

Hearing the University

Zoran Dimić (University of Niš)

Abstract

The article examines the extent to which we can still insist on all three of Humboldt's principles of the idea of the university. The question of whether the idea of the university still has the force of legitimization of the institution, coincides today with an attempt at “awakening” the professors and students. The place where the idea of university resides must be sought in a community of the scientific and educational We of university professors and students. Opening the horizon before the idea of the university is only possible if we again begin to understand education and knowledge as the affirmation of hearing.

“...wer in seiner Wissenschaft nur wie in einem fremden Eigentume lebt, wer sie nicht persönlich besitzt, sich ein sicheres und lebendiges Organ für sie erworben hat, sie nicht in jedem Augenblick neu aus sich zu erzeugen anfangen könnte, ist ein Unwürdigen, der schon in dem Versuch, die Gedanken der Vorwelt oder Gegenwart bloss historisch zu überliefern, über seine Grenze geht und etwas übernimmt, das er nicht leisten kann.”¹

Is there still a point in being interested today in the original Humboldtian idea of university? Can anything new be expected from it? What is the point of discussing the idea today if we know that almost all of the three well-known Humboldtian principles of the idea of the uni-

¹ “he who lives in his science only as in a sort of another man’s property, who does not possess it personally, who has not provided a safe and living organ for it, who could not start again creating it within himself at every moment, is not worthy of the science itself and with the very attempt to transfer the thoughts of the earlier or today’s world in a mere historical way, he crosses his limit and undertakes what cannot be done.” (F.W. Schelling, *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums*, in *Die Idee der Deutschen Universitäts* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956), 20. My translation.

versity,² which represent its foundations, are actually not applied anymore? Therefore is the idea of the university still any good?

The defenders of such a view could be emboldened by citing the facts of contemporary university practice, that is, by adducing the image of modern universities. Through an intensive functionalization of knowledge, today's institutions of higher education first of all seek to impart the necessary professional skills and competencies which society, the state and modern supranational corporations need. Never before has there been more research conducted, and so it seems, more results and discoveries at university faculties and institutes than today. On the other hand, the number of students has increased many times since the Second World War.³

It seems that humankind and universities do quite well without an idea of university! What does the authentic, enlightening character of the idea of the university, i.e. the emancipatory role of knowledge, mean at all to a modern student who wants to gain by studying his/her place in society and a comfortable, easy-going life? Philosophers' discourse on the crisis of the idea of the university, the crisis of the notion of knowledge and the crisis of educational institutions themselves during the 20th

² Here we speak of: 1. the unity of science; 2. the unity of teaching and research; 3. the academic freedom of teachers and students. For more details see: W. von Humboldt, "Über die innere und äussere Organisation der höheren wissenschaftlichen Anstalten in Berlin," in *Die Idee der Deutschen Universität* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956), 377-386.

³ For example, by the mid-fifties there were around 50 universities with approximately 150,000 students in Germany. Under the influence of the tertiary sector expansion, this number increased four times during the 60s. However, by the end of the 80s there were about a million students in 94 universities. The UNESCO data also shows that, in the period between 1950 and 1980, the percentage of the enrolled at universities in industrial countries rose from 4% to 30%. For more details, see H. Koehler and J. Naumann, "Trends der Hochschulenentwicklung 1970 bis 2000," in *Recht der Jugend und des Bildungswesens* 6.32 (1984): 419. In the USA, at the end of the 60s, the number of those who entered higher education after secondary education was higher than 50%, which is unmatched in the history of education. Based on this and, of course, many other observations, T. Parsons speaks of an *educational revolution* in the 20th century. For more details, see: T. Parsons and G. Platt, *The American University* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973), 3-6.

century have had no significant response outside the boundaries of philosophy. So we wonder: does the crisis of the idea of the university and the crisis of the university as an institution exist outside philosophy?

Nevertheless even a superficial insight into texts by philosophers, who dealt with this question during the 20th century, sheds a different light on the problem of the crisis of the idea of the university. Indeed, it turns out that the reasons for the crisis of the idea of the university do not only have an external nature, namely, they are not just exclusively related to social and economic modernization, but they are equally of an essential nature i.e. they are connected with the inner difficulties of the idea itself. For example, in their texts from the second half of the 20th century,⁴ Habermas, Lyotard and Derrida point to the fact that something was wrong with the idea of the university from the beginning.

Together with a great outburst of enthusiasm, the founding of the first free and modern university in Berlin in 1810 (Humboldt University) was also followed by great expectations. We can openly say that never before in the history of humankind had such a large number of people placed their deepest hopes and beliefs in the foundation of an educational institution. Most of the European universities educated children mainly belonging to the aristocracy or upper classes, which was a symbol of status and a matter of social prestige. But the modern university, established by the foundation of Berlin University, sparked a stormy intellectual and educational revolution by opening its doors to a concerted and apparent promotion of the new, enlightened middle class. Believing that it completely broke with tradition, that is, with privileges and laws

⁴ Habermas dealt with the idea of the university on two occasions. First, in the 60s at the time of a general discussion about educational reforms in Germany. All his works from that period are collected in the book *Protestbewegung und Hochschulreform* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969). However, his attitude considerably evolved some twenty years later in the text “Die Idee der Universität—Lernprozesse,” from the book J. Habermas, *Eine Art Schadensabwicklung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1987). Lyotard studied the problems of the idea of the university in his most famous book *La condition postmoderne* (Paris: Les Éditiones de Minuit, 1979). Derrida was also occupied with this idea several times during the 80s. Here we shall take up the ideas from the text “Les pupilles de l’Université: Le principe de raison et l’Idée de l’Université” in the book *Du droit à la philosophie*, (Paris : Galilée, 1990).

of inheritance, the new class looked for a better place in society mainly through the idea of education.⁵ Together with the promotion of the new idea of the university and thus the new idea of education, the modern and free university also promoted a new class—“educated citizens” (*Bildungsbürgertum*). The philosophers of German idealism themselves also had high hopes that, for instance, the whole culture and complete spiritual life of the nation were going to concentrate in the university institutions (Humboldt) or that the university would be the birthplace of an emancipated society of the future, i.e. the place of the nation’s education (Fichte).

But, the initial high expectations from the new modern university were soon betrayed. Actually the idealized understanding of the institution of the university within an over-all concept of a philosophy of reconciliation that would see the university as a gathering force, which should unite scientific and educational processes of learning with modern societal ways, required too much from this idea from the very start. The idea of the university was thus destined to be burdened with that utopian concept at its own source. In addition, the growing specialization which produced an infinite splitting of science into individual sciences⁶ very soon questioned the Humboldtian postulate of the unity of science. The same goes for the second Humboldtian unity: the unity of teaching and research. Changes in the outer and inner structure of universities and faculties brought a sudden increase in the number of institutes and vocational schools, which resulted in breaking up the desired

⁵ For more details see: A. Assmann, *Arbeit am nationalen Gedächtnis* (Frankfurt/NY: Campus Verlag, 1993), 33.

⁶ As can be seen from the previous course of this paper, the term *science* is used when we think of what German idealists marked by the term *die Wissenschaft*—science in the strongest sense of the word, as the philosophy of what knowledge is, namely, as individual sciences plus the problem of knowledge i.e. the problem of their establishing foundation. We use the term individual science in order to prevent an eventual confusion in understanding by the terminological separation. So, the term individual science would be appropriate for what idealists most often mark as *eine Wissenschaft*. For more details about the problems of translating and an impossibility to find a suitable language equivalent for this German notion in, for example, the English language, see: F. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.1969), 102-106.

unity between teaching and research. Still more, the greater proportion of today's research is most frequently presented in public apart from teaching, because the research was not produced in unity with teaching. A similar conclusion can be drawn for the third unity—the academic freedom of teachers and students. Humboldt's strong desire to protect science and higher education from political interventions and socially conditioned imperatives remained just an illusion. Very soon after the foundation of Berlin University, Germany was faced with an extreme influence of the State on education, which led to the loss of the university's outward autonomy. The academic freedom of teachers and students was reduced to the inner autonomy of science protected by the walls of the university institutions. The growing number of teachers and students led to a wider bureaucratization of university work.⁷ Additionally, with the strengthening of the Mandarin doctrine in Germany as early as the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, it increasingly became clear that university education gained a firm class character and acquired a bourgeois sign. Academic education became the education of a new class. Accordingly, the key epochal ideal of enlightenment, the ideal of man as the general norm of a supra-class, supranational and supra-confessional society contained in the very core of the idea of the university, was betrayed. At the same time its universalistic substance as well as the initial promise of an emancipated society as a whole disappeared completely when the Romantic Movement plummeted from cosmopolitanism into nationalism. The idea of the university quickly turned into the ideology of the university.

⁷ See: H. Schlesky, *Einsamkeit und Freiheit* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1963), 274. The very title of Schlesky's book, *Loneliness and Freedom*, intriguingly alludes to the above-mentioned contradiction between outer and inner academic freedom. To compare the same theme, see Habermas, *Protestbewegung und Hochschulreform*, 56, or Habermas, "Die Idee der Universität—Lernprozesse", 81-87. It could be said that Habermas takes the most radical stand in the criticism of the idealistic idea of university. For example, on page 85 of the latter text, while speaking about conditions for the realization of the idea of the university, he says: "These preconditions for the implementation of the fundamental idea of the German university (*Gründungsidee der deutschen Universität*) either did not exist from the start or declined to be fulfilled until the end of the 19th century."

In the preface of his programmatic essay from 1945, *Idee der Universität*, and after all the commotion at the German university since his first book on this idea in 1923, Karl Jaspers comes to the following conclusion: “The future of universities, if given a chance, rests upon the restoration of their original spirit.”⁸ In 1947, Werner Jaeger speaks about the idea of the university in a similar way: “If our universities want to become what they should be - the moving force of the rebirth of Man, then they must bring the ideal of contemplative life back to its rightful place.”⁹ With slightly different terms Jaeger actualizes what Jaspers calls the spiritual life of the university. Both of them assure us that the two basic tasks of the university, to seek truth and transfer it—that is, research and teaching—are not possible unless their final purpose is the bringing-up and education of man i.e. shaping of a specific way of life. Some twenty years later, in a new edition of his book, Jaspers tries to make himself even clearer: “Only he who carries the idea of the university with him can think and work in its favor in an appropriate manner.” However, today, none of us as university members demands the idea of the university. The university has turned into a gigantic organization with tasks and functions falling far from the personal motives and ideal norms of university members. On the contrary the good functioning of university necessarily requires a separation from what is personal. The university is obliged to serve social, economic and state purposes. The university which would truly confirm the original idea of university would serve a non-existing, imaginary society, not a real one. As early as the sixties, it became clear that the organizational structure of contemporary universities did not embody the very idea anymore. Since knowledge became a commodity, the university has been put on the market and now it is subject to the laws of supply and demand. Its destiny is determined by the market and profit, not by the relationship to science and truth. The university has structurally lost its idea. Lyotard’s words resound in our ears: “L’idée de *franchise universitaire* est aujourd’hui d’un autre âge.”¹⁰ So, in the eighties of the 20th century, Haber-

⁸ K. Jaspers, *Idee der Universität* (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1946), 5.

⁹ W. Jaeger, “Stellung und Aufgaben der Universität in der Gegenwart,” in *Humanistische Reden und Vorträge*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1960), 239.

¹⁰ J. F. Lyotard, “The idea of an independent university belongs to bygone times,” in *La condition postmoderne* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979), 83.

mas could do nothing else but conclude: “*der Idee der Universität könne nur noch extra muros neues Leben eingehaucht werden.*”¹¹

But, how should we understand *extra muros* (beyond the walls)? Can we have the idea of the university outside the institution itself? How can we today, if it still makes any sense, bring the ideal of contemplative life back to its rightful place at the university? Can any member of a university, professor or student, live a certain theoretical way of life (*bios theoretikos*)?

What will happen if we begin our search following Habermas's suggestion. In fact, he says that today “the integrative self-comprehension of the university's corporate body” can be based only on “communication,” that is, “in the very scientific process which keeps differentiating” and in “the communicative forms of scientific argumentation” (*die kommunikativen Formen der wissenschaftlichen Argumentation*). Following Schleiermacher's model, Habermas actualizes again what the Greeks promoted in their first schools long ago—the fact that the pursuit of truth and learning always implicates an organized mutual work, i.e. “a publicly communicating community of researchers” or, in other words, “a cooperative pursuit of truth.” Thus, the fellowship of teachers and students which, after all, is one of the basic postulates of Humboldtian university, still lives and according to Habermas, even represents one of the pillars of the contemporary university, perhaps in a slightly changed way which obviously does not stop Habermas from placing his greatest hopes for the future of higher education institutions exactly there. Citing Humboldt's description of the teacher-student relationship, he claims that the old idea of the university is still a sound frame for knowledge and learning. He refuses to declare that “the communicative university community” should be a model for the whole society, as German idealists did. Finally, Habermas concludes that for the future's sake it is necessary that university life and work should keep some form of mutual community life and work devoted to knowledge, learning and research, and that is exactly what ancient Greeks called *bios theoretikos* and what subsequent Christian tradition and the first medieval universities founded in the 12th century marked as *vita con-*

¹¹ “The only way to breathe in a new life into the idea of the university is from the outside” (in J. Habermas, “Die Idee der Universitaet—Lernprozesse,” in *Eine Art Schadensabwicklung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1987), 80.

templativa—of course, in a theological sense.

Well how should we think about the idea of the university in this context? Together with Derrida¹² we could formulate the question like this: how is it possible that the university exists without having its own idea of what it should be? Could it, for example, be a communicative community of teachers and students who cherish the *bios theoretikos* (which I want to support here)? To say that the university does not have its own idea or that it lost its idea would mean the same as to say that the university does not have its essence, its purpose or its reason to exist anymore. Heidegger and Derrida would say that university does not have its principle of reason any longer (*der Satz vom Grund*; *Le principe de raison*). But how can we think that the university has its meaning, its purpose, its *principle of reason* if we ourselves do not look for it, that is, if we ourselves do not give it, or create and offer it?¹³ So what is the manner in which we speak of the university having its idea? Can the university have its idea, its purpose independently of university subjects, independently of teachers and students? Can, therefore, the idea of the university, i.e. *the principle of reason* of the university itself be found in the very institution, university buildings, walls, libraries or archives? In that case, we would have to assume that each of us would come to a university building to get the idea of the university, and that the meaning, the purpose of the university, its *principle of reason* would “wait” somewhere in the corridors and amphitheatres of the university! In that situation the idea of the university could be put on in the same way as a university coat-of-arms or a university flag—like a pendant, a brooch, a

¹² Being just aware of the strong imperative which commands us to think about this idea, Derrida gives his many times mentioned text *Les pupilles de l'Université : Le principe de raison et l'Idée de l'Université* a sub-title: *Comment ne pas parler, aujourd'hui, de l'Université?* (How not to speak today about the university?). For more details on why he put such a sub-title, see J. Derrida, “Les pupilles de l'Université : Le principe de raison et l'Idée de l'Université,” in the book *Du droit à la philosophie* (Paris : Galilée, 1990), 461-462.

¹³ Analyzing Leibniz's definition of the principle of the reason, Heidegger insists that the key to its understanding is this *giving, returning, doing i.e. creating of the reason (reddendae rationis)*. Indeed, the term *reddere* allows all these meanings. For more details, see: Heidegger, 2006: 44-49. Also compare with: J. Derrida, “Les pupilles de l'Université”, 470-474.

badge or even an ear-ring.

Nevertheless, inspired by Schelling's idea that one must develop a special organ for education, knowledge and science, I would rather want to develop excellent hearing, attentive to the idea of the university instead of wearing it as an ear-ring. To have excellent hearing¹⁴ attentive to the idea of the university – that could be my concept of the idea. How have we got into such an awkward situation to be hard of hearing—to have the idea of the university i.e. *bios theoretikos* and corporative communication beyond our hearing range? Has the history of educational problems, namely, the history of academic and university institutions ever recognized the importance of hearing? I begin this research with faith that the affirmation of hearing can open new horizons upon the idea of the university.

One of the most interesting views on Pythagoras and his teaching comes from Plato's *Republic*. He says there that "Pythagoras was dearly-loved" because "he passed over to his followers a particular way of life (*'odós tis bíou*) which is even today called "Pythagorean" and which, in their own opinion, distinguishes them from the rest of people." (*Politeia* 600b)¹⁵ It is general known that Plato and Aristotle, alongside their interest in the Pythagoreans,¹⁶ showed a strange reserve towards Pythagoras himself.¹⁷ The quotation above is the only sentence in all the preserved works of Plato where he directly mentions Pythagoras by name. As for many of today's experts on Pythagoras and Pythagorean teaching, this remark by Plato may seem quite trivial. It seems especially odd that

¹⁴ As it is well-known the term *hearing* has many meanings in English language and all of them are important to me in this paper: ability to hear, distance within one can hear, opportunity to be heard, trial of a case in a low court, the action of actively giving ear, i.e. listening to a lecture, play, etc. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

¹⁵ Also compare: Plato, *Phaedo*, 66b.

¹⁶ Plato's dialogue *Phaedo* was evidently written under the influence of the Pythagorean teaching, because it discusses the question of the immortal soul. Aristotle even wrote an essay on Pythagoreans which was consequently quoted a lot, but, unfortunately was not preserved. For more details see: H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1974), Pythagoras (7).

¹⁷ For more reasons for such an attitude, see J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (New York: Meridian library, 1959), 84-87.

Plato's attention was drawn to an almost banal fact, a mere legend. The full sense and significance of Plato's view can be grasped only by a wider insight into its apparent context. Thus with Plato's help, we acquire two important insights on Pythagoras and Pythagoreans, as well as on the Greek view of upbringing and education. If we bear the entire ancient culture in mind, this is the first case of an association or school which directly connects learning and the acquisition of knowledge with a "way of life" (*'odós tis bíou*). Pythagoreans were the first in the ancient world to realize that upbringing, education and teaching unavoidably imply a particular way of life. Therefore the one who wants to acquire essential upbringing and education must accept a specific way of life. Hence, such a life appears to be more important for his education than technical training in writing and reading or playing certain instruments. This is the second insight we obtain from Plato's remark. A well brought up and educated man is holistically shaped through a particular way of life devoted to clearly projected goals, and not through a periodic practice or training such as, say, writing or reading.

How should this "Pythagorean way of life" be understood? Its core lies in purification (*katharmoi*), which means a constant self-restraint from eating and drinking, as well as from various other things in order to avoid "the wheel of birth," that is, an infinite changing of different bodies—keep away from broad beans, do not pick up what has fallen, do not touch a white rooster, do not break bread, do not walk on main roads, and so on.

Based on Iamblichus's citing of parts of Aristoxenus's essays on Pythagorean principles, we get a more complete impression of the deeper sense that the notion of purification has. I would like to draw your attention to the following testimony: "According to Aristoxenus, Pythagoreans used medicine for the purification of the body and music for the purification of the soul."¹⁸ Naturally this interest of theirs also corresponds with the general Pythagorean obsession with numbers and harmony. Different cultures in the West and especially in the East have always known about the healing effect of music on the human psyche. The Pythagorean insight into the power of music as a means of purification of the soul is surely based on similar findings. However in the con-

¹⁸ H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 58, D.1.

text of upbringing and education i.e. the origin of the first school institutions, this insight of music hides something else which will prove extremely important here. At the beginning of the afore-cited paragraph Aristoxenus says: “If they (Pythagoreans) were silent and used to hearing; and if they praised the one who could hear.”¹⁹

A legend says that Pythagoreans were obliged to just keep silent and listen for the first five years of their training. That being the case, they did not even have a chance of seeing Pythagoras because he allegedly gave night lectures. But let us put aside the mysterious layers of this legend and focus on its didactic aspect. Let our guiding thought be Isocrates’s surprising comment on the Pythagorean custom of silence (*ēhēddemosúne*). Isocrates, one of the greatest Greek orators, says that “even now people admire those who are silent and say they are Pythagoras’s disciples more than those who achieved great fame with their oratorical skill.”²⁰ Is this pointing to the importance of hearing in an educational process as well as in a teaching and didactic process, more significant when expressed by someone like Isocrates who can speak in a beautiful and convincing manner, but not be silent and listen? Here we feel a deeper sense of the act of purification, namely, of its aspects related to science and scientific, educational associations. The meaning of a disciple’s long silence and listening should not be explained by an attempt to keep the teaching secret, but by maintaining a specific discipline necessary for the *Pythagorean way of life*. The long process of hearing and being silent, deprived of the possibility to speak or to comment and ask questions during a teacher’s lecture improves and intensifies disciples’ inner contemplative work. Unable to “empty” his thoughts and dilemmas on the outside, a disciple is obliged to ask himself new questions and to keep testing those previously put. The strict contemplative discipline directed towards observation (*theoria*), that is, the generating of questions and their subsequent reshaping is here much intensified by the fact that thinking is not simultaneously “wasted” on its manifestation—on asking questions out loud, their rhetorical shaping and later discussion. In addition, every verbal manifestation “tries,” more or less, to leave a good impression. Since that is so, a disciple is

¹⁹ About the importance of hearing among Pythagoreans, also compare with: J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 93-96.

²⁰ A quote from: J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 95.

also “spared” from the devastating influence of a deeply rooted need to have a point, to “win,” to defeat an opponent in a conversation. The purpose of the stay in an association or school is to initiate and start the creation of one’s own inner theoretical life, that is, to prepare the soil for one’s own road to learning. Exactly this could be the deeper meaning of purification, the right content of the *Pythagorean way of life*. Since Pythagoras and his disciples were devoted to hearing, silence, theory and research in a complete way which occupied their entire life, we can say that they understood their own association or, if you wish, their own school as a place where you live in the manner of hearing, discussion and research.

That they developed the ancient awareness of the importance of hearing for the process of upbringing and education can also be confirmed by the role a slave-pedagogue had in the life of a child. Completely devoted to children by serving them and by making an effort to hear their inner being, Greek slave-pedagogues pointed out with their own activity the key organ of the teaching profession—the ear. The importance of hearing can be seen indirectly even through the most important concept of Socrates’ philosophy, *I know that I know nothing*, which definitely determines the supremacy of hearing over speaking.

The proof that the scientists and philosophers of Antiquity had a ‘hearing’ for hearing can be clearly seen in the choice of the site where the first philosophical school—Plato’s Academy—was founded. Under the pressure of an increasing need for self-education, that is, under the pressure of the growing number of people who lived a theoretical way of life, the founding of the first true school took place only when they found a quiet, silent and shady place where free theoretical science could be practiced. We could say quite simply that the first school appeared only when they were able to find a place (*tópos*) for *bios theoretikos*. But what is the significance of hearing in all this?

From the Dipylon gates which led to Eleusis, through the north-west part of Athens, you could reach Plato’s Academy in half an hour’s stroll. Plato’s school inherited the name from the mystic hero Academos, as well as the very place of his shrine. Hipparchus, Pisistratus’s son put up walls around the grove and statues and temples in the park. In time, many gods were given their sacrificial altars there: Athena, Hermes, Eros and others. According to Plutarch’s testimony, Cimon changed the course of the river Kifissós and planted plane- and olive-

trees, thus turning a dry and waterless grove of Academos into a pleasant garden with enough water, a lot of green and many shady paths for physical activities and long walks. At the same time he put up here one of the three most famous gymnasiums in Athens, where Athenian citizens gathered for athletic exercises. Since there was no other fixed place for philosophers to meet, the gymnasium became an ideal spot for regular meetings of the people from Athenian intellectual circles.

The teaching at the Academy ran in the form of a lecture and a kind of seminar, which actually took the form of a dialogue or a discussion with a cited text as its starting-point. The lectures and seminars took place around an *exedra*, a semi-circled stone bench. It was the place for discourses, but you could also have discussions while having a walk.²¹ Nevertheless, without any disregard for the importance of the school's curriculums (taken conditionally) and the acquired level of their systematization, i.e. the number and diversity of the studied subjects, we have to notice here that the foundation of the scientific and educational phenomenon of Plato's Academy is not found in its curriculum or subjects, but in its method of work. Naturally, Plato himself could not deal with all the fields of knowledge, and the organization of school work had to be adapted for new needs. In the course of time, many students and teachers began taking part in research, that is, they began to carry out their own. Gradually, they became more and more aware of *méthodos*, i.e. research as a common, general issue through which a member of the Academy acquires his identity. Thus an Academy member is someone who offers sacrifices to the Muses and someone who performs all other organizational functions within the school but, above all, he is someone who does research on a certain problem. A member of the Academy is, therefore, a researcher in the first place, no matter whether he is a *mathetês* (a student) or a *sholarh* (a principal).²² That being the case, the Academy students were not just passive recipients of knowledge, nor was knowledge a subject of one-directional

²¹ H. Herter, *Platons Akademie* (Bonn, 1944), 7.

²² In contrast to Herter and Usener who have no dilemma that the Academy had scientific and research work in action, Howald disagrees and connects Plato and the Academy with mysticism. For more details see: E. Howald, *Die platonische Akademie und die moderne Universitas literarum* (Zürich: 1921), 16ff. Compare with: H. Herter, *Platons Akademie*, 25.

transfer from the teacher toward them, but the method of working put them in a very active situation. In due course, the students themselves would come to a completely equal position with their teachers, precisely because they turned into a type of co-researcher. As may be inferred, this specific *méthodos* of finding one's own path to knowledge through research with the help of a teacher, of course, established the essence of Academy work, i.e. the essence of the way of life at the school. The real educational purpose of the work is fulfilled when a *mathetês* builds up and shapes his *méthodos*, which makes him a true member of the Academy's scientific community. Understood in this way, *bios theoretikos* represents the basis of the Academy as a scientific and educational institution. In that sense it is *bios theoretikos* that constitutes the very hub of the biggest and most famous school in the ancient world—not curricula, nor teaching staff or school buildings. That is why the Academy was for centuries a perfect model, a pattern for all other schools throughout the Mediterranean—both for the classical ones (Aristotle's Lyceum, the Stoic school, the Epicurean school, etc.) and the subsequent ones (the famous Mouseion at Alexandria and later Hellenistic schools, which represented a kind of institutional germ of the future medieval universities). Regarding everything previously said, we can conclude that *méthodos* is the fundamental content of *bios theoretikos* at the Academy. *Méthodos* is the way in which an Academy member lives his theoretical life. He, actually, lives in the way of research. Such a pattern became compulsory for all subsequent “academics,” i.e. all later disciples, students and teachers who wanted to educate themselves and build their own road to philosophy and science.

Anyway in our attempt to understand the real content of scientific and educational work at the Academy, there are problems yet to come. With respect to the universal professionalization and ubiquitous technical transformation of the epoch we live in, we all have an obvious tendency to understand *méthodos* i.e. research in a simplified and superficial way. But we cannot properly comprehend the way into research, which *méthodos* essentially is, without resistance to the cultural inertia of our epoch. Since *méthodos* is not something traced and trodden in advance or something known beforehand, it cannot have the form of an ordinary practice or a mere repetition of previously determined procedures and rules in order to reach a particular goal. If the object of comprehension is not something previously determined, something well-

known, the research path to knowledge becomes a painstaking business in which very little is certain, except a possible determination to follow that path. As the *sholarch* himself was a researcher, that is, he kept on building and shaping his *méthodos*, his *sholē* (lecture, lesson, instruction) could not be too authoritative. He lived so close to his students and other Academy members that they could not see him as somebody too distant and strange. Even when delivering his *sholē*, the *sholarch* and other teachers were right by their listeners, around *exsedra* or at another similar place. During discussions and feasts the atmosphere was even more informal—as it is usual among close friends. Since they all knew each other very well, such a life of togetherness did not leave much space for formal and reserved behavior. The *sholarch* and other senior philosophers built their authority in a completely different way.

The best way to illustrate what we want to say here is an extract from Plato's dialogue *Protagoras* (320a). In the context of a criticism of the sophistic attitude to virtue, Plato praises Pericles' upbringing and educational abilities and says that he,

gave young people a nice and good upbringing and education²³ in everything that depended upon the teacher, but even he cannot give them his own wisdom, nor he lets them be brought up and educated by other people, so they wander alone as a released herd hopeful to stumble

²³ The term Plato uses, *paideúo*, is translated here as 'to bring up and educate.' We think it is incorrect to translate this verb only as 'to bring up' as it stands in some translations. German translator Klaus Schöpsdau also chooses only the verb *erziehen*: Platon, *Werke*, Übersetzung und Kommentar, Band VI /2./ im Auftr. der Kommission für Klassische Philologie der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur zu Mainz, hrsg. von Ernst Heitsch, (Göttingen: 2003), 25. English translator B. Jowet completely changes the essence of the Greek verb and offers a totally different meaning of training and instruction: "gave them excellent instruction" (*The Portable Plato, Protagoras, Symposium*,..., (NY: Penguin, 1977). While another English translator, W.R.M. Lamb uses the phrase "gave them a first-rate training" (Plato. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Volume 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1967), which is, of course, even further from the meaning Plato intended to give to the sentence. As previously suggested, the meaning of this verb includes what we now call upbringing, both physical and moral, as well as what we call education i.e. the spiritual modeling of man. The noun *paideia* partly includes even the meaning of the term *culture* as seen today.

upon virtue by accident.

In the sequel, besides all his faith in the power of *paideia*, Plato reconcilably admits its helplessness before the key question of how to acquire virtue. There are many examples of a good man full of virtues who could not make better people out of those closest to him or his students.²⁴ This picture of a teacher-student relationship can be used as a paradigm for the prevalent teacher-student relationship at the Academy. Although it may seem to us very harsh and, we may say, even irresponsible, Plato's understanding of upbringing, education and teaching did not include much "care" for students and, generally, those being educated. The ancient Greeks generally showed almost complete indifference to children's or adolescent psychology. All phases of growing up: early childhood, boyhood and youth were exclusively understood as the phases of a man's development, to wit the phases in the modeling of a mature person. That being the case, we can better understand the cruelty they treated children with, the strict discipline of their upbringing. The fact that children were an object of interest only as "potential people" explains why the whole ancient culture does not possess a single study, not a single text on something which could resemble children's and adolescent psychology. Having in mind contemporary teachings in this field, we also assume that modern psychologists and pedagogues are dumbfounded by Plato's comparison of students with a *released herd*. Today's defenders of ever-popular, progressive, interactive didactic methods would probably be shocked if they happened to supervise the ancient pedagogic practice. In the same way a child tends to transcend himself as soon as possible and develop into a mature person, a *mathetês* tends to start his journey into his *mêthodos*. Opposite to a child's instinct to cling to elders or *mathetês*'s instinct to be with his teacher, Plato obviously finds it more useful for them to be *released as a herd on pasture*.

In order to understand exactly what Plato actually wants to express with this metaphor, we must take a quick look at the original text. The sentence "*hôsper aphetoî, ean pou automatoi perituchôsin têi aretêi*" could really be quite properly translated as "so they wander alone as a

²⁴ This is not the only example from Plato's dialogues in which he speaks of virtuous fathers who could not make their children that way. Compare with: *Meno*, 93d.

released herd hopeful to stumble upon virtue by accident.” The adjectival form *aphetéos* (3.adj.verb of *afīemi*) is indeed used mostly in the context of a herd put to pasture.²⁵ However, the meaning of the verb *afīemi* is a good introduction to what Plato wants to say. Its basic meaning is contained in the verbs *let go* and *disband*, but it can also be used for a ship setting out to the open sea,²⁶ or horse's reins let loose, or even releasing—in a wider context. Hence, someone who is *aphetéos* is someone on a meadow/clearing/open space/open sea, released and free, as well as someone who is *herrenlose*—without a master, therefore, someone not bothered by anyone's leadership or will. It is someone left to himself and his own will in this vast open space. The open space or clearing where students go hither and thither, ramble and wander is the only context in which they can find virtue. There are no roads in this open space. Just like animals on pasture, students move all by themselves—*automatoi*. It is this seemingly meaningless moving in which they follow their own will instead of the will of their master-teacher that guarantees success, because it is the only way they can reach true knowledge.

Since that is so, students must be *aphetoi* from teachers, that is, released, “set to the open sea” and left to themselves in order to get true upbringing and education. Thus a teacher does not have many reasons to be too much concerned with the soul of a student, child or young man. His task is just to help his student transcend the state of his slave nature i.e. his attachment to the teacher as soon as possible. Paradoxically, the teacher's task of all tasks is to be left, i.e. to make his student leave him. Only then does he accomplish his purpose as a teacher. Being *aphetéos* is also a desirable state for the teacher himself. Here is the similarity between the teacher and the student—they both become what they are by being left, i.e. by returning to the open. The teacher too keeps moving between the state of being attached to his student and the state of being left by him. Then, the modern surplus of interest in children's and ado-

²⁵ The afore-mentioned German translator, Klaus Schöpsdau follows the same logic, too. He translates it as: “sondern sie gehen auf sich gestellt hierhin und dorthin, wie herrenlose Tiere auf der Weide...”, (Ibid., 25).

²⁶ The legendary Argonauts started their quest of the *Golden Fleece* from a small port in Magnesia (in the area of Mount Pilio). The port has been known as Afe-tai ever since.

lescent psychology could be understood as a wish to keep young people under control, close by, “in a peaceful and safe harbor” in a sophisticated way. Nonetheless, that infinitely postpones their maturation and also consolidates the “slave” side of a teacher i.e. his dependence on students’ adherence. These are different aspects of a modern strategy which combines the pseudo-scientific legitimization of power or the possessive need to govern the young generations and, at the same time, an instinctive and unconscious wish of the young to remain juveniles as long as possible.

Contrary to the sophistic disciples who are constantly around their teachers, the Academy’s *mathetês* is supposed to be *aphetêos*. He does spend much time at school beside his teacher, but he is basically alone in his *mêthodos*. That is why the clearing, the open space, the openness of groves and parks provide the context in which he naturally feels best. All this alludes to the previous statement that the Academy is the first school which, in a very pronounced sense, has its ‘place’ (*tópos*). Now we can easily understand Plato’s choice of the site for the school. It is not an urban part of bustling Athens, neither the squares in which Sophists gather, nor the noisy and crowded city streets—but ample green groves, the shade of olive-trees, peace and silence. Voices must quiet down, the city hum must stop and silence must spread so that one can hear at all. And where can one listen and hear better than in the quiet of the openness and silence? Here, human soul can freely, *automatoi*, go hither and thither, ramble and wander. The very character of the Academy’s site indirectly speaks about the ancient culture of hearing at its height. It began with slave pedagogues, went through *heteria*, the Pythagorean association and the first concept of Socratic philosophy, and reached its climax with the development of the first real schools with a very organized institution of teaching. It is clear why teaching in a pronounced sense of the word did not exist before the Academy and the Lyceum. Teaching was established only when they understood that a *mathetês* must be *aphetêos*, i.e. when they gained an insight into the fundamental importance of the being in openness, purity and silence in order to be able to theorize, observe, listen and hear, that is, in order to cognize. Openness and open space are the frame for the *bios theoretikos* and the realization of *mêthodos*. Although we are not quite certain what the purpose of contemporary universities and high schools is, the parks and green spaces of their *campuses* are the silent testimonies of the be-

ginnings of school and university when their architectural complex still stood firmly united with the ultimate purpose of education and teaching. In a more or less developed form of a scientific community with people who share a common passion for knowledge and truth, the cultivation of the ability of hearing is *conditio sine qua non* of the educational and teaching process. In the wide-spread hysteria of the glorification of the “democratic principles,” the modern age has an inclination to put an emphasis on the teaching process which should create conditions for everyone to speak freely and give their own opinion. But the ancient experience in upbringing and education points to the ear as the key organ of the teaching practice. The crowning evidence of this is the greatest expression of thought of the entire ancient culture—*Gnōthi seautón* (Know thyself). Finally, I must notice that the time we live in has lost the awareness of how important the aforementioned is, and we are today less inclined to focus our attention on “hearing” and “trying to hear” silently and peacefully. That is why we cannot loudly support “democracy” and “reforms” at modern universities all over the world without also pleading for the affirmation of “hearing” and “silence.”