

Free Science

A sketch for an institution that has never existed in history — carrier-free, access-free, anti-authoritarian in knowledge

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FRAMING

This paper is a concept sketch, not an indictment and not the programme of a party. It states a historical diagnosis and derives a concept from it — as a standpoint, open to re-examination and dissent. The path is civil, peaceful and lawful; the means is science itself.

1 THE DIAGNOSIS: A FREE INSTITUTION HAS NEVER EXISTED

The claim sounds large but withstands examination: **an institution for science and education that was at once free of church, state, capital and class elite, and offered open access, has not existed in history.** The medieval university was a corporation under ecclesiastical doctrinal oversight. The early modern academies lived on princely patronage. The Humboldtian university tied science to the state — free in teaching, but state-carried and recruited from the bourgeoisie. Private universities tie it to capital and endowments. The counter-designs, too, remained partial: workers' education associations and folk high schools opened education but not research; the "republic of letters" was open in spirit but elitist in access; even foundations with "free" in their name are state-carried. Only ever one dimension was free — never all at once.

This is no moral indictment of history. It is a finding about a blank space: **the fully free institution of science is historically unattempted.** Which is exactly why it cannot be reformed into being — it has to be conceived.

2 ACCESS: WALLET AND PARENTAL HOME

To this day, education measurably depends on origin. The sociology of education has shown that formally equal access does not remove inequality but conceals it: cultural capital — language, habitus, books at home, the self-evidence of studying — is inherited like economic capital (Bourdieu &

Passeron, 1971). The statistics confirm it across decades and countries: the probability of studying, the degree reached, and even the scientific career correlate strongly with parents' education and income (OECD, ongoing "Education at a Glance" reporting). Tuition, living costs and unpaid qualification phases act as additional economic filters.

A free institution starts here: access without fee, without title prerequisites, without screening by origin. Not because prior education were irrelevant — but because it is a matter of support, not of selection.

3 AUTHORITY WITHIN THE DISCIPLINES

Authoritarian structures exist inside science as well: paradigms that sanction deviation instead of testing it; reviewing that rewards belonging; disciplinary borders that work as territorial order. Philosophy of science has described both — the productive and the repressive side of the paradigm (Kuhn, 1962), and the need to break methodological compulsion again and again so that knowledge remains possible (Feyerabend, 1975). Anti-authoritarian in knowledge means for us: **authority exists only on time and only through re-examination**. No office, no title, no school and no majority replaces the evidence.

The converse holds too: political and religious authority are no instance within the method of natural science. What someone believes is their own affair and deserves respect; what wants to count as a finding answers to the evidence — to nothing else. This separation is not enmity; it is cleanliness.

4 THE CONCEPT: THE FREE INSTITUTION

From diagnosis and blank space follows the concept. A free institution for science and education — university, institute, network, whatever its future form — has four features at once:

- **Carrier-free.** Not carried by church, state, capital or elite, but by its community — non-profit, transparently funded, with mechanisms like RETURN that sustain openness instead of consuming it. Cooperation with state or industry is possible; dependence is not.
- **Access-free.** No fees, no title prerequisites, no filters by origin. Learning, teaching and research stand open; support replaces selection.
- **Anti-authoritarian in knowledge.** Authority only on time, only through re-examination. Open review instead of closed circles; disciplinary borders as division of labour, not as territory; dissent as method.
- **Open in everything.** Results, tools, rules and finances lie open — open access, open source, open organisation. What the institution knows belongs to everyone.

This is not a utopia in the sense that its building blocks were missing. Every single one exists — open licences, sovereign infrastructure, non-profit legal forms, community governance, contribution models.

What is missing is the composition. That composition is the task.

5 WHAT COUNTS: THE ARGUMENT – AND THE DISTANCE TRAVELLED

If anything counts in such an institution, it is the contribution to the matter — not talk about it, not titles, not position. But this sentence immediately needs its own correction, and we write it in: **achievement is not measurable free of context**. The same formal step is not the same achievement for a worker's child, a migrant's child and the child from the academic household — the starting conditions differ by orders of magnitude (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1971). The free institution therefore does not measure persons and erects no new rankings. It examines arguments. Where it honours paths, it honours the distance travelled, not only the place of arrival. And in doubt, the principle of our statement of principles applies: we do not judge with finality — we re-examine.

6 THE INDIRECT EFFECT

Whoever changes access to knowledge indirectly changes society — historically well documented, from the printing press to literacy. A free institution of science is society-changing in this indirect sense: not through politics but through structure. It takes nothing from anyone; it adds to the existing landscape a possibility that did not exist before — and lets people decide for themselves what to make of it. That is the whole "upheaval": one additional, open door.

7 THE PATH: SYNTAGMA AS FIRST BUILDING BLOCK

Syntagma is not this institution — Syntagma is its first building block and its prototype in small: an open interface, a freely accessible corpus, open-source tools, a community on its own portable means, the path into a non-profit body, RETURN as a funding exploration. Each of these steps is at the same time a test run for the four features of section 4. The movement that may grow from this does not belong to us: whoever shares the direction builds along — here or elsewhere, connected or independent. That too is part of the concept: it is forkable.

8 FRAMING AND LIMITS

This paper does not judge people and calls for nothing except thinking along, re-examining and building along. What the statement of principles says holds: standpoints, not dogmas; everyone calibrates their own compass. Two limits remain absolute: no paywalls before our results, no cooperation with military, weapons or defence industry.

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