

**A (Possible) Forum for Freedom:
Faculty of Philosophy, Chair Philosophy and Applied Philosophy
– A Lecture on Philosophy without Thinker –**

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Abstract: The study analyzes the process and consequences of the merging of philosophy and the university of philosophy, proving its long-distance effects on the basic tendencies of modes of philosophizing. This means that philosophy as a profession became the dominant form of philosophizing, “going on” in various university departments and research institutions mostly without any kind of existential weight. This is what this paper calls a “thinker-deprived philosophy” or “philosophizing”, recalling at the same time the dangers of the Bologna-process in this matter.

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First I should probably write some clarifying words about why I am concerned about, and why I feel interested in the current questions of “university philosophy” as connected to the possibilities of applied philosophy? The first and most direct reference point is the fact that I myself exist in a philosophy department, and it is my activity there that provides the financial basis for the subsistence of my family and myself. To put it briefly: our source of living is that I, **as an employee**, “teach” some “disciplines” traditionally called “philosophical” at the faculty of philosophy in Cluj! Then again – secondly – I “teach” these subjects, or rather, I try to “teach” them so that I am genuinely and constantly interested in the inquisitive and explicit – *recte*: applied philosophical – thematization or activization of the challenges of the meanings of philosophizing.

However, I might also add, I could actually teach here (too) even if all that would **not** interest me **at all** with such an organic and genuinely philosophical involvement and horizon... Therefore I could manage the academically compulsory “introductory” and “concluding” references to the “usefulness and harmfulness” of things by enlisting a series of references and quotes, accessible everywhere in fact, by the trendiest figures of contemporary philosophical publicity in addition to some “classics”, as a proof that the issues “minced” during the “lectures” are indubitably “weighty” and “timely”...

All these are rendered especially timely for me, in a genuine, that is, existential, and not merely circumstantial sense, by the particular challenges of the so-called “Bologna process”. Namely, primarily precisely the fact that the new

impulses and symbolically veiled constraints and traps to “instrumentalize” philosophy may be hiding in several basic sense in these urging “calls”. Now, I am especially sensitive and fastidious for such things, for reasons equally “historical”, deriving from our recent past, and “personal”, of my own “life history”...

“Chair philosophy” of course cannot – and indeed, must not – be mistaken for philosophy pursued and professed at different departments or faculties of various universities in the course of time. For we are well aware that epochal and school-founding thinkers taught on various universities, and also that teaching was an organic part of the creation of their life work. So much so that – say, a Fichte, a Schelling or a Hegel, etc. – often moved from one university to another to find the most appropriate ground for elaborating and professing their ideas. We are also aware of course that there are several prominent thinkers of the “history of philosophy” who never got involved with any faculty of philosophy, or only for short periods of time and as a sidetrack. However, this does not affect at all their “importance for the history of philosophy”...

“Chair philosophy” is therefore not merely defined by the fact that it notes a kind of philosophy which is cultivated and professed in the context and institution of university departments (chairs). On the contrary, it is primarily characterized by its **not being philosophy**, but it only turns – or rather **transforms, dissects** – philosophy into an **object**, a **thing** in the institutional context of universities. So that, meanwhile, it also changes it into some kind of **instrument** or **technology**. In other words: “chair philosophy” practically **objectivizes** philosophy. Yet it does this in a way that it presents itself as “the” philosophy – and it is again very important to emphasize, in order to make it clear from the very beginning, that I do not argue here against the diligent and useful didactic, pedagogical, mediating, text interpreting, editing, translating etc. work of philosophy professors including myself, I only investigate and thematize “chair philosophy”. Which, in fact, is nothing else or nothing more than – with Heidegger’s word – “science of philosophy”. And this is why chair philosophy is not “useless”, for it satisfies the everyday needs in education, culture, politics, society, mentality, as well as entertainment and “intellectual” social needs for philosophy as **object**.

“Chair philosophy” therefore – to put it briefly – can be regarded as a non-philosophical, institutionalized **condition**, a **hypostasis** (and not merely “method”) of philosophy as an object alienated from itself, created by the primarily technical – that is, artificial – **instrumentarium** and **dissection** of the mostly merely terminological results of the *sui generis* philosophical accomplishments of the originally also *sui generis* philosophical urges outlined in the course of the “history” or tradition of thinking. In other words: “chair philosophy” is characterized by the rule of “methods” understood and applied as procedural and management **techniques** and “problems” understood as technical terms.

I’d like to repeatedly emphasize that chair philosophy is not merely or primarily a possible “method” of practicing philosophy but it increasingly becomes a **condition** of philosophy in which philosophy is done or treated,

designed, produced and distributed as a **thing**. No matter whether this **thing** is a kind of “concept”, “discourse”, “method” or “technique”. In this sense “chair philosophy” is indeed a special historical “product” of university-level teaching of philosophy, the “results” of which – the **products** of the “profession” or “job” of teaching philosophy – increasingly turn into **commodities**. Commodities which have their own “price”. This “price” can have of course a monetary expression, but it can be more or less considerable also in a symbolic sense.

On this account “chair philosophy” is extremely sensitive – should I not say alertly “pliable” – to all kinds of environmental (even market-) “effects” and “changes”. First of all, these are the changing “intellectual” **fashions**, modern “trends”, all kinds of circumstances and **institutional modifications**. Each of these is a requirement for any self-respecting chair philosophy. Since these are which “whisper” us what is worth studying, and also how. While the slogan of “chair philosophy” cannot be other in this respect than **adaptation, alignment and keeping up!**

Mainly if this is what makes every kind of “chair philosophy” always “timely” and “opportune”. So: directly and literally always “most recent”. For any philosophy that is not “most recent”, cannot possibly be a sellable commodity **these days**. Not even at the universities. Therefore such a thing can by no means make the university institution a sellable product. Such a “thing” is thus a needless waste of money, time and energy, since it is usually unmarketable. No surprise therefore that the politicians, managers and bookkeepers of science allocate no funds for it, no promotions or pay raises, grants, stipends, etc.

“Chair philosophy” is therefore a historical thing. Its history begins of course with the medieval history of the creation of the first universities. Since these universities were evidently under the rule of theology, the discipline of philosophy only had a subsidiary, ancillary role, often being termed as a “servant”.¹ As a result of this tradition, it later became typical – and remained so for quite a long time – that the historically most significant thinkers did **not**, and could **not** have chairs at universities. This tendency “is still functional in the 18th century, ... the really productive philosophical thinking – with Descartes, Spinoza, Malebranche, Leibniz – develops **outside** the university”. The philosophy that can be called “new” and “innovative” in the most profound and genuine sense – originally cultivated outside universities – only enters the universities at the mid- or late-18th century with Wolff, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. However, there had always been historically highly significant “outsiders” during the entire 19th century who could not fit philosophically – that is: existentially – into the institutional system of universities; let us only think of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche or Kierkegaard.

¹ See for example Károly Redl, “A fakultások vitájának előtörténetéhez” (To the history of the debate of faculties), in *Az európai egyetem funkcióváltozásai – Felsőoktatás-történeti tanulmányok* (Functional changes in European universities – Studies in the history of higher education), ed. Tamás Tóth (Budapest: Professzorok Háza, 2001), 57–72.

The actual, explicit and probably long-lasting – at any rate, today still unpredictably long-lasting – connection of philosophy and the university of philosophy only happened in the 20th century. Although this century also displays significant exceptions, such as Emil Cioran, or philosophers who were denied a university chair for reasons ideological or political, such as Czech thinker Jan Patočka, the Romanian Constantin Noica, or the Hungarian Béla Hamvas, or, temporarily, George Lukács and some his disciples. However, almost all of these thinkers operated a kind of “private university or seminar-like” home school, even if the kind of instruction offered there resembled more the Greek *paideia* than the “systematic” education of medieval or modern universities. Therefore none of this had anything to do with any kind of “chair philosophy” or, even less, with any kind of politically accepted, “official” chair philosophy. Just the opposite, they found themselves precisely at intellectual, philosophical and existential war with these!

The decisive development of the connection between philosophizing and the university of philosophy, even amidst the current tendencies, is what is lately frequently called the **professionalization** of philosophy. Richard Rorty places the beginning of this process to the second half of the 20th century, more precisely the period following WWII.¹ (From this time on, the increasing majority of those who dealt with philosophy for a living – as if **by itself, without** any kind of visible or explicit external constraint – has decided and still decides that philosophy should deal with primarily technical issues emerging within its own inner contexts... This is what the still existing criticism called *Glasperlenspiel*, a glass pearl game played amidst changing desire for texts and archives.)²

However, the professionalization of philosophy – in recent years increasingly happening amidst the conditions of growing globalization – changes the parameters and outlines of chair philosophy as well. Or, more accurately: **blurs**. For, whereas the outlines of chair philosophy have been drawn for centuries in **opposition** with those active outside university chairs on the one hand, and also those who have been an alternative for the former, namely people active in academic research institutions on the other hand, the professionalization of philosophy tends to increasingly **blur** or **homogenize** these differences. There is hardly any difference these days between the professional “chair philosophy” of university departments, and the also “professional” philosophizing in academic research institutions. Both places are inhabited by professional “philosophers”, experts and “craftsmen” of philosophy, who, to maintain their careers, carefully watch the applications of various institutions and foundations, their requirements, topics, and the “currents” worth keeping in mind when proposing their conference papers and research

¹ See Richard Rorty, “Philosophy in America Today,” *The American Scholar* 2 (1982): 183–187.

<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/41210815?uid=3738920&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21102974767571>, accessed 4 November 2013.

² See Ludger Lütkehaus, “Fachgigante und Lebenszwerge – Vom fehlenden Nutzen der Universitätsphilosophie für das Leben,” *Die Zeit* 21/2001, http://hermes.zeit.de/pdf.index.php?.doc=/archiv/20001/21/200121_philosophie.xml. accessed 25.10.2008

projects. Including also the methods and “expected results” of discussion and research. For “unexpected” results cannot count on any kind of “patronage”. Not to mention that precisely these characters will become the decision-makers of science and organized thinking who will shape things perspectively in accordance with these criteria and of course their own standards. Both downwards and upwards.

Therefore it is more and more visible nowadays that chair philosophy is – and in fact always has been – an actually “unphilosophical” “condition” of philosophy, manipulated or directly asking for manipulation. So Schopenhauer’s classic statement about university policies that the true purpose of university philosophy is to guide the deepest thinking of students towards the intellectual direction that they consider adequate for professorial appointments is essentially still valid today... This kind of chair philosophy cannot be serious, only school philosophy, which does not illuminate the darkness of our existence. Indeed, chair philosophy is sometimes reproached to be “alienated”, to avoid highly relevant current existential problems, and instead it closes up into documents and archives, sterile and hermaphrodite interpretations of purportedly “historical” or “timely” texts, and the exegetical tossing-around of letters, punctuation marks, and concepts, especially trendy ones. Meanwhile, of course, chair philosophy works still as “official”, dominant philosophy, at least insofar as the university of philosophy itself works as a kind of **office** of philosophy, and at the same time it is in an **official** relationship with the supporters of the university and the institutions involved in educational policy making, direct or indirect control, supervision, award or assessment.

The so-called “Bologna process” also risks being just another impulse in instrumentalizing philosophy, despite its emphatic references to the challenges that higher education has to face in creating a unitary Europe and the problems of quality and usefulness involved in this educational process. There is a probability and also a risk therefore that this process offers further incentive and legitimacy precisely to chair philosophy. And, what is more, amidst and ever wider, globalizing framework of the professionalization of philosophy. For the “Bologna process” aims in fact at **mass higher education**, in addition of course to also make it more efficient. But “mass education” does not mean here that more students get admitted to the university, but first of all that university education is about to increasingly mean a mere expert training course. That is to say: a mere adaptation to the ever more varied and “pluralistic” **conditions** of a constantly changing and globalizing labour market.

However, as far as “pluralism” is concerned, it should not lead us astray, for mostly it is only apparently the transgression of the professionalization and disciplinarization of philosophy. On the contrary, in the context of philosophy’s becoming a profession, pluralism actually consecrates a kind of **parallel discussion** about various topics, *a priori* differentiated even in matters of world view. While of course “pluralism” strongly manipulates the thematic and intellectual parameters of research as well as the addressees of investigations and inquiries. Who, by the way, always complain that they cannot “review” and “follow” the mass of “information” and the “bibliography” of their subjects.

The professionalization of philosophy implies first of all the overrepresentation of problems of a technical kind, of “specialization”, as well as

“disciplinaryization” deriving from aversion of contexts and questions which are not self-sufficient, and therefore brings about an emphatic idiosyncrasy. A kind of idiosyncrasy of course which coexists well with the dominance of texts, whether seen as the hermaphrodite idiosyncrasy of interpretations and readings, etc., or as the idiosyncrasy of automatic disciplinary urges forcing the creation of new and new disciplines termed “philosophical”, such as “problematology”, “peratology”, “thanatology”, “grammatology”, etc. These of course generate the process of the “self-breeding” of “problems”, including those which are circumstantially born out of the trendy and timely topics of an application, a grant or a conference rather than the constraints of actual existential experiences. This happens in close connection with the permanent and overwhelming constraint of publication and conference attendance, which does not in fact meet *sui generis* communication needs – what Karl Jaspers rightly considered one originating factor of philosophy itself – but mostly only functions as a measuring tape of “accomplishments”. And, what’s more, because of which the place of “schools” and “-isms” is taken these days by ever growing numbers of “disciplines” and schematized “procedures”.

It is perhaps only a further evidence of these problems and difficulties that the type of higher education now advocated by the Bologna Agreement could mean in fact “convertible universities”. These, accordingly, would “train” mass-professionals with locally or globally convertible “skills” and “reliability”, rather than free, responsible and engaged inquirers and thinkers. All the more so as these latter ones cannot just be “trained”...

This however – although quite probable – is not necessary as well! For – at least in liberal democracies – there is “always” a possibility to discover once in a while the simplest thing that: **philosophy can only be taught by philosophizing even at university level, regardless of the fact that the direct audience – the students – would want to invest their scholarships or tuition fees for “philosophy itself” or exchange it for other horizons (“instrumentalization”). For there is no hope – fortunately! – that any kind of truly philosophical “text” can be voiced *without* approaching its questions with our *own* questions and inquiries... And without this voicing becoming an appeal or warning for the audience that they need to ask their own explicit – and simply irreplaceable!! – questions about the matter of “texts” as well!**

For the problematic way leading us back and forth to philosophy and our own possibilities is **not a different one**, therefore the all-time contact with philosophy – whether as a professor, a student, or a “social” or “institutional” one – cannot be “easier” or “more accessible”, nor “harder” and “more incomprehensible” than the journey to ourselves, open to possibilities, limitations and challenges, and burdened with the responsibilities of communication, and leading through the beings amidst our partaking in being. And since this is what any authentic philosophy always and only undertakes, what would be just enough for the current, living “operation” of the university of philosophy, is, I think: philosophy “itself”! Without “chair philosophy”!

It is certainly not accidental that Immanuel Kant, thinking about the “conflict of the faculties”, and trying to define the place and role of the faculty of philosophy within university systems, discusses the university of philosophy, essentially and clearly, primarily as a **place of freedom**, or what is more, as the **forum of freedom**.¹ Clearly, Kant thinks of the university itself as a **forum**, while he treats the university of philosophy in fact as the **forum of freedom**. That is to say, not merely as a place of exchange of knowledge and skills, or a man production called “training”.

Nevertheless, the university of philosophy can only be a place or even a forum of freedom, if it can discuss anything as a place for the public use of the mind. “Discussion” however means nothing else than the encounter with someone or something in questioning or in the uttered question itself. And, what is more, the encounter – or rather: confrontation – not only with the question or the “partner”, but with ourselves as well. Therefore the community of professors and students as a forum of freedom can only be formed on faculties of philosophy if it means an **encounter** in questioning – that is, in search and self-search –, practiced by, and as a right of the public use of the mind, and permanently reiterating, validating and rearticulating this right and practice. And this is of course not unconnected to what is called in philosophy for thousands of years the “search for the truth”. With all its “relativity”. So it is no accident that already Aristotle connects the **basic name questions** – the “categories” – of the search for being to the *agora*...

The truth can only be searched therefore, both on the *agora* and at the university of philosophy, freely by free people: as a **responsible** and historical act of freedom. As people who interact in no other ways than in various situations – or positions in a “phenomenological” sense – of **serious self-search**. And it is only the **difference** of this “position”, this situation and the implications that constitutes it – and not of their relationship with the current set of knowledge or skills – that **essentially** and **primarily** distinguishes between one professor or student or another. And not the length of a list of publications or the frequency of conference attendance! Such things can only be derivative, even if utterly **organic** (although hopefully more and more rarely).

So, with regard to its essence and meaning, the university of philosophy – even if it were only a “factory-like” setting of “philosophical science” – could not have any other **purpose** than what philosophy itself **derives** from: the problematic, historical and factually accepted ontology of human freedom! Which, regarding its being and structure of being, is in fact identical, or rather: coincidental with the existential, ontological – and not “epistemological”, “political philosophical” or “moral philosophical” – and always factual structure of questionability and **questioning**. The university of philosophy gains thus its positive and essential meanings not from ministries and political parties, not from churches or various international agreements (Bologna or other), but from philosophy itself and its historical embeddedness – that is, not merely from its possible timely “usefulness or uselessness”. That is, from the historical urges and meanings of being of philosophy itself, which often have not even reached the universities of philosophy...

¹ Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (Der Streit de Facultaten), trans. and introd. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Abaris Books, 1992), 29.



Aleksandra Chaushova, *Swallowed Thoughts*, 2011,
pencil on paper, 25 x 32,6 cm

Even more directly: the actual purpose of philosophy “training” in higher education or of the university of philosophy itself, with regard to its **essence** and **meaning**, cannot be anything else than the **questionability** of the historical human freedom and the historically possible **autonomous** human being! Both in a

“community” and an “individual” sense. And with the clarification that no kind of community – let alone an “autonomous” community – is or can be possible without autonomous individuals!

Therefore an even more direct purpose – and not some exclusive “object”, “task” or subject – of the university of philosophy is the historical or social autonomous **individual**, a prerequisite for communities. And of course both for the presence of professors and students at the universities, and for the public “rational use” of researches! This is why the university of philosophy and the work that happens there **cannot** be especially popular. At most for a short while, due to fashion or circumstances. Since nothing is more **suspicious, unpleasant** or **uncomfortable** – to be sure, even for the “individual” itself – than precisely the “autonomous individual”! That’s why all the “movements” and organizations that usually quite whole-heartedly activate for all kinds of (primarily “community”) “autonomies” showed **not much** zeal for it. However, no movements are generally initiated for the autonomous individual, if for no other reason, than because all such endeavour would be a burden of philosophy and its derivative “institutions”.

The autonomous individual¹ is of course not the *individuum* – whose name hints to its indivisibility, atomization rather than its “one-I”-ness – nor a (more or less) isolated human being (no matter how well prepared professionally or how well “socialized”), but only the one who, conscious of his **unrepeatability**, is in **possession** of one’s own property (his wealth, including his mind and all competences and skills gained on behalf of his mind) as well as one’s own conscience. Who exists, with all his “skills”, first of all with regard to the responsibility of the problematic **possibilities** that he himself has acknowledged and undertaken. [It is no accident that the Greek name of the fundamental Aristotelian category – the *ousia* – originally meant precisely **property** and **wealth**, and by this, the “(basic) value” that counts as the foundation of being. That to which, by the direction of taking into possession, one must and should pursue. And which, therefore, is always questionable because of its importance, and which, on this very account, is the **essence** itself. This original sense of the Greek word of *ousia* is of course preserved and utilized to the full by the *sui generis* philosophy of Aristotle’s categorial thinking.²]

Probably any time and any place – even at the universities of philosophy – when and where philosophy, or at least an invitation to true philosophy, happened indeed, then it happened precisely with regard to, or as, something similar. For “reflection” – just like the related “meditation” – hardly means anything else than the meditative caring for he who, as he takes part in being, is able, and in fact indeed forced, to think – and act – about (his) being in a timely and actual way, in its all-time problem of being and with regard to his essential, historical and ultimately encounter-oriented possibilities (of being). Therefore the issue of the autonomous

¹ The Hungarian term “egyén”, meaning ‘individual’ is a compound meaning “one-I”. (Translator’s note).

² For more on this, see my study “The Future, Or Questioningly Dwells the Mortal Man... Question-Points to Time”, *Philobiblon – Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research int he Humanities* XV (2010): 92–118.

being, as also that of freedom, is in fact not a matter of moral, legal or political philosophy, but an essential historical, existential and ontological question. This is why primarily “chair philosophies” try so hard to escape it, often even in the name of “philosophy”, as something that, as “autonomy”, belongs not the individual, but to the community. In other words: thoughtlessly opposing the individual and its communities, as well as the communities and the individuals in them.

Now, with regard to the “Bologna Process” in the **field of philosophy**, it is important to notice, with regard to the determination of the situation, that it was actually prepared, and still articulated, by the professionalization of philosophy, or rather by professional “philosophy”. Of course, in close connection with chair philosophies. That is to say, with regard to philosophy, the Bologna Process is outlined “philosophically” by something which is, from the very beginning, primarily subservient to the needs of the labour market. And it can only be rightly understood in this horizon how the qualification structure of higher education follows both the needs of “knowledge-based society” and the labour market, oriented in the same direction.

It is clear therefore **what kind of knowledge** they mean when talking about the knowledge needs or requirements of a “knowledge-based” society. Such that is primarily shaped by labour market conditions! Moreover, it is well “cared for” by the systems of applications; the role that the successful results of such applications have in the assessment and promotion of professors, usually expressed and measured in points; and the **manipulation techniques** of forcing them into all kinds of work teams that university institutions and their professional staff would indeed conform to these “epistemologically” speaking hardly organic expectations.

So there is nothing to wonder that the subjects of the annual Romanian “grants” launched by the national council – probably held “most respectable” precisely because these contracts make the biggest income for the universities, the highest recognition for the leaders of these institutions, and the most “valuable” points for the promotion of professors – **contain not a single** “priority field” that could possibly include any kind of *sui generis* philosophical research...¹

¹ It becomes increasingly clear in fact that these so-called “grants” do not mean “paid research”, but such that are **already endorsed** by those in power, regarding both their subjects and their methodologies. Which are usually “promoted”, firstly with regard to things connected to philosophy, in the name of ruling spiritual public opinion, symbolic powers, and related – established and predictable – “trendy” actualities. It is no accident therefore that – and let me hint now to a personal experience – it has been completely impossible to gain any financial support or “grant” around here for a philosophical research on **euthanasia** which would radically analyze this – from their perspective – admittedly “sensitive” topic, digging deeper than public opinion and current spiritual trends in general. See also my study on euthanasia: “Euthanasia, Or Death Assisted to (Its) Dignity,” *Philobiblon – Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities* XVII/2 (2012): 335–354. Whereas the Bioethics Research Centre of Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj was founded and is operated under the authority of theology – Orthodox theology, but this not important now... Such

All these of course are quite telling as to the real nature of the loudly advocated adaptation to the “labour market”, and also of how far the construction sites of the so-called “knowledge-based society” are actually guided by the “market” – even if not the “marketplace”, the *agora*. The most surprising is – although, as I have said, there is nothing to be surprised about – that not only am I not aware of any public position or argued stance against this on behalf of the “craftsmen” of philosophy around here, but I tend to see rather that such a state of things is mostly accepted with almost natural “reflexes” of “catching-up”! This may also illustrate that the reunited team of professional philosophy and chair philosophy, with no useless sweat, is engaged in a predictably victorious, and of course always fairly judged and scored match with... nobody knows who any longer. It may perhaps be that it is not the “market” but only professional and chair philosophy that is victorious here!

So, if we read in a French encyclopaedia¹ that no concept of education has been shaped without a philosophical background, we can rightfully add that, at least in Romania, the **extraction of philosophy** from education cannot do without (chair) philosophers and their audience, eager for building institutions. For philosophy for them – as well as the teaching of philosophy and its institutions – is indeed a sort of object or thing, that they shape or build as they are required to by the market. Because this is all that lies in their “skills”.

However, authentic philosophy has always had, and will also have, if not a market, then its *agora*! Of course, it is perhaps also true that its traffic (of merchandise) is more difficult to measure. Let us say, by the number of copies of newly printed books or the masses of audience of lectures or university students.

It is also true that philosophy is usually claimed not to result in any kind of real and actual knowledge... And also that the insights of philosophy cannot actually be applied or “used” for anything. Well, one of the most important targets of this contribution – **as well** – is to **refute** this statement!² It is still my experience

things have of course a clear “message” on the actual “rights” and circumstances of the public use of the mind!

¹ See *Encyclopédie Philosophique Universelle*, vol. I: *Univers Philosophique*, ed. André Jacob (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1997).

² Humboldt’s concept of the university is traditionally criticized for not paying attention to the usefulness or direct applicability of the education and training that takes place there, and also, that it puts philosophy in the centre. It is of course impossible to think that the Humboldtian idea of the research university, greatly founded on Kant and Schelling, would think of the education and training it offers as “useless”. Rather, one should say that the Humboldtian concept of the university was not “surpassed”, but simply ... forgotten! And it was forgotten in such a way that, concentrating on “easier” possibilities in a Heideggerian sense, they did not repeat it, or were more and more incapable of repeating it. For it is not easy at all to accomplish the idea rooted in Kant’s thoughts, formulated by Schelling and institutionally founded by Wilhelm von Humboldt – especially for the need of the proliferating number of universities – that the university professor in his lectures **creates** science directly **before** the students, as if right **in front of their eyes**! And he does not “teach” some sorts of “subjects”, “disciplines” or “specializations”! Such a thing can of course pose problems too for the audience. (István Fehér M. has dedicated a highly

and opinion that we realize precisely because of our seriousness and engagement with the weight of our always “personal”, determined existential problems that no kind of “spiritual corpus”, as an impersonal “reply”-mechanism, theory or solution algorithm provided by “education” is possible in connection with them, which would just be appropriated and then kept in permanent use and operation.

Insofar I can fully agree with the Bologna process. Namely, with the fact that it promotes life-long learning. Let me note: philosophy – when it actually happened – has always been professing this for at least two and half thousand years...¹ In this way alone can the re-inquiring and re-formulating encounter with the meaning and, why not, power of philosophy and philosophizing become “possible” as well as actual again.

However, the case is completely different if, instead philosophy, the universities and schools (not only the secondary schools) teach mere disciplines, or – directly or indirectly – mentality. (Of which, of course, we cannot speak in the plural, no matter how many there are). Because both – disciplines and mentality – only waste away the inquiry that leads towards the above mentioned insights. That is: inquiry itself. Nonetheless, this is one of the most significant aspects of the university education of philosophy, both in Romanian and in Hungarian, in the Romanian education system. I am thinking about the fact that doctrinal religious education is compulsory in Romania, to the best of my knowledge singularly in Europe, from elementary school to the end of secondary school (age 18). In addition to violating human rights – since children ideologically indoctrinated ever since age 6 or 7 should have the rights to decide freely and openly for themselves in such matters – this of course also tailors, *a priori* and determinately, the possible horizons of inquiry, directions and inclinations of questions and answers for people who have grown up this way. So one of the most serious problems that I face as a professor of philosophy is that students seem to lose, year by year, the open inclination for questioning, or that most of the students’ “own” questions are formulated in a yet **hardly movable** religious and theological determination and framework.

All the more so because, in strong connection with this, the “science” disciplines of school education (like biology or physics) are also taught avoiding the problematization of theories or ideas that can be relevant for philosophy or mentality. That is to say, such things are left completely in the hands of teachers of religious education, trained and permanently controlled by the churches – I repeat, in all schools from Romania invariably – for an entire 12 years of the life-history of children ages 6 to 18, a decisive period from all points of view! This is joined with the dry instrumentalism of social sciences and “citizenship” disciplines in secondary school, and a single year of philosophy education. This again is almost exorbitant, which the current philosophy textbook, accepted also in Hungarian, is teeming with objective mistakes and errors, next to lacking any standards of thinking or criticism.

documented and insightful book containing also critical remarks about the matter, entitled *Schelling – Humboldt, Idealismus und Universität, Mit Ausblicken auf Heidegger und die Hermeneutik* [Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, New York: P. Lang, Europäischer Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2007]).

¹ It is enough to just think of Aristotle’s concept of *phronesis*, which says the same thing.

It is no wonder then that the spirituality of the “subjects” taught at the university of philosophy are also required and promoted in the same spirit, adapted to such a pre-defined “public opinion”. What they only seem to be quiet about is that this – I repeat: real and actual – “public opinion” has not simply “grown by itself”, but it was cultivated and bred. Only that few people wish or choose to know about it. And even less problematize it. The least problematized is that fact that these are precisely those power factors – not merely ideological and symbolic – which actually guide, at least for the time being, the often mentioned “philosophy labour market”. Including the “popularity” and catchment area of the university of philosophy also! That is, they also define the “numbers”, “consistency” and “quality” of those who attend it and graduate from it.

As for the labour market, it is definitely not a kind of *agora* where people freely debate or compete over jobs posted in the name and interest of truth. So most graduates of the university of philosophy of Cluj find – temporary or full-time – employment as secondary school teachers, at various foundations, societies, public institutions and political organizations, or in the press. The vast majority of these of course also stands under direct or indirect political, ideological or religious supervision (and that of the public opinion generated by these). That is to say, these probably also hardly long for “autonomous individuals”... It may well happen however, that the case is also valid for the opposite direction. So that it would not be superfluous to check how far those who were ambitious or lucky enough to meet the open or silent requirements of the labour market with their philosophy diploma have reached their “happiness” on this account. Or rather they have to deny themselves because of this day after day? But it is precisely this that proves that one can quite resourcefully influence the shaping of the labour market, instead of just lagging behind its external and usually instrumental requirements mediated by (not “uninterested”) offices and institutions.

However, philosophy does and must have its “own interests” – as Kant puts it – and it must protect and represent these interests by the public use of the mind, and primarily precisely by doing philosophy. The decisive role in this process nowadays would go not to chair philosophy, but to university philosophy, or the university of philosophy. Since neither the Romanian Academy, nor any of the Romanian universities have no serious **research institutions for philosophy**, it is perhaps time to think about the creation, or at least lobby for the creation of a research institution independently from state- or private universities, or “foundations” long expropriated by politics or ideologies. And where the most talented and engaged (young) researchers would finally find employment. Instead of the “reliable” and “predictable” people, the descendents of historical families of our little community, who are only good at the dry science of philosophy. For the single clear reason that they might “research” subjects of their own fields of interest in a genuinely philosophical inquiry, following a system of applications. Or simply: to “just” philosophize!

The worries usually mechanically arising at this, that these subjects and researches would probably lack public utility or applicability – of course, only from the perspective of those who always seem to have very accurate information as to the deep functions and tasks of our “culture” and “history”, but who, in spite of this,

are never capable of presenting truly meaningful and alive creative strategies instead of illusions – could only be put to rest by paraphrasing Heidegger: philosophy, although never really “timely” or journalistically “actual”, always pinpoints its **own age** with sharp accuracy. Meaning the truly real and central questions and problems of its age. “Philosophy” is a “useless”, meaningless or empty endeavour only if it is not really philosophy, but wrongly called so! So a periodical of the research institution called for above could also be published, and it is my conviction that it would soon become of the richest and most alive publications of thinking in the region. People from many places living with the awareness and urge of the constraint of thinking would probably soon send their analyses. For, I repeat: “philosophy” is only a seemingly “useless”, meaningless and empty endeavour if it is **not** philosophy, but something wrongly **called** so out of habit!

However, this only illustrates that the **name** of philosophy is still **attractive** today in certain respects! Together with all the traps of such an attraction. How else could it be explained that we are repeatedly told on more and more channels that almost all production or service companies or all institutions that think highly of themselves have their own “philosophies”? There is nothing wrong with this in itself, since we could even think that they mean the articulated and meaningful existence of that company within the wider connections of the world, also with a reference to its future.

The problem lies rather in the **silencing away** of the question whether these companies or businesses also have a **thinker** as an extra to their “philosophy”? The problem is not merely that the “philosophy” of companies, fashion salons or gyms is actually only an empty marketing manoeuvre, but much rather that this way the **monster of the thinker-deprived philosophy** has been formed and has been gaining more and more ground!

Since philosophy – and also “philosophizing” – no longer needs a thinker, it will do with a “professional” or “expert” – trained of course necessarily as a manager as well –, who knows also how to use the mere term and conceptual means – “word-things” in Gadamer’s term – of philosophy in order to merely “employ” “philosophy” without **thinking**,¹ and what is more, directly as a successful motivation of the lack of thinking.

It is a question therefore whether is it not the same that happens in chair philosophy – as well as professional philosophy? Namely, is it not indeed a thinker-deprived “philosophy” and “philosophizing” which happens then? And it may be that the essential and real community and interconnectedness of these two, originally probably not very different tendencies explains why – despite those said above – the name of “philosophy” still corresponds today to superfluous, void and “meaningless” occupations, complicating life and things for no avail. Or, as Erasmus used to say: a blatant “folly”.

¹ It may also have a role in this – as pointed out by Heidegger not very long ago – that we know very little about **what it means to think**, or what thinking is at all. See Martin Heidegger, *Was heisst Denken?*, fifth, revised edition (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1997), 175.

In spite of this, it is my conviction that the meditation about the teaching of philosophy and university philosophy has – even today – no other way than the reflection on the possible “**philosophical nature**” of the very teaching of philosophy. For, in case of philosophy, the question comes more specifically: what is the relationship between education **by philosophy** on the one hand, and “teaching” **philosophy**, or more precisely, “teaching” how to guide one to reach **philosophy**?

In times like this of course the “difference” that Kant made between philosophy taken *in sensu scholastico* and *in sensu cosmopolitico* is almost automatically pulled out and discussed anew. The calling of this differentiation, beyond the ramifications of conceptual differences, should have been precisely to make it clear: philosophy cannot in fact be either taught, or learnt... For that part of philosophy which can be taught as historical or mental knowledge *a priori* coming from others is, albeit not without content, but devoid of actual meanings.¹

Apart from the fact that such things are usually read in contexts which aim rather to somehow legitimize the “chair philosophy” saved by the name of university philosophy, I think that these ways of interpretations avoid precisely the hermeneutical core of things. Since most often we tend to forget that these profound and meaningful thoughts of Kant are contained and emphasized in his **university lectures** – that is, in the physical presence of Kant and his eager audience. Therefore in a highly determined way!² And what is more, in connection to subjects precisely as “metaphysics” or “logic”!

But what would be the sense of speaking – and loudly too – about the “unteachability” and “unlearnability” of philosophy as a “teacher”, a lecturer...? Certainly nothing! So, no doubt, something utterly different has to happen or be discussed there. For Kant says in this hermeneutic situation that: everything that forms the concept of **school**-philosophy can be taught and learnt... While on the other hand, although not useless at all, this still lacks the proper, *sui generis* meaning. So it lacks precisely that the knowledge and skills, proved by their the passing-on, learning and practicing – and thus connected also to “maxims”³ – be articulated with reference to, and projected on the universal (*cosmopolitanus*) objectives and senses of mankind.

These objectives however – amidst which thus the possibility of any meaning can only be constituted – appear not as “*maxims*” but as **questions**

¹ See also the systematic writing of Fehér M., István: *A filozófia tanítása* (The teaching of philosophy) in *Iskolai filozófia Magyarországon a XVI-XIX. században* (School philosophy in Hungary in the 16th–19th century), ed. András Mészáros (Bratislava [Pozsony]: Kalligram, 2003), 9–23.

² That is, precisely so as, with Schelling’s words mentioned above, science comes into being in front of the audience!

³ “Maxims” are the inner, subjective principles of the choice among various objectives.

(also) for Kant. So we could say that the – currently external – “difference” of **school** and **universal** philosophy, that is, precisely the difference between thinking taken in the sense of *maxims* or thinking and life itself taken as original questioning! Such a “difference” which the actual philosophy, *in sensu eminenti*, besides stating and outlining, always also **exceeds** and eliminates, at least with regard to itself. And this cannot be “taught” because there is nothing to “teach” about such kinds of questions or questioning!

Aristotle emphasizes both in the *Categories* and in the *Topics* that categorial questions – or more precisely the questions validated and represented by the categories themselves – are not **dialectical**. Therefore in the sense of dialectical or erotetic edification they cannot and should not be dealt with... Because they simply cannot be answered with yes or no, affirmation or negation. On the other hand, if we do not ask these questions... then we can never know or understand why we humans ask questions and answer them all the time...

The case is then probably that contents can be taught, while meanings cannot. Because these can only be inquired for – otherwise they will never even speak. Then how can they outline and constitute themselves without questioning? As something which can simply be handed over from one shoulder to the other? As a simple formula or algorithm in function.

Well, this is precisely what Kant was thinking about aloud in the presence of his students. So he did not simply impart or even less simply lecture about some “subject” – one that was made more attractive or fluent by rhetorical means –, but he explicitly interrogated, questioned it at that very time. This is why it is probably not accidental – as also experienced by his diligent exegeses – that the greatest of all questions of meaning, namely “What is man?” is formulated precisely in Kant’s **university lectures**, and not in some “scholarly” study wrapped in mere previous numbness.¹ He does not only provide his students eager for wisdom with serious warnings clad in terminological differentiations.

Meanwhile Kant always emphasizes still that the true philosopher is the practical philosopher! Which again means something completely different there than proficiency *in sensu scholastico* in the “discipline” or texts of practical philosophy, even if it is called *The Critique of Practical Reason*. On the contrary, this is the only direct way – the way of essential thinking – to the articulation of philosophy and the university of philosophy as a place and forum of freedom.

However, these days there are more and more voices telling us that some university professors should be more mindful of the fact that **not all** the

¹ See Immanuel Kant, *Introduction to Logic* (New York: Philosophical Library, 2013), especially Chapter III entitled Conception of Philosophy in General.

students who apply to the department of philosophy wish to make contact with philosophy so-to-say “for the sake of philosophy”..., but for making use of it in some other field. Therefore it is unnecessary and tiresome to place too much emphasis on the “philosophical nature” of philosophy...

But what does it actually mean that someone wants to learn philosophy not “for the sake of philosophy” but for some other reason, or that – now from the perspective of university lectures – philosophy is taught so that it may lead not to philosophy, but to something else? But how could anyone “use” or market philosophy in any other “theoretical” or “practical” field if not creating in the meantime a special relationship with **their own specific questions and urges**, or not becoming aware of the fact that their own questions and projects inevitably connected to these **organically belong to their own selves?!**

Whereas the pertinence of our – certainly always definite – questions to ourselves, and of ourselves to our existential, historical and horizon-like questions is precisely (one of) the **most essential philosophy(ies)**, as we have seen in fact at Kant as well, and to acknowledge this, there is a need for a **most profound and authentic** encounter with philosophy! As I have said, we saw the same at Kant too. And of course no kind of “science of philosophy”, “chair philosophy” or “professional philosophy” can ever possibly lead – and indeed never leads – to any such thing! Which – in spite of this and at the same time – always essentially radiates from any authentic gesture of philosophizing!

Now, what derives from this for me is precisely that the problem of the **teaching of philosophy** – and I mean not exclusively at the university – and **cultivation of philosophy** is **one and the same thing!** Actually, the main question – which has been disquieting me for quite some time – is that: the basic problem of the application of philosophy is not – and cannot be by its nature – how an already “existing”, “ready-made” philosophy, philosophical “language” or “discipline” used for understanding something which inevitably always boasts with its new and particular presence?! On the contrary, the most important question for philosophical (self) reflection itself – that is, the teaching of philosophy – is how to **make philosophy appropriate** for facing the *sui generis* and “necessary” **novelty** of the **presentness** of something problematic, oppressive and challenging – that is, truly questionable –, relevant also from the point of view of philosophical tradition?! And that, by this – for us humans – philosophy opens up to us the windows of new existential possibilities!

But let me ask: is it not this the fundamental “problem” connected to the meanings and possibilities of the teaching of philosophy? Most certainly, it is! This is why I call this both “philosophical” and existential possibility **applied philosophy**. Completely independently from what other may consider “applied philosophy” based on trends, or how relevant or irrelevant it is on the conference stages of contemporary philosophical fashion-shows!

For it is still most important to admit and have it accepted that the true subjects of philosophy – as well as its tribulations, attempts and stakes – are **not**

found primarily in books, studies or the inner “problematic” states of the “science”. Nor in various educational, political (strategic or tactical) directions... Instead, the actual subjects of philosophy stand in the explicit and articulated, reflexive **bringing to actuality** of the existential and historical challenges in action. And possibly this is the most essential, “useful” and applicable thing in “other fields” as well that philosophy students can acquire or make their own – their own *ousia* – in the community of the university of philosophy, with the philosophizing help of their “educators” in the efforts of thinking, as “the students of their own minds”.

While of course they also take themselves – as autonomous individuals – “into their possession” in the questioning articulation of the responsibly desired direction of their possibilities of being. Regardless of whether these students applied to the university because of philosophy or for other reasons! And of course also irrespective of whether this university is a traditional, “physical” one, or a “virtual” university of philosophy.

Now, for this very reason, namely because of the actual historical work that one does over oneself necessarily in all respects in the always questionable historical direction and interests of human freedom which always points beyond itself, philosophy or philosophizing cannot be just a kind of “craft”. Let alone “profession”. Therefore the university of philosophy also cannot be a higher (professional) school of such a “professional training” where the applied mechanisms could work year-by-year as an institution, as if on a conveyor belt. Where the diplomas gained at the end of “factory-structured” processes and technologies of production, training and instruction would prove such a “skill” connected to the “tasks” and “profession” of philosophy. For what kind of “instruction”, “training” or “profession” could “specialize” in amending or avoiding the problems, disorders, insufficiencies, breaks of man with, let’s say, death, dying, freedom, possibility, history, secret, etc.? Such “problems” always turn out never to lack difficulties and “problematicity” – so they would really give a job for licensed “professionals” and “experts” forever – but this way they would just ward off that essential consideration that this somehow unceasingly and unavoidably occurring “problematicity” – or more accurately: questionability, question and questioning – belongs to the very essence of philosophy just as questionability belongs necessarily and essentially – that is, ontologically – to the being of the questioning being. While there is not, and cannot be any kind of professional, procedural, or production protocol, regulation, rule or prescription which can be applied just like that, “professionally”, and adjusted to any situation.

This does not mean of course that philosophy would no longer have any kind of “use” or “utility”. On the contrary, it is only and exclusively the clarifying and always reiterated, historically always undertaken, questioning and re-questioning efforts of philosophy which can secure this ground – as well as atmosphere and mood – on the bases and horizons of which the possible human meanings of being and meaningful being can truly be outlined.

Of course, the “cultivation” and “teaching” of philosophy as a “profession” or even more as a “craft” is not only more easily and light-heartedly accessible – so smoother – but also more “efficient”, productive and profitable. Because it is weightless. Therefore it is simpler to create the expected, “timely” and accounted-

for illusion of an “attentive”, “well informed”, “sensitive” and “responsible” “creation” and pedantry of things philosophical. And, what is more, in a way that it would correspond – not to the weight of questions, but – to the explicit or implicit, but “respectable” and “responsible” “expectations” of all institutional, company or professional offices or publicity.

Still, it is in this above outlined way that I would like to understand – and not merely as a kind of naïve self-conceit – what Kant says about the **uniqueness** and “singularity” of philosophy. Namely, the philosophy is the only one that has an **inner** value, and philosophy gives value to all other sciences. For there are no calculations or algorithms or axiomatic systems which could tell us what mathematics is, of what is its meaning for human life; of there are no experiments or theories which could tell us what physics is... nor are there such “reactions” which would inform us in laboratories about the nature and meaning of chemistry. Just as there is no “device” or instrument about the meaning of technology, nor are there works of art to define what a work of art is. And just as theologies do not “ground” the religions, since these are all based on revelations coming from outside, and in revelations they find the roots and meanings of their faith. It is philosophy alone that can necessarily and inevitably find its own foundations in the all-time question and its permanent reiteration “within” itself, inquiring about its own nature and meanings, and of course always pointing beyond “itself”. Only thus, and only for this reason can philosophy lend “value to all other sciences”.

So the meditation about the university of philosophy or teaching philosophy at the university has visibly no other way than: the actual meditation about the current position and chances of philosophizing itself. Which must of course also surface the current urges and challenges of philosophizing.

This is what will probably need to guide the analyses, debates and “policies” connected to the university of philosophy as a possible university (philosophy) institution. And not the other way round. Otherwise nothing more will happen than the creation of newer versions of the usual “academic” philosophical “laboratories and factories”. In which – besides their being in fact the objectives and requirements of education and academic policy, or sandwich fillings between public mood and public will – there is a real chance that they – or we – would actually teach *misosophia* instead of *philosophia* as the “philosophy of the academic-university ghetto”.

For this is increasingly the case lately. Many “graduates” want to directly get rid of the memory and experience that they once attended a so-called university of philosophy. Just as many are those who no longer think it is important to “finish” their studies. Which, by the way, means a no greater “ordeal” than earning their diplomas by producing some three dozens of pages of a “text” on a somewhat “philosophical subject”... Or the continuation of these “studies” on MA level. While the respect, if not honour, of titles – “MA”, “PhD” – is still preserved.

This is only possible of course because we slowly not only treat philosophy as an object – or rather, dissimulate it with institutional headings, stamps and commitments – but turn it directly into a lie at the universities!

Translated by Emese Czintos