Conflicting Models of the University: Traditionalist and Innovative Views and the Semantic Horizon of ‘The University’

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Abstract: In the first part of this chapter I provide an analysis of the claim that ‘the university is in crisis.’ This claim, so it turns out, cannot be rephrased as ‘a lot of universities are experiencing serious difficulties.’ The first claim is of a more evaluative nature, while the second claim is of a more factual nature. In the remainder of this chapter I flesh out two oppositional viewpoints on ‘the university.’ The Traditional viewpoint starts out from an articulation of an ‘idea of the university.’ The Innovative viewpoint is based on a more empirically informed view on the history, evolution and characteristics of (existing) universities. The two views are compared along the following dimensions: research, teaching, service to society, the professor, the student and the institution. Both views, although opposed, can be located within the ‘semantic horizon’ of the concept of the university.

Key Words: Crisis, University, Education, Research, Teaching, Semantic Horizon

1. Introduction

Those who decry the ‘fall of the university’ often start their criticism of the present state of the academy with an articulation of a normative ‘idea of the university.’ Those who deny the crisis - although often accepting the analysis of the present state of the university in terms of ‘experiencing difficulties’ - often start out from a more empirically informed view of the ‘modern’ university. This opposition influences and partly structures the contemporary debate on ‘the university.’ In this chapter I flesh out these oppositional models and situate them within what could be called the semantic horizons of ‘the university.’

Elsewhere I analysed the dynamic of the debate on the ‘Crisis of the University’ in terms of persuasive definitions - a concept developed by Ch.L. Stevenson.' In this chapter I would like to focus more on the content
of the positions that seem to dominate this debate on the ‘crisis of the university.’

2. The crisis of the University: What university? Which crisis?

“The University is in Crisis.” This claim could be heard throughout the 20th century but is probably as old as the university itself. From the eighties onwards, however, we witness a real ‘boom’ in books, articles, opinion pieces and the like claiming this crisis to be the case, analysing it and offering remedies to solve it. Lamenting the ‘decline of the university’ seems to be an academic growth-market. But what are people really saying when they utter this seemingly clear, and to some obviously and evidently true assertion: ‘The University is in Crisis’?

Is the University in Crisis? What do you mean? Whose or what ‘University’? And which ‘Crisis’? There are two central terms in the proposition: ‘the University’ and ‘Crisis.’ What do they mean for those who state that the university is in crisis??

Let’s start with the first term: “The University.” Mind the Capitals, the definite article ‘the’ and the singular use of the noun ‘university.’ ‘The University’, of course, is a Fiction - a useful fiction perhaps, but a fiction nonetheless. ‘The University’ does not exist as such. Only real universities exist. ‘The University’ refers to an Idea and, for some, to an Ideal. ‘The University’ has, therefore, not the same meaning as “universities.” The latter refers to real institutions that are plural and diverse and have a history.

And how are we to understand to understand this ‘Crisis?’ Let us try a reformulation: “(A lot of) universities experience (serious) difficulties.” Is this true? It seems to be so. Cutbacks, external quality control, massification of higher education, casualisation of the academic force, etc… all seem to contribute to the difficulties most universities are experiencing. However, a lot of universities seem to be doing well. They thrive, are making money and are expanding. Furthermore, each year, we have more and more of them - or so it seems. Some universities, however, do seem to experience serious difficulties. But ‘having difficulties’ - even serious ones - does not mean the same as ‘being in Crisis.’

What, then, are people saying when they claim that ‘The University is in Crisis?’ My reformulation by substituting ‘universities’ for ‘The University’ and ‘difficulties’ for ‘Crisis’ doesn’t seem to work. Apparently, then, the proposition: “The University is in Crisis,” means something different than: “(Some) universities are having (serious) difficulties.”

Of course both sentences are related. There is a connection, a relationship or even a kinship between them - but there are some important
differences between them as well. The first sentence has an *evaluative* meaning, while the second sentence is more of a *factual* nature. Another striking aspect of the relation between the two sentences is the fact that they are *logically* independent from each other. Agreeing to the second statement does not imply agreeing to the first, and agreeing to the first, does not imply agreeing to the second.

I mean this in a much broader sense than what has come to be known as the fact-value distinction, meaning that you cannot derive a normative or evaluative statement from a factual statement (Hume’s Law). The debate on the (alleged) current “Crisis of the University” transcends in some sense the discussions on the empirical state and characteristics of existing universities. The discussion on the Crisis of the University is an evaluative debate.

What, then, is all this talk about ‘The University in Crisis’ then really about? What do the critics mean by “The University”? What do they mean when they use the word “Crisis”?

The use of the word “Crisis” obviously implies that there have been some changes, some developments, some kind of upheaval, which seem to threaten “The University” as such. But these problems are not necessarily the difficulties of the empirical universities. The key to understanding the meaning and the use of the label ‘Crisis’ lies in the content that is given to the label ‘The University’ and in the ways it is used.

3. “The University” vs. “Universities”

There exists an important difference between on the one hand “The Idea of a University”, or “The University,” and ‘real universities’ on the other hand. The empirical history of the universities is related to but ultimately different from the history of and content of the concept of “The University.” (H. Gray) This is a simple but altogether very important point - with important consequences. Some even claim that the concept never did match the institution.

The birth of ‘the university’ is a very complex historical process in which its structure, identity and mission have been appropriated and re-appropriated to the different ‘needs, structures and aspirations of different times and settings.’ The institution we know at the beginning of the 21st century as a ‘university’ is the outcome of a long historical process in which knowledge/research and teaching at the highest level became combined within one institution. At least two inspirational models were influential in creating the modern version of the university. One hand we have the ‘liberal arts’-based model of Cardinal Newman, on the other hand we have the ‘science’-based model of von Humboldt. In both models
'liberal-arts' as well as 'science' play a major role. Newman did not oppose scientific research, but he did put education at the heart of the university. Von Humboldt also combined both functions, but he placed research at the heart of the university. Von Humboldt’s model has probably been the most influential in shaping the modern university. It did not eliminate the liberal arts tradition but anchored it in and wedded it to the research mission of the university. It was to be a decisive moment in the birth of the modern university.

A. The idea(l) of the University

“The University”, I said earlier, is, as such, a fiction - albeit a useful fiction. “The University” stands for a type of institution that inspires awe in those who are outside of it, and bestows dignity and self-appreciation on those who are part of it. ‘The University’ stands for something worthwhile over and beyond its concrete inputs, workings and outputs. ‘The University’ is truly a higher institution and represents an idea and an ideal. It is:

a partially imagined idea that stirred people to envision a sense of the timeless dignity, the enduring worth, the permanence amidst the flux and chaos that reigned elsewhere in the world, of the higher learning and its institutions. Bologna, Paris, Oxford: these came in a long tradition to stand for the grand accomplishments of scholastic philosophy and theology, and jurisprudence, for an ideal of the universality and the unity of knowledge, its essential parts ordered in an hierarchy of truth. They stood for the international character of learning, for a community of scholars that transcended all boundaries to constitute a larger republic of learning. They represented the fundamental autonomies and freedoms requisite for the academic world. Their degrees gave life and authority to the profession of teaching, and scholarship and to the other learned professions.

Such is the highly generalized image of the ancient and timeless university with its dreaming spires that has emerged and re-emerged in the western tradition and its literature.
In this sense ‘The University’ has become one of the centrepieces of our culture. But apparently, this (idea of the) university has come under siege during the last decennia.

In an opinion piece recently published in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* (2000) and titled “The University is Dead, Long Live the University,” Ronald Barnett poses the question how the (modern) university is to understand itself. This is no easy question because according to Barnett:

> the university as a concept is no more. Amid diversity there may be no one thing that any ‘university’ has in common with its neighbour. Amid entrepreneurialism, the university has no responsibility: it becomes what market chances offer it. Either way, there is nothing that binds ‘universities’ together for which they stand. As a concept, therefore, the university is empty.5

But Barnett, like so many others, is not willing to leave it at that, because “allowing the idea of the university to collapse does matter. Indeed, we need an idea of the university more than ever (…).”6 His option is to construct and defend a novel idea of ‘the university,’ one that is ‘attuned to the craziness of the world that we are in.’

However, some deny that the traditional concept or ‘idea of the university’ is a dead one. According to them, there is nothing, or at least nothing major wrong with the idea of a university that has been around ‘for ages.’ The problem is not that there is no longer a tenable and/or applicable concept of the university. The real problem is that today, some or most of the institutions that are called universities have changed up to the point that they cannot be rightly called ‘a university’ any more. According to these ‘traditionalists,’ the ‘real,’ ‘authentic,’ ‘original,’ etc. university has some defining characteristics and when one looks at the contemporary university, most or all of these key characteristics are no longer present in the modern university. Therefore, these institutions cannot be called ‘universities’ any more, except perhaps in a dangerously extended or metaphorical sense. After all, ‘MacDonald’s Hamburger University’ is not a real university, is it?

But this Idea of the (real) University is, as I said before, not the same as the universities that supposedly are instantiations of it. And the history of the Idea of “The University” differs from the history of the institution - although, clearly, the histories are somehow related.
B. The ‘modern’ university

The ‘modern’ university came into being during the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding different national traditions and the proliferation of different types of ‘universities’ the core meaning of the term has more or less stabilised as “an institution of higher learning providing facilities for teaching and research and authorized to grant academic degrees.”

This, of course, is a lexical definition. It is useful for informing those who might not know what ‘a university’ is. In academic and ordinary discourse and in the writings about the university the word is often used with a much richer and thicker semantic content. The descriptive meaning is elaborated and the term acquires a strong positive emotional meaning - which is already partly visible in the lexical definition by the use of ‘higher.’ Those who refer to an ‘idea’ of the university when defining the concept expand the lexical definition and create a prescriptive definition. In this sense, talking about ‘the idea of the university’ amounts to talking about the ideal of the university.

This does not mean that there are no restrictions on the definitions one can propose. There has to be a more or less stable core meaning and limiting boundaries of intelligible linguistic practice. Here is, e.g., Paul David’s functional definition of ‘a university’. He states that the nexus of functions that universities have fulfilled in open societies are extensive and multifarious:

Included within the core are the peer-evaluation and validation of additions to the knowledge-base, their further codification and transmission to students and scholars at large, the provision of research conditions that help to insulate the conduct of inquiry from the manifestly distorting pressures that external economic and political interests otherwise would bring to bear, and the maintenance of institutional protections for the expression of independent judgment and, moreover, unpopular heterodox opinion. (…) The acknowledged legitimacy of all those aspects of ‘the university’s mission,’ (…) remains a unique, perhaps a defining attribute of these remarkable organizations, and is the fundamental basis of the university’s claim to society’s patronage and protection of its autonomous character.

Taking this definition as our lead we can identify at least the following defining characteristics an institution should (minimally) have if it can be called a university:
excellent research conditions & generation of new knowledge;
• codification/publication and transmission/teaching of knowledge;
• peer-based & high-level quality control;
• institutional & intellectual autonomy.

However, stated in this way, the ‘core meaning’ of ‘the university’ still remains somewhat vague and not exhausted. The four characteristics only elaborate the lexical definition given above. Probably everyone agrees on the centrality of these defining characteristics. The debate on the ‘Crisis of the University’ revolves not on these characteristics per se, but on how they should be filled in and on further characteristics that should be included in the definition. And it is here that the main differences between views of the university become elaborated, generating conflicting models of the university.

C. Traditionalists and Innovators

In his review of Bill Reading’s ‘the university in ruins,’ Dominick LaCapra makes a distinction between two ‘models of academe:’ a market model and a model of corporate solidarity and collegial responsibility. The models LaCapra identifies in academic life are linked to two oppositional definitions of the university. I will dub these the ‘Traditionalist model’ and the ‘Innovative model.’ These models do not represent the definitions most academics actually accept or explicitly defend. They are, however, dominant in the sense that many academics more or less feel torn between the extremes, sometimes stressing the ‘classical liberal’ idea(l) of a university, sometimes stressing the ‘market-oriented’ idea(l).

Let us take a closer look at the ways in which this “Idea of the University” has been filled in and on how recent changes have altered this idea. I will focus on the three ‘classical’ missions of the university (i.e., teaching, research, and service to society) on the type of students, on the faculty and on the kind of institution a university is.

D. Traditionalist models of the University

We find one of the purest post-war formulations of a Traditionalist model of the university in the writings of Michael Oakeshott. In his 1950 article ‘The Idea of A University,’ he takes issue with those who argue that the (then) contemporary universities are not as clear as they ought to be about their ‘function.’ He wonders what people
are talking about when they talk about the ‘mission’ and the ‘function’ of a university. Although he admits that at a certain level he can understand what is at stake in these discussions, he disagrees with what is, according to him, one of the premises of this kind of talk, namely the assumption that ‘there is something called ‘a university’, a contrivance of some sort, something you could make another of tomorrow if you had enough money, of which it is sensible to ask, What is it ‘for’?” According to Oakeshott this represents a mistake about the nature or character of universities, for “[a] university is not a machine for achieving a particular purpose or producing a particular result.” A university is not really a ‘thing,’ or an institution you can duplicate or create ‘at will.’ A university is a lot more than an institution that can be created, e.g., by a decision of a government. For Oakeshott, a university is better characterised as “a manner of human activity.”

If I understand Oakeshott correctly, all this talk about a ‘mission’ or ‘function’ of a university, or when a university “advertises” itself as pursuing a particular purpose,” betrays a loss of the idea of what a university really is, because according to Oakeshott, this kind of talk about the university is only necessary when “talking to people so ignorant they had to be spoken to in baby-language.”

There is no ‘recipe’ for a university - a set of guidelines, goals, procedures, etc., that when implemented produce ‘a university.’ A university is the result of a growth process:

[Universities] may not know what they are ‘for’, they may be very hazy about their ‘function’, but I think they do know something that is much more important - namely, how to go about the business of being a university. This knowledge is not a gift of nature; it is the knowledge of a tradition, it has to be acquired, it is always mixed up with error and ignorance, and it may even be lost.

A ‘true’ university distinguishes itself from non-universities by its dedication to the pursuit of learning, and in the way this pursuit is organised and carried out:

What distinguishes a university is a special manner of engaging in the pursuit of learning. It is a corporate body of scholars, each devoted to a particular branch of learning: what is characteristic is the pursuit of learning as a co-operative enterprise. The members of this
corporation are not spread about the world, meeting occasionally or not at all; they live in permanent proximity to one another. And consequently we should neglect part of the character of a university if we omitted thinking of it as a place. A university, moreover, is a home of learning, a place where a tradition of learning is preserved and extended, and where the necessary apparatus for the pursuit of learning has been gathered together.

According to Oakeshott, three classes of persons make up a university: the scholars, the scholars that teach and the undergraduates. And “the presence of these three classes, and the relations that prevail between them, determine the distinctive place of a university in the wider enterprise we call the pursuit of learning.”

The scholars focus on ‘learning.’ However, not all knowledge counts as learning, because “[t]here is a difference between the pursuit of learning and the acquisition of information.” This ‘world of learning’ is not easy to pin down because there is no clear reason like, e.g., usefulness that can be found to justify its parts. The world of learning does not grow out of a premeditated purpose. It is the result of a slowly changing tradition.

The way in which the scholars teach the students supersedes the power and knowledge of the individual scholar. University teaching is done by “a body of scholars who supply one another’s imperfections, both personal and scholastic. It accommodates many different sorts of teacher, and each draws its powers from its intercourse with other sorts. (...) [W]hat [a university] imparts in this way is at least the manners of the conversation.”

The undergraduate has a distinctive character as well. According to Oakeshott the university student has had already his schooling elsewhere “and has learned enough, morally and intellectually, to take a chance with himself upon the open sea.” He does not come to the university to merely acquire ‘useful knowledge.’ The student participates in the ‘pursuit of learning.’ Therefore, “the undergraduate would never be tempted to mistake his university for an institute in which only one voice was heard, or for a polytechnic in which only the mannerisms of the voices were taught.” For the undergraduate, the distinctive mark of a university is that:

it is a place where he has the opportunity of education in conversation with his teachers, his fellows and himself,
and where he is not encouraged to confuse education with training for a profession, with learning the tricks of a trade, with preparation for future particular service in society or with the acquisition of a kind of moral and intellectual outfit to see him through life. Whenever an ulterior purpose of this sort makes its appearance, education (which is concerned with persons, not functions) steals out of the back door with noiseless steps. The pursuit of learning (…) when it appears as a so-called 'social purpose' (…) with this a university has nothing to do. The form of the curriculum has no such design (…). 22

Oakeshott summarizes his views on the university as follows:

A university, like everything else, has a place in the society to which it belongs, but that place is not the function of contributing to some other kind of activity in the society but of being itself and not another thing. Its first business is with the pursuit of learning - there is no substitute which, in a university, will make up for the absence of this - and secondly, its concern is with the sort of education that has been found to spring up in the course of this activity. 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 came to be taught come, not in search of their intellectual fortune but with a vitality so unroused or so exhausted that 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. 23

Oakeshott was defending his views on the nature of the university in a period in which the academic landscape was in turmoil. The post-war university was driven towards a 'social contract' with society in which mutual benefits were expected. Universities should produce knowledge that should to be useful for society and the economy. The government, in its turn, would secure the financing of those universities. Oakeshott
strongly opposed this ‘social contract’ and the way ‘society’ would interfere with the university’s ‘business of the being a university,’ i.e., being a collegial social setting in which the pursuit of knowledge is central and in which students are provided with an education instead of a training.

Gordon Johnson - President of Wolfson College, Cambridge - recently made a similar point. Reviewing the 1997 autumn issue of the well-known journal *Daedalus* entirely devoted to the Academic profession in the United States, he wrote about the thoughts the articles might evoke:

For some, these essays remind them of ways in which higher education is not just about delivering a service, nor of pressing people into grey uniformity, but of stimulating while disciplining the mind. Universities are the guardians of objectivity, disinterestedness, tradition, aesthetic appreciation and the unending search for new knowledge and better understanding. True, some academic controversies may not do much more for humanity than those medieval wrangles about the number of angels that could be accommodated on the point of a pin. But there is a sense in which there is a real bottom line: civilized societies need educated citizens and educated citizens come from the values fostered by academics in real universities (...).  

Writing nearly 40 years later than Oakeshott and a few years earlier than Johnson, in a different context of discussion, Allan Bloom would formulate a similar idea(l) of a university.

In his controversial bestseller *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) Bloom was venting his resentment towards what ‘the university’ had become. He lamented the disappearance of the kind of university Oakeshott described earlier - different national traditions notwithstanding. Bloom resisted the way ‘society’ had entered the university by influencing the curriculum, and providing the students with a ‘relativistic mindset.’ He as well denounced the institutional impact of the (economical) social contract: “[n]ever did I think that the university was properly ministerial to the society around it. Rather I thought and think that society is ministerial to the university.” However, today “the democratic concentration on the useful, on the solution of what are believed by the populace at large to be the most pressing problems, makes theoretical distance seem not only useless but immoral.”
On the contrary, for Bloom the “university is the place where inquiry and philosophic openness come into their own. It is intended to encourage the non-instrumental use of reason for its own sake (...).”

Bloom strongly emphasises the need for formulating and defending an idea(l) of the university:

Falling in love with the idea of the university is not a folly, for only by means of it is one able to see what can be. Without it, all these wonderful results of the theoretical life collapse back into the primal slime from which they cannot re-emerge. The facile economic and psychological debunking of the theoretical life cannot do away with its irreducible beauties. But such debunking can obscure them, and has.

Bloom’s model for the university somewhat resembles that of Oakeshott. For Bloom a ‘great university’ was a place outside society presenting a kind of atmosphere:

announcing that there are questions that ought to be addressed by everyone but are not asked in ordinary life or expected to be answered there. It provided an atmosphere of free inquiry, and therefore excluded what is not conducive to or is inimical to such inquiry. It made a distinction between what is important and not important. It protected the tradition, not because tradition is tradition but because tradition provides models of discussion on a uniquely high level. It contained marvels and made possible friendships consisting in shared experiences of those marvels. Most of all there was the presence of some authentically great thinkers who gave living proof of the existence of the theoretical life and whose motives could not easily be reduced to any of the baser ones people delight in thinking universal. They had authority, not based on power, money or family, but on natural gifts that properly compel respect. The relations among them and between them and the students were the revelation of a community in which there is a true common good.

One of Bloom’s main concerns was with how the crisis he perceived affected the social sciences. It was here that according to him
'society' had infiltrated the university the most and damaged the key function of a university of providing students with experiences they cannot have in that society and endangered the ‘professional attachment to free inquiry.’

The natural sciences, according to Bloom, present a different story altogether. The problem with the natural sciences is their isolationist stance: "[n]atural science is doing just fine. Living alone, but happily, running along like a well-wound clock, successful and useful as ever." According to Bloom, the natural sciences were still relatively free from the pressures of society. However, their breaking away from the rest of the university and their immunity to the pressures constitutes “a large part of the story behind the fractured structure of our universities.” This is a strange myopia of Bloom’s account. During the nineties, of course, even the ‘natural sciences’ would come under a mounting pressure for aligning their research with societal and economical needs, thereby giving rise to complaints about the loss of free inquiry in this field of research as well.

At the turn of the century one of the main concerns of the critics was the rising influence of economic pressures on the university. David Kirp wrote that:

[w]hile the public has been napping, the American university has been busy reinventing itself. In barely a generation, the familiar ethic of scholarship - baldly put, that the central mission of universities is to advance and transmit knowledge - has been largely ousted by the just-in-time, immediate gratification of the marketplace. (...) Gone (...) is any commitment to maintaining a community of scholars, an intellectual city on a hill free to engage critically with the conventional wisdom of the day.

And in the year 2000, Richard Florida - one of the modern day gurus - wrote that “[t]he role of the university as an engine for regional economic development has captured the fancy of business leaders, policymakers, and academic, and led them astray.”

At the end of the 20th century, the traditionalist model as an idea and an ideal was gradually challenged by an Innovative, market-oriented, entrepreneurial model, idea and ideal of the university.

E. Innovative models of the University

The OECD summarises the forces leading up to the modern university and the effects of these forces. According to the OECD, a
‘market’ approach has strongly influenced the development of the modern university:

Students are consumers or customers with wants (such as marketable skills - competencies or skills certified through degrees or diplomas), and service providers (e.g. universities) compete in order to satisfy them. This approach also affects the research function of universities and accompanies the trend to contract-based research funding and closer links with industry. Government and industry are customers with wants (particular research projects, at a competitive price, within a specified time frame), and service providers (universities among others) compete in order to satisfy them. Universities stand to gain recognition and prestige, increased influence in the community, and continuing support from government or funding agencies, with opportunities for further expansion and growth.34

This market approach deeply influences two of the classical functions of the university: teaching and research. It generates questions, doubts, and new hopes concerning both. What kind of teaching should the modern university provide? Based on what? And what for? What kind of research should the modern university do? Based on what? And what for? What is lost? What is still or becomes possible? What is desirable and what is undesirable? Both the teaching/educational mission and the research mission of the university seem to be ‘temporarily under construction.’

The growing affirmation of what has been called ‘the third mission’ of the university, and the tailoring of the university to the needs of society, deeply influences the university at the institutional level and at the level of the perceived ‘mission of the university:’

To the long-standing tandem of teaching and research, many universities have added a third mission: service to the community. In our increasingly knowledge-intensive societies, this mission focuses on universities as centres for lifelong education (and further professional studies), as well as centres for scientific services in the form of technology transfer to the business sector in the pursuit of national economic advantage.35
The modern university has become a key player in the economic fabric of a nation and region.

We have to realize that the introduction of the ‘third mission,’ and the emergence of the ‘entrepreneurial university’ - which is one way of naming aspects of the Innovative model - has implications beyond the fact that the university is doing business itself. It has repercussions for the way the university is organised and operated; it influences deeply its research mission by reorganizing the types of research that are conducted and by shaping the funding structures of the university; it reorganises academic life. And probably as important as the former is the way the entrepreneurial format shapes the way students are taught, the kind of education they receive and the kind of people they deliver, i.e., the future academic entrepreneurs and non-academic workforce. I will start with documenting the impact of the entrepreneurial paradigm on the university and the faculty, and will then proceed to sketching the new model of students and education.

Stephen Joel Trachtenberg - President of George Washington University - recently identified 5 key characteristics of this ‘new entrepreneurial university:’

- it is turning out to be a place that makes money;
- it is a place where you can legally talk about your students as ‘customers;’
- faculty and administrators increasingly resemble each other;
- and the new entrepreneurial university has finally succeeded in making living contact with the world academics purport to be teaching the students about.

Compare this characterisation with the model Oakeshott and Bloom were defending, and one wonders whether they are talking about the same kind of institution at all.

In a recent article, aptly titled “The Future of the University and the University of the Future: Evolution of Ivory Tower to Entrepreneurial Paradigm,” Henry Etzkowitz et al. welcome the arrival of this new entrepreneurial university:

Coming from different academic and national traditions, the university appears to be arriving at a common entrepreneurial format in the late 20th century. The entrepreneurial university encompasses a ‘third mission’ of economic development in addition to research and
teaching, though the precise shape this takes might vary such that different scenarios of academic development can be projected (...). (...) The concept of the entrepreneurial university envisions an academic structure and function that is revised through the alignment of economic development with research and teaching as academic missions.38

This results in the creation of a new ethos, a new “entrepreneurial culture within academia.” This change is not limited to some universities:

Rather than being encapsulated within a special class of universities that have special interests in applied research or professional disciplines, the introduction of entrepreneurialism into the academic scene affects the educational and research mission of all of institutions of higher learning to a greater or lesser degree.39

Nor is this paradigm confined to certain parts, faculties or departments of existing universities. It permeates the totality of the university.

What kind of an institution is this new entrepreneurial university? Etzkowitz et al. outline this “entrepreneurial academic paradigm” as follows. They identify four developmental mechanisms and emergent structures.40

The first mechanism of change is internal transformation. Traditional academic tasks are redefined and expanded. Traditional teaching, e.g., is expanded. Students are testing their academic knowledge in the real world and acting as intermediaries. As the university incorporates the entrepreneurial paradigm and enlarges its role in innovation, it revises its existing tasks and structures.

The second mechanism concerns trans-institutional impact. The traditional distinction between ‘university,’ ‘government,’ and ‘industry’ gets blurred. Governments carry out research themselves (e.g., in their own departments and research institutes), universities become industrial players, industry finances collaborate research projects, etc. Formats for collaborative arrangements are institutionalized, thereby stabilising a new equilibrium of overlapping institutional spheres.

Interface processes are a third mechanism for change. The entrepreneurial university requires, according to Etzkowitz et al., an enhanced capability for dealing with other institutional spheres like industry and government. Interface departments and specialist become
central to the university. Besides these centralised interface departments and spin-off offices, “interface capabilities spread throughout the university. Within academic departments and centres, faculty members and other technical personnel are assigned special responsibility to assess the commercial salience of research findings and encourage interaction with external partners.”

They label the fourth mechanism of change as ‘recursive effects.’ Entrepreneurial universities develop capabilities to assist in the creation of new organisations. Trilateral organizations, cross-organisational and cross-institutional entities emerge. Research centres including researchers from different universities and organisations are founded and play a central role in the university.

These changes lead up to the emergence of the entrepreneurial university. According to Etzkowitz et al.:

> [t]he contemporary university is an amalgam of teaching and research, applied and basic, entrepreneurial and scholastic interests. These elements exist in a creative tension that periodically come into conflict. Conflict typically results in compromise and normative change in which different and even seemingly opposed ideological elements such as entrepreneurship and the extension of knowledge are reconciled.

Entrepreneurial universities operate within what is called the knowledge-based society and economy. Buzzwords of the day are ‘knowledge based society,’ ‘managing the science base,’ ‘the management of science systems,’ ‘the global research village,’ etc.

What kind of student and what kind of education, teaching, training, etc. can we expect to bloom in this new academic climate and institution? Let us take a look at one of the institutions at the forefront of consumer-oriented policy.

“Innovation at the for-profit University of Phoenix foreshadows change throughout higher education.” At least, this is what Jorge Klor de Alva claims. He should be in a position to know, for he is, after all, the President of that university. According to him, the University of Phoenix (UOP) is “[r]emaking the academy in the age of information.” The university of Phoenix has addressed itself to working adults. Klor de Alva states the needs of those (working adult) students as follows. The students want to complete their education while working full-time; second, they want a curriculum and faculty that are relevant to the workplace; third, they want a time-efficient education; fourth, they want their education to
be cost-effective; fifth, they expect a high level of customer service; and lastly, they want convenience. The University of Phoenix wants to realize them all. No wonder that critics have named this university an example of "[t]he commercial, convenience-store model of a university." According to Klor de Alva, the UOP:

has truly shattered the myth for many that youth is the predominant age for schooling, that learning is a top-down localized activity, and that credentialing should depend on time spent on tasks rather than measurable competence. (…) [I]t has helped to prove that the age of learning is always, the place of learning is everywhere, and the goal of learning for most people is best reached when treated as tactical (with clear, immediate aims), as opposed to strategic (with broad aims and distant goals). (…) Put another way, students who want to be players in the New Economy are unlikely to tolerate a just-in-case education that is not practical, up-to-date, or career-focused.46

Perhaps, the University of Phoenix is but an extreme example of the current reorganization transforming Higher Education. It is not, however, the only example.

In a recent paper on “Higher Education Relevance in the 21st Century,” Michael Gibbons outlines his views on how the universities as educational institutions (should) adapt to the rising predominance of what he calls ‘mode 2 knowledge production.’ It can be read as an epistemological and institutional fusion of Etzkowitz’s ‘entrepreneur-university’ on the one hand, and the ‘convenience-store university’ on the other hand. In Gibbons’s opinion, universities will be transformed from disciplinary institutions into multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary institutions. Not only the focus on which knowledge is produced and how, is shifting. Also the institutional organisation will change:

[un]iversities in the future will comprise a small core of faculty and a much larger periphery of experts of various kinds that are linked to universities in diverse ways. Universities will become a new type of ‘holding institution’ in the field of knowledge production. Perhaps their role will be limited to accrediting teaching done primarily by others while, in research, playing their
part by orchestrating problem-solving teams to work on fundamental issues.47

Apparently, universities become service providers while students, government (society) and industry become customers. ‘Usefulness’ and ‘convenience’ are the new values that inform university teaching and research.

But this is not all. Finally, the university as a ‘place’ - one of the basic characteristics of the traditional collegiate model - is threatened as well. ‘The Traditional University’ is a physical place, where you can go to study and in whose buildings you can do research. The communal life of a university centres on its campus. New information technologies could make this ‘campus’ redundant. This certainly is the case in the ‘entrepreneurial model’ of the university and it is already visible in the way teaching is carried out as well. The UOP, e.g., heavily depends on web-based learning, distance learning etc. In Great Britain, the Open University uses all the possibilities the new information technologies offer to optimise their educational mission.

To some these developments create new possibilities for academic teaching. However, in an influential thesis about the impact of information technology on the university, Eli M. Noam warns us that these technologies could very well lead to the end of the university as we know it. According to Noam, “today’s production and distribution of information are undermining the traditional flow of information and with it the university structure.”48 Due to the exponential growth of knowledge and specialization, single universities do no longer cover the range of scholarship. Electronic, invisible rather than face-to-face, real colleges become the main productive affiliation of the scholars (“Air transport established the jet-setting professorate”). Databases replace libraries and universities focus more on promoting access to (digital) information than on storing (analog) information.

The teaching role of the university is changing as well. Distance education will supersede the low-tech lecture and real-life tutoring system. In short, the information revolution decentralizes the university. No longer is there a need, nor a necessity ‘to bring it all together in one place.’ Noam concludes:

All this is a bleak scenario for the future of the university. In making this argument it is easy to appear as yet another dismal economist or technological determinist, and to invite, as a response, a ringing reaffirmation of the importance of quality education, of
academic values, of the historic role of education in personal growth, and of the human need for free-wheeling exchange. To make such arguments may feel good but is beside the point. The question is not whether universities are important to society, to knowledge, or to their members - they are - but rather whether the economic foundation of the present system can be maintained and sustained in the face of the changed flow of information due to electronic communications. It is not research and teaching that will be under pressure - they will be more important than ever - but rather their present main instructional setting, the university system. To be culturally important is necessary (one hopes) but unfortunately not sufficient.49

From this review of oppositional views on ‘the university’ we can extract a Traditionalist and an Innovative way of framing “(The Idea of) The University.”

4. **Conflicting models of the University**

In the preceding paragraphs we have elaborated different viewpoints on what a university is and on what a university should be. We made a distinction between two extreme positions within the debate on the university. On the one hand we have the Traditionalists, while on the other hand we identified a more Innovative position. As we have seen, Traditionalists and Innovators differ sharply in their views on the three ‘classical’ missions of the university (i.e., teaching, research, and service to society) on the type of students, on the faculty and on the kind of institution a university ‘really is.’

For the Traditionalists, a university is a place in which young *students*, the apprentices, do not receive a vocational training, but get an education. Their presence in the university is limited in time. The education they receive is organised as a top-down model in which students are lectured by and are taught via personal interaction with professors. This interaction is localized. It is situated within the physical university buildings. The curriculum is stable, based on tradition, and combined with new research findings that are relevant for the kind of education students should receive. In contrast with this, in Innovative models a university is a place in which *students* are customers that are prepared for their later career. Sometimes this means an academic career, but mostly a career in the knowledge-based society and economy. Some of the students are young. A growing part of the student body, however, consists of adults
that are engaged in lifelong learning. Teaching and training is laterally organized. It makes use of the latest technological innovations like e-learning. This means that the interaction between student and teacher does not have to be localized in place, limited to the time one spends at the physical university, nor personal. The curriculum is based on the latest research, up-to-date, practical, and career-focused.

According to the Traditionalists, the professor is or should be a scholar engaged in the pursuit of learning. He is tenured. He is at the same time a specialist in his own field of research, and a generalist. He is a ‘cultured local hero’ (LaCapra) firmly affiliated with his home institution to which his allegiance goes. The main goal of his scholarship is contributing to the world of learning and personal enrichment. This is how he earns the esteem from his colleagues and from society. For the Innovators, a professor is or should be a dynamic and well-established researcher. She is not necessarily tenured, and sometimes part-time affiliated to industrial or other types of research organisations. She is an entrepreneurial globetrotter. She collaborates with his or her peers, which are often situated in other universities, and with researchers in industry and other research organisation. Allegiance goes to this research group - the invisible college - and peer group. During his or her academic career, the researcher often changes affiliation. She is esteemed by her colleagues and by society, because of the contribution to relevant, cutting-edge research, and his or her success in securing funding for future research.

The ‘traditionalist’ scholar enjoys full academic freedom. He keeps a theoretical distance and engages in free, unrestricted basic research that is financed by the university on a non-competitive basis. This research is done for its own sake and not because it could turn out to be ‘useful.’ Knowledge is a social good, accessible to everyone. Researchers operating within an ‘innovative’ university actively scout for (additional) research funds. These funds are often earmarked and the allocation of these funds is highly competitive. Collaboration with industry is an important source of research funding. The research is often of a ‘use-inspired’ nature. Because of its possible economic relevance the results are carefully monitored and sometimes patented.

In the traditionalist model, the main goals of the university are safeguarding and extending the tradition of the world of learning and producing educated citizens. This is its main contribution to society of the university. Society is ministerial to the university, not vice versa. The university is largely autonomous from society. Although teaching and research are still considered as central to the university in the innovative model, its ‘third mission’ of societal and economical relevance is its most
important contribution to society. The university is ministerial to society, not vice versa. Society holds the university accountable.

As an institution, the ‘traditionalist’ university is characterised by a collegial model of organisation and interaction. It differs from corporate, market-driven and oriented enterprises. It is a closed, charisma driven world on its own. The innovative university, on the other hand, is a corporate enterprise, open and alert to the demands of the market and society. It has many features in common with for-profit organisation. It is an open institution that takes up its place and role in the science system of the knowledge-based national economy and society.

5. Semantic horizons of ‘The University’

These then are the contours of the Innovative and Traditional models of the university. The differences between the models are profound and wide ranging. However, even the innovative model of the university can be situated within what could be called the semantic horizons of the concept of the university.

All these ‘ideas’ of the university can be located within this ‘semantic horizon’ of ‘the university’ which is the result of the empirical as well as of the ideological history of ‘the university.’ We can schematise elements of this semantic horizon as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovative</th>
<th>Future / Innovation</th>
<th>Society</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research — Training — Science</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>History / Tradition</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuality</th>
<th>Culture — Education — Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History / Tradition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Traditional
The core of the modern university is its research-based teaching. During the post-war period these ‘defining attributes’ have been subject to negotiation. Probably the most important of these is the addition of or the stressing of ‘third mission,’ the innovative function of a university, \textit{i.e.}, its role in promoting societal well-being, technological advances and economic benefits.

In general, the trend moves from the southwest from the schema to the northeast. The organization and legitimisation of the modern university is future and innovation-oriented. Students are taught and trained based on and in preparation of research and science in an institution that is open to the needs - of a predominantly economical and technological nature - of the society it is located in. The ideals of education, \textit{Bildung} and character formation, liberal arts and individuality have increasingly lost predominance in the idea of a modern university.

The driving force behind the success of a university is its unique combination of research and teaching. However, this combination is not at all unproblematic. It is perhaps a paradox that the charisma and success of the institution springs from the combination of characteristics that often stand in a difficult and tense relation towards each other, like, \textit{e.g.}, Bildung and training, Liberal Arts and science, attitude and knowledge, teaching and research, tradition and innovation, individual-centred and society-oriented, open and closed, and so on. A university, in my opinion, is an inherent unstable institution and an unstable idea. But it is probably this creative internal tension that lends it its productivity and inspirational power.

6. Concluding remarks

Apparently, a lot of people feel quite a lot discomfort concerning the present state of the modern University. Traditionalists want - to a different degree - to realign the institutions with their Ideal of the University, while (some) Innovators argue that the changes should speed up.

Some Traditionalists argue that the institutions - a lot or most of them - do not conform any more to the worthwhile ‘idea of the university,’ and/or that this ‘idea of a university’ is being stretched too far. Some Innovators claim that the institutions - a lot or most of them - urgently need to change even further, and/or that the ‘idea of a university’ should be reformulated so as to better reflect the new real status and possible future of the institution. However, both parties, for different reasons, often agree on the usefulness of both the Idea of the University (as an inspirational model) and, what is more important, on the reality of and the need for Universities as real institutions.
'An Idea’ of the university does indeed matter. It should not, however, be so exclusive as to block out all institutional variation. There is something to be learned from the traditionalist model. Universities are part of the system of Higher Education. The educational mission, and the focus on the students should never be ousted by short-term economic policy goals. But there is something to be learned from the innovative model as well. Universities operate within a broader social, economical, cultural and political framework. Universities should never isolate themselves from the rest of society. After all, where do you think the students go to after their university education, and where do you think they come from in the first place?

Notes

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., italics added.
6. Ibid.
10. These are the terms the OECD uses for distinguishing between the two poles.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
20. Oakeshott, p. 100.
22. Ibid.
23. Oakeshott, p. 103-104.
27. Bloom, p. 249.
29. Bloom, pp. 244-245.
31. Ibid.
34. OECD, University Research In Transition, OECD, Paris, p. 15.
35. Ibid.
<http://www.gwu.edu/~gwpres/speeches_entre.html>
41. Etzkowitz, p. 316.
42. Etzkowitz, p. 326.
46. Ibid.
49. Ibid.

References


