Philosophy of Liberal Education: The Principles

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Abstract. This article lays out systematically the principles of modern liberal philosophy of education by explicating the foundations of the Humboldtian/European model of liberal education. Conceived over two centuries ago, those foundations have never been presented fully and coherently in Russian literature on pedagogy and philosophy of education. Ten principles of the model are identified in terms of modern liberal education theory: (1) lifelong learning, (2) academic freedom, (3) importance of practice and experience, (4) critical thinking and civic competence, (5) competency development instead of knowledge accumulation, (6) priority of general education over specialized education, (7) the concept of learning to learn, (8) self-directed learning effort, (9) political neutrality, and (10) interaction and Socratic dialogue. The second part of this article (release upcoming) sheds light on the key sources and socio-historical contexts that have shaped attitudes towards the liberal education theory since conception until the present day.

Keywords: liberal education, philosophy of university education, history of pedagogy, Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Friedrich Carl von Savigny.

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The concept of liberal education[1] has been widely discussed and used as substantiation for various initiatives to establish institutions or design learning programs based on the liberal model[2]. In present-day Russia, the liberal education agenda is mostly represented by the American version of liberal arts education, a prestigious and high-

[1] Liberal education is usually associated with the postsecondary level. This study mostly draws on that perspective; however, as we are going to see, the original liberal model did not rigidly attribute its specific elements to school or university. At the same time, we are not focusing on the distinctive features of the so-called Humboldtian model of research university, as liberal theories can take other organizational forms as well.

[2] See, in particular, the special issue of *Voprosy Obrazovaniya / Educational Studies Moscow* dedicated to the liberal model (no 4, 2015).

end segment of the U.S. education market. (Liberal arts colleges have been consistently ranked in the top ten most expensive U.S. educational institutions.) A number of basic concepts of the liberal model have lately been commonplace rhetoric in the Russian pedagogical discourse; in addition, they are abundantly dispersed throughout the key regulations and applicable laws of Russia that define the fundamental public policy guidelines in the field. Liberal education principles were inherited from the Soviet pedagogical discourse, which they had permeated discretely from various German sources, Neo-Kantian and Marxist in the first place — to the extent that the latter involved elements of the broader traditions of Enlightenment and classical German philosophy. In the second part of this article, we are going to look at how some of those principles infiltrated the Russian education and cultural policy discourse.

By the beginning of the 20th century, a few consistent conceptions of liberal education had been designed independently by educational researchers and policy makers. The authors include, first of all, Konstantin Venttsel, whom we owe not only a series of declarations and manifests that are part of the great heritage of Russian liberal thought — such as *The Declaration of the Rights of the Child* [Venttsel 1917; 1918]—but also a systematic philosophy of evolution [Venttsel 1911; 1912][3]. However, this liberal trend in child education, tracing its origin to Leo Tolstoy's early writings, did not have any perceptible impact on the Soviet pedagogical discourse and is basically bygone today. As for the conceptual elements of the German tradition of liberal education that sedimented little by little in the Russian pedagogical discourse, they have either been substantially reinterpreted or lost their fundamental relation to primary sources and become merely ceremonial commonplace in the discourse of education and culture policy. This contrasts with the American educational culture, where modern liberal education theorists recognize that universities offering liberal arts and sciences education are "embedded in European/Humboldtian systems." [Becker 2015:34] However, the nowadays constant criticism of Humboldt's model, just as the proposals for improving it, rather indicates loss of coherence in the ideas of what this model is actually about and how it works. Bill Readings, a modern educational thinker who is hard to agree with on a number of other points, described the situation as follows: "Most projects for the University of the twenty-first century bear a striking resemblance to the University projects of the nineteenth century. The reason it is necessary to reread Humboldt, Schiller, Schleiermacher, Fichte, and Kant is that the vast majority of contemporary "solutions to the crisis of the University are, in fact, no more than restatements of Humboldt or Newman, whose apparent aptness is the product of ignorance of these founding texts

[3] For analysis of Venttsel's conception, see [Kurennoy 2009].

on the history of the institution." [Readings 2010:103] This judgment, however, is only true for the principles of liberal education, which, just as the narrower and specialized Humboldtian ones, represent a *normative* model of education, whereas specific implementation mechanisms may differ greatly, as the liberal education system needs to be reviewed and updated on a permanent basis in order to keep up with the ever-changing circumstances of time and place.

This article seeks to lay out the principles of the "European/Humboldtian" philosophy of liberal education in their entirety and systemic cohesiveness (something that has never been attempted in Russian literature so far) by briefly outlining the theoretical and pragmatic implications of its fundamental ideas and commenting on the specific historical contexts as well theoretical and philosophical sources behind those ideas. Methodologically, this is the result of historical research and fundamental hermeneutics of the relevant text corpus. Following the analytical tradition of the liberal education model, we are going to rely on Wilhelm von Humboldt's texts in the first place, elaborating them through the lens of the whole corpus of classical German philosophy[4]. In defining the principles of the liberal model, its contemporary systematizations [Blaich et al. 2004; Gutek 2009:214–248; Winter, McClelland and Stewart 1981][5] are also taken into account to keep the definitions up to date.

As we elaborate on liberal philosophy of education, it will also become clear why we refer to it as "liberal" instead of "classical liberal" or elsewise, thereby emphasizing that the numerous solutions for its improvement emanate largely from ignoring or misinterpreting its principles.

Lifelong Learning

According to Humboldt, education is the highest end of human existence: "The true end of Man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal and immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole." (*Bildung seiner Kräfte zu einem Ganzen*) [Humboldt 2003 (1851):13][6] The school already must "seek the harmonious education of *all* abilities in its pupils"

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[4] The notion of "classical German philosophy" will be developed in the second part of this article.

[5] However, some of the most popular U.S. publications on philosophy of education dilating on Marxist, post-modernist, and other conceptions do not address the liberal model specifically (e. g. [Ozmon 2012]). At the same time, Bruce A. Kimball's extensive commented anthology on the liberal arts tradition glosses over the German and nearly all of the European literature in the field produced since the 17th century, limiting itself to the American context [Kimbal 2010]. Therefore, the disciplinary field of philosophy of education is politicized and highly fragmented by country-specific traditions.

[6] Here and elsewhere, the year in round brackets is the year of publication of

(*harmonische Ausbildung aller Fächigkeiten*), he underlined (*On Organization*[7]). Another formulation of this principle — education as the main purpose of human life as such — is given by Johan Adam Bergk in his pamphlet on the art of reading: "The only true perspective on our earthly existence is to understand it "as a school of upbringing." (*als Schule der Erziehung*) [Bergk 1799:90]

The closest source this fundamental observation stems from is Immanuel Kant's *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*, which was well-known to Humboldt and had an immense impact on the subsequent German philosophy of history and historiography. Its first thesis, from which Kant moved toward finding a clue to world history, postulates the following: *"All natural capacities of a creature are destined to evolve completely to their natural end*." However, there is an essential difference between the Kantian and liberal interpretations of this principle. For Kant, it flows out naturally from the teleological theory of the organic world, where an organ that is of no use or a capacity that does not achieve its purpose would contradict the very "conception" of nature, turning history into an aimless game of chance. The liberal principle is free from teleological assumptions of this kind, yet it serves the sociopragmatic purpose first of all, as we are going to see in the second part of this article. Furthermore, the second thesis states that natural capacities "are to be fully developed only in the race, not in the individual." [Kant 1998 (1784):13–14] Thereby, Kant opened the door to the type of theoretical modeling of world history that was taken further in Fichte's writing and took its final shape in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's philosophy of history. In terms of liberal education, this thesis gives rise to a series of implications that were fully explored, for instance, by Fichte in *Some Lectures Concerning the Scholar's Vocation*: as soon as the human species is in contact with nature and historically develops as a whole, the most reasonable strategy for the man is to seize upon some particular speciality for which they are best prepared by nature and society. "The cultivation of his other talents he leaves up to society, while at the same time he intends, strives, and wishes to contribute to the cultivation of society within his own speciality. In making this decision, he has selected a class, and this choice, considered in itself, is perfectly legitimate." [Fichte 1995 (1794):502][8]. As we can see, Kant's all-ca-

public distribution; where necessary, comments on the date of text creation are given in footnotes.

[7] *On the Internal and External Organization of the Higher Scientific Institutions in Berlin*, written by Humboldt in 1809, including the chapter *On the Principle of Subdividing Higher Education Institutions and the Different Kinds of Them*, is shortly referred to in this article as *On Organization*.

[8] For Fichte, such professional-class self-identification should constitute the individual's free choice. Here, this idea of class stratification differs from the conventional one, where social classes are ascribed at birth.

pacities approach, when given a holistic societal interpretation, fosters a theory of education that is diametrically opposite to the liberal model: an individual should confine themselves to cultivating a limited set of abilities and thereby choose a "class"—or, as we would say today, a narrow specialization. Contrariwise, the liberal principle of lifelong learning is individualistic and universal (applying to all). The Kantian-Fichtean idea of selective capacity cultivation consolidates the principle of class (later—occupational) stratification of society, whereas the liberal idea of comprehensive lifelong learning is focused on eliminating social inequality.

Academic Freedom

The concept of freedom is central to the liberal model of education. Describing the prerequisites for making development the unfailing purpose of human existence, Humboldt wrote: "Freedom is the grand and indispensable condition which the possibility of such a development presupposes." [Humboldt 2003 (1851)[9]:13]. In the liberal model of higher education, academic freedom can be interpreted as the freedom of professors to teach (and do research) and students to study. Friedrich Schleiermacher's 1808 essay *Occasional Thoughts on Universities in the German Sense* remains an unrivaled apologia of academic freedom in both aspects[10]. Here, we will only dwell on the most important and some of the not immediately obvious aspects of this two-fold principle. In what concerns the freedom to teach, Schleiermacher went beyond repeating the central thesis of the whole modern European liberal tradition that allowed no substantial restriction of the mind in choosing the subjects for research and teaching. What he also suggested was that the very process of teaching should be liberated from the forms of ossification. Such forms were typical of the pre-modern university and could be defined as feudalization of teaching—where subjects are strictly assigned to specific professors and faculties, virtually turning into fiefdoms, and students are obligatorily required to take a predetermined set of courses. The liberal model of education assumes that this process of parochial crystallization should be counterposed with an educational model that has two distinctive characteristics. First of all, he talks about research mobility

[9] Written in 1792.

[10] Friedrich Carl von Savigny, in his review of Schleiermacher's *Occasional Thoughts*, underlined: "No one has spoken so honestly and wittily about the nature and value of the academic freedom." [Savigny 1850 (1808):266] No one, it should be added, except Savigny himself, who succeeded to this tradition consistently in his *On the Nature and Value of German Universities* [Savigny 1832]. The concept of academic freedom is also elaborated in Fichte's rector's speech [Fichte 1905 (1811)]. Yet another key text proving loyalty to the tradition of advocating the academic freedom was the solemn speech delivered in 1853 by August Böckh [Böckh 1859], the closest associate of Schleiermacher and Savigny since the foundation of the University of Berlin.

of teachers based on their dynamic research interests and naturally leading to variation in the content of their courses. As for demarcation between the subject areas of teaching, Schleiermacher warned that "even private agreements among teachers on this point would be undesirable": "All of this would inevitably promote stagnation. On the contrary, life is breathed into any branch of science when it is reinvented by others, particularly those drawing on other branches to the fullest extent." (This statement can be considered the first formulation of the imperative of interdisciplinarity, seen as the movement of researchers into other fields of research.) Schleiermacher called the aspiration of faculties to jealously guard their territory against professors from other faculties as well as the boundaries of their subject areas "obsolete and ridiculous." "But why," he asked rhetorically, "get in the way of professors willing to enter the domain of another faculty?" This academic freedom is what opposes university to school. Moreover, Schleiermacher also demanded that the university be as open as possible to visiting professors and that the regular professors provide maximum variation in their course content: "Therefore, overestimating too much the significance of nominal professorships is certainly more typical of the school than of the genuine university spirit. Prescribing a teacher to deliver the same material over and over again for a while would mean propelling him to hate what he is doing and thus to exhaust his talent soon." [Schleiermacher 1964 (1808):262–263]. With a view to ensure research and teaching mobility, Schleiermacher also formulated two rules that have survived either formally or informally as standards in Western European academic culture: (1) professors should quit teaching upon reaching a certain age and devote themselves, say, to research in the academy of sciences alone[11]; (2) mobility of scholars between universities is necessary to avoid inbreeding[12].

Second, in order to implement the principle of academic freedom, the liberal model seeks to create a competitive research and learning environment at the university. This follows from the understanding of scientific knowledge as an open and ever-moving frontier: "When it comes to the internal organization of the higher scientific institutions, everything depends on preserving the principle of seeing science as something that has not been and can never be entirely found, and to constantly pursue it as such." (*On Organization*) This epistemological

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[11] "Honestly, there is no sadder role than a university teacher who has become obsolete, who feels it and still has to keep teaching in order not to sink into poverty!" [Schleiermacher 1964 (1808):271].

[12] "...it would be really bad if a university renewed itself completely from within. No good fruit can be produced by a soil in which self-reproducing seeds are sown, in the same way that manners petrify and the spirit fades away in families that only communicate and marry within themselves. A university like that would become one-sided for good and eventually perish." [Schleiermacher 1964 (1808):269].

argument has its social implications. Specifically, if science can never rest on its claim to be true and complete, competing approaches should be applied by a research university willing to promote research. However, if the teaching community is left to its own devices, it will spontaneously strive for homogenization — due to its social inclination to deal with the like-minded: "But freedom is threatened not only by the state, but also by the institutions themselves, which, as they begin, take on a certain spirit and like to stifle a different one from arising." (*On Organization*)[13] In the organizational model proposed by Schleiermacher and implemented by Humboldt in the 19th-century German university system, the government was expected to prevent such like-mindedness and clanship in academia: the Minister of Education had the final say on the issue, while faculties could only nominate candidates for professorships[14]. In case members of academia should disagree on the candidates due to the differences in their theoretical or practical views, Friedrich Carl von Savigny recommended that the nominating officers be guided by the principle of political neutrality: "If acute contradictions arise between researchers in a science, those who care about the school development will avoid taking the position of any party and keep going solely by <...> the universal and reliable indicators of the teacher's value, irrespective of which party he belongs to." [Savigny 1850 (1832):295] Therefore, the first mechanism of ensuring competitiveness in academia suggested by the liberal model was to assign the decisive role in personnel policy to an external agency. In the case of Germany, this role was played by the government; however, it is the functional principle that matters, while implementation may take diverse forms.

The German institution of Privatdozent was the second mechanism included by Humboldt into the university system and designed to make the academic environment competitive (fiercely and devastatingly so, since very few, naturally, would win the first prize — the rank of *professor ordinarius*). Privatdozent was an adjunct professor who was not salaried by the state and only earned his income from tuition

[13] Cf.: "... the universities are so notorious in general for the spirit of petty intrigue that in such an institution everyone is likely to fear the worst consequences arising from partisanship, passions evoked by literary feuds, and personal connections." [Schleiermacher 1964 (1808):269]

[14] At first glance, it may seem that such a mechanism could only inhibit the promotion of scientific knowledge, but that would be a rash judgment. For example, such philosophical movement as phenomenology would have hardly gained momentum if career paths had only depended on the professor community. Edmund Husserl, the principal founder of phenomenology, was appointed as *professor ordinarius* at the University of Göttingen in 1096 solely due to the decision of Friedrich Althoff, the Prussian Minister of Education, in spite of the unanimous opinion of other faculty members (mostly experimental psychologists), who referred to the insignificant "scientific value" of Husserl's works to justify their position [Husserl 1994:42 (Anm.)].

fees paid by students willing to attend his course. A Privatdozent was permitted to teach by the formal qualification of *venia legendi*, granted upon completing habilitation. The title was conferred by the university faculty, not the state (and can therefore be regarded as some kind of a relict of a medieval corporate tradition). This corporate aspect made the institution of Privatdozent a citadel of the freedom of teaching amidst the rigid censorship of the German government, and at the same time an asylum for academic dissent from *professores ordinarii*. Its role is described by Edward Erdmann as follows: "The novel fields, unanimously opposed by official university science, can only gain recognition if there are self-devoted Privatdozents willing to take advantage of their freedom of teaching to advocate those fields for quite a long time. <…> If Privatdozents thereby play an important role in scientific progress, they can be a no less important driving force for the freedom of scientific teaching. Because they are not civil servants, they do not obey any disciplinary governmental power, only faculties being entitled to take action in their regard. Existence of such free scientific teachers would guarantee freedom of teaching for professors themselves, since if the government strips a professor of his position, it will not be able to prevent him from doing his research as a Privatdozent, so the government is thus ripped of a solid motive for persecution." [Erdmann 1898:28][15] If the abovementioned functions of the institution of Privatdozent were to be described in terms of sociology of knowledge, it could be said, using Thomas Kuhn's terminology, that it was an organizational mechanism of creating the opportunity for scientific revolutions[16] and changes in the scientific paradigms[17].

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[15] The German government made regular attempts to eliminate the autonomy of the institution of Privatdozent. An incident with the physicist and socialist Leo Arons is one of the most notorious examples. To deprive him of his right to teach, which Wilhelm II himself insisted on, the parliament passed an emergency act, the so-called *Lex Arons* (1898), which ultimately made it possible for the Prussian authorities to remove Arons from his teaching post at the University of Berlin [Ringer 2008:172–173]. However, when Fritz K. Ringer observed that "the German academic community bowed to Lex Arons "without protesting too much", he (a) contradicted his own description of the perennial resistance of Berlin professors to this pressure and (b) exaggerated the role of this law, which was only used once against Arons. Erdmann's article that we cite here, by the way, is a shining example illustrating that the German academic community opposed to this law to the bitter end, being guided by the maxima, "It is absolutely necessary that Privatdozents be completely guarded against any ministerial attack." [Erdmann 1898:30]

[16] The concept of scientific revolutions is not that revolutionary for modern philosophy of science as it might seem. In fact, it was used it in its contemporary sense in Schleiermacher's *Hermeneutics* in the context of discussing the issue that modern philosophers refer to as the problem of commensurability of conceptual schemes [Schleiermacher 2004 (1838):119] (The first draft of this work was made in 1805).

[17] This mechanism remained functional until the national socialists came to power. Helmuth Plessner in his article in *Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge*—

Freedom of students to study is the other aspect of academic freedom. In university education, it means first of all that students are free to choose and organize their classes as they like. Friedrich Schleiermacher, again, was the most consistent proponent of granting students complete freedom in those matters: "They are not subject to any kind of constraint; nowhere are they urged on, and nothing is closed to them. Nobody orders them to attend a specific class, and no one can blame them if they neglect or fail to do so. There is no oversight of any of their activities, except to the extent that they voluntarily allow." [Schleiermacher 1964 (1808):275–276] A freedom like that fosters responsible decision making and a taste for scientific inquiry, as interest for research can only arise in a situation of complete freedom. According to Schleiermacher, the freedom of students cannot be restricted even if chances are high that many of them will misuse it and waste the best years of their lives. A quarter of a century later, Savigny would describe the actual state of affairs relative to academic freedoms in German universities as follows: "Our teachers enjoy an almost unlimited liberty as to the choice of their topics of instruction and the arrangement of their lectures; and the students are equally at liberty as to the choice of teachers and lectures. This liberty brings respect, honor (*Ehre*), and the spirit of competition (*Wetteifer*) into the teaching relationship, which results in every improvement of science, either as to form or substance, bearing immediately upon the business of instruction at the university." [Savigny 1850 (1832):286]

Importance of Practice and Experience

In history of pedagogy, the American practice-oriented model of education, owing its existence to Joh Dewey in the first place, has been commonly opposed to the European tradition of cognitive-based learning. Meanwhile, the liberal theory of education is far from underestimating the diversity of personal experience and orientation towards active transformation of the world. This idea was formulated explicitly by Humboldt as he elaborated on the abovementioned point of seeing freedom as the grand and indispensable condition of human development. "Besides freedom," Humboldt continued, "there is an-

a collection of essays under the editorship of Max Scheler, which demarcated the rise of modern sociology of knowledge as a discipline — defined the functions of the institution of Privatdozent in a manner that was similar to Erdmann's description: a Privatdozent may either follow the strategy of clientele loyalty vis-à-vis *professores ordinarii*, which is the social mechanism of creating stable science schools, or choose the path of constructing "new science". Although this latter path lies outside the buffer of patronage, it fosters evolution in the relevant academic field [Plessner 1985 (1924):24–25]. Global research policies of the second half of the 20th century were focused on derailing the patron-client relationship in universities as effectively as possible, thereby blocking the mechanisms that lead to the formation of science schools [Schnädelbach 2012:8–9].

other essential,—intimately connected with freedom, it is true,—a variety of situations." [Humboldt 2003 (1851):13] The same argument, a little while after being proposed by Humboldt, was developed further by his closest friend and intellectual companion Friedrich Schiller: "in proportion as man gains strength and depth, and depth and reason gain in freedom, in that proportion man takes in a larger share of the world, and throws out forms outside himself." [Schiller 1957 (1795):291–292] Schiller saw the enrichment of personal experience as a prerequisite for existence in the ever-changing world and the understanding of self as inseparable from creative activity of the man in the outside world—from creating forms "outside himself". Therefore, the liberal model of education certainly cannot be boiled down to the development of "internal" capacities. While acknowledging the diversity of experience—along with freedom—an indispensable condition of education, this model also requires practice and active transformation of the world: "At the convergence point of all particular kinds of activity is man, who, in the absence of a purpose with a particular direction, wishes only to strengthen and heighten the powers of his nature and secure value and permanence for his being. However, because sheer power needs an object on which it may be exercised and pure form or idea needs a material in which, expressing itself, it can last, so too does man need a world outside himself." [Humboldt 1903:283][18]

Critical Thinking and Civic Competence

Critical thinking is first of all the ability to think independently and make autonomous judgments based on rational rules. Critical thinking is release from "tutelage", which Kant defines in *Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?* as "man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another." [Kant 1998 (1784)] The relationship between freedom and personal autonomy was explored from all angles by German Enlightenment thinkers[19]. In particular, Christian Wolff provided some extensive arguments on this point. His *Introductory Treatise on Philosophy in General* even contains a chapter—the final one—called *On Freedom of Philosophizing*. This is how Wolff explained the concept of such freedom, based on the principle of autonomous judgment: "He who philosophizes in compliance with this method will only accept what others say to the extent that it can be proven and understood by virtue of his own fundamental convictions; he will only defend the trueness of what has been deduced from sufficient ground of evidence; he can discriminate between what is probable and what is true, and certainly expends effort to perceive clearly what other say and raise it to the level of trueness where its relationship with other truths can be experienced." [Wolff 2006 (1728):119]

[18] Written in 1793.

[19] For an exhaustive review, see [Zenker 2012].

Kant, afterwards, would only follow Wolff's tradition, as in defining reason in *The Conflict of the Faculties*: "Now, the power to judge autonomously — that is, freely (according to principles of thought in general)—is called reason." [Kant 1994 (1798):70] The autonomous judgment requirement, systematically elaborated in Wolff's philosophy, can be traced, in its turn, to the foundations of modern European theories of consciousness, in particular the first rule of René Descartes's method: "never to accept anything for true which I did not clearly know to be such; that is to say, carefully to avoid precipitancy and prejudice, and to comprise nothing more in my judgement than what was presented to my mind so clearly and distinctly as to exclude all ground of doubt." [Descartes 1989:260]

In the context of the problem of autonomous judgment development, classical German philosophy devotes a lot of attention to the aspect of solitude (*Einsamkeit*), which Humboldt considered to be a critical — along with freedom — principle of university life. The social implications of this principle have been extensively described by Helmuth Shelsky [Schelsky 2013; Schelsky 1963]. Taking this idea a little bit further, the principle of solitude manifests the social and civil aspect of liberal education. From this perspective, the liberal model of university can be called the nursery garden of the contemporary civil nation[20], an environment that fosters numerous individuals capable of reasoning autonomously and bearing responsibility for the "common good"—that is, formulating and resolving problems beyond the narrow self- and group interests and rather acting in the common interests of nation and, further, humanity. This social and civil aspect manifests itself most clearly in Fichte's *Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin*: "The desire to have school and university very near home and to spend the rest of one's life in the district where one has grown up dull and unconscious is first and foremost humiliating to man. Some day or other, one must leave all the strings attaching him to the support of his family, neighbors, and fellow countrymen and start a new life of his own in a circle of strangers to whom he is nothing more than what he is personally (*persönlich*) worth, and this right to start an independent life one day should not be denied to anyone. It would conflict, in particular, the nature of the man of science whose views ought to be free and go beyond time and place — whereas stick-

[20] The modern conceptualizations of the liberal model define this implication as "education for general citizenship", or "citizenship education" [Gutek 2009:237]. Here, we only mention one of the most important aspects of this social, civil, and political dimension of the liberal model without going into details. Humboldt, however, saw this dimension as paramount, which follows from his definition of "higher scientific institutions" as "the pinnacle where everything that happens directly for the moral culture of the nation comes together." (*On Organization*) Thereby, the university, in addition to its direct educational function, also exerts the fundamental external function of cultivating "civic competence by means of education." [Lübbe 1989:173]

ing to the patch of land where one was born, inexcusable except for artisans residing in cities, is dishonorable. In the end, this even prevents the organic ingrowth of all into one citizenship, and this is the only reason why individual provinces and cities get separated from the great whole of the state <…> None of those who grew up amidst such restrictions will ever become a capable person or a great statesman." [Fichte 1971 (1817):170–171][21] Such a statement of the problem, proposed by Fichte, leads to the practical issue, widely debated in classical German philosophy, of university location — whether it should be an isolated campus (the model broadly applied in the United States) or a location within a big city. That same Fichte, who originally gravitated toward the former, still opted for the latter in his 1811 rector's speech *On the Only Possible Disturbance of Academic Freedom* [Fichte 1905 (1811)]: "thanks to his peculiar sociological farsightedness, he came to the conclusion that isolation of students from the civic life is easier to achieve in big cities than in small towns. Otherwise speaking, big cities allow for a more solitary lifestyle." [Shelsky 2013:78–79]

This digression into history demonstrates that autonomous, critical thinking based on independent reasoning is even more fundamental that the liberal philosophy of education as such — in fact, this is a cornerstone of modern society, which rests upon the premise of individual rationality and a certain type of civic consciousness. Such a perspective on this principle sheds a totally different light, for instance, on the problem of plagiarism and paper mills in postsecondary education. This is not so much about copyright violation — there may be nothing wrong with it even at the level of expanding our knowledge and experience; at the very least, a commissioned piece of writing may be an original and independent scientific inquiry. What this is rather about is that the modern society depends in its existence on people capable of thinking autonomously, i. e. critically, instead of simply following someone else's opinions. A formal certificate of university graduation, let alone academic degree, should at least certify that the person holding it is able to make judgments independently and freely — *Einsamkeit und Freiheit*! The absence of such ability is by far not only the problem of the current state of science or a defect in the system of professional education. This is a universal concern, as modern societies rest upon the premise that they consist — in their active citizenship part at the least — of such capable individuals. Therefore, one can fully agree with John Dewey saying that "the future of democracy is allied with spread of the scientific attitude," [Dewey 1968:165] if the scientific attitude is interpreted as a required minimum of civic competence that consists in the ability to think critically. The problem of plagiarism and paper mills is not limited to university education; rather, it is universal to the civil society.

[21] Written in 1807.

Competency Development Instead of Knowledge Accumulation

Comprehensive education does not imply "learning of many things"—which, according to Heraclitus already, "does not teach understanding" (40 DK)—or encyclopedism, but rather development of what is referred to as competencies[22] in modern educational terms. Motivation for such learning should not be external (disciplinary) but should be free and primarily based on the aesthetic inspiration for learning: the school must "exercise its strength on the smallest possible number of objects from all sides, where possible, and implant all knowledge in the mind only in such a way that understanding, knowledge, and intellectual work become attractive not through external circumstances but through their inner precision, harmony, and beauty." (*On Organization*). Therefore, the liberal theory of education is inherently opposed to misinterpreting diversity as a propensity toward encyclopedism that manifests itself in studying as many subjects as possible.

Priority of General Education over Specialized Education

General education plays a more significant role for personal and civic development of a human being than specialized or vocational instruction: "All schools <…> that are recognized as such, not by a single social group, but by the entire nation or the state, must aim only at the general development of the human being. Whatever is required for the necessities of life or for one of its particular occupations, must be acquired separately and upon completion of general instruction." (*Lithuanian School Plan*, [Humboldt 1920 (1910)]) Therefore, the liberal model of education has a distinctive feature of universality, which modern authors refer to as *the distribution requirement* and consider to be the hallmark of liberal arts and sciences education [Kudrin 2015:63].

In his treatise on the university, Schleiermacher elaborated the idea of the primacy of general education, frowning upon "the old mischief of determining children for a certain business almost from the cradle" and arguing that all new students must devote their first year at the university to studying the pure idea of science at the faculty of philosophy in order "to strengthen their principles and get a general understanding of all truly scientific disciplines <…> it is the best time for them to develop their views, their love, and their talent; they will discover their right occupation infallibly, thereby gaining the great advantage of having found it independently." [Schleiermacher 1964 (1808):260–261]

Therefore, an additional dimension to the priority of general education emerges: it is only after the completion of general (philosophical,

[22] The concept of "competency", which is key to classical German philosophy, was borrowed from the then generally accepted theories of philosophical psychology. In the 19th century, the theory of innate abilities was criticized and deconstructed in the psychology and pedagogy discourse—first of all, in the works of Friedrich Eduard Beneke and Johann Friedrich Herbart.

in this case[23]) instruction that a young person is able to decide on their future occupation freely and independently, otherwise their self-determination is the unfree "old mischief" (*das alte Unwesen*) typical of the traditional society where children ascriptively inherited not only the social status but also the occupation of their parents. By virtue of this, the perceptions of present-day liberal arts and sciences researchers about Humboldt's model and the innovative capacity of modern approaches stem from the loss of the idea of what the liberal theory of education is actually about[24].

Learning to Learn

Learning to learn is defined as the key competency to be developed by graduates of schools (Humboldt) or universities (Schleiermacher). "The student is ready to graduate once he has learned so much from others that he is now able to learn by himself" (*Königsberg School Plan* [Humboldt 1920 (1910)[25]]). This fundamental criterion of educational institution performance flows out from the meta-principle of the liberal theory that proclaims education the ultimate mission of a human being, saying that learning should not be restricted to a certain stage of formal education or program but should be perceived as a life-long journey. This position was shared by all classical German philosophers, regardless of disagreements they might have on any other issue. The principle of defining the purpose of university education as "cultivation of the ability to learn", instead of knowledge acquirement, is pivotal to Fichte's *Deduced Scheme* [Fichte 1971 (1817):102]. Likewise, Schleiermacher referred to the university as the organization in which the man masters the skill of "learning to learn" (*das Lernen des Lernens*) [Schleiermacher 1964 (1808):238]. Finally, this thesis even assumed a poetic form during the period of establishing the new campus. "We want to teach ourselves to learn," goes the ode written by Clemens Brentano on the opening of the University of Berlin [Brentano 1963 (1810):227]. Disagreements, as we can see, revolve

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[23] Whether it is a course in philosophy or any set of disciplines functioning as an orientation course is certainly a debatable point in terms of principle implementation.

[24] For instance, Jonathan Becker repeats essentially word by word a quote from Schleiermacher on the need to let students choose their major after admission, yet he sees it, erroneously, as a fundamental difference from the Humboldtian model: "one of the most important but underappreciated elements of LAS education is the rejection of the Humboldtian notion that seventeen and eighteen year olds should be expected to choose their area of specialization (or major) prior to being exposed to learning within the context of the university classroom. Trust is put in the student to explore different possibilities and to make an informed choice of specialization based on real-life experience, rather than depending on impressions from secondary school or guidance from (often ill-informed) parents." [Becker 2015:51]

[25] Written in 1809.

around whether students must develop self-learning skills at school (Humboldt) or university (Fichte, Schleiermacher). Today, as we are observing some elements of higher education spreading to the school (content variability, which provides a certain degree of freedom to study; "diversity of situations" in student projects; etc.), it can be said that this process activates the inherent mobility resources of the liberal model of education.

Self-Directed Learning Effort

Learning, particularly in higher education, is never about just passing knowledge from teacher to student — it is always based on the individual's free autonomous effort alone: "The university is reserved for what the human being can find by and within himself: insight into pure science. For this self-activity in the fullest sense, *freedom* is necessary, and *solitude* is helpful." (*Lithuanian School Plan*) The idea that true learning is not the processing of what is taught but always a self-directed learner's effort has been expressed most prominently by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling: "It is not when students acquire specific knowledge — the only type that can be taught — but when they become able to autonomously produce and reproduce knowledge that education is completed. Education is only a negative condition, whereas true learning (*Intussuszeption*) is impossible without inner transformation. All rules for study are summed up in this one: learn only in order to create (*Lerne nur, um selbst zu schaffen*). Only by his divine capacity for production (*Vermögen der Produktion*) is man truly man; without it, no more than a tolerably well-devised machine." [Schelling 2009 (1803):30] In terms of philosophy, this effort-based approach to learning was arranged by Fichte, whose theory was centered around the concept of *Tathandlung* — the so-called "deed-act" — the main characteristic and an active form of the subjective *I* (interpreted as an effort-based action), which always precedes the essence.

Political Neutrality

Political neutrality, or "freedom from indoctrination", is a key principle of liberal education [Gutek 2009:243]. It is normally dated back to Max Weber's lecture *Science as a Vocation* [Weber 1990 (1919)], but earlier sources are also available, including Leo Tolstoy's policy article *Training and Education* [1936 (1862)]. Weber and Tolstoy premised their theories of political neutrality in education on the classical German philosophy principle of political neutrality and its extensive criticism of "partisanship" at the university. This tradition has its roots in Schleiermacher's argument on preventing the university from turning into the state's political instrument. As long as scientists become increasingly more allied with the state, noted Schleiermacher, some of them "begin to prioritize politics over science" and "tolerate the state's interventions" more and more. As a result, "this part of the broader national scientific community grows ever more isolated from

everyone else who are more committed to their peculiar principles, degrading to a regular agency that the state uses for its own purposes." [Schleiermacher 1964 (1808):232] Therefore, already Schleiermacher formulated explicitly the need to maintain the depoliticized autonomy of the university and scientific knowledge — a knowledge based on "one's peculiar principles".

Savigny elaborated on the problem of "partisanship" among professors and students in his treatise on the university and proposed a set of initiatives to mitigate the effects. Understanding that political neutrality of students and professors can hardly be achieved by regulation alone (as Max Weber would later insist), Savigny suggested avoiding external constraints and using diversity instead to create an environment where partisanship would not play a significant role as compared to research enthusiasm of students and faculty: "Essentially, such false directions can only be counteracted by the power of true ones. If students' attention is captivated by the zeal and talent of many bright teachers, fewer and fewer minds will be occupied with false intentions. What is needed and lacked most of all is the diversity of student effort stimulation, better motivation for self-directed learning, and closer attention to such learning." [Savigny 1850 (1832):303–304] Savigny argued against any kind of ideological constraint in higher education as well as against banishing "all freedom and individuality" from universities on the ostensible grounds that such freedom fostered the spread of fallacy and evil, along with truth. This is where his words acquire a homiletic tenor: "Where, in a certain era, false and even evil tendencies arise, they are sent by the Lord as a special ordeal that cannot be overcome but ought to be sustained. In that case, it is unnatural and perilous to destroy or weaken the spiritual power as such only to prevent it from being conquered by the enemy." [Ibid.:289] To put it in other words, Savigny suggested that uniform neutrality should not be achieved through restrictions but through freedom of opinion — the argument that has been traditionally used to justify the principle of freedom of speech[26]: "All of this, however, should come about without any pressure from the outside, be a matter of honor and moral, and only be driven by the example of capable individuals." [Ibid.:305]

Interaction and Socratic Dialogue

Classical German philosophy is also a glaring example of early media studies and of solving the problem of mediation in education[27]. Fichte begins his *Deduced Scheme* by straightforwardly raising this problem.

[26] Classical arguments for the freedom of speech were proposed by John Milton [2001 (1644)] and John Stuart Mill [2012 (1859)].

[27] Johan Adam Bergk's *The Art of Reading. Including comments on publications and authors* [Bergk 1799], already cited above, is a notable example of early media studies.

A media revolution came about when books, which used to be a privilege of the few, became "absolutely common". If the purpose of universities is to disseminate pre-existing knowledge that can be learned from text, there is no point in their existence anymore: "they must be immediately closed down, and those who need education must be referred to the existing texts." Fichte describes numerous advantages that printed text has over the university, such as that students have an opportunity to read anywhere anytime, re-read and reflect on a specific passage, etc. Passive learning in the form of lectures without interaction only results in the student "getting habituated to passive suffering and losing his motivation for self-directed learning" [Fichte 1971 (1817):100; 99]. Reponses to this challenge to universities' existence include rethinking the very process of communication in higher education and what could be referred to as the prototype of modern critical media studies and their deconstructivist strategies.

For interpersonal communication at the university to remain meaningful, it should not consist in passing down information or pre-existing knowledge. A lecture only makes sense so far as it creates or recreates the process of research and knowledge generation: "The purpose of academic teaching consists in reconstructing knowledge genetically. The genuine advantage of live instruction is that the lecturer does not merely communicate results, as the writer normally does, but shows — in the higher sciences at least — how these results were obtained, each time recreating the science as a whole in front of the student." Such a lecturer, Schelling explained, must be able, "at any moment, to start reproducing, himself," the scientific logic of research; science can only be delivered "as something that should be discovered, not as a fixed knowledge" by someone who can "reconstruct it himself from the very beginning." [Schelling 2009 (1803):23–24]

Schleiermacher took this idea of Schilling, which had found credence among all the classical German philosophers, further into a theory of two elements of the new lecture. According to its first, "popular" element, the lecturer should assess the condition in which the listeners find themselves, make clear what the audience lacks and how to eliminate this "insufficiency". According to the second element, the lecture is "productive", in that the teacher "must not tell what he knows but rather reproduce his own process of learning (*Erkennen*), the act (*Tat*) itself, so that students do not constantly just collect the facts but rather can immediately perceive and reproduce (*nachbilden*) the activity of reason in the process of knowledge formation." [Schleiermacher 1964 (1808):252]

The second crucial thrust towards interactive communication, proposed by the liberal model, consisted in increasing the role of direct interpersonal communication, or Socratic dialogue. Fichte provided an exhaustive formulation of this idea: "The teacher only gives the material and stimulates the activity; the student works with this material himself; however, the teacher must be able to see whether and how

the student is working on this material, so as to be able to assess the student's level of skill and offer new material in light of the progress. Not only the teacher but the student as well must constantly speak and communicate, so that their relationship becomes an ongoing conversation <…> whereby the scientific teaching transforms from a continuous flow of words, which it remains in the books, into the dialogic form (*die dialogische Form*) and establishes a true academy in the sense of the Socratic school, which we had in mind when intending to use that particular word here." [Fichte 1971 (1817):103–104][28] This new idea of interactive, person-to-person communication spiraled into a critical revolution in the German model of research university at the institutional and organizational level. Lectures remained overwhelmingly prevalent up to the late 1700s, but the 19th century was a golden age of university seminars and research centers (institutes), which essentially pushed the monologic lecture method aside. In the humanities of the early 19th century, Socratic seminars were consistently used only in classical philology, where they found advocacy and elaboration from Friedrich August Wolf. The new idea of science and the new model of university that arose in Germany at the beginning of the 19th century laid the groundwork for the progressive adoption of the seminar method by all the humanities and the conception of modern research institutes and centers [Brocke 1999; Erben 1913] In his treatise, Schleiermacher formulates a thesis on the need to provide broad availability of seminars and "practical classes" at the university and makes a stand against seeing seminars as a privileged form of teaching reserved to the most senior professors [Schleiermacher 1964 (1808):241; 264–266].

The arguments for developing personal student-professor interaction in the form of Socratic dialogue prompted the first elaborations of critical media studies in classical German philosophy. Criticism followed from the new media situation that the university was thrusted into by the invention of mass printing, which made books and other texts accessible to individual readers. The individual learner now had the text all to himself, being left one on one with the book. That conceptual model already outlined the directions for criticism of the written text that can be observed these days in phenomenology [Husserl 1996], deconstructivist theories [Derrida 1996], and contemporary media studies [Kittler 1988]. Recent findings and theoretical reflections have revealed the complex and even dramatic problem of medi-

[28] This statement of Fichte leaves no doubt that liberal philosophy of education is intrinsically based on the principle referred to as "student-centered academic advising" in modern liberal arts conceptualizations. All of the early philosophers of liberal education would certainly agree with a modern theorist that "the advising relationship, properly conceived, is a student-centered instructional relationship and so ought to be considered a feature of liberal arts and sciences." [Schein 2015:138–139; 132]

ality affecting our beliefs about the world and shaping a peculiar type of subjectivity[29]. Already Hegel emphasized, in *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, the relationship between reading and writing, on the one hand, and a particular configuration of subjectivity, on the other: "What has been said shows the inestimable and not sufficiently appreciated educational value of learning to read and write an alphabetic character. It leads the mind from the sensibly concrete image to attend to the more formal structure of the vocal word and its abstract elements, and contributes much to give stability and independence to the inward realm (*Innerlichkeit*) of the subject." [Hegel 1977 (1817):300] Effects of this kind, generated by textual experience, are taken into account in media criticism practices developed by philosophers of higher education.

Let us consider the example of Savigny analyzing the difference in the effects generated by an author of a written text and a teacher interacting with students directly. The former addresses indefinite, undifferentiated audiences of the present and future, so what he writes is also largely "general and indefinite", being only so far valuable "as it contributes to establish or develop the science". Thereby, the author himself is "only, as it were, an organ of the ideal spirit, by which this science is progressively improved. Thus everything conspires to remove the personality of the author, and the peculiar manner of his development, from the eye of the reader." Contrastingly, the teacher at the university deals with individuals personally known by him, to whom the science which he teaches, so far as it has advanced, will naturally appear, "as it were, personified" in their teacher: "Whilst the teacher thus gives a vivid representation of the genesis of scientific thought, the kindred spiritual power is awakened in the student, and excited to re-production. He will not only learn and understand, but also vitally re-produce, what he has been so vividly presented before him, in its living realization." [Savigny 1850 (1832):275–276] Therefore, personal interaction in education essentially amends our writing-mediated understanding of the world, which is not a product of the ideal spirit

[29] Cf.: "The possibility of *writing* will assure the absolute traditionalization of the object, its absolute ideal objectivity — i. e. the purity of its relation to a universal transcendental subjectivity. Writing will do this by emancipating sense from its actually present evidence for a real subject and from its present circulation within a determined community." [Derrida 1996:108] To put it otherwise, the discursive experience of writing and, hence, reading makes the subject develop a very peculiar perception of the world and of itself. The world is thereby structured as an objective and constant reality, while the subject perceives itself as being outside the world and capable of changing it through purposive-rational actions. This worldview, a product of written culture, caught the breathless attention of Husserl in the 1930s, as the power of ideologies considered by their followers to be based on a clear scientific understanding of how the world worked and what people were supposed to do about it was gaining a huge momentum.

anymore — free of failure, inconsistency, and fortuity — but rather implies perception of a particular individuality, hence imperfection, contingency, and factuality of how science develops and the world works.

Dialogic interaction, an important element of the liberal model, is acquiring a new meaning as university education has been undergoing waves of massification. Classical philosophy of higher education was designed for institutions with a small number of teachers and students. Massification has put a new twist on university education, turning it into an industry. A number of the liberal model principles have not been undermined. For example, freedom to study can be achieved by providing a wide variability of curriculum modules, and so on. The greatest challenge, in our opinion, consists in applying the principle of dialogic interaction, in terms of the liberal model, as a possibility of live, direct dialogue between the teacher and the student. The new wave of mediatization that has swept over the education system as a result of online courses and other forms of digitization requires thorough analysis of the fundamental anthropological implications of those processes. The classical liberal model of education counterbalanced the dominance of the Gutenberg Galaxy of mass media with a revisited Socratic dialogue and the promotion of seminar classes and other forms of personal interaction. The question is, will such forms remain efficient in the new media context (after all, the previous media revolution, associated with the rise of modern mass analog media, left them almost unaffected), and what are the areas for review and improvement?

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