, 2002, pp. 129-132).

### **Hegel**

Hegel's influence can be seen most clearly in Ricoeur's approach to reconciling the apparently diametric poles of deontology and teleology and the views of Aristotle, Kant, Levinas and Rawls. Ricoeur's ethical arguments, the development of which can be traced throughout his major writings prior to *OAA*, are meant to show that there must be moral norms by which to assess the defensibility of concrete ethical aims. But these moral norms are not free from all reference to the good: "It cannot be entirely autonomous because of the idea of just distribution...in other words, the deontological level, properly regarded as the *privileged* level of reference for the idea of the just, cannot be made so autonomous that it would constitute the *exclusive* level of reference" (*The Just*, p. 21).

The dialectical development of Ricoeur's arguments for his ethical theories, in which he finds instruction even while critiquing, and his rejection of the "either-or" in favour of the "both-and" (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 5), reflects the search for connectors rather than dividers, or, harkening back to Aristotle and practical wisdom, for reconciliation rather than compromise. While the "thesis-antithesis-synthesis" model of Hegel is in reality a misappropriation of his thought and are terms never used by Hegel (Pippen, 2001, pp. 365-370), the model does fit Ricoeur's methods of argumentation in his little ethics. Ricoeur himself called this method "refined dialectic" (*Explanation and Understanding*, p. 150).

Like Hegel, the dialectic involves identifying key oppositional terms in a debate and then proceeding to articulate their synthesis into a new, more developed concept...Ricoeur's method entails showing how the meaning of two seemingly opposed terms are implicitly informed by, and borrow from, each other. (Dauenhauer, 1998, 2003)

Hegel's influence, however, extends beyond methodology. Ricoeur's work on language and action in the 1960s led him to reconsider his earlier work on the theme of human will and determine that it was not well enough developed. This was because he had emphasized so heavily that the will involved an "internal" project or aim (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 100). However, instructed by Hegel, Ricoeur came to realize that to make full sense of aims or intentions, one had to see them as connected to events in the world. "Action is the phenomenon that connects projects and worldly events" (ibid, p. 100). However, action's meaning is heavily dependent on its reception by others. Insofar as what one does is part of a practice, it has its own meaning, independent of the intentions of the agent (the one who does the action). Ricoeur agrees with Hegel's thinking on this and concludes:

The way the work has of taking its meaning, its very existence as work, only from the other underscores the extraordinary precariousness of the relation between the work and the author, the mediation of the other being so thoroughly constitutive of its meaning. (OAA, p. 56)

### **Arendt**

The work of Hannah Arendt on institutions and power also influenced Ricoeur's thinking on just institutions. Her work focused on political action, as an antidote to the egoism that isolates us from one another. Modernity is mired in egoism, according to Arendt, which is compounded by the emergence of a mass that consist of bodies with

needs temporarily met by producing and consuming, and which demands that governments minister to these needs (Flathman, 2001, pp. 42-43). Those capable of it are called to a mode of being, political action, which requires the courage to initiate 'one knows not what'. Its outcome is power; not over other people or things but mutual empowerment to act in concert and thereby overcome egoism and achieve positive freedom. This mutual empowerment goes beyond friendship, which can unite only a small number of people. Reciprocity among friends is transformed when the life together shared by a few people gives way to the distribution of shares in a plurality on the scale of a historical political community (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 149).

Arendt contends that action and speech reveal persons who are responsible for what they introduce into the world as well as the idea that if what they do is to make sense and find efficacy it must be seen and understood by others who can respond to it. There is, therefore, reason for the constitution of a public domain with institutions proper to it that is distinct from the private domain. The constitution and preservation of the public domain is the task of politics. It is in the public domain that persons are fellow citizens rather than simply producers, labourers, or family members. In the public domain we find our fullest freedom and our fullest independence (ibid).

One can further see the influence of Arendt in a quotation from *The Just*: "Politics...is in the *interesse* that the hope of living well achieves its goal. It is as citizens that we become human. The hope of living in just institutions means nothing else" (quoted in Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 143). Arendt also points to the importance of public space and the ethical primacy of such space as a means to develop political institutions with power-in-common versus domination. She argues, and Ricoeur agrees, that power-

in-common springs directly and fundamentally from the capacity people have to act in common a capacity which cannot be utilized in a context of isolation and egoism. "Again with Hannah Arendt, we can call *power* the common force that results from this will to live together..." (Ricoeur, *The Just*, p. 8). Arendt also argues, and Ricoeur agrees, that power-in-common is more fundamental than domination even in politics (OAA, pp. 194-5).

Within institutions are many people who need and want to live together, but who will never have a face-to-face relationship. This plurality, as Ricoeur calls it, is spread out in time. "The historical community in question not only has roots in the past. It has the aim of enduring indefinitely into the future" (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 155). The political institution is most important because it provides the social space for all other institutions and protects it from encroachment by any of the others, and thus provides for the full expression of the multiplicity of human capabilities; and the political institution is founded on power-in-common.

## **Parsing the Ethical Aim: Overview**

Ricoeur's ethics are both teleological and deontological. However, he gives primacy to the ethical over the moral. The ethical aim, however, must be subjected to the test of the norm. He argues that all human action is linked to some sort of precept; every action is intrinsically open to and invites evaluation in terms of some norm. Ethics cover the domain of that which is considered to be part of the good life. Morality is the articulation of the ethical aim in terms of norms which are treated as obligatory.

The teleological and the deontological are complementary to one another dialectically. Esteem for self and others belongs to the level of ethics. Respect for self and others finds its fulfilment in morality. Hence, esteem is prior to and *presupposed* for respect (OAA, pp. 169-71; Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 145-7).

According to the theses proposed here, it will be made apparent 1) that self-esteem is more fundamental than self-respect, 2) that self-respect is that aspect under which self-esteem appears in the domain of norms, and 3) that the aporias of duty create situations in which self-esteem appears not only as the source but also as the recourse for respect, when no sure norm offers a guide for the exercise *hic et nunc* of respect. In this way, self-respect and self-esteem together will represent the most advanced stages of the growth of self-hood which is at the same time its unfolding. (OAA, p. 171)

As the subject of my actions, I am responsible for what I do; I am the subject to whom my actions can be imputed and whose character is to be interpreted in light of those actions. Aiming for the good life with and for others in just institutions is the premise of this practical and material conception of selfhood with its presupposition of a world of action, lived with others. For Ricoeur, a life can have an ethical aim because the teleological structure of action extends over a whole life, understood within the narrative framework (Atkins, 2003, p. 8).

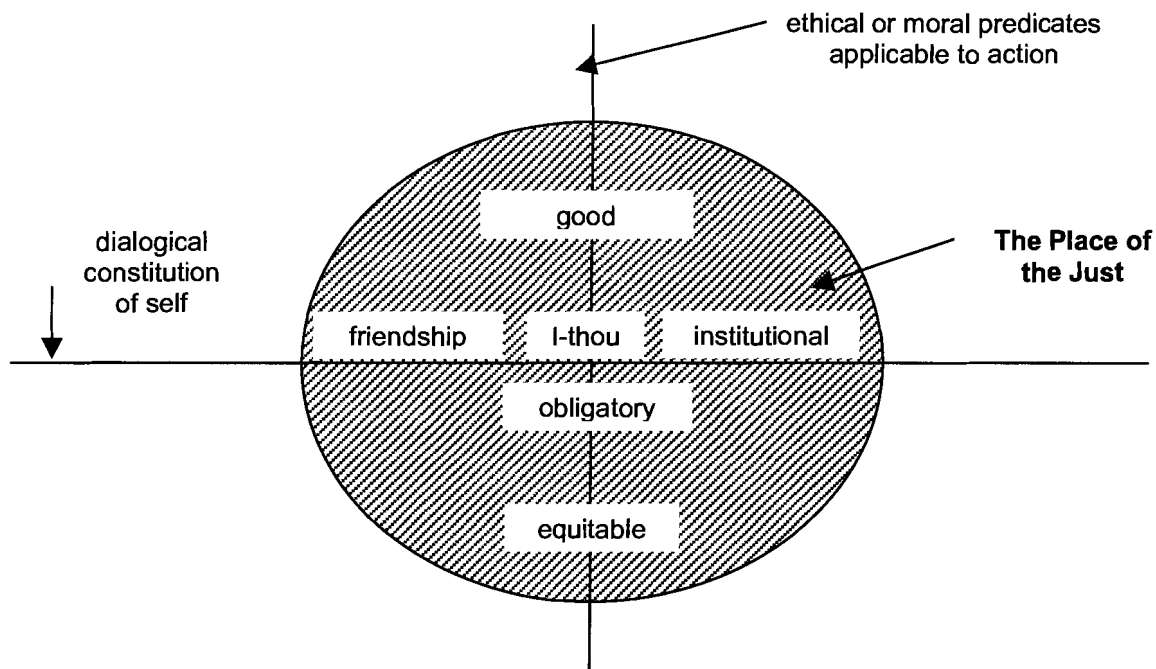
The basic question for Ricoeur is not "what must I do?", but rather "how do I want to live my life?" The answer to that question has three components: the individual, the interpersonal, and the societal. Following Aristotle, Ricoeur takes it that a person finds the good life in praxis and in friends, friendship providing the opportunity for both mutuality and reciprocity (Dauenhauer, 1998, pp. 147-8). Praxis is most often lived out in institutions. Justice is an integral part of the wish to live well (*The Just*, p. xiv).

Ricoeur explains Studies 7, 8, and 9 in a 'graphic' way in the preface to *The Just*. There are two different directions of reading: the horizontal axis, which is the dialogical constitution of the self, and the vertical axis which represents the hierarchical constitution of the predicates that qualify human actions in terms of morality. "The philosophical place of the just thus [finds] itself situated, in OAA, at the intersection of these two orthogonal axes and the two readings they mark out" (*The Just*, pp. xii-xiv). This is represented diagrammatically in Figure 1.

The horizontal reading is the dialogical constitution of the self. "A philosophical theory of the just then finds its first handhold in the assertion that the self only constitutes its identity through a relational structure that places the dialogical dimension above the monological one" (*The Just*, p. xiii). For a good life, one must have associates with and for whom one acts. Practical wisdom, an important element in Ricoeur's ethical theory, has as its guiding light the solicitude we ought to have for each person in his or her uniqueness (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 148). There are two distinct notions of the other: the first is found in the face and voice of the other and her designation of me as second person singular; the second notion is the other of interpersonal relationships, i.e., the other member of a relationship, and is lived out in friendship. Friendship, although wonderful, says Ricoeur, does not fulfil the task of justice. The virtue of justice comes in interpersonal relationship mediated by the institution. "The other for friendship is the 'you'; the other for justice is 'anyone' (*The Just*, p. xiii).



**Figure 1. A Schematic Representation of Ricoeur's Ethics**



*Note.* Adapted from the narrative description in *The Just*.

The vertical axis is more directly related to OAA. This axis represents the hierarchy of morality of human action. At the first (highest) level is the good, which is based on the teleological approach inasmuch as the good designates the *telos* of an entire life in question of accomplishment (*The Just*, p. xv). It is important to Ricoeur that the word 'life' appear within a framework of a philosophy of action, in that it recalls that human action is born by desire or lack thereof. "The connections among life, desire, lack, and accomplishment constitute the basis of morality, for which I reserve the term 'ethics'. This is why I define ethics as the wish for a good life" (*The Just*, p. xv).

The predicate 'obligatory' comes from a deontological perspective, the level of the norm and duty. Ricoeur does not put the teleological in a binary relationship with the

deontological. The ethical aim, the good, must pass through the sieve of the norm (OAA, p. 170). One of the reasons Ricoeur synthesizes the good and the obligatory is because of the potential for people to inflict wrongs, such as violence and injustice, on one another, usually through prohibitions.

The 'equitable' refers to the idea of just distribution. Ricoeur moves away from a Rawlsian deontological and contractual approach to fairness and equity, and instead looks to the teleological to provide justice in the thorny and difficult area of fair distribution of resources.

The vertical axis is a visual representation of Ricoeur's three main points regarding ethics in OAA:

- i) the primacy of ethics over morality;
- ii) the necessity for the ethical aim to pass through the sieve of the norm;  
and
- iii) the legitimacy of recourse by the norm to the aim whenever the norm leads to an impasse in practice. (OAA, p. 170)

"The basic aim of Ricoeur's little ethics is to establish that the proper determination of what counts as just conduct comes from a practical wisdom that pays heed to universal moral norms but does not give them the last word" (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 175). His ethical theory is dependent on a relationship between the three 'definition points' of the ethical intention. This relationship, in Ricoeur's view, is utterly necessary.

The major advantage of entering into the ethical problematic by way of the notion of the "good life" is that it does not refer directly to selfhood in the figure of self-esteem. If self-esteem does indeed draw its initial meaning from the reflexive movement through which the evaluation of certain actions judged to be good are carried back to the author of these

actions, this meaning remains abstract as long as it lacks the dialogic structure which is introduced by reference to others. This dialogic structure, in its turn, remains incomplete outside of the reference to just institutions. In this sense, self-esteem assumes its complete sense only at the end of the itinerary of meaning traced out by the three components of the ethical aim. (OAA, p. 172)

### **...Aiming at the Good Life**

In the reflective *Preface to The Just*, Ricoeur argues that philosophy has, in general, neglected the concept of justice, and, in doing so, has lost sight of one of its most crucial aspects. We have overlooked its 'affective roots', that is, the fact that justice does not spring primarily from a deontological sense of duty but is an integral part of the ethical intention. The just "is first an object of desire, of a lack, of a wish. It begins as a wish before it is an imperative" (*The Just*, p. xv). Thus, the concept of the just begins with the desire, the *aim*, to live a good life. Justice, however, has ethical features which go beyond solicitude; it requires equality. "The institution as the point of application of justice and equality as the ethical content of the sense of justice are the two issues of the investigation into the third component of the ethical aim" (OAA, p. 194), which will further discussed in a later section.

For Aristotle, the 'good life' is the very object of the ethical aim. Ricoeur agrees, and looks to Aristotle for the 'first great lesson', i.e. that the fundamental basis for the aim of the good life is in praxis. The second lesson is that we must attempt to set up the teleology internal to praxis (*phronesis*) as the structuring principle for the 'aim of the good life' (OAA, pp. 172-3). Acting according to *phronesis* entails that the first step to decision-making is to perceive what is at stake in a particular circumstance, perceiving what action is required, and then deciding what sort of particular action will be the most

suitable, given the particular contextual and historical situation in which that action is to be taken (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in Deneulin, 2003, p. 11).

There is a potential paradox here in that the right praxis could be its own end, while aiming at an ulterior end. Ricoeur resolves this paradox by looking to narrative theory to broaden and hierarchicalize the concept of action in such a way as to “carry it to the level of the concept of praxis” (*OAA*, p. 175). The properly ethical nature of praxis is characterized by Alistair Macintyre’s ‘standards of excellence’ which allows us to compare different practices to a standard of excellence (which has a strong ethical component) as developed by the community of practice. A community of practice is necessary to develop standards of excellence, or ‘internal goods’ for a particular practice. While these standards are dependent in part on the circumstances where the practice is situated historically and contextually, they are also guided by a knowledge of what is good beyond what is specific to a particular situation. These internal goods provide us with a benchmark by which to reflect on our actions and develop self-esteem (MacIntyre, 1984). “On the ethical plane, self-interpretation becomes self-esteem” (*OAA* p. 179). The community provides us with our criteria for self-interpretation (hermeneutics of the self). When we have the certainty that we are the agents of our own action (self-esteem), this certainty “...becomes the conviction of judging well and living well and acting well in a momentary approximation of living well” (*OAA*, p. 180).

There is, of course, a narrative component to the establishment and maintenance of communities of practice, and thus, a narrative component to living the good life. Ricoeur uses the term ‘narrative unity’ to represent the concept of the connection that the narrative makes between estimations applied to actions and the evaluations of

persons themselves. “The idea of a narrative unity of life therefore serves to assure us that the subject of ethics is none other than the one to whom the narrative assigns a narrative identity....[and] places an accent on the organization of intention, causes, and chance that we find in all stories” (OAA, p. 178).

### **...With and for Others**

The concept of ‘with and for others’ requires an understanding of the self as well as an understanding of ‘the other’. The notion of self in Ricoeur’s thinking is directly tied to the notion of the other, and Ricoeur’s ethics in turn are tied to the concept of the narrative self. Here narrative plays a role: “I make sense of my own identity by telling myself a story about my life” (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 126). Characters in stories also help us make sense of our personal identities. Through stories, we also learn that the identity of a personage is always tied into identities and stories of other personages; “...our personal identity is inextricably intertwined with others, and never exclusively in ways of our own choosing” (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 127).

The self, according to Ricoeur, develops through a dialectic between *idem*, the self’s spatiotemporal sameness, and *ipse*, its uniqueness and ability to initiate (agency). Self-esteem, as discussed earlier, is formed through positive self-evaluations of our actions. Of course, finding self-esteem in the ability to act implicitly references others, who can also act and evaluate: “...is realized action not always something of an interaction? This question is momentous both for personal relations and politics” (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 148). Ricoeur privileges the *ipse* because it does emerge in relationship to the other and is mediated by the other. “...selfhood understood and ipse-

identity prioritizes the issues of agency, praxis and intervention, all vitally important to critical theory and its offshoot, communicative ethics” (Rainwater, 1996, p. 100). The good life cannot be lived in isolation.

Because selfhood is something that must be achieved, and is dependent on the regards, words and actions of others, one can fail to achieve selfhood. “The narrative coherence of one’s life can be lost, and with that loss comes the inability to regard oneself as the worthy subject of a good life; in other words, the loss of self-esteem” (Dauenhauer, 2003), where ‘good’ is an intersubjective criterion to which one attests. Selfhood goes hand-in-hand with the notion of imputation, which is related to personal responsibility for one’s actions. “...justice depends upon the capacity of the human agent to accept responsibility for his or her actions” (Dauenhauer, 2003).

In the first essay of *The Just*, Ricoeur seeks to uncover the fundamental features that make a subject capable of commanding esteem and respect, a capacity that prompts the desire for justice and determines that three factors are necessary: agency, narrative identity, and imputation. These three things on their own, however, are not enough to command esteem and respect. The role of the other is not restricted to the development of self-esteem or simply to the role of being the recipient of our actions. Interpersonal forms of ‘otherness’ must also be included. “The self is only realized in a variety of social systems (e.g., technical, fiscal, juridical, political, educational, etc.) where persons interact with each other and where each recognizes the other as legitimate subject of rights” (Dauenhauer, 2003).

Ricoeur, following on the suggestion of Charles Taylor, pairs the self and the good. "This correlation expresses the fact that the question... 'Who am I?' presiding over every search for personal identity finds a first outline of an answer in the modes of adhesion by which we respond to the solicitation of strong evaluations" (*The Just*, p. 148). Discriminating between good and evil, or determining what 'the good' is corresponds to different ways of orienting ourselves in moral space. Conscience is the way we orient ourselves in this moral space. This, says Ricoeur, is a more elementary question (knowing how to live my life, i.e., my conscience) than asking what I ought to do (*The Just*, p. 148).

Ricoeur also holds that we need friends to have a good life. Friendship "adds the idea of reciprocity or mutuality to the intersection of persons who esteem themselves" (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 148) and thus, solicitude (care or concern) for others becomes not some extrinsic addition to self-esteem but rather the dialogical dimension of self-esteem. "Self-esteem and solicitude cannot be experienced or reflected upon one without the other" (*OAA*, p. 180).

Friendship, however, is not in and of itself justice, for it involves only a small number of partners. Justice, on the other hand, must encompass many citizens and govern them in and through institutions. Reciprocity among friends becomes transformed "when the life together shared by a few people gives way to the distribution of shares in a plurality on the scale of a historical political community" (*OA*, p. 149).

Friendship... gives the self as its vis-à-vis an other who has a face, in the strong sense that Emmanuel Levinas has taught us to recognize it.  
Justice conceived as an equality gives the self an other who is an 'each'.  
In this way, the sense of justice takes nothing away from solicitude.

Rather justice presupposes it inasmuch as solicitude regards persons an unsubstitutable for one another. Conversely, justice adds to friendship inasmuch as the field of applicability of equality is the city, the historical community ruled by the State, and ideally, all of humanity. (OAA, p. 202)

### ***...In Just Institutions***

Living well also includes how we live together in institutions. For a good life, one must have associates with and for whom one acts. Societal institutions, particularly political institutions, set the context for action and significantly affect its efficacy.

Unlike Levinas, Ricoeur expands the concept of otherness to include “institutional forms of association (a neutral third party) that mediate interpersonal relations” (MacCammon, 2001). By ‘institution’, Ricoeur is referring to an interpersonal form of otherness, “the structure of living together as this belongs to a historical community—people, nation, region, and so forth—a structure irreducible to interpersonal relations, and yet bound up with these in a remarkable sense [with] the notion of distribution” (OAA, p. 194). An institution is bound together by common mores rather than by constraining rules. For Ricoeur, institutions are essential, because the ‘who’ of the subject of rights cannot be developed apart from social mediation. Institutions are inextricably bound up with the realization of self and the concept of otherness.

In Ricoeur’s thinking, the concept of justice within institutions does not lie on the deontological plane, as Rawls would assert. “The just, it seems to me, faces in two directions: toward the *good*, with respect to which it makes the extension of interpersonal relationships to institutions; and toward the *legal*, the judicial system conferring upon the law the coherence and the right of constraint” (OAA, p. 197).



There is a primacy of the ethic of living together over the constraints related to judicial systems and political organizations, which Ricoeur likens to the gap between power-in-common and domination, following Hannah Arendt. Living together is privileged over constraints because power-in-common is fragile, and can exist only as long as people continue to act together. However, this very fragility renders us responsible (1996, p. 16). Institutions, therefore, can survive only as long as people wish to live with and for others. This will is frequently rendered invisible by the "frequent and obvious manifestations of relations based on a will to dominate. As a result, the will to live together usually has the status of something forgotten" (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 156).

Equality is an important component of just institutions. "Equality...is to life in institutions what solicitude is to interpersonal relations. Solicitude provides to the self another who is a face...equality provides to the self another who is an *each*. In this, the distributive character of 'each' passes from the grammatical plane...to the ethical plane" (OAA, p. 202). The concern for a distribution which is in some sense equal brings a deontological aspect to justice, which works together with the teleological notion of justice as a virtue. "Thus, the idea of justice demands that we adopt the image of a society that is not only characterized by a will to live together but also by rules of distribution - the distributed parts making each citizen a partner, in the literal sense of the word" (Ricoeur, *Le Juste Entre*, in Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 158). "This set of considerations shows, then, that the ethical aim of living together with and for others must, if it is serious, go beyond interpersonal concerns and include an aim for institutions that are just, institutions that efficaciously and fairly distribute the various goods that are

at society's disposal to distribute" (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 159). It is important to remember that by 'fairly' Ricoeur, like Aristotle, does not refer simply to numerical equality, but incorporates both distributive and reparative justice. "The unjust man is one who takes too much in terms of advantages...and not enough in terms of burden" (OAA, p. 201-2).

In OAA, Ricoeur points to the Golden Rule (In everything do to others as you would have them to do you. Matthew 7:12) as a norm for reciprocity, which goes beyond solicitude, and overcomes the inherent discrepancy in agency between individuals—the agent, who acts and the patient, who is acted upon—which the Golden Rule presumes (pp. 219-20). However, he also acknowledges the 'ambiguity' possible in the idea of just distribution and solicitude.

There is no doubt that a certain ambiguity...profoundly affects the idea of justice. The idea of fair shares refers back, on the one hand, to the idea of a belonging that extends all the way to that of an infinite *mutual indebtedness*...on the other hand, the idea of just shares leads, in the best hypothesis, to the idea that we find in Rawls of a mutual disinterest for the interest of others; at worst, it leads back to the idea...of separation. (Ricoeur, OAA, p. 202)

In later work, Ricoeur further developed his thinking on the problem, specifically focusing on the Golden Rule. It can be "drawn in the direction of a utilitarian maxim whose formula is *Do ut des: I give so that you will give*" (*Love and Justice*, p. 35-6). Justice is the formalization of the Golden Rule. Ricoeur questions the kind of social cohesion which will be brought about by even the highest ideals of justice, as important as justice is. Ideally, justice will be 'neutral' or disinterested, that is, justice as either distributive justice or the equality of rights, must "[uphold] the claims of each person

within the limit that the freedom of the one does not infringe on that of the other” (p. 31).

This, says Ricoeur, is both the strength and weakness of justice: a ‘disinterested interest’ which is the basic attitude of the parties in the original idea of the social contract (p. 31).

But what kind of social cohesion does disinterested interest create?

My own suggestion would be that the highest point the ideal of justice can envision is that of a society in which the feeling of mutual dependence - even of mutual indebtedness-remains subordinate to the idea of mutual disinterest...[this] prevents the idea of justice from attaining the level of a true recognition and a solidarity such that each person feels indebted to every other person. (*Love and Justice*, p. 31)

Instead, Ricoeur offers the ‘new commandment’, (Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. Luke 6:27-8) as a corrective to this possible interpretation of the Golden Rule. Speaking more from his Christian background, Ricoeur calls the new commandment “a hyperethical expression of a broader economy of the gift” (p. 32), hyperethical because it is an imperative and linked to a structure of praxis which abolishes the distinction between enemy and friend (p. 33). The difference between the Golden Rule and the new commandment is the difference between a logic of equivalence and the logic of superabundance: “it [the new commandment] is a logic of generosity whereby I give more than the other deserves in relation to me, and not merely an amount equivalent to that which I will receive in return” (Simms, p. 117). Because in Scripture the two precepts are often placed in close proximity to one another, Ricoeur argues that the writers *intend* the new commandment to prevent a perverse interpretation of the Golden Rule. “...the commandment of love does not abolish the Golden Rule but instead

reinterprets it in terms of generosity" (*Love and Justice*, p. 35) without which the Golden Rule would constantly be drawn in the direction of utilitarianism.

However, as the golden rule is formally expressed in justice, the rule of justice also needs the hyperethic of love in order to keep justice oriented away from utilitarianism and disinterested interest. Without this orientation towards a hyperethic, our structures of living together are in danger of being reduced to interpersonal relations based on expectations of what the other owes to us based on our behaviour towards them, or to a simple equivalence. This would not be a just institution for Ricoeur, for institutions are more than the individuals and their actions; Ricoeur's definition of institutions earlier in this section points to both in the historical community and in the need of common mores. His idea of common mores expanded in this later work go beyond the logic of equivalency and disinterested interest, the basis of social contracts, and incorporates the ethical good, in this case, the hypergood of love, into justice, and therefore, the just institution.

## **The University as a Just Institution**

Ricoeur's ethical thought raises possibilities for a framework for public institutions such as the university in today's context. For example, in our modern society, most institutions are legal entities; according to the law, they exist as equivalent to individuals and have agency. They are responsible for the distribution of the 'goods' at society's disposal, such as education and health care. Ricoeur's ethical theories are founded on an interdependence between the self, the other, and the social institutions through which we relate to one another beyond the scope of our personal relationships. Justice is not

possible without all three of these elements. This triad opens up the possibility to consider our social institutions in Canada, such as universities, in new ways, perhaps to revision and reinvent them as 'just institutions' as opposed to economically efficient institutions. This is most applicable to the university. If it is to be an authentic institution in order to be an effective element in the public sphere, if it is responsible for creating thinking citizens to participate in democracy, if higher education is a public good rather than private goods, then it would follow that as an institution it must also be ethical, or, in Ricoeur's word, just.

We have seen that, particularly in Ricoeur's later thinking, the notion of justice has taken on a particularly Christian perspective, a perspective which it is reasonable to question for a public institution such as university in our pluralistic context. Can Ricoeur's aim of the good life, to live with and for others in just institutions, be helpful as an institutional framework? I believe that it can, providing we also use the thinking of Taylor and Habermas in formulating such a framework.

How can Ricoeur, Taylor and Habermas be used together to provide a possible institutional framework for a modern conception of the community of scholars in the large and complex organization which is today's university? I think we can begin with Habermas' *TCA*, wherein system, a necessary part of any functioning society or community, is embedded within the lifeworld, so that lifeworld is not colonized by system, but rather guides system. System is the economic and distributive aspect of our living together. We have seen that many universities today are on a path of academic capitalism, where economic factors are driving the direction of the institution. This is, I believe, an example of system colonizing lifeworld.

The lifeworld is built on intersubjectivity and dialogue, and relies upon communicative action, i.e., communication in which all actors have an aim of understanding one another, as opposed to strategic action, where the actor is aiming for success in achieving some end. In order to create checks and balances to counteract the tendencies of academic capitalism, the university needs a strong lifeworld. But what is the motivation for developing and maintaining a strong lifeworld through communicative action? This is one of the criticisms of Habermas which can be overcome using Taylor and Ricoeur.

I have been using Taylor's concept of authenticity, i.e., the aim towards a higher ideal, as an important idea for the institution of the university. Authenticity would give the motivation for actors to seek to work towards mutual understanding. In addition, Taylor's theories overcome another criticism of Habermas, the universality of the concept of lifeworld and *TCA*. Taylor, being teleological in his thinking, as opposed to the Kantian perspective of Habermas, points to the necessity of societies, and, I would argue, important institutions of that society, to have some sort of horizon of significance, or a set of beliefs and values used to guide actions and make meaning. These frameworks, he says, are inescapable; whether we are aware of them or not, they guide our actions. In the past, frameworks and horizons of significance could be found in common religious or cultural beliefs. For many today, Taylor argues, these have been lost, leaving modern society open to instrumentalist and economic factors becoming dominant, similar to Habermas' conception of the colonisation of the lifeworld.

An important piece in authenticity is the recovery of the past. The past, or the historic community, can provide us with an understanding of a framework which goes

beyond economics and helps in developing a notion of the good. Recovery of the past directly overcomes the universalism of Habermas, as does Ricoeur's ideas of our structures of living together being based on a historic community.

But an organization as large and complex as today's university cannot be guided simply by an overarching 'horizon of significance' or common set of values. I think this is where Ricoeur's ethics are most helpful. By combining the teleological with the deontological, by putting ethics through the sieve of the norm, we can begin to see how policies, regulations and other facts of life for a university might work within a larger ethic, or notion of the good, needed for authenticity. And norms can be developed through communicative action within a strong lifeworld.

A major question remains, however. As pointed out earlier, Ricoeur's principles of the just institution are built upon a Christian foundation, especially in his later thinking. Taylor, while not specifically focused on Christianity, also argues for a transcendental good, which is often interpreted to suggest a metaphysical idea of a deity. Should the modern university, then, look to religion for its definition of the good? Or try to return to a past model or ideal, a concept which Ricoeur himself saw fail miserably in Nanterre?

In Chapter Two, the evolution of the ideals of higher education were traced and a modern ideal was developed. University education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century was envisioned as a public good which:

- i) creates thinking citizens who participate in democracy;
- ii) develop a fuller range of interests and abilities in the individual;
- iii) provides a place for informed and articulate discussion of critical issues in society and in doing so functions as an important part of a functioning public sphere;

iv) provides a foundation for the public good.

I suggest that these ideals should be the good to which the university can aspire and hold to as a motivation and framework for its institutional life and practices.

Ethical frameworks, while indispensable for authentic institutions with strong lifeworlds, are not enough on their own. Some kind of structural institutional framework must exist which can foster particular ways of living together. Ricoeur pointed out that the just institution must go beyond the rule of equality and disinterested interest, which is the basis of the modern social contract. He argued for the Christian idea of love (*agape*), a principle of selfless and self-giving love, which is certainly a radical change from the 'what's in it for me' current philosophy so often lamented today. We can use Taylor's notion of the secular, i.e., not the absence of religion in society, but a different place for it (Taylor, 2004, p. 194) to transpose this idea to a secular one which holds with the ideals described above. In this secular understanding, *agape* can be seen as a mutual obligation which each member of the community (in this case, the university) has to the other, based on each member's commitment to the larger community and its ideals. This goes beyond the type of obligation found in contracts (even social contracts) and into the realm of covenant, a faith term like *agape* which also has a secular counterpart: a voluntary agreement among independent but equal agents to create a shared community, an idea which takes the concepts of Habermas, Taylor and Ricoeur into account.

A covenantal organisation goes beyond shared interests, however; it also encompasses a shared identity. This type of organizational structure would create a



new social imaginary for the university, by which it could follow new norms and practices to offer an alternative to purely instrumental values in society. Is this realizable? The next chapter will provide a discussion of covenantal organizations.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Findings and Conclusions: Covenant as an Institutional Model for Authenticity

Through the discussions and investigations of the previous chapters, I find that there are traditional ideals which have held through time and which need to be reclaimed. These ideals, as retrieved from the historical past of the university and subjected to the notions of 'the good' are as stated below.

University education is a public good for the purpose of:

- i) creating thinking citizens who participate in democracy;
- ii) developing a fuller range of interests and abilities in the individual;
- iii) providing a place for informed and articulate discussion of critical issues in society, and in doing so, plays an important role in the public sphere; and
- iv) through these activities, providing a foundation for the public good.

The university, in response to various external pressures, is acting in ways which are altering its fundamental nature and traditional ideals. By becoming more like a business, the university risks becoming just *another* business enterprise in our society, with economic concerns the primary, if not sole, decision-making criteria, and credentialing its main reason for being. If this happens, the university is in danger of losing the important role and place it has held in society for the last thousand years, at, I believe, a great cost to society. To paraphrase Charles Taylor, I suggest that the

university is in malaise and the answer to this malaise is for the modern university to be revisioned as an authentic institution.

The previous chapters have discussed the colonisation of the university's lifeworld by system and how this makes it difficult if not impossible for the university to be an authentic institution. The need for authenticity in our institutions of higher education has been explored and a rationale developed. Ricoeur's ethical aim—living well with and for others in just institutions—has been offered as a possible organizational framework to realize the principle of authenticity. This ethical aim is particularly appropriate given the ideals for higher education and its institutions identified in Chapter Two: educating citizens for active and critical citizenship with the university as a key institution of the public sphere. The responsible educating of citizens is encompassed in Ricoeur's "living well with and for others" while the role of the university in the public sphere is addressed in his "in just institutions".

What is needed now is an organizational model which can create the robust lifeworld necessary for an authentic institution while at the same time meeting the imperative to educate citizens. My thesis is that a covenantal organisational structure can provide the university with a defence against the marketplace and a structure in which be authentic and ethical. This does not mean that economic considerations have no place; as demonstrated by Habermas, large and complex organisations need system. But system must be embedded within a strong lifeworld, which I think can best be built and maintained within a covenantal model. A covenantal model allows us to conceptualize our practices in terms of *phronesis* and authenticity, rather than through economic instrumentalism and market-like behaviour.

This chapter will explore a covenantal model of organization and philosophical rationale for this model. I will also provide evidence and examples of such organisational structure in other types of institutions. The history and background of covenant and the polity implications of such a model will also be discussed, and leadership in such institutions will be discussed.

## **Understanding Covenant**

What is meant by 'covenant'? A modern definition of the word, oriented towards an organization is "a voluntary agreement among independent but equal agents to create a "shared community." The primary purpose of the agreement is consciously to provide a stable social location for the interpretation of life's meanings in order to help foster human growth, development and the satisfaction of legitimate human needs" (Pava, 2003, p. 2). Covenants emphasize mutual respect and responsibility. The key focus in a covenant is relationships. An organization and its individual members choose to work by this model and are "simultaneously free agents and members of a living community" (Pava, p. 3). This does involve a certain amount of ambiguity, but within a covenant the participants are expected to "search actively and creatively for the best interpretation of the agreement—one that will benefit everyone in the long run..." (Pava, p. 3). For example, one might compare the restorative justice or 'healing circle' model (Robbie, 2005), where solutions are arrived at as a community, as opposed to an administrative justice model where previously approved policies are applied.

Covenants are based in moral commitment and by definition involve a transcendent moral authority. However, that authority need not necessarily be religion-

or faith-based. While much has been written on the Judeo-Christian aspects of covenant, Daniel Elazar, director of the Center for the Study of Federalism at Temple University, is one of the few scholars who has explored the political and organisational aspects of covenant in his four volume series, *The Covenant Tradition in Politics*. According to Elazar, every covenant involves the acts of consenting and promising and is meant to be of unlimited duration. Covenant as a theo-political idea “has within it the seeds of modern constitutionalism in that it emphasizes the mutually accepted limitations on the power of all parties to it, a limitation not inherent in nature but involving willed concessions” (Elazar, 1995, pp. 1-7). “In all its forms, the key focus of covenant is on *relationships*. A covenant is thus the constitutionalization of a relationship. As such, it provides the basis for the institutionalization of that relationship...” (Elazar, p. 24).

## **History of Covenant**

In spite of my earlier assertions that Christianity can no longer be the basis for authenticity for the university in an age of pluralism, it is necessary to consult the Bible, especially the Hebrew Scriptures, to understand fully the concept of covenant, especially its theo-political implications. It is this text which provides the framework, to use Taylor’s language, for all covenants. “Serious students of political thought must inevitably become aware of the Bible in shaping the political ideas of the Western world up until the first generations of the modern epoch” (Elazar, 1995, p. 55).

It was the Sinai covenant as found in the book of Exodus (19-24) which took a group of loosely knit tribes and made them into the nation of Israel. ‘Covenant’ is one of the oldest terms that deal with political order through “consent as manifested in a pact or

an appropriate level of mutual binding” (Elazar, p. 32). The Sinai covenant followed the typical pattern of Ancient Near East covenant agreements, including spelled-out ‘blessings and curses’ as found in Deuteronomy Ch. 26-28. “This political structure emphasizes the seriousness of the nature of the relationship between God and Israel and *ipso facto* eliminates the possibility of foreign alliances” (Unterman, p. 208).

The moral commitment in the Sinai covenant went beyond the loyalty oaths of more ancient covenants, and created an organization (i.e., the nation of Israel) the people of which were bound together in a stronger and more enduring way. This was a new form of covenant which brought God in as partner to the agreement as well as establishing Judaism as a monotheistic religion. It was “thus informed with religious value and implication for the Israelites, who saw no distinction between its religious and political dimensions. The covenant remained a theo-political document with as heavy an emphasis on the political as could be” (Elazar, p. 25).

This covenant foundation did not mean that the organised society of the nation of Israel was without problems which other societies have faced, in spite of a foundation of faith, as any reader of Hebrew Scripture can attest. However, even at its lowest points, within the diaspora and the major changes in the practice of Judaism which occurred after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE, the Sinai covenant remains as the foundation of Judaism, an artifact which even in the post-Holocaust world brings Jews together as a community.

## **Covenant as a Political Tradition**

A detailed discussion of the covenant tradition in politics is beyond the scope of this work, which will focus rather on the Biblical and understanding of covenant and the framework for authenticity, through adherence to a set of transcendent beliefs, this provides. This will be reinterpreted for organizations today in keeping with the notions of the transcendental in Ricoeur and Taylor. Therefore, the idea of covenant in Western polities will only be touched on very briefly here in order to show that the influence of covenant in political structures goes far beyond ancient Israel.

With the rise of Christianity and its increasing involvement with the state and political systems beginning in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century in the Roman Empire and coming to fruition in the 4<sup>th</sup> century with Constantine's declaration of Christianity as the legal religion of Rome, the notion of covenant ironically took on a more religious and less political meaning. Christian theology even to today has largely ignored the theo-political dimension of covenant, instead focusing on the spiritual meaning of the 'new covenant' which is typically based on a 'new' (Christian as opposed to Jewish) understanding of a relationship with God through the resurrected figure of Christ. This is often interpreted as an individual relationship as opposed to a community or group relationship, such as the nation of Israel (Judaism) had/has with God via earlier understandings of covenant. While covenant was important as one of the foundational ideas of Christianity, Christian theologians were "reinterpreting the old biblical covenant establishing a people as a polity as a covenant of grace between God and individual humans granted or mediated by Jesus" (Elazar, 1995, p. 26).

During the Reformation covenant re-emerged first in political theology and then in political philosophy. This was a central concept in Reformed Protestantism, as contrasted with Lutheranism and Anglicanism, the other main movements of the Reformation, and was known also as 'federal' theology, from the Latin *foedus*, which means 'covenant' and is the root of the English word 'federal'. The Reformed Protestants combined both theology and politics into a strong covenantal tradition which can perhaps be seen most clearly in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century England and Scotland under the Puritans and Presbyterians. Sometimes called the Covenanters, the Puritans created their Christian Commonwealth as a way of recognizing the importance of civil government for "maintaining the fabric of human society against human vices, especially greed, overweening ambition, and lawlessness" (Elazar, 1996, p. 156).

It was in the British colonies of North America, however, where neo-covenantal models for institutions actually took root a generation before the 17<sup>th</sup> century philosophers such as Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke began to formulate the modern expressions of covenantalism through their ideas of the political compact and civil society. By then the people of the New World had already begun modifying their institutions to deal with the realities of life in the new land and were well on the way towards a modern federal democratic republic, with 'federal' used in its original political sense of covenantal, the human pacts of modernity made 'under God' rather than with the Supreme Being (Elazar, 1998, pp. 5-6). The philosophers of the old world named this 'civil society', but it was a society which retained its connection to covenant much more strongly than had anything in Europe or Britain. "Indeed, one might say that the apotheosis of the modern experience in the United States was based upon the synthesis



of and tension between biblical covenantalism as filtered through Reformed Protestantism and modern ideas of political compact and civil society” (Elazar, 1998, p. 6). The modern epoch, beginning with the Enlightenment, brought about a secularization of covenant which expressed itself as the desire to achieve a civil society, which was eventually pursued as liberal democracy (ibid).

Both Reformed Protestantism and the Christian Commonwealth played major roles in the establishment of the United States and other polities, and it was through these filters that the covenantalism of the Bible reached these new societies.

There it was transformed into a set of operational principles, institutions, and practices. What had been primarily an ideological expression of a grand theory become a fundament of culture, a shaper of institutions, and a major influence on political and other behavior. In the process it was modified by modernity, a modification that ultimately was to have consequences far beyond those intended at the beginning of the modern epoch. (Elazar, 1998, p. 6)

The notion of Christian Commonwealth leads back to the involvement of various state churches and other denominations in universities of the time. “One of the most pronounced characteristics of the polity of the Reformation covenanted community was the link between the religious congregation, the civil government, and the university, with the universities in Reformed Protestant polities serving as centres for theological and doctrinal developments. Never before in history had universities played such a prominent role in a major social movement” (Elazar, 1996, p. 156). It is interesting to note this, as it shows a past example of the university, which by Taylor’s definitions were likely authentic institutions, *not* being an effective element in the public sphere, as also defined by Taylor, because of their role in working closely with government to foster

particular ways of thinking, as opposed to being centres of critical thinking regarding government.

Reformed Protestant covenantalism ended up in a bloody civil war in the British Isles after years of political ferment. It is interesting to consider whether things might have been different had universities been places of independent thought rather than institutions supporting and further developing the public agenda. Perhaps there are some cautionary lessons to be taken from this for today, when the public and government agenda is not a “federal” theology based on Christian metaphysics but rather an economic agenda based on the global marketplace and capitalism. If the university today simply becomes another agent of this agenda, what then?

### **Three Models of Polity: Hierarchical, Organic and Covenantal**

There are three basic forms from which all polities are derived and through which all are organized: hierarchical, organic, and covenantal. To understand more fully how a covenantal model might be applied in an institutional setting, it is helpful to understand these different models and their structures. Elazar, in the third volume of his series on covenant, *Covenant and Constitutionalism* (1998), defines these forms as follows.

Hierarchical models are generally founded by external or internal conquest of some sort (revolt, coup d’etat, corporate takeovers, for eg.). They are organized in pyramids based on power, with those with the most power at the top of the pyramid. Others are organized into levels, with each level having power and authority over those

below. Organisational charts follow this model. In hierarchies, administration takes precedence over politics. Politics takes the form of 'court politics', i.e. the struggle for the ear and favour of the ruler. There is rarely a constitution, but if there is, it consists of some type of charter granted by the ruler to those subordinate. The apotheosis of this model is military organisation, with generals at the top and privates at the bottom.

Polities founded and organized on the organic model seemingly grow 'naturally', and as they develop, the more powerful or otherwise talented leaders form an elite at the centre, while other members are relegated to the periphery. Rather than a pyramid, the organic organization can be pictured as two concentric circles, centre and periphery, with those at the centre ruling. Those in the centre determine the connections between the centre and the periphery. The politics are the politics of the 'club', or those with power at the centre. Administration flows from their politics. The constitution is the traditional body of accepted rules regarding the workings of the 'club' and the administration which is dependant on it. The apotheosis of this model is Westminster style parliamentarianism with the parliament understood as sovereign and dominated by those 'in the club'. The administration is also led by club members, but is subordinate to Parliament.

The covenantal model is characterized by a matrix, that is, a group of cells framed by a common institution. It is founded by reflection and choice; individuals or individual entities join together through a covenant or political compact as equals to unite and establish common governing institutions without sacrificing their respective integrities. The constitution is pre-eminent as it embodies the agreement which holds the entities together. The politics are based on negotiation and bargaining and designed to

be as open as possible. Administration is dependent upon the constitution for its authority and politics for its power. While hierarchies are sometimes organized within it, the covenantal model is not hierarchical, nor does it have a single centre. It is based upon multiple centres, each constitutionally protected. Its apotheosis is a federal system in which the constituent units are represented in the framing government and also preserve their own existence, authority and powers in those areas which are not delegated to the framing institutions. In Canada, this compares to the relationship between Ottawa and the provinces (Elazar, p. 1998, pp. 1-3).

Elazar also points out that even if the larger environment is not covenantal, institutions themselves can remain 'carriers' of the covenantal model at least until they are forced to be different by massive change in their contexts. "Thus the behavior of people functioning within those institutions, particularly their political behavior, is a clear manifestation of covenant where it exists" (Elazar, 1998, p. 6).

## **Covenants, Compacts and Contracts**

Covenant, compact and contract are three interrelated terms describing the formation of political order. Both compacts and contracts are derived from covenant, and sometimes the terms are used interchangeably (Elazar, pp 1-2). There are, however, important differences among the three. Understanding how the terms are related but differ assists in a fuller understanding of a covenantal institutional model.

Covenant is the oldest of these terms. As noted above, a covenant is a morally-informed agreement based upon voluntary consent and mutual oaths or promises,

witnessed by a higher authority, between parties with independent status, that provides for joint action or obligations to achieve defined ends under conditions of mutual responsibility which protect the individual integrities of all parties involved. Every covenant involves consenting, promising and agreeing. Covenants are in their essence political as their bonds are used principally to establish political and social bodies (Elazar, 1998, p. 7).

Compacts are similar to covenants, except that a covenant has a morally binding dimension which takes precedence over the legal dimension. Both are constitutional or public, and both are broadly reciprocal, that is, those bound by compacts or covenants are "obligated to respond to each other beyond the letter of the law rather than to limit their obligations to the narrowest contractual requirements (Elazar, 1995, p. 31). A compact is based upon mutual pledges rather than guarantees or promises made before a higher authority. The compact rests more heavily on a legal, though still ethical, grounding for its politics than does the covenant. A compact is essentially a secular form of covenant. Compact was introduced as part of the spread of Enlightenment ideas. "Those who saw the hand of God in political affairs in the United States continued to use the term *covenant*, while those who sought a secular grounding for politics turned to the term *compact*" (Elazar, 1995, p. 31).

Contracts are different from both compacts and covenant. Contracts are essentially agreements between individuals (or agencies, or individuals and agencies), whereas the other two are public. Contracts contain provisions for unilateral abrogation by one party or other of the contract, under certain conditions. Usually penalties of some type are involved. Covenants and compacts, on the other hand, need to be dissolved by

mutual consent. Contracts also tend to be in effect for a particular period of time, while compacts and covenants are of unlimited duration.

In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, Rousseau, Locke, Hobbes and others talked about the 'social contract'. Elazar calls this a 'highly secularized' concept, which, even when applied to public purposes, never developed the same level of moral obligation as either covenant or compact.

While some might suggest that 'compact' is a more appropriate term for the university because of its secular connotation, I would argue that within the context of authenticity, which is the lens through which this study looks, covenant is the more appropriate term. The opposite of secular need not be 'religious'. Authenticity is founded on a higher moral ideal, not necessarily a Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu or Wiccan higher ideal. The higher ideal proposed in Chapter 2 is moral, based on teleological notions of 'the good' and 'virtue'. Thus I find it appropriate as the moral basis for covenant.

## **Philosophical Rationale for Covenantal Organisations**

Covenant and the covenantal organisation are supported by the ideas of Taylor, Habermas and Ricoeur. The concepts of authenticity and the social imaginary, lifeworld, and just institutions are contained within the notion of the covenantal organisation.

The focal point of authenticity is the acknowledgement of and commitment to a horizon of significance based on a transcendental idea of the good and lived out within some type of community. Taylor, as discussed in Chapter Three, suggests that part of

the reason society is in malaise is due to the lack of authenticity in modern life, both in terms of a framework based on higher ideals and the lack of community experienced in many people's lives. This has allowed instrumentalism to become the framework. He further developed this thinking in his later work on the social imaginary, also discussed in Chapter Three. The social imaginary, or the common understanding of the way we make sense of things, has a moral order at its core. Like the malaise of modernity, the 'disembedding' experienced by our modern social imaginary is due in part to the loss of this moral order which has allowed economic considerations to be paramount.

Our practices are embedded within a social imaginary; the practices of the university are embedded within its own particular social imaginary. As with malaise and disembedding, the university has lost its ideals, its 'moral core'. Reclaiming an authentic existence for the university requires a sense of community and a commitment to a higher ideal. Both of these factors are inherent in the covenantal organisation, with the framework or moral core consisting of the ideals and commitment to being a public good, as opposed to an adherence to faith based belief system.

In Habermas, lifeworld closely corresponds to the covenantal organisation. Chapter Four discussed the lifeworld, the culturally transmitted and linguistically organised interpretative pattern which sustains our collective identity. It is maintained and reproduced through communicative ethics, which is discourse between individuals which is oriented towards reaching understanding. This communication is not to be coercive, but is based upon the desire of and aim for mutual understanding. The covenantal organisation is founded upon relationships of mutual respect and obligation

and like the lifeworld, these relationships take place within a community which functions on agreed upon values.

Chapter Four also discussed the need for system to be embedded within a strong lifeworld to prevent colonisation. When colonisation occurs, meaning making is compromised or destroyed, and money and power dominate the community. The university is not only in malaise, but, as shown in the examination of current practices, is being colonized; the lifeworld of the university is being dominated by system. As Habermas emphasised in *TCA*, a strong lifeworld is the answer to colonisation. For a strong lifeworld, an organisational model which supports ethical relationships and community values is needed. This can be achieved within a covenantal organisation, as the definition of such an organisation fulfils the criteria for a strong lifeworld.

Ricoeur's just institutions are based on a historical community with common mores and a narrative framework. As discussed in Chapter Five, institutions are inextricably linked with the realisation of self and the concept of others. For Ricoeur, the good life is found in praxis (*phronesis*) and friends, i.e., the individual, the interpersonal and societal are all important aspects. The ethic of living together, in institutions as well as in society, goes beyond solicitude to a hyperethic of love, which Ricoeur means in the Christian sense of a radical care for the other.

A secular understanding of the hyperethic of love means a mutual obligation which each member of the community has to the other. This is a covenantal relationship. Ricoeur's ethics, i.e., the aim to live the good life with and for others in just



institutions, also describes the essential elements of covenant; the just institution *is* the covenantal institution.

## **Examples of Covenantal Organisations**

There are some examples of real-life application of such models in both the educational and business spheres, which assist in our understanding such a structure for the university. Thomas Sergiovanni has taken the concepts of lifeworld and system and applied them directly to institutions, namely, public schools. Sergiovanni, with echoes of both Habermas and Taylor, speaks of culture, meaning and significance as part of the lifeworld of the school. The “systemsworld” is “a world of instrumentalities usually experienced in schools as management systems” (Seriogiovanni, 2000, p. 4). These systems are meant to help schools effectively and efficiently achieve their goals and objectives. When they work the way they are supposed to, systems actually enhance culture; the lifeworld and the systemsworld engage each other in a symbiotic relationship (2000, p. 4). Here Sergiovanni is clearly working from Habermas’ idea that systems are to be embedded in the lifeworld. Sergiovanni, in application of these concepts in the school, sees system as serving the lifeworld.

Sergiovanni too often, however, sees the colonisation of the lifeworld in public schools today. Management systems take priority over the needs of the children; accountability and outcomes guide decision-making.

The lifeworld is the part of the school that focuses on the learning of each child, and learning in turn is the activity which generates the cultural reproduction of the lifeworld...But in an environment where

standardization and accountability are so strongly desired, getting on with teaching is often quite difficult. (McConnell, 2002, p. 58-8)

In his book *Moral Leadership*, Sergiovanni described schools which do manage to maintain a strong lifeworld as 'virtuous schools' (as opposed to 'effective' schools) and studied ten examples of virtuous schools across the United States. All of these schools had traits in common. They concentrated all their efforts and energies on their conceptions of what students should be and know. They had strong social contracts that communicated the *reciprocal* responsibilities of administrators, teachers and students. They had a strong commitment to parenting and worked with the parents on moulding students' attitudes and values. They worked to maintain their distinctive character by socializing new teachers, students and parents to the model. They focused much less on process and procedures and much more on solving whatever problems got in the way of their goals as an organization.

Sergiovanni talks about the virtuous schools as 'building covenants' and in the above description it is easy to see many elements of traditional covenant. Covenants create the kind of bonding relationships necessary to build membership connections and values. In echoes of authenticity and ideals for universities, Sergiovanni finds that such bonded relationships foster the "aspect of human nature that places other interests before self-interest...they give needed meaning and significance to our work lives...and join covenant and virtue" (1992, p. 102).

Sergiovanni looks to the designated leadership in the individual organisation—in the case of the public school, the principal—to be the prime mover in reviving the lifeworld of schools and creating covenantal communities. Leadership of schools should

be a moral act much more covenantal than contractual. A covenantal relationship “rests on a shared commitment to ideas, to issues, to values, to goals...” (de Pree in Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 73). Schools should not be operated like businesses, but should be more like churches; leadership should shift from “doing things right” to “doing the right things” (1992, p. 4).

This ‘shared commitment’ in the schools may be driven and fostered by leadership, but also exists among individual members of the school: staff, students, parents, and the community. This corresponds to Habermas’ three components of lifeworld—culture, society, and individuals, to Taylor’s focus on a moral community with a clear sense of identity and to Ricoeur’s ‘with and for others’. ‘Shared commitment’ is also a defining element in covenant. A covenantal relationship according to Sergiovanni is dependant upon communication and mutual understanding among all groups. The ‘reproductive processes’ of the public school lifeworld, like those of Habermas’ lifeworld, take place through communicative action.

Why is the lifeworld of public schools so easily colonized?

The three processes so important to the lifeworld, mutual understanding, coordination, and identity formation, can hardly exist in the factory-like public schools of North America. The lifeworld can hardly be healthy in an environment where legislation dominates (board policies, government laws and standards, union contracts). Sergiovanni’s answer to this is the creation of smaller, quasi-independent schools that have some chance of sustaining a healthy lifeworld. (McConnell, 2002, p. 59)

Moses Pava, in his book *Leading With Meaning* puts the covenant model into the modern business context. Pava, a professor of business ethics at Yeshiva University, a Jewish university in New York, promotes the idea that rather than being viewed as

machines, large organizations like business and universities, should rather be viewed as covenantal institutions, basing their activities on shared agreement among equal partners (p. xiv). He asserts that religion and its traditional resources can “help frame and resolve some of the contradictions inherent in modern organizational life” (p. xvii). Covenantal organizations can also be open to change, but any and all change must be in the context of the covenant.

Pava discussed what he considers are the three most important elements in the covenantal organization. First, it is ‘open-ended’. Mutual responsibility and respect are emphasized, but are purposefully vague. This is intentional; as each member of the organization has the best interests of the ‘other’ foremost, the economy of language is meant to encourage new and deeper responsibilities to develop over time: “...in the context of a true covenant, all participants are expected to search actively and creatively for the best interpretation of the agreement—one that will benefit everyone in the long run—and not the one that requires the least amount of effort” (p. 2). ‘Not in my job description’ is not heard in the covenantal organization. Second, covenants are considered as long-term in nature. There are no pre-set time limits or expiration dates on a covenantal agreement. Third, a covenantal organization protects the integrity, uniqueness and personhood of all parties involved. At the same time, “it is understood that the covenant is a self-chosen mechanism for locking agents into a social entity” (p. 3). Pava points out that detractors of covenant call this the ‘fatal paradox’. However, he sees it as a strength: human freedom *requires* a background of social order and social order *requires* human freedom (p. 3).

Are there any business organizations which can actually live up to this model?

Three different organizations are mentioned in this particular study, the most notable being the American furniture company called Herman Millar. Under former CEO Max De Pree, who has himself written several books on leadership, Herman Millar was consistently in the top 25 of *Fortune's* most-admired companies list. Described as a covenantal leader, De Pree says:

Leaders owe the organization a new reference point for what caring, purposeful, committed people can be in the institutional setting. Notice I did not say what people can 'do'-what we can do is merely a consequence of what we can be...Covenants bind people together and enable them to meet their corporate needs by meeting the needs of one another. (De Pree, in Pava, p. 11)

Pava points out a weakness in his examples, in that in all of the organizations he uses as models, their leadership has a strong religious affiliation which they are very open about. He cautions that it is very easy to misappropriate the power of the covenant to demand adherence to a particular religious belief system. Covenant in a secular organization need not be based on a particular religious belief, albeit the individuals in that organization may adhere to one or many particular beliefs. Meaning-based organizations need not be based on meaning as defined by a particular religious view. However, organizations, even covenantal ones in a pluralistic context, are not required to be 'religion free'. Rather, he says, such organizations should be dedicated to noncoerciveness, transparency, pluralism, compromise and personal responsibility so that all can lead an 'integrated life' both inside and outside the institution.

## **Covenant in the University**

Many who work within the university will recognize the similarities between the situation Sergioivanni describes in many public schools, driven by an efficiency and accountability perspective, and what is faced in universities today. But is his solution applicable in a university context? Pava's examples of covenantal organizations all had strong leadership in the CEO's office. A university president does not have the same powers as a corporate CEO. The university is a more complex organization than most large corporations and certainly more complex than even the largest schools described by Sergioivanni. The question of a covenantal model for the university is thus a valid one.

According to Pava:

...our colleges and elite universities are about as close as one comes in the modern world to a purely covenantal organization. They are virtually the only organizations that openly recognize, with few or no apologies, that the primary function of shared community is to provide a stable location for the interpretation of life's meanings so as to foster human growth, development and the satisfaction of legitimate human needs. (Pava, p. 147)

Pava's point is that universities represent the best potential we have today for a covenantal institutional model. The modern university has moved away from its traditional ideals, which I suggest provided the covenantal organisation Pava refers to, and which is a possibility for the university to reclaim. Pava himself, it should be noted, is a professor in a small, orthodox Jewish university which may well be more covenantal in its orientation than the typical large, public institution, and this may well be the perspective from which his comment originate. However, I again emphasize his point:

universities have the *capacity*, perhaps more so than other institutions, to be covenantal in nature. If one accepts the ideals for higher education and universities today as outlined in Chapter 2, then a covenantal model with its emphasis on mutuality and responsibility to the ideal would seem a highly appropriate institutional model.

Roger Simon, in his essay "The University: A Place to Think?" (in Giroux, 2001), also makes the case for a covenantal model, although he does not name it as such. However, he argues that the university must struggle with the long tradition of the university as *in* but not *of* the world, where the most profound human needs and longings are released, formed and matured; the need to train skilled and educated workers for our economy; and reinvigorating the link between education and democracy (Simon, pp. 48-50). Simon suggests that in order to balance these often conflicting demands, new options must be explored. The best way to do this, in his opinion, is to re-vision the university as a community of learning, a place to think, which can be characterized by relationships of "being-together" in a way which Readings (1996, p. 127) described as "dissensual community" (as opposed to consensual). This means relinquishing the idea of a community in regulatory or unity-in-thought terms, and rather considering the institution of the university in terms of the specific obligations it engenders, precisely the *obligation* of thought-in-relation. Echoing Ricoeur's imperative of living well with and for others, Simon calls this commitment on the part of faculty (and, I would add, ideally on the part of all who live and work within the university) to thought-in-relation as a *sacred trust* between student and teacher which is fulfilled in the process of facilitation of an adventure of self-knowing (Simon, p. 49). While Simon acknowledges the demands on faculty which create the kind of institution in which

Readings says thought is more and more difficult and less and less necessary (Readings, p. 175), he still regards the quest for the thought-in-relation, dissensual community as vitally important to the future of the university and a goal which is worthwhile to work towards.

Simon's institutional model exhibits a number of the characteristics of the covenantal organization, with its foundation of commitment to others and to a higher authority, in this case the 'alibis' or ideals of university education and the notion of the faculty-student relationship as a sacred trust, which seen in the context of thought-in-relation brings us back to Habermas' strong communicative action, in which the participants refer to intersubjectively shared value orientations that - going beyond their personal preferences - bind their wills. Participants in a strong lifeworld (which Simon's model reflects) are oriented towards the intersubjectively recognized 'rightness' of the validity claims, in this case the alibis outlined above. In weak communicative action, as found in the contractual organization, actors are oriented solely towards claims to truth and truthfulness (i.e., the facts) which are one-sided expression of will: neither actor is prepared to accept the claims of the other. The contractual relationship, where, for example, one is teaching because one is compelled to by reason of one's employment agreement, cannot contribute to the notion of thought-in-relation.

Similar thoughts were expressed in the *Rae Review* (2005). While the report emphasized the need for 'excellence' in higher education, defined in terms of outstanding faculty, research and students, Rae also expressed concerns about the poor quality of student experience in many post-secondary institutions: "If students feel they



come and go and no one cares, something is out of balance. A commitment to excellence includes a commitment to an outstanding student experience” (pp. 17-18).

John Bennett, in his 2003 article “Constructing Academic Community: Power, Relationality, Hospitality and Conversation”, follows the thinking of Simon and shares the concern of the *Rae Review* in terms of the student experience in universities. He argues that rather than the “insistent individualism” prevalent in universities today and exhibited by not only faculty but students and staff as well, what we need is a balance between the individual and community. One-way power, particularly as it resides within the faculty-student relationship, is dangerous and works against relationship. Rather, the focus, beginning with the way academic culture pre-disposes those in it to think of themselves as independent entities, needs to be on hospitality, the practice of radical openness to the other. This, in turn, will lead to conversation, which is where individuals have the opportunity to develop their own distinct voices. Bennett uses the discourse ethics of Habermas to define what hospitable conversation entails. While Bennett, like Simon, recognizes that “academic community in its fullness may even elude us” (p. 59), it is yet a goal for which we should aim, a “standard against which to measure ourselves and a lure that can draw us out of ourselves” (p. 60).

This theme is also found in Oakeshott’s work. In “The Universities” (1949), he laments the typical student experience in most universities. No attempt is made to provide the mental and spiritual security which the undergraduate needs and desires, and students are seldom encouraged to find answers to the larger questions of life themselves. “Most students go through our universities without ever having been forced to exercise their minds to the issues which are really fundamental” (p. 121). For

Oakeshott, this is symptomatic of the disintegrated community of scholars which academic institutions have become, weak alliances of “intellectual entrepreneurs” who, rather than agree to disagree (essential to academic life) instead have agreed to be ignorant of one another. What is needed to overcome this “malaise”, to use Taylor’s term, is nothing short of revolution, a “drastic Metanoia” (Oakeshott, p. 121). We cannot go back to a Christian tradition for universities, but neither are classical and scientific humanism any longer workable frameworks. Rather, the whole basis of the university must be revisioned.

## **Creating Covenantal Organisations and Directions for Future Study**

The question remains of how a covenantal structure might be applied in our institutions. The nature and culture of the university institution is such that even the strongest leaders cannot cause change or force people to act in certain ways. While the very idea of covenant includes a notion of transcendence, the nature of covenant in terms of being a voluntary association consisting of relationships of mutual respect and obligation precludes a hierarchical approach to creating this institutional model. However, steps can be taken towards the aim of covenant by leaders and administrators at all levels.

The key focus and indeed the building block of the covenantal institution is relationship, which, in the case of the university goes beyond relationships between staff and faculty. Although these are important, based on the ideals of the university the key relationships are between the representatives of the institution (staff and faculty) and the

students. This relationship, for most students, is expressed fundamentally in their experience in the classroom and with the 'system' of the university. Therefore, in order to create a covenantal institution, the university needs:

- a renewed emphasis and value on teaching;
- increased focus on student services and support.

Leadership at all levels also needs to consider how and what the university communicates regarding community and the nature of the discussions which take place at any and all decision-making tables. This means:

- intentional action on the part of leaders to create and nurture a sense of community among all members of the university community, including attention to the narratives, actions, and symbols which we encounter on a daily basis.
- decision-making at all levels which, while acknowledging economic realities and the need for efficiency and accountability, frames discussions and decisions within the context of the higher ideals of the university.
- reclaiming accountability from the realm of accountants and rearticulating it in terms of accountability towards one another in the community of the university.

How each of these could be achieved and implemented requires further study and consideration. There are several futures areas of study in terms of philosophical questions as well as practical organisational issues which warrant exploration, such as:

- Can a large organisation be covenantal? Could this be achieved by creating a system of smaller institutions-within-an-institution in the university, perhaps similar to the smaller college system which existed in many institutions?
- In what ways can faculty, students and staff be encouraged to consider changing their relationship with the university from contractual to covenantal?

- How might administrative policies need to change to foster community?
- Is there anything to be learned from smaller institutions which have become covenantal organizations, particularly elementary and high schools?
- How can notions of individual identity in Taylor, Ricoeur and Habermas be applied to institutional identity, for e.g., narrative and remembering?
- What would leadership in a covenantal university look like?
- Are there any current models of covenantal universities, for e.g., private religiously-based institutions? Do they in practice function as communities? In what ways? What might be applied to large, public institutions in an effective way?
- Can leadership, no matter how dedicated, create a 'covenantal' atmosphere in an organization many experts have described as one of the most complex in existence today—the modern university?

## **Final Reflections: The Journey of This Dissertation**

To conclude this dissertation, I will go back to my roots as a theologian and the disposition of hope which I articulated in the introduction. It is this disposition of hope which allows me to suggest that there is an 'exit ramp' to the current path of increasing academic capitalism, with all that it entails, in our universities. This dissertation was intended to assist educational leaders in developing new and different ways of thinking and reflecting on current issues and practises, using philosophical thinking and the notion of *phronesis*. The tradition of covenant has reappeared through Taylor, Habermas and Ricoeur, and allows us to re-theorize and re-animate the great traditions of higher education and the institution of the university.

This is not to suggest for a moment that economic and practical considerations for university education are not important, nor that they should be ignored in favour of some kind of romanticized return to a purely academic golden age which never in fact existed. On the contrary, universities have a responsibility to the society in which they are situated, and have always had such responsibility. As publicly-funded institutions, today's universities have an obligation to use taxpayer dollars as efficiently and effectively as possible, and to look for ways to improve revenue and to be entrepreneurial in providing more funds to support their activities and students.

However, I am saying, strongly, that the focus should not *only* be on the financial and practical, and that economic decisions must be made within the context of the broader ideals—and obligations—of the university, i.e., system must be nested within lifeworld. The university, as has been discussed earlier, currently runs the risk of losing this broader context and becoming simply another economically-oriented institution, of forgetting its long history and tradition and being *more* than an economic driver for society.

My hope—and goal—for the university is that the notion of covenantal institution will encourage educational leaders at all levels to also take hope that it is possible to consider the university as more than an economic institution. Or, to paraphrase, that we, the people involved in university education, the people who constitute the institutions, will accept this as a call to action to a 'better way' than the current pathway of economic imperative is leading us and work towards reconfiguring the university as a just and authentic institution for the great good of the individual student and society

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