

István Fehér M.: Schelling – Humboldt – Idealism and University

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The contemporary crisis of the university in general, the ranking of viable alternatives for more or less clarified future images of higher education, outlining along world tendencies, the long lurking or acute problems and their solutions – these concrete sides of the issue of universities are those which István Fehér M. does *not* address in his book published by the Peter Lang Publishers in 2007, entitled *Schelling – Humboldt: Idealismus und Universität. Mit Ausblicken auf Heidegger und die Hermeneutik*.² Much rather, he accomplishes a kind of retrospection which links on several points to the more or less original meaning of the concept of university connected to the name of Wilhelm von Humboldt, the effect of which is essential in the creation of modern (research) universities, and the core of which is closely linked with the system of German idealism. The idea of the university standing on the grounds of Humboldt's concept, offering instruction by science, undoubtedly survives in our time as well, and although it is more purely efficient in the western or overseas parts of the world, still, the discussions of the role, mission, and tasks of the university, albeit less consciously, are also indebted to Humboldt's ideas – in Hungary as well. István Fehér M. has repeatedly attempted to raise the issue long before writing his book: in connection to the foundation of the German language Andrassy University, inspired by European university traditions, as well as on the occasion of several forums and conferences of university history and philosophy.

The author considers that the hermeneutic character of his investigations lies not only in the methodological traits of the revelation and recovery of the meaning concealed in its history, but also in practicing philosophical hermeneutics itself, as – in a sense – the philosophical heir of idealism. Thus the reception history of idealism interconnects the interpreted which represents the past, and the presentness of understanding, being there in its horizon. In this

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² István M. Fehér: *Schelling – Humboldt: Idealismus und Universität. Mit Ausblicken auf Heidegger und die Hermeneutik*, Frankfurt/Main – Berlin – New York: Peter Lang, Europäischer Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2007, p. 268.

interconnectedness the parallels between Schelling and Humboldt immediately become emblematic, once approached from an inquiring standpoint centred around the concepts of research, education, and science, included, by no means accidentally, in the humanist program of the formation of free man, the institutional framework of which would necessarily become the university in a Humboldtian sense.

According to the author, Schelling's lectures on the methodology of academic studies (*Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums*) have had an undeniable influence on the theoretical background of the Humboldtian reforms, while its wider context of antecedents and afterlife also includes Kant's, Fichte's, and Schleiermacher's thoughts about the university (the latter two having an absolute primacy according to contemporary research). István Fehér M.'s understanding (partly) differs from the major interpretive trends by claiming that, beyond the relations of filiation (Humboldt's letters to Schiller prove that he thought high of Schelling's philosophical works; and Schleiermacher reviewed one of Schelling's lectures roughly in the same period, therefore Schelling's concept of university might have influenced him as well), Schelling's lectures and Humboldt's concept of university present an essential similarity. Fehér M. proves his point along the main characteristics of Humboldt's concept of university, as follows: the determinateness of science as a researcher's life conduct tending towards infinity; the unity and freedom of research and teaching; absolute independence by independent thinking; the disruption of the university from the school because of its existence within the freedom of teaching and learning; exemption from the criterion of usefulness; universality as opposed to specialization (education of humans and not of professionals); the central role of philosophy (an idea dating back to Kant's *Debate on faculties*); scientific education leading to the evolution of the individual; human formation's independence from the state, guaranteed and protected by the state (the Humboldtian idea of a liberal culture state).

Schelling's concept of science is the foundation for the German idealist thinker's thesis on the methodology of academic *studia*. In this respect science is an ideal mirror image of the organism of the world, achieved precisely by the university. The elevation of the intellect into the realm of the general and the absolute may only be achieved by a unitary science the core of which, philosophy, will completely pervade the human being in all the aspects of its nature. This idea is related to Humboldt's notion of education, the method of the harmonic

development and perfection of all faculties (which the book interestingly discusses, one of these being the problem of the development of morally bad faculties).

According to the notion of education rooting in idealism, the transformation of the human being does not happen merely by handing down the information, in which process the information is “superposed” on an individual always identical with him/herself, but by an inner transformation which, in Schelling’s, as well as Humboldt’s perception, is a process occurring in the complete unity of theory and praxis. The author sees here a concrete coincidence between the formulations of the two thinkers: in Humboldt’s terms, subjective education brings about a kind of interiorization of objective sciences, while Schelling considers education as a process which changes the essence of the human being. This way, in the process of a mutual academic activity, the teacher does not only offer mere research results to the students, but also presents the methods to reach them; does not only transmit knowledge, but transmits in an – in Schelling’s words – intellectually affluent way, that is, he brings science to life in front of his students.

These ideas express one of the main characteristics of Humboldt’s concept of university, the thought of the unity of research and teaching, which draws the attention on that hidden feature of science that it cannot be bequeathed merely by transmitting research results, but it must be acquired over and over in the course of infinite research. In this respect the author quotes Heidegger’s idea about the “happening” of tradition, that tradition by transmission makes the transmitted not more attainable, but more concealed. This idea can be drawn back to the difference of Schelling’s concepts of mere transmission and intellectually affluent transmission („*bloße Überlieferung – geistreiche Überlieferung*”).

The participants in academic research (the teacher and his students) do not act for each other, but for science, which in this live and active relationship cannot be characterized by a mere knowledge transmission, but – as long as it is autonomous and free – as a *mode of being*, that is, an orientation which is attached to its “things” appearing in its own happening by a particular necessity, and this practice also brings about the intellectual and moral transformation of personality and character. A necessarily conditioned result of this is the separation of higher education institutions from schools.

The separation of higher education institutions from schools which hand down ready-made knowledge is necessarily followed by the

rupture from the principle of usefulness (*Nützlichkeitsprinzip*). While in the *Debate of faculties* Kant only contests the principle of usefulness in the case of the philosophical faculty, Schelling and then Humboldt extend the criterion of exemption from the principle of usefulness to the entire university, to gain thus an explicitly philosophical institution, that is, one meant to search for the truth. The author considers that the Humboldtian institution in a Kantian sense appears to be an increased philosophical faculty. Such a “faculty” must have been at a necessary distance from the scope of public expectations, and it must have enjoyed, in a way, the unconditioned support of the state.

The contestation of the usefulness of such forms of university also means that the so-called *Brotstudium* (studies meant to ensure one’s subsistence) is also excluded from the curriculum. Schelling has at least three reasons for such a rejecting attitude: firstly, the teacher does not transmit ready-made knowledge (e.g. a profession), but points at the way that leads to knowledge; secondly, the rejection of *Brotstudium* may also derive from the essence of science, because knowledge is self-sufficient, and science ceases to be science if used as an instrument; and thirdly, usefulness is an extra-scientific principle, as also at Kant, and belongs to the competence of the government.

The achievement of this latter condition means the independence of higher educational institutions from the state, but only in a social framework in which the state unconditionally accepts the protection of scientific orientations in general, even if incomprehensible for itself, and also despite itself. In Humboldt’s formulation this condition of being of research and teaching is independent of the state, but guaranteed and protected by the state – as the basic condition of the highest degree of individual freedom. The necessity of the independence of science from the state was also raised after Kant in the late works of Schelling and by Hegel. This necessity, which may not seem beneficial to the state, may be counterbalanced in an institution committed to the search for the truth such as a university, by accomplishing a basic task for the state, the cohesion of nation and state. Idealism claims that national unity is dependent upon a dominant religion or a philosophy which essentially determines its spirit, and which is only capable of strengthening the essence of the nation, which is always exposed to erosion nonetheless. The cure of the German nation lies in science – claims Schelling, and this does not only define the novelty of the Humboldtian concept of university, but also creates a new dimension of the relation between university and state, and the role of the university

within the state. The science which puts aside usefulness, meaning variable security, defines itself – in Schelling’s understanding - as the seeker (and not owner) of the truth, and gains an essential role by the stability offered by intellectual cohesion. This stability would preserve the nation from complete disintegration, and enforce the Germans disposed to sciences as they are, in their cultural, political, and moral unity.

Despite the fact that Humboldt’s conception of culture state has been tendentiously dissolved into a state cultural policy all along its historical accomplishment, the idea itself is nevertheless cardinal, remaining the logical endpoint of Humboldt’s concept of university, without which this concept would only remain unaccomplished, as any idea lacking an “earthly” assurance. The essential merging and mutual interdependence of individual freedom and education in a life conduct deeply penetrated and ruled by a commitment with science and the truth, becomes part of a common theological order for German idealism following Kant, and for Humboldt as well, equally represented by a target-oriented culture state and university. In this respect the accomplishment of the aims of a university does not only prove the success of the cultural policy of a state, but also of its politics in general, as far as it is directed towards the support and intellectual well-being of the intellectual development of its citizens.

The particularly justified and detailed examination of the relation of education and freedom surfaces the philosophically relevant embedding of the inseparable relation of the two in a Humboldtian image of man, because education is the act of freedom, while at the same time with the progress in education, the educated partakes in ever greater amounts of freedom. As a result, the concept of education depends on the concept of freedom – states the author.

A very important aspect of the relationship of freedom and education is revealed exactly by approaching the freedom of education. The idea of academic self-management is influenced, in German idealism as well as Heidegger’s endeavours, by a self-legislation in Kant’s terms, or self-revelation in Heideggerian terminology, which naturally does not carry the possibility of exemption from certain necessary constraints, but is based upon a severe and essential self-awareness. And wherever there is university self-awareness, the faculties do not exist in an incidental juxtaposition and accidental subject orientation, but by a common will which refers to the essence of the university. Heidegger’s endeavours to establish a university are clearly related to, and at the same time critical

of, idealism and Humboldt's concept of university. However, it can be his justification that in the "difficult" years he was interested in creating not a national-socialist, but a Humboldtian university under the changed circumstances – not as a restitution of uncritical repetition of the Humboldtian tradition, but its creative, lively re-application, continuation.

The afterlife of Humboldt's endeavour, the empirical-historical evidence of its accomplishment – despite its obvious effect on the self-perception of (primarily German) universities in the 19th-20th century – is very much debated to this day. Following the survey of historical questions, István Fehér M. distances himself from this discourse – drawing upon one of Helmut Schelsky's ideas –, in order to search for the reasons of the difficulties of a thematized concept of university exactly in the main difficulties of idealism. Institutionalization is quite alien from liveliness and intellect; in this much, therefore, the idea of science and research understood in this way is materialized in a rudimentary form, imperfect as compared to ideal existence – an idea also referred to by Humboldt when discussing the connections of university and state. Institutionalization as an achievement is therefore a feature which does not result directly from this concept. Institutionalization involuntarily becomes thus a hindrance of the university as a concept striving to meet its own essence. But if the essence of the university is exactly education, *Bildung* through science (*Bildung durch Wissenschaft*), then here – in Humboldt's words – we are speaking about a process happening inside the soul and originating from it, in which science becomes the medium of the personality's self-formation and instrument. The achievement of science as an education, erudition taking place in the unity of freedom and research does not mean the perfect materialization of an idea, instead – since it is a process – it can be understood as the following of this idea, influencing everyday activities.

In order to understand the all-time crisis of the university, it is necessary indeed to understand the tradition thought to be dead, and repeatedly acquire the essence of science organically connected, and not accidentally linked, to education, and a philosophical way of cognition which concentrates on the issues of life, instead of erring in the multitude of often meaningless methodologies and the regulations of disciplines and specializations. Thus the crisis of the university as the embodiment of the highest level of education – at least in the continuation of Humboldtian conception – is also the crisis of the individual (and society); nevertheless, may anything be more critical than education

itself, in the course of which the student – by the exemplary assistance of his professors, of course – strives to accomplish the *fragile balance* of his faculties?

Education and erudition is a risky process from the very beginning; it is so because the self-exceeding elevation to humanity lurking in the deep structure of is meaning may not follow a definitively fixed order of values and rules, but it may approach its objective only by continuous reflection. The essence of humanity itself is not, and cannot be, fixed this way, but it is born over and over again as an attempt of self-definition in the whirl of human existence. Thus, the “solution” to the crisis of the university and of the sciences and philosophy should not be sought in a severe way of research, built upon immovable evidences and methodologies, because these may offend the freedom of research, and this would have a domino-effect on the Humboldtian model of university. If the return to the original idea of the university could indeed be accomplished, it would be useless to point out new ways to be searched and desired.¹

Translated by Emese G. Czintos

From Attachment Theories to Intervention Techniques in Psychotherapy

Enikő Školka, *Teorii explicative, modele și tehnici de intervenție în psihologie clinică și psihoterapie* (Explicatory theories, models, and intervention techniques in clinical psychology and psychotherapy)

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“He hasn’t got the seven years at home” – elders say about children with no manners, or a rude teenager, usually blaming the parents for not having offered the child a befitting education. But is there indeed a relationship between a man’s childhood education and his later

¹ Jörg-Dieter Gauger also agrees in emphasizing the importance of this for contemporary debates in his review written on Fehér’s book, “Bildung und Elite”. *Die politische Meinung. Monatsschrift zu Fragen der Zeit*, hrsg. von der Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Nr. 462, 53. Jg., Mai 2008, pp. 76–78.

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