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on the idea and history of a unique institution

A translation by Lee Hoinacki of the keynote address delivered at the Bremen Rathaus, September 23, 1991, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the University of Bremen

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Ivan Illich

TEXT AND UNIVERSITY - ON THE IDEA AND HISTORY OF A UNIQUE INSTITUTION

The day before yesterday, for the first time, I rode on Germany's response to the Japanese bullet train, the country's new high-speed public transportation. Only minutes - but who knows how many miles before the almost imperceptible stop at Hannover - a stranger greeted me, calling me by name. It turned out he had read my work two decades ago, and now recognized my face. Like myself, he was on his way to Bremen, where the university was celebrating the twentieth anniversary of its foundation. We got out together and transferred to the Bremen train, meanwhile beginning a friendly conversation. A professor of solid state physics, he had been involved in the design of the circuits that decelerate the monster arrow on which we rode. From the way he was enthralled by his research and able to explain it, I thought he must be a master engineer and teacher.

From silicon and germanium our conversation soon veered toward the theme of my keynote address today. Discussion with this man sharpened my awareness of a conceptual sore point I want to take up:

> Why do so many people in 1991, whether academic colleagues or lay taxpayers, consider him and his associates scientists whose labors occasionally bring forth something useful like the brakes of a very fast train?

As well as a good number of my fellow faculty at Penn State's Solid State Lab, this man knows that such a belief is plain, pious nonsense - most of today's science is fundable research measurable in its expected dollar output. Almost anything that goes under the name of physics, genetics or systems theory, but also linguistics, psychology or even philosophy is financed because its results translate - hopefully - into economic gain.

The university in Germany, no less than in the U.S., has become a service for sale, ever more ready to hire itself out to governments or multinationals. It makes itself important through communal navel-gazing. Pedagogues and astronomers, gene researchers and sociologists, all work to process data and present them for verification to a management committee of peers, that is, like-minded data producers. What goes on in the lab has lost all but a tenuous tie to sense and meaning, let alone truth. Why is it, we puzzled, that so few of those who share our conviction are willing to come out and confess this? I promised my co-traveler that during the coming night, which would be sleepless because of the nine hour time differential in my flight across the Atlantic, I would rewrite my speech. I needed to stress that what defines the university is not some post-Enlightenment science, but the new medieval writing technique that appeared in the twelfth century. It is this that makes university culture unique.

We are here to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of this university. When it was founded, the border between science and technology stood as firm as the Wall in Berlin. That border has now been discarded, just as the Wall was dismantled. Yesterday, the first day of this celebration,

we heard an avalanche of claims for the unique scientific enterprise constituted by the university. I am under the impression that these claims sounded as hollow to many of you as the ritual appeals for Leninist and Marxist thought sounded to critical persons in the GDR just a few years ago. A landslide has washed away the belief in science that legitimated the University of Bremen at the time of its foundation. The need to justify its continued claim on tax money by putting on lab coats and pretending faithfulness to scientific method lies as far behind us as the quite recent appeals to Marx in "real existierenden Sozialismus." Those who twenty years ago wanted to found a new kind of university now have the opportunity to recognize that their foundation has survived the demise of assumptions that had originally legitimated it.

In a special way, this university was conceived as an adventure. Today, many of those here assembled remember the origins. They can look back, celebrating the fact that their institution, Phoenix-like, has outlived the science fetishism that reigned in the epoch of its foundation, and ought now to survive its implosion: the collapse of literature into deconstructive criticism, the collapse of biology into genetic engineering, the collapse of language studies into communications and, most critically, the vanishing of science into engineering.

In this perspective, your anniversary comes just at the right time to provide you with the chance to show that the intellectual and moral leadership of the university's initiators has not been paralyzed by the wedding of tax money to fundable research. Since the war in Vietnam, such a union has characterized academic life in Germany, as much as in the U.S. and France. The University of Bremen is known, not only for the nationwide discussions that accompanied its foundation, but also for the survival of a band of colleagues committed to a university able to renew itself. To share in this spirit of renewal could be, for our students, an immeasurably more invigorating experience than the opening of the Berlin Wall. It challenges them to take a distanced view of the fundamental epistemic break that occurred in the lifetime of all those now over twenty. Let others find fault "mit der real existierenden Wissenschaftlichkeit," or propose new forms of bondage between science and chairs. I propose that we think like historians, that we remember the past: The tie between university and science was a temporary dalliance, a characteristic of just one short epoch in the long history of a venerable institution. I propose that we celebrate our ability to outgrow the crippling trap of scientific productivity, which now threatens to reduce the pursuit of higher learning to some form of communication.

Here is my thesis: I believe that the university does not need to justify its existence by insisting on the scientific character of its methods. I believe that the disentanglement of tested knowledge production - and training for it - from the aims of the university is an urgent and necessary condition for the survival of the institution's credibility during the nineties. Unless the faculty cultivate a self-conscious cynicism in front of so-called science, they seriously jeopardize the university's ability to survive the epoch of scientism. And that epoch has now closed.

To carry out this task, one must first gain some distance. For that reason I draw your attention to the fact that the university, 800 years ago, grew strong on the tree of the artes, as a new branch. I will insist that this innovation was tethered to a technical breakthrough that is generally overlooked by both historians of culture and those of technology. The historically important technique is that of creating texts that can be read at a glance. This renewal of scientia, thanks to a new technique of encoding, created the atmosphere within which the science that

Popper - as much as Kuhn or Luhmann - speaks about, could come into being. Viewed in this perspective, the university does not derive status from its spawn, namely, science, but western science achieves some claim to dignity because it bloomed in the institutional shadow of the academic cloister. This skeptical approach to academic history seems to be at home in Bremen.

Christian Marzahn, Rector of the University and old friend, pointed this out to me. You, Christian, were the one who led a delegation of colleagues to the Mexican village of Ocotepec, and invited me to speak in this Hanseatic council chamber. Further, I owe to you the idea of making "reform" the theme of my talk. You made me a gift when you arrived in Mexico, a guidebook to this city that has adopted you. You titled the publication, "Bremer Ernst" - "Bremen's Seriousness." There you relate the story of a four hundred-year-long tussle between learned tradition and civil autonomy that still goes on. The city fathers, whose hall and chairs we occupy for this one day, have consistently cultivated a cynical stance toward whatever smacked of academy, religious or secular.

Early this morning, with your guidebook under my arm, I went to inspect the façade of this building. I searched the spandrels that hug the arches of the loggia. And, in the left triangle over the fourth arch, I found what I was looking for: a delightful emblem for this day on which the faculty have invaded the seat of city government. My eyes were tickled by the bulging behind of Lady Brema, riding the dolphin who rushes out of the wall to face you. With a mischievous smile, she balances herself backwards on the slippery fish, and with her right hand swings the city key like a trophy. Triumphantly she looks over her right shoulder into the complementary spandrel filled by Sophia, her drab sister. You sense the fun Commerce has teasing Academe, who buries her pointed nose in a magic square held up in the guise of a mirror. The contrast between the beaming Matron and the earnest Spinster is heightened by that between the lusty grin of the dolphin and the serious look of the spaniel in the lap of the old maiden. We must thank Mayor Scherff for allowing us to meet in Brema's home. Otherwise, we would have been forced to gather in that cement maze of knowledge management that has grown up as a campus on the outskirts of town. Lady Brema is the symbol of the special anti-clericalism that is part of the civic culture of this city.

Such boisterous this-worldliness, however, could only too easily frustrate the analysis that I propose. On the one hand, a critical look could exhaust itself in objections to academic waste. On the other, it could reduce a needed university reform to the historic criticism of bad versus good science. That might have sounded like quite a progressive idea twenty years ago. At that time, the scientific character of women's studies, social ecology or acupuncture were still open questions, while the historical study of science as ideology was just taking off. For the sake of a dignified survival of the university, a much more radical antagonism between higher learning and science will have to be acknowledged.

The forms of thought determined by systems theory have subverted the possibility of searching for truth, reality or a rational ethics. An arbitrary game has become the central feature in postmodern literary criticism, as is the case in computer science or journalism also. A way of thinking that was launched during the time of Alan Turing has gained such acceptance today in a Penrose or a Luhmann that "science" has become a word-crumb, so burdened with connotations that one can no longer use it to denote anything exactly. More and more, science is a plastic word,

in the sense assigned by Uwe Pörksen - amoeba-like and slippery, as versatile as a Lego block. Starting with it, one cannot arrive at anything new, that is, reform something. At best, science still serves to formulate applications for funding.

The renewal needed goes far beyond a new look in academic administration or a critique of peer judgments. The kind of reform I advocate entails a disciplined reflection on the sort of thing the university has become, compared to the community of scholars in the historical circumstances that first established it in the world. How and why did this new form arise out of the monastic cloister in the thirteenth century? How did the new kind of study reformulate the traditions of studium, the artes, the disputatio, and scholarship in that century that also gave birth to the contractual movement of citizens into towns, and the uniquely European notion of peasantry? This moment also inaugurated the great age of pilgrimage, the new free fraternities and mendicant orders, consensual marriage. The question is poignant because university renewal is not a recent conceit; it reaches back in an unbroken tradition to the institution's origins in places like Bologna and Cambridge.

What are the necessary conditions under which one could discuss the continued existence of this historically unique institution? What I would like especially to celebrate today is the continued ability of a secular institution - singular, traditional, European - to reform itself in the age of computer science through reflection on "the novel thing" it produced in the thirteenth century.

I say "thing," and mean a thing, a technique. I see the university in the mirror of the material object, the thing which constitutes the material foundation for a new conceptual and social form: the newly written, visible page. In the second third of the twelfth century the texture of the page-picture changes; a new technique of writing lay-out makes university teaching possible, indeed, the elements of the technique call forth the institutionalized praxis of a different sort of teaching. The material foundation of the spirit informing the university was a complex technique pioneered by the scribes. Through their new physical devices, and even more through the use of these techniques, the manuscript page is transformed from an arrangement of singing lines to the reflection of an imagined order. Visual ordinatio replaces contemplative chewing, ruminatio, as an activity that calls for a renewal of learning.

The customary metaphor, voces paginarum - singing pages - precisely defined the attitude toward the book. Reading was then a form of listening, not only for the one who heard the lectio, but also for the reader himself. If you examine the descriptions of the act of reading as an ethologist, an investigator of behavior, you will clearly notice this transformation. Until well into the high Middle Ages, reading is described as an oral activity. The reader moves through the line as through an orchard, picking the words, sampling and tasting them. Page-by-page progress through a book is understood as a journey, a pilgrimage. It is talked about as an adventure that leads across one pagus after another, and on each page fruits of ever new taste are picked and savored. The reader is asked to chew over at night the nourishment he got from the book during the day. Reading was an oral-auditive activity, and no distinction was made between the book read with one's own eyes and that read through another's. Peter the Venerable, the great Abbot of Cluny, who arranged the first translation of the Koran, provides an illustrative story. The monk in the neighboring cell reported that, during the night, Peter's cell sounded like a beehive. In the darkness, mumbling, Peter ruminated on the day's reading.

Reading was a psycho-physical activity that engaged all the senses. This comes out clearly from hundreds of texts: reading is described as wandering and resting, a grasping and masticating. As a result, the medieval teacher's instructions sound strange to our ears. He explains to his students, vexed by the words they have not understood, that they should learn from the oxen in the stable. They should bring the words back into their mouths, regurgitate the crumbs from their stomachs, chew them over and over again, wetting them with their saliva. Reading was a haptic, psychomotor devouring and comprehending of the sounding word, always a loud activity. The monastic scriptorium was a noisy place. Therefore, copying was forbidden in Cistercian monasteries during the hours of "the great silence."

The physical, material conditions that enable today's pedagogues to teach reading did not then exist. The separation of words on the papyrus or parchment scroll was unknown in antiquity, as also punctuation marks. Rhetorical, similar to musical notations, marked the places where the voice should be raised, lowered or broken off. Even in the transition from scroll to codex - with its cut and bound pages - the "picture" of the page remained lines of uninterrupted letters that could become comprehensible only with the help of rhythmic indicators. The first separation of words on parchment is attributed to the Venerable Bede. Previously, this only occurred on marble or bronze tablets.

The invention of the empty space separating lemata was devised by Bede, supposedly to assist thick-headed Scots who, it was claimed, could not learn Latin without word separation. Since they lived on the other side of the limes, Latin was really a foreign language to them. If anyone today does not believe that our reading is impossible without separating words, he can make a simple test: Put any text on a computer screen, hit "delete spaces," and then try to understand what appears - without sounding the letters.

Books were not written by the author's hand but "orated"; they were dictata, not dicta. The writing was done by a handyman, an amanuensis, in antiquity usually a slave. Reading meant voicing; but you could not make vocal sense of the Indian line of letters, uninterrupted by spaces, unless you got into the hang of the rhythm. Knowledge of the customary rhythms also belonged to the art of dictation, of writing, as much as to reading.

Between 1130 and 1200, something fundamental changed. Over one and a half dozen small devices produced an entirely new technology. The shape of the Latin letters, the basic elements of the new technology, the two dozen signs, change only minimally. But these signs, the letters, are used in an entirely different architecture. The separation of words, common since Bede; chapter titles, already in use by Isidore of Seville; underlining and separation with subtitles pioneered at the end of the first millennium - all come together, and come into regular use. Punctuation replaces the rhetorical notations. The spaces between lines are emptied of glosses, and a small moon or star marks the place where a "footnote" belongs. The individual page is planned so that the main text, together with its corresponding gloss, fits. Quotations are marked, often with a different color of ink. Chapters are numbered, sometimes even paragraphs, and not just for Holy Scripture. Therefore references become possible, both within the codex and to other codices. A table of contents can now be provided.

The alphabetical subject index appears. Alphabetical word lists were already used occasionally in vernacular glosses to Latin texts, but subjects had never before been listed together

in alphabetical order. The idea was as surprising at that time as it would be today to ask a grammar school class to recite the days of the week or months of the year in alphabetical order.

Albert the Great apologized for an index in which leopardo followed leo alphabetically - everyone simply knew that the leopard is a symbol of Christ's meekness, and the lion of his power. Albert explained that such an arrangement had nothing to do with order; while it might be untenable intellectually, it was indeed useful didactically; one could indicate on one line every place in the book where lion occurred. The gate to "random access" was thereby opened. Three hundred years before leo appeared as the first word on page 137 of all copies from the same edition - something possible only in copies printed from the same stock - by the end of the twelfth century at least two monasteries in central France made it their special job to prepare concordance and subject indices for Holy Writ - to facilitate the preparation of sermons.

Parallel to this new optical technology based on a different use of pen, ink, ruler and parchment, bookbinding also went through a change: The book became smaller and easier to handle. It was printed on paper, and bound with new methods of sewing the signatures; it increased in portability, and could more often be privately owned. At the end of this technical revolution in the scriptorium, the book was more like what fills our libraries today than the "vineyard of the text" had been at the beginning of the century. Pagina had been transformed from an acoustical to an optical instrument.

The more I reflect on the techno-genesis of the modern page, the clearer I grasp who I am:

> - In the train of my thoughts, I am aware of the parentheses, the italics, the paragraphs, the need for a footnote here, an idea out of the bibliography there. In the plans I have for this next semester, some periods are blocked out, others underlined. On my memory's note pad with the agenda for lunch with Professor Marzhan, two new translations of Winnie the Pooh into African languages stand, right after the title of a new journal, Symposion, dedicated to "con-bibiality." When I tell you my thoughts, it's as if I were reading them off from inside me. To an alarming degree, the structure of the page is the outline of my thoughts, plans and memories. My experience is biblionomic; I have become a biblionome.
>
> - Even in the liveliest and most intimate conversations, I am reminded of books next to the faces of people. I know where a certain book stands, I remember its size and type face exactly. I know I got an idea I'm discussing in a paragraph on a right-hand page, somewhere in the lower third. As with a colleague whose mustache I remember before I can hit on his name, so with the color of a book's binding before I can bring up its title. Again and again, a page will serve to orient me. I continually turn to a page, and am turned on by a page. All this make me a bibliotrope.
>
> - Finally, the outward expression of my bibliophilic character is seen in the reverence with which I handle paper and books. I sometimes envy the monks of the early Middle Ages, when book meant Bible, and arca the chest where treasures, relics and parchment

> scrolls were guarded. These men were true bibliophiles; they cherished the inscribed object.

My insight into the revolution on the page in the twelfth century first brought me to understand the modes and ways in which my faculty of reasoning was characterized by unexamined assumptions which, in the first place, only became possible through the new writing technology. Without hesitation, I demand to be given an "original text." I just assume that it comes from a spoken language, and is then poured into another language, as into a new container. It seems logical, even natural, that arguments be neatly ordered in numbered columns that face me. I search through the index for the places in the book that will answer my questions.

I spontaneously took the notes in my hand, with key words neatly arranged, to organize this lecture. Only by looking back into the ethology of reading around the year 1100 do I realize the extent to which my assumptions make me a foreigner to the teachers of old, make me into a creature of a very peculiar epoch. I understand this because the first lecture notes of this kind that I know about appeared in the Middle Ages, and were made by Thomas Aquinas and his contemporaries. They had rediscovered cursive writing, each inventing his own scribble, and used it to fix the ordinatio of their argument. For me today, it seems obvious that my text is like the mirror of my mind, the anchorage of my thought, the map of my reflections. In this process, not only my relation to the page, but also my relation to the world has become bibliophilic, bibliotropic and biblionomic. I taste, chew and belch very little when reading; I read in dead silence.

This technical revolution took place in the course of just one generation in the high Middle Ages. It was conditioned by, was part of, and also the result of, a fundamental institutional reform. The browsing, singing, muttering reading and learning had found their home in the monastic cloister. Writing and the book were, first of all, the Bible. Everything else written existed only in terms of that text. Ever since antiquity, reading had been, primarily, the lectio divina - the deciphering of the two books that came from God's hand, the Bible and nature. During this entire epoch, up to the time of Guibert and Abelard, reading was understood as a work of ob-oediencia, of obedient listening to the sound of wisdom descending from the past. Just as no distinction was made in the earlier Middle Ages between philosophy and theology, so also between reading and prayer.

This changes with the new technical style of generating the image of the page. A new type of social relationship to the codex is reflected in a new form of assembling around a teacher. At the beginning of the century, the Age of Abelard or Hugh of St. Victor, the teacher is shown at his pulpit with his eyes fixed on the codex, addressing a couple of listeners whose eyes are glued to his lips, or he is portrayed as "dictating into the pen in his hand" - as the current idiom put it. By the end of the century, the miniatures show a different scene: A dozen students squat in front of their teacher, each with an opened book on his knees. The teacher looks at the outline of his argument in quaestiones and articuli, distinctiones and responsoria. To be able to follow the complex Gothic ordinatio, a student simply needs an optical crutch, which he finds in the architecture of the book in front of his eyes.

A reading, a lectura, is no longer primarily a ceremony in which believers assemble for a common tasting of the voces paginarum, as was the case with Bernard of Clairvaux's homilies. Now the carefully organized text-page, the output of proto-industrial stationers, is designed to permit the students to internalize and deepen the outline the teacher has before his inner eye. They are being trained to answer each of the multiple objectiones the teacher formulates to each doctrinal point he defends. As a result of this new reading, the fides quaerens intellectum - the theological attempt to flesh out belief with reason, can henceforth be formally distinguished from the intellectus quaerens fidem - the philosophical setting for faith. Both are optically based on the new page; both aim at a symmetry between the outline on the parchment and the order it mirrors in the mind. Both the new philosophy and the new theology are split off from lectio divina.

In fact, "grazing in the pastures of Scripture," regurgitative "digestion of the page in the darkness of the night" - common ways of describing lectio - become increasingly pale metaphors. A new term, lectio spiritualis, dislodges the term, lectio divina. The new notion now designates pious reading carried out either in the monastery, or in contrast to the real thing. The lectio scholastica becomes paradigmatic, autonomous, and located in a new setting - a place for critical thinking, arguing and learning - the universitas studiorum. It stands for a cultural split, a stylistic schism or rift that has been of deeper cultural consequence in the constitution of the West than any substantive, scientific or doctrinal reformation since. The university institutionalized and trivialized the new sensual, fantastic and conceptual possibilities articulated by the technical innovations in the scriptorium.

The technogenesis of the western image of biblio-trope has been examined, but usually understood as an implication of the printing press. McLuhan's argumentative genius led to widespread acceptance of the opinion that Gutenberg's invention uniquely shaped western, - nay, modern - modes of thought. Elisabeth Eisenstein and William Ivins superbly demonstrated how the documents which create the epistemic space that harbors the modern mind rest on the use of the press. Without printed and continually revised tables, there would be no modern astronomy. Without the visibility of plants in woodcuts and living tissue in copper engravings, there would be no botanical classification or anatomical morphology. Without print, my demand for critically edited texts would not even appear to me as a Fata Morgana. This situation led George Steiner to speak about a breakthrough, the origin of the epoch of "bookish reading" in the fifteenth century.

Four decades of historical research on what the press implicitly says, rather than on what it explicitly does, have solidly established the symbolic historiography of techniques. The technologization of the word, of which Walter Ong speaks, might well be considered the deepest form of cultural technogenesis. However, in the reception of these rich studies concerning the imprint of the press on the forma mentis of the modern age, research on the earlier cognitive transformation resulting from the Gothic and high scholastic revolution in the scriptoria was paralyzed. Steiner is right; the manuscript book of around 1350 was much closer to the object we now call by this noun than to any writ before then. Similarly, the generative axioms of bibliotropic self-perception were solidly in place one or two centuries before the Gutenberg Bible. Furthermore, the ideal type of institutional form founded on this newly textured ideal of learning as a social activity - the university - was not structured, but only reequipped, by movable type, woodcuts, engravings and book fairs.

Of course, there have been and are in all high cultures special institutions for the growing up of society's "guardians": the Moslem medersa and marestan; Jewish jeshivas; Brahman ashrams; Buddhist nunneries and the Aztec calmecac; all in some way, "learning cloisters." The Chinese system of selection by examination was specifically taken as a model and adapted by French republican educators. Fundamentalist sects and totalitarian movements have aped novitiates. However, there is one reason why the university cannot be put into the same pot. Even attempting to do so precludes the understanding of something that makes the university unique.

Among all traditional forms of advanced learning, the university is the only one that has succeeded in prying loose the acquisition of knowledge from advancement in sensual self-discipline. In the older monasteries of the Benedictine tradition, and in the newer movement of canons regular - formed in a new style, adapted to city life - ascetical and intellectual discipline were inextricably tied to each other. Then, with the foundation of the mendicant orders in the thirteenth century, a new conception of a learned fraternity came into being. The novel institutional form can be initially grasped in terms of a bifurcation in the etiology of reading. Up to the twelfth century, the monastery, with its lectio divina, had been the place that integrated ascetical and intellectual pursuits. Now, in the mendicant orders, a fraternal life of prayer in small communities prepared roaming preachers, while it also produced most of the faculty members who gave lectiones, academic readings, in the new institution.

One consequence of splitting the modes of approach to the page and the architectonical setting for the lectio was the interiorization of this division. The social pursuit of higher learning acquired growing independence from personal commitment to spiritual formation. The split goes much deeper than what is generally called the onset of secularization. It is also more profound than the chasm between the two sides of academic culture examined a generation ago by C.P. Snow. It bespeaks a somatic transformation in our societies: the separation and subordination of the ear with respect to the eye - what Jacques Ellul calls "the humiliation of the word." It indicates the separation of theology from the liturgy. It permits associating the practice of a morally engaged personal refinement in attitudes towards the other with theoretical advances characterized by ethical neutrality. And this is one of the presuppositions for the growth of that science with which I began these reflections. The idea that the artes and scientiae could be cultivated apart from the practice of virtue and prayer, that the tradition of learning and that of asceticism could be assigned to distinct loci in society, has been implicit in the West only since the founding of the university. Since then, the various attempts to reintegrate monk and scholar, to devise religious rules that mingle novitiate and scholasticate, liturgy and study, but without merging them, show that the new autonomy of the intellect was also felt as a loss by many reformers.

The break with ascetical tradition in the new style of high literacy is so thorough that I do not quite know how to speak about what has been lost without creating the impression of inflaming desires and pleading for practices understood today as monkish and pietistic, and certainly unrelated to any kind of institutional reform meaningful to the majority of my colleagues. During my classes in the forthcoming winter semester, I hope to show that this is not so. I will detail how much higher learning has been impoverished by disregarding traditional practices of penance, fasting and other sensual abnegations. We have even lost an appropriate vocabulary for these

actions, but without understanding them our intellectual tradition cannot be fully tasted, smelled, gazed upon and enjoyed.

I cannot be careful enough in the choice of my words to avoid being misunderstood. I am not here to abuse a festive occasion, nor to denigrate my host. I speak about what has been, I try to describe what has been forgotten, because I hope that I can in some way recover its essence without giving up the enormous beauty and wealth of the bibliophilia of my nurture in youth and pleasure in my adult teaching. My argument is not a lamentation, but a cautionary tale. The new scribal product has decisively distanced later generations from lectio divina, which can only be practiced today as a form of heroism by small circles of committed friends. In the twenty years since the foundation of this university, academic practices have even more radically removed recent generations from the text as a magical mirror of the mind.

One can hardly claim that the organization and priorities of the new universities of today give any impression of critical philological and bibliophilic commitment. Within our generation the text, originating in faculty offices and rapidly rushed into print by the modern press, has become a staple of minor importance in education. Social ideology has led to the abandonment of any philological prerequisites for admittance to a university. In spite of all the resolutions of educational bureaucrats and dissident reformers, the litterae humaniores have become de facto subsidiary subjects, even in the so-called liberal arts.

Allow me to explain rather than complain about this loss of the essential elements of a university, leaving us with its bare, rattling bones. Just as the page, the carrier of singing lines, was displaced and silenced around 1160 by a visible, organized, silently readable, arbitrarily accessible text, so something equally radical is forcing itself between the biblionomic text and the modern reader. Provisionally, and for the sake of brevity, I will call this something the "screen."

Thirty years ago, the pioneers of the act of turning knowledge into garbage, such as Reader's Digest-type magazines, designedly used graphics embedded in a box on the page to underpin the waning legitimacy of words. Tables, diagrams and formulas; photographs from high altitudes and others of things so small that they belong in the world of the invisible; any kind of image - all were framed with the intent to reduce the text to mere legend. What happened in fast-food publishing soon became standard in textbooks. With their so-called pedagogic devices - graphs, illustrations, slogans and snobbish quotations - they denigrated the word and reduced the text to the status of commentary, gloss or caption. The technologists of information shower us with multidimensional, no longer understandable hypertext that forces us to buy ever bigger hard drives and ever faster chips.

A transformation possibly as profound, but enormously sadder than the changeover from singing lines on the vineyard-like parchment into a mirror of mental ordinatio is now underway. The mode of presentation, the place-less anomaly in which the screen image appears, its timeless speed - all make it very difficult to ask students to accompany their teacher in the struggle for the author's meaning. Not only in linguistics, but in literature too, students are trained to forgo anything that would formerly have been called reading. Instead, they glory in lightning-like receptions of messages, and in their ability to trace, manage, and reformat these strings. Some who come to my classes are so far removed from traditional intercourse with a book that they want to identify their scrolling through icons on a screen with the stroll on a pagus of cowhide!

It is precisely this resistance to accepting the fact that the most fundamental verbs have a history that helps me to make a point about the historicity of institutions. To illustrate the issue, I argue that walking was a different activity before personnel transport came into existence, gazing referred to a different ocular act before images had become the main output of industry and, analogically, reading denoted distinct ethological categories in different epochs. The understanding and enjoyment of the eye in front of a page covered with Chinese ideograms is physiologically and psychologically an experience that does not lend itself to comparison with reading the linear letters of phonetic spelling. The shared celebration of a singing line cannot be understood without distancing oneself from our bookish reading.

Such an ethologically based, historiographic typology of reading makes the university appear as the prototypical social institution that coins homo textualis. What do I mean by this?

-- the self-understanding of the human being as one capable of thought that can be remembered as a line, written yesterday, and reread in the present;
-- the self-understanding of the human being as one endowed with a conscience that can be examined as you would consult a book;
-- the understanding of stable relationships such as marriage, citizenship and professional status as the result of contractual arrangements;
-- the belief in knowledge that can be fixed, tested, and falsified;
-- respect for the originality and authorship of an individualistic self.

This humanistic ideal, which went through several major forms in the course of the last 800 years, is now threatened. Our students are no longer born - as we were - into an institutional web that makes one grow up around the metaphor of the page. To struggle for this humanistic tradition in the age of total communication has become an option to be pursued heroically, against the grain of the day.

The choice can be highlighted through the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of Bremen's university. This institution was founded in the age of TV, only to find itelf fighting to survive in the age of the computer. Screens today form an umbrella of optical make-believe that to a large extent has eroded the trust of each in the trustworthiness of his or her common sense. Our academic faculties are split between those who would assign to the university the task of higher information management and facility of communications, and those who treasure the university mainly as the milieu of freedom allowing us to create niches of intense face-to-face inquiry, controversy and conversation. Never in its long history has conflict within this institution been as potentially serious as it is at this moment. Why? Because both these options represent a peculiar kind of challenge to the fundamental originality that brought the university into existence: the institutionalized segregation of the ascetical-mystical pursuit of prayer and charity from the intellectual-critical pursuit of truth.

Both conceptions distance themselves from the bookish, optical textuality that prepared, instrumented and interpreted the new social organization of learning. Those who want to wire knowledge, model consciousness and engineer our biological existence have abandoned the text, replacing it by strings of code. Those who want to nest in niches that are propitious for the

cultivation of the ascetical complement to intellectual pursuits attempt to reform the university in a way more radical than anything ever seen before. They feel secure enough in the humanistic tradition, and free enough in front of all church authorities, to set out on their journey into embodied truth. They believe in the potential strength of friendship to find the courage for cultivating the renunciation of artificially captivating symbols for the sake of a growing awakening of the senses.

The practice of muttering and singing the lectio divina remained alive only in tiny and isolated corners because of the often glorious but continued decay of the contemplative monasteries, and the short-lived fervor of mendicants, poverelli and reformers. One purpose of today's gathering is to clarify the options available for a next stage of the university, avoiding that it become a huge corpse cannibalized by its staff and exploited - albeit with good intentions - by ephemeral sectarian groups. Let me conclude by explaining how I can hope in such university reform.

If I read history rightly, then the foundation of the university has been a major event in church history, less controversial but more deeply determinant than schisms, heresies and reformations. The appearance of the university can be understood as one manifestation of a characteristic that theologians have always ascribed to the Church: universitas semper reformanda, an assembly in a constant process of renewal. Christian Marzahn, in his introduction, referred to our common interest in this conceptual heritage. By his choice of words, Marzhan revealed our mutual pleasure in the use of classical maxims, authorities in learned enquiry. Both of us are enamored of Latin, he with the ancient classical language, I with early Gothic, late-blooming Augustinian rhetoric.

Reforma, often also called revolutio, is one of the words that lift those who have the privilege to use them in their old context above the shackles of current vocabularies. Reforma, at the time of the university's foundation, was the clear remedy for corruptio - not any corruption, but corruptio optimi. For years I've been striving to make a suitable translation of the Latin adage, corruptio optimi pessima. With the translation of corruptio optimi as "Verderbnis des Kostbarsten, des Köstlichsten," Professor Marzhan succeeded in German where I have failed in English. In German, Kost means victuals, nourishment. Köstlich bespeaks oral pleasure, the sweetness and richness that is felt with tongue, nose, lips and lungs. The precious (Kostbare), and the delicious (Köstliche), exist like this only in German. Both words are marvelously ambiguous, because rooted in the same two Latin forms: gustare and constare, "tasting" with the tongue, and "standing for" with the person, respectively. His translation perfectly suits today's celebration because with it he asks a question that opens to the two options I have outlined. Traditionally, humanists have sought to progress from merely digested to critically and historically understood textual study. But the barbarians are already inside the gates. How prevent the university's capitulation before "text management," ending up with an amalgam of senseless and meaningless inputs from information networks - a highy stylized menu of junk food?

The tradition of ecclesia semper reformanda, a community that can purge itself of the worst, which is the good corrupted, is one of our great western heritages. In the belief of my revered teacher, Gerhart Ladner, it is of early Christian origin, even in its most secular forms. Why should we not aim at resurrecting this ancient tradition, under the guise of a reformation of learned reading? Why not let the sense of the Latin phrase be Englished with the words of Shakespeare, the words that end his ninety-fourth sonnet:

> For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;
> Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

What I would like to stand for today is the preservation of what is in good taste - enjoyable reading, embodied reading, with an attitude before the book that echoes in the inner senses. I seek a reading that nourishes, which strengthens when well digested. Just as a requisite askesis and moderation are necessary for enjoyable drinking, so are they needed for pleasurable study. My concern is the care of this sobria ebrietas ... How transmit this sober and sobering intoxication in the midst of being watered with dry information empty of all sense? This question troubles my desire to celebrate, here above the Rose Cellar and the Apostles' Cellar - where the best wine is stored - the future of this university.