

# *AUTONOMIA, NOT AUTARKEIA*

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## **1. The Author's Perspective**

The author of this paper believes that he should begin by openly pointing out the circumstances leading to his rather specific approach to the conference theme in two of its aspects. Because of these circumstances, which are briefly explained in the continuation, the paper is not structured as a case study of a particular university but tries to reflect upon the topic of the conference from the perspective of national strategies for higher education development.

In speaking of tradition and the development of higher education within a national framework, we cannot ignore the fact that in Slovenia tradition and development were concentrated upon one center, one university--the University of Ljubljana--for a span of many years. The other Slovene university, the University of Maribor, was founded only 20 years ago, and the formation of new higher education institutions, and thereby a diversification of the higher education sphere, is a matter of recent times. The specific feature of any discussion on particular traditions and development trends of a particular Slovene university is in the fact that it more or less directly overlaps the discussion on national traditions and trends in higher education in Slovenia in general.

The other set of circumstances upon which the author's perspective is based is of a more recent date. Four years ago, the independence of Slovenia and the establishment of an independent state enticed him from the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana to the team of the Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia charged with the legislative reform of the education system as a whole. The nature of participation in such a project requires a consideration of each individual institution and of national strategies as well.

## **2. Academic Traditions and Development of Higher Education**

Slovenia belongs to the circle of the youngest independent national states (1991), yet it can trace academic traditions on its territory back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century when a Jesuit college was founded in Ljubljana. Independent studies of philosophy and theology were offered by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but these programs were transferred to Graz in 1849 due to the Reform. There, lectures in Slovene were soon abolished, and endeavors to re-establish higher education in Ljubljana did not bear results until the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the turbulent period at the end of the First World War, when new borders were being drawn across all of Europe, the University of Ljubljana was founded (1919; *75 Years...*, 1994), the first and for many years the only Slovene university. Its first professors were those who had returned from various regions of the former common state, also bringing with them students from Graz, Vienna,

Prague and elsewhere. At the time of its establishment, the university offered studies at five faculties: Law, Arts, Theology, Technical and the incomplete (two-year) Medical Faculty.

The establishment of the University of Ljubljana went on paralleled the formation of the first Yugoslav state; therefore many judged the act to be more a political than a professional problem. This was true also in later years when every adoption of the budget of the then common state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes gave rise to discussions on the rationality of having three complete universities--Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. These discussions were not primarily academic neither were they limited to the problems of the minister of finance. They concerned the very core of the political life of a multicultural and multiethnic society: the essence was *the right to higher education in one's own language*, with all cultural, social, political and economic consequences brought about with such right and the existence a "national"--our own--university. Despite all the conflicts during the period of the first Yugoslav state and the subsequent four years of invasion during World War II, the University of Ljubljana strengthened its role and functioned virtually without interruption.

After the second World War, the University of Ljubljana began to develop rapidly under entirely new circumstances. In a period characterized by rapid industrial development, the university introduced new courses in addition to the traditional ones. New faculties and other forms of higher education institutions (for example, colleges, which provided short courses in the fields of economy, health, education, public administration, etc.) were founded. The number of students--full-time as well as part-time--increased, and the first forms of off-campus studies appeared; they were important especially for rather distant regions of the country. Despite repeated reorganizations of the existing faculties, the University of Ljubljana remained almost the only complete institution of higher education in Slovenia; at the time, only the Faculty of Theology was not part of it.

Until the 1960s, in general an important turning point in the modern history of higher education, the Slovenian higher education system had only one university, which developed the full complex of activities, in other systems, generally developed by a complement of universities or other institutions of higher education. Therefore, it is not surprising that the university was referred to in everyday speech as a singular national entity, something like the Academy of Sciences or Parliament. Though the establishment of the "our own" university was of utmost importance for the national identity and existence, the functioning of a single university posed a number of problems at the level of the national higher education system. For example, in such circumstances of "mononuclear system of higher education" (*Higher Education...*, 1995, p. 103) one could speak of the lack of academic competition, of a monopoly and of a danger to the quality of academic performance. From the perspective of a small national system of higher education, however, such a situation can also be interpreted as a consequence of efforts to maintain quality and international standards (international cooperation as well), which has obviously been reached in the case of Ljubljana University: "We have only one university but it is a good one." Both arguments should be taken into account in seeking to understand the trends in the structure of a small national system of higher education. This is all the more important for the fact that, since the end of the 1960s, Slovenia, like other countries, has witnessed extensive development of higher education and new developmental challenges.

It is true that, for seventy years, the University of Ljubljana developed as one of the Yugoslav universities as well and preserved traditional links with other European universities. But relations with other Yugoslav universities did not substantially influence higher education in Slovenia, because of the specific situation in the decentralized system of the second (post-World War II) Yugoslavia and traditional differences in language and culture, while cooperation with foreign universities was only partly limited by the political situation and the general spirit of the times. Probably more than by relations with the universities, the traditional structure of Slovenian higher education was changed by the establishment of a second university in Slovenia, the University of Maribor. Its establishment (1975) followed a decade of

preparations, in particular the development of individual institutions of higher education, and was closely related to the intensive industrial development of northeastern Slovenia as well as the political debate over polycentric national development.

The establishment of the second university first of all took away the touch of national exclusivity from the formerly unique university, and thereby offered premises for a thoroughly structured national system of higher education. Around the middle of the sixties, the number of students began to increase sharply; initiatives for new academic disciplines and studies were formed and the university life started to exert a more significant influence upon general social processes. The structuring of the national higher education system also brought about a number of questions not discussed until then, especially those concerning the quality of higher education and its assessment, the "critical mass" needed for the establishment of a university, inter-university co-operation and student mobility at the national level, and the relation of the university to the issues of national development, etc. These questions might have contributed to fruitful reflections, had they not faced the almost total formalization and marginalization of the university's role at that time.

The second Slovene university was created at a time when there existed no university in the classical sense, a result of contemporary changes in the legal regulation of higher education. The specific decentralized model, with which the so-called *socialist self-management system* regulated the legal status of economic enterprises, also interfered with the status of institutions of higher education. Faculties, art academies and two- or four-year colleges became independent legal entities, which were, on the other hand, obliged to associate to form a university. Thus, in the mid-1970s, the university became a "self-managing community" of rather disintegrated higher education institutions, and not specifically an academic institution. This change reflected a period of defeat for reformist, as well as for democratic and liberal movements, from the late 1960s and early 1970s, movements which recruited from the university in particular.

### **3. The Turbulent Eighties: the Role of (Higher) Education**

In a broader historical context, the eighties were a highly important era for Slovenia, since that was a period when fundamental ideas and major agents of social and political changes developed progressively. Anybody should understand that such global changes have an ultimate impact on social subsystems such as education. It should be stressed, however, that in this case (higher) education was not merely a passive area marked from the outside by tectonic movements in the society in general, but that specific political demands in the field of the education system were one of the constituent parts of the social context of the eighties. (Zgaga, 1992.)

The transition from the sixties to the seventies was, in the Yugoslavia of that time, accompanied by reformist and liberal tendencies obvious in politics and economy ("socialist market economy"), as well as in the cultural and intellectual life which demanded the right to criticism and freedom of creativity originating mainly at universities and reinforced by the student movement, but enjoying a strong support of professors as well. When, in the mid-seventies, the regime succeeded in stabilizing the situation with the aid of a number of political reforms and amendments to the Constitution then in force (establishing a federation of "republican states," federation presidency, self-management of "*associated labor*", etc.), the time was ripe for a reform of education as a whole. At the end of the seventies, the project of the so-called *career-oriented education* was ready, which could not be reduced to a mere tendency to discipline the universities and strengthen the ideological function of education, since it deeply affected the entire education system. One of the project's fundamental principles was a direct linking of education to ("associated") labor ("school as a factory"). The federation

left the details of legislation in the field of education to the republics. The adoption of the new legislation (1980) on such conceptual foundations resulted in a higher level of regulation of higher education in conjunction with secondary education (together as “career-oriented education”), where the difference between general and vocational education ceased to exist. Without regard to the relative nature of previous circumstances, the university lost considerable autonomy when a previous law for higher education ceased to be effective. Another far-reaching change was the concurrent abolishment of grammar schools (*gymnasia*) as traditional institutions of general secondary education preparing students for university studies. Therefore, the first organized protests and actions especially against the abolishment of *gymnasia* took place in Slovenia as early as the first half of the eighties.

Thus, with the *Career-oriented Education Act* (1980), the university was deprived of a number of autonomous capacities, especially the right to approve its study programs and determine personnel policies. The idea of educating concurrently for employment and further studies did not contribute either to the quality or the efficiency of studies or its modernization. A consequence of the concept of the career-oriented education--in connection with “eternal budgetary problems”--was also a regulation of higher education financing which systematically divided funding of “pedagogical” expenses from research expenses; individual faculties competed on their own, more-or-less successfully, for the funding of the latter with non-university institutions, mostly institutes, not “burdened” by students. Perhaps the most fatal consequences were those resulting from the status of higher education institutions. Analogously to the economic and legal organization of so-called *associated labor*, basic legal entities in higher education were faculties, art academies and schools and not the university; the latter played merely the role of some sort of meta-institution, their obligatory association, which had no serious academic powers, however. Such disintegration of the academic sphere posed a major obstacle to academic cooperation amongst various faculties, provoked differences in academic standards of higher education institutions, impeded transfers among study programs and reduced the rationality of the entire higher education system.

The criticism of circumstances in higher education was linked to the criticism of secondary education, and the discussion of the position of education in national strategies took place as a part of broader and broader democratic endeavors. After a proposal for amendments to the *Career-oriented Education Act* was formed finally as a consequence of numerous criticisms in the second half of the 80's, the universities submitted in April 1988 a request to pass a special university education act. In May 1988, the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia passed a conclusion adopting this request and, at the same time, proposed that the universities prepare the expert framework for that special act in cooperation with the government of that time, an action, which would introduce the act to the Assembly. In 1989, the amended version of the *Career-oriented Education Act* was adopted, which took into account some of the demands formed by that time. However, the discussion of possible systemic solutions continued at universities.

With the adoption of the amended version of the *Career-oriented Education Act*, a majority of the acute problems of that time was solved. For example, the powers of the management councils and the academic councils of higher education institutions were determined anew; the autonomous and integrating role of universities in designing teaching and research activities and in the procedure of awarding faculty titles was set forth. Yet, these changes could not terminate the status and organization of universities which followed the model of the socialist self-managed economy required by the *Associated Labor Act* already obsolete at that time. Universities were still merely associations of heterogeneous institutions (faculties, academies, two and four-year colleges), differing in standards, financing, activities and other elements of organization. Universities as associations of institutions were compulsory but, in reality, they remained undefined communities without their proper original field of endeavour.

After the parliament of the republic passed a decision (1988) that a new Higher Education Bill should be prepared by the universities themselves, the discussion was temporarily halted by the

tumultuous events at the transition into the nineties. During that period, political parties were legalized, while regular elections to parliament were carried out on the basis of the former legislation. Thus, in the spring of 1990, a peaceful change in political power occurred; at the same time, relations in the federation reached a boiling point, which announced a dissolution of the existing state which could not be avoided. Under such circumstances, it was not possible to carry on normal work for the preparation of new legislation. During this period, however, intense efforts were put into drafting a new Slovene Constitution; it was adopted at the end of 1991 following the turbulent summer events. The following three articles are especially important for the legal status of universities:

Article 57: "Education shall be free.[...] The state shall provide the opportunity for all citizens to obtain a proper education." Article 58: "State universities and other institutions of higher education shall be autonomous. The founding of these institutions shall be regulated by statute." Article 59: "Scientific and artistic endeavor shall be free." (*Constitution...*, 1993.)

At the beginning of May 1991, a committee was appointed in order to prepare a Higher Education Bill. It consisted of the representatives of universities, students, university staff trade unions and the government. This task was completed in May 1992, at the time of dissolution of the first parliamentary coalition, with a working version of the Bill. In June--after the second Government after elections of 1990 was formed--the final coordination procedure, including government ministries, both universities, their member institutions and student unions, began. In November 1992, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia determined the final wording of the Bill and introduced it in the Assembly for debate and adoption. At the same time Slovenia joined the Council of Europe's *Legislative Reform Programme (LRP)* for higher education. (*Project...*, 1993.) The National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia passed the *Higher Education Act (HEA)*; see *Higher Education...*, 1995) at its 1993 December session.

#### **4. Higher Education Act (HEA), its Principles and Basic Solutions**

**4.1.** In the concluding phase of the preparation of new legal solutions, primarily the following ***basic elements of regulation and stabilization of the higher education system*** were stressed:

- autonomy of universities and other institutions of higher education and their de-regulation (important especially as a final elimination of the surviving features of career-oriented education, which subsumed also higher education within the common basis);
- legal reorganization of the university from a loose association into a modern integrated university;
- delineation of matters in the state control from the academic self-government and the formation of a special "buffer body" to discuss strategic questions concerning higher education in the country (Council for Higher Education);
- formation of a democratic and self-organized academic community with fixed professional standards, open to the needs of its immediate economic, cultural and other environments;
- higher education development strategies determined by a master plan;
- increased accessibility to higher education studies and an increased level of population with higher education degrees;
- systematic integration of teaching and research and funding of material costs for scientific and art activities of higher education teaching faculty;
- quality control and assurance of higher education activities;
- assurance of competition and plurality in higher education activities in general and the possibility of establishing private higher education institutions;
- encouragement of new study programs, the establishment of new higher education institutions, and a possibility for multiple centers of higher education in the future. (*White Paper*, 1996.)

**4.2.** Regarding the problems of the autonomy, attention should be drawn to the following items among the *basic solutions introduced by HEA (White Paper, 1996)*:

*Institutions of higher education.* HEA defines universities, faculties, art academies and professional higher education institutions (similar to *Fachhochschule*) as higher education institutions. Their names are protected by law. Universities guarantee academic excellence, the development of science, professions and art and the transfer of knowledge in many fields and disciplines of science and art, in the educational process performed by faculties, academies of art and professional higher education institutions.

*A university as a legal entity.* Faculties, art academies and possibly professional higher education institutions and other institutions (libraries, student residence halls, etc.) are established within the university as its members. The notion of “member” was explained at the occasion of adopting the act as a “historical compromise” at the transition from a disintegrated “association of members” to an integrated university. During the transitional period, members still retain some features of a legal entity with regard to activities outside the master plan for higher education. Faculties and academies of art founded by the state may exist only within a university. Private faculties and academies of art can be founded as free-standing institutions of higher education, as well. The same is true for professional institutions of higher education, and the founder does not matter. Free-standing institutions of higher education and other institutions may join a university as affiliated members in accordance with the charter and the constitution of the university.

*Establishment.* A higher education institution may be established when the fields of study and research and art disciplines to be developed by it are determined and when the teaching and research faculty and faculty assistants, suitable premises and equipment needed to carry out the program are available. Prior to the adoption of the charter of a higher education institution, the founder must obtain a judgement of the Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia.

*Bodies.* HEA sets forth the following bodies of higher education institutions: rector and dean, senate, administrative board, student council. The Senate is the highest academic body, while the administrative board is the governing body. The rector manages, acts on behalf of and represents the university; upon a nomination by a senate of a member institution, he appoints the dean of this member. The details concerning the bodies (their tasks, powers, number of members, manner of their election, etc.) are regulated autonomously by the respective constitutions of higher education institutions.

*Study and research programs.* Higher education institutions carry out accredited and non-accredited study programs. They can begin to carry out accredited (state approved) study programs after they have been adopted by their senates and when other requirements have been fulfilled. Before a study program is adopted, the senate of the university member should obtain the approval of the university senate for it, and the senate of a free-standing higher education institution needs the approval of the Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia. On the basis of especially defined criteria, the Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia forms a judgement on every new study program prior to its pre-enrollment announcement. Higher education institutions performing public service carry out scientific, research, and art activities in accordance with the program adopted and announced by the senate, according to the procedure determined for the adoption of study programs. Basic and applied research and development and other projects are carried out by higher education institutions in accordance with the law regulating research.

*Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia.* HEA has introduced a special “buffer body” to discuss major professional issues in the field of higher education: the Council for Higher Education appointed by the Government. The Council consists of 15 members (governmental as well as academic representatives) and is a special consultative body adjunct

to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. It delivers expert opinions on the strategic and developmental issues of higher education, its standards and quality, on the establishment of new institutions and the introduction of new study programs, and it also assesses whether the educational standards of free-standing higher education institutions are at the same level with others. The Council has some direct powers: it approves study programs of free-standing higher education institutions and the award of titles to faculty and faculty assistants at those institutions.

*Funding.* Higher education institutions are funded from the budget of the Republic of Slovenia, tuition and other fees, payments for services, endowments, legacies, donations and other sources. For public services, the Republic of Slovenia provides financial resources for salaries and material costs, for acquisition and depreciation of real property and equipment, for extracurricular activities for students and other tasks. Standards for executing higher education activities are stipulated by the master plan for higher education; the standards for master plan funding are adopted by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. Job classifications of public higher education institutions are determined by the dean or the rector in accordance with the law and upon the approval by the minister having jurisdiction over higher education. Tuition fees for state-approved undergraduate programs performed as public service (full-time studies) cannot be charged to Slovene nationals as long as they are not carried out at a level above the standards stipulated by the master plan.

*Control.* Control over conduct of business in accordance with the law and the fulfillment of requirements for performing higher education activities is exercised by the ministry having jurisdiction over higher education, in compliance with special regulations. Control of usage of resources for public service in accordance with designated purposes is carried out in accordance with special regulations. The quality and effectiveness of work of higher education institutions is monitored and assessed by a common Quality Assessment Commission founded by higher education institutions in the Republic of Slovenia.

**4.3. *The autonomy of higher education institutions*** is expressly defined in one of the first articles (Article 6) of HEA:

“Institutions of higher education shall base their actions on the principles of autonomy, which ensures them primarily the right to:

- freedom of research, artistic creativity and transfer of knowledge,
- independent regulation of their internal organization and operations by their constitution in accordance with the law,
- adopt criteria for awarding titles to teaching and research faculty and faculty assistants,
- award titles to teaching and research faculty and faculty assistants,
- select faculty members to be appointed,
- prepare and adopt study and research programs, determine the study rules and the manner and terms of student examinations,
- award professional, academic and scientific titles in compliance with the law and award honorary doctorates and the title of professor emeritus,
- elect, appoint and remove their governing bodies in accordance with their constitution and other regulations,
- decide upon the forms of cooperation with other organizations,
- manage their property in accordance with the purpose for which it was acquired.” (*Higher Education...*, 1995.)

## 5. Autonomy and the Pains of Implementation

HEA stipulated a two-year transitional period for its implementation. This period was finished at the end of 1995, so that now it is possible to summarize the first results. A year after the adoption of HEA, the status of both universities was transformed by a special decree of the National Assembly (December 1994); by the middle of 1995, the universities drafted and passed their constitutions as well. On the basis of the new legislation, seven smaller, mainly private, free-standing institutions of higher education have been accredited so far. One of them is an affiliated member of the University of Ljubljana.

The legislative reform of higher education and especially the adoption of new constitutions, which laid entirely new foundations for the operation of the universities in general and especially the relations with the so-called “members”, turned the course of the academic life upside down. (*Legislative Reform...*, 1995.) In this process, the problems of autonomy were manifoldly exposed. If during the period of forming the conceptual framework for the new law the notion of autonomy was predominantly linked to academic autonomy, those problems now include also the topics of administrative and financial autonomy.

Former circumstances, under which the freedom of research and teaching was not a self-understood principle and under which a political influence upon the solutions of academic matters did not take the course of carefully concealed lobbying, but was direct and openly established as a system, created very specific experiences at universities. From the perspective of those experiences, the problem of university autonomy was perceived as and reduced to the problem of the relationship between *the university* and *the state*.

There was yet another moment in the background of such perception especially at the end of the eighties: in the ever-increasing democratization process of that time, all key social questions crystallized in the definition of the relationship between *the civil society* and *the state*. In the time immediately preceding the first democratic elections, this definition risked a purely romantic temptation, verging on the metaphysics of good and evil: the experience of a certain historical form of the state and the clashes with it created the impression of a state as an intrinsically totalitarian entity, and an internally homogeneous civil society as an intrinsically democratic and liberal entity. Such an impression quickly disappeared with the elimination of the one-party state. A gradual segmentation of civil society and an experience of conflicts within it (e.g., the abortion question during the adoption of the new *Constitution*; in its most extreme form the experience of *bellum omnium contra omnes* in not so distant parts of the once common state) were important contributions to the understanding of the concept of the legal state.

Analogously to the process of a changed understanding of the relationship between the state and civil society, the internal relationships at the university were determined. During the adoption of the *Constitution of the University of Ljubljana*, the majority of discussions referred to the composition of the university senate. HEA stipulates that the senate should be composed in such a manner “that all scientific, art and professional disciplines [be] equally represented” (Article 21), but the definition of the autonomy permits the universities an “independent regulation of their internal organization” (Article 6). Problems were caused mainly by the fact that, in former decades, walls of the university “members” fortified so much that the definition of scientific disciplines became a matter of the internal (re)distribution of power. Primarily, some disciplines were simultaneously developed by several faculties, whereby their protagonists often developed rival relationships. Instead of defining the fundamental disciplines, which should have been fostered by the newly integrated university and which would have offered a basis for the structuring of academic responsibilities and decision-making, the conservative concept granting one senate seat to each “member institution” prevailed in drafting the university constitution. (*Constitution...*, 1995.) A consequence of such a solution is that, with the new constitution, technical disciplines were given the majority of votes in the

university senate, which was also a result of some the former “free-standing” faculties splitting into several new ones during the reorganization of the University, not the case with traditional faculties. The experience is painful and precious at the same time: implementation of academic autonomy is not a discovery of an *El Dorado*; on the contrary, it opens new questions, and it is quite normal that one of them be a question of the internal democratic organization of higher education institutions.

Undoubtedly, one should look for the reasons for such an asymmetrical structure of power in the difficult *process of integrating scattered and isolated academic atoms*. This process is as much more difficult inasmuch as their positions in the power net of the former organization differed. This concerns not only the democratic relationships amongst the “members”, but also the rest of the democratic academic atmosphere in which students and other staff participate; and also those relations which, in some perfect system of external control, if we may use a simple expression, should not exist amongst scholars at all: in such cases, “dirty business” is left to the spheres outside academe. The realization of autonomy, however, is not reduced to a simple question of democracy at the university but is a more complex process. It includes a whole range of problems anterior to modern European democracies: e.g., the discourses condensed by Kant in the title *Streit der Fakultaeten* and some even subtler topics. One of the serious topics of academic autonomy in hundreds of years of history of higher education has been, for example, also the problem of the *individual’s autonomy in research and teaching*. This problem cannot be reduced to a mere relationship between the state and the individual, although there is a recent and broad experience confirming the aforesaid. When a university is or becomes an autonomous institution, the problem of free individual scientific and artistic endeavor is not automatically solved; it is probably not until then that it is raised in a sensible way.

## **6. The University, the State and the Civil Society**

If, on one hand, a gradual implementation of autonomy, in reality put the university--which, as an academic community experienced excessive external control--to its *internal* test, its autonomy is also undeniably determined *outwardly*, yet not only in relationship with state. The experience of other circumstances and a different institutional status are probably the very reasons that at present the problem of autonomy as an internal test is underestimated at the university, while the external dimension is interpreted as depending on the relationship between civil society and the state, which, by its very definition, always regulates too much and--depending on the point of view--saves or spends too much.

Recently, an academic representative wrote in a paper that “the university personifies the civil society.” In its context, the wording is unusually reminiscent of the notion of the *historical avant-garde* once used. Regardless of a greater or lesser popularity periodically enjoyed by the university in public, it is my opinion that such estimation is either exaggerated or used to replace what two decades ago sociologists called *independent* or *critical intelligentsia*. The discussion of the external dimension of *university autonomy* includes not only the relationship to the *state*--that is, the regulation of the legal system and funding--but also to *civil society*, its heterogeneous needs, value orientations, individual and group aspirations, etc. And this relationship is not necessarily always harmonious.

The changed social circumstances after 1990 created tension and instability in the field of education. It seems that educational ambitions changed a great deal and that, in the so-called transition period, especially higher education even augmented its otherwise rather important role as social promoter. No less important a factor of the demand for study places at universities is the unemployment of the youth. This is the very point where the relationship between the university and the civil society is put to the test. Responsibilities grow with the acquisition of

power. The fact is that the interest of the young for university studies is growing extremely rapidly: in Slovenia, the number of students has increased by 25% in the five years of its independence. In comparison with the number of study places at universities, dramatically (although not sufficiently) increased, the structure of places for freshmen in specific disciplines is changing much too slowly, while new offerings have been an exception rather than a rule. While the places for engineering studies remain vacant, a rigorous *numerus clausus* is in force in the social sciences and the humanities. Changes in student counseling and active care for a successful course of studies and advancement at the university are also very slow. Faculties have practically done away with special yearly reports on the efficiency of studies, obligatory under former legislation, though often practiced in a purely formal way. Although HEA authorizes institutions of higher education themselves to found the Quality Assessment Commission, this step has not yet been implemented. And last but not least is the fact that sooner or later, global changes in a society always reveal a need for changes in hierarchy and the relationships within individual institutions, and thus also at universities. Reform of the university is not only an administrative task; it strikes upon the broad realm of *academic culture*.

If the state abdicates the right to be involved in the decision-making as to faculty, research and teaching, the problem of autonomy by its very definition moves from the academic to financial and administrative questions connected therewith. A university, and especially a state university, operating under the historical conditions of a *country in transition*, is depending on public funds and the state budget, to the highest degree. *Depending*--the term itself is provocative enough. Financial dependence is in the last instance only another term for external control. But on the other hand, a no less provocative echo is possible: *accountability* for public funds. Probably no government could endure even in much more stable conditions than are those existing in the countries in transition, if it gave up the control of general educational, social, employment, fiscal and other effects of higher education on the national scale.

But in modern political and civilized circumstances, *external control* has its *strict limits*, differentiating a modern government from absolutism. All such boundaries are, in a way, defined by *autonomy*: the autonomy of the individual, human rights, etc. One of those boundaries is also the autonomy of communities such as a university. I suggest, however, that it be carefully separated from the *autarchy* as an outmoded reflex to an outmoded absolutism.

The slogan "*Autonomy for quality*" has oft been heard in the past years. Indeed, the issue of quality is probably becoming the central question of higher education, determining not only its relation to the state and the rest of civil society, but also the internal structuring. (*Pilot Project...*, 1994.) The golden mean discussed here is determined by the common point and the balance between these two notions. A cancellation and limitation of external control is not a politically cunning retreat, but a necessity of more effective results. From this aspect, I understand the autonomy of universities to be an (inter)national and not only an academic strategy. The university is a specific, yet a highly important segment, of all modern societies, which is vitally endangered by purely external control but which, despite its specific position, cannot afford a fall into *autarkeia*, a self-sufficient scientific economy closed from outer society. Indeed, *autonomia* as a self-governing scientific and educational community is a weak-but the only true guarantee of social and cultural prosperity of modern societies.

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