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## Historical retrospective review of idea of university: complementarily of reason and spirituality

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### Abstract

**Background:** In the paper the Idea of the University and its transformations throughout the history are analysed. The content of the Idea of the University was based on understanding of spirituality when the man is upcoming to enlightening. Religion, philosophy, and education get together, when spirituality is defined as the categories and personal characteristics of a human. According to philosophy, spirituality is a non-physical way of a human being, which was granted to him as the ability of self-education. Religion understands spirituality as invariant of enlightening. The scientific-methodical apparatus of education was created to realize the potential ways for raising a person to enlightening in secular or religious schools. The spiritual aura was constantly presented at the University.

**Methods:** A general philosophical approach and comparative historical method were used in the research.

**Results:** Understanding the role of spirituality in the University education was absolutely manifested. The University was based on the idea of going up from individual towards the Universal Truth and Absolute Spirit. Knowledge and Truth are ideological categories of the University. Truth contained the spirituality and rational knowledge in the unity.

**Conclusions:** The University has not lost its Idea throughout the history. The basic conclusion of the paper is that its Idea as well as its essence is the change of its criteria in response to the new historical reality.

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**Keywords:** Idea of university, spirituality, faculty of theology, philosophy, mind.

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### 1. Introduction

The urgency of research of the topic designated in the title of the present paper is caused by the necessity to comprehend the changes which occur in the modern university. The university endures crisis. Its consequences are shown empirically, analytics and reflections are necessary. The crisis manifested itself it became obvious that the university loses its own specificity and is split into a set of co-existing various university forms (such as

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corporate, enterprise, pedagogical, research, innovative and other types of universities). The estimation of substantial metamorphoses of its idea and mission, criteria and activity is carried out. The university and its intrinsic idea pose a research interest because the question of possibility and necessity of its existence in its classical form is now being seriously doubted. As an answer to nostalgia for the classical university the researches devoted to the search of possibility of preservation of the university classics in modern - nonclassical - conditions are conducted. Many authors show the urgency of the research of the transformations happening to the classical university during nonclassical time. In the report of UNESCO of 2005 the experts of the international level (such as L. Demare, Z. Pluen, etc.) asserted that the new models of development of higher education (UNESCO world report, 2005) are required today. J.-F. Liotar talking about “obsolescence” of the classical principle of education (Bildung), states that in new conditions “the university is sick” and “will become obsolete” (Liotar, 1998). B. Riddings (Riddings, 2003), J. Habermas (Habermas, 1994), R. Barnet (Barnet, University understanding) and others talk about the crisis which is of great concern for the university. The general leitmotif of researches in the field of philosophy of the modern university is ascertaining of its “ruins” (Riddings, 2003). The classical university is doomed today to “ruins” where one can hear “prayer for the dying era of the professor” (J.-F. Liotar (Liotar, 1998)). Such leitmotif causes a desire of conducting an objective research of what actually happens to the classical university when it “acquires” other university forms and changes in the classical content. Transformations of the modern university state the necessity of its identification especially in those forms that receive new emblem names.

In the literature devoted to the designated topic, different authors connect the necessity of research with the influence on formation (university education, first of all) of new social and cultural conditions. The society is at a postindustrial step of development. The mechanism of social movement has changed. During the industrial period it was the tradition which transferred social and cultural conditions and provided their historical inheritance. Today the place of the mentioned mechanism was taken by innovation. Paradox of the social reality existing on the principle of innovation is that it is always in the “post” mood. The post-present is unpredictable and its vectors of development are impossible to forecast. The authors discussing this question consider it in characteristics of “rhizome” (Deles, Gvattari, 1990), irregularity of ways (as “macaroni in casserole” or as “a ball of playing kittens” (Nordstrom, Ridderstrale, 2000), “chaos” (Markova, 2004) “ontology over-” (Lehtsier, 2007). Sociality today is “seams”, “mismatches”, “lacunas”, “gaps”, “impediments”, “breaks”, “failures” (Lacan, 2004).

In such reality, it is impossible to remain unchanged for any social institute (including university). The university changes in order to be relevant to the mobile and rhizome world. The idea, simultaneously fixing university education in its both rational and spiritual - humanitarian content, is also changing. The task to reveal the directions of these changes is extremely actual in the conditions of modern crisis state of the university and its idea.

## **2. Subject and methods of research**

The problem of the paper consists in comprehending the inconsistent situation. On the one hand, the university was generated as the educational institute having the Idea and a special mission. The university, according to Humboldt, should show a rational way of development of a society, give the project of the future wealth of the German nation and each citizen separately, educate the student in love to the science which has been not necessarily focused on practice, but liberating the person, ennobling it. On the other - modern social conditions dictate necessity of other Idea - the idea including the market, business, commerce. Contradictions are caused by radical changes of all basic characteristics of classical university: its idea, mission and criteria. The object of research of this paper is the “idea of university” in its content, and form. The subject is the content of the idea of the university in the unity of mind and spirituality at different stages of the university history. We are interested mostly in two stages – the stage of classical university with criteria and idea developed by Humboldt, and the stage of modern research university with its idea. The purpose is to investigate the possibility of preservation/nonpreservation of the substantial characteristic of “idea of university” in the conditions of the present. The tasks of this paper are:

- to develop the Idea of the university in the formulation of Humboldt;
- to prove the possibility and necessity of changes for the content of Idea of the modern university by emphasizing its humanitarian and spiritual component.

The main method was the comparative historical method of research. This method was applied at the study of cultural background of different epochs that had influenced the contents of idea of university. Mainly two socialities were compared – industrial and postindustrial one, but the sources of complementarity of rationality and spirituality were searched both in cultural and historical conditions of far antiquity and in the period of the university beginning in the Middle ages. A general approach used is the cultural and philosophical one. It allowed searching the gnosiological roots of the idea of the university and revealing its dependence on the character and way of philosophical thinking.

The hypothesis of the research – ancient Greek sources of understanding of the truth and knowledge in unity of their rationality and spirituality had laid the foundation of the direction and principles of development of scientific knowledge in further history of science. In this unity (complementarity) the science permeates to the university education and defines the contents of the idea of the university. The conditions of the postindustrial world, however, distort this balance when the spiritual and humanitarian constituent of the idea of the university undergoes significant transformations due to the processes of commercialization, mercantilization and pragmatization of education.

### **Obtained results**

The university was an objective product of the West European culture. It was evolved in the course of history, and was formed according to the criteria in Humboldt's Idea of the university. Historically and theoretically its beginning can be connected with philosophical doctrine about the truth, which appeared in the Ancient Greece. The discovery of the Logos by the Greeks, which could reveal Truth as a universal essence of life is, of course, important. The University was originated in the Middle Ages but the prerequisites for it were created in Ancient Greece. The Reason allowed learning life in its universality. In this quality knowledge and truth are genetically ideological sources of university. The ascension to a truth process was also included into its content and has originated the Idea of the university in its spiritual and humanitarian content. From antique anthropology the university has adopted the concept of learning of soul, which informed the person aspired to truth, a perfect condition - arete. The truth was not opened to everyone. It was opened only to those who “cared” about the soul. Heraclitus says: “one cannot find the borders of soul, it doesn't matter how many ways are traced, so its depth is Logos” (Reale, Antiseri, 1994). And as the soul was identified by Greeks with reason, the reason as a comprehension of everything that surrounded the person, and the comprehension too was allocated not only by the force of thought, but also by a moral force. Let us give thought to the moral force - that was the Ancient Greek practice of “caring of oneself”. The unity of thought and morals showed virtue - arete as the blessing and something perfect. For the Greeks the knowing person is a perfect person. Socrates' thesis: “all anger is from ignorance”, that is from lack of knowledge. So, the Ancient Greek philosophical anthropology bore in itself that potential which allowed speaking about the unity of intelligence and virtue - arete. Arete introduced spirituality in rational truth. This antique tradition kept its significance in the university education. Without “care of oneself” (that is about a soul) the person remains blind, smart sight is a result of corresponding education, it is given to the person as a spiritual award of gods for one's work on soul formation. The true knowledge is actually divine revelation which the person only joins. God supposes familiarizing, and it concerns only the one who prepares the soul for falling outside the limits of the human sensual world and to passing on to the world of super sensual, spiritual where the truth as superhuman, super individual knowledge is ready to be opened. The truth is spiritual by nature.

The spiritual side of education is revealed by Plato in dialogue “State” - in “the Myth about the Cave” (Plato, 1990). Education according to Plato is, first of all, not the acquisition of knowledge, but transformation of human

soul. When it occurs, the truth becomes not simply conforming to the world of things, it becomes *aletheia* accessible to knowledge, since it takes up positive influence of an inner world of *eidoses*. Not casually the prisoner of a cave of Plato, being released and having passed its borders, that is from borders of empiricalness, sees, according to Plato, the truth. He sees not the shades of things, but its spiritual essence, that is truth. Out of the ability of a person, by joining the beyond-physical (spiritual) world of *eidoses* the knowledge could not take place, it would not meet truth. Antique sources of understanding of the truth comprising spirituality, connected with rational knowledge, have been prolonged in philosophical doctrines of new time when the university was generated as a scientific and social institute.

J. Newman (Newman, 2006) and V. Humboldt (Humboldt, 2002) formulated “Idea of university”. J. Newman was carried away by the idea of the Gentleman-intellectual that he wanted to realize in the university education practice. Formulation by Humboldt was based on philosophy of spirituality. But complexity of historical time in the late XVIII - beginning of XIX centuries, connected with revolutionary events in France and Napoleon's occupational moods, has turned into a university crisis for education: medieval traditions of university were subject to reforming. The educational idea of its orientation did not maintain the spirit of industrial and bourgeois time. The new epoch preferred the idea of a useful science as well as useful education. The industrial society has demanded from university not to be merely engaged in the universal, fundamental knowledge, but to be guided by the knowledge of the applied industrial character. Already then, the university reform could end with its liquidation. Humboldt, following the spirit of German idealism, and, being the patriot of Germany, has rejected French liquidation mood and, being in patriotic feelings, has developed the university reform in Germany, taking for a basis of its preservation the education and scientific structure different from other educational institutes by wide orientation not on mere reception of “useful” knowledge, but on wide educational intellectual-spiritual preparation. “We see distinct aspiration of Germans not to follow the French reform, but - despite all rational arguments - to go their own way (Kourennoy, 2011). The content of Humboldt's idea of the university proving “own way” German university education, was based on its doctrine about the “spirit of the people”, to orient to which as to the educating and clarifying basis of the person was the mission of the university. “The idea of the university” was orientated to fundamental science in the unity of scientific research and teaching and to the specificity of spiritual condition of the German nation. The national and personal identity, scientific literacy, enthusiasm for “useless” scientific researches - all these are fundamental-scientific and spiritually humanitarian signs and simultaneous humanitarian orientation of the university education. Their observance caused a humanitarian condition, spiritual aura and criteria of the classical (created by Humboldt) university.

In the course of its history, the Idea of the university underwent transformations, but it always kept the spiritually humanitarian content. At the very beginning of its way, the theological faculty bore the function of humanitarian education, becoming responsible for even the choice of the first faculties. Except for theological, there were also legal medical and philosophical faculties - all humanitarian oriented, but the theological one was still considered as predominant among others.

However, even in the first crisis of the university in the XVII-XVIII centuries when an emerging science, being differentiated, made out its directions, and each of them was formed as a single faculty, the humanitarian and spiritual content of its idea still remained. I.Kant, underlining the role of humanitarian education as a criterion of the university, defines the specificity of this period in the university history. He believes that, only owing to philosophy the university has not lost the classical specificity - its own Idea in its history.

Nevertheless, there appeared other tendencies in the modern university, among which the two directions of changes are the most frequent: desire to get the status of the World University (Salmi, 2012) and aspiration to commercialization of all university structures, appearance of enterprise universities (O'Brien, 2012). Both contradict the idea of the university according to Humboldt.

Today all universities aspire to receive the status of the world university: not only new, but also already existing, not only leading and elite, but also universities of emerging market economies (Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia). All want to enter the world level, without thinking of possibility of its achievement, but more likely

because on this sort of movement they receive additional and considerable financing from the state. In aspiration to realize this desire there is a danger of transformation of the university from the socially-educational institute into the social and economic institute. M. Crow (Crow, *The Research University as Comprehensive Knowledge Enterprise: A Prototype for a New American University*. In *University Research for Innovation*) names competitiveness and business as the basic lines of the modern American university.

The mentioned directions of transformations of the university cardinaly change its classical Idea, the content of which, according to Humboldt, was firstly connected with national spirit (“spirit of the people”) and was guided by maintenance of state-national interests, and secondly, the classical university has never prepared pragmatic people concerned about their own competitiveness. So, the founder of the university, classic Humboldt, considered that the task of the university is to strengthen and to form national states. Therefore, the university was supposed to be national. However the world universities which have appeared today cannot be based only on national basis. The national idea of the university in the world educational space is beyond the frameworks of those criteria of one’s own state and, of course, should change the content and form.

The main changes for consideration are - the acquisition of the good form by truth and knowledge, exit from the sphere of solely gnoseology, and active involvement in all spheres of social and cultural relations. Such transformations, having affected the university, have transformed it into the subject of market relations. From a temple of a science and knowledge it turns to a commercial corporation. Commercialization conflicts with humanitarization and fundamentalization of education. The contradiction between humanitarization and commercialization of education in Russia is supplemented with specific national contexts. In particular, economic relations of market character, education commercialization and acquisition of commodity characteristics by means of knowledge for the Russian university appear as the new phenomena and do not always meet understanding. It is considered that education - is the institute, which is not essentially commercial, and commercialization only undermines its effective development.

The Russian university ceases to be a temple and becomes an ordinary institute in the world of daily struggle for a survival. There is a threat of loss of intrinsic university specificity. The new position of the classical university poses a problem of search of the ways of its further development: whether there is a prospect of preservation of it as University or will it disappear?

Since 90s of the XX century, education in Russia refuses the strategy of evolving to the only thing in its eternity and, hence, spiritual ideal of truth and knowledge and chooses the strategy adequate to opened pluralism of changeable norms, ideals, samples. In their dynamics and pluralism it was offered to make an independent choice. Self-determination, independence become principles of the organization of education. The ideal now is not mastering fundamental and eternal knowledge, but, on the contrary, the ability to refuse eternity, to seize variability, movement, changes. The absoluteness and eternity of a spiritual core were eliminated. The science and scientific truth in their humanitarian form, that is the idea and in the criteria of the university, were now questioned. In such situation the university could not exist as classical any more.

Since 90s the discussions about the traditional cultural wealth, sources of which are the values of religion as the steadiest in the world outlook relation for the nation, people and individual, became actual. It was noted that traditional cultural wealth underlies the world educational systems, it provides stability, defines their originality and cultural-world outlook originality. They have played a vital role in the formation of philosophical pedagogical concepts, and resorting to them had good influence and influences till now the modern education and the general condition of countries, including those with the most advanced economy, science and technologies.

The university education in Russia began in the XVIII century. In 1755, in Russia, there appears Moscow University with three faculties - law, medical and philosophical. M.V.Lomonosov wrote to count Shuvalov: “Theological faculty I leave to Synod schools” (*Traditions of theological education in Russia: history and modern times*, 2008). One of the principal reasons of refusal to open theological faculty and to consider it as the highest (as it was regarded in Europe), was, according to Lomonosov, due to the lack of native Russian professors (*Traditions of theological education in Russia: history and modern times*, 2008).

According to the archbishop of Samara and Syzran Sergey, who has deeply studied the traditions of theological education in Russia, in the XIX century, the interaction between the spiritual and secular higher school remained rather limited. According to the charter of 1884, which was cancelled in 1904, the graduates of Theological seminaries could not study at universities, and the graduates of grammar schools and real schools - in Spiritual academies. These interdictions led to gradual replacement of religion from intellectual life of society - nobility, and later - intelligence. The majority of young Russian intellectuals of the beginning of the XX century perceived religion as something obsolete and braking development of science. The idea of omnipotence of scientific, rational thinking grasped the attention of university students. Design of rational projects on the world reorganization, creation of utopias - this tradition seized minds and was apprehended by Russia from the leading tradition of not religious, but philosophical thinking. This tradition did not come from the Greek concept of truth in a variant of *alethea* and *arete*. It came from the positivistic interpretation of science and its inattention to philosophical sophism and social and cultural background of revealing the truth. "Pure" ratio with its force of generating subjectivity, first of all, drew the attention of students. The involvement of the idea of rational perfection of the world, its rational designing and reorganization has been incompatible with the idea of divine creation, and also with philosophical mood which in Russia were expressed by the ideas of good (V. Soloviev) and love (Pushkin's words that "there is no truth without love" are well known). Nevertheless, the general revolutionary spirit has affected the change of the treatment of the spiritual content of traditional idea of classical university. It affected the formation of ideology of radical Russian parties, as a result of the victory of one of them, a violent eradication of religion has begun. It is possible to assume that, along with other conditions and reasons, the October revolution in Russia was caused by the weakening of the university attention to its traditional idea in its humanitarian-spiritual content (Traditions of theological education in Russia: history and modern times, 2008).

In the course of the Soviet history the university did not know "the dispute" of theological and philosophical faculties because the first did not exist.

In the modern period of Russian history there are appreciable changes concerning the problem of secularity of education, and separate theological disciplines started to be taught at universities. In 1992, the Ministry of Education made a decision on the possibility of teaching theology in establishments of vocational training of Russia. However religious specialists acted against theology introduction in high schools - they were earlier mostly teaching scientific atheism. The basic argument of opponents was that the new specialty contradicts secular character of the state in Russia and can strengthen the difference between religious communities of the country. In discussions, which took place on the given problem, incorrectness of these moods were more exhaustively proved. Russia is, actually, a multiconfessional and multinational country, but it is not the reason to forbid a Russian or any other person to study the national and religious traditions (Traditions of theological education in Russia: history and modern times, 2008).

The research of the foreign experience shows that in the European states which are secular, as well as the modern Russia is, the theology is taught at many universities. So, at Bonn University there are two theological faculties - Protestant and Catholic which co-operate, exchange teachers. The same situation can be observed at the state university of the French Strasbourg. In Oxford and Cambridge the theological faculties are the oldest and the first on internal university numbering. Theological faculties with rich tradition are available in Bern, Geneva, Vienna, Berlin, Helsinki, Copenhagen and other largest university centers of Europe (Traditions of theological education in Russia: history and modern times, 2008).

In 90s of the last century the majority of Russians saw the rise of interest to spirituality but they had very few knowledge of national orthodox culture and tradition. Many possessed and now possess only a sketchy idea about religion. A spiritually-moral crisis which is shown in all spheres, frequent international and interconfessional conflicts, acts of terrorism have sharply posed a problem of streamlining of sphere of spiritually-moral education to a society and leaders of the country. Its modern crisis – is "a moral-valuable disorientation and desertedness of,

first of all, youth” (Grof, 1995) which, after tearing from traditional cultural wealth, can become a destructive force of a society.

Tackling the problems of the unity of rational intelligence and spiritually-humanitarian literacy the modern Russian university is at the stage of development of the content of professional and personal identity of a graduate. Professional identity is based on such concepts, as competence, creativity, charisma, competitiveness, skill to communicate. A personal identity of the graduate of the classical university is formed by a humanitarian component of the university education and is based on traditional characteristics of intelligence and morals, spiritual aristocratism and aesthetics in behavior and dialogue. Such sort of knowledge allows the modern worker to enter the intelligence market where the unity of personal and professional in the formulation of “emotional intelligence” is extremely claimed today.

The demand is caused by social and cultural specifics of the current state of the world community - dynamic, constantly changing, presented by a randomness of “space of streams” (Kastels, Prologue: Network and I), that is, multilinear development on the basis of innovation. Such society is extremely separated, a separate individual is lost in “space of streams” and individualism becomes the objective form of existence in the networks. At the same time in a sociality of the globalized world when the borders between the countries and continents, practically, are erased, and the interdependence of people became the objective form of their life, individualism cannot be considered as a necessary attribute of the daily occurrence world, be of the verified nature and built social ontology. K.G. Gergen writes about it: “When people all over the world become more and more interdependent and when they have an opportunity of mutual destruction (by weapons or pollution), the ideology of self-sufficient individualism threatens human existence” (Gergen, Social construction and pedagogical practice). K.G. Gergen opposes “municipal relations”, interactions of people based on the unification and concordant communication to “Space of streams”, impetuous and indifferent to a single person. J. Habermas states the same, (Habermas, 2000) when he introduces the “consent” principle in a society to the social ontology. Similarly, the turn to that, what is supposed by spiritual existence, finds itself. The mentioned authors, actually, confirm the increase of the role of spirituality in the modern society since the basic social structure they name is not a separate and self-sufficient Ego, but “relation” and “communication”. In contextually changing “relations” the knowledge is born and the knowledge is carried out.

For a condition of the Russian university the drawn conclusion concerning educating the person in the unity of professional ratio and spirituality matters in the respect that it has not exhausted the pathos of classical criteria, since showing itself as a rational-intellectual skeleton of the society, it keeps its spiritual leadership in it as well.

### **3. Conclusion**

The problem stated in the paper demands further consideration and the subsequent research attention in order to find in the pluralism of the modern university forms, the one, which with the greatest completeness would inherit specificity of the classical university. It is possible to state a hypothesis that such university form is the research university. What does this university inherit from classics? What will be transformed? What idea will be expressed? In what does the specificity of unification in the idea of the research university, of reason and spirituality consists? These and similar questions remain to be researched. Answers to the stated questions are connected with the further theoretical research, and with the practically realized actions.

The education sphere undoubtedly bears its share of responsibility for many negative phenomena since the reason of it is the person. The person who has lost the ability to actively withstand the evil in all its forms, who has lost the faith in spiritual values and the meaning of human life, who has forfeited reference points, who does not have answers to the most important world outlook questions.

Realization of set goals is of great importance today, since the university (concerning above all our country) finds itself in an unusual position that makes it viewed from the new perspective of the main criterion, which has been always considered as the main presence of fundamental science in its spiritual and humanitarian content and

orientation at the university. As the result of the processes that take place in the Academy of Sciences (the possibility of its disbandment), there arises a question concerning the institute that could get the science as the prerogative. In the course of its history, the classic university had the monopoly of conducting scientific researches. It seems that the question concerns the return of its original function to the classic university. However, the specifics of time – peculiarities of modern ontologies introduced by “space of streams”, network communications, leading role of knowledge that has transformed into information etc. – brings up new questions and sees difficulties in realization of this function by the classical university.

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