

Faith and Universities in a Religious and Secular World (1)

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Following in the wake of Rawls and Neuhaus, any number of theologians, philosophers, historians, and political theorists — led by major figures like Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, and Stanley Hauerwas — have re-examined, debated, challenged, and at times rejected the premises of liberalism, whether in the name of religion, or communitarianism, or multiculturalism.

To the extent that liberalism's structures have been undermined or at least shaken by these analyses, the perspicuousness and usefulness of distinctions long assumed — reason as opposed to faith, evidence as opposed to revelation, inquiry as opposed to obedience, truth as opposed to belief — have been called into question. And finally ... the geopolitical events of the past decade and of the past three years especially have re-alerted us to the fact (we always knew it, but as academics we were able to cabin it) that hundreds of millions of people in the world do not observe the distinction between the private and the public or between belief and knowledge, and that it is no longer possible for us to regard such persons as quaintly pre-modern or as the needy recipients of our saving (an ironic word) wisdom.

Some of these are our sworn enemies. Some of them are our colleagues. Many of them are our students. (There are 27 religious organizations for students on my campus.) Announce a course with «religion» in the title, and you will have an overflow population. Announce a lecture or panel on «religion in our time» and you will have to hire a larger hall.

And those who come will not only be seeking knowledge; they will be seeking guidance and inspiration, and many of them will believe that religion — one religion, many religions, religion in general — will provide them.

Are we ready?

We had better be, because that is now where the action is. When Jacques Derrida died I was called by a reporter who wanted to know what would succeed high theory and the triumvirate of race, gender, and class as the center of intellectual energy in the academy. I answered like a shot: religion.¹

Is Stanley Fish just noticing a passing fashion in some American universities when he describes a surge of intellectual energy around religion? It is the argument of this article and its sequel that he is in fact identifying something more fundamental.

Religion was intrinsic to universities from their European Medieval beginnings and through most of their history. It has also been complexly involved with them during the past two centuries since the beginnings of the modern research uni-

versity marked by the foundation of the University of Berlin in 1810. Yet those centuries also saw a widespread secularization of universities, in the sense both of the elimination of religious control of universities and also of the increasing marginalization of religion in the spheres of ethos, curriculum, policy-making, «mission», and focus of concern. At the same time, the rest of the world was not simply undergoing secularization. It was developing in complexly religious and secular ways and arriving at a variety of balances, blends and settlements in different parts of the world and spheres of life. I argue that this has led to a mismatch between universities and their

¹ Stanley Fish. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* January 7, 2005.

contemporary context. Universities on the whole teach, research and relate to society as if the world were simply secular, or, at most, secular with some religious survivals. There is rarely the sense that, as Fish says, hundreds of millions of people (in fact, the vast majority of the world's population), including a great many students and academics, see reality differently.

Fish draws attention to academics in a range of fields who in various ways have been challenging the universities (and other areas of public life) about the ways in which religion is ignored, misconstrued, marginalized, privatised or dismissed. This should have consequences for the way in which universities are shaped with regard to religion. At least they should not be places where some ideological version of secularism is taken for granted. At best there should be universities that are complexly religious and secular in modes that reflect, reflect on, study, discuss and are responsible towards our religious and secular world in appropriately academic religious and secular ways. These articles are an attempt to explore the latter best-case scenario. This article sets the scene by considering some key phases in university history.

First, there is some historical discussion of universities in the Medieval and early modern periods. Then the foundation of the University of Berlin is examined as the root of the modern research university, and its significance assessed in relation to the religious and secular. It is seen as a historical surprise not only in its academic character but also in the originality and fruitfulness of its religious and secular settlement. Finally, the subsequent influence and problems of the Berlin paradigm are traced briefly, and the case is made for the desirability of a new surprise in order to repair, renew and in some respects supersede the Berlin paradigm, the concern here being especially with its religious and secular settlement. Such a surprise would require the sort of intellectual and institutional creativity that helped to generate the University of Berlin.

In the second article² an attempt is made, in line with the work of Jeffrey Stout and others, to describe the public sphere in terms that allow for (and even make desirable) a university that might be called <interfaith and secular>. One ele-

ment of the envisaged religious and secular university is the responsibility of its various religious and secular constituencies to think through their own convictions and commitments in relation to the university, and to enter into debate with others. The university needs to learn from the various traditions of understanding, wisdom and values that are present within it, and each of these traditions therefore has the task of continually relating their best wisdom to that of others, in the interests of the flourishing of the institution, its students and staff, its academic disciplines, and its wider responsibilities to our world. Each particular tradition or blend of traditions has to face this challenge, and as a Christian theologian I propose a conception of the interfaith and secular university that grows out of Christian understanding. In particular, I explore some academic Christian approaches to universities from Berlin to Yale and then to Cambridge, asking how religious traditions can be best mediated academically in the twenty-first century. This conception of the university is offered as a contribution to a debate in which it is to be hoped that other Christians, those of other faiths and those of secular or agnostic convictions will also participate.²

Two further introductory comments are in order. One is that the present articles are part of an ongoing project concerned with the shaping of universities in the twenty-first century. That universities should engage better with the religious and secular character of our world is just one element of this. There are of course a great many other elements in the shaping of universities, most of which are far more obvious than the issue of the religious and secular. How should teaching and research be related? What about core intellectual values, interdisciplinarity, university governance, collegiality, public and private funding, the commodification of knowledge, and the balance of responsibilities towards the flourishing of society? Some of those are mentioned when relevant, but they are not the main focus of these articles. Most of them are discussed briefly in an article focussed on the University of Cambridge which might act as a complement and context for what is said

² To be published in the next issue of *STK* (3/2005).

here,³ but I also intend to treat some of them at greater length in future work.

The second comment is on the analogies used by Fish in the opening quotation. He compares the present focus on religion with four other concerns: high theory, race, gender and class. Those have not only generated the <intellectual energy> noted by Fish. They have also led to radical mind- and heart-searching; much suspicion, accusation and polemic; rewriting of history; reconceiving of courses, curricula and whole disciplines; faculty and institutional crises; political movements, campaigns, conflicts and correctness; and deep divisions. That does sound like a description of what religion tends to produce too! One response might be to try, in the interests of peace and goodwill, to resist religion coming back on to the university agenda, since it is hard to see how it can be prevented from generating those results. Yet it may also be that a factor contributing to religion being often so lethal in our world is its widespread exclusion from the higher educational environment of a large number of leaders, key workers, opinion formers and teachers. If within our cultural <ecology> there are few niches where the issues about, within and between religions can be thoughtfully studied, taught, researched and debated by people of all faiths and none, then we should not be surprised if both the religions themselves and the realm of public discourse are impoverished as a result. If one goes by what has happened with race, gender and class, then academics may not anyway have much choice about whether religion is on the agenda or not; what they may have some say in is how that agenda is handled. These articles speak to that concern.

³ David F. Ford, *Knowledge, Meaning and the World's Great Challenges: Reinventing Cambridge University in the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge 2003); reprinted in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57 (2) 2004 pp. 182–202 under the title <Knowledge, Meaning and the World's Great Challenges>: as the more easily accessible version, references will be to this SJT article. Cf also David F. Ford, <The Responsibilities of Universities in a Religious and Secular World> in *Journal of the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics* vol. 17 no. 1, 2004 pp. 22–37.

Universities: The Medieval Heritage

In the magisterial opening chapter of the four-volume *A History of the University in Europe* of which he is the General Editor, Walter Rüegg sums up what he calls <the essential outlines of an academic ethic in the process of formation> distilled into <seven values which in the Middle Ages legitimated, in religious terms, the *amor sciendi* and the university which was its institutional form.>⁴ It is worth quoting at some length, since he and the other contributors together make a convincing cumulative case over the three volumes that have appeared so far for there being, despite huge changes, some continuity linking the university's Medieval origins with at least some of its successors today. There is of course a large question as to how much continuity there is or should be, but at least his distillation based on the first three centuries of the existence of universities offers a benchmark against which to measure change and some categories through which to approach the task of saying something normative as well as descriptive about universities.

The seven evaluative propositions are:

(1) The belief in a world order, created by God, rational, accessible to human reason, to be explained by human reason and to be mastered by it; this belief underlies scientific and scholarly research as the attempt to understand this rational order of God's creation.

(2) The ancient understanding of man as an imperfect being, and the Judaeo-Christian idea of a creature fallen into sin, and the proposition deriving from these ideas about the limitation of the human intellect, operated in the Middle Ages as driving forces impelling intellectual criticism and collegial cooperation; they served as the foundation for the translation of general ethical values like modesty, reverence, and self-criticism into the image of the ideal scientist and scholar.

⁴ Walter Rüegg, <Themes> in *Universities in the Middle Ages* Edited by H. De Ridder-Symoens, Volume 1 of *A History of the University in Europe*, General Editor Walter Rüegg (Cambridge 1992–) p. 32.

(3) Respect for the individual as a reflection of the macrocosm or as having been formed in the image of God, laid the foundation for the gradually realized freedom of scientific and scholarly research and teaching.

(4) The absoluteness of the imperative of scientific truth already led scholasticism to the basic norms of scientific and scholarly research and teaching, such as the prohibition of the rejection of demonstrated knowledge, the subjection of one's own assertions to the generally valid rules of evidence, openness to all possible objections to one's own argument, and the public character of argument and discussion.

(5) The recognition of scientific and scholarly knowledge as a public good which is ultimately a gift of God had not, it is true, even before universities existed, prevented study and teaching for the sake of money. Nevertheless, there has been less interest within the universities in the economic use of scientific knowledge than there has been in the learned professions outside the university. This relatively smaller interest in the economic utilization of scientific knowledge has been an axiomatic value of the university.

(6) *Reformatio*, which regarded one's own scientific efforts as the renewal of previously established knowledge and its further development «in the cause of improvement», laid a disproportionate weight in the medieval university on already established patterns of thought and older authors. Nevertheless, these were not accepted without criticism; they were critically scrutinized to test their veracity as the basis of one's own knowledge. They were a stimulus to new ways of seeing things and to new theories ... Scientific and scholarly knowledge grows in a cumulative process, by building on earlier knowledge. In this sense, the progress of knowledge is a continuous process of *reformatio*.

(7) The equality and solidarity of scholars in confronting the tasks of science enable the universities to become the institutional centres of the scientific community. The acknowledgement of the scientific achievements of those who think and believe differently from ourselves and of those who are members of social strata different from our own and the readiness to correct one's own errors in the light of persuasive new know-

ledge, regardless of its source, permitted the rise of science ... Indeed, the more highly equality was evaluated, and the more it was joined to the common responsibility for the increase of knowledge, the better the university fulfilled its obligations.⁵

I will return to these propositions in the second article when developing a Christian theology for the university. At this point it is worth noting three points. First, as regards the Christian tradition in which they are historically rooted, twenty-first century as well as medieval Christians could affirm them. The teachings — God as creator of a world order accessible to human reason; human imperfection; humanity in the image of God; the appropriateness of public argument and discussion to the absoluteness of scientific truth; scientific and scholarly knowledge as a public good transcending any economic advantage it might bring; the cumulative and self-correcting process of the growth of knowledge; and the equality and solidarity of those committed to the pursuit of knowledge — would be likely to gain the assent of a broad range of Christians in universities: conservative, liberal, radical, postliberal — though not, perhaps, some postmodern.

Second, members of many other faith communities, especially those of the Abrahamic traditions, but also others, would affirm analogous doctrines.

Third, the practical implications of the propositions — rational investigation of the world; ethical values of modesty, reverence and self-criticism: respect for the dignity and freedom of the individual; rigorous public argument appealing to demonstrated knowledge and rules of evidence; the recognition of the pursuit of knowledge as a public good irreducible to economic interest; the need for continual self-criticism in the course of improving our knowledge; and the value of equality and solidarity — all these could be affirmed, even if justified in very different ways, by many agnostic or secular people in the academy.

The conclusion is, therefore, that even in its medieval form the university had the potential to embrace those of many faiths and of none,

⁵ Ibid. pp. 32ff.

though this was not to happen fully in European universities for many centuries. Nor is this surprising when its history is understood.⁶ The universities that grew up in the thirteenth century drew heavily on non-Christian sources. The influence of Greek and Roman civilization on the curriculum was enormous. In the liberal arts (the *trivium* of grammar, logic and rhetoric; the *quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music) each subject was dominated by non-Christian authorities or by Christians who had learnt most of what they knew from non-Christians.⁷ In the higher faculties of law and medicine the situation was similar. Roman law was the model for both civil and canon law.⁸ In medicine the main authorities were Greek and Islamic, and Muslims and Jews were among leading medical practitioners.⁹ In the remaining higher faculty, theology, the chief authority was the Bible. During the early centuries of Christianity in the Roman Empire the Bible had become the classic at the centre of Christian education, but it was studied in ways that owed a great deal to Greek and Roman *paideia*, with

close attention to grammar, logic and rhetoric, and this continued in the medieval period. As the new urban universities complemented and competed with the older monastic schools, one of their main innovations was to bring into the centre of intellectual debate a wide range of texts originating in classical Greece and Rome. Many of these texts came through Islamic channels, the most influential being by Aristotle. Debate about the reception of Aristotle, and in particular his influence on theology, were among the liveliest in the medieval university, with the work of Thomas Aquinas as a high point in the critical integration of Aristotle (and of other classical philosophical and scientific thought) with Christian theology. So within the medieval university it was not generally permitted that pagans, Jews or Muslims be there in person, but they had contributed a great deal to the whole range of subjects on the curriculum, and they constantly figured in debates.

The medieval university developed other patterns that have been repeated with variations in later forms of the university. Three are of special importance.¹⁰

First, there were the tensions between different fundamental goals: understanding and truth for their own sake; formation in a way of life, its habits and virtues; and utility in society — study oriented towards practical use and employment in various spheres of life. These tensions were there from the start and have continued into twenty-first century debates. They have always been closely linked to the negotiations between groups with an interest in higher education. The medieval university was in its various institutional forms the outcome of settlements negotiated between what were then called *studium*, *sacerdotium*, and *regnum*. It is part of the argument of the present articles that the university in every period has had to be vigilant about doing justice to the legitimate claims of each of those spheres (or their analogies in other periods), and that one of the neglected tasks today is that of rethinking the claims of *sacerdotium*, which

⁶ For a survey of relevant research see J. M. Fletcher (Ed.) *The History of European Universities. Work in Progress and Publications, 5 Vols.* (Birmingham 1978–81) and J. M. Fletcher and J. Deahl, 'European Universities 1300–1700: the Development of Research 1969–81, and a Summary Bibliography' in J. M. Kittelson and P. J. Transue (Eds.), *Rebirth, Reform and Resilience: Universities in Transition 1300–1700* (Columbus, Ohio 1984) pp. 324–357.

⁷ See Gordon Leff, 'The *trivium* and the three philosophies', and John North, 'The *quadrivium*' in *A History of the University in Europe*, General Editor Walter Rüegg op. cit., Vol. 1 *Universities in the Middle Ages* Edited by H. De Ridder-Symoens, pp. 307–366; 367–359.

⁸ See Antonio Garcia Y. Garcia, 'The Faculties of Law' in *A History of the University in Europe*, General Editor Walter Rüegg op. cit., Vol. 1 *Universities in the Middle Ages* Edited by H. De Ridder-Symoens, pp. 388–408; P. Koschaker, *Europa und das römische Recht* (Berlin 1966); S. Kuttner, *The History of Ideas and Doctrines of Canon Law in the Middle Ages* (London 1980).

⁹ See Nancy Siraisi, 'The Faculty of Medicine' in *A History of the University in Europe*, General Editor Walter Rüegg op. cit., Vol. 1 *Universities in the Middle Ages* Edited by H. De Ridder-Symoens, pp. 360–387.

¹⁰ On these see *A History of the University in Europe*, General Editor Walter Rüegg op. cit., Vol. 1 *Universities in the Middle Ages* Edited by H. De Ridder-Symoens, especially Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 13.

requires coming to new terms with the complexly religious and secular character of our period.

Second, the medieval university embodied another closely related set of tensions concerning its unity and diversity. It was unified in overall conception through theology but the liberal arts were rarely content simply to accept their subordination to theology, and the law faculty was also jealous of its independence. Perhaps more important, the integrating discipline of theology was itself institutionalised in a plural way. Closely involved with most university theology faculties were the *studia* of religious orders, especially the new mendicant orders of Dominicans and Franciscans (to be joined in the early modern period by the Jesuits). The presence of these orders, called *«religiones»*, and the often energetic disputes carried on by them and the *«secular»* teachers (not members of religious orders) of the university meant that right from the start there was built into the university fundamental disagreement and dispute about what integrates it. Indeed, one key characteristic differentiating the first universities from monastic and diocesan schools was their institutionalisation of dispute. It has continued to be in the nature of an institution with many disciplines, interests and responsibilities to have to ask constantly about what holds it together, with inevitable disagreement about what, if anything, that might be. The answers have ranged from *«nothing»* (hence the French solution discussed below) to a particular substantive religion, ideology or worldview, and other options have included specific *«master-disciplines»* (theology, philosophy, law, experimental science), and specific uses (service of church, state, economy). But at another level of integration there has been the creation of the institutional space within which these disputes could take place. This has taken many forms, and Rüegg's list of seven propositions (with my associated remarks above about their continuing validity) suggests a higher-level integration in terms of shared intellectual, ethical and social values and practices.

Third, there was the development of collegiality. This took many forms,¹¹ one of which, the

university college, because of its ability to sustain a religious dimension even in the face of strong secularising pressures, will be of special interest in discussing the University of Cambridge in the second article. Colleges in universities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were *«privileged institutions serving to guarantee their members, at the price of a degree of discipline, the best conditions for work and study, in other words, to constitute a student elite»*, and *«in France, England and Germany they were henceforth the place where the pedagogic model which was to exert the greatest influence upon the evolution of practices of secondary and higher education in modern Europe was elaborated.»*¹²

So overall the medieval university proved durable in some vital respects, while also capable, as later centuries were to show, of considerable innovation and reinvention.

Early Modern European Universities: Expansion and Decline

The early modern period (for my purposes defined as stretching roughly from 1500 till 1800) included times of great upheaval in Europe, beginning with the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and ending with the French Revolution. Intellectually, there was a huge range of new developments, such as the impact of humanism on medieval scholasticism, the invention of printing, increased use of the vernacular, the opening up of America and other parts of the world that helped change the perception of humanity and culture, Protestant and Catholic theologies in polemical relationship with each other, a new relationship to the past through scholarship and historical study, and a series of *«revolutions»* (scientific, industrial and political) which were deeply related to new ways of thinking and forms of knowledge. The very term *«Middle Ages»*, applied to what had preceded it, marked out this time of innovation and self-conscious difference. What happened to universities during these three centuries? It is not possible here to summarise what is now a large

¹¹ See *ibid.* Chapter 4.

¹² Jacques Verger, *«Patterns»* in *ibid.* pp. 61f.

and growing field in historical research,¹³ but what follows is an attempt to name some of the main developments.

Overall this period has been summed up as a time for universities of differentiation, professionalization and an expansion whose vigour was not sustained.¹⁴ As regards differentiation and professionalisation, many kinds of institutions of further education grew up, covering secondary education, technology, and scientific research, and at the same time the universities were increasingly guided by market demands to produce graduates suited to the professions and other employment.¹⁵ As regards expansion, this was closely related to religious dynamics of Europe, with a large number of both Catholic and Protestant foundations, the most remarkable single element perhaps being the extraordinary energy and success of the Jesuits in university foundation and transformation.¹⁶ But the very achievements of the churches and their pervasive influence on universities meant that as the churches were increasingly challenged — both intellectually and politically — the future of universities themselves was at stake, since they were so closely identified as religious institutions. Especially in the eighteenth century there were fierce struggles for power as increasingly powerful and centralizing nation states sought control over education. This was a period in which secularization seemed to many to mean liberation from forms of church domination that constricted academic inquiry, adaptation, innovation and access in unacceptable ways. The resistance of many universities both to new knowledge and to secularization marked them down for destruction (as in France), radical reform (as in Germany) or marginalization (as in

England until a combination of the foundation of new universities and nineteenth-century reforms of Oxford and Cambridge led to the *sui generis* system that will figure in the sequel to this article).

I now turn to the most influential event in the history of the modern university.

The Berlin Surprises

It was by no means inevitable that an institution associated with strong religious roots and control such as the university should become the leading research and higher level teaching institution of the contemporary world.¹⁷ The French in 1793 replaced universities with a combination of academies and specialist government *écoles*. The Prussians were considering something similar at the beginning of the nineteenth century. But the combination of an extraordinarily creative set of thinkers and organizational innovators, together with appropriate historical conditions, led to Prussia reorganizing its educational system with the university at the top. The university became not only the centre for formal credentials for state employment and a range of professions; it also had a good deal of academic autonomy, an increasingly differentiated set of specialist faculties, and what Collins calls a <structural impetus to creativity>, with professors expected to produce new knowledge.¹⁸

This was above all embodied in the foundation of the University of Berlin in 1809. The Berlin model spread in Europe far beyond Germany and also to America and elsewhere, and its key features are still characteristic of those universities that dominate intellectual life around the world.

What about religion in these universities? Collins¹⁹ tells a largely linear story of secularisation: theological and ecclesiastical domination were ended as disciplines won their auto-

¹³ Cf. *Ibid.* Vol. II *Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)* Ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens *passim*.

¹⁴ Willem Frijhoff, <Patterns> in *ibid.* p. 79.

¹⁵ Frijhoff says this <is perhaps the most striking characteristic of the period>, *ibid.* p. 80.

¹⁶ For a clear overview of the huge expansion see the lists and maps appended to Frijhoff's chapter, *ibid.* pp. 90–105. It helpfully shows the pattern of Protestant and Catholic institutions, including a separate map of the Jesuit universities.

¹⁷ For what follows cf. Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies. A Global Theory of Intellectual Change* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London 1998) pp. 640ff.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 643.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* chapters 12–14.

nomy and the state presided over the creation of a new system in which religion eventually played almost no part. In Collins' history the result of the process is that niches in the intellectual ecology previously occupied by theology are now colonised by other disciplines, especially philosophy, and religion has effectively disappeared. This is akin to the secularisation theory according to which modernity brings with it the irreversible decline of religion in most areas, especially of public life. But what if a more complex, dialectical story is told, leading to a different conception of the contemporary implications?

Collins does not mention the religious-secular debate that took place over the constitution of the University of Berlin. Hans Frei's account of this emphasises the differences between Fichte (its first Rector), who wanted to exclude theology because it was not sufficiently *wissenschaftlich*, and Schleiermacher (Fichte's successor as Rector), who was both supportive of *Wissenschaft* and argued for the inclusion of theology as drawing on various disciplines with the overall aim of the professional education of clergy. Schleiermacher resisted any overarching systematic framework or theory of *Wissenschaft* for the University of Berlin since this could not do justice to «the irreducible specificity of Christianity at the primary level of a «mode of faith», a cultural-religious tradition, and a linguistic community».²⁰ Frei comments that Schleiermacher's

view won the day resoundingly. But that is in its way startling. Here was *the* university, the conception of which was most deeply influenced by a philosophical system, the idealist view of the rational and unitary character of study; the university, furthermore, that was to be the model for others in Western Europe and the New World. And it, of all institutions, found itself, from the start, unable to embody its own unitary idea, while the man who ended up defending both — the idea of the intellectual unity and supremacy of

Wissenschaft and the university, and the actual as well as conceptually irreducible diversity of the institution of higher learning — was himself one of the leading idealists. It was a triumph of orderly eclecticism over system by a leading systematician. And he based the right of theology to a place in the university on the status of the ministry as one of the professions in the modern sense.²¹

Beginning from that account, the story of the historical surprise of the University of Berlin and its contemporary significance for us might unfold differently. The continuing interplay of the religious and the secular, appropriately adapted to specific contexts, and refusing any overarching philosophy, ideology or religion, might emerge as part of its secret. Its genius was to create an institution that simultaneously did several things: it constructively drew on the two deepest roots of European civilisation, the Hebraic and the Hellenic; it was sensitive to the context and needs (including religious) of its own society; it embodied creative responsibility for the future through teaching and research; it tried to safeguard freedom of intellectual inquiry and of belief; and it pioneered a type of environment in which a good deal of the most important intellectual inquiry and debate in both arts and sciences has continued to happen. One could also draw up the other side of the balance sheet, noting features such as the massive reliance on the state and its bureaucracy, the potential of disciplinary autonomy leading to fragmentation, the limitation of theology to a certain type of state-recognised Christianity, and the whole system's vulnerability to political manipulation (of which the Nazi and Communist periods were only the most extreme examples). In addition, there was the lack of an endowment: this was part of Wilhelm von Humboldt's original vision to enable the university to be more independent, but it was refused by the Prussian government.²²

Overall, this was a «modernization of the medieval structure of the university»²³ and might

²⁰ Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*. Edited by George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1992) p. 114 — this is Frei's redescription of Schleiermacher's position.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 112.

²² See Walter Rüegg, «Themes» in *A History of the University in Europe*, General Editor Walter Rüegg op. cit., Vol. III *Universities in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries (1800–1945)* Ed. Walter Rüegg p. 12.

be described as a creative blend of ancient and modern wisdom (together with some blind spots). It refused the *tabula rasa* pure modernism of the French Revolution; it also avoided the pure traditionalism that continued to rule Oxford and Cambridge for some decades. It maintained fundamental continuity with the basic values of the Medieval university as discussed above, while doing away with church control. Yet it can hardly be called a secular university — certainly not in the French sense. This was a university that trained clergy for the state church and so was deeply related to the religious nature of its society. I suggest that the best description is for it is: a (religious and secular) university. In line with that, it had its own version of medieval diversity described above, due to Schleiermacher's insistence on the inclusion of theology.

Looking today at the Berlin paradigm, one sees various continuities and discontinuities. But as regards the question about how these institutions help equip students and their societies to cope with a complexly religious and secular world, the view is disappointing. The dialectical tension between the religious and the secular was anomalous even in relation to Berlin's founding concept of *Wissenschaft*, and in changed historical circumstances the tendency has been towards letting the tension slacken in the direction of an embracing, normative secularism. Even where this has not happened the form of the religious has been restricted to certain forms of Protestant and Catholic Christianity, with very limited concern for the rest of Christianity or other religions. On the whole universities have been powerful supporters of secularisation, whether in anti-religious or more neutral modes. This has generally meant (though arguably it need not have) that their attention to religious traditions, living religious communities, and to the questions raised by the religions, between the religions, about the religions, and between the religions and non-religious or mixed forms of understanding, belief and practice, has been marginal. They therefore fail to do justice to huge swathes of past and present

human culture, experience, thought, ethics, politics, economics, art and practice.

This leaves the educated elites largely ignorant, naïve or misinformed about some of the most important dimensions of their own and other people's societies, and this inadequate and distorted view of reality is widely disseminated through the media, schools and other institutions that are largely led by university graduates. It also leaves the religious traditions impoverished in the realm of informed, critical and constructive engagement in the public realm that might help them think through their self-understanding and their participation in society. And within the academy it not only leads to theology and/or religious studies being a small department often relatively isolated from others; more seriously it also cuts universities off from sources of wisdom they need to meet their current challenges.

All of this may be considered acceptable in a situation of massive expansion of the system worldwide to cope with hugely increased demands for higher education. Why should universities be concerned about wisdom when there is so much to get on with producing new knowledge and applications of it, and training graduates with the appropriate competence in their fields? Part of the answer is that wisdom directs attention to the whole situation and its tendencies over time. Universities are a vital niche in the long term intellectual and moral ecology of our world. As the clichés put it, we are in an information revolution, a knowledge economy and a learning society. Leaders and key workers in most spheres are university-educated. What happens in this niche is therefore of great importance across generations. If in crucial respects the Berlin model is no longer engaging fruitfully with a major aspect of our global environment, its religious as well as secular character, then it requires correction.

The question I will seek to answer in the next article is: how might a university today be true to the core ideals of the Berlin paradigm, including its combination of the religious and secular, but in a way that is appropriate to the repairs and renewal that paradigm now requires?