

Academic Freedom in a Globalising Era: the Intangible Asset of Higher Education.

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Academic Freedom (A.F.) is the result of a void or interstice of power caused by a balance of powers (e.g. Emperor of the Roman Holy Empire vs. Pope of the Roman Church). The Western tradition is apparently more fertile as a context in comparison to Byzantine or Eastern one (aka “Second Rome — Ρωμαίοι”)

West: *Popes and Emperors had been for centuries in balance, creating Investiture Struggles—deemed as a germ for modern democracies, but also a favourable condition to have universities*

East: *Emperors have absolute powers over religious authorities. There is no contest*

A.F. means to be partially autonomous from one’s funder and/or protector. Any monopoly of political power is malign for the rise of universities. A.F. can be enriched or contracted by the granting player according to specific—mostly political—circumstances.

West: *Bononia is able to attract students from northern Empire (Germany) establishing a new way to have partial independence as a “Free City” (Comune)*

East: *only in 1724, more than half a millennium after Bologna, the first university in Orthodox world is established by Peter the Great. His idea is isomorphism from the West to modernise the “Third Rome” (from “Сказание о князьях Владимирских”).*



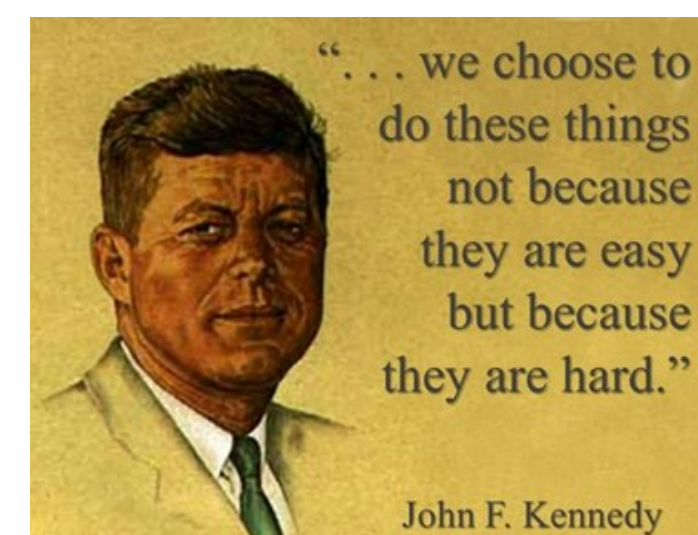
International students enrolled in Bologna in 1497

Coat of the first Russian university

Arguably, A.F. can boost innovation in those fields which are crucial in a particular era (i.e. theology in Middle Age; Technology nowadays?), but A.F. is hard to be dosed optimally.

East: *USSR impresses the world with Sputnik. Despite social sciences and humanities operated with no A.F., STEM could have leeway. Unclear the role of universities in this achievement.*

West: *JFK ends McCarthyism launching ambitious programmes to regain technological supremacy over USSR. A.F., as for Manhattan Project, is a double sword: Prince’s targets at the same time give momentum to academics (experts are good) as well as constraints (i.e. to work on very specific targets)*



Slogan to chase Soviet space hegemony

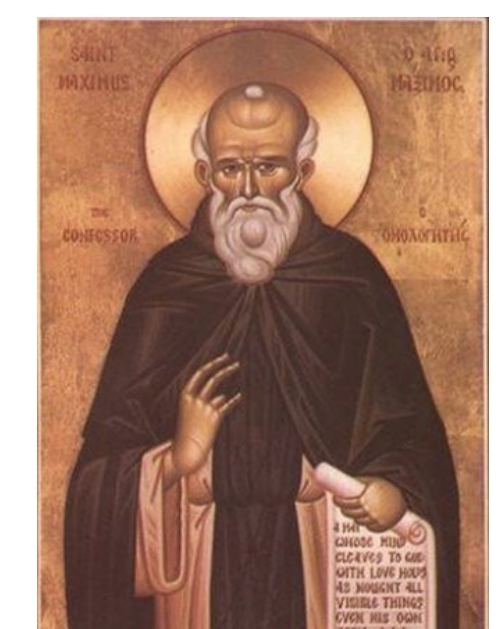


Soviet hegemony

A.F. permits to have “Public Intellectuals”, or partially independent engaged people inside academia, and also outside academia. As far as popularity of these P.I.s is generated from the diffusion of their thoughts, funders or protectors are in a trade-off position: “to suppress, or not to suppress those free-thinkers?”

West: *Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarca and “Magister” Giotto painted in a convent in Montefalco (central Italy) in XIII century. All from Florence, considered by monks as “VIPs” or “Public Intellectuals” worth of attention almost like Saints. Their freedom was assured by their popularity.*

East: *Massiminus the Confessor (VII century AD) – Dared to have a word against the official paradigm; Ended to have hand and tongue cut*

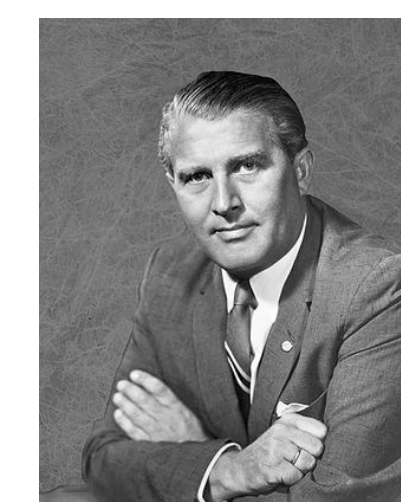


A.F. is an asset in the global competition of talents. Arguably, talents like to be free in what they want to pursue

West(/Central?): *Enrico Fermi fled Italy to US via Sweden because his wife was Jewish*

West(/Central?): *Wernher von Braun can select between US and USSR*

East: *Путырём Алекса́ндрович Сопо́кин left URSS in 1923. Lack of A.F. in Sociology in USSR was visible since the very beginning.*



What do we really know about A.F.? Given this definition, the HE community has a relatively poor body of research and theoretical insights concerning:

- **Varieties and constraints by country, eras, combinations of A.F. components**
- **Actual beneficial outcomes; possible undesired outcomes (“formulae of A.F.”)**
- **Role of A.F. in the big shift and watersheds in history (geopolitics and political sciences perspective)**
- **Any empirical way to trace A.F. worldwide**

Sources of pictures:

- https://altritaliani.net/wp-content/uploads/jpg_fig.5b_montefalco_chiesa_museo_di_san_francesco_benozzo_gzoli_petrarca_giotto.jpg
- <http://www.quoteslides.com/large/Slide103.JPG>
- http://s3.amazonaws.com/wootsaleimages/Sputnik__Remixe74Detail.png
- all others from Wikipedia