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EDUCATION AS A COMMODITY? (A SKETCH OF SOCIOLOGICAL EXPERTISE)

The article reveals the problematic aspects of the transformation processes of education into a commodity. Education is understood as a social practice and as a social institution. Carrying out a systematic analysis of these processes, the author demonstrates both systemic social, societal threats and (often underestimated) “pitfalls” generated by these processes, as well as possible limitations and even limits of their actualization and deployment. This analysis and demonstration is carried out in the technique of theoretical sociological expertise. The problem of sociology’s partial disregard for the commodification of education and the probable prospects and problems arising from this are analyzed. It is emphasized that the uncritical perception of the processes of commodification of education by sociology, especially on the periphery of global neoliberal capitalism, is in itself a threat to education, in particular in the form of a change in the very nature of education as a phenomenon, its evolution from a phenomenon, first of all, a sociocultural phenomenon into a phenomenon primarily economic. Various arguments are given and analyzed in relation to the processes of commodification of education, each of which is named in the article by the name of a sociologist whose analysis is closest to the argument put forward. “Five big” arguments and “seven small” ones are formulated. In their presentation the “dark sides” of the processes of commodification and neoliberalization of education are analyzed in detail. Attention is focused on the analysis of how education is involved in interaction with other social institutions and phenomena, as well as on what effects and post-effects can be generated as a result of education commodification processes. It is emphasized that in this context, the most important plot is the connection between education as a phenomenon and freedom as a social construct – at the micro level, as well as with the social order – at the macro level. A number of conclusions are formulated about such a property of education as autonomy, about its socio-cultural characteristics and about the threats of the market.

Keywords: education, commodity, commodification, neoliberalism, consumption, education, market, Niklas Luhmann, Pierre Bourdieu, David Harvey, Terry Eagleton, Bill Readings.

*...I will show you an infinite and indivisible thing:
a point moving everywhere at infinite speed.*

B. Pascal «Thoughts».

Setting the problem and analysis of recent researches and publications.

In the last half of XX century (since the end of the 1970s), sociologists, philosophers, culturologists, educators around the world peered with alarm at the processes of the market’s attack on social, cultural, personal, and political topoi. The globalization of the market and the globalization of capitalism have given rise to the phenomenon of

neoliberal late capitalism, and with it, so intensively intervening in all spheres of the functioning of society, – neoliberal education, neoliberal culture of life, neoliberal worldview in general.

This anxiety has been manifesting itself in different ways for more than a decade, in many respects intuitively “grasping” on a variety of reasons for manifestations. So, Terry Eagleton [1] demonstrates above all

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dissatisfaction with managerial practices in neo-liberalized education. Bill Readings [2] comprehends the internal evolutions of the modern university, its being in the role of a “national university”, the movement “within the boundaries of reason”, and even the transition to a “post-historical university”. Carol Wild [3] ultimately comes to the analysis of the activity of the teacher in the neoliberal space of education as an artist who “sells” his ability to aestheticize the educational process in the “neoliberal audience”. Mitja Sardo [4] addresses such an obvious aspect as neoliberal discourse and language in education, with particular attention to the “rhetoric of equality, justice and welfare”. Daniel Cairo and Victoria Cabal [5] write about the “corporatization” of student problems and affairs and about the transformation of the functionality of the education system towards servicization and, perhaps, even servilization. Of course, it is impossible to discuss these problems without gender dimension of academic activity, as, for example, with Briony Lipton [6] or Y. Taylor and K. Lahad [7]. The “cult of speed” in the era of neoliberal mobility [8] and the increase of conflictness in the education system [9], the chronotope of neoliberal education [10], educational advertising and affective government [11], labor mapping in a neoliberal university [12] – all this became to some extent the object of study in the analysis of the processes of education neoliberalization.

It should be noted that some consensus has more or less settled in Western discourse, expressed in the perhaps partly alarmist, but accurate title of the work of L. Donskis, I. Sabelis, F. Kamsteeg and H. Wels “Academy in Crisis” [13]. A clarification to this diagnosis, offered by Lawrence Busch [14], is still relatively optimistic: after all, if the neoliberal education system is described by the words “knowledge for sale”, then at least the object of negotiation remains essential.

However, such a variety of research on neoliberal tendencies in the modern education system by Western scholars can be nothing to compare and oppose by Ukrainian sociology. For a decade and a half, the experience of open neoliberalization and commodification of education¹ has not yet received any

acceptable and, most importantly, critical reflection. The main lines of the Ukrainian sociology of education have focused on an apologetic analysis of the current educational reality (entirely in the spirit of M. Weber and E. Durkheim), without noticeable and deep criticism and, accordingly, without a detailed analysis of the threats and dangers that grow out of loyalist and servile perceived political and managerial decisions. In this sense, a somewhat paradoxical situation is emerging: in the countries of the “core” of neoliberal capitalism, criticism of a system that is actually functional and in some ways even beneficial for the education systems of these countries is possible, while in the countries of the periphery it is much less common, and certainly turns out to be pushed to the margins of social thought. Although it is peripheral social thought, in theory, that is interested in questioning and criticizing these processes.

This contrast has aggravated over the past few years, especially in connection with new challenges that have risen to their full potential for the Ukrainian education system with the increasing use of distance learning techniques, including those with COVID restrictions, which we already partly wrote about in [15]. And the wartime situation on the territory of Ukraine seriously raised questions for Ukrainian universities about what their essence is, and what are the goals and meanings of their work, and about who and how they see their own employees and students.

In this situation, the politically and administratively enforced language and discourse of neoliberalism, unproblematically and loyally perceived in the understanding of the education system (which was written by Mitja Sardo [4]) can no longer remain so. The modern system of Ukrainian education needs sociological, philosophical, anthropological, pedagogical, psychological, etc. expertise from the academic community, researchers, teachers, even despite the obvious interest and difficulties with objectification. For, as P. Bourdieu rhetorically asked, how can one speak about university without sacrificing university doxa – that which universities take for granted and therefore apply to the alma mater mental categories produced by themselves? [16]. In this sense simultaneously with the analysis of the processes of the

¹ And before that, these same processes in a mild, latent form.

formation of neoliberalism in Ukrainian education, it would be functional and epistemologically appropriate to analyze also the processes of formation of the discursive infrastructure of neoliberalism in Ukrainian education, because without analyzing it, to fully reveal all the threats and problems generated by neoliberalism in educational institutions. practice is unlikely.

However, this task is not (com) mensurate with the scale of the article, so we will limit ourselves to such *a goal* as the implementation of a theoretical and sociological examination of the threats and potentials for transforming education into a commodity. This expertise is possible only on the basis of a systematic analysis of education as a social phenomenon, institution, practice in its correlation with social integrity and processuality, with its functionality and structure.

Neoliberalism of Expertise and the Expertise of Neoliberalism

The processes of transformation of education into a commodity are multidimensional and diverse. As we noted above, it is possible to single out at least such dimensions as:

- commodification of education as a social practice;
- neoliberalization of education as a social institution;
- the transformation of education as a social phenomenon into a commodity phenomenon.

Each of these aspects is worthy of a separate analysis, and the expertise of each of these aspects is also worthy of a separate reflection. The fact is that:

a) the expertise of commodification is inevitably included in the process of commodification of the expertise itself as a social practice generated, produced and reproduced according to the rules and laws of the commodified practice of education;

b) the expertise of neoliberalization will necessarily be instituted and established in a neoliberal way, with the approval of that central rule of neoliberalism, which D. Harvey writes about [17];

c) the expertise of the transformation of education into a commodity phenomenon (and not only into a commodified practice, which

is certainly a simpler case) will be influenced by the transformation of expertise into a commodity.

This gives rise to a number of systemic social, societal threats and (often underestimated) “pitfalls” in the implementation of expertise, i.e. balanced analysis, social and scientific “arbitrage” in the implementation of these processes. Here, sociologists² find themselves in the trap of “false objectivity”, when any critical understanding of these processes is stopped and even blocked by the “argument from reality” and “from the inevitability of this reality”.

But sociology, originating in the 19th century from the rhizome of moral philosophy, began, we recall, with Comte’s “to know in order to foresee, to foresee in order to be able” [18]. In this sense, the servile, loyalist self-withdrawal from the discussion of these acute problems and processes, which it has demonstrated over the past decade and a half in Ukraine (despite the fact that, we note, the sociology of education is one of the most prolific and numerous branches in Ukrainian sociology), in itself is revealing and menacing.

That is why the proposed sociological expertise is supposed to be in the technique of theoretical sociological expertise. The fact is that the elimination of a number of limitations and problems of the expertise of the commodification of education on the path of empiricization or instrumentalization of this issue is an epistemological dead end. After all, the uncritical perception by sociology of the processes of commodification of education, especially on the periphery of global neoliberal capitalism, is a multidimensional phenomenon. It manifests itself, among other things, in the construction of empirical tools, in the formulation of research tasks, in the setting of the topic itself. Here, getting rid of the path dependency of the two last decades is a separate task for the sociologist. That is why, from our point of view, an important chance for such a release is a theoretical discussion with representatives of the sociological classics.

Another framework condition for the sociological expertise of the commodification

² As well as administrators, workers, functionaries from education.

and neoliberalization of education is the fact that these processes do not just modulate certain characteristics of education: they change the very nature of education as a phenomenon. Education, which arose and developed as a socio-cultural phenomenon (first of all, of course), which did not exclude political, economic, socio-structural elements and components (to take the classic quadrotomy of T. Parsons), is now undergoing significant shifts and influences. Content analysis could show how sociocultural markers³ were gradually replaced and receded before economic markers⁴. This transformation is not harmless and doubtless from the point of view of its consequences and potencies, as well as unobviously spontaneous from the point of view of its sources. So, for example, P. Bourdieu, on a similar occasion, points out in plain text that “it is impossible to get rid of the suspicion that non-guaranteedness is not at all a product of economic inevitability, identified with the often mentioned “globalization”, but rather is a product of political will” [19].

However, without delving into discussions about the genesis of neoliberalization and (as a consequence) commodification in general and in the field of education in particular, it should be noted that in any case such a fundamental shift in the very architectonics of society, such a tectonic cataclysm in the social constitution significantly and essentially deforms and reforms the communicative, practical and discursive system of relations between education and other social institutions and phenomena.

In particular, as we will show below (see N. Luhmann’s argument), the drift from the “system-environment” mode to the “subsystem-system” mode radically modifies not only practices and discourses, not only roles and statuses, but also the very nature of human interaction in the education system. After all, the client-service relationship is categorically different from the relationship of a minister and a parishioner or a

relationship between a teacher and a student (of course, if the student is not reduced to a client).

Or, as another example, the hierarchy of communication and management between education and politics is noticeably modified in the neo-liberalized space: politics⁵ turns out to be able to “hack” educational autonomy (see P. Bourdieu’s argument), and not with the use of political and ideological mechanisms and tools⁶, but with the use of economic and marketing mechanisms and tools, which in a neo-liberalized space dooms education as a “junior” partner for systemic damage.

Such cataclysms give rise to multiple effects and even post-effects (aftershocks), many of which are far from being self-evident, and equally not obvious even post factum as aftershocks of precisely the commodification of education. For example, it is not so easy to perceive as one of such near aftershocks the fundamental science’s gradual shrinking in favor of applied science, and the latter – in favor of specific technologies and technical results. But it is even more difficult to assess as distant aftershocks, respectively, the rejection of the monographic culture of the implementation of science in favor of the opportunistic-article culture; outsourcing of planning the functioning and implementation of the development of science towards authorities that have nothing to do with the history and essence of science; mediatization and entertainmentization of education as a process; fragmentation and particularization of education as a result. It is tempting to attribute some of these consequences to postmodern(ism), McDonaldization (according to G. Ritzer) and rationalization (according to M. Weber) as universal processes, the formation of the “Internet galaxy” (according to M. Castells). And it is much more important and systematically more meaningful to see in them a single logic of commodification, including the logic of its post-effects, a logic that will influence the trajectory of the development of education for years to come even if education succeeds in protecting and defending its essence, its autonomy, its self-determination.

3 “Mission of the university”, “education of a person”, “preservation of heritage”, “development of science”, “increase of knowledge” etc.

4 “Provision of educational services”, “building human capital”, “optimization of skills”, “quality services”, “marketing competencies” and so on.

5 Somewhat earlier marketized up to the constitution of the phenomenon of political marketing as a key one in political practice in the modern world.

6 Which would just increase the chances of education being resistant.

Education as a commodity without a question: five big arguments

Analyzing the (including epistemo-) logic of neo-liberalization and commodification of education, it is necessary (but not sufficient and not exhaustive, of course) to turn to a number of arguments about the threats and restrictions generated by these processes.

And the first of them by right of honor of protest against the neoliberal world is still thirty years old and by right of depth we will give to Pierre Bourdieu. The great Frenchman could put forward a whole argumentarium about these processes, but we will turn to the most sociologically significant – *Pierre Bourdieu argument about autonomy*. Recall that the classic defined the autonomy of the field of symbolic production “by its ability to produce and impose the norms of its production and the criteria for evaluating its own production, that is, the ability to translate and reinterpret all external definitions in accordance with its principles” [20]. In other words, considering education as a field of symbolic production, we must necessarily turn to its products, without which education turns into a market *for the sale or consumption of someone else’s* symbolic products. We can see the sociological operationalization of this rather theoretical and abstract definition further in the words “the more the field is able to function as a closed field of competition for cultural legitimacy, that is, for purely cultural recognition and for a purely cultural opportunity to ensure it, the more the principles by which internal divisions appear as irreducible to any external principles of division, such as factors of economic, social or political differentiation” [Ibid.]. However, this understanding of autonomy, which Pierre Bourdieu derives from a detailed analysis of the genesis and nature of the symbolic production field autonomy, conflicts with the neoliberal logic of submissiveness to the market in determining the cultural legitimacy of education products, and also destroys the characteristics of “pure cultural recognition” and “pure cultural opportunity, provided for it”. Thus, the absolute demands of employers or students⁷ not only erode the

7 Figures outside the field relatively to the education system as a place of production of symbolic products, figures from the area of consumption of these symbolic products.

autonomy of the field of production, but also destroy the very essences as fields of cultural production, as *well* as and symbolic products. This is, in fact, a rigorous conceptual proof of the above thesis, formulated by us within the framework of the systemic paradigm, regarding the evolution of education from a predominantly sociocultural phenomenon to a predominantly economic one. Thus, the question of autonomy for the field of education in case of its conflict with the neoliberal intervention of the market and the logic of commodification turns out to be a question of the very essence, the very identity of education.

Continuing to operate in the space of system paradigmatics, let’s take a look at the most important *Niklas Luhmann’s argument about selection*. Within the framework of N. Luhmann’s understanding of systems [21], the system is in non-equilibrium relations with the external environment. The external environment is always “stronger” due to its greater complexity compared to the system, however, the system selects interaction with the external environment, due to which the process of absorption and development of the system by the external environment is prevented due to the superiority of the latter. Even this theoretically formulated argument is quite transparent for the education system, which, as a result of many centuries of differentiation [22] in relation to social systems in general and to the economy in particular, has acquired the most important ability to select communication in interactions with other communication systems. Actually, it is this selection that does not allow transferring the interaction of education with the external environment into the mode of direct and directive control from the outside. Whereas (and we notice this quite clearly!) the destruction of the barriers erected by this selection leads to the loss of subjectivity by the education system in general and its individual elements (universities, schools, teachers, etc.). Thus, the denial of *educational influence* to the education system, as well as the withdrawal of intra-system filters from the education system⁸ are important parts of this process of destroying the subjectivity of the education system. And

8 With the transfer of the assessment authority outside in relation to the education system.

the neoliberal logic of commodification here is another stroke in this overall picture – far from being the most optimistic for education as integrity, systemicity, and subjectivity.

In addition to the fact that, as we pointed out above, the centuries-old labor of producing a specific communicative system of education is destroyed by neo-liberal commodifying efforts, there is a somewhat more particular, but very significant *Norbert Elias' argument about differentiation* as a product of civilization. N. Elias [23] describes the process of civilization (that is, in fact, the process of development of human societies) as a process of developing more and more differentiated figurations, between which an increasing number of more and more sophisticated and thin “partitions”, barriers, and boundaries grow. Differentiation (albeit understood not in Luhmannian way) in the N. Elias' optics turns out to be the most important indicator of the social development and a phenomenon associated with the complexity of the system. It is clear that such differentiation should not be an end in itself, since excessive fragmentation of sociality by unnecessary boundaries turns out to be dysfunctional and even destructive. However, the historically achieved differentiation and, accordingly, the boundaries, as N. Elias shows on the example of decency, bodily habits, ways of relating between men and women, vocabulary, etc., are fixed, reproduced, transformed, complicated, deepened, in the end are internalized⁹, but never discarded. Such a rejection turns out to be a retreat from the path of development, involution, degradation, destruction of the gigantic labor of previous centuries and generations. In this sense, dedifferentiation, which in essence is the commodification of education, is an involutory process, not an evolutionary one. The rejection of already created, institutionalized, founded boundaries, which, we recall, were once absent¹⁰, not only should not be described as progress and improvement in education, but should be subjected to anxious reflection as a dangerous signal from the point of view of the archaization of an integral social system.

⁹ Turning an external instance of control into an internal one.

¹⁰ For example, in the days of guild education and apprenticeship there was no such boundary.

After all, the integral system of society retains its integrity, even when demarcated by the rewards of justice, and here one cannot fail to quote *the argument of Laurent Thevenot and Luc Boltanski about the justification practices*. After all, the “cities of justice”, which exist primarily as an order of judgments about justice, as “modes of involvement”, as ways of constructing conventions [24] not only do not imply the reduction of the “cities” identified by the authors to a single Weber-unified social, but also takes into account the “lived-in” by people in different “engagement regimes”, the connection of these regimes with their own “everyday arguments”. L. Thevenot and L. Boltanski most directly refer to the well-known economic and sociological thought that selfish, private, particular interest is only a separate case of people's motivation, which means that the market does not exist alone, but adjoins (and on an equal footing) with other ways and types of institutional regulation of interaction. Of course, it is worth considering the interventionism and “aggressiveness” of the market in relation to other forms of human unity: two centuries ago, the young K. Marx wrote that money, like *GemeinWesen*, is “distinguished” by a special “intolerance” to other forms of *GemeinWesen* [25]. However, this does not mean that it is necessary to “play along” with such a peculiarity of the market. L. Boltanski and L. Thevenot describe the plurality of social worlds as a result of the combining actions of social agents that intertwine different regulatory principles of their own and others' behavior along with explanatory rhetoric about it. Why, in the course of analyzing the processes of commodification of education, this appropriate suspicion of the non-absoluteness and relativity of the market remains outside the scope of sociological attention is a mystery to us. As well as why the “order of greatness” of education¹¹ should be de facto destroyed in favor of the “order of greatness” of the market – a much poorer and more monotonous “city of justice” than the education¹², we note in brackets.

Finally, the fifth “big argument” about the processes of neoliberalization and

¹¹ Combined from several “cities of justice”.

¹² Which is much more diverse and synthetic as city of justice.

commodification of education is offered to us by two great theorists of the 19th and 20th centuries. This is *Jean Baudrillard's and Karl Marx's argument about consumption* as well as about production, reality and simulation. Anthropologically understanding a person as a subject of productive activity¹³ and philosophically distinguishing, as suggested J. Baudrillard [26], reality and simulation, in the matrix of intersections of these binary features, we get education as an activity of the symbolic and material (especially in relation to individual specializations) production, and not symbolic (primarily) consumption. Consumption is a dissubjective process, as well as a dissipative process in relation to the systemic integrity of society, and in this sense it opposes the very logic of education. Education cannot remain education¹⁴ without referring to the non-consumer, production efforts of all participants in the education process. Whereas service-client relations imply, *at a minimum, the possibility*¹⁵ of appealing to a passive, dissubjective (not objective, namely dissubjective, consumering) way of relating to education and his materials. In addition, education cannot afford the simulation of mutual subjectivity on which the phenomenon of “consumer society” [27] is based, even at a purely discursive-symbolic level. Because this illusion, being functional for the market with its specific organization of relations, turns out to be dysfunctional and dissipative for the very logic of education with its focus on duration, on joint work, on non-economic methods of motivation for work, on value-based foundation, on socio-cultural tools of involvement, etc.

These five large, universal arguments are somehow supported, unfolded and revealed by whole trees of more particular arguments, among which we would like to single out the “seven small arguments” due to their relative independence (or at least non-obvious connections) from the “big arguments”, and also because of their independent significance each separately.

13 That is, the activity of transformation, but not consumption of the real world.

14 That is, the production of a certain *image* as something different from the substratum that was “at the entrance” to the “social machine” of education.

15 And therefore, in sufficiently large arrays it will be implemented with a probability approaching to 100%.

Education is not a commodity: seven small arguments

Anthropologically perhaps the most important of them is *the argument of Arnold Gehlen and Helmut Plessner about the openness and eccentricity* of man [28]. This fundamental anthropological presumption is not refuted by the theory and practice of educational services and educational goods, but it is overthrown. A product or service does not realize the openness and eccentricity of a person, however, it “closes” the “valency” formed by this openness, “occupies” it, destroys it for possible future self-unfolding. Education, as not only the communication of specific “professional competencies” to a person, but also *the education, formation* of a person, purely functionally, from the point of view of the development of social systems, is called upon precisely to increase the number of such “valences”, to further self-discovery of a person and even to increase his/-er *eccentricity*. In the case of a commodified formation, the functionality of reflection (impossible without *eccentricity*), (self) criticism and introspection just disappears.

This is due to the fact that social systems (or, as the classic would say, “the social form of the movement of matter” [25]) put forward other patterns than the previous “forms of movement” of matter. Here Lester Frank Ward’s sociologically key *argument about telosis as anti-genesis is actualized* [29]. This argument can be read in modern terms: thus, from an evolutionary point of view, it may be a losing strategy in the short term to invest in long-term efforts (or “long will efforts”), at least on an individual level for the one who makes this investment. However, it is precisely this production of *shared goods* that makes it possible to produce the prerequisites for communication systems, including social systems: it is commercially unprofitable, for example, to spend time and resources on teaching literature, history or language, but it is functionally necessary for the production of communication systems. This quite obviously resonates, among other things, with non-evolution and the introduction of some goals of education from the point of view of “survival of the strongest units” and “natural selection”. And although L.F. Ward reduced this fact to an idealistically understood telosis (opposed to genesis), the content of the argument is more important to us, and it

is transparent: argumentation by Darwinian and market mechanisms has its own rigid limits.

One of the manifestations of the above “social form of the movement of matter” is the production by people in their joint activity of artifacts and phenomena that cannot be reduced to the actions, thoughts or feelings of any of them or even all of them together. Here, culturologically, *Rudolf Otto’s argument about the numinous* is the strongest. R. Otto wrote that the essence of the sacred lies in the numinous [30], which is internalized in the form of a *sense of piety*. It is clear that the latter can be not only religious piety, but a form of socially specific behavior. The core of any numinous is *the presence of mystery* in it, and, accordingly, the experience of any priesthood is the experience of the “presence of the mystery” with all the attributes: mystical horror, admiration, feeling of greatness, divine energy, mysterium. In Kantian terms, the numinous is *a completely different thing that is in no way comparable with the logic of the market, the behavior of merchants*¹⁶. The metaphor of the “temple of science” intuitively captures precisely this idea of the numinous in educational and scientific activities. And it hardly needs proof that the supermarket of educational services, even based on its own semantics and rhetoric, has not the slightest chance of building a *numinous*.

This is partly confirmed and reinforced by *Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault’s inverted argument about biopolitics, discipline and disciplinarity*. It is inverted because G. Agamben and M. Foucault warned the reader about the dangers and threats of the society of control in any of its manifestations, and, in particular, the disciplinary techniques generated by it [31]. Understanding the social necessity of the Foucauldian-criticized phenomena, let us present this argument in an inverted form: only disciplinary techniques as techniques for using and influencing the body are able to achieve educational goals in full – to the extent that it is demanded not so much by the market as by society. However, the logic of consumption itself opposes such a possibility of disciplinization, in contrast to the logic of *the numinous*, for example. As

well as to the logic of *production*, which allows for the possibility of self-restraint for one purpose or another. Disciplining a student and disciplining the material is possible only within the framework of a certain power strategy, and this power strategy is purely structurally outside the marketized strategy of *temptation* [32]. Education through temptation is impossible: only disfigurement, deprivation of *an image* is possible.

This subtlety was noticed and developed by perhaps the most notable philosopher of the early 21st century, who offered us an epistemological argument – *Peter Sloterdijk’s argument about cynical reason*. Without sharing his pathos of anti-materialism and philosophical positions, we point out that P. Sloterdijk very accurately grasps the fact that the reigning cynical mind marks the decline of critical theory, namely the ability to question [33]. That very “ubiquitous and all-penetrating diffuse cynicism”, turning into a “mass type of cynic”, into this “anti-social type integrated into society”, denies the very possibility of education as a value (and not as a tool), as an end (and not as a means), as meaning (and not as a commodity). However, in the field of production of such a consumerist education is obviously in a losing position compared to the press, the entertainment industry, the media, and the Internet. In this sense, education risks not only losing its identity, but also not getting a bowl of lentil stew for this identificational suicide.

After all, such a betrayal of one’s past and even future¹⁷ will bring down the knots and networks that have been accumulating for so long. *Randall Collins’ historical argument about interactive rituals and genius-producing nests* is particularly effective here [34]. The commodification of education does not only make it meaningless: it destroys the very prerequisites for *interactive rituals* of the joint production of science and knowledge. Moreover, the market makes impossible the production of scientific schools and their competition according to the autonomous rules of the field of science itself. Just as the market has “shut down” amateur sports, turning them into a narrow production stage of a limited production for highly professional

16 In the temple of the father, or in the temple of science – it does not matter.

17 Especially in the person of those, albeit a few who, even in such conditions, are ready to resist the “cynical mind”.

producers¹⁸, the “academic market” will turn the efforts of individual science and education enthusiasts into ineffective, will establish a neoliberal “vacuum cleaner” of scientific capital, quickly hierarchizing the entire world system of science while maintaining the current conditions of the global academic market, of course.

Gilles Deleuze offers us the most powerful philosophical *argument*, speaking of *difference, event and repetition* [35]. Education as one of *the series of events* in the multiple ontology of society in the case of the commodified production of educational services and acts faces the risk of breaking the ontological connection between *difference* and *repetition*, as well as the risk of destroying the very *event* of education as an attribute of bodies and states of things. After all, the service can be torn away from the buyer or consumer of the service, which creates a *fold* in which you can hide from the formation *event*. After all, a specialist produced according to a “unique educational trajectory” in commodified education less and less *repeats* “colleagues of the same name” and “comparable” with him, despite all Lukachian quantifying logic of analyzing “competences” and “credits”, which deaden not only the *event* of education *itself*, but also its participants.

Conclusions. Our analysis demonstrates that the processes of neoliberalization and commodification of education are dangerous not only for education, but also for society itself. We intentionally ignored some of the possible arguments that are self-evident and understandable to any sociologist, for example, arguments of mile Durkheim, Max Weber, Robert Merton and many other classics of the sociology of science and the sociology of education. It was more important for us to carry out an examination not directly of the processes of commodification and neoliberalization of education, but of their systemic effects, structuralities, and proceduralities. After all, it is at this level of analysis that one can discover the most important plot not only in the implementation of education, but also in its study, namely the

connection of education as a phenomenon with freedom as a social construct. At the macro level, education dialectically (re)produces human freedom, producing opportunities and measurements for an individual, which is inevitably associated with coercion, with the development of baggage already created by mankind, with discipline and disciplining, with classifications (according to P. Bourdieu) and systems.

Realized at the micro level, all this turns out to be paradoxically and dialectically reflected at the macro level in the form of a social order, which is unthinkable for the products of market interaction. The metaphor of the “elements of the market” exists for a reason: market interaction produces not the social order, but the economic one, and the social, cultural and political post-effects generated by the economic order remain beyond the horizon of the market functioning. Whereas the strategic nature and duration of the development of social systems, which presupposes not only their antigenesis (in the Wardian sense), but their counterchaosity, inevitably seek precisely a differentiated, developed in a long civilizational competition, a specific code of a separate education system, autonomous in relation to the systems of the market and politics, numinous and anti-cynical, open like a man himself, yet disciplinary and disciplined like society itself.

An infinite, but indivisible point, moving at the speed of thought - this should be a metaphor for education, and not competent merchandising on the shelves of a university supermarket.

¹⁸ See, for instance, the typical situation with the constant reproduction of the same set of clubs and countries, at least starting from the top-8 of the Champions League in football or the Final Four in European basketball.

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ОСВІТА ЯК ТОВАР (НАРИС СОЦІОЛОГІЧНОЇ ЕКСПЕРТИЗИ)

У статті розкриваються проблемні сторони процесів трансформації освіти як соціальної практики і соціального інституту в товар. Здійснюючи системний аналіз зазначених процесів, автор демонструє як системно-соціальні, соціетальні загрози і (найчастіше недооцінені) «підводні камені», що породжуються цими процесами, так і можливі обмеження та навіть межі їхньої актуалізації та подальшого розгортання. Цей аналіз і демонстрація здійснюються в техніці теоретичної соціологічної експертизи. Аналізується проблема часткового ігнорування соціологією комодифікації освіти та ймовірні перспективи та ризики, що можуть бути спричинені цією ситуацією. Підкреслюється, що некритичність сприйняття соціологічною наукою процесів комодифікації освіти, особливо на периферії глобального неоліберального капіталізму, сама по собі є серйозною загрозою для освіти, що, зокрема, може виявлятися у кардинальних змінах самої природи освіти як феномену, її еволюції з феномену передусім соціокультурного на феномен передусім економічний. Наводяться й аналізуються численні аргументи на користь процесів комодифікації освіти, кожен з яких отримує у статті назву на ім'я того чи іншого соціолога, чия аналітика виявляється найближчою до певного аргументу, визначеного автором. Формуються «п'ять великих» аргументів та «сім малих», у викладенні яких детально аналізуються «темні боки» процесів комодифікації та неолібералізації освітньої системи. Акцентується увага на аналізі того, як інститут освіти «втягується» у взаємодію з іншими соціальними інститутами та феноменами, а також на тому, які ефекти та постоефекти можуть бути породжені в результаті процесів комодифікації освіти. Підкреслюється, що в цьому контексті найважливішим сюжетом виявляється зв'язок освіти як феномену зі свободою як соціальним конструктом на мікросоціальному рівні, а також її пов'язаність із соціальним порядком на макросоціальному рівні. Формулюється низка висновків щодо такої властивості освіти, як автономність, а також щодо її соціокультурних характеристик та можливих загроз на ринку освітніх послуг.

Ключові слова: освіта, товар, комодифікація, неолібералізм, споживання, виховання, ринок, Ніклас Луман, П'єр Бурдьє, Девід Гарві, Террі Іглтон, Білл Ридингс.

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