Annales. Ethics in Economic Life 2018
Vol. 21, No. 6, Special Issue, 33–47
doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.18778/1899-2226.21.6.03

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Words and deeds. Corporate Social Responsibility in higher education institutions*

Abstract

The purpose of the paper is twofold. Firstly, to formulate a definition of university social responsibility (which takes into account social expectations towards this institution and its internal determinants as well). The final result of this research is the definition built on two concepts. On one hand, it is a stakeholder policy, on the other hand, a whistleblower policy. These are the criteria of responsibility, that is to say, rules which make the institution transparent and open to social criticism. Secondly, the article tends to establish whether a university in Poland (treated as a dominant institution of knowledge) is rightly seen as an irresponsible partner of civil society. Form the business ethics perspective the university is the more responsible, the more intensive are its relations with the social environment represented by stakeholders and whistleblowers. When they do not play their parts properly, the relations must be considered dysfunctional. Additional explanation of this problem is provided by the theory of management. In a use of the concept of the final customer, public opinion can find out if it—really—is the main interlocutor of the university. Social partners of this institution focus their attention on politicians and public administration taken as the alternative final customer of the academic product.

Keywords: university, social responsibility, stakeholder, whistleblower, final customer

JEL Classification: I23, I28, M14

* The article is an updated version of the paper published in Polish in the *Annales. Ethics in Economic Life*, *20*(1), 33–48.

1. Introduction. What is the institutional responsibility?

Responsibility is one of the concepts in which representative difficulties for the humanities and social sciences accumulate. In the process of socialization, it plays the role of a keystone which combines qualitatively different expectations regarding the outcome of educational work. In this sense, responsibility may be regarded as a synonym for the integrity of the person shaping their attitude toward themselves and others. Shaping seemingly only boils down to adopting the rules of behaviour in its social environment. These rules are characterized by diversity. In one case, the adjusted individual is expected to be loyal, in the second it would be able to claim its own, and in the third, it would act wisely. To be precise, the last criterion should be taken in quotes. The prudence of Jesus talking to Satan is not equal to the prudence of Odysseus who blinded Polyphemus. Meanwhile, both stories belong to the canon of Western cultural patterns. Therefore, consideration, like responsibility, cannot be judged differently than by embedding the postulate of integrity in the *subiectum* space. This entity is the one that selects the patterns with which it wants to identify. At the same time, it combines the requirement of consistency in using them, with the awareness of the goals that they want to achieve with their help.

It follows from this observation that responsibility is an ambiguous concept. It is no use looking for a solution to the problems that divide social interlocutors. Etymologically speaking, they are obliged to present the motives of their behaviour to each other. However, this is where the issue ends. By communicating what they do, justifying their choice with the preferred system of values (cultural models), they avoid the accusation of decisive inconsistency or unpredictability of action.[1] The situation changes radically when one of the goals the responsible subject is seeking to achieve is to build—in cooperation with others—ties based on trust. This is how the dialogue begins (Rotengruber, 2000). It begins, potentially, from the first moments of each of our lives. After all, it is difficult to assume that a man who is of healthy body and spirit does not feel the need for closeness, partnership, or understanding. This gives rise to reciprocity as a legitimate need to protect something that has been considered a positive value. Unfortunately, this substantiation fails in everyday reality. An experience not related to one's own benefit turns out to be insufficient. When using the explanation presented by Abraham Maslow, we (usually) place matters related to security and wealth before the need for respect and self-fulfilment (cf. Maslow, 1990, pp. 72–92). These goals are also a component of responsibility, even if one is responsible only for themselves (Hume, 2005, p. 5; cf. Ayer, 2001, pp. 158–161).

[1] The author omits the obligation to comply with the law. The state establishes obligatory liability for violation of its rules. However, anyone who thinks that they are the quintessence of the citizen's social responsibility is wrong. Rather, it is torn between the order established by the legislator and order, which—in a larger temporal extension—was formed spontaneously.

These arrangements are reflected in the issue of organizational responsibility. Institutions either (directly) called to serve others, or ones which derive their existence from the approval of others, cannot avoid asking about the connections between them and their social environment. The situation of economic organizations seems simpler. In their case, the market criterion determines the success of their mission. Following this indication, a competitive advantage should be achieved by a company providing fuller (and more reliable) information about its product. For the sake of accuracy, this is not the whole truth about the market. Within it, not only that which is better drives out the worse but also that which is cheaper drives out the more expensive. It so happens that the less credible bidder "makes up for the price" of the image loss caused by information or quality inadequacies. However, when this dependence is temporarily extended, making up for these losses turns out to be extremely difficult. Abraham Maslow (1990) explains that this is about moving the accent by the participants of economic life from their mercantile goals to social obligations; Ronald Inglehart (1990) thinks it is the post materialistic attitude of Western societies, Ulrich Beck (2002) that it is connected with the ubiquitous risk that these societies—with increasing difficulty—face. At least in this perspective, responsible management may be considered (potentially) profitable.

The image of institutions providing public services is less optimistic. A petitioner, a student and even a patient (especially the one with a health card) are only seemingly their final recipients. You must not underestimate the actors mentioned. The accumulation of their bad moods can turn against the unreliable service provider. However, this is not the provider's main concern. In everyday practice, they focus their attention on the entities financing their activity. It could be said that a market mechanism is activated here. But it activates in a specific way. More important than those who have provided funds for the functioning of public institutions (by means of paying taxes) is a political intermediary. He decides how to divide these funds. The administrative authority becomes the dominant administrative medium (Habermas, 2005, pp. 50–51, 53). It results in consequences that are difficult to estimate. The main unknown is whether the subsidiaries of this authority will be satisfied with the role of (blind) executors of its provisions, or if they will strive to remain faithful to the professional ideals understood as their public mission.

The case of the university seems to be especially complex.[2] As an institution of knowledge accumulating the most valuable cultural resources and, at the same time, monopolizing the qualifications for certifying the most socially necessary knowledge and skills, it has the authority that can be used in a political game for independence. This is not about the right to veto as an end in itself. Rather, the purpose is to maintain credibility. The authority of the university disappears when it succumbs to political pressure. Politicians do not know better than the academic environment what science is or what its social uses are. Instead, they have the resources to implement their plans. This puts the university in a difficult situation.

[2] For the purposes of these analyzes, I treat the university as a synonym of a university (fully or partially) financed from public funds.

On the one hand, it serves the truth, on the other hand, its emancipatory intentions may lead to a conflict with those who pay for its maintenance. The university itself is not without its faults. There are as many imperfections and decisive deficiencies in it as around it. The symbol of this is the recently fading distinction between educated and uneducated people. The state policy—a result of which is the absurdly high gross enrollment rate—intersects here with the involvement of Polish universities in the process of "mass production" of graduates. Who do they enroll, what resources they have (staff, infrastructure, etc.), what standards of education are they able to guarantee? The more difficult it becomes to obtain a "satisfactory" number of students, the less attention of university authorities these issues absorb.

The University has every reason to combine the criticism of systemic solutions with the calculation of conscience. It is more than just about its autonomy. An equally important goal is to protect the image of a mediator and a guide. Social functions of the university, unlike its powers, are disappearing along with the loss of faith in its social responsibility. It needs to be emphasized that in this light the concept of responsibility is not burdened with ambiguity. The university's social partners ask about how things should be arranged; answering this question is an integral part of its educational offer. They ask not only about the value of knowledge pooled at the university but also the way of using it. Regarding the latter, until recently, social partners of the university focused on the effects of the unethical use of scientific discoveries (cf. Lakatos, 1995, pp. 363–366). Today, they are much more worried about the alienation of this institution, manifesting itself in its escape from the control of the society. So in that spirit, the subject of the article makes connections between the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the university's attitude to its social environment. I intend to show that although the university is not an enterprise, after taking into account the differences between the two institutions, CSR is applicable in the study of the moral and political condition of universities in Poland (cf. Geryk, 2012).

2. Corporate social responsibility—doctrine, definition difficulties, applications

The doctrine of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is over one hundred years old. In *The Gospel of Wealth*, published in 1889, the American steel magnate Andrew Carnegie associated socially responsible management with the entrepreneur's respect for the principles of stewardship and charity (Sójka & Ryan, 1997, pp. 5–11). Beside moral considerations, these principles were also suggested by common sense. Carnegie was convinced that the strength of the entrepreneur is determined by the durability of his relationships with those who entrusted him with their fate and the opinion of those who contribute to his social environment. A century later there are no more red brick factories with the name of the owner placed above the gate. Today, shareholders and managers took the owners' place

(Sójka, 2005, p. 12). In these dramatically different circumstances, the question of the identity of actors who share the (social) responsibility is valid again. It is particularly worth noting that the idea of a company charity does not necessarily go together with its stewardship obligations. The main obstacle is the economic calculation. Investing in the image of a socially responsible company, not supported by estimates of the expected benefits, makes a business philanthropist seem mismanaged (Lewicka-Strzałecka, 2006, pp. 22–26).

The mentioned difficulties do not diminish the interest in the doctrine of corporate social responsibility. On the contrary, it has become one of the main instruments of public policy of Western countries. Its political users did not stop at controlling enterprises, or, more broadly, commercial organizations. They found other, non-economic or economic-related applications for the idea of CSR. Unfortunately, these new applications aggravated the previously expressed fears. The problem of the unilateral character of the disputed idea and the economic justification of the cost of its implementation was accompanied by vagueness regarding the limits of social responsibility of public institutions. Managers wonder if they are allowed to give away trustees' money, and the officials question why their work would be subject to control other than that exercised by their superiors and external supervisors. The goal of this research demands that both doubts be elaborated.

In the first case, one should start by explaining what charity is for in a socially responsible management of a profit-oriented organization. Is it a question of preservation of appearances (selflessness) for the needs of politicians and public opinion? Definitely not. Although it would be a mistake to disregard these applications, they are not the main advantage of the CSR strategy. Apart from the role that charity played in Carnegie's time (as a recipe for building personal prestige), it was associated with the principle of stewardship in his doctrine. This connection determines the correct reading of his message. Giving out is replaced with acquiring the trust of the company social environment. By investing in such qualities (image-related features) as reliability, predictability, or decency, it achieves a competitive advantage over its rivals (Rotengruber, 2013). Informationally and qualitatively, it makes decisions whose profitability can be calculated.

A parallel issue is the estimation of losses resulting from CSR shortcomings. Objections raised against an economic agent expose them to social ostracism, especially if their activity is continuous. This means costs resulting from the refusal to participate in the market game with such an uncertain participant. This is where the doctrine of corporate social responsibility is applied. In the summation of the achievements of business ethics and management theoreticians, it is a compilation of research programs dedicated to stakeholders and whistleblowers. Their choice is not accidental. The aforementioned strategies provide criteria for responsible management of a company, one which would be in line with the expectations of its social environment. These criteria have a double application. On the one hand, an economic entity cannot do without knowing about the dangers posed by its social partners. On the other hand, these partners should be included in the management process by means of negotiating their particular interests and the public interest.

Managing an organization can become responsible only if socially and economically verifiable decisions are made. It refers to two questions: (1) how—from a management perspective—to assess the qualifications of a manager confronted with social challenges; and (2) how—from a more common perspective—to discern the intentions of anybody who declares social responsibility? In contemporary business realities sometimes called managerial capitalism (Evan & Freeman, 1997) using the CSR doctrine without taking into account the listed criteria cannot serve anything other than to mislead yourself and others. This thesis, however radical, is justified. It is included in the alternative according to which either the company's goal is to gather knowledge about its social partners and gain their trust, or to (permanently) misinform them and reveal the hostile intentions of the nominally responsible entity. When advocating the first option, we should determine how to comply with CSR requirements.

It should be noted that the awareness of their social environment attitudes is a responsibility of any manager about to choose a socially responsible management strategy. Irrespective of the ethical evaluation of an enterprise, the necessity for its leaders to be aware of a variety of social challenges is a prerequisite for their employability (efficiency criterion). To be more precise, a manager who does not know the social consequences of actions undertaken by his company puts it at a potential loss (at least of reputation). It becomes evident that he is a bad manager. It is even more difficult to take his declarations of social responsibility seriously when he does not know who to and what to answer for. Along with this claim, the stress is moved from the question of whether to develop a managerial awareness of social realities to how to develop it.

A solution—even if imperfect—is in the concept of stakeholders. According to R. Edward Freeman, a stakeholder is anyone who thinks he has suffered a loss due to a fraud or management mistakes committed by the company (Freeman, 1984, p. 48; cf. Young, 2005, p. VIII). Besides employees, clients or co-operators, this group includes actors with indirect dependencies, such as the local community, or the company competition. A measure of the manager's foresight is their knowledge about the stakeholders combined with the ability to forecast the threats they can pose to the company. Unfortunately, it is impossible to manage such a defined risk. The threat is ubiquitous. This probably prompted Freeman to change views on the longevity (and universality) of stakeholders' rights (Wicks & Freeman, 1998, pp. 123–140). Together with William M. Evan, they associated these powers with Kantian ethics, imposing on the company an (imperative) requirement to protect the participants—each and every one of them—of the economic sphere (Evan & Freeman, 1997, pp. 186–187). Meanwhile, transcendental argumentation proved to be unreliable. Stakeholders, as Ronald K. Mitchell warned us, should be taken seriously not only because they are persistent and strong, but also because of the role that moral convictions play in situations of conflict (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997, pp. 853–886; cf. Mendel, 2001, pp. 16–18). Freeman's next correction pertained to how differently economic interlocutors understand the rules of justice (Phillips, Freeman & Wicks, 2003). Even when they are honest, one cannot be sure if they base their claim on the grounds familiar

to its addressee. A consequence of this is the obligation of the manager to combine responsibility towards stakeholders with a concern for the good of the company. He must understand those who have reservations about it and, simultaneously, remember what he needs to protect.

The same applies to the postulate of gaining trust through the mechanism of the disclosure. The readiness of a company to undergo social control confirmed by appropriate guarantees encounters an obstacle in the form of acknowledging the supremacy of public interest over the principle of confidentiality (which binds employees, co-operators, experts, etc.). To put it concisely, economic ethicists and management theorists characterize unmasking as an act of disloyalty justified by the intention of defending the common good. They agree that a whistleblower is a person who reveals company secrets for ethical reasons, thereby risking punishment for "nosiness" or "snitching". At the same time, the researchers dealing with this issue are divided as to whether the whistleblowers who are (current or former) members of the stigmatized organization deserve equal public attention as those who are not its members or are located on its peripheries. The bone of contention is the question of how and why non-organizational whistleblowers have access to classified information, the matter of their vague intentions and (allegedly) lower risk of revenge resulting from the act of unmasking (Rotengruber, 2016).

The dispute over the definition of a whistleblower is important because it results in a collective selection of behavioural patterns used in the fight against entities threatening public order. It is difficult to disagree with those who do not want to equate various manifestations of pettiness, irritated ambition, or opportunism with action taken in the social interest (Habermas, 2005, pp. 50–51). At the same time, however, we cannot lose sight of the danger of discrediting each and every individual taking on the role of a whistleblower. Yes, there is room for doubt here. Yet this doubt should not obscure the ethical side of the enterprise. An easy to predict reaction of an organization, whose dark affairs are exposed, is to question the credibility of the informer. Accusing the informer or ignoring them results in throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Because of this, it should be stated that the efficiency of the mechanisms protecting the whistleblower can be taken to be a measure of public life health.

Although the first recipient of this postulate is civil society, it is not its only addressee. Parallel to it, the actions taken by the responsible company become more important. It can increase the capital of social trust through a consistently conducted policy of openness to the voice of opponents using factual arguments. Its quick response to the evil it perpetrated shifts the focus of criticism from the company itself to that which aroused social resistance. However fluid this distinction may be, a situation in which the villain clearly declares his willingness to communicate with the public is not to be underestimated. On the other hand, from a social point of view, the participation of the enterprise in public debate on fair and effective principles of using the method of unmasking becomes a condition for responsible management. It needs to be emphasized that in everyday realities this dependence may be regarded as a minor detail that does not affect the image

of the organization. However, it gains significance when its abuses come to light. To sum up, among the factors that make up a company's social responsibility more important become those which enable it to reconcile particular goals (stewardship) with universal goals (charity). An equally important aspect of such an enterprise is its ability to estimate the benefits resulting from its choice of CSR as a management strategy.

The transfer of the social doctrine of responsible management to the non-economic sphere requires taking into account two premises. First of all, it is only about those institutions which, due to their rights or the nature of the services provided, owe honesty and transparency to society. In short, it is about organizations that carry out public tasks. Established to serve a political community, they lose their sense (or at least credibility) when they cease to be socially responsible. Secondly, although these institutions are financed from public funds, the manner of managing them must take into account economic constraints and legal restrictions respected by business. According to the comparison made in the introduction, it is necessary to determine the final recipients of the product created by the first type of organizations. To be more precise: who uses their services, reviews their activities, and finances them. Because these roles are played by different actors, declarations regarding the responsibility of public institutions become ambiguous. Since they were established to serve citizens, are maintained from the budget of the state or local government units and are controlled by public authorities—the question comes to mind—to which of the listed entities do they bear the greatest responsibility?

The expressed fear may be obscured by the contents of an (effectively implemented) image building strategy. It may assuage fears, but it does not solve the problem. To the public opinion, the evaluated institution remains impeccable. However, this strategy does less than its leaders may think. Private opinions and the emotions the accompany them are beyond their reach. This observation takes us back to the postulate of socially responsible management. In the proposed interpretation of this doctrine, the manager's responsibilities include having insight into the moods of stakeholders and gaining public trust by promoting ethical disclosure as a method to protect the common good. A public institution may be regarded as socially responsible only when the verdict is passed by those whom it concerns (Leja, 2013, pp. 183–208).

Meanwhile, the darkest place is under the candlestick. Research on how to distinguish genuine socially responsible leadership from apparent socially responsible leadership is the domain of the university. Although it was economic practitioners who initiated reflection on the issue, it would not be possible to develop it without the participation of scientists and institutions organizing their work. For this reason, the university may be regarded as a depository of knowledge about management rules consistent with the social interest. The University acquires this knowledge, develops it, uses it for didactic purposes, and converts it into a research tool and a method of mediation. Putting it concisely, it teaches others what things should be like. Unfortunately, the university does not apply these teachings to itself. Torn between the expectations of different final recipients, it is first on

a list of organizations using double standards. The formulated objection—also in this case—can be refuted with image-building arguments.[3] However, it is impossible to deal with it when the emphasis is placed on the criteria of social responsibility of a public institution. In this case, doubts about the minimal presence of social interlocutors of the university are becoming more and more important. It is difficult to assume that this institution does not threaten anyone and has nothing to hide.

The University maintains admirable loyalty towards political decision-makers establishing ever new rules for its functioning. As a reminder, changes in the financing of higher education (resulting, among others, in an absurdly high scholarisation rate), recruitment model (based on the new "maturity diploma"), ECTS points system etc. were introduced without much resistance. As long as the wishes of the political recipients of the academic product are met without question, the voice of the social party is barely audible. It would seem that the university senate, the faculty council, or the institute council are places where at least internal stakeholders (students, PhD students, employees) can present what they object to. This entitlement, however, omits—insurmountable for many—the obstacle in the form of competency dependencies. How can we, in accordance with the law and academic custom, effectively question the validity of decisions taken by these units? How can we influence the authorities that lead them? To whom, for example, should a PhD student ill-treated by their supervisor turn or where can students unjustly evaluated by a lecturer who is also a dean, a director of the institute or friend of the director go?

No less pessimistic conclusions arise when we look for a place where the voices of external stakeholders of the university and its (potential) whistleblowers would be heard (cf. Wieczorek, 2009; Korczyński, 2009). Their voice does not sound at all. It does not sound because we can in vain look for a mechanism within the university's structure to promote and protect them (Piotrowska-Piątek, 2014; cf. Wojciechowska-Nowak, 2008). The matter seems hopeless to such an extent that those authorities would need to be told who and with what effect takes on both of these roles. Neither a concern for stakeholders nor the protection of whistleblowers are the tasks that give sleepless nights to the Polish universities' authorities. When we analyze this observation through the prism of the concessions they made to the political environment, it is worth asking about the losses incurred by society. According to the example given in the introduction, university qualifications for the certification of knowledge and skills are used less and less in the process of elite reproduction. Both factors form a highly dysfunctional system. Legal requirements concerning scientific and artistic degrees and titles make studying a necessary condition for professional development for many people. However, is it a sufficient condition? This, among others, should be resolved by the social partners of the university (cf. Geryk, 2010).

[3] It is difficult to find a university that does not include the issues raised in its development strategy.

The postulate of social evaluation of (dominant) knowledge institutions and the accompanying requirement for their leaders to be aware of the moods of their social environment corresponds with research into the quality of education conducted by Polish universities. Self-control is more important than external feedback in the way they work. It dominates and at the same time, it replaces it. It is not about a situation in which external stakeholders and whistleblowers take the initiative in commenting on university affairs. It would mean going to the other extreme. Their fears, even those best justified, do not give a meaningful insight into the university realities. Hence the conclusion that a model solution is a dialogue that takes into account the capabilities of this institution and the needs and expectations of those whom it addresses. Meanwhile, it is the way it is. A monologue replaces dialogue. What is striking in this process is the presence of a silent majority rarely threatening the integrity (especially image integrity) of this autopoietic system (Dahrendorf, 1993; Luhmann, 1994). Conceptual references to Niklas Luhmann and Ralf Dahrendorf are semi-useful. This institution does not have to worry about its future. No matter how far it distances itself from social partners, they will still need it as an entitlements distributor.

The above shows that the university's weapon that it can use to fight those who would criticize it is violence. In the case of internal stakeholders, it has a palette of resources stemming from the employment relationship and academic custom. The other opponents are victims of more sophisticated depreciation techniques. Pierre Bourdieu writes about symbolic violence consisting in perpetuating the belief about a primacy of competence of some people over others (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 162–163). In the academic realities, it manifests itself in the monopolisation of powers by scientific communities to comment on their own and other people's affairs. Michel Foucault emphasizes the symbolic domination held by a knowledge holder with respect to the desired forms of collective order (Foucault, 1998, pp. 47–48, 86). Finally, Steven Lukes (1981) explains how—in the political practice of Western communities—the power elites reach a persuasive advantage over their social trustee.

Because the last proposal best reflects the complexity of the symbolic incapacitation of the interlocutor, it is worth analyzing it in more detail. Lukes joins the dispute about the conditions for the democratic control of leadership groups. He contrasts the views of pluralists—advocates of the one-dimensional option, and elitists—advocates of the two-dimensional option with his own three-dimensional approach (1981, pp. 9–23). The one-dimensional option is associated by Lukes with the message of the authors claiming that the scale of tensions produced by politically and economically dominant actors remains in close correspondence with the scope of freedoms of a spontaneously communicating society. According to Robert A. Dahl and Nelson W. Polsby, in the cases of violent conflicts between the dominant political groups the authority is closer to the ideal of civil society (Dahl, 1995, pp. 170–188). Among the advocates of the two-dimensional option, Lukes mentions Floyd Hunter and Charles Mills. They observe that the distribution of power in the United States in the second half of the

twentieth century is the domain of "socially irresponsible elites." The two-dimensionality of their leadership lies in the fact that their explicit purpose is to intensify political differences, while the hidden goal is to eliminate them. The power elites, although divided on the outside, create a homogenous pressure group capable of

> [...] excluding the interests of particular individuals or groups during debates at legislative assemblies, in council chambers and other places where decisions affecting community life are made. (Hindess, 1999, p. 30)

Lukes shares the views of the elitists, but he also thinks that they are not radical enough. He supplements the criticism of the hidden dimension of power with reflections on the system of signs and symbols ordering the public sphere, independent of the will and social knowledge of the actor (1981, pp. 19–30). The result of the proposed correction is the disclosure of problems that are undiagnosed (or not fully recognized) by proponents of the two-dimensional option. In addition to the behind-the-scenes activities, the power elites may abuse their powers with impunity because they are able to manipulate the criteria for their assessment (the third dimension of power). They exert pressure on layers without distance from social facts, exploiting gaps in the management and control system. That which was supposed to protect society against the violence of political circles, to make it capable of expressing their own opinions, turns into a tool for dominating it.

The need to transfer political considerations into the university space is justified by the question of a place where its critics could (successfully) initiate a debate on the shortcomings of this institution and their social consequences. According to the representatives of the theory of rational choice, some do not see the failure mechanisms of knowledge and skills distribution; others see them, but—for various reasons—they wash their hands of the issue; others protest but are ignored by those whom the protest concerns (cf. Arrow, 1979; 1985, pp. 25–52; Stiglitz, 2004, pp. 7–12, 60, 78). The argument here is the lack of premises confirming the opposite claim. Despite the huge challenges facing Polish universities, it is difficult to find examples of their genuine involvement in the dialogue with the public.[4] It should be stressed that this is not about a "dialogue" undertaken according to the criteria set by the university. The goal of the postulated undertaking is to protect its social partners. Until they become capable of admonishing what is in the interest of each of them individually and—in their opinion—of what threatens the public interest, the (Polish) university, apart from the sin of omission, will be blamed for failing to do what it teaches. That's another accusation.

[4] In another place, I explain what the postulate of dialogue has in common with the doctrine of corporate social responsibility (Rotengruber, 2011, pp. 166–250).

3. Homo Academicus Polonus. Summary

In the time of progressing atrophy of social ties—the crisis of the welfare state, intensified competition on the labour market, or cultural wars breaking out in many places—the postulate of social responsibility of public institutions is gaining importance. We are involuntarily looking for guides who would be able to reverse the unfavourable trend. An important place among them is the university. Even if it is assumed that it does not have a monopoly on the knowledge of how to manage common affairs, it is difficult to question that it possesses the right to certify it and to bestow prestige on the certified person. The obviousness of this statement comes from the fact that both public institutions and commercial organizations are with almost no exceptions managed by university graduates.

The University is leading the research in, among others, principles of socially responsible management. This knowledge turns into a scientific and educational offer. It would seem that this makes the university an arbiter in social and political disputes. Nothing could be further from the truth. The university's scientific and educational resources are a commodity whose final recipient is a political principal. However, they are not the only recipient. Nevertheless, they pay for the academic product, set limits on the mode in which the product goes into the hands of its social recipient. The ethical ambivalence of the university is a consequence of the diversification of its evaluation perspectives. Because it has to take into account the voice of stakeholders and whistleblowers, it is (almost) necessary for it to create a semblance of social responsibility.

The described state of affairs prompts us to think about the reasons why the academic environment is so easily put under pressure by circumstances (cf. Melosik, 2009). Instead of increasing emancipatory capital and turning it into a tool of resistance against irresponsible or incompetent decision makers, these groups choose methods drawn from the world of politics to "outplay" the social interlocutor by appropriating the criteria of their communication correctness. Where does their permission for ethical mediocrity come from, how do they deal with the dissonance between what they teach and what they do? These problems deserve a thorough examination. Hence, the call for research into the rules of academic life in Poland that closes our considerations.[5] It is worth analyzing not only for the scientists. A consequence of the university's shortcomings is the consolidation of patterns of behaviour that help other institutions and professional groups to escape social control (Rotengruber, 2015). The knowledge of the latter—including their university experience—apparently does not go to waste. Therefore, this postulate should be treated not only as an incentive for the examination of the conscience of academia, but above all, as an appeal to undertake a common search for the social credibility criterion of the university.

[5] Research inspired by the achievements of Pierre Bourdieu (1988).

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