

At its best, philosophy has named a space, within the university and the broader culture, where a society can attain a kind of distance from itself - room to question, dispute, reflect, speculate, dissent. Its suppression is an unequivocal signal of a profound intolerance toward any intellectual activity that is not entirely reducible to the functional and the operational, to the unrelenting imperatives of profit and power. It is dispiriting to hear that in Chile - a country that has long suffered the ravages of exploitation and domination, but which has also been the arena of inspiring resistance to the violence of neoliberalism, both armed and unarmed - the teaching and learning of philosophy is under threat. That a powerless practice can cause such discomfort to the powerful, that a 'useless' pursuit can so unsettle the intransigent instrumentalism of our political classes, is all the more reason to defend it unconditionally - not as some pure endeavour for disembodied elites but as a critical and collective practice that finds shelter and form in the institutions of philosophy, but which also has a rich, if fragile, existence across the culture. If 'live without ideas', as the French philosopher Alain Badiou has suggested, is the slogan of our status quo, then giving life to ideas, especially ideas about how we can live otherwise, is the imperative for those who can glimpse behind the fear and contempt for philosophy the fear and contempt for criticism and critics, thinking and thinkers, the quiet hatred for the intellectual capacities and creativity of citizens whom our governments would prefer to reduce to docile servants, clients and consumers.

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