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MAGNA CHARTA UNIVERSITATUM

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Observatory for Fundamental University
Values and Rights

"Carmine A. Romanzi Award"

The Interpretation of the Magna Charta Universitatum and its Principles

Stephen Lay

OBSERVATORY
MAGNA CHARTA UNIVERSITATUM

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Foreword

Fabio Roversi-Monaco
President, Collegium of the Magna Charta, Bologna

In 2003, to mark the 15th anniversary of the *Magna Charta Universitatum* signed in Bologna on 18 September 1988, the Magna Charta Observatory decided to launch an award destined to young researchers and academics interested in the interpretation of the *Magna Charta Universitatum* and of its principles. This project was to be dedicated to the memory of Carmine A. Romanzi who, in 1988, was the President of the European Rectors' Conference (CRE) – now the European University Association (EUA): from the beginning, he had been a staunch supporter of the idea of a common charter to be endorsed by all universities joining the University of Bologna 900th anniversary commemoration. The financing of the award was also made possible by funds he had raised and entrusted to EUA for international university development.

The number of entries received, their variety and quality have fully met the Observatory's expectations. Thus, the members of the Collegium, joined by the President of

the Board of the Observatory, Dr Kenneth Edwards, acted as a jury and decided to grant the prize to a young academic from Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, Dr Stephen Lay – whose entry is published herewith. Based on a thorough historical enquiry, his essay presents, with a deep sense of continuity, the reasons that fed the development of the principles that a few of us [1], in 1988, had tried to bring together – with an eye both to the past and to the future - as the structuring elements of an institution also fully aware of its social environment, i.e., of its working links with its surrounding community: the university.

In the long history of higher education, one should remember that this document, born out from the initiative of a few institutions, represents the first charter that focuses on the role of the universities, those same universities that gave this paper its credibility when 400 of them solemnly signed the document in September 1988 – many others endorsing the charter over the following years too.

I must confess that this institutionalisation process has not been perceived as central in the making of the charter by the award candidates, not even by the laureate Stephen Lay. As an actor in the staging of the 1988 event, I considered, then as I do now, that only a document referring to the tradition while offering also general guidelines on today's mission of the university had a chance to be en-

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[1] *The committee was composed by: the President of the European Rectors Conference, prof. Carmine Romanzi; the Rector of the University of Bologna, prof. Fabio Roversi-Monaco; the Rector of the University of Paris I, prof. Jacques Soppelsa; the Rector of the University of Leuven, prof. Roger Dillemans; the Rector of the University of Utrecht, prof. J.A. Van Ginkel; the Rector of the University of Barcelona, prof. Josep Bricall; Bologna Ninth Centenary Committee, prof. Giuseppe Caputo; the President of the sub-commission for Universities of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, prof. Manuel Nuñez Encabo.*

dorsed by institutions representing very diverse historical, social, legal, administrative and institutional realities.

Indeed, to be approved and signed by institutions as diverse as English, German, Italian, Arab, American or Latin American universities, to mention but a few of the signatories, such a document had to stress general principles mainly. Even the future mission of the institution – now challenged by a globalising world, as justly pointed out by Dr Lay – had to be drafted in generic terms, thus calling also for further references to particular traditions.

In other terms, as indicated by the laureate, the Magna Charta needs at present an interpretation of its capacity for evolution, a discourse that goes beyond the criticism of principles that, although considered of universal value, do not offer adequate solutions to the problems of a society as complex as ours.

For sure, the Magna Charta includes references to the enduring links between the university and a society in constant evolution – especially because of its growing international dimensions – when the document claims "that the universities' task of spreading knowledge among the younger generation implies that, in today's world, they must also serve society as a whole, and that the cultural, social and economic future of society requires, in particular, a considerable investment in continuing education".

Very appropriately and constructively, Stephen Lay thus tries to determine what the future role of the university can be; indeed, he does not stop at the present stage of higher education but takes the opportunity to spell out and define the institution's function rather than its characteristics. Such an approach is needed from all the universities of our time – when they envisage linking with their specific community – although the university, vis-à-

vis other social partners, has certainly no claim to pre-eminence in the running of society.

In other words, Stephen Lay's essay opens vistas on the institutional future of higher education; however, his conclusion that "a consideration of the development of the university suggests that its central function should in fact be the maximisation of the influence of reason in human society" leaves me rather perplexed by its very generality. This could also apply to the training of 10 to 18 year old students in secondary schools. Are not universities very different institutions, *per se*?

The university must indeed engage its basic functions when it works *in* and *for* society but, to my mind, it should also remain a very specific institution insofar as it respects the plurality of opinions and is capable of understanding and evaluating the variety and adequacy of the many solutions proposed to diverse problems – in fact the substance of its teaching and research.

For the university to meet such targets, independence and autonomy are indispensable pre-requisites; hence, the importance for their fundamental values to be guaranteed by several constitutions so that the universities can even resist the interventions inspired by government or parliament contingency requirements – often with success.

We need institutions that are sufficiently strong to refuse the demagogy of rules and acts such as those that happened all over Europe after 1968 when, for instance, it was decided to offer indiscriminate and immediate access to higher education: this led not only to universities relaxing their requirements for the recruitment of teaching staff but also to the marginalisation of those policies that had intended to help younger people to choose stud-

ies by taking into account both their individual talents *and* the interests of the community.

Demagogy and authoritarianism are easy practices in places where autonomous institutions do not exist, i.e., where there are no institutions fully aware of their independence. Only autonomous universities can really oppose demagogical outbursts and take up conscious social responsibilities - as Claude Allègre, the former French Minister of Education, implied in a speech given at the Observatory meeting of September 2001:

"The Observatory and the Magna Charta are great ideas. But, to be relevant to today's problems, they should go beyond the work of two nice committees. Their members will need to meet to discuss the new conditions of autonomy for the new university, especially if the place of the university in the new society is to increase: indeed, a growing number of people will want to be educated, during all of their life. They will wish to go to university – not to be trained in schools. I expect that the university will become a permanent feature of society everywhere. But what does lifelong learning mean to the university identity? Who certifies learning and how are diplomas delivered? How will such degrees compare with initial awards? And what does this imply for mobility, between institutions, between academic providers and others? These are problems of responsibility and responsibility shapes autonomy. Time is appropriate for university people to reflect on these questions".

Only an independent and conscious institution can indeed resist the many temptations of ephemeral pro-activity, as too often such commitments represent answers to irrelevant requirements from society, i.e., short-term exigencies that the university should avoid to engage in.

In short, while acknowledging the validity of Stephen Lay's observations, we can point out that, where exists an institution that has represented for centuries the main asset of our common European experience [2], there is ground for the university to be protected as such, and to be invited – if not pushed – to develop its social function, thus meeting the expectations of a community that also funds it. Autonomy, independence and innovation at the service of society are certainly closely connected fundamental values for academia; to consider them as separate elements can only harm the university's cause.

These few personal remarks are there to express my appreciation and admiration for Stephen Lay's essay – a document that has evoked committed reactions from my part but a document that should also encourage the Observatory to move on the suggested path of evolution, thus gradually assuming a more significant role in the changing international environment of the universities.

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[2] *"Europe already exists, and its people have shared one common institution for centuries: the university. Indeed, Europeans can rally around their universities as agents of their intellectual past and future, considering that these institutions have common aims and common methodologies when exploring and disseminating knowledge - be it theoretical or practical. That was the message given in 1988 at the 900th anniversary of the University of Bologna, considered to be the oldest academic institution in Europe".* (Magna Charta presentation)

The Interpretation of the Magna Charta Universitatum and its Principles

Stephen Lay
Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Background

In 1988 representatives from a number of European countries gathered to mark the ninth centenary of the University of Bologna by endorsing the Magna Charta Universitatum. The Magna Charta seeks to establish guiding principles to define, and thus protect, the very concept of a university. The signatories of the Magna Charta agreed on such fundamental tenets as institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and the symbiotic relationship of research and teaching.

Yet in the fifteen years since the ratification of the Magna Charta these principles have come under considerable pressure, as societies throughout the world make greater demands on their institutions of higher learning. Trends such as globalisation, rising student numbers, and widespread government intervention in the university sector have all threatened the viability of the principles

established by the Magna Charta. However, as universities evolve into an uncertain future, their custodianship of the cultural legacy of the past, along with their ability to make a strong and positive contribution to contemporary society, need to be heavily reliant on a generally accepted statement of core institutional values.

The universities have played a fundamental role in the development of human cultures, yet the essential nature of these institutions is difficult to define. This is because, throughout their long history, institutions of higher learning have been in a constant state of change, a process of evolution caused by the often equivocal nature of their relationship with the wider world. In many ways, the very concept of an 'institution of higher learning' holds an inherent tension between the wide latitude individuals require to achieve intellectual excellence, and the demands a society might wish to impose upon an institution which, after all, it must materially support. As societies change, and make new demands on education and research, universities are obliged to adapt. For this reason, the modern university is in essence a conglomerate of earlier concepts and organisational forms; it is a product of centuries of societal challenge and institutional response. In acknowledgement of this complex process of change, and in an effort to positively influence the ongoing development of higher learning, the Magna Charta identifies crucial institutional characteristics as basic principles for future university governance.

How then does the Magna Charta define the ideal university? The document concedes that, due to 'geogra-

phy and historical heritage'[3], the modern university exists in a multiplicity of forms. Nevertheless, even across this plethora of organisational structures, several fundamental characteristics have been identified. The Magna Charta describes the 'true' university as 'an autonomous institution at the heart of [different] societies', an institution charged with the task of 'spreading knowledge among the younger generation' and providing them with 'the education and training that will teach them, and through them others, to respect the great harmonies of their natural environment and of life itself.' Underpinning this training should be high quality research, for 'teaching and research in universities must be inseparable if their tuition is not to lag behind changing needs, the demands of society, and the advances of scientific knowledge.' In addition to this didactic function, the university is declared to be 'the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant care is to attain universal knowledge.' Thus the university is identified by its teaching, research, and cultural roles. Yet the defining qualities of the true university also include the ways in which these roles relate to each other, along with the relationship between the institution as a whole and the outside world.

The Magna Charta delineates four fundamental principles that must guide the internal organisation of the university and its interaction with wider society. In order to be considered a true university an institution must first and foremost be 'morally and intellectually independent of political authority and economic power.' The adminis-

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[3] The text of the Magna Charta Universitatum (in numerous languages) can best be viewed at the website:
    http:// www.magna-charta.org/magna.html.

trators of a university must endeavour to ensure that the campus provides a protected space where 'freedom of research and teaching is possible, unhindered by intolerance or intellectual constraint'. To ensure an institution's intellectual integrity, the research and teaching functions must be granted equal support; similarly the critical relationship between these two pursuits must be acknowledged. The document further stipulates that 'to fulfil its vocation [the university] transcends geographical and political frontiers and affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other.' The Magna Charta concludes by proposing means for assuring the quality of such universities: resources must be allocated in such a way as to preserve freedom in teaching and research; staff must be recruited in accordance with the principle that research is inseparable from teaching; eligible students must be guaranteed unhindered access to universities; and the exchange of information, students, and staff members across national borders must be encouraged.

The source of the principles identified by the Magna Charta is the university itself, so they are in reality a product of the university's long history of institutional evolution. The ideal of university autonomy was established during the Middle Ages, but the crucial link between teaching and research was not affirmed until the nineteenth century. A conspicuous characteristic of the earliest universities was the international character of scholarship, yet in the modern world the rapid proliferation of universities across the globe has made the principle of supranational learning more problematic, but also potentially more crucial, than ever before. Because the principles of the Magna Charta are the product of an extended historical process, a critical first step in interpret-

ing them must be to consider their chronological context. Each of these principles was initially developed to meet the specific concerns of particular societies, concerns in fact that were sometimes only tangentially related to the pursuit of intellectual excellence. Only by assessing the historical factors that lay behind the initial adoption of these principles can their utility as general tenets of university government be understood.

Such an analysis of the original purpose and long-term validity of these essential principles of university governance is critical in light of more recent history. In the years since 1988 the Magna Charta has received widespread attention, with universities worldwide choosing to endorse its principles by becoming signatories.[4] Yet as institutions of higher learning continue to evolve against the background of a rapidly changing society, the ability of university administrators to actually uphold the principles of the Magna Charta is coming into question. One of the most pervasive trends of modern times has been the seemingly inexorable movement toward a global society. Ironically, while the supranational principles advocated by the Magna Charta are in some ways furthered by the rise of globalisation, the principles of institutional autonomy and the indivisibility of teaching and research have been seriously compromised. Yet it is not only the principles themselves that are being challenged, but also the ethos constructed upon them. Even as administrative commitment to the Magna Charta's principles has been sapped, so too the essential function of the university has been subtly redefined. In the face of such fundamental chal-

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[4] For a list of the present signatories see:
http://www.magna-charta.org/magna_universities.html.

lenges, the very survival of the type of university advocated by the Magna Charta seems in doubt.

Yet institutions of higher learning have always been subject to change. The Magna Charta cannot prevent this change, nor should it seek to do so, for to remain vibrant the university must evolve in tandem with society. What role then does the Magna Charta have to play? Can it be anything more than a goad to promote desperate rearguard actions in defence of beleaguered principles? In fact the function of the Magna Charta remains the same: it seeks to offer guidance to university policy-makers in protecting what past experience has shown to be valuable. Yet in the same way that the Magna Charta's principles have been drawn from the evolutionary development of the university, so too these principles must themselves be capable of evolution. A process must exist whereby present day innovations to the university can be incorporated into the Magna Charta, just as earlier institutional developments have been. This, however, is a delicate task. A means must be found to gauge the effectiveness of fundamental principles, both present and future. Only then can the Magna Charta be confidently developed to meet the challenges universities now face from a rapidly changing world.

The historical context of the principles of the Magna Charta

The principles enshrined in the Magna Charta have developed as the result of centuries of negotiation between institutions of higher learning and wider society. Some authors have emphasised the 'intellectual univer-

sity', meaning the community of scholars and students, as the 'true' university, rather than the institutional forms that grew up around it (Patterson, 1997: 8-9). Certainly the pursuit of intellectual excellence requires wide freedoms, yet this latitude must inevitably be limited by the expectations of governments and the general public. The institutions of the university were originally created within this tension, and have proved to be the most effective means of mediating the often conflicting needs of pure scholarship and social practicality. Yet the institutional innovations that the Magna Charta later formalised as principles were in fact often the result of very specific social situations. To understand the true nature of these principles it is necessary to consider the circumstances that brought them into being. Only then can the full implications of elevating locally derived initiatives into universal tenets of institutional organisation be fully grasped.

Interestingly, the historical development of the university frequently follows a cyclical pattern of innovation, gradual ossification, and then sudden (usually imposed) reform. Several of these general phases have left deep imprints on the modern university, and thus are reflected in the principles of the Magna Charta. The origins of the university lie in the classical and medieval worlds. The institutions of higher learning in both these societies were primarily teaching facilities; students journeyed from afar to learn in the company of famous masters. These early institutions first gave rise to some of the issues that still complicate higher learning, issues such as the tension between vocational and general education, and the dangers state support can pose to intellectual integrity. This initial phase of development culminated in the universities' achievement of institutional autonomy. Yet the emer-

gence of formal structures dedicated to higher learning
did not guarantee their intellectual vibrancy. By the sev-
enteenth century the universities had entered a period of
stagnation, in which they withdrew from society and con-
centrated on maintaining the privileges gained during ear-
lier phases of expansion. The stunning intellectual devel-
opments of this period – from the discoveries of the Sci-
entific Revolution to the works of the Enlightenment
philosophers – occurred primarily outside the walls of the
academy. By the nineteenth century calls to modernise
the university had gathered strength and reformers
sought to reinvigorate the institution by redefining its
function. The relevance of the traditional university cur-
riculum for the modern world was questioned; and new
institutional forms developed to meet changing educa-
tional needs. Yet perhaps the most crucial of these re-
forms was the recognition of the integral relationship that
must exist between higher education and research. In
many ways, it was the efforts of these nineteenth-century
reformers that created the outline of the modern university.

Throughout the history of the university the ideal of
international scholarship has been considered fundamen-
tal to the effective pursuit of higher learning. In the mod-
ern world this principle has been complicated by the very
success of the university as an institution. The expansion
of European culture across the globe, through colonisa-
tion and the subsequent creation of imperial spheres of
influence, encouraged the transplantation of the univer-
sity to other parts of the world. The spread of the univer-
sity into non-European cultures has serious implications
for the principles of the Magna Charta. Although institu-
tional forms were frequently transported *in toto*, a univer-
sity's long-term success relied on its ability to adapt to

meet the individual needs of the recipient country. The result has been the development of a great number of quite distinct institutional forms around the world. This proliferation of new universities poses serious challenges for the Magna Charta's principle of supranational scholarship. As universities diverge, the links connecting them can become increasingly tenuous. Yet in order to fulfil their potential as institutions of higher learning universities must always strive to encourage the transfer of knowledge. More importantly, by facilitating greater cultural understanding and creating common links between disparate peoples, the universities are in a unique position to play a more crucial role in human development than ever before.

From the Classical to the Medieval world:
the quest for institutional autonomy

The first European institutions of higher learning emerged in the vibrant societies of the Ancient Greek world. Though dedicated to education and enquiry, these institutions were prompted by singular political and economic circumstances, and they grew from existing societal forms. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, these institutions were modified to meet changing needs, becoming both increasingly complex but also more closely aligned to the needs of government. Due largely to this close relationship with civil authority, higher learning was overwhelmed by the social and political chaos at the end of the ancient world; it was not to be re-established until the Middle Ages. Medieval higher learning emerged into a completely different social environment, and the forms it

adopted were a product of that environment. This new, fundamentally medieval form of educational institution evolved into the university. During the Middle Ages the university secured independence from outside authority, and at the same time was able to isolate an area of knowledge as its own particular purview. In this way, therefore, the university was able to formalise its relationship with society as one of sharp separation. More than any other single characteristic, institutional autonomy is held to distinguish the medieval university from its classical forerunners; it is also identified by the Magna Charta as a crucial prerequisite for any true university. In effect, however, the securing of this autonomy was a resolution of the tension initiated in the classical period over the appropriate balance between the needs of higher learning and the demands of society.

The classical world was the cradle for western higher education. There emerged in some of the ancient Greek cities a market for advanced skills in reasoning and disputation; the first institutions of higher learning were established to meet this need. These early concepts of higher learning were subsequently transplanted into other cultural environments – being reinvented and modified in the process – first by Hellenistic society and then later by the Romans and Byzantines. During this process many of the characteristics of the modern university can be glimpsed in ancient schools, but the critical concept of autonomy had no place in classical education. Instead, increasing government support for higher education also brought about growing levels of official interference, and the spirit of free enquiry that had characterised the early schools was gradually lost.

The earliest European institutions of higher learning were founded in the ancient Greek world, primarily in the city of Athens, two and a half millennia ago. The Athenians, in common with most other Greeks, had long supported a basic education for young citizens, a process that emphasised physical and military training as well as basic literary and musical skills. In the wake of the Greek victory in the Persian Wars (491-479BC), Athens had grown to become a major economic and military power. Many citizens found themselves with greater disposable income and the leisure in which to enjoy it. More importantly, Athens had developed a democratic form of government. Political power was shared by the entire citizen body and so could be directed by any individual capable of persuasive oratory. The combination of growing prosperity and democratic government presented an opportunity for teachers who could excite the intellectual curiosity of the idle rich, or provide their children with skills to assist them in political careers (Lynch, 1972: 32-67).

This need was initially filled by wandering teachers, known as Sophists (from the Greek *sophos* – wise), who toured the major cities of the Mediterranean world presenting lectures to paying audiences. The Sophists offered education in a diverse range of subjects, from advanced callisthenics for athletes, to rhetoric for aspiring politicians, or even philosophical postulation for enquiring minds. Athens, as the most prestigious and lucrative of venues, became the hub for these peripatetic scholars. The resulting atmosphere of rival ideas and skilled disputation excited local intellects, most famously in the person of Socrates, who gained a fearsome reputation for deflating the egos of the opinionated. The growing popular interest in higher learning eventually grew substantial

enough to support permanent institutions within the city. The first such institution was established in 392 BC by an upper class Athenian, Isocrates, and offered to train students in the practical arts of rhetoric. A rival school, the Academy, was founded by Plato in 387 BC. Plato was the leading student of Socrates, and pursued his teacher's famed philosophical method. In 335 BC a third important school, the Lyceum, was founded by Plato's student Aristotle (Dillon and Gergel, 2003; Clark, 1963; Lodge, 1970; Barrow, 1975; Lynch, 1972). These early schools, along with others subsequently founded beside them, flourished in the turbulent climate of the city state. But already the outside world was changing, and the next important institutional development came not in Greece, but rather in Egypt.

The campaigns of Alexander the Great – Aristotle's most famous student – forced the focus of political power and intellectual fervour inexorably away from Greece. These social changes also influenced the functions higher learning was to serve. Hellenistic culture, that fusion of East and West created by Alexander's expansionist activities, flourished in Egypt, where following Alexander's death power fell to the ambitious and able Ptolemaic dynasty. An important political currency for monarchs has always been prestige, and in an effort to raise the profile of their kingdom the Ptolemies decided to create an intellectual institution to rival the schools of Athens. Scholars of all types were tempted to Alexandria with offers of high salaries and freedom to pursue their own interests. Integral to the institution was the establishment of a library, and within a decade the scrolls were said to number in the hundreds of thousands. The scholars were supported by a complex administrative machine

responsible for ensuring their security and physical comfort. Thus the Great Library of Alexandria became the first institution dedicated to teaching and higher research created and funded by government (Patterson, 1997: 19-22; Cowley, 1991: 10-18; Barnes, 2000).

The Great Library served its purpose and brought undying fame to the dynasty that had founded and supported it. Yet even as the scholars laboured over their various tasks, outside their walls the political tides were changing once again. When the Romans began forging a Mediterranean empire they assimilated the cultures they encountered, encouraging those elements they found useful and discarding the rest. Advanced education was highly valued by noble Romans as an aristocratic accomplishment, but was also coveted by ambitious people of more modest backgrounds as a means for securing career advantage. The stability of the Pax Romana encouraged travel, and for the first time there developed a major international education industry. The old schools of Athens began to be heavily patronised once more, and new centres of learning were founded around the empire. It was during this period that the first institutions of higher learning were established in Western Europe, in Reims, Toulouse, Nice, and other urban centres (Cowley, 1991: 22-30; Patterson, 1997: 22-6).

The education system of the Roman world was not simply a wide scale replication of the institutional forms conquering legions had encountered in the Greek and Hellenistic worlds. The Romans also modified the educational curriculum to better serve their own needs. While Rhetoric and Philosophy remained core components of traditional schooling, specialised legal training was also developed (Clark, 1963: 59-66; Cowley, 1991: 25). This

innovation was above all a product of Roman pragma-
tism, for the consolidation of imperial rule required ever
greater numbers of trained administrators. Yet this change
was also of major, long-term significance. The new law
schools aimed to produce a specific type of graduate for a
clearly defined career path. Moreover they established a cor-
pus of material to be learned, and structured the teaching
process over a set period of time. In addition, these law
schools also undertook higher research, with legal schol-
ars working to arrange the Roman law codes more logi-
cally. Even after the western empire declined, the work of
legal tabulation continued in the east, reaching its zenith
in Constantinople under the Byzantine emperor Justinian.
(Cowley, 1991: 22-30)

Although the classical institutions of higher learning
proliferated across the Mediterranean world, increasing in
wealth and complexity as they did so, the relationship be-
tween these schools and wider society remained poorly
defined. When institutional higher learning first emerged
in ancient Athens, many orthodox citizens viewed the
new development with suspicion. To a large number of
Athenians, the philosophical musings of the early teach-
ers seemed both pointless and blasphemous, while the
oratorical skills they offered were simply a means to hood-
wink the citizen body for personal profit. One early voice
of conservative reaction was the comic playwright Aris-
tophanes, who in his play *Clouds* savagely lampooned the
proponents of the new learning, particularly Socrates.
The play concludes with the protagonist, an ageing Athe-
nian named Strepsiades, burning down Socrates' school,
'because of many things, but most of all since they [the
Sophists] were doing injustice to the gods' (Aristophanes,
1984: 176 (ll. 1508-9)). This comic scene was an indica-

tion of a deeper danger to the new learning, as Socrates subsequently found out, when he was tried by the Athenians and executed for his pursuit of philosophy (Phillipson, 1928).

Yet as the citizens became more familiar with the presence of advanced learning in their midst this hostility abated. Rather than being feared as a threat to public order, famous institutions of higher education came to be seen as a financial benefit and a source of civic pride. By 200 BC, a century after the condemnation of Socrates, the Athenian government was willing to offer leading teachers substantial salaries to retain them in the city (Lynch, 1972: 106-34). This generosity was necessary, for schools were being set up across the Mediterranean, bringing with them a growing competition for famous teachers and scholars. The Hellenistic period saw still more ambitious exercises in government support for higher learning, as exemplified in the Great Library of Alexandria. Yet governments would exact a heavy price for the security they provided, as became increasingly apparent in the Roman and Byzantine periods.

Roman imperial authorities raised official support for advanced education to ever greater heights. The Emperor Vespasian established chairs of rhetoric in Rome, and freed scholars throughout the empire from a series of public duties. Trajan added to these privileges, but under Hadrian and his successor, Antonius Pius, higher learning received still greater encouragement. Building programs were instituted in Athens and new salaried positions were created in each of the schools. An official institution, the Athenaeum, was founded in Rome by imperial authorities and employed a number of salaried teachers. Marcus Aurelius continued this policy by establishing even more

salaried positions in Rome and Athens (Cowley, 1991: 25). To retain this official largesse, however, institutions were obliged to become more compliant with imperial wishes. For example the emperors retained the right to appoint, and so also to dismiss, the scholars who held their lucrative teaching positions.

> As beneficiaries of the state the [Roman] scholars, much like the Alexandrian scholars before them, knew better than to delve critically into political matters. The government dominance reduced the brilliance of the schools in the late Roman period (Cowley, 1991: 26).

Even the more established schools were susceptible to imperial interference, as was famously demonstrated in 121 when Hadrian imposed rule changes on the Epicurean school in Athens in obedience to the wishes of his predecessor Trajan's widow, Plotina (Jones, 1989: 85).

The Roman schools in the West declined with the empire, but in the East similar trends of official benefaction and subsequent intervention prevailed. Indeed, Byzantine emperors could be enthusiastic supporters of higher education in their territories, and in 425 Emperor Theodosius II founded what later historians have called 'the state university of Constantinople'. This remarkable institution lasted for over ten centuries (a still unbeaten record of longevity) and was only closed when the city fell to the Turks in 1453. Established with over thirty salaried teachers, the institution offered courses in letters, medicine, law, and philosophy. Yet the drawback of imperial patronage was highlighted in spectacular fashion when, in 529, Emperor Justinian decided to enhance the position of the imperial school by forcibly closing all other institutions of higher learning under his control

(Cowley, 1991: 28-9). Thus the philosophical schools of Athens were abolished, ending their long historical continuity with the original efforts of the Sophists.

The classical world then, was able to produce a highly developed system of advanced education and research. Higher learning arose in response to specific circumstances and, after a brief period of conservative resistance, was embraced by society. It was adopted by a series of successive cultures, each of which modified the institutions surrounding higher learning to meet their own needs. The ancient institutions that resulted from this process displayed many of the characteristics modern commentators, including the signatories to the Magna Charta, attribute to the true university. The classical schools were permanent centres of learning undertaking higher education and enquiry, with both teachers and students being drawn from all corners of the Mediterranean world. Disciplines were developed to teach and research an established body of structured knowledge. Interestingly too, there grew up a rivalry between the various branches of learning, particularly between the exponents of Rhetoric and the Philosophy. The rhetoricians promoted the value of practical, career enhancing knowledge, while the philosophers believed learning should be undertaken to improve the students' moral and intellectual character. The debate begun by the students of Isocrates and Plato over the relative value of the vocational and general approaches to learning remains unresolved even today. Yet there were some characteristics of the modern university that were not a part of the ancient tradition. Perhaps most fundamental of these differences was that classical society did not seem to conceive of any need for a formal distance between their schools and the

wider world. For this reason, the classical higher education system never developed a concept of institutional autonomy. This was to be an achievement of the medieval world.

The slow disintegration of the Roman Empire in the West undermined the viability of schools, and by the sixth century institutional higher learning had collapsed; it was not to re-emerge until the eleventh century. Many factors may account for the medieval renewal of interest in higher education. The eleventh century brought increasing stability to Europe and with it a growing prosperity at all levels of society. The re-emergence of centralised governments offered attractive careers to trained administrators. Another impetus for higher learning seems to have been the greater exposure to other cultures Europe received as a result of the crusades (Patterson, 1997: 38-9). While these circumstances bear some parallels to those that had encouraged the development of higher learning in earlier cultures, many aspects of the medieval world were completely new. Europe was no longer a series of city states, nor was it a centrally administered empire. Instead the new forms of higher learning arose in urban communities under the secular governance of kings and the spiritual authority of the pope. Medieval higher learning developed institutional forms drawn from this environment, from its organisational structures, its social mores, and its power relationships. The most obvious difference between classical and medieval higher learning was the evolution of institutional autonomy. This autonomy had two aspects: legal and economic independence; and the consolidation of control over a specified body of knowledge. The development of both these

facets was crucial to the future development of the university.

Two quite distinct models of university organisation emerged during the medieval period. The first of these developed in Bologna and was initiated by the student body. A divergent model, instituted by the teachers, formed in Paris. Yet the success of both institutional forms rested on common factors: the tendency of both students and masters to organise themselves into collectives to meet external threat; and their ability to secure the support of political and ecclesiastical authorities for the rights they claimed. Medieval urban communities had a long tradition of corporate organisation, making it natural for students and masters to arrange themselves into similar associations. The first universities were in fact a device to enhance the bargaining power of their members, and in this role they proved highly successful. By organising themselves into groups, the scholars were able to use their collective economic power and, increasingly, their moral authority, to achieve growing levels of autonomy. Yet the independence the universities demanded, and the willingness of outside authorities to accede to them, was seldom justified on purely intellectual grounds.

The University of Bologna has a strong claim to be considered the first true university (Patterson, 1997: 40-50; Rudy, 1984: 18-20). By the eleventh century the city had already become an important centre for advanced learning, with an emphasis on the study of law. Bologna's geographical location proved an advantage, for it was a centre for mercantile trade as well as pilgrimage routes from the north to Rome. More importantly, however, a series of remarkable legal scholars, including Irnerius and later Gratian, resided in Bologna. Students were willing to

travel great distances to gain access to the advanced legal training offered there. Yet on their arrival in the city these students found themselves largely devoid of legal protection from the financial opportunism of the citizens. Their defensive response was to form themselves into a collective to resist the more exorbitant exactions of the local people.

> The organisation that the law students at Bologna resorted to in order to defend their interests was, in essence, the university of Bologna. In the early twelfth century they formed student guilds, modeled on the other corporate organisations that were customary in the economic and social life of the medieval towns; these guilds were known as *universitates* (Rudy, 1984: 18).

By 1195 the students of Bologna had organised themselves into two 'universities', one for Italian and the other for non-Italian students. Each group elected their own leaders, rectors, and other officials.

These organisations proved very effective in protecting the rights of the students in the face of civic impositions. The ability to bargain collectively gave the student representatives great power. The conducting of lectures actually required very little from the host city: the sum total of university infrastructure was a few hired rooms. This provided the student body with considerable potential leverage. In 1217, for example, the students deserted the city en masse, and refused to return until their demands were met. In a remarkable example of student solidarity, the stand-off lasted for three years, after which the city officials capitulated. Prominent among the students' demands was the right to appoint their own lecturers, and to direct the curriculum they would be taught. By

1245 foreign students had been granted protection under city law and less than a decade later the statutes of the universities – and thus their corporate existence – was recognised by the Bolognese authorities.

The masters also tried to protect their interests through collective action. By 1215 they had joined forces in a guild of their own, but were unable to counter the control the students exercised over all the functions of the university. The students hired lecturers, arranged their teaching schedule, and established the material to be taught. Student leaders also retained the right to impose heavy fines on lecturers who deviated from these guidelines. Similarly, student representatives managed the daily running of the education process. They, for example, were the ones responsible for the hiring of lecture halls. Nevertheless, the masters were able to maintain the integrity of their own guild. They retained the right to admit new members by establishing a license to teach – the *licentia docendi* – which was only granted after examination by the masters. This was, therefore, the first established form of academic degree. In all other matters, however, the representatives of the student guilds monopolised authority within their own hands.

The student representatives were also able to attract the support of powerful outside forces in their confrontation with civic authorities in Bologna. As early as 1158 the German emperor Frederick Barbarossa issued a charter, *Authentica Habita,* intended to provide a measure of protection to the students. The emperor's move was not entirely altruistic, and was as much a recognition of the economic importance of the schools as a plaudit for their intellectual value. Moreover the emperor was also keenly aware of the prestige the university brought to his rule

and the valuable counterweight their legal studies pro-
vided to the power of the papacy (Rüegg, 1992: 11-12).
Popes were no less aware of the prestige value of the uni-
versities. From the thirteenth century onwards the papacy
found considerable reason to support higher learning.
Thus, by becoming a point of contention between rival
external powers, universities were able to secure further
privileges. The advantages of becoming an object of in-
terest for vying external authorities are even more appar-
ent in the rise of the second model for a medieval univer-
sity, in Paris.

The circumstances surrounding the formation of the
University of Paris bear some similarities to those in Bo-
logna, but the differences are perhaps more significant
(Patterson, 1997: 50-9; Ruby, 1984: 20-6; Rüegg, 1992:
12). Paris, unlike Bologna, became famous as a centre of
theological rather than legal training. In Paris, moreover,
the initiative for collective action in defence of higher
learning came from the teachers rather than from the stu-
dents. But it was the differences between the two cities
themselves that had the deepest impact on the types of
universities that formed within them. Where Bologna was
a largely independent mercantile city, Paris was a royal
capital and also an important bishopric. Royal and eccle-
siastical authorities had a long tradition of supporting
scholars, and they expected to maintain authority over
them. Thus, while the Parisian students and masters faced
similar threats as did those in Bologna from rapacious ci-
tizens and hostile civic officials, in the French case the
situation was complicated by the threat of royal and epis-
copal intervention in university affairs. The university's
success came as a result not only of their economic and
intellectual importance, but also because of their signifi-

cance in the complex power struggles going on in the society around them.

During the late eleventh and early twelfth century there developed a strong tradition of theological disputation in Paris. Foremost among the many scholars who came to the French capital was Peter Abelard, the most brilliant teacher of his age. Students congregated around such teachers, other scholars soon followed them in the hope of securing larger paying audiences, which in turn attracted more students. The Parisian schools soon became renowned for their teaching of Arts, Logic, and Theology, but with its large population of masters, schools could also offer competent instruction in subjects as diverse as Medicine or Law. The organisation of teaching within the city was controlled by the local clergy, with the chancellor of the Cathedral of Notre Dame responsible for granting individuals their licence to teach. This ecclesiastical control was not universally accepted, and in the final years of the twelfth century the masters formed a guild to advance their own cause. This collective of masters was soon called upon to demonstrate its capacity for corporate action in defence of their own, and their students' rights.

In 1200 a tavern dispute escalated into a riot during which heavy-handed police action led to the deaths of several students. In response the guild of scholars ceased lectures and threatened to leave the city. King Philip Augustus was unwilling to lose the financial benefits of the many students in the city, but he also saw the possibility for extending his own influence into the university (Rudy, 1984: 23-4). The king ordered severe punishments for the civic officials responsible for the affray. To reassure the scholars the king granted a royal charter which exempted

them from secular jurisdiction and freed them from taxation. Thus, the scholars had received royal acknowledgement of their special position within the city, and within society as a whole. Through this charter the king formally conceded that the university enjoyed the same benefits medieval society accorded to the clergy. Yet this status presented the scholars with its own dangers, particularly in their relationship with the city's ecclesiastical authorities.

Early in the thirteenth century, the simmering tensions between the chancellor of the university – an episcopal appointee – and the lecturers erupted into open conflict. A number of the younger scholars abandoned the university and began to offer their own lectures elsewhere in the city. They then went further and sought to establish a rival chancellor. Eventually the conflict found its way to the papal court, where the result proved to be a watershed.

> The Papacy, jealous of the pretensions of the local episcopal authorities, was quick to throw its support behind the claims of the Paris university. The Holy See in 1212 forbade the chancellor to exact an oath of obedience from the masters or to refuse a teaching licence to any candidates recommended by the masters in the several faculties. The chancellor was also forbidden to imprison or fine any of the scholars (Rudy, 1984: 22).

The position of the university was further consolidated in 1215 when a papal representative, Robert of Courson, was charged with guiding the masters in a general reform of the schools. A series of rules of conduct and discipline were drawn up, to be administered by the four faculties – Arts, Law, Medicine, Theology – which were thereby obliged to work together more closely. This corporate identity was tested in 1229, when another dis-

pute in a tavern quickly escalated into a riot between the students and the citizens. Once again over-zealous policing left several students dead. Many of the Arts scholars ceased lecturing in protest and continued to remain on strike for two years. Ultimately Pope Gregory IX intervened, demanding redress from the civil authorities and issuing the papal decree *Parens Scientiarium* (Mother of Knowledge) in 1231. This document was essentially a university charter. It granted the university papal protection and freedom from local church or civil authority, and allowed the university to establish its own laws for self-governance (Patterson, 1991: 53-5).

The early development of the university of Paris, in common with that of Bologna, demonstrates the complex relations that lay behind the achievement of legal independence from external authority. In both cases, the university was formed by individuals not for ideological or political reasons, but rather as a form of self-defence against the civic forces arrayed against them. The early universities could wield considerable power because of their essential simplicity – there was little to stop them abandoning an overly inhospitable location. As time passed, the universities were able to secure crucial institutional guarantees of their status due primarily to the competing authorities around them. Kings, bishops, and popes were willing to advance the cause of the universities not simply because of their intellectual or even their economic value, but rather due to the implications of this support on wider patterns of political power. Yet securing freedom from legal or economic constraint was only one facet of institutional autonomy. At the same time there occurred a more subtle, complementary process: the division and appropriation of knowledge itself.

The process of structuring and isolating bodies of knowledge had become standard educational practice in ancient Greece. The Sophists established purviews of knowledge over which they could display mastery and so attract a crowd of paying customers. This process was formalised by the schools of Rhetoric and Philosophy and taken up by all subsequent institutions of higher learning. This division of knowledge became a central factor in the administration of early universities, as scholars and students were commonly arranged into faculties on the basis of their studies. As the university developed, these faculties gained in authority. For example, Pierre de Courson's crucial reforms of the Paris University in 1215 consolidated the institutional coherence of the faculties and elevated them to effective governance of the university as a whole. This process crystallised the subdivision of knowledge – and thus the implicit apportioning of rights over it – initiated in the classical world. Yet medieval society also added another dimension to this process.

When the early universities modelled their organisation on the guilds, they also adopted much of the guild mentality. The members of a guild seek above all to control access to the knowledge that is, after all, their livelihood. Despite student domination of the University of Bologna the masters would not yield up their control over the admittance of new members to their company. Similarly the major point of conflict between the Paris masters and the chancellor was his control over entrance into their circle. The *licentia docendi*, the licence to teach, was the cherished means by which this exclusivity was maintained. Thus it was the guild's desire to maintain control over access rights to its store of knowledge that first created the need for both examinations and the de-

gree structure that would later become a central pillar of modern universities. Furthermore, the nature of medieval society added a further dimension to the universities' proprietary rights over knowledge.

The guild of scholars demanded a closed shop and in doing so they enjoyed the support of the papacy. But by adding spiritual authority to an essentially practical arrangement, the papacy dramatically consolidated the universities' possession of knowledge. During the thirteenth century the papacy gradually converted the scholars' licence to teach into the far broader *jus ubique docendi* – the right to teach anywhere. This privilege authorised a university to grant degrees that would be recognised throughout Christendom. Pope Gregory IX first granted this right when he founded the University of Toulouse in 1233. The privilege was later extended to other universities, including Bologna in 1291 and Paris in 1292 (Patterson, 1997: 72-3). This development had clear political implications: by establishing this precedent the pope was underlining the fact that he, and he alone, exercised authority throughout Christendom. But the ramifications for the status of the scholar were, if anything, even more extensive. The granting of the license to teach throughout Christendom universalised the new structures of knowledge. Equally importantly, papal sanction confirmed the universities' monopoly over this form of power.

The implications of this apportioning of knowledge became clear as a new intellectual wave, Humanism, emerged. The dominant intellectual tradition in the early universities was the Scholastic method of enquiry, which involved the application of logic to the minute examination of tendentious issues of theology or law. The teaching inspired by this method was essentially vocational:

students studied primarily in the hope of advancing their careers in the priesthood or public administration. The rise of humanism shifted the ground of higher education, giving rise to the possibility of new purposes for the university.

> What distinguished the 'humanist'... was a mastery of the arts and sciences of the classical 'encyclopedia' which in effect transformed the medieval ladder of technical learning into a 'circle' of human arts (Kelly, 1991: 3).

Inspired by the rediscovered works of the classical philosophers, humanist thinkers suggested that education could become a means of self-fulfilment, and should be pursued for its own sake. The knowledge they were interested in was the more human-orientated wisdom of the classical world, which seemed to stand in such direct opposition to the otherworldly musings of the theologians. To pursue the learning of the ancients required a mastery of their languages, and the first phases of humanism involved a rediscovery of Classical Latin and Greek, and an eager seeking out of manuscripts by ancient authors.

The traditional scholars, secure in the universities, were at first indifferent or openly hostile to the proponents of this new learning. The penetration of humanists into university ranks was firmly resisted. (Patterson, 1997: 103-9; Ruby, 1984: 40-57). In fact the majority of the initial work on humanist texts was undertaken by private study groups outside the official university system. But the new styles of learning could not be excluded forever.

> ... mostly on the initiative of the political authorities, rather than that of the universities, humanists, firstly mostly of Italian origin, began to be charged with the

teaching of humanistic subjects in some faculties of the arts and colleges (Rüegg, 1992b: 459).

The main changes the humanists brought to the university was in the curriculum, where human-orientated studies began to appear. The impact of the humanist incursion into the universities can, however, be overstated, for by the sixteenth century the new learning had been firmly assimilated into the overall faculty structure (Webster, 1975). Thus the universities were able to take both the general as well as the vocational branches of learning into its provenance without the need for substantial institutional change. In fact the most obvious result of the addition of humanist subjects to the university curriculum was an increasing elitism among the student body (Ruby, 1984: 53-4). This changing social makeup was to have dramatic long-term impact on the future development of higher learning.

The history of the origin of the university consists in large part of the delineation of borders between institutions of higher learning and wider society. The institutional form of the modern university is seen in the achievement of several critical characteristics, including institutional autonomy, the establishment of faculties, the codification of knowledge, and the provision of exams and degrees that would be recognised by similar institutions throughout Christendom. Many of the antecedents for these developments lie in the ancient world. Classical schools were highly organised institutions dedicated to teaching and research in clearly defined branches of knowledge. Yet the final formalisation of the relationship between society and the university was a uniquely medieval achievement. This final step to autonomy is celebrated

by many scholars, and indeed by the Magna Charta, as the dawn of the true university. Yet the subsequent history of the university indicates that the victory of institutional autonomy may in fact have been too sweeping.

The university in the modern world: stagnation, reform, and scholarship

From their foundation in the medieval period until the Reformation in the sixteenth century the universities remained at the centre of Europe's cultural life. In the post-reformation world, however, universities began to be left behind by new intellectual advances. Secure in their prestige and their privileges, many European universities had become stultified by tradition. No longer did they provide the education ambitious students required for advancement into ecclesiastical and administrative careers, increasingly they acted simply to perpetuate existing elite structures. As universities concentrated on maintaining their hold on a body of traditional, inherited wisdom, the intellectual currents were changing. The great advances of the seventeenth and eighteenth century – the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment – were carried forward primarily by intellectuals working outside the increasingly moribund atmosphere of the academy. Despite rising calls from society for institutional modernisation, universities were slow to accept change. By the nineteenth century the reformers had lost patience. Across Europe new institutions dedicated to more practical forms of higher learning were established outside traditional university systems. Yet in Germany a remarkable series of reforms were undertaken to reinvigorate the

university itself. The means these reformers chose was to establish scholarship as a fundamental function of the university. The Magna Charta's principle defending the indivisibility of research and teaching has its origin in this important initiative.

By the seventeenth century the once intellectually vibrant medieval university had ossified. The ideals and ambitions of both students and teachers had almost completely changed. The cost of a university education rose beyond the means of most people; but at the same time the practical value of that education was becoming less clear. As a result, universities were increasingly seen as a privilege for the wealthy, rather than a means for social advancement. Even those few students from poorer backgrounds who managed to attend university did little to mitigate this process, for 'even more than those born to the elites, the success of the newcomers depended essentially upon how well they perpetuated the traditions they learned at the universities.'(Patterson, 1997: 165). As Kearney asserts:

> The universities between 1500 and 1600 underwent a change of social functions. They were transformed from being institutions geared to training for a particular profession into institutions which acted as instruments of social control (Kearney, 1970: 126).

Universities had evolved away from a pursuit of higher learning and become instead a means for social demarcation and exclusion. Even as the education provided by the universities became less applicable to social advancement, the impractical knowledge became more valued by aristocracies as means of reinforcing a sense of class difference.

Meanwhile, outside the walls of the university, changes were occurring. The wonders of the Scientific Revolution had startled the world, but few of the leading scientists held university posts; indeed there was a strong movement among the universities to distance themselves from the new modes of thinking. For this reason the *philosophes* of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment reserved some of their most stinging criticism for the university (Gascoigne, 1998b). The *philosophes*, who advocated progress and forward-looking social improvement, found the conservative structures and traditional assumptions of the academy repugnant. When describing the scholars' reaction to the intellectual advances around them, John Stuart Mill famously thundered: 'Universities and academic institutions, which had once taught all that was then known, but having since indulged their ease by remaining stationary, found it for their interest that knowledge should do so too.' (quoted in Cowley, 1991: 56). Of course these voices of denunciation arose from intellectuals outside the academy, yet the resistance in the more traditional universities was not illusory. A more moderate, modern voice observes:

> The universities had been founded to preserve and refine society's store of knowledge and the idea of 'research' – of adding to rather than simply conserving what was known – only slowly took root in the universities, some of whose members felt it no more their business to add to the existing body of knowledge than a librarian feels an obligation to write a new book (Gascoigne, 1998: 392).

Thus the university scholars of the period did not see their proper role as engagement with these dramatic new

intellectual developments. Instead they continued to maintain their traditional role, even in the face of a growing chorus of dissatisfaction from many sectors of society.

The calls for change could not be ignored forever. Political leaders were increasingly aware of the need for international competitiveness, and this was now seen to be based on a highly skilled workforce. Yet the skills required were not to be found in traditional higher education. With a few notable exceptions in Scotland and Germany, the universities demonstrated scant willingness to take the lead in the new sciences (Patterson, 1997: 138-9, 149-52). In time both national governments and the general public began to explore alternative options for higher education. In England, where Oxford and Cambridge had maintained their stranglehold on higher education since the twelfth century, a remarkable push for reform emerged. The result was the University of London and a system of civic universities across the country. The circumstances behind this initiative illustrate one important direction in European university reform.

The movement to create a new university was launched in thoroughly English fashion, with the submission of a letter to *The Times* in 1825 by the poet Thomas Campbell. In this letter Campbell suggested the foundation of a university in London to educate those of middling income (Patterson, 1997: 162-3). The suggestion soon sparked debate and then growing support, particularly from those groups excluded by limited means or institutional prejudice from participation at the Oxbridge colleges. Religious and political minorities from across London society found themselves united in support of the project. Because they lacked extremely wealthy beneficiaries, the organisers set up a corporation and an-

nounced a share offer to attract funds. The resulting institution, dubbed the University College, offered a curriculum that was thoroughly secular and directed toward practical subjects, although not exclusively so. This worldly emphasis attracted some hostility and led to the foundation of a rival Anglican institution, King's College, offering a similar curriculum. But in 1836 the two rival colleges were able to suppress their differences and amalgamate to form the University of London.

Beyond the practical curriculum and greater accessibility of the new university there was another critical difference between it and the Oxbridge system. London University's charter allowed the setting of examinations and the awarding of degrees not only to those attending the original two colleges, but also to students of institutions that might be affiliated later. As a consequence of this, the University of London quickly grew in size through the incorporation of other institutions around the city. Equally importantly, a series of linked institutions were founded across the country. These civic colleges were opened in many larger cities to provide education in the middle class professions. Initially such colleges were dependent on the University of London, and their students were obliged to travel down to the capital to sit their exams. Over time, however, many became independently chartered institutions. The College of Leeds, for example, was founded in 1874 as a branch of London University, but became the University of Leeds in 1904 (Patterson, 1997: 162-5).

The pressures that had brought about these educational reforms in England were also being felt in other parts of Europe. The common trend was for the traditional universities to resist the calls for change, obliging

governments or corporations to respond with the foundation of a variety of new institutions offering advanced training in scientific and practical subjects. Some critics of the traditional university system wished to go even further. Influenced by some of the more vitriolic statements of the Enlightenment *philosophes*, some reformers questioned whether there was any real justification for the university in the modern world. With the easy availability of cheap books, the medieval ideal of lecture and tutorial no longer seemed the most efficient way to transmit a large body of material. Justifying themselves both in terms of cost benefit and equal access to education, radical voices argued for the complete abolition of universities in favour of prescribed bodies of knowledge in widely available forms. Under this model, higher education would simply become the provision of the requisite book list. The student would then be examined to receive a degree testifying that the required material had been committed to memory. This was a nightmare vision to many other educators, and in Germany there arose a remarkable effort at university reform designed, among other things, to counter this threat. (Cowley, 1991: 133-6; Röhrs, 1987).

In the early decades of the nineteenth century a group of German reformers led by Wilhelm von Humboldt, the Director of Public Instruction in Prussia, adopted a radical new approach to the organisation and function of the university. Faced with moribund traditional universities and the foundation of more vibrant vocational institutes, these reformers proposed a new model for the old universities. In this vision, which Humboldt developed fully in the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810, the function of the higher learning was radically redefined.

Under these reforms, the university was reinvented as the central pillar in nothing less than an intellectual effort for national rejuvenation. The universities would become the repositories of the national spirit and a vehicle for national pride. Fundamental to this new vision of the university was an emphasis on scholarship, and the assertion that the true university accord equal significance to research and training.

The fundamental tenet of Humboldt's vision was the concept of *Wissenschaft* – science – but which in this context has a meaning closer to 'investigative scholarship'. The ideal university aimed to increase the sum total of human knowledge through research. The pedagogic relationship between lecturer and student would be replaced with a sense of comradeship in the pursuit of scholarly excellence. As Palterson observes, 'the professor's task was to develop the student's independence of mind, not to fill it with facts; rote type learning was therefore seen as an anathema.' (Patterson, 1997: 156). Teaching was to be a means of improving both lecturer and student: true knowledge would emerge in the interplay between experience and enthusiasm. To facilitate this invaluable intellectual relationship further, the university organisation was also liberated from the strictures of earlier years. Two concepts became maxims for the new university: *Lernfreiheit*, under which a student should be free to take whatever courses were desired; and *Lehrfreiheit*, the freedom of lecturers to pursue whatever research and teaching they chose, without interference from administration or government. The Magna Charta's principle that teaching and research are inextricably linked is a product of these reforms.

Humboldt's reforms were ground-breaking and have had a dramatic effect on the concept of the university,

but they also had important ramifications for the issue of university autonomy. Although freedom to research was granted, it was assumed that this did not include freedom to question contemporary issues. Humboldt did not intend the University of Berlin to become a haven for civil disobedience or Bohemian excess. In fact, the emphasis given to pure scholarship was to have a negative impact on the autonomy of the university. Applied research was far more costly than simple teaching, and obliged the universities to become increasingly reliant on government support. Under Humboldt's reforms, lecturers were gradually coming to be seen not as independent scholars in a community of fellows, but rather something as more akin to salaried civil servants working for the state. (Patterson, 1997: 157-8)

Many of Humboldt's most important reforms were undermined by his more conservative successors in office, but by then the lure of pure scholarship had already been felt. Scholars were eager to continue the pursuit of knowledge in a Humboldtian system, but it was the newer institutions that tended to be most influenced by the German model. Traditional universities resisted institutionalising such changes. In Cambridge and Oxford the general sweep of the German reforms were largely rejected, with one critical exception. In the donnish atmosphere of Oxbridge the principle of *Lehrfreiheit* was enthusiastically embraced, with effects not seen in Germany. The Oxbridge scholars felt charged not only with the freedom to conduct research on any area they wished, they also felt this mandate extended to commenting on contemporary social and political issues. This encouraged them to ask the types of politically charged questions institutions of higher learning had eschewed since the early

classical period. The reason for this ability to undertake social criticism was that, unlike the German scholars who were closely allied with the state, the Oxford and Cambridge fellows could still considered themselves colleagues in an autonomous collective. From this position of relative safety they were far more able to stand in conspicuous opposition to government authority (Patterson, 1997: 181; Ashby, 1974).

The stagnation and reform of the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries highlight the complexities inherent in the relationship between higher learning and the state. The strict borders of autonomy established by the end of the medieval period allowed the universities to become lethargic, but attempts to modernise them had mixed results. The training offered by the vocational institutes met societies' immediate educational needs, even as they undermined the social status of the universities and allowed critics to question the continued value of traditional higher education. The German reformers attempted to reinvigorate the university and return it to the centre of national consciousness. The resulting emphasis on research did bring the universities increased distinction, but this came at a high price in terms of institutional autonomy. Ironically, it was the bastion of traditional university conservatism, the much-maligned Oxbridge scholars, who gave hope that some balance of institutional autonomy and social utility might yet be found.

A multiplicity of forms: the university
in the twentieth century

In Europe there developed several distinct models of university organisation, each sharing to a varying degree the critical characteristics of an autonomous environment in which higher education and research were undertaken. Beyond these basic similarities, however, institutional forms varied widely, and this variation was soon to increase exponentially. From the nineteenth century onwards, as European influence spread outwards, the institution of the university was transplanted into all corners of the globe. This rapidly increased the number of universities. It also brought about a multiplication of both institutional forms and function, as the models from various European traditions – English, French and German – were utilised around the world. Recipient countries adopted permutations of the European styles and then adapted them to meet their own needs. Indeed, a comparison of the early development of the Australian and American university systems suggests that the success of a newly implanted university was largely reliant on its adaptive ability. This process of evolution produced strikingly different organisational structures, even when the recipient society had also adopted most other European cultural characteristics as well. The scope for institutional variation was even greater, therefore, when university traditions are translated into completely non-European environments, such as in Asia or the Middle East. As a result of the transplantation of the university across the globe the twentieth century has seen an unparalleled explosion in the variety of structural arrangements universities have adopted. This institutional variation has made

the ability to define what actually constitutes a university more difficult, but the similarities that do exist between institutions raise the possibility that the university can yet become a means of wider cultural understanding. This hope is reflected in the supranational principles advocated by the Magna Charta.

The first century of Australian university development, or indeed lack thereof, provides a revealing insight into complexity of institutional transplantation. The European university was the product of a long evolution; behind its institutional forms lay centuries of negotiation with wider society and the creation of subtle links and traditions. The Australian universities found to their cost that, while the institutions themselves might be translocated, the deeper roots of traditional relationships could not be so easily replicated. Moreover, rather than attempting to forge these relations with wider society, and adapt to meet the needs of the general public, Australian universities remained slavishly linked to their European origins. As such they became increasingly separated from society in general, and came to be viewed as largely irrelevant in the growth of the nation. Low student numbers and widespread indifference to the university was the price the institution paid for refusing to evolve away from its European origins.

Universities were a fairly late arrival in Australia. The first was opened in Sydney in 1850, the second in Melbourne three years later (Patterson, 1997: 206-9; Jones, 1985). They were patterned as closely as possible on the Oxford and Cambridge models. Both the new Australian universities boasted the appropriate sandstone cloisters and Gothic bell-towers; they also adopted collegial structures and a strong emphasis on traditional curriculum.

The new universities' charters emphasised this link, with the bold expectation that the degrees they offered would be equal to those of the Oxbridge universities. These institutions were founded in the belief that a mature and accomplished nation must have a recognised university. Further encouragement was provided by the strong sense of regional rivalry that existed between Sydney and Melbourne – hence the coincidental construction of institutions in both cities within years of each other, some six decades after the first European settlement. But perhaps the primary motivation behind the foundation of these universities was a desire to maintain cultural links with the colonising country, England. It was in this spirit that the first chancellor of Melbourne university anticipated his fledgling institution would 'stamp on their future pupils the character of the loyal, well-bred English gentleman.' (Jones, 1985: 12). Yet these expectations, which in reality had little to do with intellectual development, would in fact stunt the growth of the Australian university for at least a century.

The Australian universities certainly had daunting geographical and logistical problems to overcome. During the nineteenth century the population was either concentrated along the western coastline or scattered in small communities across vast expanses of land. Outside major urban centres transport was difficult and often haphazard; while secondary education was frequently rudimentary at best. These factors seriously complicated wide-scale access to higher learning, yet the universities made no practical effort to combat the problems. There was little attempt to liaise with secondary schools, nor to make the campuses more accessible. In fact, in an effort to establish what was perceived as the correct atmosphere for

higher learning, the universities were deliberately sited some distance from the centres of their respective cities. This physical distancing from society was compounded by the nature of university finance. Throughout their history the Australian universities remained overwhelmingly reliant on government funding. Student fees were in themselves insufficient to cover costs, and there was no tradition of public donation. University finance increasingly took the form of direct grants from state and later federal governments. Yet this support, from an often distant and disinterested source, did not encourage the universities to become involved with the local communities, as universities in other countries were obliged to do to ensure future funding (Jones, 1985).

Australian universities were also unusual in their relative inability to create professional relationships with other important social institutions, such as the church or the government. The Australian universities were secular foundations, and while they attempted to mimic the ecclesiastical atmosphere of the established English institutions, this was a largely superficial affectation. The training of clergymen was a central function of most European universities, and similarly became fundamental in the foundation of the American universities (Gamage and Miniburg, 2003: 185). In Australia, however, organised religion had relatively little role in society, and when educated clergymen were required, they tended to be imported. Thus there never developed a strong tradition of theological training in Australian universities, so a valuable means of connecting with the general public was lost. Equally damaging for the university sector, was the absence of any strong tradition of involvement with government administration. Although successive govern-

ments were willing to fund universities, they did not seek to provide employment for graduates. Where in most other countries university training was seen as a favoured avenue to government jobs, this relationship never developed in Australia. In fact civil administrations showed considerable suspicion of university graduates and preferred to select recruits with a military background. This not only made a university education less attractive to potential students, but also lessened considerably the role the university was able to play in wider society (Jones, 1985: 18-20).

But perhaps the greatest factor in the isolation of the early Australian universities was the attitude of the general public. The overwhelming preoccupation of the universities was the maintenance of an 'English Standard', and with it the cultural mores of an increasingly distant motherland. As Australian culture developed its own identity the role of the university became increasingly discordant with popular attitudes. Growing murmurs of complaint were raised, attacking the universities as monolithic, unchanging expressions of the establishment. They appeared to offer impractical knowledge to a small cadre of urban elites, but they did so at the expense of the taxpayer. The universities seemed at best irrelevant, but at worst retrogressive. Critics described the institution as an indefensible example of middle-class exploitation, and called for major reform. Yet university administrators remained largely deaf to criticism. For as long as they saw the university as primarily a bastion of English culture in a far-flung corner of the empire, change seemed closely akin to a betrayal of the imperial ideal.

Yet the result of this isolation was dire. In 1939 the ratio of Australian university students to the entire popula-

tion was still dramatically low. The percentage of the Canadian or New Zealander populations undertaking higher education was twice that recorded in Australia, while America and South Africa boasted figures almost three times higher (Brandby, 1939: 21). Only in the second half of the twentieth century did this situation begin to change under the shifting political and economic circumstances of the post-war world (Gamage and Miniburg, 2003: 185). Yet the long moribund first century created an attitude of anti-intellectualism and suspicion toward higher education that persists in Australian society even to the present day. This legacy is starkly revealed in the low support Australian governments of all political hues continue to provide universities – the lowest indeed in the OECD – without provoking the least murmur of unease from the general public (Welch, 2002: 463). The early history of Australian universities demonstrates all too well that the vibrancy of the modern university is reliant on an ability to adapt to the society around it. The value of adaptation to changing social needs is epitomised by the institutional development of American higher education.

The American university system has a far longer history than its Australian counterpart (Cowley, 1991; Patterson, 1997: 193-206). The first American institutions of higher education were founded in the seventeenth century, drawing particular inspiration from the Oxbridge model. In common with their institutional sources, these early American institutions offered a conservative education for an elitist clientele. Their ongoing resistance to change led the federal government to create a new form of institution, the Land Grant College, in which traditional liberal and more utilitarian studies were given equal standing within the same facility. In the nineteenth cen-

tury this innovation was overlaid with the German concepts of scholarship, and a new form of university was created. While this model drew heavily on the European tradition, the final fusion was highly distinctive. Moreover, during the twentieth century, the American model has become increasingly influential in the development of universities in other countries.

The first American institution of higher learning was Harvard, established in 1636; others followed until, by the time of the Revolutionary War in 1776, a total of nine colleges had been founded. (Gamage and Miniburg, 2003: 185). These colleges were patterned on the Oxbridge universities, both in curriculum and structure. They also inherited from their Old World predecessors a staunch resistance to any attempt to change their traditional formula. As a result of this traditionalism their relationship with civil authority was often tense. The disputes between college claims for autonomy and governmental demands for authority over higher education reached a climax with the Dartmouth Act in 1819, under which the independence of the institutions was confirmed by the Supreme Court. Yet in fact this government set back was to inaugurate a new form of teaching institution (Cowley, 1991: 118-20).

When legal avenues to influence higher learning were closed, the federal government changed its education strategy and decided to create a series of colleges more amenable to the policy needs of the state. In 1852, during the Lincoln Presidency, the Morrill Act became law. Under the provisions of this act states were allocated large tracts of federal land to support the establishment of state-administered educational facilities. The text of this law is highly revealing.

... the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanical arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life (quoted in Cowley, 1991: 121).

In the wake of this act a string of institutions were formed across America, colleges that combined the traditional liberal disciplines with other more practical studies within a single institution – granting them equal status and so quelling for a time the debate over the relative merits of general and vocational education. Moreover, on a more subtle level, this combination of vocational and general education began to undermine the elitism of the university not simply by opening the doors more widely, but also by raising the status of practical studies to stand beside the so-called 'cultivating' arts.

In parallel with these government initiatives was a dramatic rise in the level of philanthropic support for higher education. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a series of financial magnates provided large endowments for the establishment of institutions of higher learning. John D. Rockefeller, Sr. gave thirty million dollars to establish the University of Chicago. John Hopkins bequeathed money and land worth over seven million dollars to establish his eponymous institution. Leland Stanford gave twenty million dollars in various assets for the foundation that bears his name. These are only three of many huge grants establishing colleges across the country, and there were numerous

other smaller bequests to new or established institutions (Patterson, 1997, 204-5). These philanthropic universities were created by the new industrialists and, like the government-run colleges, they had an overwhelmingly practical, secular character.

The bludgeoning novelty of the American college system was to receive one final wave of influence from Europe. Despite, or perhaps because of the growing interest in higher learning, there arose a sharp public debate on the nature of advanced education, with considerable unease being voiced as to whether American institutions might be considered to be universities at all. In 1851 Henry P. Tappan articulated this sense of cultural cringe:

> In our country we have no universities. Whatever may be the names we choose to call our institutions of learning, still they are not universities. They have neither libraries and materials of learning, generally nor the number of professors and courses of lectures, nor the large and free organizations which go to make up Universities (quoted in Cowley, 1991: 137).

This unrest was fuelled by the many American graduate students who had chosen to complete their education in Europe. After turning away from the inward-looking English and French universities of their day, many American graduates had embraced the Humboldtian revolution taking place in Germany. These returning scholars became enthusiastic proponents of the German model, advocating the ideal of scholarship as the defining characteristic of the university. With the opening of the first American research university in 1876, as a result of the philanthropic generosity of its namesake, John Hopkins, these hopes became a reality. With this final overlay

of scholarly expectation the essential characteristics of the American university had been established.

The American model was a product of European traditions being selectively transported in response to local needs. As needs changed, these models were adapted in a pattern of borrowing and modification.

> The unique university which emerged in the late nineteenth century was therefore a hybrid organisation: a combination of a German graduate school emphasising research; an English-style college concerned with general education; an English civic university oriented toward utilitarian subjects and applied research; and European-style separate professional schools; all incorporated into the one university institution (Patterson, 1997: 201).

In this way the United States produced universities that were flexible and capable of meeting both the cultural and technical needs of the growing nation. At the same time they were also able to take advantage of various forms of financial support. Throughout this process, moreover, American universities were in most cases able to maintain the autonomy necessary for the pursuit of intellectual excellence. This system grew and flourished, to become a much-utilised model in other countries.

For universities to be successfully translated from European into neo-European cultures considerable institutional adaptation was necessary. In evolving to meet the needs of a recipient society, the final form of the New World university could become quite different from the original European models. Yet the difficulties adapting European forms in America or Australia were magnified many times when attempts were made to transpose the university into societies with existing, non-European tra-

ditions. In these instances, the complex relationship between the university and society was complicated by fundamental cultural issues. The introduction of western-style universities into the Islamic world provides a particularly striking example of the institutional evolution universities must undergo when being transferred between fundamentally different cultures. The relationship between Islam and the West is a huge and multifaceted subject; for the purposes of this discussion, therefore, the introduction of the European-style university in the Middle East will be considered in contrast with the experience of another predominantly Muslim society, Malaysia. Even this small sample of countries will highlight the multiplicity of institutional forms cross-cultural transportation of the university can produce, along with the inherent tension such a process can create.

Many commentators have observed the oddly conflicting currents in Muslim reactions to Western culture. This internal tension is well captured by Grunebaum, who notes: 'the individual and his society are divided against themselves, suffering from feeling at the same time attracted and repelled when confronted with the nonchalant aggression of Western mentality.' (quoted in Szyliowicz, 1973: 1). The university, as a perceived manifestation of this 'nonchalant [cultural] aggression', prompts a variety of reactions from the Muslim world. On one hand the institution is seen as a means Muslim countries might achieve the technical and economic advances the West has enjoyed. On the other hand, however, the cultural substructure of the university can sometimes be viewed with considerable suspicion. Thus traditionalist views would accept the practical benefits of the purely technical advantages of the university, but refuse

to adopt the cultural assumptions that lie beneath these institutions. This is a course likely to create purely mechanical institutions lacking in intellectual vibrancy; therefore secular Muslims advocate a more inclusive transfer of institutional forms. This debate is an old one within the Islamic society, but has become increasingly tense in recent years, for in institutions across the Muslim world fundamentalist and secular groups are squaring off against each other (Bollag, 2003). Moreover this conflict differs in important respects from the many historical cases where social tensions have in the end actually advanced the development of higher learning. The conflict between secular and fundamentalist Islam cuts across the usual categories in university life, with students, lecturers, administrators, and governments all finding themselves divided. In addition, beneath this general Islamic uncertainty toward western culture, there lies a kaleidoscope of regional and national variants that further complicate the role of universities in these countries.

The Muslim nations of the Middle East were early recipients of European models of higher education. The earliest Western-style universities in the Middle East were either branch universities established by foreign interests, such as the American universities at Beirut and Cairo, or were set up in the administrative centres of occupying powers, such as the University of Cairo, founded under British authority, and the University of Algiers, overseen by the French colonial administrators. Even Turkey, which had managed to resist direct European control, looked to Germany for inspiration in the foundation of the University of Istanbul (Landau, 1997). These universities were all intended to bolster the authority of waning imperial powers, be they Ottoman, English or French.

Each was charged with training the administrators required by the three powers' respective empires, and were also expected to spread the imperial nations' cultural values throughout their colonial possessions. By the early decades of the twentieth century the universities had proved unequal to this task. The First World War brought the Ottoman Empire to an end; the Second World War rang the death knell of the European empires. Following the end of these imperial dreams the universities of the Middle East were given a different mandate.

The newly emergent nations of the Middle East saw the universities as valuable agents for national construction and prestige (Szyliowicz, 1973: 91-203; Landau, 1997). The reforms imposed in 1933 by the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, are indicative of the mixture of old and new these states required. Ataturk planned modernisation along Western lines, and higher learning had a central role to play. The old guard of the Istanbul University were dismissed and a new wave of scholars, many of them refugees from National Socialist Germany, was recruited to establish the basis for modern teaching and research. Yet the subject-matter of the new university was widened to include a nationalistic version of Turkish history and courses in local language and culture. Two decades later, the University of Istanbul was able to provide the inspiration for a series of universities founded across the Middle East in the 1950s. In this single decade universities were founded in Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia. Central to the mission of these universities was the desire to consolidate nationalistic sentiments. Their curriculum was also changed to reflect this function – European languages were phased out in favour of Arabic. Courses on

local history and culture, many of them mandatory, were also introduced.

Due to their central role in national development the universities remained under tight government control. Academic freedoms were bounded and research into some issues, for example the fraught issues surrounding the rights of minority groups such as the Kurds, was actively dissuaded (Bollag, 1998). At the administrative level Middle Eastern universities generally remain under the direct authority of the Minister for the Interior, who determines higher appointments and annual funding arrangements. This obedient relationship is consolidated by the staff, who by and large consider themselves employees of the state, and by the students, the majority of whom aspire to government jobs. One unexpected result of this central oversight has been oddly eclectic institutional forms:

> An extreme case was the University of Baghdad where, in the 1960s, the Colleges of Arts, Science and Medicine followed British patterns; the college of Agriculture American; the College of Law, French, and the College of Education and Engineering a mixture (Landau, 1997: 10).

Close government control of universities would seem to encourage this apparently ad hoc approach to organisation. When authority is vested in an intrusive external official, and internal decision-making is of limited consequence, the patterns of internal organisation become less critical to university management.

There is another general characteristic of Islamic societies that has influenced the development of the university and will continue to do so. Traditionally higher edu-

cation in the Islamic world was in the hands of religious training centres. The western-style university and the Islamic university have existed in parallel, with the former preparing candidates for secular careers, the latter providing an advanced religious instruction. There are, however, some areas of overlap. The non-technical subjects offered in western-style universities have the potential to create tension with the traditional schools. The western concept of a general education, which has formed the centre-piece of the European humanist tradition and continues to be a fundamental aim of university education, can be interpreted as encroaching on the self-development role of traditional Islamic higher education. Moreover, there has also been cross-over in the other direction, with fundamentalist Muslims enrolling in secular universities and then insisting on reform of basic institutions to bring them into line with traditional Muslim practice (Bollag, 2003). A struggle is being played out which will dramatically influence the future direction of higher learning in Islamic societies; already, however, many Middle Eastern universities have been forced into compromises with fundamentalist demands.

While the Middle East contains many of the cultural centres of the Islamic world, significant populations of Muslims live in South East Asia. Muslim countries in Asia have also encountered significant challenges incorporating Western ideals of higher education into their societies. In common with the Middle Eastern experience, the earliest universities in South East Asia were transplanted into the region under the auspices of European colonial powers (Silcock, 1964; Subramani and Kempner, 2002). Their original mandate was to provide a loyal local administration, but in many cases these institutions soon

became bastions of nationalist fervour. After independence, the universities in these countries were reformed as agents of conscious national creation. Yet the variety of roles these universities are called on to play have become, if anything, even more complicated than those expected by Middle Eastern governments. Malaysia offers particularly revealing insights into the difficulty non-European countries can encounter when adapting universities to meet their own needs.

Higher education first came to the Malayan peninsula when the region was under the control of Great Britain. From as early as 1905 local elites were provided with an education at Kuala Kangsar College. Successful graduation led to employment in the Malay Administration Service. Other colleges were established throughout the peninsula, but not until 1949 was a chartered university founded. The University of Malaya was created from the amalgamation of the King George College of Medicine and the Raffles College of Arts and Sciences (Silcock, 1964: 60; Subramani and Kempner, 2002: 234-6). An initial proposal that the University of London would administer the institution was rejected in favour of periodic external assessment, and a university charter was issued. The political realities of the region imposed an unusual structure on the university. Two virtually independent branches were established, one in Singapore and the other in Kuala Lumpur, operating under a single chancellor. This division became permanent when Singapore withdrew from the Malaysian federation in 1965.

By far the most contentious issue faced by Malaysian higher education has been the implications of the ethnic makeup of the population: indigenous Muslim Malays account for around 55 percent of the population, predomi-

nantly Buddhist Chinese some 32 percent, and Indian Hindus almost 10 percent. The establishment of the University of Malaya exacerbated ethnic tensions, over such issues as the selection of lecturers, or whether English or Malay would be the language of instruction. Moreover Malays complained about the high proportion of Chinese students in the university, particularly in the science and economic faculties; non-Malays were aggrieved that the overwhelming majority of government scholarships were given to indigenous students. The imposition of financial deterrents to Chinese students and the creation of a quota system to raise Malayan participation in higher education prompted wealthy members of the Chinese community to fund private institutions, among them Nanyang University in Singapore. Despite government opposition and accusations of administrative irregularities these institutions have continued to offer professional training to Chinese Malaysians. Many more students, however, have been obliged to seek higher qualifications outside Malaysia, creating an important education market in surrounding countries.

Tension over access to educational opportunities is only one of the issues raised by the ethnic makeup of Malaysian society. The advantages in terms of national cohesion of using a single language were recognised at the time of Malaysian independence. This recognition was formalised into law in 1967, but even though Malay was established as the official national language, the continued use of English in higher education was allowed. This situation satisfied nobody. English still predominated in the universities, particularly in the sciences, medicine and economics, due in large part to the need to maintain pace with developments outside the country and the special-

ised vocabulary that underpinned these subjects. This unrest was compounded by a continuing predominance of Chinese students in the sciences and technical faculties. Growing tension over the relative advantage each ethnic group gained from the modernisation of the country was an essential factor in the riots that convulsed many regions of Malaysia in 1969. As Subramani and Kempner (2002: 235) lament, 'Sadly, it required a racial riot with the loss of hundreds of lives before the British higher education model was finally recognised as being incongruent with the basic national issues and the welfare of the Malaysian society.'

This tension was predominantly the result of an essential friction in the purposes of the university as envisaged by the Malaysian government. The universities were given a complex role to play in Malaysian society, a series of goals that have been difficult to rationalise with the traditional functions of a western university.

> ... universities are instruments of development and their importance is based not only on their supplying the manpower inputs for development but also on their structuring this supply so that economic equity and balance between the ethnic groups is achieved. This is not to deny that they, as centres of learning, still perform their traditional tasks of teaching and research. However, to claim that the universities are independent centres of fundamental thinking and intellectual leadership with regard to issues of development is in practice to question the whole basis of the symbiosis between them and the government which has been so carefully cultivated since independence... (Hashim, 1987: 75).

The universities are expected to carry out a broad range of often inconsistent functions: as traditional insti-

tutions of higher learning; as major instruments in the modernisation and economic prosperity of the nation; as an agency of social engineering; and as a means of establishing national cohesion. Yet these tasks are difficult to maintain in tandem. The insistence that Malay remain the language of tuition for reasons of national formation complicates the universities' teaching and research functions. It also limits the opportunities for involvement in the wider academic world. There is great temptation to resort to more commonly used international languages, particularly English. Yet the use of non-Malay languages has dramatic repercussions on the accessibility of higher education to the Malay-speaking majority of the population, and consequently on their attitudes toward the universities. Rare government attempts to reconsider the use of the Malay language, particularly in the sciences, has provoked considerable social unrest (Pillai, 1994).

The Malaysian experience provides a clear example of the variety of functions universities can be called on to fulfil above and beyond their traditional role of teaching and research. The unique ethnic mix in Malaysia underlines this complexity, but similar circumstances are to be found in many other countries, both European and non-European. The nationalistic insistence on the use of local languages, a common characteristic of many smaller countries, has serious implications for the integration of these institutions into the wider sweep of international scholarship where, for good or ill, the European languages, particularly English, have come to predominate (Welch, 2002 :435-6). The development of Malaysian higher education also highlights the difficult line universities in non-European countries must walk, on one side making the adaptations necessary to integrate successfully

into local cultures, and on the other retaining the ability to function effectively as a institution of higher learning. In this environment statements offering guidance in institutional development, such as those provided in the Magna Charta, become more valuable than ever.

The university as an institution changed in fundamental ways as it was carried beyond the borders of Europe. Just as the tension between intellectual endeavour and social expectation forced adaptation on the institutions of higher learning in European countries, so too universities were obliged to modify their operations to succeed in new environments. The institutions that managed to adapt to the needs of their recipient countries were able to flourish; those that did not, languished as isolated and marginalised pockets of irrelevant exoticism. The evolutionary trajectories of universities in non-European environments have produced more effective models of higher education, and so provided reinvigorating examples even to those countries where universities have a longer tradition. But the proliferation of universities also raises negative possibilities. The virtually innumerable variations of environment the universities face will produce a wide range of institutional response. The danger exists that the differences may come to outweigh the similarities, thus undermining one of the fundamental strengths of the university. As the Magna Charta observes, to excel in its cultural and educational mission the university must retain an supranational quality, in which the exchange of personnel and ideas is encouraged. As the universities, and the societies that support them, move into an uncertain new millennium, this quality of the university, and the power it has to promote mutual understanding be-

tween cultures, will certainly take on an ever greater importance.

In 1988 the Magna Charta identified a number of critical principles that are the product of a long history of societal challenge, institutional response, and negotiated change. The medieval university completed the task begun in the classical period by firmly delineating the relationship between the university and society. A structure of knowledge and the autonomy to effectively disseminate that knowledge were both established as a result of the particular social milieu of the Middle Ages. Yet this autonomy proved to be a mixed blessing, for it allowed universities to fall behind the societies they aspired to teach. Widespread pressure to modernise higher learning forced further institutional evolution, resulting on one hand in the development of more practical areas of study, and on the other in the rise of scholarship as an integral part of the university. The institutional forms that emerged in Europe found new expression as European influence radiated outwards across the globe. Subsequent universities adopted forms appropriate to their new environments, and the resulting multiplicity of forms has created the danger that the very concept of a university might become lost. Nevertheless, the commonalities that exist between institutions offer the hope that medieval ideals of the universality of knowledge throughout Christendom might still be realised on a worldwide scale. Yet even as the changing world created the university, so the world continues to change. The years since the ratification of the Magna Charta in 1988 have brought dramatic new challenges for the very principles the Magna Charta seeks to protect.

The challenge of the present: the principles of the Magna Charta since 1988

The Magna Charta identifies the characteristics of the ideal university, characteristics that have evolved over centuries, often in response to particular social needs. The Magna Charta defines universities as institutions dedicated to the preservation and transmission of knowledge to succeeding generations; institutions which, in the tradition of the humanist mission, facilitate the application of scholarly effort to expand the boundaries of human potential. The three major pillars of the university edifice are identified as institutional autonomy, the indivisibility of teaching and research, and the international nature of higher learning. The institutions of the modern university developed in the tension between the needs of higher learning and the expectations of society. The university has been a highly successful compromise between these two positions and demand for university education has increased exponentially throughout the world. Unfortunately, in the fifteen years since the ratification of the Magna Charta Universitatum, the changing relationship between society and the universities has cast considerable doubt on the continued viability of the Magna Charta's principles.

The most prominent social development in recent decades has been the seemingly inexorable rise of globalisation and the neoliberal economic theories that support it. The pervasive effects of globalisation on world societies and cultures appear set to continue. In recent years the term 'globalisation' has been overused to the point that its meaning is becoming unclear (Welch, 2002: 34-40). Various models have been proposed to describe the

impacts of increasing levels of communication and travel across the globe. One aspect of globalisation that has particular significance for the future of higher education is the development of a 'global culture'. Recent advances in information technology and mass communication have changed the ways in which individuals view the world and their places within it. People across the globe are bombarded with largely identical information, encouraging the development of a common, mass cultural identity. Because the primary nexus of this information stream is the United States, and the predominant language is English, this process of cultural homogenisation has been likened, with considerable justification, to cultural imperialism. The development of mass communication and the resulting threat to global cultural diversity has clear implications for the content and delivery of higher education. No less significant for the future of higher learning has been the advent of a 'global economy'.

The rise of global capitalism implies the steady erosion of national sovereignty. Almost half of the world's one hundred largest economic entities are multinational companies rather than states (Welch, 2002; 436). In its simplest form, the process of globalisation is a progressive removal of the restrictions nation states impose on the passage of currency, goods, and individuals. While neoliberal economists insist that this process of freeing the international market creates greater overall productivity, the unequal distribution of the resulting economic benefits in this ultra-competitive environment has led to a growing gap between the winners and losers. As Welch (2002: 457) observes:

This largely unfettered growth of a neoliberal business agenda, and the intensification of global competition, is leaving more and more people behind in the race for employment, while fracturing the workforce. On the one hand is the minority of well-paid, full-time employees while, on the other hand, is the majority of contract, part-time or causal staff, who are often denied many of the benefits that their full-time colleagues enjoy.

These changes have many implications for higher learning. University departments have experienced first-hand the results of this 'fracturing' of their workforce. Moreover the impact of workplace changes has been exacerbated by a rising demand for higher education. The uncertainty and selectivity of the global workplace has led a growing number of individuals to perceive higher education as the best insurance against unemployment. Yet this surge in enrolments has not been met with a rise in funding, for in the push for international competitiveness governments have in fact reduced funding to universities even as increasing demands for productivity are made. In the face of the dual pressures of rising student numbers and decreased funding the principles of the Magna Charta have been in many instances seriously eroded.

While the exponential growth in student numbers might, superficially at least, suggest a robust higher education sector, this has not in fact been the case. As government funding is progressively reduced, more of the financial burden of education is being placed upon the student. Ironically, even as government support for universities has decreased, demands for academic accountability have grown. Government policies ostensibly intended to maximise 'efficiency' have led to a gradual reorganisation of university administration along corporate lines. In-

creasingly education has come to be seen as a commodity to be marketed; and students are recast as consumers of pre-packaged knowledge units. This changing attitude toward the process of education has also led to attempts to standardise and quantify the learning experience. The push toward commercially delivered education with established and guaranteed outcomes has been colourfully yet aptly criticised as the 'McDonaldization' of the university sector (Ritzer, 1998).

The development of a mass education system run along corporate lines has had a dramatic impact on the university. What are the implications of these challenges for the Magna Charta? The Magna Charta defines the university in both functional and institutional terms, with the emphasis being placed on the latter. The definition of the university's function is actually a fairly flexible assertion of the centrality of research and teaching, coupled with a statement on the importance of the humanist mission. Yet the changing demands of a global economy have intensified the perennial controversy between vocational and general education, and the result of this debate seems destined to define the future direction of the university. As vocational learning comes into the ascendant, the aims of general education, and with it the very ideal of the humanist mission, seem in danger of being lost. At the same time, the principles that bear the major burden of defining the Magna Charta's ideal university are also under threat. University autonomy has been directly challenged by governments, on the grounds of efficiency or accountability, and undermined more subtly by changing funding arrangements. Similar forces have also threatened to separate the functions of teaching and research. Even the supranational ideals of higher education, which have on some levels been

have on some levels been enhanced by the proliferation of universities and the development of new communication technologies, seem on closer examination to have in fact been seriously compromised. In the modern environment not only is the institutional integrity of the university threatened, but the function a university should actually serve has become less clear.

What to teach, and to whom? The function of the university as defined in the Magna Charta

The definition the Magna Charta provides of a university's role in society allows wide latitude of interpretation. The university must offer high quality education that 'should teach [students], and through them others, to respect the great harmonies of their natural environment and of life itself.' Moreover the university is declared to be 'the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant care is to attain universal knowledge.' Uplifting as these definitions are, the details provide little actual guidance to university administrators. The teaching and research functions in universities have been brought to a crisis by increasingly assertive government demands for clear monetary benefits. These impositions have encouraged the marketing of vocational studies and the pursuit of economically determined research. The definition of a true university in terms of the teaching and research it offers is further complicated by the many non-educational demands being made on institutions of higher learning. In addition to its productive engagement in the 'knowledge economy' the modern university may also be expected to further the patriotic or social policies of gov-

ernment. To what degree, administrators must ask, do such roles conflict with the ideal university as proposed by the Magna Charta? Unfortunately, the answer is by no means clear.

Questions over the nature and the purpose of higher learning have been asked since the time of the Sophists, the foundation of the schools of Rhetoric and Philosophy crystallised this debate. The scuffles between Isocrates' young rhetoricians and Plato's philosophy students in the Athenian backstreets were an early manifestation of the dichotomy between vocational and general education. Yet it would be an error to overdraw the polarity as it existed in these earlier times. Isocrates was not training mercenaries; he saw a character building aspect to the professional education he offered:

> Firstly [the successful student] is capable of dealing with the ordinary events of life by possessing the happy sense of fitness and a faculty of usually hitting upon the right course of action. Secondly, his behaviour in any society is always correct and proper. If he is thrown in with offensive or disagreeable company, he can meet it with easy good temper; and he treats everyone with the utmost fairness and gentleness... (Isocrates, quoted in Cowley, 1991: 6)

While Isocrates trained youths in practical subjects this was seen to be of wider general benefit. This sense of proportion became an integral part of the early concept of higher education. Thus, while the medieval student was learning the knowledge that would prepare him for a career, his clerical status made him constantly aware of the sacred nature society accorded his efforts. Later too, when the Renaissance humanists were engaged in pursu-

ing ancient learning for the joy of discovery, their students were also attuned to the career benefits this training gave them (Kelly, 1991: 26-7). In short, the polarisation of rhetorician and philosopher was simply a matter of emphasis, and the learning provided by early universities contained elements of both the vocational and the general. This balance was generally retained in the university as it developed into the modern world, but the ongoing trends seem less promising.

The future of general education in the university seems increasingly uncertain. One major reason for this is the economic imperative facing students in the contemporary higher education sector. In most countries the expense of attending university has risen rapidly as the financial burden of education is shifted from governments to the students themselves. As a result, prospective students arrive at university contemplating large upfront fees or even larger long-term student debts. Such a proposition inevitably has implications for their choices of courses. Strictly vocational subjects, those offering a clear career path after graduation and high starting salaries, are liable to attract the major share of new student enrolments. 'Responding to employers' demands, young people see their best prospects in mastery of some aspect of [the] ever more powerful technologies' (Noah, 1987: 98). Yet the threat to general studies comes not simply from lower enrolment rates, but also from fundamental changes to the ways these subjects are to be taught.

The pervasive government ideology of corporatising higher education, thereby treating knowledge as a commodity and the student as a consumer, has dramatic implications for the relationship between vocational and general education. Vocational learning tends to deal with

a specific body of knowledge, an established set of facts that the student must learn and understand. General education, on the other hand, deals in wider concepts and on the relationships between facts. Because of this essential difference, the general subjects suffer a considerable disadvantage when confronted with the modern trend identified as the 'McDonaldization' of higher education. Under this model, subject-matter must conform to a standard format, have milestones of progress, and quantifiable outcomes. While such an approach lends itself to the presentation of a body of knowledge that consists of atomic facts, it is far less effective as a measure of understanding the relationships that gives those facts meaning. As Furedi (2002: 35) observes: 'Knowledge about a discipline cannot be passively consumed. Its provision and acquisition requires a creative tension between teaching and learning.' Despite the weakness of a mechanical method in teaching general knowledge subjects, a concept of 'core values' has been established, allowing subjects to be restructured to better fit the desired teaching approach (Fox, 2002). In the process, however, the essence of the subject itself has been lost.

The notion of general learning and the benefits it conveys in terms of character development has been undermined by the economic imperatives driving the modern university. But general studies, and indeed the concept of a humanist mission, has also sustained substantial damage from within its own ranks.

> In the twentieth century, western civilisation produced the most technologically sophisticated genocide ever seen in history. Progress, democracy, objective knowledge, and modernity itself no longer seemed to march in

step toward the enrichment of humankind (quoted in
Hudson, 2002: 108).

Many scholars reacted to the events of the last century
by retreating into relativism (Hudson, 2002: 107-10).
Academic dabbling with relativism encouraged a debilitat-
ing questioning not only of the purpose, but even the
possibility, of general education and the humanist mis-
sion. Unfortunately, however, when the academy itself
cannot agree that the humanist mission is a possibility, let
alone a worthwhile goal, students, and indeed govern-
ments and their bureaucratic servants, can scarcely be
censured for turning toward the concrete economic bene-
fits of more vocational subjects.

The Magna Charta attempts to identify the function of
the university in terms of teaching and research and its
promotion of humanist ideals. Yet such a definition has
become increasingly problematic. The ascendancy of vo-
cational learning and the repackaging of general subjects,
not to mention the doubts raised by relativist musings,
have complicated the value of such a definition. This
problem is exacerbated by the numerous roles the univer-
sity has been called on to play, both historically and in the
modern world. Some of these functions are corollaries of
the intellectual tasks of the university, but others seem to
be, if anything, contrary to the research and teaching
roles the university must continue to fulfil. These addi-
tional university functions can be usefully divided into the
essentially political and those that have a social signifi-
cance. Yet the potentially diverse roles of the university in
society, and the implications of these roles on future in-
stitutional development, are not sufficiently recognised by
the Magna Charta.

Throughout their long historical development institutions of higher learning have been expected to fulfil social and political roles in addition to their intellectual functions. Well-regarded institutes of higher learning can accrue a unique lustre, a glow they can then share by association. The Library of Alexandria was a product of the ambitions of the Ptolemaic dynasty and their desire for the prestige that would assist in the consolidation of their rule. Medieval universities were used as important bargaining pieces by popes and kings in their convoluted political strategies. The rise of the nation states in the modern world further complicated the calls placed upon universities. Nineteenth-century German reformers were not simply seeking scholarly excellence for its own sake, but rather to bring about a national rejuvenation through intellectual effort. The Australian universities during the same period, in contrast, attempted to reinforce the cultural links between imperial colony and mother country. In the post-colonial world universities in many newly independent countries were openly charged with the task of consolidating local national identities. The case of Malaysia, while striking, is by no means unusual.

In addition to the political benefits the reputation of an institution might bring to wider society, the process of higher education also has important social implications. Hudson, in fact, goes so far as to claim that the role institutions play in socialising youth to the mores of the wider world is in fact the primary function of the university (Hudson, 2002). Yet one of the most important aspects of higher education is the means by which access to it is obtained. From the seventeenth until the nineteenth century the major function of the Oxbridge universities in England appeared to be the creation of a social elite

rather than the furthering of useful knowledge. Many of the circumstances that encouraged this function appear to be re-emerging into the modern world.

> ... it could well be that the structures of extreme selectivity of our most prestigious colleges and universities may risk losing an important part of their legitimacy in the eyes of the society at large. For it is at least conceivable that [society] might well begin to question the justification and the legitimacy of the tremendous social (as distinct from public) cost of the Harvards and the Stanfords if those institutions were to become increasingly the vehicles through which at least the majority of their students orchestrate their personal advancement into positions of extraordinary material comfort and social success (Weiler, 1987: 64).

There is a danger that the universities can become merely instruments of elite formation, or worse, or elite replication. Yet the admission policies of universities can also be used for more democratic, but still controversial, social engineering.

Increasingly in recent years governments have seen the university as a means to address wider equity issues within society. This can take the form of an insistence on preferred access for particular social groups, as with the advantageous entry-conditions granted to the indigenous peoples in Malaysia. Such policies are designed to combat perceived social disadvantages suffered by specific groups, although frequently – as in Malaysia – there are also political imperatives at work. A more widespread and indeed more potentially dangerous form of social engineering has also been demanded of universities. Wider access to education has been a government policy throughout the world and in many cases this policy is

portrayed as a reaction against the supposed elitism of previous generations. The price for throwing open the university gates, many scholars have argued, has been the loss of intellectual excellence and, ultimately, the purpose of higher learning. As Fox (2002: 129) succinctly points out: 'The question is not whether fewer or more people should have access to the ivory towers, but rather what those towers represent in the contemporary context. The key question is: what are today's students being given access to?' The answer, it seems, is not very much! (Fox, 2002; Hudson, 2002).

The Magna Charta attempts to define the function of the university in terms of its research and teaching mission. Unfortunately recent intellectual, economic, and political currents have undermined the validity of such a distinction. The many political and social roles higher learning has been called on to fulfil require a more subtle definition of university functions. In fact, the concept of the university as presented by the Magna Charta rests more heavily on institutions than functions. Yet here too there are significant problems. The fundamental principles of the Magna Charta have been increasingly threatened by the ongoing evolution of higher learning. One essential tenet of the university as defined by the Magna Charta is the concept of institutional autonomy. This principle though is under considerable threat from several quarters.

University autonomy in an intrusive world

The Magna Charta identifies physical and intellectual autonomy as a fundamental characteristic of the true university. To function effectively, a university must be

'morally and intellectually independent of political author-
ity and economic power.' Scholars must be assured of the
freedom to pursue their research and teaching free from
undue restraint. The administrators of the university are
obliged to ensure a space in which ideas can be developed
free from interference or intolerance. The concepts of in-
stitutional autonomy are the product of long centuries of
evolution; in the modern world they are under increased
scrutiny. Governments have intervened in the running of
the university at all levels, usually justifying such actions
by appeals to the principle of wider public access, the
need for greater efficiency, or the obligation of a univer-
sity to be accountable for monies received. More subtle
challenges to institutional autonomy also come when
governments insist on tying various forms of funding to
scholarly acquiescence to official policies or research pri-
orities. Both the administrative autonomy and the auton-
omy of teaching and research, the cornerstones of the
university as envisaged by the Magna Charta, have been
threatened in these ways.

The achievement of institutional autonomy was a
product of the Middle Ages; indeed the success in sepa-
rating the university physically and intellectually from
wider society is a primary distinction between classical
and medieval education. This separation included the
more commonly recognised legal independence, but also
the social acknowledgement of scholarly control over
secular knowledge. During the nineteenth century the
breadth of scholarly freedom to undertake research was
widened, in some respects at least, by the radiating influ-
ence of the German reformers. Paradoxically, however,
the financial expense of pure research made the universi-
ties increasingly reliant on government funding. The im-

portance commentators have accorded to the principle of university autonomy is symptomatic of the essential tension between the institution of higher learning and the society that must support it. This tension has risen sharply in recent years as long-held principles of autonomy come under threat. In order to explain the nature of these threats it is necessary to briefly consider some of the changing ideas of institutional autonomy that have developed in the modern world.

Institutional autonomy implies that the critical decisions concerning the running of a university are made within the institution itself. Questions on the nature of university autonomy concern who makes those decisions and exactly how they are arrived at. There have been various attempts to define the decision-making processes and the external pressures that might be applied to them. An early and important distinction was made between the substantive and procedural facets of university management: the former being the setting of institutional goals; the latter deals with the establishment of policies to carry out these goals. This interpretation was subsequently refined by categorising the types of decision where pressure might be placed on universities as appointive, academic, or financial. More recent studies have noted that university administrations and external agencies are not completely distinct and a wide variety of negotiations take place between them (Ordorika, 2003: 362-3). Consequently, the threats to autonomy must be recognised as coming not only from direct action on behalf of governments and bureaucracies, but also through subversion of the mechanisms and personnel charged with creating and administering internal policies. For this reason, questions of university autonomy can hinge on who or what exactly

is the university. These issues come into sharper focus
when some of the pressures undermining the autonomy
of the university are considered more closely.

Greater direct government intercession has been a
trend across national enterprises of all kinds, including
universities. In the name of efficiency and accountability
universities have been obliged to provide increasing
amounts of detailed feedback to government bureaucra-
cies. Staff-members of universities world-wide have been
subjected to these impositions, but the detailed auditing
of university functions has been particularly intrusive in
the United Kingdom.

> This stress on process is orientated toward assuring sys-
> tems of management rather than the quality of teaching.
> The ethos of auditing puts pressure on teachers to elabo-
> rate procedures, which can be compared and standard-
> ised throughout the university system. As a result, the
> university sector has become so obsessed with proce-
> dures that little creative energy is devoted to what is be-
> ing taught (Furedi, 2002:37-8).

This growing level of bureaucratization both frustrates
and alienates the staff members who are obliged to spend
their precious time filling out evaluation forms (Salter,
2002). Equally problematically, the organisational struc-
tures of many universities have been gradually reformed
away from a collegial and toward a more corporate
model. This has had dramatic implications for the nature
of institutional autonomy in those universities.

Symptomatic of the changing nature of the university
is that vice-chancellors routinely and unselfconsciously
refer to themselves as CEOs. Yet as the corporate model
grows more entrenched the distance widens between the

academic sector of the university – the lecturers and students – and those making the decisions. The collegial nature of traditional university organisation seems increasingly halcyon when contrasted with the harsh present-day reality of university staff being viewed as little more than production line workers on the knowledge-factory floor. The tenuous relationship of students and staff to the decision-making process has become evident in the greater frequency with which students are resorting to direct, often illegal protest; and staff are finding themselves obliged to stage industrial action. Yet the community of scholars and students, the self-motivated guild-like collective that first conceived and then won institutional autonomy, represent the original university. That they have been excluded from the decisions that control the development of the modern university makes the concept of institutional autonomy appear increasingly hollow.

Direct government impositions on the institutional autonomy of the university have been matched with less direct attempts to influence the direction of proposed research. While the Magna Charta seeks to establish the right of scholars to pursue their chosen research untrammelled by economic, political, or social concerns, the actual situation in the modern university is something quite different. Although universities, and indeed governments, ostensibly support these ideals, the reality is that funding for research projects must be obtained in a competitive market. This directly impacts on the types of research projects that are proposed. Funding guidelines have the insidious tendency of limiting the parameters of research (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). Moreover the highly competitive nature of such funding tends to favour applicants with a proven track-record in securing previ-

ous research grants. This, however, also has the effect of consolidating existing paradigms and discouraging new and innovative lines of enquiry.

The only certain way to secure research funding is the ability to demonstrate the economic benefits such research will bring in the market place. Yet this concentration on the short-term economic value of research carries with it a considerable price in terms of future intellectual progress.

> Sometimes, difficult and unpopular ideas generated in one era all of a sudden acquire significance in another a long time after their authors have died. The benefits of such work cannot be judged in the here and now. Furthermore, the merits of academic work may well be realised through the contribution of another researcher working in another society. The imposition of a short-termist regime of calculation fosters a climate where academics have little incentive to work creatively (Furendi, 2002: 36).

Many, even most, of the great intellectual advances were initiated by essentially profitless curiosity – from renaissance humanism to modern information technology – and seemed at the time to have no practical benefit. The present day concentration on profitable research draws from a pool filled by the efforts of previous generations of thinkers, without refilling it through support of the seemingly directionless research that will provide the building blocks for future, presently inconceivable advances.

The institutional and intellectual autonomy of the university is a central tenet of the Magna Charta. Recent social and political developments have undermined this

principle in several ways. Governments have become increasingly aware of the importance of the university, an importance they invariably equate in economic terms, and have demanded greater oversight over university actions. Direct threats to university autonomy have come in the form of increasing government intervention through intermediary bureaucrats and from the gradual imposition of corporate models of university governance that effectively isolate the majority of the university from the decision-making process. Moreover government funding patterns with an emphasis on short-term economic benefit as a preferred outcome have undermined the autonomy of research and traded short-term economic return for long-term obligations to future societies. In the face of these many interventions into the operation of universities, the question becomes not whether autonomy has been infringed, but rather whether it still exists at all.

The missing link: research and teaching in the modern university

The importance of the relationship between teaching and research is identified by the Magna Charta as a central principle of university governance. The major reason teachers in a university should also be engaged in research is because this link enhances both pursuits. Unfortunately, under the constraints of rising student numbers and dwindling financial resources, this valuable relationship has been weakened. In the modern university teaching has been devalued and increasingly imposed on part-time or temporary staff members. Time allocated for research is becoming a privilege granted to full-time staff as

a measure of success. This situation has a deleterious effect on both teaching and research. Equally, it has led to a division of the academy into two classes of scholar: those who are given the means to pursue research; and those who are relegated to teaching-only positions. Such division runs contrary to the ideal of the community of scholars and undermines the university as a whole.

The significance of the relationship between teaching and research was established by the nineteenth-century German reformers. Since then many explanations have been offered for the necessity of maintaining both functions within the single institution. Attempts have been made to give the relationship some form of quantification. (Hattie and Marsh, 1996). Unfortunately, such efforts have been forced to rely on indifferent data, with academic performance judged in terms of numbers of publications, and teaching on the information gleaned from student surveys. The results have therefore been largely indeterminate. A more popular justification, and indeed the one adopted by the Magna Charta, is that teaching benefits from close proximity to research, for only then can new discoveries be rapidly incorporated into lectures. Yet in an age of virtually instant transfer of information across the globe such arguments have sometimes failed to convince. In fact, the clearest statement of the importance of this link was produced by the nineteenth-century German reformers who first instituted it.

Humboldt had several reasons for believing that the combination of research and teaching was a critical factor in the excellence of both activities. Teaching did not simply benefit the student, but also the lecturer, who was mentally reinvigorated through constant engagement with new, younger perspectives. Thus quality research could

not take place in the absence of such teaching. An equally pressing reason for the intrinsic importance of this link was the type of training a university actually intended to provide. The student did not attend lectures simply to gather knowledge:

> The universities' objective, as far as method is concerned, is not a "repetition of book learning", but the development of a "school of the art of using one's understanding scientifically" through the medium of the book (Röhrs, 1987: 20).

For the German reformers the role of the university was not simply to teach a body of knowledge, but rather to demonstrate the ways in which knowledge can be used. The lecturers should themselves become the subject of study, as they demonstrate the methods of a working researcher. Moreover, as a consequence of this focus on methods, any topic of research may be profitably undertaken, regardless of its supposed practical benefits, in pursuit of the universities true teaching mission. It was this focus on process rather than on facts that most defined the Humboldtian reforms.

Despite the benefits delineated by Humboldt and his circle of reformers, in modern times teaching and research have increasingly been undertaken by different staff members, due primarily to economic policy decisions. In many universities the bulk of teaching duties are delegated to relatively inexperienced members of the institution. The reason for this is, as one observer cogently reported:

> Salaries and benefits for full-time tenured and tenure track faculty members make up a large proportion of

academic budgets, and, because tenured faculty members cannot be fired without cause or made to retire against their will, administrators usually have little room to manoeuvre with personnel costs. On the other hand, adjunct faculty members, teachers hired for a limited time, and graduate-student teaching assistants can be dropped from the payroll at the stroke of the vice-presidential pen. (Walker, 1998; B6)

Beyond the immoral nature of this exploitative relationship with the university's own graduate and postgraduate students, the result of this tendency has been a significant split in most departments between those staff members who have full time positions including a percentage of time – albeit consistently dwindling – allocated to their own research, and those who endure far more tenuous circumstances. The latter now make up the larger proportion of most departments and are employed in predominantly teaching-only positions for short periods. Any research they are able to undertake is done on their own limited time. The assumption in this equation is that it is to the universities' benefit if the more experienced researchers pursue lucrative funding grants, while teaching is delegated to newer, less experienced staff.

This situation has serious implications for the quality of higher education in the university sector, as has been noted by critics (e.g. Hudson, 2002). Rather than reconsider these accounts, however, my own personal experience would seem to be a reflection of the general situation. In the early 1990s first-year university courses were run by one senior lecturer and two assistant lecturers, all of whom were employed as full-time staff engaged in both teaching and research. Now, a little over a decade later, the view from the other side of the podium is dra-

matically different. Courses with far higher student numbers are managed by a single lecturer and a circle of postgraduate sessional teachers, all of whom are employed for a single semester and a few ad hoc lectures. This situation has a deleterious effect on the university experience not only for the undergraduate receivers of this teaching, but also for the predominantly postgraduate providers.

Again, in my own undergraduate experience of a decade ago, and taking the inevitable effects of nostalgia into account, there was an element of continuity in the provision of university education which is largely lacking today. Students became accustomed to dealing with lecturers not for a semester course, but for the three or four years of their degrees. Student in the twenty-first century confront a very different situation in which their major face-to-face interaction is with a harried postgraduate who will in all likelihood be gone the following semester. Yet for the postgraduate tutor this situation is, if anything, even more disenchanting. The absence of the intermediate positions of assistant lecturer as an interim step makes for bleak prospects on completion of a doctorate. The gap between the doctoral graduate and the accomplished lecturer is a wide one, and yet crossing that chasm has become difficult in the extreme due to the absence of the junior academic positions that might offer the novice lecturer an opportunity to undertake substantial research.

The importance of research lecturers who are also able to pass their skills on to students was recognised by Humboldt in the nineteenth century. Such lecturers were not only capable of offering their students the benefit of a cutting edge knowledge in their subjects, but were also able to demonstrate through their own actions the means

by which reason can interact with the body of existing facts to create new knowledge. The value of this critical relationship cannot easily be measured in financial terms and so has been substantially weakened in the present climate of financial stringency. Senior academics are increasingly directed to concentrate on attracting lucrative research funding, leaving the task of teaching future generations of students to underpaid temporary staff. This is not the environment in which intellectual excellence might be most effectively cultivated.

Supranational scholarship: internationalism or globalisation?

Of all the principles and concepts found in the Magna Charta the expectation that the university will encourage international academic links is the only one that would seem to be encouraged by modern global trends. In fact the supranational aspects of academic life have been extended in ways the signatories in 1988 would not have thought possible. The proliferation of universities across the world seemed to present the opportunity for higher learning to take a leading role in educating not only individuals, but also societies, in cultural tolerance. The university seemed ideally suited to take on this task, with its unique combination of supranational characteristics and the adaptive flexibility to establish links with local national cultures. Unfortunately this does not appear to have been the actual outcome. The passage of students and staff across national borders seems prompted more by the economic dictates of globalisation than the cultural impulses of internationalism. At the same time, the inter-

net revolution has extended the possibilities of education delivery and is set to have dramatic implications for the future of the university.

The Magna Charta envisaged the free passage of students and staff across national borders and to some extent this has occurred. The tradition of travelling scholars and students is an ancient one, initiated by the Sophists, consolidated by the Romans, and central to the medieval university. In recent years the sheer number of travelling students has exceeded any other period in history. Yet the question remains: has this movement occurred due to the desire for enhanced cultural experience or can another cause be deduced? The Australian university system provides an illuminating study in this respect, for while higher education policy in Australia has led the world in few things, the rapid internationalism of the universities has been remarkable. A few statistics underline the extent of this change. In the period 1980-99 the number of international students rose from 8,777 to 84,304. This represents an increase of 1,041 percent over the period. In comparison, the two other major English-language education providers, the United Kingdom and the United States, climbed by 263 percent and 63.5 percent respectively. As Australian universities entered the twenty-first century international students made up 12.6 percent of the total student body; although on some campuses the rate was as high as twenty percent. This compares with the United Kingdom at 10.8 percent and the United States at 3.2 percent. During a similar period some twenty percent of lecturers employed in Australia were educated elsewhere, while in the same category the United Kingdom and the United States shared rates of about five percent (Welch, 2002: 442-3, 448).

These statistics would seem to suggest that Australian campuses have taken on a distinctly multicultural character, but the reasons for this internationalism seem to be only indirectly related to cultural exchange.

> ... the internationalisation of students, staff members, and programs were each underpinned by the extension of market principles. In this sense, it can be argued that, to a substantial extent, the internationalisation of higher education in Australia since the mid-1980s occurred because of globalisation, rather than despite it (Welch, 2002: 468).

Australian universities sought to attract international students not for the cultural benefits this might bring, but for the high fees these students were willing to pay. For this reason too, the hiring of international staff and the establishment of cultural programs have been dismissed by some critics as little more than advertising ploys.

In order to encourage the exchange of university students and staff members the Magna Charta calls for the provision of both organisational and financial assistance to foster international travel. To some extent this has been accomplished, and several such organisations have come into existence. Yet while these groups do attempt to overcome national borders, they have been less successful in circumventing economic zones. In fact the leading organisations dedicated to enhancing personnel exchanges have grown up in tandem with the economic blocs that have divided the world. Thus ERASMUS/SOCRATES focuses its efforts in Europe, NAFTA/FTA is concentrated on the Americas, and the Asia-Pacific region is covered by the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) organisations. Conse-

quently the activities of such groups, while tending to advance international exchange within specific spheres of influence, also confirm with an academic sanction the divisions that have been imposed on the world by the international marketplace (Welch, 2002: 447).

The promise of universities as facilitators of cultural exchange and understanding through the transfer of students and staff has been to some degree at least subverted by the currents of global economics. Yet the same period has seen a rapid growth of internet use among students and potential students. The ability to pass information across national borders without hindrance has raised the exciting possibility of long-distance learning, an education that might be provided irrespective of a student's physical location. Unfortunately the reality of e-learning has been quite different from the educational cornucopia optimistically anticipated. Indeed, despite some innovative uses of electronic communication in teaching, the promise of the internet has yet to be fully realised. Instead online education has been a source of considerable unrest between staff and administrations in some universities, and has also led to widespread community concern, particularly over the difficulty in guaranteeing the quality of online education providers.

In a classic study of the dangers of an over-rapid embrace of new internet technologies, Noble described the initiatives in open learning launched at two institutions: the University of California Los Angeles; and York University in Toronto (Noble, 1998; Welch, 2002). In an attempt to carve a niche for the university in cyberspace, UCLA administrators required all academics in the Arts and Sciences departments to place their lecture materials on open access websites. Then, without prior consulta-

tion, a for-profit company created by the university proceeded to market the material to students online, in clear violation of the copyrights still held by university staff. Further sensational scenes ensued when York University attempted to impose similar obligations on its staff. A company was formed with the intention of marketing the academics' material online for the benefit of the stockholders. The result, however, was a general academic strike that lasted for two months and ultimately prevented the initiative proceeding. Reflecting on these events Welch (2002: 466) concludes:

> ... despite the rhetoric about flexible delivery and more creative pedagogies, the global strategy of electronic marketing of higher education is motivated principally by cost considerations (since, once having mounted the course on the Web, the push is to recoup costs by marketing it as widely as possible).

Happily not all institutions pursue such mercenary aims. The pedagogic possibilities of the internet have been recognised by a number of university organisations. Persell (2002: 74) notes the genuine efforts undertaken at MIT to ensure open access to course materials. Yet even here attempts to offer the widest possible access are hindered by the high costs of maintaining an effective presence on the web.

Another serious problem with online education delivery is the fraught issue of oversight and quality assurance (Welch, 2002: 467). With the web notoriously difficult to police, and 'caveat emptor' being the motto of internet commerce, the student faces considerable difficulty assessing the educational value of material provided. This is of even greater concern when reputable universities form

associations with private companies in order to increase their web access. For example, York University was willing to lend its good name to the online scheme described above for a cash gratuity. In this, as in many other cases, the universities provide the *gravitas* of their reputation but maintain little control over the actual education provided by the internet company. All too easily hopeful students can be defrauded by poorly constructed or misrepresented online courses (Woudhuysen, 2002).

The links universities maintain with each other worldwide constitute one of their most crucial defining characteristics. To remain integrated in the networks of international scholarship, a university must encourage and support the movement of students, staff members, and information across national borders. In recent years there has been a growing level of internationalism among universities due to the greater numbers of students and staff members willing to travel beyond their countries of origin, although whether this is the result of internationalism or globalisation is less clear. Similarly the internet has been recognised as an educational tool of great power. In some cases, however, the promise of this media has been undermined by the corrosive effects of laissez-faire capitalism. Nevertheless, the possibility exists that the full benefit of internet education might yet be realised.

The ability of universities to maintain the principles of the Magna Charta has faced sustained challenge from a changing world. Globalisation and neoliberal economic theories have forced the dramatic restructuring of many social institutions, and the university is prominent among them. As has been observed, the university is an historical construct that developed in the tension between the ideals of higher education and the demands of society; yet

these societal expectations are now forcing a total reap-
praisal of the institution itself. Attempts to systematise
the provision of higher learning have confused the very
function of the university. Institutional autonomy has
been challenged by government intervention, the ideal of
independent research has been undermined at every level
by the funding priorities of outside agencies. In the face
of global forces that seem to be largely outside the con-
trol of universities, or indeed even of national govern-
ments, the future role of the Magna Charta is open to
question. If it is to be anything more than an institutional
seed awaiting a more propitious social climate in which to
flourish anew, the Magna Charta must recognise the need
to adapt, to change in response to social demands, and so
assist the universities as they evolve into new and uncer-
tain times.

**The uncertain future: a (re) interpretation of the
Magna Charta Universitatum**

Every society poses question to its institutions of hi-
gher learning. Every generation asks anew: 'What is the
university? What purpose does it serve?' The Magna
Charta is an attempt to answer those questions. The con-
cepts and principles that form the basis of that answer are
the result of centuries of institutional evolution, and in
combination they present a compelling portrait of a uni-
que entity: the true university. Yet the world continues to
move forward, the same societal forces that forged the
university over time continue to force further develop-
ments. In this new environment the definition provided
by the Magna Charta has come into question. The func-

tions proposed for the true university no longer seem entirely apt to contemporary realities; the fundamental principles have been undermined by social change. Yet modern society continues to pose the question: what is the university? To answer this question the principles of the Magna Charta need to be reviewed and a central theme distilled from them. This theme must be nothing less than a clear statement of the purpose of the university, a purpose which must reflect the past, but also have an ongoing validity. Moreover the universities themselves, as a community of institutions, must endeavour to demonstrate the veracity of such an answer not only through their words but equally through their actions. Only thus can the Magna Charta be successfully reinterpreted in light of the needs of the present, and so continue to guide university development into the future.

Higher learning emerged in the classical world and immediately institutional forms grew up around it; these forms were the unique products of the individual societies in which the phenomena of higher learning was manifested. Classical societies passed on these institutional forms to the medieval world, where new innovations were created. Yet despite the significance of classical achievements in the fields of higher learning the ancient schools are often dismissed from discussions of the university.

> ... the Academy of Athens [and] the Museum of Alexandria... were not true universities. For authentic universities to exist (in the modern meaning of the term), there must be permanent institutions of learning employing regular teaching staffs, offering specific courses of higher studies, administering examinations from time to time, and granting certificates of accomplishment in the form

of generally recognised diplomas or degrees. (Rudy, 1984: 14).

Regardless of the problems with this description of the university – autonomy is omitted – or with the validity of the distinction – for ancient institutions did in fact meet many of these categories – what is remarkable about this classic definition of the university is the emphasis on institutional forms over functions. The university is defined as a product of the Middle Ages by what it was, rather than what it did. A similar assumption pervades much writing on the nature of the university, and the Magna Charta is no exception. While the function of the university is quite nebulously drawn, its institutional characteristics are far more clearly established. Why might this be so?

There is something very attractive about the trajectory of the institutional evolution of the university from the Middle Ages to the early twentieth century. It can be portrayed as a pattern of upwards development, an occasionally bumpy progression from the early establishment of autonomy until the proliferation of universities across the world; it provides a pleasing interpretative unity. Yet this interpretation has also produced serious difficulties for the modern custodians of the university tradition, who find themselves faced with a rapidly changing system of higher education. A focus on institutions rather than functions has placed debilitating limitations on the effective guidance documents such as the Magna Charta can offer in these new, unchartered waters. The very foundations of the traditional university have been called into question by contemporary critics, and time-honoured explanations for the value of fundamental university characteristics are no longer being accepted as self-evident. This

is largely because the justifications used to establish the importance of principles such as those of the Magna Charta can appear complicated or occasionally even contradictory. They are difficult to present to a general population, and indeed to political leaders, increasingly accustomed to sound-byte explanations to complex issues. For the universities to go forward they must establish a clear definition of their function in modern society.

Yet to create a function-based definition of the university is also difficult, for the modern institution has been obliged to take on a number of roles: its function has become a conglomerate of intellectual, nationalistic, or social elements. One solution may be to look further back, before the accrued institutional encrustation had begun to form around the ideals of higher education. Pirsig, a scholar of early education, defined the university in a novel fashion:

> It is that great heritage of rational thought that has been brought down to us through the centuries... The real University is nothing less than the continuing body of reason itself.
>
> In addition to this state of mind, 'reason', there is a legal entity which is unfortunately called the same name but which is quite another thing...
>
> This second university, the legal corporation, cannot teach, does not generate new knowledge or evaluate ideas. It is not the real University at all. It is just... the location at which conditions have been made favourable for the real [university] to exist (quoted in Patterson, 1997: 8).

For Pirsig, the central characteristic of the true university is the pursuit of reason. On closer examination of the

development of higher learning, this single goal does seem to constitute a common preoccupation.

Reason was the touchstone for the rhetoricians and the philosophers of ancient Athens. The celebration of reason was central to the ambitions of the scholars of the Great Library of Alexandria and was taken from the conquered territories by the legions of Rome. When the Romans later developed schools to offer administrative training to govern the empire, it was their hope that by doing so the advantages of a reasoned approach would pacify the world – and they were not disappointed. When the institutions of the ancient world were lost it was reason again that survived to spark in the minds of early medieval scholars as they turned anew to questions of law and faith. Reasonableness was also central to the thinkers of the Renaissance and the scientists of the seventeenth century. The *philosophes* who so roundly castigated the academia of their time pointed first to their unwillingness to behold the impact of reason on the world outside their walls. In short then, the pursuit of reason and the application of it to the store of human knowledge was the central theme of the intellectual effort begun in the sacred groves in Athens, and it was carried down through subsequent western cultures. The different institutional forms that grew around it, of which the university was the most successful, were simply formalisations of that central impulse.

The fundamental importance of the protection and exploitation of reason is also an assumption in the Magna Charta. The teaching and research functions specified by the principles are clear examples of reason in use. The pursuit of the humanist mission identified in the document as the central role of the university is in fact simply

the application of reason to knowledge. It appears then that the major function of the university is intrinsically linked to the role of reason in society. A statement of the fundamental function of the true university must therefore reflect this relationship in a manner that can be presented as a direct answer to society's recurrent questions on the purpose of the university. A possible framing of this answer might be:

> The university is an institution dedicated to maximising the influence of reason in all human societies.

If taken as a central proposition by the Magna Charta this statement would clarify in a direct and easily understood manner the essential mission of the university and underline the benefits this mission offers to the society that supports it. Moreover the overall goal of maximising the influence of reason in society provides a defensible position from which to confront the social forces seeking to undermine the essential character of the university.

The adoption of a tenet identifying the pursuit of reason as the university's prime function would also have important benefits for the future evolution of the Magna Charta itself. Society is always changing, and to adequately guide the development of the university, the Magna Charta must also be capable of change. To do so effectively, however, a standard must be established against which the fundamental principles of university governance can be judged. The tenet of maximising reason in society provides just such a benchmark. An example of this use for the tenet can be found in the problematic tension between vocational and general education. Both forms of learning have great, although slightly dif-

ferent, value in light of the central importance of reason in the university's ultimate mission. Vocational learning provides a means by which reason can be used for the direct betterment of humankind through the provision of practical skills – an outcome in direct accordance with the tenet of maximisation of reason. General education, on the other hand, employs reason primarily for the betterment of individuals; individuals who through their positive actions can then radiate these advantages outward through society. Thus neither form of teaching is contrary to the primary purpose of the university; indeed both vocational and general learning should be pursued in tandem if the university is to function at its fullest potential.

The ongoing success of the university will be reliant on the establishment of a clear statement of intent. The tenet of the maximisation of reason in society has been drawn from the history of the university and has great potential as a tool to assist present day institutions in defining their role to an often sceptical public. The more commonly used, predominantly institutional, approach to defining the university tends to emphasise what institutions expect from society, without providing adequate reasons as to why such expectations must be met. The functional definition, on the other hand, establishes exactly what a university can offer to society as a whole. The tenet of the maximisation of reason in society also has a role in the development of the Magna Charta itself. Fundamental principles of university governance can be judged against the function of maximising the influence of reason. In this way new insights into the essential value – or otherwise – of these principles can be found. The possibilities of this approach are still more apparent when new concepts are to be examined for inclusion among the

fundamental principles. One such possible addition to the principles enshrined in the Magna Charta is the concept that the university should, in conjunction with its research and teaching roles, undertake a wider range of social services. How then might such a modification be assessed?

Projecting reason into society: a job for the Magna Charta?

At present the Magna Charta offers only the most general delineation of the role a university should play in society. Yet this is, in many ways, an accurate reflection of the confusion with which many people, both inside and outside the academy, presently view institutions of higher learning. Although the days of the ivory tower are long gone, there is still a lingering sense among many academics that a distance should be maintained between the true university and society. The academy must overcome such tendencies and engage more directly with society, expanding beyond the traditional roles of educating students or producing carefully researched and tightly argued publications for a learned audience. Increasingly, power and legitimacy lies with the popular opinion of the general public. Thus, in addition to the basic educational and research functions stipulated in the Magna Charta, members of the university must also be encouraged to become more active in civic life. The academy should strive to provide both intellectual leadership for society as a whole, as well as an example of the benefits of a reasoned approach to life. The validity of including a concept of civic service as a fundamental principle of the

Magna Charta can be demonstrated by its potential to forward the university's primary goal of maximising the influence of reason in society.

The origins of the often un-stated scholarly assumption of the need for a discrete distance between the university and wider society seem to lie in the same attitudes that have encouraged the domination of the institutional over the functional definition of the university itself. This attitude is most transparent in the generally accepted belief that the university is a product of the medieval world. The achievement of institutional autonomy has been interpreted as the foundation of the modern university. Yet the medieval establishment of sharply defined borders between the university and society was based on ecclesiastical ideals and the practical needs of vulnerable scholars; such a position seems increasingly out-of-step with the modern world. Moreover, rather than protecting scholarship, this separation leaves the university increasingly open to criticism. Perhaps a more productive paradigm can be found in an earlier period, when higher education was far more closely integrated into society. An ancient observer, Olympiodorus, commented on the novelty of Plato's Academy:

> Plato freed himself from the Pythagoreans' sacred obligation (or oath) about keeping the doors closed... instead he gave everyone the impression of greater concern with civic matters. (quoted in Lynch, 1972: 56-7).

The dawn of higher learning saw a greater institutional engagement with society. Perhaps this, rather than the medieval concept separation, is the more appropriate inspiration for the modern world.

Although the university clearly serves society in many important ways, including the provision of education, ideas, and a number of social and political roles, as an institution it nevertheless remains curiously aloof. The widening of student access to universities has eased this somewhat, yet for the majority of people a university education is still something that happens to somebody else. It has been justly observed:

> The dilemma is that [leading] universities have increased in resources, diversified their activities, and exceeded their expectation. But they have also become, like Kafka's castle, "vast, remote, inaccessible". (Checkoway, 2001: 129).

One method in which the universities might build more profitable links with society as a whole is the idea of civic service. This would imply that universities become more proactive than at present. As Checkoway (2001, 127) laments, 'today's universities are uneven in their commitments, faculty members are unprepared for public roles, and community groups find it difficult to gain access to them.' Of course one important reason for the lack of academic engagement in wider social issues is simple lack of time. University leaders must therefore be encouraged to support this important adjunct to purely academic pursuits. To facilitate this, an expectation of public service could be written into the Magna Charta and thus become a guideline for university administration. For it is important that the academy engage more fully in public debate, not simply as commentators, but rather as participants.

The university is in a position to offer important opinions on the full range of social issues. One notable exam-

ple is the prevailing societal trend toward globalisation. The rise of neoliberal economics has created a large reservoir of confusion and bitterness in societies throughout the world. Yet the universities are uniquely qualified to provide insightful input due to the supranational view they alone can attain. To be most effective, however, such comment must be directed not only to other scholars, but to society as a whole. The academy must direct at least a measure of attention to providing both information and active leadership to wider society. Moreover, the reward system of academic success must recognise the value of such contributions. One central role of the university must be to synthesise complex concepts into information that may be more widely understood. This process should be valued as the skill it undoubtedly is, rather than dismissed as a 'dumbing down' of knowledge.

The most direct justification for including service among the principles of the Magna Charta would be to raise the profile of the university in the public mind. Equally, however, such a principle would have important implications in terms of the proposed tenet of maximising the influence of reason in society. Greater social engagement would provide a clear example to the general public of the benefits yielded by a reasoned engagement with real-world problems and seemingly intractable social issues. Optimally, success in this endeavour would enhance the position of both society and the university itself. By displaying the value of a clearly reasoned position, the academy would not only make a positive social contribution, but would also be able to insinuate itself back into the centre of community consciousness. Instead of being perceived as a monolithic structure dispensing degrees and obscure, little-read publications, the

university should be valued as an intellectual resource of inherent social usefulness and admired as the model of a reasoned approach to life.

In a changing world it is important for universities to be able to articulate clearly what they are and what distinguishes them from other institutions of higher education. The transference of knowledge is without doubt a worthy task, but the true role of the university should be to exercise reason upon that knowledge for creative ends. This primary function must be clarified to the wider public and demonstrated to them both through words and deeds. Only by engaging the support of the majority of society in the university's mission of intellectual and cultural improvement will institutions of higher learning be able to negotiate successfully the problems of the present and develop to their full potential in the future.

Conclusion

This essay seeks to consider the problems of the present in relation to the experience of the past to provide indicators for the future. The challenges facing universities are no longer localised to a particular region or nation, so any effective response to those challenges must also have a global focus. A clear statement of the essential qualities of a university has never had a greater importance than now. In light of the challenges faced by the university, it is crucial to reconsider the relationship between higher learning and society. The university must define – to itself and to society as a whole – exactly what it is, and more importantly, what it can offer to others. A first step in this task is the formulation of a clear state-

ment, or a tenet, of the university's role in society. A consideration of the development of the university suggests that its central function should in fact be the maximisation of the influence of reason in human society. To pursue this function it is the responsibility of the academy to engage with an often sceptical public, and by doing so demonstrate the benefits the university can bestow. A universally accepted statement of institutional characteristics will be crucial in this endeavour, and the Magna Charta can play a decisive role in the future development of the university, but the principles it establishes must be both rigid enough to guide change, but not so inflexible as to become irrelevant to that change. Only thus can the true university – an intellectual and cultural legacy millennia in the making – be adequately safeguarded for those generations yet to come.

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