



## The Haunting Ghost Of Heidegger On Campus

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**Abstract:** The research universities have become an arm of the nation-state since the first half of the twentieth century. In his brief tenure as chancellor of Freiburg, Heidegger is the first figure in paving the way for higher education to serve the narrow national interests of the state. Nonetheless, Heidegger's case is minuscule compared with the massive war crimes of James B. Conant, the President of Harvard. This essay throws light on the collapse of the idea of the university in recent decades.

Henry Kissinger once said that "University politics are vicious, precisely because the stakes are so small." One may be tempted to add that the stakes are great and the viciousness even greater when University politics become an arm of the national government.

One such example occurred at the onset of Adolf Hitler's accession to the Chancellery in 1933 when all aspects of the university life swiftly began to be seized and swayed by the National Socialist regime. In this fateful year Martin Heidegger had his own accession to the chancellery at Freiburg. His May 28 rectorial inauguration, as reported by the press, was a stately ceremonial, with the grand orchestra playing Brahms' "Academic Festival Overture," with the attending SA storm troopers—the first-time presence of a uniformed paramilitary force at a university campus in German history. This "luster and impressive scene" reached a climactic height by Heidegger's "very important speech on 'The Self-Assertion of the German Universities.'"<sup>1</sup>

Heidegger, for the next nine months of his tenure as the Freiburg Chancellor, was delivering speeches on a new set of rules and policies at different campuses as far as Heidelberg, Kiel and Leipzig, writing partisan articles to recruit students to join labor camps, and addressing

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speeches, short articles, and the praising German editorials on him. He never wrote a book with such title, nor wished himself to be called an existentialist. Also noteworthy is that this inauguration occurred exactly twenty-one days after his official entry to the Party (*Der Alemanne*, May 3, 1933; *ibid.* p. 13, and *Breisgauer Zeitung*, May 4, 1933; *ibid.* 57) — the brief period that became a part of his postwar apologetic attempts to distance from National Socialism, claiming that for assuming the rectorate he had no choice but to first become a member of the NSDAP. This is in spite of his remaining a dues paying member to the end of the war in 1945. As to why he had desired to become a rector in the first place, he had other excuses. For example, Martin Heidegger, "Tatsachen und Gedanken," in *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität/Das Rektorat 1933/34 - Tatsachen und Gedanken* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), translated by Lisa Harris as "The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts," *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*, (New York, New York, Paragon House, 1990), pp. 15-32. The references to this English translation are cited in this essay in parenthetical as *MHNS* followed by page number.

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<sup>1</sup> *Der Alemanne*, May 28, in Martin Heidegger, *German Existentialism*, D. D. Runes, ed. & tr. (New York, New York: The Wilson Library, 1969) pp. 16-17. It is to be noted that this slim volume is a collection of some of Heidegger's

crowds of workers with propaganda, thereby throwing more firewood into the raging altar of National Socialism.<sup>2</sup>

On Heidegger's Heidelberg speech Karl Jaspers wrote:

It was a masterly lecture as to form; as to content it was a program for the National Socialist renewal of the universities. He demanded a total transformation of the intellectual institutions. . . . Heidegger expressed anger about many facets of university life, even about high salaries. He was given a tremendous ovation by the students and by a few professors. I was sitting at one end of the first row, with my legs completely stretched out, my hands in my pockets; I did not budge.<sup>3</sup>

Jaspers' posturing, as he remembers, reflects not only the deep resentment he had felt against the ideology of what that podium represented, but also a sense of helplessness toward the inevitable Nazification of the entire landscape. The cruel irony was that the birthplace of the Modern University was about to be its own deathbed—a complete rejection of the idea of Wilhelm von Humboldt.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The Heidelberg student labor service speech: *Heidelberger Neueste Nachrichten*, July 1, 1933; the November 11, 1933 Leipzig address to German professors: *Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund*, Dresden, 1933; speech to the Freiburg student body: *Freiburger Studentenzeitung*, June 20, November 3, 1933, January 23 1934; address to the laborers: *Der Alemanne*, February 1, 1934—to mention a few of his activities in this period.

<sup>3</sup> "Philosophical Autobiography," *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, Paul Arthur Schlipp, ed. (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1981), p. 75/8. It should be noted that at the press time of the first edition of this collection in 1957 Jaspers requested that the Heidegger part of this autobiography be published only after Heidegger's death, which occurred in 1976—seven years after Jaspers' death.

<sup>4</sup> Under the influence of the great Prussian theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher's liberal democratic ideas, Humboldt stressed academic freedom, the importance of laboratories, small seminars and one-on-one tutorials. By "academic freedom," Humboldt was interested in more than "free speech." Rather, it was imperative to him to extend liberal education to include granting freedom to students in taking seminars according to their personal interests taught by the professors they liked, as well as adding and withdrawing from the classes in accordance with their personal needs and scheduling conveniences—beside other things nowadays taken for granted in the universities all over the world. It is to be noted that Wilhelm Humboldt (1767-1835) was a renowned philologist, a liberal political philosopher, the author of two-dozen books, and the Education Minister of Prussia. His younger brother, Alexander (1769-1859), was also very talented and active, known for his travels as an explorer, geographer, and naturalist.

This essay has no claim of having an especial insight into the moral truth in judging Heidegger's misconduct. The blames, if enough has not been said already, are to be left to the moralists. Nor am I called upon to describe or evaluate the moral standing of the University, though such a task would undoubtedly be a noble undertaking. At contention here is something of a different order: it is about a complete disregard for the cosmopolitanism of the modern university, whose gross and brazen violation by the participating academicians in Germany and elsewhere makes Heidegger's case a cruel joke. As such, criticizing Heidegger in this regard is not so much of a challenge. His case is not the sole concern here, since he is not alone. There have been indeed numerous university researchers and administrators who, for more than a century, have participated in the transformation of this cosmopolis into a political and military arm of their respective national government. What makes this problem more complicated is that pacifism, as an apparent opponent of militarism, can be a useful tool for the Great Powers to maintain their hegemonies by opposing, under the pretext of peace, the challengers of the status quo, identifying their geographical locations as "the trouble spots," and even attacking them in the name of international order and security. While militarism and pacifism remains an odd couple on the global stage, many of these faculty members have not been even pacifistic enough to be caught in this paradox.

It is, of course, naïve to expect the University to be an isolated utopia. The crisis of the University is only a symptom in the larger landscape of an era in which philosophy, religion, politics, and the arts have lost their strict standards—an unprecedented phenomenon exclusive to our time. Of course, disagreements and conflicts can open new ways and in the long run be proven constructive. But the present crisis is of a different kind. The collapsing age-old Idea of Universal Truth (especially in the more advanced Western society) is playing a pivotal role in rendering the term, University, meaningless. The withering of the universal principle of unification, which has pledged a significant role for the feeling of security in the individual in the face of inevitable death, and in the human communities on the wide and round face of the earth, is not just a fascinating story for some existentialists and poststructuralists (or late structuralists) to entertain. It is important to ask whether the Universal Truth was only a useful deception in the collective unconscious of humanity. Has this Truth—like everything else in the

world—had a life of its own and is now passing away? And if so, what would its effect be on the very meaning as well as the actual function of the University?

The central question with which this essay struggles is the meaning and function of the University in this intellectually troubled time, the time that Heidegger, as the rector of a venerable university, allowed his nationalistic will—which is always very partial—to be unleashed on the graveyard of the once immortalized god: the Universal Truth. Heidegger's brazen freedom to do what he did reminds me of Zarathustra's shadow, that before its self-liberation by walking away from him, thus spake: "Nothing is true, all is permitted!"<sup>5</sup> This is a sign of the time, "say they." But did Heidegger, by joining millions of other Germans, not make himself as one of the "they"?

The case of Heidegger is crucial because, as a post-Nietzschean philosopher, he was better equipped to see the coming of this age than all those philosophically impaired professors of chemistry, physics and biology who developed, and are still researching and improving, the most lethal weapons of mass extinction in the university laboratories. Heidegger had the knowledge and the will to manipulate, design and redesign terms and thoughts to fit his brand new rectorial robe. The political cause he once fought for, together with his own personal *Dasein* and its Care, are now gone for good, albeit that the "Dasein" and "Care" of his philosophy are expected to stay for a long time. However, the nihilistic choke-weeds, that are still growing on the campus lawns of research universities, in the West as well as in the East, have reached an unprecedented lethality. Heidegger is not the cause, but he was, sadly enough, an involuntary soothsayer of what was coming, while his silent ghost is now haunting many college seminars, laboratories and administrations—the on-going event that makes Heidegger's speeches effectively miniscule. Many of these scientists are, unlike Heidegger, not even nationalistic. They are playing with toys for the simple reason that the toys are there to play with! In the Nietzschean sense, these are "the gay scientists." They are true nihilists. To throw light on the crisis concerning the concept and goal of the University, however difficult it might, seems to be a worthy undertaking. So, let this be the inquiry of this essay.

<sup>5</sup> "Nichts ist wahr, alles ist erlaubt" *Also sprach Zarathustra*, 4 "Der Schatten" (The Shadow)

To start with, the meaning of the University is defined by its task: attaining the Truth. "Truth" means the Universal Truth—that single, tenuous entity whose attainment has been of extreme interest since prehistoric times, identified with the Oneness of the Sun. Of immediate interest to this essay is the relation of the University to the Universal Truth. The meaning and the task of the University are characterized in Jaspers' *Die Idee der Universität* as "a community of scholars and students involved in the task of seeking the Truth" (*IU* 9).<sup>6</sup> Here "the Truth" (*die Wahrheit*) refers to that objective, immutable, Universal entity, which is the pinnacle and ultimate aim of knowing. To provide a similar definition: "the University is an institution of higher learning aimed at the acquisition and transmission of the Universal Truth." This is the Truth whose attainment is Knowledge, properly so-called. This is what Plato meant and struggled to attain through the mouth of his frustrated and unsatisfied Socrates. The centrality of the Universal Truth in defining the University, though etymologically sound, leads to some fundamental questions. Does Jaspers believe that this Truth actually exists? Or, should it exist only nominally as an artificial glue to unify and coordinate all the fragmented disciplines/departments on campus? But why should the scientific fields care for this grand old idea insofar as their researches, experimentations, and instructions proceed without acknowledging or questioning it? True, that is not their job. They may care, or couldn't care less. This venerable Truth is the referent for, say, a metaphysical-epistemologist with a seemingly never-ending intentionality. It is the ultimate phenomenon to attain, particularly for traditional philosophers. It should also be of interest to any philosophically inclined university chancellor whose occupation requires seeing the whole campus as a single totality.

The University's quest for attainment of the objective Truth in Jaspers' booklet seems to be a

<sup>6</sup> Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1923. With a slight difference: Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 1946. Some revision with K. Rossmann (Berlin, Göttingen, Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 1961). The English version: *The Idea of the University*, K.W. Deutsch (ed.), H. A. T. Reiche and H. F. Vanderschmidt (tr.) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959, and London: P. Owen, 1960). The references in this essay are from the 1946 edition, cited in parenthetical as *IU*, with page number. About a century before Jaspers' time, John Henry Newman wrote a similar book, with an almost identical title: *The Idea of a University* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1960).

significant reason for Heidegger's disappointment and eventual break with him. Jaspers complains that

Someone from Freiburg informed me that Heidegger had said that my booklet was the most irrelevant of all the irrelevancies of the time. . . . The strange fact is that such information reached me repeatedly. Thus in 1923 he made another switch: "Jaspers and I can never be fighters for the same cause."<sup>7</sup>

Ten years later, it became completely apparent why. The difference between the two was diametrical. Thus Heidegger addresses Freiburg:

The will to the essence of the German university is the will to science as the will to the historical spiritual mission of the German people as a people that knows itself in the state [*Staat*]. Together, science and German destiny must come to power in the will to essence. (MHNS 6)

Heidegger knows that like a handgun that has no feeling of loyalty to anyone and can be fired even at its own owner, so the orphan "science" should come to serve "German destiny," and they, "together," will "the essence of the German university." Heidegger continues:

And if our most authentic existence itself stands before a great transformation, and if it is true what that passionate seeker of God and last German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, said: "God is dead" – and if we must be serious about this forsakeness of modern human beings in the midst of what is, then what is the situation of science? (MHNS 8)

Heidegger is now calling Nietzsche "that passionate seeker of God," which is only for popular consumption.<sup>8</sup> (For example, the last words of *The Antichrist* reads: "This eternal indictment of Christianity I will write on all walls, wherever there are walls—I have letters to make even the blind see.")<sup>9</sup> Of course

<sup>7</sup> *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, p. 75/5.

<sup>8</sup> At the time of this address Nietzsche had been hailed as the prophet and philosopher of National Socialism while the majority of German population was devout Christian. Nietzsche sometimes even identified himself as the Antichrist. In fact, shortly before his street collapse in Torino (January 3rd, 1889), he signed three letters as "Der Antichrist:" the 1888 letter to Otto von Bismarck (undated December draft), to Ferdinand Avenarius (December 12th), and to Cosima Wagner (December 25th draft), *Sämtliche Briefe Kritische Studienausgabe* (8 vols.), volume 8, pp. 504, 544, and 551, respectively.

<sup>9</sup> Throughout his writing Nietzsche made many contradictions, but his atheism remains consistent.

Heidegger knew better than that, and his misleading statement about his great predecessor speaks more about Heidegger's character and demagogic words before a pumped-up crowd. No doubt, he had a deep passion for the overwhelming power of the National Socialist movement. But because of so many stretches in references, lopsided interpretations, and inaccurate quotations in this and other university addresses, and because these problems reappear for the opposite effect in his postwar denials, it is foolish to trust any more in what he has to say. This reminds me of Descartes, who says of his senses that "it is wiser not to trust entirely any thing by which we have once been deceived" (*Med. I*).<sup>10</sup>

In spite of all this, we must take Heidegger for his words here, since at stake is what he actually did (in 1933-1934), his active role in bringing all the University departments to the service of the fascist State. Heidegger's actions seriously violated the conception of "university." Interestingly, this exceptional wordsmith who spent much of his writing on raising great philosophical questions, and defined and redefined words, is here shunning from the etymology of "university." So, for this lack in his words and works, because of *this* silence, we must dig out some soil to expose the roots. Where are those roots hidden? Is it not more than accidental that the aforementioned definitions of "university" (in Jaspers and ours) included the word "universal"? What relation is there between "university" and "universal"? Is the "universe" their single parent? To stop questioning, this is what I might respond in brief.

In spite of English being a member of the Indo-Germanic family, "university," like many words in modern European languages, has a Latin root, and its immediate ancestor is the French *université*.<sup>11</sup> The Latin

<sup>10</sup> *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* (2 vols.), tr. E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), Volume I, p. 145.

<sup>11</sup> This probably had to do with the cultural aftermath of the Norman invasion of 1066, although the consortium of Oxford cluster was not called a university until more than three centuries later. Therefore, it seems safe to conclude that *université* was imported and anglicized after decades of usage in France. Moreover, the German *Universität* and the Spanish *universidad* certainly spell and sound closer to the original Latin *universitās*, than *université* does. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that the German and Spanish versions are older than the French one, nor am I really interested in an international contest over who first pioneered or adopted the Latin term. What is of interest here is that *université*, *Universität*, *universidad*,

*universitās* means "universe," "whole" (taken together), "entirety," "overall aspects" (of a thing or of all things), "sum" (of things), etc. Likewise, the adjective *universes*, means "the whole of," "all without exception," "regarded as a whole," "taken all together," "general idea/principle," "occurring/acting in or on all," "all in one piece," and "affecting everyone/everything general and universal."<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, in the Roman Empire *universitās* had a certain legal signification, which referred to "a collective unit of property." This legal sense suitably applies to the physical and intellectual property rights of the Modern University, especially to its independence and freedom in research and instruction. These rights provide a considerable degree of both "negative" and "positive" liberties. The negative set includes freedom of contemplation, of research, of speech, and of assembly enjoyed by all faculty and students, and the positive set includes freedom from search and seizure, from surveillance and spying, and from undue pressure and intimidation by the University administration, as well as by the municipal, regional and national governments.<sup>13</sup>

As a result of the considerations concerning the Universal scope and jurisdictional rights above, the University can be defined as "a community of teacher-scholars and students in the pursuit of attaining the Universal Truth independently of any political authority or bureaucratic interference." Now, consider Heidegger's misuse of the term University in his July 1, 1933 Heidelberg address:

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etc., which all refer to the same entity, are derived from *universitās*. The Roman legal writers, like Gaius (100?-200?) and Ulpian (probably died in 228 AD), used *universitās* as the "corporate body of persons," or "community."

<sup>12</sup> The relation of "Universe" and "University" can be found in any standard dictionary of the English language. For example, "ME universe < O Fr. < Med. Lat. *universitas* [sic.] < L.Lat. a society < Lat. the whole < *universes*, whole. — see UNIVERSE." From *The American Heritage Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), Second College Edition. For a more detailed description of "Universities" see *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

<sup>13</sup> The idea of distinguishing *negative* and *positive* freedoms (by the prepositions "of" and "from," respectively) was proposed by Isaiah Berlin in "Two Concepts of Liberty," 1958. See Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), "Two Concepts of Liberty," pp. 166-217

We have on the one hand the new Reich, and on the other the university that must take its tasks from the Reich's will to survive. There is a revolution in Germany, and we must ask ourselves, "Is there a revolution in the university?" No. The fighting is still in the skirmishing stage, and has so far mounted only a single attack — the building of a new life in the Hitler Labor Camps . . .<sup>14</sup>

Of course, this passage is not an aberration in Heidegger's university addresses. He actually worked as an active participant in shutting down the autonomy of the University by opening its jurisdictional gates to the State, for the State's invasion and intervention. The crucial background-reasoning behind this and the Freiburg address is that "the death of God" opens all the possibilities, that truth is not what you seek and discover by pure intellection, but rather what you actively make. It is not that vainglorious, futile, impossible Universal Truth that is to be sought; but it is the truth of fact, which is achievable and to be materialized through action. The critical question, however, is: Why should the hollowness of truth be filled up with *ultra-nationalism*, recruiting college students to join the labor camps and provide service to *this* particular regime, or energizing the laborers to work harder for the State's *narrow* ideological aims? It is not hard to imagine that at the time of these speeches Heidegger was privately thinking how the fathomless nihilism, the heralding of the collapse of all the Universals, could be an opportunity, a convenient vacuum, for uploading the State's ideological apparatus. To bringing the University to the service of the New Reich *practically*, was his motive.

Of course, one could will the opposite, like acting in accord with liberal-democracy had the circumstances been agreeable, as in the post-war era. In this way Jaspers, who had a democratic temperament, served briefly as the Rector of Heidelberg after the war. In his booklet Jaspers says, "It would be contrary to the Idea of the University to deny admission to a man of intellectual distinction . . . even if his scholarship ultimately serves a foreign interest" (*IU* 60). That is because, the Idea of the University transcends all national boundaries and leaves behind every particular, one-sided and narrow-minded tribal interest. In this case, it is clear that the liberal-democratic approach, especially with a non-nationalistic/cosmopolitan

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<sup>14</sup> *German Existentialism*, p. 23.

ingredient, is not as contrary to the integrity of the University as its fascist opponent. In addition, liberal-democracy contains the skepticism that allows open and free debates suitable for the cosmopolitan spirit of the University. In contrast, Heidegger repeatedly uses the compound, "German University." With regard to the considerations concerning the Universality of the University, it must be stated that the University is not German, not British, nor Chinese. The University Idea has no nationality. It is and should be treated as an embassy representing the entire Universe. The raising of the national flag or displaying patriotic emblems or staging a memorial event for the veterans of foreign wars is unbecoming of the University. Of course, the local and national government are naturally interested in the well-being and services of the University, as the University is also interested in giving service to the community by educating a portion of the population and preparing them for productive jobs, training students to become physicians and nurses, biologists and psychologists, natural scientists, public administrators and business managers. However, the Universal adjective bestows a jurisdictional independence to this institution that would disallow the uniformed officers acting on duty on campus, or government officials taking over the affairs of the University.

An actual absence of the Universal Truth puts all these cosmopolitan characteristics and rights in question. If this is why Heidegger was trying to substitute for it with something that he liked or making an opportunistic move that would have had some benefits for his own interests, he should have refuted the worn out Universal predicate of the University and pronounced the politics of the new regime as a suitable replacement—each time at the outset of his speeches. Heidegger, like everyone else, had the right to use any word the way he wished. But for the sake of coherence and communication he should have first defined what he meant by "university" before using it. He did this in other cases, but not in this case. It seems that, because of his passion for National Socialism, when it came to the use of "university" he failed to clarify his personal import. With a rural southerner root, Heidegger shared the ultra-conservative characteristics of his fellow rural southerners.<sup>15</sup> One should remember that behind every

<sup>15</sup> In this connection Alan Olson articulates that "Heidegger, like many rural south-German Catholics, probably resented deeply the liberal-Protestant, social-democratic, modernist-cosmopolitan, north-German domination of culture, politics, and national

word, there is a person, with possible intellectual shortcomings, insecurities, biases, defects.

While Heidegger's rectorate lasted less than one year and his due-paying Party membership ended with Germany's total defeat, his postwar reputation has been tarnished because of his engagement with National Socialism.<sup>16</sup> But besides some university addresses and lectures, the real damage to the University was his work in facilitating the Nazification of higher education during his short tenure as the Freiburg chancellor. This is all that he did. But everything that Heidegger did during those years comes to nothing compared with the career of someone like James B. Conant. Born four years after Heidegger's birth, and died two years after his death, Conant, like Heidegger, came from a humble and conservative background. After receiving a doctorate in chemistry from Harvard, he joined the faculty of Harvard and soon became its president in 1933: the same year that Hitler and Heidegger became chancellors. Unlike Heidegger, whose chancellorship lasted just under a year, Conant remained university president for two decades (1933-1953). While holding his day job at Harvard, Conant served as Chairman of the U.S. National Defense Research Committee, which sought to mobilize university professors in a clandestine crash program to build the world's first nuclear bomb.<sup>17</sup> Conant was a primary figure in the strategic decision to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing in two blasts hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, and seriously injuring nearly a million more from severe burns and cancers caused by radioactive fallouts.<sup>18</sup> According to a recent biographer,

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identity after the Enlightenment." *Jaspers & Heidegger*, Alan M. Olson, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> The publication of Victor Farias' *Heidegger et le nazisme* in 1987, and its English translation as *Heidegger and Nazism*, Paul Burrell, tr./Fr. and Dominic Di Bernardi tr./Ger. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989) revived the controversy of Heidegger's prewar involvements with the Nazis. But even the English readers should have been familiar with this theme, as excerpts of his addresses and lectures had been available since the 1965's *German Existentialism*.

<sup>17</sup> "He witnessed the Trinity test and was on the Interim Committee that made recommendations on using the atomic bombs against Japan." *The Manhattan Project*, C. C. Kelly, ed. (New York, New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, Inc., 2007), p. 468 [Henceforth cited as *MP*].

<sup>18</sup> Because of the lack of a thorough and impartial investigation regarding the mindsets behind the atomic bombings of

Conant fully supported, and never subsequently showed regret over, the decision to bomb Hiroshima. With the exception of Ralph Bard, who expressed post hoc reservations, the entire Interim Committee endorsed the conclusion that the bomb should be dropped on a heavily populated Japanese city, and dropped without prior warning.<sup>19</sup>

This attack has been by far the most blatant violation of the Geneva Conventions and International Law.<sup>20</sup>

When Heidegger in the postwar era was being cornered from left and right in the West German media and by journalist interviewers, nobody was criticizing the massive war crimes of Conant—who at that time had just become the U.S. Ambassador to West Germany. For his work on the development of nuclear weaponry, Conant received the prestigious Oak Leaf Cluster from President Truman and the Atomic Pioneer Award from President Nixon. Should Conant's role become a matter of public scrutiny as a historic necessity, he would not be remembered so fondly. In

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Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there are still individuals, especially in the United States, who do not quite understand the extent of what Conant and his colleagues did to a large portion of humanity. The ultimate responsibility of course lay in the White House; as President Harry Truman himself famously said, "The buck stops here."

<sup>19</sup> James Hershberg, *James Conant: Harvard to Hiroshima and the Making of the Nuclear Age* (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 225. Last summer I had the opportunity to watch on the C-Span 3 the rerun of the network's April 27, 2002 "Forum on the Manhattan Project" sponsored by the Atomic Heritage Foundation, which was hosted by Hershberg himself, speaking of his book above. In the end nobody even asked the author why Conant allowed himself to head this clandestine operation while staying the President of Harvard University. Even, near the end of the meeting, an old man on his way to the exit loudly said something to the effect that "God came to help us!" — presumably for the making of the atomic bombs and dropping them on the Japanese civilians.

<sup>20</sup> The American reputation has been seriously damaged ever since. For example, after sixty years, in an emergency meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, the Iranian Ambassador Sirous Nasser, whose country had been accused by the United States of breaking the rules, told the delegates that their meeting coincided with the world's remembrance of those atomic bombings, and added, "It is the most absurd manifestation of irony that the single state who caused this single nuclear catastrophe in a twin attack on our Earth now has assumed the role of the prime preacher in the nuclear field while ever expanding its nuclear weapons capability." *Los Angeles Times*, "Iran Defends Its Nuclear Stance as IAEA Meets," p. A3, Wednesday, August 10, 2005.

an event of a suicide nuclear-bombing's annihilation of an American city, the name Harvard and the surname Conant will be stained forever. As president of America's top university, Conant knew how to manage the faculty members of the Manhattan Project. Conant led a group of faculty from the most prestigious American universities who had no regard for the idea of academic impartiality, but were focused on the destructive effects of the uranium, plutonium, and later hydrogen, bombs. These university professors were at the time not even aware of the deterrence doctrine.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly enough, after the war many of these scientists received the Noble Prize for physics and chemistry [MP 466-473]. The attachments to their motherlands and hatred of the perceived enemies were the instinctual driving force for their scientific/academic achievements in inventing the atom bomb. In fact, months before the Red Army's discovery and liberation of the SS death camps in Poland, a Jewish-Polish physicist of the Project, Joseph Rotblat, angrily resigned when he learned of the cancellation of the plan to atom-bomb Germany [MP 464]. Rotblat's resignation was accepted, while nearly all of his colleagues were not thinking much of the Japanese people as fully human.

The towering dark shadow of nationalism on the university campus is, of course, not exclusive to the Western World. Take the Red Army, just mentioned above: one of its primary goals was to find the leading Nazi scientists, including biologists, in the ruins of Berlin, and transport them to the Russian homeland. At that time, the Soviet Union, like the Nazi Germany, had not yet fully developed an effective link between its universities and its industrial military complexes. So here was underway a two-staged plan to take effect immediately: first, abduct the German scientists into

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<sup>21</sup> Among the science professors who worked at Los Alamos, the following names are among the best known (with their university affiliations) [MP 466-475]: Kenneth Bainbridge (Harvard/MIT), Harold Agnew (Chicago), Hans Bethe (Cornell/MIT), Enrico Fermi (Columbia/Chicago), Richard Feynman (Princeton), Val Fitch (Princeton), James Frank (Johns Hopkins/Chicago), Crawford H. Greenewalt (Chicago), Theodor Hall (Harvard), Isabella Karle (Chicago), George Kistiakowsky (Harvard), Ernest O. Lawrence (UC, Berkeley), L. W. M. Libby (Chicago), Edwin McMillan (UC, Berkeley), J. Robert Oppenheimer (UC Berkeley/Chicago), I. I. Rabi (Columbia/MIT), Emilio Segrè (UC, Berkeley), H.D. Smyth (Princeton), Harold Urey (Columbia), Eugene Wigner (Princeton/Chicago), and Robert Wilson (UC, Berkeley).

safe and secret locations, then gradually transfer their cutting-edge scientific and technological knowledge to narrowly selected students and technologists. The priority was given to three distinct areas: nuclear physics, missile technology, and bio-weaponry.<sup>22</sup> So far, much debate has been spent in Western media and history departments on Soviet developments and achievements in the first two. But, to me, much research is needed on the relationship between the biology faculty and the national laboratories, especially in the former Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan where nearly 30,000 "technologists" were employed on the development of bio-weaponry during the Cold War. The result of these clandestine operations led to a subfield named "black biology." These weapons, especially in the varieties of "binary," "designer," "chimera," "neo-zoonotic," and "stealth," cause incurable maladies and are lethal to the extent of potentially wiping out the human species.<sup>23</sup> Now, nearly two decades after the demise of the Soviet Union, the whereabouts of these scientists remain unknown.

Of course, funding and controlling research programs in the natural sciences departments is not exclusive to the United States, the former republics of the Soviet Union, and Western Europe, for in recent years nearly all major universities in Brazil, the Far East, Southern and some Western Asian countries have joined the club. This is a serious issue—wearing away

the independence of learning and scholarship at the highest possible level. It was not too long ago that some students at MIT soon learned that the video games such that they were playing became known to the public as the satellite-guided missile technology employed in the First Gulf War, with some "collateral damage."

In view of these developments in recent decades, the "Universality of the University" is a term that it is no longer even funny, but sounds like a cruel joke. If the Universal Truth existed, then the University would have been defined as "a community of teacher-scholars and students in the pursuit of attaining and transmitting/learning the Universal Truth—Truth unconditionally, and for its own sake." Nevertheless, the present lack of faith in and incredibility of this Truth, on one hand, and the direct and indirect State and corporate interventions, on the other, have rendered the term, University, misleading (at best). In an attempt to preclude deceiving the intellectually innocent, the University should perhaps lead the way by voluntarily changing its name. Yet I know that that will never happen.

Meanwhile, the ghost of Heidegger is still haunting the campus. But why Heidegger? Did he not just make a few addresses and then quickly resign? What do they want from him? How much revenge is still out there in those most revengeful souls? Admittedly, though, he is in a very difficult situation. His name will unfortunately remain on top of this debate only because he was politically naïve, loud and silent at wrong and odd times, and put himself behind the podium full-heartedly supporting the educational program of a newly elected authoritarian government in the midst of the worst storm in his nation's history. His side fought with an incredible valor to its annihilation. And he sold himself and his University to what became annihilated. Yet there were others, like Conant, who secretly and silently led the best science faculty to the creation of the most fearsome weapon, helped the decision to use it on densely populated cities, but managed to stay behind the curtain, far from the podium. Even Conant's autobiography made many critics scratch their heads wondering what, if anything, he had said about himself. The book is appropriately titled, *My Several Lives* (1970). Conant and those Soviet black-biologist did what they thought was right for their countries. But Heidegger's action proved unfortunate in his career, as the most influential philosopher of the twentieth century.

<sup>22</sup> The interest of developing bio-weaponry in the Soviet Union in fact began in the 1920s, and the kidnapping of German biologists in 1945 and in the following years from East Germany are only indicative of the fact that the Russian leadership had become convinced that the German scientists had advanced considerably in all scientific fields, including biology, since the rise of National Socialism. There are even some strong allegations concerning the actual use of biological weapons, especially with strong strains of Tularemia, against the German troops near Stalingrad in 1942. The widespread epidemics in the North Caucasus villages, especially the finding of considerable Tularemia agents in the victims at the time, gave rise to the suspicion that the epidemic might have begun with the consumption of the German corpses by the thriving rodents in the area. See: Kenneth Alibek and Stephen Handelman, *Biohazard: The Chilling True Story of the Largest Covert Biological Weapons Program in the World – Told from Inside by the Man Who Ran It* (New York: Random House, 1999). Also, Vadim J. Birstein, *The Perversion of Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> For more information on and references to this threat, M. K. Khazae, "The Looming Clouds Of A Stateless Totalitarianism of the Spirit," *Existenz*, Vol.1, Nos 1-2, Fall 2006, pp. 53-54.