

## EDUCATION AS HUMAN PRODUCTION: TOWARDS THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF SERVICE SERVITUDE

The article is devoted to a complex philosophical and sociological analysis of the essential transformation of education as an institution under the dominance of neoliberal rationality. The authors analyze the deep ontological and axiological shifts that lead to a fundamental change in the purpose of the educational process - from the "production of the human" to the production of simulacra. The article proves the thesis that modern education, subordinated to the logic of the market, undergoes a radical reduction: from the process of forming a free, autonomous and critically thinking subjectivity (Bildung) it is transformed into a mechanism for producing "human capital", and later – into a factory for the production of signs and imitations of knowledge. It describes how the university, which historically was an agora for the search for truth, is transformed into an integral part of the "society of the spectacle", where the real content of education is supplanted by its denunciatory representation. The authors analyze the specific mechanisms of this transformation. The article argues that these mechanisms lead to the formation of a new anthropological figure – the "consumer student", whose subjectivity is captured and redefined by the powerful "apparatus" of neoliberal power. The authors pay special attention to the deconstruction of the hegemonic discourse of educational reforms, which operates with the categories of "efficiency", "competitiveness" and "quality". The authors contrast it with the strategy of "weak thought" (pensiero debole) of G. Vattimo. In conclusion, the authors argue that the attempt to subordinate education to the logic of service servitude is ontologically impossible and leads to anthropological catastrophe. This impossibility is based on four fundamental principles highlighted by the authors. The article is a call for the revival of the ontological mission of education as a practice of freedom, openness and shared existence, aimed at the production of the human in its existential fullness.

**Keywords:** education, transformation, production, human, service, student, subject, consumer.

Education as the production of human beings seems to us to be a pivotal, existentially significant theme for understanding the profound crossroads at which we find ourselves today as an academic community and as a society as a whole. This is not a question of banal institutional reforms or formal paperwork, nor even a question of the ideological or value structures of educational activity. It is, above all, a question of what kind of future – primarily in the essential-ontological sense, and not just in the formal-chronological sense – we are producing through our university here and now.

*The relevance of this research* is dictated by the totality and unprecedented speed of the onslaught of market, managerial, and corporate (as T. Eagleton brilliantly put it [Eagleton, 2015]) rationality on the last bastions of human solidarity, critical reason, and cultural memory – in particular, on the university, which, according to B. Readings [Readings, 1997], is in ruins now. Higher education, this complex institution, historically formed as a space for questioning truth (from scholastic debates to the German Humboldtian university), is today being systematically and (one cannot help but feel this conceptually) purposefully transformed into a sphere of paid services, entirely subordinated to the logic of capitalist accumulation and efficiency. If P. Bourdieu spoke of the impossibility of escaping the suspicion of political expediency rather than economic necessity when observing the emergence of precarious structures everywhere [Bourdieu, 1998], this feeling becomes even more obsessive when observing processes at the university. After all, here we are witnessing not only the formation of capitalistically functional structures, but also the destruction (the reduction to ruins, according to B. Readings) of resistant and dysfunctional ones.

The process of commodification, that is, the total transformation of the educational process (or, as D. Harvey noted, the imposition of neoliberal rationality [Harvey, 2005]), its results and the very existential experience of knowledge, education, enlightenment, and mutual learning into a commodity, is part of a macrosocial process. That process, following I. Wallerstein, can be understood as the final “mastery” and inclusion in the logic of the world-system of capitalism [Wallerstein, 1996] of those areas of human life (“life-world”, according to J. Habermas [Habermas, McCarthy, 1985]), which previously retained at least relative autonomy from direct market exchange and “instrumental reason” (according to the same J. Habermas).

In the specific context of Ukraine, which is persistently located on the periphery of the aforementioned world-system, these processes acquire a particular, and rather painful, intensity and drama. We are witnessing<sup>1</sup> so-called “catch-up modernization”, which, lacking internal momentum and critical reflection, often turns into a simulacrum of development, a painful parody of Western models, which, meanwhile, are themselves experiencing a profound internal crisis. Often, the Ukrainian education system imports not essence, but forms; not content, but empty procedures – point-rating systems, quality management geared toward accountability rather than development – thereby exacerbating its own peripheral status, turning into a testing ground for the most vulgar and reductive versions of neoliberal doctrine.

*At the ontological level* of the problematic situation, we are confronted with a radical redefinition of the very mode of "human" existence in the modern world. Drawing on the insights of J. Baudrillard (as well as B. Latour, M. Foucault, and even F. Ferrando and J.-M. Scheffé), we can discern the following historical sequence: in the industrial era, primacy belonged to the production *of things*, material artifacts that transform the material world. Classical philosophy from I. Kant to G. Hegel understood education<sup>2</sup> as a parallel (but higher) process – namely, the production of the human being as a free, autonomous, self-determining subject, capable of moral judgment and/or reaching the world spirit. However, in the emerging consumer society and, further, in the society of the spectacle (as conceptualized by Guy Debord), both these spheres – the production of things and, more tragically, the production of humans and human at all – find themselves in a diminished and, consequently, degraded position. They are replaced and subjugated by *the production of signs*, simulacra that refer not to reality but only to each other, forming a hyperreality. The production of humans and the human becomes a subservient activity, upon which the capitalist production of things and – above all! – of signs, which are commodified far more successfully and profitably than the production of humans, flourishes.

Education in such a society is no longer a process of “creating the human being” in their entirety. It is forced to constantly justify its existence, paranoidly and abjectly proving its “usefulness” and “effectiveness” in the narrow, economic terms of return on investment (ROI or KPI). The production of the Human Being as an end-in- itself (Kant's postulate) gives way to the production of “human capital” – an anonymous, depersonalized, dehumanized, specific resource that must be competitive in the labor market and, therefore, subject to the logic of the market, supply and demand, objectification, and alienation. And then this utilitarian function, too, is eroded: education becomes the production *of signs of competence*, in other words, *simulacra of knowledge* – diplomas, certificates, “skills”, competencies that are not deep-seated personal qualities, but exchangeable signs in the semiotic system of market codes. The student turns into a “client”<sup>3</sup>, knowledge – into a “product”, and pedagogical interaction – into a “service”. And here we come to the key point: services, in the interpretation of J. Baudrillard, work not with reality<sup>4</sup>, but with “client satisfaction”, that is, with the area of perception, emotions and, ultimately, simulacra. Such a purely market act of (self)transformation in market logic is nothing other than

<sup>1</sup> And, it should be noted, participating in.

<sup>2</sup> And here the German etymology is revealing – Bildung, meaning “construction”, “construction”, “erection”.

<sup>3</sup> Let us note how specific the semantic and meaning trajectory of the three “-ents” (student, client and patient) is and how different the “cities of greatness” (according to L. Boltanski and L. Thévenot [Boltanski, Thevenot, Porter, 2021] “equipped” with these roles) are.

<sup>4</sup> Involvement, “witnessing life itself”, deep understanding, character, critical thinking.

ontological degeneration, the transition from the production of essence to the production of appearances and epiphenomena, leads to the systemic degradation of education as a key institution of long-term social self-reproduction. It calls into question the very possibility of a community based on genuinely shared values, historical memory, and, crucially, the capacity for collective critical reflection. We are risking to create a society in which each member, as G. Agamben describes it, is “bare life”, stripped of its political and cultural form.

*At the epistemological level*, the problem manifests itself in perhaps an even more paradoxical and alarming way. Social sciences and the humanities<sup>1</sup> were called upon to be a form of critical self-awareness for society, its “conscience” and an instrument of demystification – often finds itself captive to the very discourse it is supposed to problematize. We are witnessing a striking phenomenon: sociology, the economics of education, and political science, following in the wake of the mainstream neoliberal narrative, instead of uncovering its ontological and axiological foundations, are busy developing and refining increasingly effective tools for its implementation and legitimization, thereby exacerbating the crisis.

The discourse on “educational quality”, “graduate competitiveness”, “integration into the global educational space” (understood exclusively as a market and a competitive space), and “innovation” (reduced to technological innovations) is accepted as self-evident, unquestionable, and “progressive”. Such thinking, lacking the hermeneutic effort (H.-G. Gadamer) to uncover hidden prejudices and the ontological sensitivity (M. Heidegger) to the question of the Being of the human being produced in this way, is incapable of recognizing in this “progress” a form of profoundly destructive metaphysical intervention. As Michel Foucault puts it, we are dealing not simply with an ineffective or dysfunctional educational policy, but with the formation of a new type of power that operates through the production of “true” discourses and the constitution of a particular type of subjectivity. The production of subjectivity of the neoliberal type is generally a special mechanism of power, deeply based on the process of interpellation (according to L. Althusser [Althusser, 2003]), concealing the true essence of power.

Pierre Bourdieu would add that sociology, without reflecting on its own foundations, risks becoming not an instrument for uncovering social games, but rather a participant in them, reproducing symbolic violence. In Giorgio Agamben's terms, neoliberal educational discourse is a powerful “apparatus” that captures and redefines human subjectivity itself, producing the “student-consumer” as a new anthropological figure. Thus, the epistemological problem is the “blindness” of instrumental (according to Jürgen Habermas), procedural, technical, and legislative reason (according to Z. Bauman) to its own fundamental premises, its inability to conceive of itself as a problem, which is, in essence, a renunciation of philosophy's primary task. Such reason is no longer capable of wonder (with which philosophy begins), of reverence, of inquiry, of doubt. It serves the hegemonic order, including by forcing any resistance also (and so) serve it.

**The purpose** of this article is not only to acknowledge and describe the crisis in education, but also to provide a profound philosophical and sociological articulation of it as a crisis of human production. We intend to accomplish the following:

1. *To trace the metamorphosis of the logic of production:* to show how the consistent movement from the production of things through the production of man to the production of signs leads to a fundamental substitution: the production of human subjectivity in its autonomy, sovereignty and openness to the Other (J.-P. Sartre) is replaced by the production of “human capital”, and then by the production of signs, in particular the simulacrum signs of this subjectivity.
2. *To reveal the mechanisms of spectacle and simulation in education:* to demonstrate, following Guy Debord and J. Baudrillard, how the modern university is becoming an integral part of the society of the spectacle. In this spectacle modern university produces not knowledge and a thinking subject, but rather its spectacular imitation – management reports, citation

<sup>1</sup> The disciplinary field that, beginning with the critical philosophy of I. Kant and continuing through the dialectic of G. Hegel, the phenomenology of E. Husserl and M. Heidegger, and the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre.

indices divorced from real intellectual influence, competency matrices, educational “products” that work to manage perception and create the illusion of competence.

3. *Deconstruct the mainstream discourse of reform:* deconstruct the dominant discourse on “reform”, “efficiency”, and “competitiveness”, revealing its ontological inadequacy, metaphysical poverty, and, as a consequence, its destructive social potential. The “weak thought” (pensiero debole) approach can help us with this (G. Vattimo [Vattimo et al., 2013]) not as a call to weakness, but as resistance to the violence of the “strong”, impersonal, totalizing metanarratives, which today include the neoliberal utopia of the market.

Only through such a radical, back-to-the-basics questioning, through an attempt to think against the flow of mainstream discourses, can one hope to “win back” for education (or at least demarcate, “set out flags,” and stake out) its true, ontological mission. Its mission is to be simultaneously an agora, a workshop, a spiritual exercise, a factory for the production of the human in its non-utilitarian, sovereign, fragile, and open to an unpredictable future fullness.

### ***Metamorphoses of the logic of production: from subjectivity to simulacra***

To understand the depth of the contemporary crisis in education, it is necessary to trace the metamorphosis of the very logic of production, which, after passing through several key stages, leads to a fundamental substitution of its purpose. The classical industrial era, conceptualized in the works of Karl Marx, established the paradigm *of the production of things*. In this system, man acted as *homo faber*, transforming material nature and creating the objective world. However, in parallel, particularly in the space of European university culture, another, higher concept, idea, and (in the broad sense of the word) practice was maturing – *the production of the human*. Dating back to the ideals of the Enlightenment and German neo-humanism, it found its expression in the concept *of Bildung*. According to I. Kant and G. Hegel, education is not the accumulation of information, but a process of self-creation, a person’s emergence from the state of his “social immaturity”, the acquisition of intellectual and moral autonomy. Thus, for G. Hegel, the spirit forms itself, removing its natural spontaneity in order to return to itself, but already as a spirit possessing knowledge of itself [Hegel, 2018]. Here, the production of the human is the production of a sovereign subject, capable of self-reflection, moral choice, and responsibility. Later, in the existentialist interpretation of J.-P. Sartre, this is a project of constant self-transcendence, of “being-for-himself” open to the Other and constituting itself in this openness and freedom [Sartre, 1972]. The “product” produced here is a person, or even a subject, whose essence is not given in advance, but is created through acts of free self-determination.

However, the progressive role of capitalism<sup>1</sup> ends at the same point where the essence of any phenomenon ends – namely, in the self-transcendence and self-surpassion of measure. In this case, the measure turned out to be the commodification and marketization of human production.

Therefore, penetrating this sphere of economic logic marks the transition to the second stage – *the production of “human capital”*. Human capital theory (G. Becker, T.-W. Schulz [Moghader, 2023]), which emerged in the mid-20th century, carried out a radical and fundamental shift, redefining the human being not as an end, but as a means, as a specific resource. However, such a redefinition fits perfectly with the logic of market hypertrophy and its intervention in all previously unmarketed spaces and practices.

Within these processes, investment in education came to be viewed not as a value in itself, not as a reproduction of the social reproduction system, but as a calculated strategy for increasing the individual's future income. Pierre Bourdieu symptomatically demonstrated that education operates not simply with economic but with symbolic capital, reproducing social hierarchies through the appropriation of cultural codes and diplomas [Jenkins, 2025]. This, even without radical critique, in itself demonstrates a fundamental shift in the ontology of education.

<sup>1</sup> Which, on the one hand, liberated man from the shackles of traditional society and, on the other, immeasurably increased humanity's productive forces.

In this new logic, sovereign subjectivity, open to the Other, is replaced by a calculating agent optimizing its own trajectories. Autonomy is transformed into competitiveness, openness (Öffentlichkeit, according to Jürgen Habermas), into the ability to network for profit, and public communication into a “brothel”. The educational process begins to be subordinated to disciplinary power (M. Foucault), producing not a free citizen but a controlled individual whose behavior, knowledge, and even motivation must correspond to market demands. And it's worth noting that the germ of this transformation was captured with utmost clarity by E. Fromm, who rigorously demonstrated the socializing institutions of capitalist society as a place for the pre-training of future loyal members of a “correctly” organized production process, with the corresponding “strapping” of the necessary and properly trained “social characters” [Buechler, 2024].

However, the most radical and final break with the classical tradition occurs in the third stage – the era of the dominance of *the production of signs and simulacra*. This transition is brilliantly described by Jean Baudrillard [Szepanski, 2024]: while consumer society still worked with goods possessing use value, later capitalist society already carries out a transposition to the realm of pure signs, whose value is determined solely by their place in the semiotic system. Education becomes a factory for the production of such signs. A diploma ceases to be evidence of some internal transformation (that very *Bildung*) and turns into a simulacrum – a sign that refers not to real competence or the depth of personality, but only to another sign (a job description in the HR system; a “competency grid” in formal documents; a structure of “stakeholder” requests; etc.). Knowledge itself is fragmented into “competencies” and “skills”, which are nothing more than “floating signifiers”, Barthesian parasitic connotative meanings [Lurz, 2025], mythological structures easily integrated into market discourse. The student-consumer buys not the arduous path to truth, but a package of educational services whose end aim and product is "customer satisfaction" – again, a praxeological and discursive simulacrum that replaces genuine educational experience, which by definition is associated with overcoming and dissatisfaction. In the society of the spectacle [Debord, 2014], the university itself becomes part of the spectacle, where the ritual of educational attainment is enacted, while its real content – the formation of a critical, autonomous subjectivity – is evacuated and eliminated. Education no longer produces a person or even human capital, but rather his ghostly image, his simulation, which circulates in a system completely divorced from the referents of reality.

Thus, the historical path of the logic of production in the field of education is a path from the ontological strengthening and rooting of human existence through its essential formation and involvement in history, culture, systems and structures to its final reification and subsequent dematerialization in the world of simulacra, where education loses its corporeal, meaning-forming function.

### ***Mechanisms of performance and simulation in modern education***

The modern university's immersion in the logic of the society of the spectacle (Guy Debord) and simulation (Jean Baudrillard) represents not an external influence, but a fundamental metamorphosis of its internal nature. The university is gradually ceasing to be an autonomous space for knowledge production and critical reflection, becoming an integral part of a global system for the production of spectacular imitations and imitations of spectacles<sup>1</sup>. This process is realized through a series of interconnected mechanisms that transform both the university's activity itself and the subject it produces.

The central mechanism is *the substitution of form for content, and representation – for essence*. In the society of the spectacle, as Guy Debord noted, everything previously experienced directly is now relegated to representation [Debord, 2014], and history is repressed as the spectacle's primary threat. University life follows this logic: the real, complex, and often “inconvenient” process of learning, fraught with doubt, error, and intellectual labor, is supplanted by its smooth,

---

<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, from this perspective, the “dark side” of the mediatization of university activity, their ecstatic fusion with online platforms like Coursera, etc., becomes a worthy avenue of research.

packaged representation. Doubt and suspicion themselves are transformed into something dangerous and unreliable. Curricula are transformed into “educational products” with vivid descriptions (syllabi), which are more important than their content, which is especially evident in the very nature of the “choice of disciplines” as a marketplace, for example. Scientific research is replaced by indicators of “research activity” (which is clearly illustrated by how impersonal and meaningless the scientific activity of an entire university or faculty appears in a numerical report); and academic reputation is replaced by formal rankings. The professor finds himself in a situation described by Jean-Paul Sartre [Sartre, 1972]: his being-for-himself, his genuine engagement in the search for truth, is forced to subordinate himself to being-for-others, for the administrator, for the reporting system. Or even worse: he is forced to transform himself into an “internal emigrant”, a thing with its “being-in-itself”, which mechanically reproduces the functions ascribed by the user. His activity above all must be *visible*, measurable, and presentable.

This spectacle reaches its apogee in a system of endless management reports, accreditations, and audits. According to Jean Baudrillard, these documents are simulacra: rather than reflecting the actual quality of education, they replace it, creating a hyperreality in which reporting on the work performed becomes more important than actually completing it. Auditing becomes a ritual, verifying not truth but procedural compliance, producing symbolic legitimacy.

The second key mechanism is *the simulation of scientific significance through metrics*. Citation indexes, impact factors, and the h-index – these indicators, initially introduced as auxiliary tools, become themselves the goal and primary product of scientific activity. The most ominous aspect is that they create a closed semiotic system, with internal self-reference and autopoesis. Its communications determine an article's value not by its intellectual contribution or ability to change the field of discourse, but by its place in the game of citations, often organized through mutual links and through the market “exchange of strokes”, citations in “relevant” journals, or a focus on fashionable but intellectually empty topics. J. Baudrillard would call this “third-order simulation” – a sign that masks the absence not only of a referent<sup>1</sup>, but also of any fundamental reality as such. Knowledge becomes a sign of knowledge, circulating in a system that refers only to itself. The scientist becomes the producer of these signs, the university becomes the exchange where they are traded, and scientific journals become currency exchanges.

The third mechanism operates at the level of subjectivity production and is associated with the creation of *educational simulacra that control perception*. An “educational product” is not a set of knowledge and competencies, but a set of signals designed to create the illusion of competence in the “consumer” (student) and “customer” (employer). The system of “skills”, ECTS credits, micro-diplomas, “accounted informal education”, and “digital badges” operates precisely in this way. These elements form a language that speaks not of depth of understanding or critical thinking ability, not of the thoroughness of preparation or structured thinking, but of formal compliance with certain standards. A student who successfully completes such a course possesses not so much knowledge as a *sign of knowledge* – that is, a kind of certificate that simulates their competence. This process is a direct embodiment of J. Baudrillard's simulation: the real educational process (with its difficulties, insights, and personal growth) is replaced by its operational, tactical model, which is presented as reality itself. The result is an “illusion of competence”, where both the student and society are satisfied and gratified not by actual achievements, but by their spectacular representation. Moreover, the interest in satisfaction proves to be greater than the “longing for reality”, the desire to return to the desert of the Real.

Thus, the modern university, as part of the society of the spectacle, produces neither a thinking subject nor knowledge-as-truth, but three interconnected types of simulacra: 1) *administrative simulacra* (reports, rankings), creating the appearance of effective management; 2) *scientific simulacra* (metrics, indices), simulating intellectual progress; 3) *educational simulacra* (diplomas, skills), simulating competence. In this system, a genuine event of thought (M. Heidegger [Heidegger. 2016]), occurring not in space and time, but in the beginning, becomes impossible, since any intellectual activity must be pre-fitted into a Procrustean bed of measurable

---

<sup>1</sup> That is, real intellectual influence, the true productivity of scientific truth.

indicators and spectacular forms, and also budgeted for time and space. The university is being transformed into a conveyor belt for the production of ghosts – simulacra, which, however, possess very real power to determine the fates of people and ideas, thoughts and their creators, and to distribute resources, finally locking education into a self-sufficient world of hyperreality.

### ***Deconstructing the Mainstream Discourse of Reforms:***

#### ***Ontology of Weakness vs. Metaphysics of Strength***

A significant role in the reproduction, expansion, and proliferation of such a system is played by the dominant and hegemonic discourse of educational reforms, which operates in categories of “efficiency”, “competitiveness”, and “quality”, and which ambitiously and hypocritically claims to be a technically neutral and objective language. However, the simplest deconstruction reveals it as a powerful narrative, possessing its own ontology and metaphysics, which, in their totalizing pretensions, prove to be detrimental and destructive to education. This discourse essentially represents a contemporary version of the “metaphysics of presence” (according to J. Deleuze [Deleuze, 2008]) in its most aggressive, instrumental form. Thus, the concept of “efficiency”, rooted in Taylorism, Fordism, the managerial revolution, W. Whyte's “corporate man” [Whyte, Nocera, 2002], and the philosophy of positivism, presupposes the existence of some objective, measurable, and uniquely valid goal, toward which one must move in the most direct and economical way. In addition, this goal is not questioned as essential and existing. However, in the field of education, whose essence lies in the production of human beings, such a goal fundamentally cannot be objectified. Is the process of awakening critical thinking “effective”? Can the “cost-effectiveness” of acquiring moral autonomy be measured? What quality can be attributed to P. Bourdieu's “sense of play” [Jenkins, 2025]? By reducing education to a set of measurable results (KPIs), the discourse of efficiency forcibly excludes from it everything that cannot be quantified, everything that is truly human – doubt, search, incompleteness, chance, that is, the very fabric and the here-and-now weaving *Bildung*.

The idol of “competitiveness” is similarly deconstructed. This concept, rooted in social Darwinism, imposes an ontology of permanent warfare of all against all, transferring the laws of the market to the internal life of the university and the consciousness of the individual. Students, faculty, departments, and entire universities are drawn into a global race for symbolic capital, where the primary measure of success is not truth or the public good, but rankings. Competition is transformed into a fetish, a self-imposed constraint, a hyper-civilization (our concept) that is not justified by any outcome, but rather a process for the sake of process.

This process, as can be demonstrated using P. Bourdieu's tools, is a form of symbolic violence that mystifies the real mechanisms of inequality reproduction under the guise of “fair competition” (P. Bourdieu debunked this particularly pompously in “Insecurity Everywhere” [Gildas, 2023]). In a Heideggerian perspective, such discourse embodies the “forgetting of being”: human existence, its authentic telos, is replaced by impersonal functioning within a calculating attitude (*Gestell*), where all that exists, including humans themselves, is viewed merely as a reserve (*Bestand*), destined for optimization and use. *Dasein* is replaced by design.

It is here that the philosophical strategy of “weak thought” (*pensiero debole*) by Gianni Vattimo offers an alternative path to resistance. “Weak thought” is a radical ontological position that opposes “strong” metanarratives – be it Hegel's dialectic of the Spirit, Marxist theory of revolution, or, as in our case, the neoliberal utopia of the market. It offers the possibility of guerrilla tactics of resistance to authoritarian strategies (according to M. de Certeau), the possibility of overcoming legislative reason with interpretive reason.

All these “strong” narratives lay claim to the Truth and the right to reorganize reality according to their totalizing logic. The neoliberal discourse of reform is a similarly “strong” narrative, imposing a single, rigid teleology on education, based on the principles of managerialism and market fundamentalism. “Weak thought” offers the opportunity to loosen the grip of this discourse by subjecting it to a hermeneutic unlocking, calling not for the rejection of reforms as such, but for the rejection of their totalitarian, monologic nature. The idea is to

conceive of reform not as a global project of reorganization according to a single plan, but as a local, pluralistic, and always open process of interpretation, in which diverse voices, including those ineffective from a market perspective, can be heard – the voices of philosophy, art, vulnerable social groups, and the academic corporation itself.

This approach reveals the destructive social potential of mainstream discourse, whose ontological poverty lies in its inability to conceive of education as a form of self-care (according to M. Foucault [Foucault, 2010]) or as a practice of freedom. It produces not a community of solidary citizens, but an atomized mass of competing individual entrepreneurs, educational “bodies without organs” according to J. Deleuze and F. Guattari, and ultimately a profoundly antisocial order. By opposing this with “weak thought”, we defend education's right to its own, non-utilitarian ethos, to its openness to a plurality of interpretations and meanings. This resistance is not to force in general, but to the specific violence of “strong” metanarratives, which, as history shows, always ultimately prove metaphysically impoverished and humanly destructive.

### ***Conclusion: Education as human production.***

#### ***Outside the service easement***

The current state of education extends far beyond specific dysfunctions or problems of underfunding. The logic of production, having progressed from the creation of things through the production of human beings to the total dominance of the production of signs, has led to a fundamental substitution of the purpose of education. Neoliberal transformation, unchecked by established institutions, is leading to a total domination of simulacra of efficiency and competitiveness completely displace the essential content of the educational process. Multiple mechanisms of the spectacle, in which the university is transformed into a factory for the production of various simulacra (administrative, scientific, and educational) circulating in a closed system of hyperreality, constitute the basis of the mainstream discourse of reform. Deconstruction of thus discourse has revealed its ontological inadequacy and metaphysical poverty, its inability to conceive of education in its true, human dimension, and has outlined a path of resistance through “weak thought” that opposes the totalizing violence of market fundamentalism.

However, ***education is fundamentally impossible as a service servitude***. The very essence of “humanity” as a product of the educational (phylogenetically – of the civilizational) process resists its reduction to the level of a service, and even a “partially owned” one at that. This impossibility has several fundamental roots in the nature of man and society.

***First, humans are the result of a long, multigenerational process of civilization.*** As Norbert Elias has convincingly demonstrated [Elias, 2000], human development is the gradual development of a self-control apparatus, the increasing complexity of mental organization, the “restraint of affects”, and the internalization of social norms. This “civilizing process” is not quick, comfortable, or focused on immediate gratification. It is the arduous, often painful, work of culture on natural materials, and education is the concentrated, accelerated, rationally organized, and reflective mechanism of this process. It presupposes effort, discipline, and the renunciation of immediate desires for the sake of achieving more complex intellectual and spiritual goals. Attempting to squeeze this centuries-old process into the Procrustean bed of the logic of “service”, where “the customer is always right” and the criterion of success is “satisfaction”, is tantamount to attempting to abolish the very logic of anthropogenesis. Service meets existing needs; education forms new, higher needs and abilities; it is the overcoming of a person's current state, the realization of his “eccentricity”, about which German anthropologists have written a lot.

***Secondly, man is a constant effort and overcoming of himself.*** This idea runs like a red thread through all European philosophy – from the ancient ideal of “care of oneself” (*epimeleia heanton*) to the existential project of “being-for-itself” in J.-P. Sartre and “self-overcoming” in F. Nietzsche, is categorically and absolutely alien to the “service paradigm”.

Service logic is by definition passive: it awaits a request-offer, it craves temptation and strives to facilitate its satisfaction as much as possible. However, genuine education, the production of the human, is definitionally active and even aggressive in relation to the existing “I” and the state in which it finds itself here and now. Genuine education presupposes a cognitive (auto)conflict, a clash with the Other (including within oneself, in the form of “what I myself can be”), overcoming intellectual and ethical barriers, leaving the “comfort zone”. To learn means to face misunderstanding, to experience frustration, to force your brain to work in an unusual mode; this is work, not consumption; and turning this work into a “service” kills its educational essence, because it removes the need for effort, leaving only the illusion of movement.

**Third, humans are a constant act of self-production, not self-consumption.** Here we encounter the ontological difference between the two models. The service and consumption model is oriented toward exhaustion: having consumed a product or service, the client completes the act and requires more, finding themselves in a constant and never-ending race of consumption, quantitatively calculated and symbolically formalized. This is a linear, extensive logic. Human production in education is subject to a different, cyclical, and intensive logic. This is autopoiesis (in the Luhmannian sense [Luhmann, Barrett, 2013]), self-creation, where the result (knowledge, competence, moral choice) is not an external product that can be alienated, but a part of the very fabric of the personality, a new foundation for further development. Education is not E. Fromm's “having” a diploma or skill, but rather “being” a thinking, responsible, and communicative being. Consumption impoverishes and completes, closes and centers; education enriches and opens, excites and initiates. The service model, being essentially a model of consumption, is ontologically incapable of describing and supporting the endless process of human self-production.

**Fourth, man is (co)participation with another and others in the social.** The production of the human is by definition not an individual act, being possible only in the space of intersubjectivity, in dialogue, in dispute, in the joint search for truth, in struggle, but not a struggle for status and consumption, but a struggle with one's own boundaries and limitations. The university has historically developed as a corporation, as a Single Body in plurality, as a community of students and teachers (*universitas magistrorum et scholarium*), united by a common cause. The service model, however, radically atomizes this process, transforming the community into a market, a battlefield, a stadium for competition, a supermarket for temptation and consumption – but not a community of equals. It reduces it to a contract between the service provider (the professor) and its recipient (the student-client). It destroys the very idea of academic solidarity, turning colleagues into competitors and students into passive consumers. But man, as a political being (Aristotle), is formed not in isolation, but in the polyphonic space of a common world, where education is the practice of constructing this common world through discourse, shared understanding, and the development of common values. The instrumental logic of service, by atomizing participants in the process, undermines the very possibility of such a shared existence, producing not citizens, but individuals deprived of genuine connections with one another.

Thus, the attempt to subordinate education to the logic of service easement is not just a managerial error; it is a step toward *anthropological catastrophe*. A small step for one manager, a great step for all humanity. Such an attempt denies humanity as a product of civilization, as an subjective effort to overcome oneself, as an act of self-production, and as co-participation in the social.

**Prospects for further research** in this area are seen in several directions: This includes the concretization of philosophical critique at the level of disciplinary fields, where it is necessary to trace how the described processes of commodification and simulation transform specific disciplines – from philology and philosophy to engineering and the natural sciences. This also includes the development of a positive ontology of education, an alternative not only to the market model, but also to the classical Enlightenment project, which often carried the seeds of the same instrumentalism. Here, a dialogue with the concept of “educational doctrine” (J.

Herbart), the philosophy of dialogue (M. Buber, E. Rosenstock-Huessy), as well as with contemporary theories of anthropopractices and “work with oneself” seems promising. This also includes empirical studies of resistance, namely, how, in the context of the total offensive of managerialism and simulation, individual teachers, departments, and even entire universities find practices for “guerrilla” preservation of the authentic educational process? Studying these “pockets of resistance” has not only academic but also enormous practical value. Finally, it also helps us understand education in the context of technological challenges: how are digitalization, AI, and Big Data, on the one hand, becoming new tools of simulation and control, and on the other, can they be harnessed to realize the true purpose of education – the production of free, critically thinking, and responsible individuals?

The answer to these questions will determine not only the future of the university as an institution, but also the very possibility of producing the human in an era when its ontological foundations are being systematically eroded and denied.

## REFERENCES

Althusser, L. (2003). *The Humanist Controversy and Other Texts*. Verso.

Boltanski, L., Thévenot, L. (2021). *On Justification: Economies of Worth*. Princeton University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Acts of Resistance. Against the New Myths of Our Time*. Polity Press.

Buechler, S. (2024). *Erich Fromm: A Contemporary Introduction*. Routledge.

Debord, G. (2014). *The Society of the Spectacle* (Annotated ed.). Bureau of Public Secrets.

Deleuze, G. (2008). *Gilles Deleuze: an introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

Eagleton, T. (2015). *The Slow Death of the University* [Електронний ресурс]. April 6. URL: <https://ru.scribd.com/doc/290117868/terry-eagleton-the-slow-death-of-the-university-pdf>

Elias, N. (2000). *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (revised ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Foucault, M. (2010). *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Habermas, J., McCarthy, T. (1985). *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalism*. Beacon Press.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press USA.

Hegel, G. W. F., Pinkard, T. (ed.). (2018). *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Cambridge University Press.

Heidegger, M. (2016). *The task of thinking and hermeneutic phenomenology: Kant, Husserl, and the history of being*. Duncker et Humblot.

Jenkins, R. (2025). *Pierre Bourdieu* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Luhmann, N., Barrett, R. (2012/2013). *Theory of Society, Volume 2*. Stanford University Press.

Lurz, J. (2025). *The Barthes Fantastic: Literature, Criticism, and the Practice of Language*. University of Chicago Press.

Moghtader, B. (2023). *Schooling, Human Capital and Civilization: A Brief History from Antiquity to the Digital Era*. Routledge.

Readings, B. (1997). *The University in Ruins*. Harvard University Press.

Salmon, G. (2023). Bourdieu, the Demystifying Power of Individualism, and the Crisis of Anthropology. *Beyond Description*. Cornell University Press. P. 104–124.

Sartre, J.-P. (1972). *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*. Random House USA Inc.

Szepanski, A. (2024). *In the Delirium of the Simulation: Baudrillard Revisited*. Becoming Press.

Vattimo, G., Zawadzki, A., Noica, C. (2013). *Literature and weak thought* (1st New ed.). Peter Lang GmbH, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Wallerstein, I., Hopkins, T. K., et al. (1996). *The Age of Transition: Trajectory of the World-System, 1945-2025\**. ZED Books, London & New Jersey, Pluto Press, Australia.

Whyte, W. H., Nocera, J. (2002). *The Organization Man* (Revised ed.). University of Pennsylvania Press.

**Golikov Sergey O.**

PhD in philosophy, Associate Professor

Department of Theoretical and Practical Philosophy named after Professor J. B. Schad

Deputy Director of the Educational and Scientific Institute of Philosophy, Cultural Studies, and Political Science for Academic Affairs

V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University

4, Svobody sqr., 61022, Kharkiv, Ukraine

E-mail: s.o.golikov@karazin.ua

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7901-5832>

**Golikov Alexander S.**

Doctor of Sociological Sciences

Professor at the Department of Sociology

Deputy Director in Scientific Issues of Scientific and Education Institute of Sociology and Media Communications

V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University

4, Svobody sqr., 61022, Kharkiv, Ukraine

E-mail: golikov@karazin.ua

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6786-0393>

**Authors Contribution:** All authors have contributed equally to this work

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest

The article was received by the editors 10.08.2025

The article is recommended for printing 27.10.2025

The article was revised 22.10.2025

This article published 24.11.2025

---

**ОСВІТА ЯК ВИРОБНИЦТВО ЛЮДСЬКОГО:  
ДО НЕМОЖЛИВОСТІ СЕРВІЧНОЇ СЕРВІТУТНОСТІ**

**Голіков Сергій Олексійович**

кандидат філософських наук

доцент кафедри теоретичної і практичної філософії імені професора Й. Б. Шада  
заступник директора навчально-наукового інституту філософії, культурології, політології з  
навчальної роботи

Харківський національний університет імені В. Н. Каразіна.

майдан Свободи, 4, Харків, 61022, Україна

E-mail: s.o.golikov@karazin.ua

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7901-5832>

**Голіков Олександр Сергійович**

доктор соціологічних наук

професор кафедри соціології

заступник директора з наукових питань навчально-наукового інституту соціології та  
медіакомунікацій

Харківський національний університет імені В. Н. Каразіна.

майдан Свободи, 4, Харків, 61022, Україна

E-mail: golikov@karazin.ua

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6786-0393>

**АНОТАЦІЯ**

Стаття присвячена комплексному філософсько-соціологічному аналізу сутнісної трансформації освіти як інституту в умовах домінування неоліберальної раціональності. Автори

аналізують глибинні онтологічні та аксіологічні зрушення, які призводять до фундаментальної зміни мети освітнього процесу – від «виробництва людського» до виробництва симулякрів. У статті доводиться теза, що сучасна освіта, підпорядкована логіці ринку, зазнає радикальної редукції: з процесу становлення вільної, автономної та критично мислячої суб'єктності (Bildung) перетворюється на механізм продукування «людського капіталу», а згодом – на фабрику з виробництва знаків та імітацій знання. Описується, як університет, який історично був агорою пошуку істини, перетворюється на інтегральну частину «суспільства спектаклю», де реальний зміст освіти витісняється його уречевленою репрезентацією. Автори аналізують конкретні механізми цієї трансформації. У статті доводиться, що ці механізми приводять до формування нової антропологічної фігури – «студента-споживача», чия суб'єктність захоплюється та перевизначається потужними «апаратами» неоліберальної влади. окрему увагу автори приділяють деконструкції гегемоністського дискурсу освітніх реформ, який оперує категоріями «ефективності», «конкурентоспроможності» та «якості». Йому автори протиставляють стратегію «слабкої думки» (pensiero debole) Дж. Ваттімо. У висновку автори стверджують, що спроба підпорядкувати освіту логіці сервісного сервітуту є онтологічно неможливою й веде до антропологічної катастрофи. Неможливість ця ґрунтується на чотирьох виділених авторами фундаментальних засадах. Стаття є закликом до відродження онтологічної місії освіти як практики свободи, відкритості та спільного буття, спрямованої на виробництво людського в його екзистенційній повноті.

**Ключові слова:** освіта, трансформація, продукція, людське, сервіс, суб'єкт, студент, споживач.

**Внесок авторів:** всі автори зробили рівний внесок у цю роботу

**Конфлікт інтересів:** автори повідомляють про відсутність конфлікту інтересів

Стаття надійшла до редакції 10.08.2025

Переглянуто 22.10.2025

Стаття рекомендована до друку 27.10.2025

Опубліковано 24.11.2025

**Як цитувати / In cites:** Golikov, S., & Golikov, A. (2025). EDUCATION AS HUMAN PRODUCTION: TOWARDS THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF SERVICE SERVITUDE. *The Journal of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Series Philosophy. Philosophical Peripeteias*, (73), 70-81. <https://doi.org/10.26565/2226-0994-2025-73-6>