Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.

_Dialectic of Enlightenment_

_TWO WORLDS_

Here in America there is no difference between a man and his economic fate. A man is made by his assets, income, position, and prospects. The economic mask coincides completely with a man's inner character. Everyone is worth what he earns and earns what he is worth. He learns what he is through the vicissitudes of his economic existence. He knows nothing else. If once the materialist critique of society challenged idealism by stating that it is Being that determines Consciousness, and not Consciousness that determines Being, and that the truth about society lies not in the idealist representations of society itself, but in its economy,
TWO WOLRDS

Here at the so-called University there is no difference between a man and his academic fate. A man is made by his academic titles, publications, the money one brings in, position and prospects. The academic mask coincides completely with a man’s inner character. Everyone is worth what he publishes and publishes what he is worth. He learns what he is through the vicissitudes of his academic existence. He knows nothing else. If once the materialist critique of society challenged idealism by stating that it is Being that determines Consciousness, and not Consciousness that determines Being, and that the truth about the University lies not in the idealist representations of the University itself, but in its academic life, now contemporary Self-Consciousness has shaken off such idealism completely. Academics judge themselves by their market value and learn what they themselves are according to their position in the capitalist academic market.

SOME HISTORICAL FACTS

How many maintain the historical memory that the first European University, founded in Bologna in 1088, was developed as a student union? At this University, students defined the principles and ways of study, the powers and obligations of teachers, and the Rector to whom teachers swore an oath of obedience was a senior member of the students. The teachers, selected and appointed by the students, were not entitled to vote in the assemblies, and were only involved as observers. Symmetrically to this model, the
University of Paris, the second in the historic series of European Universities, was established a few decades later. There, the University developed as a *teachers union*, where students were under the domination of teachers. The historical memory of this second model has been the standard ever since.

The two symmetrically opposed historical models, the Students University and the Professors University, encouraging student or professorial domination over the University community, determined the development of universities in the European South, adopting the Students University model, and the European North adopting the professorial variant, from the 12th century to modern times. The rise of the nation-state in modern times marked the end of student control. The new National University, maintaining its autonomy as a University, came under the control of a professorial hierarchy emerging at the top of the National Education System under the ultimate supervision of the State.

It must be noted here that the University authorities at first were only marginally professorial or student-led. In their historical development, it would be fair to say that most were at best mixed, run by both students and professors, driven by an antagonistic differentiation between the North and the South, with the South being predominantly student-based, and the North predominantly professorial. But even when the nation-state put an official institutional end to this antagonism, submitting the University to professorial control under the state supervision, professorial control was meant to ensure academic freedom - defined as freedom of Knowledge. In parallel, already from the mid-19th century, student unions connected the principle of academic freedom with the participation of students in the choice of professors and the distribution of educational and research duties, since for them, the freedom of Knowledge was intrinsically interwoven with the freedom of study, of research and of teaching.
The third University model was developed simultaneously in England, France and Germany and finds its full-fledged realization in the institution established in 1810 by Humboldt in Berlin. By the end of the 19th century, this historical model, which in a way is transcending dialectically both previous ones, had become universal. In what follows, we will have a look at the historical evolution of the University deriving from this model.

THE UNIVERSITY TODAY

1. The University and the Academic Freedom of Knowledge
One would have to engage in a broad and lengthy discussion of this singular European model in order to confront its principles, its itineraries and turning points until today. Here, suffice it to summarize all this in five principles, the annulment of which defines the passage to today’s so-called University. Let it be noted here that my formulation of these five principles expresses only their abstract presence in academic ideology — I will not examine the ways in which they are rejected or accepted in concrete cases at the University.

The first and introductory principle of the model European University is that teaching and research are inseparable. The University professor is a teacher and a researcher at once. Professors teach what they research and research what they teach.

The second principle is the equality between teacher and student. The equality is founded upon the symmetry of teaching and learning. The teacher learns from the student. If teachers do not learn, they are orators not teachers. The equality is completed through the continuum and unity of teaching and learning within the unity of learning and research. During the process of teaching, the research of the students continue the research of their teachers. In general, the reverse is the case. The research of the teachers continues their own research as students and the research of their students.
The third principle is the **totality of Knowledge**, which comprises the purpose of the unity of University learning, teaching and research. According to Humboldt himself, this totality follows the Aristotelian tradition and is as such an absolute totality. Knowledge can be differentiated but not dissected, research and teaching are interconnected and indiscriminate, evolving within the continuum of Knowledge of the natural world and of the human being in the world, as a single person and as society.

This approach of the totality of Knowledge corresponded to the distinction between the academic University and the professional schools. According to this distinction, academic studies did not lead to a profession. The turn towards professional studies, i.e. studies that lead to a specific profession, relativized the meaning of the term “totality of Knowledge” in a dual way. On the one hand, the field of every specific professional Knowledge should, from then on, cover as much Knowledge ground as possible for the part of the totality it was accorded. On the other, University studies in each professional field should be founded upon some elementary kind of total Knowledge. This foundation also developed in two ways. First, entry into University required the completion of general introductory studies in every field of the Knowledge totality, i.e. of the natural sciences and the humanities. Secondly, University studies which lead to a professional diploma ought to extend to fields beyond the specific professional field of Knowledge.

The fourth principle that presupposes the above three, is **self-education**. A continuum of Knowledge of the natural world, awareness of human society in the world and awareness of the single person in society, exists separately in each person. Every individual is singular and unique, and his or her education —total education and specialized education alike— is his or her own personal responsibility. Knowledge of the world and self-Knowledge, which is its ultimate goal, is the result of self-education. Teachers, if they are teachers indeed, are chosen, not imposed.
The fifth and fundamental principle, deriving from and continuing the fourth, is a constitutional principle of the University itself. It is the freedom of Knowledge, safeguarded by the autonomy of the University in regard to the institutions of economic power and political authority.

The phrase “academic freedom”, when referring to the freedom of Knowledge at the University, has a specific meaning. It used to describe the ideal European University. Today, when employed to contemporary Higher Education Institutions, a completely different meaning is given to the phrase. In fact, today, it means the opposite to what it used to mean. Academic freedom is transformed into the freedom of the market. What is the opposition here, one might ask. Well, first of all it is not freedom of the University, according to its historical model. Consequently, it has nothing to do with the freedom of Knowledge.

2. The “University” and the market “Freedom of Knowledge”

*The irony of the Magna Charta Universitatum*

In 1988 the rectors of European Universities drafted the *Magna Charta* “on the occasion of the ninth centenary of the oldest University in Europe, four years before the definitive abolition of borders between the countries of the European Community” as stated in the preamble of the Charta, where they “proclaim to all States and to the conscience of all nations the fundamental principles which must, now and always, support the vocation of universities” The first of the “fundamental principles” in the text of the Charta is that “The University is an autonomous institution” in which research and teaching “should be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power.” The second principle is that “teaching and research are indivisible.” As shown above, the first of the principles of the Charta is the fundamental, principle of European Universities. The second
is the introductory one. And what about the other principles: the equality between teacher and student, the unity of Knowledge and self-education? Are they implied in the other two, or are they simply being excluded?

The irony of the *Magna Charta* is that its rhetorical return to these principles comes at the very moment when the process of their total abolition has been completed. One year after the ninth centenary in 1989, the end of “actually existing socialism” hails the neoliberal era of the end of national capitalism and of whatever remained of State capitalism. The nation-state and the international market give way to a supranational State and a global market. National bourgeois democracy and, marginally, the welfare state, has been replaced by the transnational oligarchy of wealth and generalized State repression. In the neoliberal era, the principles of the University have been abolished for good.

And what is the definition of the term *University* today? This is how the Congress of the European University Association (EUA) responded to this question in 2003: “The EUA uses the term University to refer to institutions with full power to confer doctoral degrees”, adding that, in European Higher Education, 1,000 institutions fulfill this criterion. This contrasts to the 4,000 institutions of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the broader market of Higher Education services. Alongside this market and distinct from it, there is also the European Research Area (ERA), the market of research services. The “University”, then, is an institution, private or state, operating at the intersection of these two areas of the global market — an institution in which the distinct market services of education and research intersect at the production of the doctoral degree.

*The Bologna Process*

In the “Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education” which was issued in Bologna in June 1999 and refers to the
Magna Charta, the first of the key objectives in Higher Education is “international competitiveness” in the “promotion of the European Higher Education system worldwide”. The so-called “Bologna process”, which began with the declaration, is essentially an application of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) to the European market for education and research services. The GATS is a treaty signed by the members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, four years before the Bologna Declaration.

Research and Education: innovation and training
In the Bologna Declaration, the University studies are divided in two cycles, undergraduate and graduate. The first, leads to a Degree which actually consists of a list of an individual student’s certified competences (“Diploma Supplement”) and provides access to the European labour market. The second cycle leads to a Master and/or doctorate degree, which is also of individual character. On this individual level —individuality is of particular importance here— University curricula are integrated programs of education and research —the term “integrated programs” is stated in the Declaration. A decisive question arises. How does the Declaration understand “education” and “research” in these “integrated programs”?

“Education” is training provision —“training” is a term also used in the Declaration. “Research” is the production of innovation —the term “innovation” is not mentioned in the text of the Declaration but it is central to the reasoning of the Bologna Process. And what about “integration”? Integration is the identification of provider and producer: The University as a provider of market training for its students becomes a producer of market innovation through the supervision of its doctorate students. Integration is also the identification of what is provided with what is produced. Integrated training means training for the production
of professional services in a specific field of Knowledge as well as training for the production of innovations in this field.

We shall finish this with a remark. Training provision and the production of innovation are both market services of private or state education and research enterprises.

**Social education and Market training**

In order to better understand all this, we should turn to the conceptual opposition between ability and competence, competence being of central importance in the discussion on Higher Education today. There is a crucial difference between ability and competence. *Ability develops through social education*, while *competence is produced through market training*. And what is the opposition between them? Abilities cannot be produced. They grow through the *social education* of free persons, as the subjective component of their social force. Competences, on the other hand, are commercialized abilities. As such, they are produced by the *educational market enterprises*. Competences are *reified* and *measurable* (with their own marks, point systems and rating charts), and they can thus enter the market as commodified labour power. Competences must also be *effective*, in order to be competitive.

3. **After the “University”: the Social Freedom of Knowledge**

As I stated above, what is today referred to as academic freedom has lost its historical connotations. It now means freedom of the market. My discussion aimed at clarifying this position. But I added that what is today referred to as academic freedom has nothing to do with the freedom of Knowledge.

The question arises: Why is academic freedom today not freedom of Knowledge? Isn’t the provision of training and the production of innovation also a production of Knowledge, albeit commodified Knowledge? It is. But this is not *free Knowledge*. Far from being the *production of Knowledge determined by the social*
needs and desires of a free person, it is Knowledge defined by the market needs of the alienated subject, it is the production of forced Knowledge, determined by the market and imposed by the State.

We would need more space to analyze the critical issue of the social subject, the formation of the subject into a free person, the loss of freedom through alienation and the central role of the market in the reification of abilities that leads to the alienation of the subject and finally to the deconstruction and dissolution of the person – prosopon.

Let us briefly comment on the relevant issue of self-education, the fourth principle of the model European University we mentioned above, and then on the freedom of Knowledge, as a constitutional principle of the University. We shall limit ourselves to the axiomatic formulation of its meaning based on the concept of the person - prosopon. There are three basic principles of the freedom of Knowledge.

The first principle is that of the freedom of the person. We call “free Knowledge” the Knowledge that is acquired by the social subject constituted as a person through exercising his/her freedom. The second principle is collectivity. Every social subject is not a person. The person, as a locus of social freedom is a subject presenting him/herself to others and being recognized by the others as such. The person presupposes collectivity. Consequently, free Knowledge also presupposes collectivity for the social subject to be constituted as a person, in fact that collectivity which constitutes the subject of study —the student— as a person. The third principle is creativity. The Knowledge that is acquired through exercising one’s freedom is realized also through the exercising of freedom. Creativity is the realization of freedom.

THE KNOWLEDGE COMMON

According to its principles, and specifically the principle of collectivity as a presupposition for the freedom of the person and as a
social space of its creativity, the freedom of Knowledge is founded upon the Common of Knowledge. What exactly is a Common?

At a discussion organized by the “Urban Conflicts Workshop” in June 2013 on the subject of “the Space of the Commons and of the Crisis” I gave a general answer to the question in my paper on “The Concept of the Common: Social Space and Mode of Communication”. It was response challenging the usual discourse on the “Commons” (in plural). My title already suggests my basic argument: “The Common is a mode of communication that constitutes the multitude as a public body, a mode of communication integrating the several differentiated personal lives of people into a unified public life of all.” In my vocabulary, a mode of communication within a social space, much like the Marxian concept of the mode of production, is the unity of social relations and social forces. The social forces are the unity of objective potentialities and subjective abilities to realize the relationships of the social space.

Based on this concept of the Common, and focusing on Knowledge, the Knowledge Common is the Knowledge-related aspect of the abilities determining the Common. In other words, the Knowledge Common is the Knowledge-related dimension of the mode of communication that integrates the differentiated personal life of each human, in the sense that each human as a free person is unique and singular, within a unified public life-world of all.

The Knowledge Common Beyond the “University”
The issue here is not the Common of the so-called University Knowledge, forced Knowledge determined by the market and imposed by the State, responding to the market needs of an alienated subject. The issue is the Knowledge Common as free Knowledge.

The Knowledge Common can be divided into parts, which correspond to the division of the multitude into separate social collectivities and political unities within a Common Space. A Common
Space is made up of the composition of collective space within civil society and the space of citizens within political society. In other words, it is a space combining the two central divisions in the four-part pattern of Social Space: personal space - collective space (of civil society) and space of citizens - space of the body politic (of political society). This division of Knowledge Common in parts does not negate the unity of the Common. The reason is that the division is characterized by overlaps in the production of social life and the reproduction of the social system in a continuum that socially constitutes relationships, by trying to maintain desired relationships and subvert or avoid undesired ones, from the smaller scale of the personal to the broader scale of the political.

We thus return from a different historical route to the unity and totality of Knowledge as goal and purpose of learning, teaching and research in their unity, with self-education based on the equality of teacher and student as their foundation. Free Knowledge is not possible through the University — what we today call “University”. In a world where Knowledge can still maintain, in certain areas, its true spirit of freedom — let us repeat that forced Knowledge is, in the end, distorted Knowledge — the University can exist only where the emergence of free Knowledge is possible within and beyond the University, in networks of free sociality, where persons and collectivities meet to develop the Knowledge Common.

These networks are loci of group-cooperative cultivation of Knowledge through the socially evolving division of Knowledge into parts and the recomposition of these parts into interconnected clusters of social praxis, where by praxis we understand the integration and unity of theory and practice.

NOTES

1. Zwei Welten: Hierzulande gibt es keinen Unterschied zwischen dem
wirtschaftlichen Schicksal und den Menschen selbst. Keiner ist etwas an-
deres als sein Vermögen, sein Einkommen, seine Stellung, seine Chancen.
Die wirtschaftliche Charaktermaske und das, was darunter ist, decken sich
im Bewußtsein der Menschen, den Betroffenen eingeschlossen, bis aufs
kleinste Fältchen. Jeder ist so viel wert wie er verdient, jeder verdient
so viel er wert ist. Was er ist, erfährt er durch die Wechselfälle seiner
wirtschaftlichen Existenz. Er kennt sich nicht als ein anderes. Hatte die
materialistische Kritik der Gesellschaft dem Idealismus einst entgegenge-
halten, daß nicht das Bewußtsein das Sein, sondern das Sein das Bewußt-
sein bestimme, daß die Wahrheit über die Gesellschaft nicht in ihren ide-
alistischen Vorstellungen von sich selbst, sondern in ihrer Wirtschaft zu
finden sei, so hat das zeitgemäße Selbstbewußtsein solchen Idealismus
mittlerweile abgeworfen. Sie beurteilen ihr eigene Selbst nach seinem
Marktwert und lernen, was sie sind, aus dem, wie es ihnen in der kapital-
istischen Wirtschaft ergeht. Ihr Schicksal, und wäre es das traurigste, ist
ihnen nicht äußerlich, sie erkennen es an.