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Explanations for professional and public resistance to an "urban mission" can be found in the history of higher education, where two themes emerge, each with its own images that form what George Lakoff and Mark Johnson call a "metaphorical conceptual system." Such systems reflect and help determine how people think and act when they make and respond to social policy. This essay examines the discourses in American social thought and higher education in terms of metaphors and images of the wide-open country and of the walled city to show how pastoralism and gatekeeping have undermined an urban mission.

Greenery vs. Concrete and Walls vs. Doors:

Images and Metaphors Affecting an Urban Mission

A significant variation on Cardinal Newman's idea of a university as a pastoral retreat conducive to solitary scholarship is the idea of a socially involved urban university as a resource to educate the citizens of the city—especially minorities and immigrants and their children—and to serve the city by helping to solve urban problems. However, the idea of such an urban mission has been undermined by both internal and external forces. Within academia it has received mixed reviews, as demonstrated by a faculty reward system that has valued objective and theoretical research over social action research, teaching, or service to the city and its population. Outside of academia, the urban mission has been attacked by massive state budget cuts that have a particular impact on urban institutions and academic support programs.

Inside the urban university some faculty and administrators have resisted calling their institutions "urban," perceiving that the term often connotes inferiority, low standards, and a mere service role. A case in point is the University of Illinois at Chicago, a university located between towering downtown skyscrapers and sprawling neighborhood slums, a site so blatantly urban that students have nicknamed it "the concrete goddess." Nevertheless, in its early days, some faculty there strongly opposed using the word urban in their strategic planning document. As a compromise, "urban university" was used, but "urban mission"

was not, as it had once been the rallying cry of student protests in the late seventies against higher admissions standards, an era of which many faculty did not wish to be reminded.

How can we explain professional and public resistance to the label and idea of an urban university? How can we explain an internal reward structure and an external political structure that don't value expressions of an urban mission such as social action research and academic support programs? Answers can be found in the history of higher education in which two themes emerge, each with its own images, that form what Lakoff and Johnson call a "metaphorical conceptual system." Such systems reflect and help determine how people think and act when they make and respond to social policy.

In this essay, I will examine the discourses in American social thought and higher education in terms of metaphors and images of the wide-open country and the walled city—the first, a geographical conceptual system and the second an architectural one.

The first metaphorical system is the contrast between religious and moral images of the country and secular and immoral images of the city, represented by the contrast between greenery and concrete. A pastoral landscape is a metaphor for the spiritual and intellectual growth fostered by a college education, whereas the asphalt urban landscape is a metaphor for moral corruption and decay.

The second system uses the metaphors of doors and walls to represent tension between the access and gatekeeping functions of colleges. The inviting discourse of open doors and dismantled walls popular in higher education is periodically challenged and superseded by the more restrictive discourse of barriers and gates. The valuing of both the pastoral and gatekeeping features of the university, along with the corresponding tendencies to fear and resist the urban (metrophobia) and to keep out diverse urban peoples—(xenophobia), have undermined the notion of an urban mission. The cloistering of scholarship and learning in the distant green pastures of the country or behind the concrete walls of the city has been a problematic distinction since colonial times. The geographical images have countered an urban mission, although based on the land-grant rural mission, the analogy has the potential to promote the urban mission; architectural images of walls and doors have been used in the higher education literature to extoll and promote an urban mission, although the recent political backlash has damaged educational service to the city.

The Wide-Open Country

A tradition of ambivalence toward the urban university exists in part because of intellectual and popular hostility to the city in general. Morton and Lucia White in *The Intellectual vs. the City: From Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright* summarize the common arguments of American intellectuals against the city:

> It's been thought to be: too big, too noisy, too dusky, too dirty, too smelly, too commercial, too crowded, too full of immigrants, too full of Jews, too full of Irishmen, Italians, Poles, too industrial, too pushing, too mobile, too fast, too artificial, destructive of conversation, destructive of communication, too greedy, too capitalistic, too full of automobiles, too full of smog, too full of dust, too heartless, too intellectual, too scientific, insufficiently poetic, too lacking in manners, toomechanical, destructive of family, tribal, and patriotic feeling" (p. 222).

We can see American fear of the city and the corresponding idealization of the country in the prevalence of urban grime and crime movies and TV shows, the perpetual flight to the suburbs, summer homes and retreats in the country, the popularity of nostalgic country music, and the likelihood that we'll buy beer, cigarettes, or soft drinks if the ad pictures a stream in the woods or a field of flowers. Pastoralism, says Leo Marx in *The Machine in the Garden,* "manifests itself in our leisure time activities, in the piety toward the out-of-doors expressed in the wilderness cult, and in our devotion to camping, hunting, fishing, picnicking, gardening, and so on" (p. 5). It is the machine of the city, says Marx, that interrupts Americans' idyllic reverie.

Prejudice against the corrupt city and in favor of the pure and innocent country has pervaded American thinking since the early days of the republic and has influenced the development of American colleges, which were often founded in small country towns because of, in David Riesman's words, "a specifically American fear of the city and its corruption" (p. 477). Jefferson's early writings were particularly anti-urban, urging Americans to stay on the farm, away from immoral cities and their "diseased" citizens. "I view great cities as pestilential to the morals, the health, and the liberties of man" (*Works*, quoted in White and White, p. 17). "The mobs of great cities," he said, "add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body" (*Works*, quoted in White and White, p. 14). As Frederick Rudolph pointed out, the deepest roots of the American college are rural, contributing to what he calls "the agrarian myth," expressions of which were land-grant agricultural and mechanical schools and small-town booster colleges.

How did this agrarian myth develop? One explanation is found by contrasting the Anglo-American history of higher education with its counterpart on the European continent. The colonial colleges were country colleges modeled partially on the British small-town institutions of Oxford and Cambridge, not on the medieval, continental urban universities. In fact, the British did not establish a university in the city until the 1800s with the University of London. The Universities of Paris, Bologna, Berlin, Prague, Cologne, Vienna, and Padua were built within these cities mainly for safety and the availability of shelter, food, taverns, and brothels. In contrast to these worldly and secular motivations, one of the reasons American colleges were

founded was to save souls—the souls of the students, many of whom were in turn trained to save the souls of the Indians.

The original charters of many American colleges involved religious missions associated with the country—pastoral in both senses of the word. The founders of early American colleges believed that a young man's mind had to be nurtured and his morals developed in the fresh country air, away from the foul-smelling city with its temptations and immigrant hordes. The purity of the Hebrew pastoral lifestyle was in direct contrast to the sinfulness of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The most feared places were seaports such as New York and Baltimore, packed with foreigners and sailors. Because most colleges were originally founded under church auspices, faculty considered the students' piety and morality more important than their intellect. In fact, many faculty were themselves preachers who trained young men for the ministry. Land, and if not land, landscape—the wilderness tamed—was thought to be a source of moral virtue, a component of not only "the agrarian myth," but the campus and dormitory lifestyle, or what Rudolph calls "the collegiate way." A necessary component of "the collegiate way" was small towns in the countryside. A college has always been located on a "campus," meaning "field" in Latin, first used to describe the greensward or lawn outside Nassau Hall at Princeton where young men sat under trees communing with God and nature and contemplating eternal truths. Even the word "academy" comes from the Gardens of Academus, later called Academia, the park in Athens where Socrates and Plato taught.

A bucolic environment was considered the best place in which to educate not just future preachers, but also politicians, and other leaders. Rudolph quotes Mark Hopkins, founder of Williams College, who noted that "fine scenery" was a builder of character (p. 93). An argument against founding the College of Rhode Island in the city of Providence, was that "a Considerable Degree of Retirement is very Requisite in order to acquire any Great Proficiency in literary Pursuits" (p. 92). Similarly, today, billboards advertising Luther College in the rural town of Decorah, Iowa, read, "get away and think," and picture a wooded mountainside in the fall. The caption reads, "A classic, liberal arts college nested among scenic river bluffs, Luther College offers an ideal environment for educational, emotional, and spiritual growth." Nature is associated with the spiritual and serves as a sanctuary that fosters learning. A sanctuary of learning is, in Wordsworth's language, "a green spot 'mid wastes interminably spread."

Rudolph quotes an 1876 popular guide to colleges equating the small scenic country town with moral virtue: "If Yale were located at Williamstown, Harvard at Hanover, Columbia at Ithaca, the *moral character* of their students would be elevated in as great a degree as the *natural scenery* of their localities would be increased in beauty" (p. 93, emphasis added). Likewise, he points out, Cambridge, not Boston, was chosen for Harvard; Ann Arbor, not Detroit, for the University of

Michigan; Berkeley, not Los Angeles or San Francisco for the University of California; Palo Alto, not San Francisco, for Stanford.

A safe, sheltered, and moral environment was all the more essential considering that many college students during the frontier and colonial periods were only 12 to 18 years old. Jencks and Riesman point out that in the nineteenth century, many urban parents sent their children to small-town country colleges such as Amherst, Williams, Dickinson, Franklin, and Lafayette to learn traditional theology and old "rural virtues." In the late 1800s, many universities already located in urban areas either moved or tried to move to more remote, countrified locations. Columbia University moved to Morningside Heights; the University of Pennsylvania moved to West Philadelphia and then tried unsuccessfully to relocate to Valley Forge. David Levine points out that in the early 1900s, prestigious urban universities such as Columbia, New York University, and Western Reserve advertised that their campuses were just like rural enclaves in order to attract middle class Protestants reluctant to send their children to a "corrupt and immigrant populated city" (p. 72). A common pattern of compromise was to locate the liberal arts campus in a "lovely neighborhood" and the professional campus downtown, as is the case, for example, at Chicago's De Paul University.

That these connections between the bucolic and the moral, between the natural and the holy, may be more common in memory, fiction, and the movies than in reality, and that they are part of "the agrarian myth," does not make them any less emotionally and politically potent. John Thelin's anecdote about how President Eisenhower, upon visiting Dartmouth in 1953, remarked, "Why this is how I always thought a college should look!" demonstrates the power of the pastoral, since Eisenhower had recently served as the President of Columbia University in the heart of New York City (p. xv).

The first wave of state universities were all established in small towns in the country between 1750 and 1850: Georgia, North and South Carolina, Vermont, Tennessee, Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, and Iowa. The rural roots were further deepened with the second wave of state universities through the turn of the century—the land-grant movement that established colleges in small towns, but not in large cities, with the exception of the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities. The purpose of the land-grant universities was to serve rural areas, to improve farming and production—truly a rural mission. In 1862, when President Lincoln signed the Morrill Act that began the movement, over 85 percent of the population lived in the country, whereas today over 85percent live in metropolitan areas.

The third wave in the history of American higher education was the establishment of urban universities in response to urbanization, mass migration to the cities, and the educational needs of World War II veterans and their baby boomer children. The G.I. Bill changed American education as much as the Morrill Act had. One third of

the 11 million World War II veterans eventually entered college. The comparison and contrast between the second wave—the land-grant universities—and the third wave —the urban universities—is one of the most important themes of the urban university/urban mission discourse. In fact, the argument for an urban mission is based on the analogy with a rural mission, and an urban-grant mission has been argued in analogy to the rural land-grant mission of the Morrill Act. However, rural images associated with moral, spiritual, and intellectual growth have undermined the urban mission.

The Walled City

The second set of images—an architectural metaphorical conceptual system based on the opposition between the open door and the ivory tower—can also be used to argue either for or against the urban mission. The liberal literature on higher education uses images of open gates and doors to promote an urban mission, whereas the discourses of conservative educational movements and government policy, arguing that an urban mission is a futile waste of the taxpayers' money, has periodically urged the erection of higher admissions standards as demographic gatekeepers and barriers.

Scholars have pointed out that a homologous relationship exists between the modern city and university because they share so many features. They are even defined in similar terms and in terms of each other. Contrasting the common image of walls that kept enemies and undesirables out of medieval cities and universities, the university has been called "a city without walls," and the city, "a university without walls." In terms of equal access to participation in the American economy, both the urban university and the city have been called teachers of democracy. Both are described with similar metaphors as "ports of entry" and "open doors" for immigrants, minorities, the working class, and the poor. As Peggy Elliot asserts in her recent book, *The Urban Campus*: "Traditionally U.S. cities have been the staging areas for the first step on the ladder of integration into American society. Today the staging areas include urban campuses" (p. 14). One of the most dramatic statistics of the 20th century has been the increase in the numbers of urban campus college students.

The lack of metaphorical walls is what many in comparative higher education see as distinguishing the American university system from those in other countries. According to British educator and critic Sir Eric Ashby who is quoted frequently, "[t]he dismantling of walls around the campus is the great American contribution to higher education." Elliot calls the walls of some urban colleges "exceedingly porous." "The impoverished, affluent, young, old, black, white, male, female, Asian, Hispanic, executive in mid-career, high school valedictorian—all of these and more mingle in the urban academy" (p. 76). In the higher education literature from the last three decades, walls are contrasted with doors, gates, gateways, and pathways,

all of which represent democratic access by and to the urban community. Typical is Clark Kerr's recommendation to "replace medieval *walls* with *pathways* to our doors" (p. 111, emphasis added) or Rose Mancuso Edwards' recent observation from an article called "Beyond the Open Door":

> We removed the ivy from our hallowed walls and opened our campus gates to those who a generation ago never would have dreamed of pursuing a college education (p. 309).

Countless books and articles with "door" in their titles have provided analyses of college demographics: *The Opening Door*, *The Half-Opened Door*, and *Beyond the Open Door*. Urban youths were said to be "knocking at the doors" of urban institutions. Women, Elliot says, have been "knocking insistently" (p. 5). Liberal admissions policies have often been called "the open door," which, without strong support programs, have made some universities "a revolving door." Elliot points out that the urban university must be the open door because other doors such as those to jobs that involve manual labor and industrial skills are closing.

However, the urban university has still not provided sufficient access to the American dream for enough members of the urban underclass and groups historically underrepresented in four-year institutions; in fact, the current metrophobic and xenophobic political climate further threatens access. Since the sixties, the urban university has at times been characterized as a fortress with cloistered walls—another term for ivory tower—protecting scholars and their life of the mind from the encroachments of daily life and those undeserving or undesirous of scholarly endeavors. The fortress has centralized activities and power in its own defense rather than diffusing its powers and its knowledge to enable people in the community to defend themselves. Walls represent the meritocratic barriers of Cardinal Newman's idea of a university—the prevailing view that college is only for the deserving who are sorted from the undeserving by the educational gatekeeping of rankings and test scores or the social gatekeeping of economic class distinctions. That view continues to be bolstered by architectural metaphors of gatekeeping and walls. For example, in his recent unflattering characterization of underprepared students at City College of CUNY, James Traub uses "wall" metaphors to defend the value of "mounting the ramparts of higher standards" (p.169) in order to exclude those in need of remedial math and English and restore City's pre-open-admissions image as "City on a Hill," the title of his book.

Conclusion

The small-town religious and rural roots of the American college have contributed to a strong pastoralism, accompanied by metrophobia and xenophobia. The agrarian myththat is identifying the rural with moral and intellectual growth and the urban with moral and intellectual decay has also interfered with internal and external efforts to implement an urban mission. Likewise, despite the prevailing liberal higher education literature of the open-door metaphors of access, current trends in the political sphere and in media coverage are clearly promulgating closed-door, wall-building rhetoric, and policies. Given the current metrophobic and xenophobic climate, gatekeeping is likely to prevail, symbolically walling off portions of the city's population, especially immigrants, minorities, and the underclass from urban institutions and consequent economic opportunities. Since 1990, for example, cuts in the California State University system have locked out 50,000 students. These assaults will intensify the decade-long trend of limited access, demonstrated by Kinnick and Rick's study of 32 urban institutions. Now is the time to counter anti-urban attitudes and policies by reviving the urban mission analogy that was based on the rural mission and by continuing to fight for the dismantling of walls and the (re)opening of doors and gates.

NOTE: This article is adapted from a portion of a book project about the urban mission and the academic support program.

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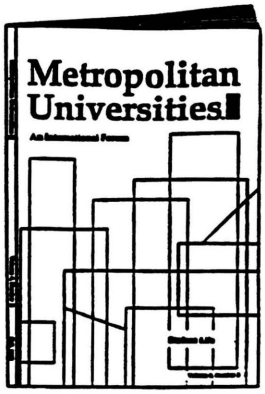

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