

The University of the Twenty-first Century Will Be Socially Responsible or It Will Not Be

1. Reform of the University: Urgently Needed to Meet the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century

In January 2003, for the fifth anniversary of the Declaration on Higher Education, I underscored that which I had found to be underestimated in the Declaration:

1.1. The University is just as much a part of the causes of the crisis of today's world as it is of the solutions to it

- the need for radical change and a new contract between the University and society;
- the central character of the thinking on the responsibility of the University;
- the need to network for a strategy for change.

My paper on that occasion drew up the main lines of a strategy. It is this line of thinking that I wish to take up and to take further with you this morning.

Contrary to most of you, I am not part of the University. In fact, I do not think that the University can change solely from the inside through its own evolutionary logic. It is a product of society, it will have to change to meet society's new requirements, and it is on the basis of these requirements that I am going to try to express the need and the conditions for a deep transformation of the University.

I am going to do so by «de-specializing» the thinking, by treating the University not as a separate institutional and social entity «similar to nothing else,» but as the specific application of more general thinking that applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to other institutions and other social bodies.

My thinking here is sustained by three personal experiences that constitute «from whence I speak.»

- My past as higher civil servant of the French government led me to think in depth about the historical foundations of public action, the reasons of its current crisis, the difficulties that it faces in being reformed, and the principles of a revolution of governance. This taught me in particular the force of institutional machinery, which always overrules the objectives that it is assigned.
- Having been for nearly twenty years at the head of the FPH, which has now given itself the priority, for reasons that I will explain, of supporting the emergence of a global community, I have been able to measure the importance of the collective construction of new perspectives, rooted in what is tangible, through networking, provided that rigorous methodology is used.
- Finally, having initiated an international dynamics, the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World, which among others produced the International University Reforms Observatory, I was able to discover the common foundations of the crises of the current world and the ensuing priorities, which we called, after the World Citizens Assembly, the «Agenda for the Twenty-first Century.»

Today's University is just as much a part of the causes of the crisis as it can be part of its solutions.

1.2. An emergency: to learn to manage relations

Beyond the mechanisms of economic domination that each of us knows, the crisis of our contemporary world has conceptual, ideological, and institutional foundations.

This is, indeed, a crisis of relations: of human beings with human beings, of societies with societies, of humankind with the biosphere. Crisis of human beings among themselves, the example of social exclusion; of societies with each other, and the exceptional difficulty they face in managing our interdependence within the framework of the current forms of political regulation; the crisis finally of the relations between humankind and the biosphere because society consumes resources much more quickly than they are renewed and seems to think that it will be able to do so indefinitely ...

This difficulty in relations is found in every field, as if the Cartesian model—decompose to understand—had degenerated into a form of schizophrenia and generalized partitioning:

- in the field of industry, production chains are juxtaposed;
- in the University, knowledge is partitioned;
- in public action, sectoral policies are juxtaposed;
- in society, we are moving toward an «organ pipe» system, where contacts between people from the same sphere at opposite ends of the planet are more intense than contacts with neighbors;
- in agriculture, there is the inability to reason as a whole on ecosystems to the benefit of the simplistic symptom-processing couple, which is leading to generalized deterritorialization.

This crisis in relations is to be associated with the crisis of the Western development model, which is characterized by the inversion of the ends and the means.

When we are told, «You can't stop science,» this is amazing, because that means that science is the new name for fate! When there is discussion on issues as serious, ethically, as the cloning of human beings or genetic manipulation, etc., we are earnestly lectured: «But how do you expect to stop laboratories from doing research, producing patents, etc.?» Same thing for the market. How extravagant to present market economy as a law of nature! That stands up to neither historical nor political analysis.

The University, however, participates in the inversion of ends and means by increasingly teaching how to do things (science, law, management, the economy) as separate from the purposes.

1.3. Let us stop trying to manage tomorrow's world with yesterday's ideas and day-before-yesterday's institutions

A good illustration of the current confusion in the thinking is provided by the semantic confusion between economic globalization and globalization. In English, there is only one word: «globalization.» «Globalization» of everything from the new information and communication technologies to negotiations on the reduction of trade barriers in the framework of the WTO, and including such things as freedom of investment for multinational companies. The French language is lucky to have two different words, so let us take advantage of that: we have on the one hand, mondialisation, and on the other, globalisation économique.

What is mondialisation? For me, it is a fact, an inescapable given. Mondialisation is the fact that the interdependence among societies has grown all over the world, year after year, and finally made us take a true qualitative leap. If in the eighties the famous ozone hole had such media success, it was less because of the effective seriousness of the skin cancer it was supposed to cause than because of its extraordinary symbolic value. The ozone hole that was growing over the Antarctic was directly connected to the activity of industrial societies. It therefore symbolized the fact that the macroclimatic, macroatmospheric effects of industrial activities were occurring in the only place where there were none at all! Coming after the satellite photos and their image of the blue planet, a series of symbols progressively expressed a reality that everyone perceived: we are all in the same boat and the boat is fragile, it is threatened. The awareness of being in the same boat, that is what mondialisation expresses. It is the awareness that the greenhouse effect is the sum of an infinity of things, from using one's car instead of one's bicycle to go buy bread, to the development of rice crops. The awareness that all of this is combined in the atmosphere, the awareness that acid rain can move from one place to another, that the deadly Chernobyl cloud also moves, but also that the Internet is building a global information network in real time. All of this has raised awareness of an increasing interdependence since World War II. A figure. Already in the mid-nineties, global society consumed one-and-a-half times of the renewable resources of the planet every year. Concretely, whereas only 20% of society has access, if I may say, to developed-country type consumption, we are «gobbling up» our stocks every year. Globalization is therefore a fact. It cannot be reversed. Behavior can be reversed, there is the possibility of nationalistic withdrawal behavior, we see a lot of that, there is resistance behavior, anxiety, etc., but globalization is an inescapable fact.

Economic globalization is a completely different issue. Economic globalization is a policy and an ideology. We have to go back to history to understand the situation in which we began, taking one year with another, to fall into the present dominant thinking, which has excluded all other forms of thinking. When the Americans, as a condition to the Marshall Plan, challenged us Europeans in the aftermath of the war by saying, «We would like to help you to rebuild, but if you are simply going to jump back into a destruction spree as soon as you have reconstituted your steel industry and arms industry, we are not interested,» pressure for European economic unification was applied as a political aim. What was at stake was peace, not prosperity. Considerations on reducing customs duties took place with regard to a very specific historical sequence: economic crisis, withdrawal, increase of customs duties, nationalism, war. It was in terms of this historic situation that thinking on the relationship between freedom of trade and peace was suddenly supported. Does this mean to say that everywhere and always freedom of trade guarantees development, the balance between human beings and the atmosphere, and the balance between nations and social justice? No, a thousand times no! It has become obvious in the past thirty years: international trade has grown at a considerable pace, but has brought growth in inequalities, leading to what in French is known as the «champagne glass» curve, where a small minority controls a large majority of possessions and a large majority is content with the smallest share.

We are going to have to manage a globalized, an irreversibly globalized world. We are going to have to take globalization not as a burden but as an opportunity and also as a need for change.

To understand how this happened to us, we have to go way back in history and to its acceleration in the past century and more especially since World War II. Then we will observe a fundamental truth: all the elements of the system do not change at the same rate. This is what I call the discrepancy theory: day after day, the economy, science, and technology change while systems of thought and institutions do so more slowly.

I think that the mutations of the twenty-first century will be comparable in their scope and their systemic nature to the passage from the Middle Ages to the modern world. And the similarity is striking between the emergence, at the beginning of the nineteenth century of the Prussian Von Humboldt University and the emergence, between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century of the modern state. In both cases there was a movement of dissociation, specialization and self-

reference. In the case of the University: dissociation of science and religion; specialization with the institution of separate faculties; self-reference with the claim for university autonomy as a condition for the autonomy of the free production of knowledge.

In the case of the state: dissociation with the separation of the Prince's fortune and public goods; specialization with the development of specialized institutions; self-reference by making sovereignty an absolute value.

The similarity between public action and the University continues with precision in the crisis of relations:

- partitioning of disciplines and fields;
- the difficult relations with the rest of society (partnership) and the obstacles to communication between thinking and action.

We see inertia and resistance to change well at work, which explains that at this beginning of the twenty-first century our institutional and ideological models are soon to be 200 years old, whereas in the meantime, the world has changed radically.

So in the end, we wish to manage a radically interdependent world with intergovernmental relations between sovereign states, and systemic realities with academic disciplines that are hanging on to their autonomy.

2. For Science and the University, the Same Challenge: to Renew Their Contract with Society

2.1. The current social contract is obsolete

For science and for the university there very well existed, after World War II, a form of social contract.

For science, the contract was born from the reconversion of the fabulous mobilization effort of the minds that the war had required.

For the University, the implicit social contract had two dimensions: building and circulating specialized knowledge; the university exemptions. But this contract is leaking on all sides.

First, because the nature of post-university outlets has changed: there is less and less reproduction of the University itself or the state's framing of society, and more and more training of knowledge and know-how handlers within companies. Hence: a) the loss of monopoly in the delivery of knowledge and a growing influence of companies, with knowledge drifting toward becoming a marketable good; b) the University's retreating to the benefit of systems directly responding to the short-term needs of the economy.

Then, because the skepticism of society with regard to this form of production and reproduction of knowledge is growing; in a word, society is trusting the University less and less: the obsolete nature of the contract is progressively removing society's support for the University.

In the third place, because the University, like the state, no longer has the monopoly of expertise. This is seen in the growing power of what I call citizens network expertise. All of this

means, in plain language, that if academics refuse to step down from their pedestal, one day they will be simply toppled like the vulgar statue of a fallen leader.

Finally, because in the information society, the mutualisation of knowledge is not compatible with the visible or invisible walls of institutions. The fight against the marketing of knowledge can no longer be limited to defending public education. Competence networks will soon have more reality than workgroups taken singly. Universities are in any case going to move from the status of temple of knowledge to the status, in my view even nobler, of mediator of knowledge.

2.2. Elements of the new social contract

Before specifying the contours of the new social contract and showing their strength and their foundations I would like to present the features that have already appeared for it:

- Given the lag accumulated by the systems of thought and the institutions on the realities of the world, we need much more than a slow, marginal evolution or simple adjustments. As in the field of governance, the University needs a conceptual and institutional revolution.
- Facing the crisis of the present world, the new system must be able to match the major mutations of the twenty-first century.
- The new system must be characterized by its capacity for managing relations among different forms of knowledge and among players.
- The new system will put the ends and the means «right side up»; in this sense, the University is one of the places where humanism needs to be reinvented without allowing itself to be fascinated by instrumental reason, which is nothing else, at the end of the day, than the capacity for providing efficient solutions to questions that were not necessarily understood.
- The system must acknowledge the other sources of production of knowledge and must define itself as mediator.

To build this new contract, we must once again stand outside of the University proper, and understand why the idea of a «social contract,» which has rather fallen into obsolescence, is returning powerfully. I see two complementary, in fact inseparable reasons for this, which have to do with globalization and the growth of interdependence.

First, globalization. The societies of the world did not choose to live together. They have simply been led to the fact that their destinies are indissolubly connected. To manage their common future they cannot have recourse, as traditional societies do, to a common transcendence or to common myths—the myth of national unity, for instance. Management of this common future is therefore of the order of a contract.

Then, the growth of interdependence among different spheres. It commands the question of responsibilities to one another, of the balance of rights and duties. Just as the freedom to conduct a business will inevitably be subordinated to the recognition of the social responsibility that ensues from it, the support that the University claims from the rest of the society is justified by the University's contribution to the resolution of the challenges of society.

2.3. The new social contract is based on the Charter of Human Responsibilities

Before returning to the question of the responsibility of Universities, which is at the very heart of the idea of the contract, let us describe these ethical foundations precisely. They are not specific to the University. They govern, as a common basis, the whole of the contracts.

Work has been conducted internationally for a long time in the framework of the Alliance to determine this basis. Explaining it in detail would take us out of the subject of this conference, so let us move immediately to the result, which after World Citizens Assembly took the form of a Charter of Human Responsibilities. This ethical charter is not a moral code decreeing imperative rules and interdictions. Ethics ensue on the contrary from the exercise of freedom. It is an ethics of choice, an ethics of the tension between apparently contradictory requirements, in a word, an ethics of relations:

- the relation between unity and diversity, which invites the University to welcome, within a common search, a plurality of angles, views, cultures, and knowledge, to make sure that there is a constant coming and going between the unity of knowledge and the diversity of the forms of approach;
- the relation between the individual and the collective, which first invites tolerance, then the combination of individual commitments and collective commitments;
- the relation between being and having, which invites the University to not to lock itself into teaching instrumental reason, to always have the purposes and the human development of persons and societies on the horizon;
- the relation between continuity and change, which invites the University to be the depository and the transmitter of what Edgar Morin rightly calls the «human condition,» to not to be fascinated by change for the sake of change, by innovation for the sake of innovation; but also to be capable of radical change because today, this is required by the long-term pursuit of the human adventure;
- finally, the relation between freedom and responsibility.

The Charter of Human Responsibilities specifies the three major features of responsibility in our contemporary world and you will see how much these features apply to the University and its contract with the rest of society:

- responsibility is about the impact of our acts, even their long-term more-or-less unforeseeable impact;
- responsibility is in proportion to knowledge and power; this of course especially concerns the University as possessor of knowledge;
- finally, responsibility is to generate the power for change and this power for change comes only from establishing links with others; therefore no one can shirk his or her responsibility in the name of his or her own helplessness.

How do these three faces of responsibility apply to the University and fashion its contract with society? This is what we will now examine.

2.4. The University's own responsibilities

For the university, what characterizes its responsibility first is its very long-term impact. This derives directly from what I called the discrepancy theory. Our representation systems are lagging behind the realities. Hence the overwhelming responsibility of the education bodies where such representations are forged among those who will be managing tomorrow's world! This is the great challenge for teachers, who were trained with ideologies built in the days of their youth. A

philosopher comes to mind, who said about politicians: the problem with politicians is that they stop thinking when they enter the political battle. When they reach power, they do so with the system of thought of the time when they entered the political battle. Since they are professionals, they begin early, because they have to begin early to have a career and in general, given that the competition is rough, they get there late. This leads to a general 40-year gap between their way of considering issues and the reality of the issues. For the University, we are dealing not with a 40-year, but with a 200-years gap!

The responsibility of the University is both individual and collective. It is that of every academic taken singly, of every university taken singly, and of the university community as a whole. I would like to insist on these three levels. The first two can express the social contract through a Brazilian Charter of Responsibilities of Academics and Universities. The third level, symbolized by the international nature of the present conference, has to do with building a global community. This is the first imperative of the «Agenda for the Twenty-first Century»: globalization, the global nature of our interdependence, does not yet have institutions and a political community as its counterparts in the real world. It is therefore necessary and urgent to try to bring about a tangible, living global community. We should remember that «humanity» did not become a subject of the law until World War II, with the introduction of the idea of «crime against humanity»; the idea of a global community is a new anthropological leap and the University has a crucial responsibility to play its role in it. At a time when our home has become the world, we need to remember that the University has a twofold etymology:

- first that of «human community of students» and by extension of professors;
- then that of «universal»: presumed universality of knowledge yesterday, universality of the challenges today.

The responsibility of the University has, it seems to me, two main faces:

- Training future teachers, those who will model youth. The question is not whether today's young people will adapt to tomorrow's society, as if history were written beforehand, but rather whether young people have the capacity of making the necessary mutations and of grasping relations.
- Involvement in political and social affairs: the capacity of making connections locally that will make it possible to consider political challenges together and in a new way. This is where the new role of the University, mediator of knowledge built by networks, can prove to be essential. Indeed, globalization, rather than moving actors away from the local territory, sends them back there. Because the territory, in an economy of knowledge and when it comes to learning to manage relations of different natures, is called to be the founding brick of the governance of tomorrow. The territory is certainly the social actor whose role is going to grow the most in the coming decades, to the detriment of the company.

Thus the social contract between the University and society must have several dimensions and several scales. On the one hand, a global contract, the commitment of the responsibility of the academic community as a whole facing the great challenges of the contemporary world and facing the education of young people; on the other, territorialized contracts clarifying locally relations with the other actors of society.

Assuming its responsibility fully before the challenges of the contemporary world, the University becomes a full citizen. But its greatest challenge is to train future citizens. This is not of course about «civic education» but about preparing for everyone's individual exercise of his or her responsibilities.

The first application is what I call the duty of generation. In the aftermath of World War II, the duty of young French people and young Germans was to «make Europe» in order to avoid finishing off the mass suicide that had been started so well by the two World Wars. The duty of the coming

generation is just as obvious. This time it is to build not Europe but the world and, for the same reason, to avoid mass suicide.

The second application is to prepare students to be in the world and to make the world. Before, we spoke of «studying humanities» to absorb the great thinkers of the past. What needs to be done today, and nothing less, is to make Humanity. Why not dream, for instance, as the philosopher Michel Serre proposed, of a first year of University common to all countries and to all disciplines and where one would learn, for example:

- the ethics of choice and citizenship—from the local to the global;
- cross-culturality;
- the common challenges;
- knowledge sharing and building international connections?

Could we not, for instance, imagine universities organizing interactive citizens panels including India, China, and Africa, in order to compare their different questionings on the world and to match them with different experts? How can all this be done? With which strategy for change? And who has the means to conduct it? At this stage we need to come back to the third dimension of responsibility as stated earlier: power is not given it is created. And, to quote Paul Ricoeur, «power is born when men assemble, it vanishes when they disperse.»

There is only one answer to the question, «Who has the power to design and to implement the necessary mutations?»: citizens, academics, and the students themselves.

3. A Strategy of Alliance to Reform the University

3.1. Apply to the University the classic principles of strategy for change used in large organizations

The University's first responsibility is to implement its own transformation.

It will not find the strength to do so, will not have the power to do so, unless it builds alliances. What is an alliance? A new way of getting organized without setting up new institutions (universities have plenty of these!) but rather common objectives, common ethical rules, and specific working procedures.

Large institutions, and this is the very difficulty in reforming the state, change only if there is conjunction: at the top, of a determination, a clear vision, and a strategy to be implemented in the long term; at the bottom, of a deep aspiration for change, an individual and collective quest for meaning, a capacity for innovation, and a willingness to take chances. In my book, *L'Etat au coeur* (The State at Heart), I showed how in France state reform has always failed because at the top, there was failure of vision and of constancy in effort, as if to change how things work it were enough to change the organization chart, as if to change a man it were enough to change his clothes. But it failed even more surely because instead of showing consideration for civil servants, instead of considering that the engine for change should be fuelled by their ideas, their experience, and their personal search for sense in public action, civil servants were only presented as obstacles to change, as a force of stubborn resistance to the inspirations of the political authorities.

The latest mistake to date was that of Claude Allègre, when he was Minister of Education. He inaugurated his strategy for reform by announcing that he would be «skimming the mammoth.» This simple statement was enough to deprive him of the support of those very persons who, within the national education system, could have been convinced by his ideas!

Large companies are very familiar with the issue of strategies for change. Indeed, when a state is not able to reform, it does not disappear. It gradually declines, losing in the process its legitimacy in the eyes of the other players, and depleting itself from the inside of all its meaning. As for a company, no matter how powerful it is, it can collapse if it does not achieve reform!

From company experience, we can draw four rules, four conditions for success in a strategy for change:

- the collective awareness that there is a crisis, which is needed to justify what any reform involves, i.e., the painful efforts, the questioning, the disputation of established situations;
- a clear and shared vision of the objectives aimed for;
- long-term continuity in reform action according to specific stages;
- finally and foremost, within the organization, the constitution of «allies for reform,» of an alliance made up of all those who, more responsible, more aware, or more innovating than the others, are prepared to go beyond the maintenance of the established positions and rights, beyond the present habits, prepared to project themselves into the future, prepared to be the collective engines for this adventure.

3.2. Identify or build different levels of alliances for reform

It is therefore not on the basis of representative institutions that change is built, but on the basis of alliances among organizations and persons—universities and academics—who share the same sense of responsibility to society, to the future. The vocation of «representative institutions,» well we know, is to represent a community and to guarantee its continuity, therefore to embody, to a greater or lesser degree, an «eternal order.» They are not, for all that, necessarily obstacles to change. They retain an important legitimation role, thanks to which they can greatly facilitate a strategy for reform by speaking out in favor of a new social contract, by endorsing, for instance, a new Charter for the Responsibility of the Universities. But they cannot, in themselves, be the engine for reform; for this alliances have to be built. An institution—that is its vocation—is on the side of permanence; an alliance—and this is why it should not be institutionalized—is on the side of movement.

Just as the social contract itself, the alliance for a University of the twenty-first century should be organized at different levels:

- at the global level, because at the global level the University must be the very incarnation of the community and of universality;
- at the national level, where in the present state of affairs, it is still easier to conjoin a political aspiration for reform, which embodies the general aspiration of society, with an aspiration for change coming from within the University itself;
- and at the level of each university, for it is at this level that the various attempts for innovation can be crystallized into a general transformation; it is also at this level that territorial social contracts can be reached among the different social players.

Allow me to dream that this morning's attendance, which gathers innovators from the whole world, which convened upon a call from the Brazilian minister materializing a national political will for

reform, which finally includes education commissioners and teachers who have come with their determination to participate in this event, is the founding moment for these different levels of alliances. If this were the case, this event could be qualified as historic.

3.3. Establish the tools, the actors, and the stages of the strategy for change

An alliance is defined by its specific working procedures, all of which aim at connecting and building:

- We need tools to produce collective intelligence in order to convert everyone's tangible experience into a general strategy and for this strategy to be constantly rooted, irrigated, vitalized, and inspired by tangible reality. It is not possible, it is no longer possible to induce support through watchwords delivered from the top, no matter how legitimate they are. If we wish the advocates for sense to form alliances, the methods must be consistent with the objectives that are aimed for, and every individual ally must always feel he or she is the co-author and co-maker of the common strategy.

- There is a need for allies to be linked with one another, for forums of collective debate, for a meeting point where the community of allies is embodied. The Internet and the World Wide Web have radically modified the conditions for building alliances, particularly in the academic world, which stands at the cutting edge of this instrument.

- We need founding acts: in the case of the University, it is around Charters of Responsibilities of different levels that the founding acts for alliances can happen. It is around common forums for experience sharing and debates that an identity can be fashioned.

- Finally, for an alliance aiming for long-term transformations, there is the need for common evaluation tools, ritual moments to measure the road that has been traveled. Specific stages, failing which the most well-meaning strategy will be lost in the sand and the most enthusiastic innovators will bend to discouragement. The French sociologist Michel Crozier, speaking of our national predilection for taking words to be things and speeches on change to be change itself, said: «You cannot change society by decree.» Change is not an act, it is a collective process.

But such an alliance would be incomplete if it did not fully associate what is probably the essential player: the students themselves. The truth is that to become the heralds of tomorrow's society, to be the seeds and the midwives of this global community in gestation, they need themselves to build their alliance to give the University back the sense of the Universitas of the Middle Ages, the community of students. The young generation—I see this all over the world—is seeking sense and points of reference. It is not up to the teachers to set up this alliance in their place, but obviously, the way the courses are designed, the organization of international exchanges, the availability of logistical means can be of powerful assistance.

To end with, I will say that in a strategy for reform, you do not, you never start from scratch. The seeds are there already. They may be scarce; each of them is marginalized within their institution; alone, they are lacking a coherent perspective to federate them. But they are the yeast of the dough. These seeds are present in large numbers within the University. It is therefore essential, from the start, as soon as a national or an international will for reform is expressed, to go out to meet them, to count them, to allow them to gain in value, to network them.

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