

What Remains of Philosophers' Reflections on University?

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***Abstract:** In modern Europe, the establishment of universities is inseparable from the academic hegemony of philosophy. Kant, Humboldt, Fichte, Schleiermacher, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Ortega, Weber, Jaspers, Derrida, and many other leading thinkers who have written on the topic of universities are almost all university professors who developed their philosophy in a very close relationship with university institutions. When addressing “University and Philosophy,” it is essential to ask, with what right can philosophers question the university? How do philosophers have the right to consider the idea and reality of the university? In comparison to others, such as literary scholars or scientists, why do philosophers have the privilege to approach the question of university? Today, in the era of global capitalism where competition is created by a knowledge-oriented economy, the university is going through a decisive transformation induced by economic values. The “solitude and liberty for exercising research” advocated by Humboldt and the independence of the university from society no longer apply. It may well be that the idea of the university that philosophers designed is now considered obsolete. However, from the collapse of the idea, we must find a way to rethink the very question of university. An epistemological question, “what is the idea of university?”, was already substituted by an ontological question, “is the university possible?” After having lost the idea of the university, how (and how not) to speak of possibilities to be revived from what remains under the very name of the university?*

1. The Crisis and Resistance of Philosophy

In talking about “Philosophy and University,” we cannot help but, in a pessimistic tone, refer to some crisis of philosophy in recent years.

In 2010, the management of London’s Middlesex University one-sidedly decided to cut all programs run by the philosophy department for financial reasons. It seemed extremely irrational, as the faculty is famous for its excellent research

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developed on an international scale. It worked very well as an important philosophy research center in the U.K., where the study of French theory, critical theory, psychoanalysis, Marxism, etc. achieved outstanding results. Professors and students raised voices against the decision; they occupied some meeting rooms on the campus to conduct public discussions on the necessity of philosophy in the university. Their spontaneous action "Save Middlesex Philosophy" obtained widespread support worldwide through the Internet. Due to the international support, Kingston University proposed taking in the Middlesex research center of philosophy with its faculty members.

In Hungary, since 2010, philosophers have been under increasing pressure from the conservative government. Legislation restricting free speech in the media was passed, and philosophers like Agnes Heller, who protested it, were attacked for misusing government grants. This political attack on philosophy created an international movement demanding the restoration of Heller's lost honor.

The International College of Philosophy (Le Collège international de philosophie: CIPh), founded by François Châtelet and Jacques Derrida, among others, in 1983 in Paris, faced a severe crisis in 2014 when the Ministry of Education decided to suspend its annual budget (240,000 Euro). Under pressure to survive amid international academic competition, the marginal philosophical organization was forced by the French government to integrate with globally leading centers for university-based education and research. In fact, in 2006, the government began to establish 26 centers for research and higher education (Pôles de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur: PRES), and in 2013 these university associations were largely replaced by new university and higher education institution associations (Communautés d'universités et établissements: COMUE). To defuse the budget crisis, program directors drafted the statement, "The Right to Philosophy: Save the International College of Philosophy," which was distributed on the Internet in 18 languages. The international campaign for collecting signatures succeeded, and President Holland finally answered the open letter, saying the government would assure the CIPh's annual budget.

These events show that maintaining philosophical institutions in any society and era is never guaranteed: there is a trend of efficiently managing higher educational institutions by "selection and concentration," there is political pressure to silence critical thinking, and there is a tendency to make light of philosophical activities considered unproductive in the context of industrial capitalism.

In fact, we have heard public statements deprecating the humanities. As a symbolic example, we can refer to former French President Nicolas Sarkozy's anti-intellectual attitude. Bucking the trend of French Presidents, who have generally shown a high degree of respect for cultural heritage, Sarkozy did not disguise his disdain towards the humanities. He declared that people should not pay taxes for classic literature research, but focus on the career prospects of youth. In 2014, British Education Secretary Nicky Morgan habitually downgraded the importance of the arts and humanities for teenagers, provoking an outcry among teachers and supporters of the humanities.

Furthermore, a social trend towards anti-intellectualism has influenced this attitude. Anti-intellectualism does not currently consist of indifference and ignorance, but rather attacking someone aggressively in a certain intellectual manner. Due to information technology, everyone believes they have (and occasionally truly do have) enough knowledge or intellectual information to criticize intellectuals. People criticize a certain type of knowledge, often including the humanities, while assuming a kind of intellectual attitude more or less associated with populism.

In these three cases in England, Hungary and France, philosophers have encouraged international solidarity in the fight against the crisis by initiating petition campaigns. Thanks to an internationally backed movement, the philosophy department at Middlesex University survived by transferring to Kingston University, the political pressure on Hungarian philosophers was gradually reduced, and in France, the Ministry lifted the restrictions on financial contributions to the International College of Philosophy. International exchange provides an important network for research and education in the humanities. If research and education institutions face unreasonable danger, domestic and/or international solidarity for them should be encouraged. This kind of international solidarity against the crisis is often lacking in humanities institutions in Japan.

2. How to Question “Philosophy and University”

In modern Europe, the establishment of universities is inseparable from the academic hegemony of philosophy, and it is surely no accident that philosophers have generally been the ones to question the university. Kant (*The Conflicts of the Faculties*), Humboldt (On the Internal and External Organization of the Higher Scientific Institutions in Berlin), Fichte (*Lectures concerning the Scholar's*

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Vocation), Schleiermacher (*Occasional Thoughts on Universities in the German Sense*), Schelling (*Lectures on the Method of Academic Study*), Schopenhauer (*On the Philosophy of University*), Nietzsche (*On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*), Heidegger (*The Self-Assertion of the German University*), Ortega (*Mission of the University*), Weber (*On Universities*), Jaspers (*The Idea of University*), Derrida (*Right to Philosophy, The University without Condition*), and many other leading thinkers who have written on the topic of universities are almost all university professors who developed their philosophy in a very close relationship with university institutions¹.

When addressing “University and Philosophy,” it is essential to ask, with what right can philosophers question the university? How do philosophers have the right to consider the idea and reality of the university? In comparison to others, such as literary scholars or scientists,² why do philosophers have the privilege to approach the question of university?

This right seems largely to be inherited from philosophy's decisive historical role in establishing and shaping the modern university. For example, after Prussia suffered a major defeat by Napoleon's army, it tried to establish the University of Berlin to overcome social devastation and stimulate the recovery of spiritual authority. The needs of the time made philosophers create the modern university to reestablish their national culture. In addition, their desire for the knowledge system in German idealism corresponded to the university structure. The university represented a universe where different sciences were organically related to one another. Philosophy was considered important in ensuring the unified idea of the university.

Today, in the era of global capitalism where competition is created by a knowledge-oriented economy, the university is going through a decisive transformation induced by economic values. The “solitude and liberty for exercising research” advocated by Humboldt and the independence of the university from society no longer apply.³ It may well be that the idea of the university that

¹ For a genealogical study of these philosophers' reflections on university, see Yuji Nishiyama (ed), *Tetsugaku to Daigaku [Philosophy and University]*, Tokyo: Miraisya, 2009.

² As regards the comparative study of different discourses (philosophy, literature, sociology, psychoanalysis, etc.) in the university, see Pierre Macherey, *La parole universitaire*, Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2011.

³ At the end of the eighteenth century in Europe, people already demanded the abolishment of university as an outdated relic of the Middle Ages, and enlightenment thinkers demanded education suitable for practical use, focused on vocational skills training. Critical clichés based on the principles of form and utility, such as “the style of university is out-of-date

philosophers designed is now considered obsolete. However, from the collapse of the idea, we must find a way to rethink the very question of university. An epistemological question, “what is the idea of a university?” as John Henry Newman asked at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was soon substituted by an ontological question, “is a university that actually accords with the idea of a university possible?” After having lost the idea of the university, how (and how not) to speak of possibilities to be revived from what remains under the very name of the university?

3. *The Conflict of the Faculties, Again*

To reflect on the relationship between university and society, it is always useful to return to Kant’s *The Conflict of the Faculties*. Kant, the first philosopher to assimilate academic freedom with the freedom of the university, opposes the superior (theology, law, and medicine) and lower (philosophy) faculties, and finds the social significance of the university in the relationship of power between them. In contrast to the superior faculties authorized by the government, which exert a direct influence on public life, the faculty of philosophy offers a radical contestation in seeking the right to free and open speech. According to Kant, it is due to a critical contribution by philosophy that the university finds its real place in the midst of society.

The issue, classic and unresolved until today, is the university’s autonomy in the face of the State, which has remained a problem. According to Kant, while the superior faculties are often heavily censored by the State, the faculty of philosophy tries to ensure the freedom of reason that judges all the doctrines. Criticism improves the social function of the university, which would be genuinely useful for society and the State.

In our time, it is impossible to consider the university and its role according to Kant’s architectonic schema: The growing influence of the concept of excellence in research and education renders the conception that a certain faculty can remain in a place of non-power null and void. Nevertheless, among the questions raised by Kant, that of the ideal structure of university institutions is still greatly important today. The opposition and conflicts between inside and outside, which characterize

now” and “education and research in the university is useless” have been repeated for a long time.

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the relation between university and State power, or between university and society, have already taken place symbolically in the university itself. The relation between faculties reflects, today, oppositions based on criteria such as useful and useless, profitable and non-profitable, and efficient and non-efficient.

As Kant emphasizes, the legal conflict in the university is never the war. The fact that the conflict is not a battle of life and death but a struggle for the truth is critical. As globalization has proceeded in recent years, each university, faculty, or researcher has been forced to join the severe competition in research and education, so one is often in “a state of war” to acquire the budget to survive. One of the criteria of finding the ideas and freedom remaining in the university would be not to turn our situation into a war, but to develop “our legal conflict” productively. Kant made the excellent point that the realization of academic freedom allows the inclusion of freedom of reason, which in turn enables room for social freedoms. Emphasizing the relation between these three kinds of freedom is an excellent remark in Kant's argument on university. If results in research and education are evaluated only on economic criteria, and academic freedom comes under severe pressure, the freedom of the rational thinking mind will be lost in society.

According to Kant, while the superior faculties as the right wing defend State doctrines, the faculty of philosophy, as the opposite party, thinks rigorously about their validity, and if necessary, argues with them. The conflict should be useful even for the State, as long as reason makes an accurate judgment to reveal the truth to the world. Then, the faculty of philosophy takes the position of the right wing and the superior faculties that of the left wing, as if there were a lever mechanism at work. It is important that the architectonic schema maintains the functionality of this lever that allows the university to change direction within the bipolar division of faculties⁴ and to leave the door open for multiple political strategies around the truth. When this intellectual struggle is possible no more, a certain signification of university will be lost. The university's task should be to divert a battle between life and death accelerated by a capitalistic economy, and to manage the energy towards the legal conflict around the truth.

4. Karl Jaspers' Philosophical Idea of University

⁴ Jacques Derrida focused on the notion of the lever in Kant's text on the university. See Jacques Derrida, *Eyes of University: Right to Philosophy 2*, California: Stanford University Press, 2004, pp. 109-112.

In 1952, Karl Jaspers published *The Idea of the University* to reconstruct the intellectual spirit of university after the moral destruction caused by Nazi totalitarianism. In his argument, we can find the traditional philosophical idea of university inherited from Kant and Humboldt. Jaspers clearly defines university in the introduction; his clear remarks present the idea of university precisely, based on three principles.

1) The principle of autonomy and autogestion of “universitas,” that is, associations of professors and students. The “universitas” consists of their existential communication for research and education.

2) The principle of searching for truth without any restriction in the anti-utilitarian or supra-utilitarian dimension. The university has its proper spiritual life independent of society or the State.

3) The principle of the structural complementarity of different disciplines, where each science collaborates with another despite their differences, opposition, or contradiction, in an effort towards integrity of knowledge.

Jaspers emphasized these points against the background of an ominous prediction of the university’s failure in the near future. Because the idea of university is realized only in the institution, “a permanent state of tension exists at the university between the idea and the shortcomings of the institutional and corporate reality.”⁵ Jaspers insisted on the idea against the development of science and technology and the trend of popularization. However, during the rapid economic growth in the 1960s and 70s, popularization and technicism transformed the institutional reality of the university. As a popularized institution, the university is no longer a pure and simple universe of knowledge, but rather a “multi-university” with different purposes. According to Jaspers, “from one point of view, the university resembles an aggregate of professional training schools isolated from one another or an intellectual department store with an abundance of goods for every taste.”⁶

It is also significant that Jaspers is concerned about the drastic influence of modern technology on the university cosmos. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, technology has stepped up its presence, “has become an independent

⁵ Karl Jaspers, *The Idea of the University*, trans. by H. A. T. Reiche and H. F. Vanderschmidt, Boston: Beacon Press, 1959, p. 70.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

giant.”⁷ The world and human existence as transformed and controlled through technology obviously became the academic subject of the university. The novel task is now not only to consider the technical world's reality from a utilitarian perspective, but also to think about its meaning and purpose in the human order from a philosophical one. Therefore, Jaspers consciously focuses on the integration of the technical faculty in the existing university. “Along with the incorporation of a school of technology, other changes would become essential. Above all, the old philosophical faculty must be reunified. The division into natural sciences and humanities must be overcome. Only reunification can impart sufficient force to the basic theoretical disciplines to counteract the increased impact and scope of the practical disciplines.”⁸ Although Jaspers recognized the technical world's independence and universality as a modern phenomenon, he could still believe in the philosophy faculty's task, that is, to elaborate the “metaphysical foundation of a new way of life, which technology has made possible.”⁹

As for the current situation, this issue of the technical world is not limited to such a dialogue between faculties, but influences a whole university over decades. The mindset associated with technology and engineering has strengthened its presence in university administration in the form of educational technology and social engineering. One has developed a strong tendency to evaluate various factors of the university in the (analytic, mathematical, metrical) style of science and engineering, with terms of management such as “PDCA (plan-do-check-act) cycle,” “quality assurance,” “governance,” and “performance.” There is a growing emphasis on designing a rational and efficient system including a teaching and study method or learning environment; this situation makes it increasingly difficult for philosophy to maintain the “metaphysical foundation” of the university against the engineering design.

5. The Age of Evaluation

With the gradual loss of the idea of university, new conceptions have gained more influence in university administration in this age of globalization.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁹ *Ibid.*

1) Evaluation as the Medicine/Poison¹⁰

Since its beginning, the university has been closely linked to the logic of evaluation. Since the conferral of degrees is a privilege of the university, the evaluation criteria in developing human resources is key. In the twelfth century, universities were spontaneously created as intellectual societies. A charter from the Pope or emperor approved the establishment of universities from the fourteenth century, and the State approved it from the fifteenth century. In the U.S., from the nineteenth century, numerous universities were founded based on a system of self-evaluation, developed early on. Later, the system of accreditation established in the U.S. would become a global standard for university evaluation. Thus universities have been constantly subject to evaluation, be it by a higher authority (the church or State), other universities, or themselves. However, in the last 30 years, there have been notable changes in the evaluation system. The increase in the number of graduates and universities, which also led to budget growth, economic efficiency, and public interest in the university, became more significant and led to the sort of evaluation that aims to subject research and education to the point of view of administration and hold it accountable to society.

Evaluation is both medicine and poison for the university. It works as knowledge beyond all knowledge, a discipline beyond all disciplines, and a competition beyond all other competitions. It seems that everything can be evaluated in the university. Every stakeholder is encouraged to participate in evaluating the university as a public educational organization — a tendency which seems impeccably democratic. We all know that democracy is irreconcilable with the arbitrary restriction, blatant censorship, or violent interdiction of academic freedom and artistic expression. Paradoxically, however, the more democratic evaluation there is, the more we see restrictions, censorship, and interdictions exercising an influence on research and education, in a manner that is less visible and more indirect. Shouldn't we say that the severe competition for research funds, the move towards "trendy" research subjects, the increased difficulty in attaining tenure, and the state of employment opportunities for students all have an impact on academic freedom? We should consider whether democratic competition does perhaps lead to a tyranny of evaluation.

2) The Notions of Performance and Excellence

¹⁰ For philosophical reflection on the notion of evaluation, see *Cités*, "L'idéologie de l'évaluation," PUF, N. 37, 2009.

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The engines of evaluation in research and education are the notions of performance and excellence. "Performance" is a flexible scale that is adaptive to various domains or fields. It is used as an objective index for evaluating the performance of machines, or abilities in sports or arts. In the logic of management, performance means producing the best result at a minimal cost and time, to fulfill customers' needs and expectations.

"Excellence" is the empty scale that makes the bidding-up of value possible. According to Bill Readings' *The University in Ruins*, the efficacy of the notion of excellence stems from the opacity of its definition, "The need for excellence is what we all agree on. And we all agree upon it because it is not an ideology, in the sense that it has no external referent or internal content."¹¹ A concept without real substance, excellence allows us to compare values between different domains. It is more attached to quantifying the degree of social contribution than determining the quality of research and education. It makes comparing university performance with that of society possible, introducing the principle of competition in every academic field. Paradoxically, "the point is not that no one knows what excellence is but that everyone has his or her own idea of what it is."¹² To demonstrate their own excellence, universities and researchers have to keep escalating their originality. In this kind of competition, "on the one hand, they all claim that there is a unique educational institution. On the other hand, they all go on to describe this uniqueness in exactly the same way."¹³

With the concepts of performance and excellence, it seems possible to compare and estimate everything: academic results of students, their career options, conference presentations or peer-reviewed articles, the financial position of a university, the quantity of books in libraries, etc. The efficiency of research and educational activities becomes subject to evaluation as does that of the university's administration and its contribution to society. Thus, we will be able to uniformly evaluate universities, museums, hospitals, etc. — institutions whose rationales, goals, content, memberships, and histories differ. Performance and excellence, this flexible scale without scale, plays a crucial part in synchronizing the university with the values of contemporary society, and transforming academic freedom according to economic indexes of efficiency, utility, profitability, etc.

¹¹ Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 23.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

6. Time, Power, and Emotion in the Humanities

The humanities might nevertheless open up some space for criticism, despite the process just described in which research and education in universities have been taken over by the logic of evaluation.

1) Time

Evidently, the human sciences require much smaller budgets than natural sciences. They do not require expensive laboratory equipment and a large research staff, as they are mainly engaged in reading and analyzing texts, to contemplate the spiritual activities of human beings. Rather, the humanities require *time*. Today, on the one hand, we in the humanities spend time reading texts very closely; on the other hand, we are rushed by the swift current of evaluation. The time required for the humanities should be this kind of dual temporality: “we still have some spare time” and “we are always short of time.” If the humanities were not rushed by a single kind of time but could create multiple temporalities existing between marginal and rushed or hurried time, it could create a rich temporal motion that would carry them forward.

2) Power

As the word “value” derives from the Latin *valare*, meaning to be powerful or in good health, the question of value or evaluation contains the quality of power. What kind of power is to be acquired with respect to the university’s identity? “Faculty” is a polysemic word that could mean “the power (of persons or things) to do anything,” “a kind of ability: branch of art or science,” or “a conferred power, authority, privilege.” During the birth of the university, the Latin word *facultas* was used to indicate a guild of intellectuals, a professional group of professors with the skills and abilities (*facultas*) to impart knowledge, which also has the authority (*facultas*) to certify other people as teachers, and have them join their group.

In Japan, universities were truly diversified after the 1991 reform. In 2008, the Central Council for Education, in its report *On the Formation of Bachelor’s Degree Programs*, mentioned that students need to acquire “undergraduate competencies (*gakushi-ryoku*),” which are described as learning “to be able to” do certain things, thereby attaching more importance to the skills students should acquire than to the material the faculty should teach them.

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However, is human ability limited only to the passage from “I cannot” to “I can”? Do we grow up only along the line from incompetence to competence? What do we lose by focusing almost entirely on an ability-based model? In the tradition of Western philosophy, Aristotle pointed out the binary distinction between potentiality and actuality: What is potential (*dynamis*) is something that is not yet actualized (*energia*). Based on this Aristotelian viewpoint, Giorgio Agamben, in his essay “On Potentiality,” developed the mode of existence of potentiality.¹⁴ According to Agamben, potentiality is not simply a capacity or ability to do this or that, but also a particular mode of existence that simultaneously means doing and not-doing, or being and not-being. An architect is considered an architect as long as she has the potential to construct, even when she does not construct anything. Potentiality is defined as the power of having a privation, which Agamben prefers to call *impotentiality*. Potentiality cannot always be reduced to a process of actualization, but is, for us as human beings, an existence of waiting. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle cites examples of potentiality in various human activities, such as grammar, music, architecture, medicine, etc. What we learn in the humanities contains more or less this kind of impotentiality. In fact, it is important for us to obtain the ability “to be able not to do”: an ability that is between competence and incompetence as narrowly defined. Even prior to subscribing to freedom in its modern sense, the task of the humanities consists of deepening impotentiality that can be expressed by the phrase “I am able not to do.”

3) Emotion and Sensibilities

In evaluating research and education, people often ask, “what does it mean?” or “what is it good for?” However, when it comes to the humanities, we should also ask, “what kind of emotions or sensibilities do they generate?” Throughout the twentieth century, the humanities diversified in terms of theories and methods, going beyond the traditional orthodox interpretation of classic works. It is important not to look for a single sense of the humanities based on the normative model of “great books,” but rather to question the sense of the humanities in their fluctuating plurality. The humanities’ task consists of not only searching for answers or aspiring to usefulness but also promoting a richness of emotion and sensibility that can suggest directions for our lives. Unlike answers or utility, such sensibilities and emotions cannot and must not be evaluated, or else we risk extinguishing academic freedom. As long as

¹⁴ Giorgio Agamben, “On Potentiality,” *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, California: Stanford University Press, 1999.

the humanities provide depth to our life, criticizing the evaluation system conditioning research and education at the university remains a possibility.

7. Figure and Place of Anti-University in the Margins of University

We all know, of course, that the university is not the only place for spiritual life. Intellectual activities have often been developed outside university, refused by the academic circle. During the Renaissance period, humanism came into existence as competition for the medieval university. In the seventeenth century, innovation in natural science and philosophy occurred outside university. In the eighteenth century, the intellectual Enlightenment movement made progress not in the university, but in State-sponsored institutions, such as Académie française or the Royal Society.

1) Movements of Anti-University, Sub-University, or Infra-University

We can find this kind of anti-university, sub-university, or infra-university movement, especially based on the humanities, outside or in the university margins throughout the twentieth century.

The Institute for Social Research (Institut für Sozialforschung) in Frankfurt, founded in 1924, aimed at shedding light on the development of reason in history through sociological and philosophical analysis, and substantive research. When the Nazis banished Jewish professors from their university posts, the New School for Social Research established “The University in Exile” in New York, which received more than 180 Jewish scholars from 1933 to 1945 and achieved tangible results in the study of German and Italian fascism. In Czechoslovakia, when the communist power after WWII controlled and limited academic freedom, Jan Patočka began “The Underground University” (Podzemní Univerzita) in his house in 1948 to teach the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger, which encouraged the students to put philosophy into practice. This underground activity allowed the establishment of The Jan Hus Educational Foundation in 1980, which organized many seminars of Western academics as philosophical action against political pressure, on the initiative of British philosophers at the University of Oxford. In 1961, Ivan Ilich founded the Centro Intercultural de Documentación (CIDOC: Intercultural Documentation Center) at Cuernavaca in Mexico, both a research center offering language courses to North American missionaries, and a free university for conducting an in-depth review of the institutionalization of social values (education,

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hospital, labor, etc.) in industrial modernization. In 2002, Michel Onfray opened the “Université Populaire” (Popular University) at Caen, a small city in the north of France, in an attempt to resist the intellectual centralized system around Paris. The name comes from the “Universités Populaires,” which were created spontaneously by workers at the beginning of the twentieth century and expanded to about 230 hubs, to provide adults with the opportunity to learn.

Faced with the difficulties of the times, people have launched intellectual movements to come up with a vision for research and education, in putting forward radical questions to existing institutions such as the university. As for the relations between the institution of the university and anti-university, sub-university, or infra-university movements, it would be too simplistic to say that we should create a new intellectual activity exclusively from the higher education system, because universities do not maintain academic freedom under political and economic powers. On the other hand, it would be naive to claim that the university is already dead. The examples mentioned above give us a clue to question the borders of the research university and educational activity.

3) The Unconditional Right to Say Everything Publicly

One of the university's motives consists of unconditional faith in the truth, which, in turn, drives us to extend beyond the institutional university framework. In *The University without Condition*, Jacques Derrida defines the deconstructive aspect of university as unconditionality for the truth. “The university *professes* the truth, and is its profession. It declares and promises an unlimited commitment to the truth.”¹⁵ In reference to the etymology of “professor” and “profession” or “confession,” Derrida emphasizes the aspect of confessing the truth in constative and performative manners. To make a profession of truth, it is necessary to keep “the principal right to say everything, even if it be under the heading of fiction and the experimentation of knowledge, and the right to say it publicly, to publish it,”¹⁶ in the university, and particularly in the humanities. However, unexpectedly, Derrida never identifies the unconditionality to say everything with an academic freedom protected within the university. On the contrary, “by reason of this abstract and hyperbolic invincibility, by reason of its very impossibility, this unconditionality exposes as well the

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, “The University without Condition,” *Without Alibi*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, California: Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 202.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

weakness or the vulnerability of the university.”¹⁷ This unconditional right does not necessarily enforce the sovereignty of the university in society, but is nearest to its fragility exposed to social powers. Derrida attentively thinks of the unconditionality at the limit of the university’s conservation, on the one hand, and innovation, on the other.

“The university without conditions is not necessarily situated or exclusively within the walls of what is today the university. It is not necessarily, exclusively, or exemplarily represented in the figure of the professor. It takes place, it seeks its place wherever this unconditionality can take shape. Everywhere that it, perhaps, gives one (itself) to think. Sometimes even beyond, no doubt, a logic or lexicon of the ‘condition.’”¹⁸

Indeed, the university is not the only privileged place for the right to say everything publicly. However, so that this right can be shared anywhere in our society, we have to save room for it at least in the university. According to Derrida, a university without condition “has never been in effect.”¹⁹ As long as the right to say everything publicly survives in the *heart* of the university, this unconditionality can provide different places for thinking the truth.

In the thirteenth century in Europe, the university was spontaneously born as a guild association of professors and students. The first universities had no campus or buildings; lectures were held in a church or a monastery. Students crossed borders to attend the universities, and were free to travel in search of excellent professors. Because the group of professors and students itself was highly mobile, they were willing to move from one university to another.

These historical contexts suggest that the original image of university would be that of traveling. Students always travel to university; furthermore, the university itself without any proper place is on the traveling path. The unconditional right of university would derive from its historical image of traveling; without it, today, we cannot obtain a clear view of its destination.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.