0. The crisis and resistance of philosophy

To talk about the topic « Philosophy and University », I can’t help but, in a pessimistic tone, refer to some crisis of philosophy for the last years.

In 2010, Middlesex University in London decided to cut down all programs run by the philosophy department. The management one-sidedly decided on this cut for financial reasons. It seemed extremely irrational, for the faculty is famous for its excellent research developed on an international scale. It worked very well as the important research center of philosophy in the U.K., where the study of French theory, critical theory, psychoanalysis, Marxism, etc. was so developed. Professors and students raised voices against the decision. They occupied some meeting rooms in the campus to conduct public discussions on the necessity of philosophy in the university. Their spontaneous action « Save Middlesex Philosophy » through the Internet obtained broad support from all over the world. Thanks to the international support activity, Kingston University proposed to welcome the Middlesex research center of philosophy with its faculty member.

In Hungary since 2010, philosophers are under increasing pressure from the conservative government. Legislation that restricts free speech in the media was passed and philosophers like Agnes Heller, who protested against it, are being attacked for misusing government grants. This political attack to philosophy brought a movement to claim for lost honor of Heller on an international scale.

The International College of Philosophy, founded among others by François Châtelet and Jacques Derrida in 1983 in Paris, faced a severe crisis in 2014 when the Ministry of Education decided to suspend the annual budget (240,000 EURO / about 33,600,000 yen). Under pressure to survive amid international academic competition, the French government forced the marginal philosophical organization to integrate with world-leading centers for university-based education and research. In fact, in 2006, the government started to establish 26 centers for research and higher education (Pôles de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur: PRES), and in 2013, these university
associations have been largely replaced by the new associations of universities and higher education institutions (ComUE). In order to defuse the serious budget crisis, program directors drafted the statement «The Right to Philosophy: Save the International College of Philosophy», which was diffused through the Internet in 18 languages. The international campaign for collecting signatures worked well, The President Holland gave finally his answer to the open letter, saying that the government will assure the annual budget for the CIPh.

These events show that it is never self-evident to maintain philosophical institutions in any society and in any era: a trend to efficiently manage higher educational institutions by “selection and concentration”, a political pressure to silence critical thinking and a tendency to make light of philosophical activities considered unproductive in the context of industrial capitalism.

In fact, we have heard public statements of depreciating the Humanities. As a symbolic example, we can refer to an anti-intellectual attitude of French ex-President Nicolas Sarkozy. French Presidents have had a high degree of respect for the cultural heritage, Sarkozy made no disguise of his belittling attitude to the Humanities. He declared that people should not pay their tax for the research of classic literature, but give their prior attention to the career prospect of the youth.

In 2014, British Education Secretary Nicky Morgan made profession of downgrading importance of the Arts and Humanities for teenagers, which provoked an outcry among teachers and supporters of the Humanities. «If you wanted to do something, or even if you didn’t know what you wanted to do, then the arts and humanities were what you chose because they were useful for all kinds of jobs. Of course, we know now that couldn’t be further from the truth – that the subjects that keep young people’s options open and unlock the door to all sorts of careers are the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths) ».

And this was influenced by a social trend in the direction of anti-intellectualism. The current feature of anti-intellectualism doesn’t consist of indifference and ignorance, but rather in attacking someone aggressively in a certain intellectual manner. Thank to the information technology, everyone believes to have (sometimes they truly have) enough knowledge or intellectual information to criticize the intellectuals. People criticize a certain type of knowledge, including often the Humanities, without giving up a kind of intellectual attitude, more or less associated
with populism.

In those three cases, philosophers urged 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 being moved to Kingston University, the political pressure on Hungarian philosophers was gradually reduced and in France the Ministry lifted the freeze on financial contributions to the International College of Philosophy. The international exchange provides an important network to the research and education in the Humanities. If research and education institutions face an unreasonable danger, it is desirable that domestic or international solidarity spread for it. What is often lacking in the institutions of the Humanities in Japan would be this kind of international solidarity against the crisis.

1. How to question “Philosophy and the University”

In modern Europe, the establishment of universities is inseparable from the academic hegemony of philosophy. Kant, Humboldt, Fichte, Schleiermacher, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Ortega, Weber, Jaspers, Derrida... many leading thinkers who have written on the topic of universities are almost all university professors. It was in a very close relationship with university institutions that they developed their philosophy.

When addressing the topic of “University and Philosophy”, it is essential to ask: “With what kind of 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?

After Prussia suffered a major defeat by Napoleon’s army, they tried to establish the University of Berlin to overcome the social devastation, to stimulate the recovery of spiritual authority. The needs of the times made the philosophers create the modern university in order to re-establish their national culture. And their desire to the system of knowledge in the German idealism corresponded to the structure of the university. The university represent in fact the universe where different types of sciences are organically related to each another. Philosophy was considered to play an
important role to ensure the unified idea 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. Both the “solitude and liberty for exercising research” advocated by Humboldt and the independence of university to the society no longer apply\(^1\). It may well be that the idea of university which philosophers had designed is now considered obsolete. However, it is from the collapse of the idea that we must find a way to rethink the very question of university. An epistemological question, “what is the idea of university”, such as John Henry Newman proposed in the beginning of the 19th century, was already substituted by an ontological question, “is the university possible?”. After having lost the idea of university, how (not) to speak of possibilities to be revived from what still remains under the very name of university?

2. *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Again

In order to reflect on the relationships between university and society, it is always useful to go back to Kant’s *The Conflict of the Faculties*. Kant, first philosopher who assimilated the academic freedom to the freedom of university, opposes the superior faculties (theology, law and medicine) and the lower faculty (philosophy), and find the social signification of university in the relationship of power between the faculties. Against the superior faculties authorized by the government, which exert a direct influence on the public life, the faculty of philosophy brings a radical contestation in seeking the right of free and open speech. According to Kant, it is thanks to a critical contribution of philosophy that university find its real place in the midst of society.

The issue, classic and unresolved until today, is the autonomy of the university in the face of the State, which has remained a problem. While the superior faculties are heavily censored by the State, the faculty of philosophy tries to ensure the freedom of reason which judges all the doctrines. In Kant's view, it is the role of

\(^1\) In the end of 18th century in Europe, already, people claimed the abolishment of university as an outdated relic of the Middle Ages, and enlightenment thinkers demanded the education suitable for practical use, focused on the vocational skill training. The critical cliches based on the principles of form and utility, such as « The style of university is out of date now », « Education and research in the university is useless », have repeated for a long.
criticism that improves a social function of the university, which would be genuinely useful for the society and the State. Derrida analyzes the pure reason heterogeneous to the censoring power of State remarked by Kant.

« One could interpret all of Kantian politics, that politics implicitly or explicitly implemented by the critical enterprise, through the three great Critiques, as a political enterprise whose aim is to take and delimit: to take notes of a censoring power – and of the legitimacy of State reason as a censoring reason, the power of censorship – but also to delimit this power; not by opposing it with a counter-power, but a sort of non-power, of reason heterogeneous to power. This would be that of pure reason, or, from the point of view of its institutional translation, that of the Faculty of Philosophy »².

In our time, it is no more possible 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 null and void the conception that a certain faculty can remain in the place of nonpower. Among the questions raised by Kant, that of the ideal structure of university institutions still takes on great importance today. The opposition and conflicts between inside and outside, which characterizes the relation between university and State power, or between university and society, has already taken place in a symbolic manner in the middle of the university itself. The relation between faculties reflects today the oppositions based on criteria such as useful and useless, profitable and non-profitable, efficient and non-efficient.

As Kant emphasizes, the legal conflict in the university is never the war. What is critical, the conflict is not a battle between life and death, but a struggle for the truth. As globalization has proceeded in recent years, each university, faculty or researcher is forced to join in the severe competition of research and education, so one is often in « a state of war » in order to acquire budgets to survive. Not to turn in a war, but to develop productively « our legal conflict » would be one of the criteria to find the idea and freedom still remaining in the university. The realization of academic freedom allows to bring into action the freedom of reason, which leaves enough room for social freedoms. It is an excellent remark in Kant’s argument on university to emphasize the relation between these three kinds of freedom. If the result of research and education is

evaluated only by the economic scale, and academic freedom comes under severe pressure, the freedom of rational thinking mind will be lost in the society.

While the superior faculties, as the right-wing, defend State doctrines, the faculty of philosophy, as the opposite party, thinks rigorously about its validity, if necessary, argues with it. The conflict should be useful even for the State, as far as the reason makes an accurate judgment in order to reveal the truth to the world. Then, the faculty of philosophy turns into the position of the right wing, on the other hand, the superior faculties into the left wing, as if the mechanism of the lever worked well. The important in the architectonic schema is to keep the function of lever which allows to turn the direction of university on bipolar division of faculties. And to leave the door open for multiple political strategies around the truth. When this intellectual struggle is no more possible, a certain signification of university will be lost. The task of university should be to divert a battle between life and death accelerated by capitalistic economy, and to manage the energy toward the legal conflict around the truth.

3. Karl Jaspers’s philosophical idea of University

In 1952, Karl Jaspers published *The Idea of University (Die Idee der Universität)* in order to reconstruct the intellectual spirit of university after the moral destruction caused by Nazi’s totalitarianism. We can find in his argument the philosophical idea of university traditionally inherited from Kant and Humboldt. Jaspers defines the university with clarity in the introduction.

« Like the church, it [=university] derives its autonomy respected even by the state from an imperishable idea of supranational, world-wide character: academic freedom. This is what the university demands and what it is granted. Academic freedom is a privilege which entails the obligation to teach truth, in defiance of anyone outside or inside the university who wishes to curtail it ».

« The university is the one place where by the concession of state and society a given epoch may cultivate the clearest possible self-awareness. People are allowed to congregate here for the sole purpose of seeking truth. For it is a human right that man

---

must be allowed somewhere to pursue truth unconditionally and for its own sake. » (p. 1)

« The university is the corporate realization of the primary thirst for knowledge [das ursprüngliche Wissenwollen]. Its most immediate aim is to discover what there is to be known and what becomes of us through knowledge. » (p. 2)

Jaspers’s clear remarks show precisely the idea of university 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 the society or the state.

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

Indeed, Jaspers lays great emphasis on the idea of university, but, he also makes an ominous prediction of its failure in 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. » (p. 70) Jaspers insisted on the idea of university against a development of science and technology and the trend of the popularization. But, during the period of rapid economic growth in 60–70s, popularization and technicism transformed an institutional reality of university. The popularized institution of university is no more a pure and simple universe of knowledge (uni-versity), but rather the « 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. » (p. 80)

It is also significant to see that Jaspers is well concerned about the drastic influence of modern technology on the cosmos of university. From the beginning of the 19th century, technology has stepped up its presence, « has become an independent giant. » (p. 92) The world and human existence transformed and controlled through technology obviously came to be the academic subject of university. The novel task is
now not only to consider in an utilitarian approach the reality of the technical world, but also to think about its meaning and purpose in the human order in a philosophical approach. That’s why Jaspers consciously pays attention to 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 the natural sciences and the 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. » (p. 94) At that time, although Jaspers recognized the independence and universality of the technical world as a modern phenomenon, he could still believe in the task of the faculty of philosophy, that is, the « metaphysical foundation of a new way of life which technology has made possible. » (p. 94)

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

4. The Age of Evaluation

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

1) Evaluation as the Medicine/Poison

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

The evaluation is both medicine and poison for the university. It works as a knowledge beyond all knowledge, a discipline beyond all the disciplines, a competition beyond all other competitions. It seems that there is nothing that cannot be evaluated in the university. Every stakeholder, teacher or no teacher, is encouraged to participate in evaluating the university as a public educational organization—a tendency which indeed seems impeccably democratic. We all know that democracy is irreconcilable with the arbitrary restrictions, 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 post, 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

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 for abilities in sports or in the arts. In the logic of management, performance means producing the best result at a minimal cost and time, to fulfill the needs and expectations of customers.

“Excellence” is the empty scale which makes possible the bidding-up of value. According to Bill Readings’ *The University in Ruins* (Harvard University Press, 1997), 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” (p. 23). 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 the quality of research and education. It makes possible comparing the performance of the university with that of society, introducing the principle of competition 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” (p. 33). In order 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” (p. 12).

With the concepts of performance and excellence, it seems possible to compare and estimate everything: academic results of students, their career options, conference presentation or peer-reviewed articles, the financial position of a university, the quantity of books in libraries, etc. Not only the efficiency of research and educational activities, but also that of the university’s administration and its contribution to the society become subject to evaluation. Thus we will be able to uniformly evaluate universities, museums, hospitals, etc.—institutions whose rationale, goals, content, membership, and history are different from each other. 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.

---

5. Time, Power, and Emotion in the Humanities
The Humanities might nevertheless open up some space for criticism, despite the process we just saw of how 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 the natural sciences. They don’t require expensive laboratory equipment and a large research staff, as they are mainly engaged in reading and analyzing texts, in order to contemplate the spiritual activities of human beings. Rather, what the Humanities require is time. Today, on the one hand, we in the humanities spend time reading texts very closely; on the other hand, we are being 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 will be able not only to be rushed by a single kind of time, but to create multiple temporalities that exist between marginal time and rushed or hurried time—this 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 to be 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 identity of the university?

“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 period of the birth of 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 teach some knowledge, which also has the authority (facultas) to certify other people as teachers, and have them join their group.

In Japan, universities have been truly diversified after the 1991 reform. In 2008, the Central Council for Education, in its report On the Formation of a 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.
However, is the 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” develops the mode of existence of potentiality. According to Agamben, potentiality is not simply a capacity or ability to do this or that, but also a particular mode of existence which simultaneously means doing and not-doing, 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 an existence of waiting for us, human beings. 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. Even prior to subscribing to freedom in its modern sense, the task of the humanities consists of deepening the 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?”, “what is it good for? But 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 style of 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 task of the humanities consists not only in searching for answers or aspiring for usefulness, but rather in 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 the
humanities provide depth to our life, there remains the possibility of criticizing the evaluation system that conditions research and education at the university.

6. Figure and place of anti-university in margin of university

We all know, of course, that the university is not only a social place for spiritual life. Intellectual activities have been developed often outside of university, rather refused by the academic circle. During the Renaissance period, Humanism came into existence as competition with the medieval university. In the 17th century, the innovation in the natural science and philosophy took place outside of university. In the 18th century, the intellectual movement of Enlightenment made progress not in the university, but in the institutions sponsored by the state, such as Académie française or Royal Society.

1) The example of French academics

Let us take a nearer example. In France, philosophy had been considerably institutionalized in the period of the Third Republic. The progress of educational secularization made expectations rise for philosophy to cultivate the citizens serving as a secure foundation for democratic society. Jean-Paul Sartre is a typical figure who developed philosophical activities outside or in the margin of university. In his first career, he, as an academic philosopher, elaborated his own existential philosophy grounded in the phenomenology coming into fashion around that time. And, with the great success of his novel *Nausea* (1938), he received the attention of literary circles. After WWII, he started his magazine *Les Temps Modernes* in order to show his commitment (engagement) to actual problems.

After the generation of Sartre, some French thinkers opened new philosophical frontiers outside or in the margin of traditional university. Just after May 68 (students' contestation for the autonomy and democratization of the university), the French government founded the “Experimental University Center of Vincennes (Le Centre universitaire expérimental de Vincennes)” to calm students' anger. Against the authentic University of Sorbonne, it made an attempt to develop the interdisciplinary research and education by introducing studies of cinema, plastic art, dance, theatrical
performance, psychoanalysis and media. The Center accepted workers or the ones without a national school admission (baccalauréat) and opened the door to foreign students from the developing countries that did not even have a credit transfer system. In the Faculty of philosophy prepared by Michel Foucault, professors such as François Châtelet, Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière and Gilles Deleuze, etc., organized the curriculum not in a traditional way, but rather to derive a philosophical practice from a political conflict.

In the interview in 1978, Foucault talked of his position regarding the university system⁴:

« Les auteurs les plus importants qui m'ont, je ne dirais pas formé, mais permis de me décaler par rapport à ma formation universitaire, ont été des gens comme Bataille, Nietzsche, Blanchot, Klossowski, qui n'étaient pas des philosophes au sens institutionnel du terme, et un certain nombre d'expériences personnelles, bien sûr. Ce qui m'a le plus frappé et fasciné chez eux, et qui leur a donné cette importance capitale pour moi, c'est que leur problème n'était pas celui de la construction d'un système, mais d'une expérience personnelle. À l'université, en revanche, j'avais été entraîné, formé, poussé à l'apprentissage de ces grandes machineries philosophiques qui s'appelaient hégélianisme, phénoménologie... »

« En outre, la phénoménologie cherche à ressaisir la signification de l'expérience quotidienne pour retrouver en quoi le sujet que je suis est bien effectivement fondateur, dans ses fonctions transcendentales, de cette expérience et de ces significations. En revanche, l'expérience chez Nietzsche, Blanchot, Bataille a pour fonction d'arracher le sujet à lui-même, de faire en sorte qu'il ne soit plus lui-même ou qu'il soit porté à son anéantissement ou à sa dissolution. C'est une entreprise de dé-subjectivation. »

His talk gives us a glimpse of notions of anti-university. First, these writers, such as the ones Foucault mention, tried to describe the experience-limit so as to elaborate the radical notion of écriture (writing). « Écriture » means both an action of writing and what was written, that is, the activity of the writer as a subject and the

materiality of text. Different from the demonstrative system in the university such as a doctoral dissertation or thesis, «écriture» presents precisely the existence of a text itself, the experience of writing itself. Secondly, Foucault critically revisited even the position and effect of subject. As long as it is exposed to the experience-limit, the subject itself has been questionable. The traditional relations between subject and truth not only under the influence of the radical literary experiment, but also of new frontiers of psychoanalysis, semiology and anthropology. The logic of dis-subjectivation (dé-subjectivation) doesn’t fit the traditional education any more.

2) Movements of anti-university, sub-university or infra-university

We can find this kind of movement of anti-university, sub-university or infra-university, especially based on the Humanities, outside or in the margin of university throughout the 20th century.

The Institute for Social Research (Institut für Sozialforschung) in Frankfurt, founded in 1924, aimed at shedding light on the development of reason in the history both with sociological and philosophical analysis, and with the substantiative research. When Jewish professors were banished from their university position by the Nazis, 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 academic freedom was controlled and limited by the communist power after W.W. II, Jan Patočka began in 1948 «The Underground University» (Podzemní Univerzita) in his house to teach the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger, which encouraged the students to put philosophy in practice. This underground activity allowed to found The Jan Hus Educational Foundation in 1980 on the initiative of British philosophers at the University of Oxford, which organized many seminars of Western academics as philosophical action against the political pressure. 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 missionaries from North America, and a free university for conducting an in-depth review of the institutionalization of social values (education, hospital, labor, etc.) in the industrial modernization. In 2002, Michel Onfrey opened up «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 « Universités Populaires », which were created by workers spontaneously at the beginning of the 20th century and expanded in about 230 hubs, in order to provide the adult 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 university institution and movements of anti-university, sub-university or infra-university, it would be too simplistic to say that we should create a new intellectual activity out of the higher education system, because universities don’t keep academic freedom under political and economic powers. 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 university of research and educational activity.

3) The unconditionality to say everything publicly

One of the motivities of the university consists of the unconditional faith in the truth, which, in turn, drives us to extend beyond the institutional framework of university. In The University without condition (L'Université sans condition), Jacques Derrida define the deconstructive aspect of university as the unconditionality for the truth. « The university professes the truth, and is its profession. It declares and promises an unlimited commitment to the truth »5. In reference to the etymology of « professor » and « profession » or « confession », Derrida emphasizes the aspect of confessing the truth both in constative and performative manners. In order to make profession of the 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 » (p. 205), in the university, and particularly in the Humanities. However, unexpectedly, Derrida never identifies the unconditionality to say everything with an academic freedom to be protected within university. On the contrary, « by reason of this abstract and hyperbolic invincibility, by reason of its very impossibility, this unconditionality exposes as well as the weakness or the vulnerability of the university. » (p. 206) This unconditional right necessarily doesn’t enforce the

sovereignty of university in the society, but is the nearest to its fragility exposed to social powers. Derrida attentively thinks of the unconditionality on the limit of conservation and innovation of university.

« The university without conditions is not necessarily situated or exclusively within the walls of what is today the university. It is not necessarily, exclusively, 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.“ (p. 236.)

Indeed, the university is not the only privileged place for the right to say everything publicly. But, so that this right could be shared anywhere in our society, we have to save room for this right at least in the university. According to Derrida, the university without condition « has never been in effect. » (p. 206) As far as the right to say everything publicly survives in the heart of the university, this unconditionality can produce different place for thinking the truth.

In the 13th century in Europe, the university was spontaneously born as a guild association of professors and students. First universities had no campus, nor buildings at that time, the lectures were held in a church or a monastery. Students crossed borders to go to the universities, and were free to travel in search of excellent professors. Because the Group itself of professors and students were administered in a high mobility, they were willing to move from a university to another.

These historical contexts let us 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 way of traveling. The unconditional right of university would derive from its historical image of traveling, without it, today, we cannot get a clear view of the destination of university.