

# Preface

## Hubertus von Amelunxen

The European Graduate School was founded in 1994 and began its teaching, its learning activities, twenty years ago, in 1995. To this day it is an extraordinary, an unusual university, thanks to its faculty, its students and its staff. The task of the EGS has been, and will continue to “*faire profession*,” as Jacques Derrida subtitled his speech about the university held at Stanford in 1998, by clearly declaring what one is, what one believes, what one would like to be, and by including the Other, along the way, in dedication to this act of profession. With its two divisions, Arts, Health and Society (AHS) and the division Media and Communication set up in 1998 and now renamed Philosophy, Art and Critical Thought (PACT), the EGS has created a place for a renewed and genuine professionalism through the singularity and independence of its thinking and doing, its *poiesis*, and to do this by means of teaching, thinking, learning and creating.

Eighty years ago, in 1935 and 1936, Martin Heidegger held his lectures entitled, *The Origin of the Work of Art*; in autumn 1935 Walter Benjamin completed the first of a total of five versions, up until summer 1936, of his essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*; and in the winter term 1936/37 at the University of Freiburg Heidegger conducted his *Tutorials for Beginners – Schiller’s Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, which was published for the first time only ten years ago based on students’ transcripts. It would be interesting, indeed imperative, to study the connections between Schiller’s post-revolutionary

essay on aesthetic education, Heidegger's interpretation of same, and Benjamin's elucidation of Fascism's aestheticization of politics. Schiller had suspended his revolutionary hopes and turned the problem of the political, as he writes, into a question of the aesthetic, "since it is through beauty that man wanders towards freedom." We will surely not replace failed revolutions by art, and certainly not put art in the place of the political, but understanding a critique of violence as a critique of art is a way, an itinerary, which the EGS has taken from the very start and intends to continue on.

Just a few weeks ago, the EGS received European accreditation. What does the accreditation of a university mean? The predictions that the EGS would be subject to a surveillance system and lose its independence through standardization have proved to be unfounded. We have lost nothing, we have gained. In addition to Saas-Fee, as of spring 2016 we will also be offering seminars in Malta, and, after successful collaboration with the National Commission for Further and Higher Education of the Republic of Malta, we can offer all students of the EGS, be they MA or PhD students, degrees which are recognised all over the world. This is just another step in the thinking of freedom, in "the unconditional freedom of the university," if with Kant and also with Schiller in his letters on aesthetic education, we understand freedom as the freedom to give oneself a law (*Gesetz*) in the face of the possibility of laws.



**Hubertus von Amelunxen** is President of The European Graduate School. He is a theorist in literature and the arts and a curator, he holds the Walter Benjamin Chair at EGS, where he teaches Media Philosophy and Cultural Studies. Professor von Amelunxen was a Founding Director and Professor at the International School for New Media in Lübeck (Germany) and President of the Braunschweig University of Arts. He has been a member of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin since 2003.