

## **Leonidas Donskis**

### **Liquid Evil, TINA, and Post-Academic University**

#### **Bound to Choose Between Two Educational Philosophies?**

Within European academic tradition, universities have always been associated not only with the increase of scientific knowledge and scholarly enterprise in general, but also with cultivation of the soul and virtue. University culture embraced all forms of life and tendencies of thought characteristic of a given historical epoch. For instance, universities sustained and supported aristocratic culture. Earning the degree of doctor of philosophy was nearly the same as becoming part of nobility. At the same time, universities were instrumental in the process of gradual democratization of social life – for nobody was able to be a scholar by birth. It was a matter of achievement, rather than ascription. Suffice it to recall that rector, in medieval universities, was elected a scholar whom his peers regarded as the most deserving and learned.

Therefore, one part of an academic's identity has always been linked to accommodation of tradition, whereas another part represented the idea of achieving and accomplishing something that comes from your conscious endeavour. The latter tendency obviously anticipates the modern world where the logic of identity lies in self-cultivation and self-discovery, instead of the once-and-for-all established identity. This is to say that European universities attempted to preserve what we would describe now as the canon, yet they were bound to question and change European legacy from time to time. The interplay of tradition and modernity, or the canon and its reinterpretation, has always been at the core of university life.

However, some pivotal modern ideas emerged not at the universities. Instead, they came from alternative sources and movements. At this point, it suffices to recall the Renaissance with its idea of *studia humanitatis*. The medieval model of scholarship and university education, with

its focus on in-depth knowledge, specialization, and separation of the faculties of the soul and competences, would never have allowed anything like *studia humanitatis*.

The idea that we can reconcile natural sciences to arts allowing the latter to become the core of education is an inescapable part of humanist education which was the outcome of *studia humanitatis*. The idea that an enlightened individual can cross the boundaries of disciplines encompassing poetry, philosophy, fine arts, and natural sciences, was the first step of what we now call cross- and inter-disciplinary scholarship. In its initial and original form, the idea of *studia humanitatis* dates back to Cicero who, as Alan Jacobs reminds us, “in his *Pro Archia*, refers to the *studia humanitatis ac litteratum*: humane and literary studies” (Jacobs, 2015, 66).

The idea of liberal/humanist education emerged in Renaissance Europe opposing scholastic/ conventional university model of education. Yet it was accepted later. Most importantly, Renaissance scholars, from Coluccio Salutati to other great Florentine humanists and Neo-Platonists, stressed the critical importance of humanist education and its relation to civic virtue and patriotism. The paradox is that one of the most important traits of modern education – civic virtue and leadership – emerged in a setting which was more of an anti-university model of learning. (On the other side, we could mention the Enlightenment with its salon culture and ideas of the republic of letters, toleration, and civil loyalty, which has little, if anything at all, to do with university culture of that time. Yet these things became crucial for European modernity, although they did not originate in the academic world.)

What was crucial for the Renaissance was the idea that the human world was a perfect testimony of nearly divine powers of human creativity and, therefore, was able to establish a symbolic partnership between God Himself and the human being (this idea belongs to Comte Giovanni Pico della Mirandola). This paved the way not only for the humanities as the realm of human self-fulfilment, but also for Giambattista Vico’s assumption that human sciences were more important than natural sciences, since only the almighty God was able to know the world that he created. Once philology in the sense of Vico was the human world par excellence, it required the further step towards recognition of the autonomy of the human world.

Renaissance scholarship would have been unthinkable without the union of literature and philosophy, form and content, beautiful language and wisdom, strict logic and graceful

metaphor, theorizing and joke, *philosophia perennis* and comedy. The concept of the carnival of the language can be applied to Thomas More's *Utopia*, Erasmus's *Encomium Moriae* (Praise of Folly), and to the whole linguistic and poetic universe of Renaissance scholars.

Putting aside the stylistic and literary devices characteristic of Renaissance *Studia humanitatis* and philosophical writings, we have to remember that non-affiliated, or independent, scholarship was also the phenomenon of the Renaissance. The type of an independent and traveling philosopher who is not affiliated to any university, yet remains quite influential – the type that embraces René Descartes, Benedict Spinoza, Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, John Locke, and Voltaire, to mention just a few, – is too obvious to need emphasis. The same applies to the circle and the society – new organizations that became quite prominent outside the academic world.

Although the educational and political ideas of the Renaissance became part of European academic tradition, the aforementioned medieval model was still there. The tensions between medieval/specialized and Renaissance/liberal arts education are still quite strong, so we would deceive ourselves by asserting that they are just a trace of the past. It is difficult to say which of these models prevails now – maybe we could more or less safely state that a sort of fragile equilibrium has been reached. Yet the propensity to think that a scholar has no real existence beyond their college or university is most telling and betrays the conviction that we have no real existence beyond our institutions, which is the hundred percent medieval idea.

To sum it up, civil society and civic virtue are difficult to sustain and cultivate without liberal arts education. Historically speaking, civil-mindedness and the spirit of liberality greatly benefited from the tensions between universities and their rivals, such as humanist circles, societies, philosophical salons, and coffee-houses. Therefore, the strength and the flexibility of universities lay in their ability to internalize what they had long denied and what once was in strong opposition to them.

The Renaissance was the epoch of utopias. Yet utopia, in the way that humanity knew it for centuries, is dead now. This signifies the arrival of what Zygmunt Bauman calls liquid modernity as opposed to solid modernity. Utopia got privatized becoming merely a dream of the middle classes. Privatization of utopia means the new condition under which no society is

deemed to be good and just: only individual life stories can be success stories. As such, they tend to become our new utopian dreams in a utopia-free, or dystopia-ridden, world.

We live in a world without alternatives. TINA, or the acronym for There Is No Alternative (first forged by Margaret Thatcher, and then wittily redefined and reinterpreted by Zygmunt Bauman), allows a point of departure when dealing with this uniquely new and unprecedented phenomenon – namely, one’s ultimate belief in social determinism and market-based fatalism, the major difference before earlier decades and our time being the fact that whereas Sigmund Freud’s dictum informed us that biology is destiny, our dictum could be that the economy is destiny.

Hence, the transformation of evil from solid, equipped with black-and-white social optic and Manichean divides, into liquid evil with its Don Juan-like powers of seduction, lies, manipulations, and abandonment. Most importantly, liquid modernity and liquid evil would be unthinkable without the world without alternatives.

A total abolition of privacy leading to manipulation with human secrets and abuses of their intimacy, which appears as a nightmarish vision of the future in such dystopias as Yevgeny Zamyatin’s *we* and George Orwell’s *1984*, was foreseen, anticipated, and wittily depicted in early modern European literature.

Suffice it to recall Luis Vélez de Guevara’s *El Diablo cojuelo* (*The Devil on the Crutches*, or *The Limping Devil*), a seventeenth-century text where the devil has the power to reveal the insides of the houses, or a variation of this theme in Alain-René Le Sage’s novel under that same title in French, *Le diable boiteux*. The astonishing fact remains, though, that what early modern writers took as a devilish force aimed to deprive human beings of their privacy and secrets have now become inseparable from the reality shows and other actions of wilful and joyful self-exposure in our self-revealing age.

Two of the manifestations of the new evil: insensitivity to human suffering, and the desire to colonize privacy by taking away a person’s secret, the something that should never be talked about and made public. The global use of others’ biographies, intimacies, lives and experiences is a symptom of insensitivity and meaninglessness.

## **Liquid Evil and Living with TINA**

As mentioned, we live in a world without alternatives. It's a world that propounds a single reality and a world that labels as lunatics – or eccentrics in the best case – all those who believe that everything has an alternative, including even the very best models of governance and the most profound ideas (not to mention business and engineering projects). The world has probably never been so inundated with fatalistic and deterministic beliefs as it is today; alongside serious analyses, as if from a horn of plenty, flow prophecies and projections of looming crises, dangers, downward spirals, and the end of the world. In this widespread atmosphere of fear and fatalism, the conviction arises that there are no alternatives to contemporary political logic and to the tyranny of economy or to attitudes toward science and technology and the relationship between nature and humanity.

Not by any stretch is optimism the foolish exultation that we are here in this place and that our surroundings are warm, fuzzy, and comfortable; rather, it is the belief that evil is transitory and does not vanquish humaneness (or only briefly when it does). Furthermore, optimism means a belief that hope and alternatives do indeed always exist. The conviction that a pessimist is an all-round loftier and nobler being than an optimist is not simply a relic of the modern, Romantic sensibility and worldview – it is something greater.

This profound juncture goes all the way back to the monumental conflict between Christianity and Manichaeism – after Augustine (who, by the way, defeated his inner Manichaean and became one of the Fathers of the Catholic Church). Christians held evil to be a state of errant or insufficient goodness that could be overcome, while Manichaeans held good and evil to be parallel but irreconcilable realities. Optimism is, above all, a Christian construction – it's based on the faith that good can overcome evil and that unexplored possibilities and alternatives can always be found. But we live in an age of pessimism. The twentieth century was excellent proof evil was alive and well, and this has reinforced the positions of modern Manichaeans. They saw a world that could be temporarily abandoned by God but not by Satan.

One question, though, remains unanswered: How meaningful is Manichaeism today? Disbelief that God is all-powerful, and that He is Love, is something that might have been

greatly reinforced in the wake of the many atrocities of the twentieth century. Mikhail Bulgakov's enduring work, *The Master and Margarita*, is imbued with a Manichaean spirit – the novel makes numerous mentions of the concepts of “Light” and “Dark” developed by the Persian prophet and eponymous architect of this belief system. The interpretation of evil in this great twentieth century East European novel is one that asserts the self-sufficiency of evil. This interpretation of Christianity is close to that of Ernest Renan in his *Life of Jesus*, a study with which Bulgakov was quite familiar.

Even Czesław Miłosz considered himself something of a closet Manichean. After his encounters with the incomprehensible evils of the twentieth century – which arose in world no less rational and humanist than our own that had created world-leading cultures (such as in Russia and Germany) – Miłosz came to see evil as an independent and self-sufficient reality or, at least, as a dimension that is not in any tangible sense affected by progress or modern forms of sensibility.

He noted that French philosopher Simone Weil was also a closet Manichaean; she conferred a millenarian meaning on the phrase “Thy Kingdom Come” in The Lord's Prayer. There's a good reason why Miłosz taught a course on Manichaeism at the University of California, Berkeley. By his own admission, in his book *Miłosz's ABC's*, he situated the opening act twentieth century evil in the story of Bulgaria's Bogomils and the martyrdom of the Cathars in Verona and other Italian cities. All of the great East Europeans were Manichaeans to some degree – from Russia's Bulgakov through to Gorge Orwell (who was an East European by choice).

Meanwhile, we live in an era of fear, negativity, and bad news. There's no market for good news because no one is interested in it. (Although, a fun and adventure-filled apocalyptic story is something quite different.) It is this that gives rise to the wholesale sewing of panic and industry of fear – “breaking news” that relies on commentaries with large discrepancies and wherein the commentators often contradict themselves. Although some of these are occasionally insightful and well-reasoned, most are hysterical and defeatist.

What does the concept of liquid evil signify? How can it be best understood in our times of mutually exclusive qualities and characteristics that a number of phenomena bear? I would

argue that liquid evil, contrary to what we could term solid evil, the latter being based on white-and-black social optic and the resilience of evil easily identifiable in our social and political reality, assumes the appearance of good and love.

More than that, it parades as seemingly neutral and impartial acceleration of life – the unprecedented speed of life and social change implying the loss of memory and moral amnesia; in addition, liquid evil walks in disguise as the absence and the impossibility of alternatives. A citizen becomes a consumer, and value neutrality hides the fact of disengagement.

Individual helplessness and forsakenness coupled with the state's denial and refusal of its responsibility for education and culture, goes along with the heavenly marriage of neoliberalism and state bureaucracy both of them insisting on the individual's responsibility not only for their life and choices in a free-choice-free world, but for the state of global affairs as well.

George Orwell clearly saw that the new forms of evil tend to walk in the guise of good and love. Thou shalt love Big Brother. To the contrary of the predecessors of Oceania's Party, Jacobins, Bolsheviks, and Nazis alike, no martyrdom is allowed. Your life will go unnoticed, and nobody will know anything about your existence. Or you will be swiftly and silently reformed to force you to assume and adopt the vocabulary that you had long denied passionately and consistently.

Evil is not obvious and self-evident anymore. Low intensity political oppression and human rights violation as well as low intensity military conflicts obfuscate and obliterate the dividing line between war and peace. War is peace, and peace is war. Neither good news nor bad news remain un-ambivalent and clear nowadays: even if there is no war or any other calamity going on, it becomes impossible to discuss it without scaremongering and fear industry. Good news is no news. Bad news is the news by definition.

Therefore, by liquidity of evil, I assume that we live in a deterministic, pessimistic, fatalistic, fear-and-panic-ridden society, which still tends to cherish its time-honoured, albeit out of date and misleading, liberal-democratic credentials. The absence of dreams, alternatives and utopias is exactly what I would take as a significant aspect of the liquidity of evil.

Two ideas of Ernst Bloch and Karl Mannheim proved prophetic: whereas Bloch regretted that modernity lost the warm and humane spirit of a utopian dream, Mannheim strongly felt that

utopias were effectively translated into political ideologies, thus stripping them of alternative visions and thus confining them to the principle of reality, instead of imagination. The liquidity of evil signifies the divorce of the principle of imagination and the principle of reality, the final say being conferred for the latter.

The seductive powers of evil are coupled here with disengagement. For centuries, as we know, the very symbol and embodiment of evil was the Devil, whether making his appearance as Mephistopheles in the legend of Faust ranging from medieval tales to Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and death of Doctor Faustus* and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*, or as Woland in Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. This was the old news, though. The old "good" Devil represented solid evil with its symbolic logic of the quest for human souls and active engagement in human and earthly matters. He simply pursued his goal trying to reverse and delegitimize the established social and moral order.

This is to say that solid evil was a sort of amorally committed and actively engaged evil with a solemn promise of social justice and equality at the end of the time of the world. Liquid evil, on the contrary, comes up with the rationale of seduction and disengagement. Whereas Prometheus and Satan, according to Vytautas Kavolis, an American sociologist of culture and civilization analyst of Lithuanian background, as we will see soon, were the two protagonists of subversion, uprising and revolution, the heroes of liquid evil attempt to strip humanity of its dreams, alternative projects and powers of dissent. In doing so, they act as protagonists of counterrevolution, obedience and submission.

The logic of solid evil was to win the soul and to conquer the world by imposing the new rules of the game; yet the logic of liquid evil is to seduce and retreat changing its appearances all the time. "Seduce and disengage" – this is the very motto of the Proteus-like hero both of liquid modernity and of liquid evil. I know what is to be done, yet I refuse to engage leaving my object or seduced victim to her or his own devices – that's the name of the game. From now onwards, one's sinking in the ocean will be called freedom.

In his analysis of the emergence of the symbols of the rebellion/subversion of the established order, Vytautas Kavolis traced the symbolic designs of evil understood as interpretive frameworks within which we seek the answers to the questions raised by our time

interpreting ourselves and the world around us. In his analysis of the emergence of the symbols of the rebellion/subversion of the established order, Kavolis traced the symbolic designs of evil understood as interpretive frameworks within which we seek the answers to the questions raised by our time interpreting ourselves and the world around us.

Prometheus and Satan are taken here as core mythological figures and symbolic designs to reveal the concepts of evil that dominated the moral imaginations of pre-Christian and Christian thinkers and writers. Whereas Prometheus manifests himself as a trickster hero whose challenge to Zeus rests not only on his natural enmity to Olympic gods but on his compassion for humanity as well, Satan appears in the Bible as the one who subverts the universal order established by God, and, therefore, bears full responsibility for all manifestations of evil that result from this subversion.

Kavolis's work in cultural psychology provides a subtle and penetrating analysis of the models of evil as paradigms of secular morality and of the models of rebellion as contrasting modes of cultural logic. In doing so, he offers his insights into the emergence of the myth of Prometheus and that of Satan. Prometheus emerges in Kavolis's theory of the rise of modernity as a metaphor of technological progress/technologically efficient civilization combined with a kind of sympathetic understanding of, and compassion for, the urges and sufferings of humankind. Satan is interpreted as a metaphor of the destruction of legitimate power and of the subversion of the predominant social and moral order.

In this manner, Kavolis developed some of his most provocative and perceptive hints as to how to analyse the symbolic logic of Marxism and all major social or political revolutions – aspects of which are at some points Promethean, and at others Satanic. Each modernity – for Kavolis spoke of numerous and multiple “modernities,” each of them as ancient as civilization itself – or civilization-shaping movement, if pushed to the limit, can betray its Promethean and/or Satanic beginnings (Kavolis 1977: 331–344, Kavolis 1984: 17–35, Kavolis 1985: 189–211, Kavolis 1993).

A valuable implication for literary theory and critique, this standpoint underlined Kavolis's insights into Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. With sound reason Kavolis noted that even the title of Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein, or the Modern*

*Prometheus*, was deeply misleading – the obviously Satanic character, Frankenstein, who challenged the Creator of the universe and of the human being, was misrepresented there as a sort of modern Prometheus.

Our freedom today becomes localized in the sphere of sheer consumption and self-renewal. Control, surveillance, dispositional asymmetry of power parading as freedom of choice, fear industry, and privacy exposure games make up a complex combination of the sociocultural condition that we metaphorically call here TINA and liquid evil.

Promise the entire humanity to allow and foster freedom, equality, justice, reason, pursuit of happiness, human rights, powers of individuality and association, social mobility, living without borders, and then disappear suddenly leaving individuals in their countless identity games mistaken for freedom, and also reminding them that it is up to them to solve the world's problems without relying much on institutions, fellowship, and engagement – this is the liquid evil's tried and true strategy.

This is why, I assume that the real symbol of liquid evil is a kind of Big Mr Anonymous (whom we will discuss more explicitly soon), or collective Don Juan. Don Juan, in Zygmunt Bauman's eyes, is modernity's real hero. Don Juan is the face of modernity whose power lies in constant and incessant change. At the same time, his is the power of self-concealment and retreat for the sake of an asymmetry of power. Solid modernity was about the conquest of territories and their utilization for the sake of the state of any other power structure. Liquid modernity is about a hide-and-seek power game, be it a military strike followed by retreat or any other destabilizing action.

Therefore, liquid evil, in terms of military campaigns, tends to disrupt economy and life in certain territories or societies by bringing there as much chaos, fear, uncertainty, unsafety, and insecurity as possible, instead of assuming responsibility and burden for remaking or transforming them. At this point, terrorism appears as a pure expression of liquid evil. Imperialism is about solid power games, yet terrorism is always about the liquidity of evil – even its sinister logic of speaking up in favour of society coupled with disdain for a concrete society that is sacrificed for individualized power games should not deceive us.

The seducer, who retreats by leaving the void, disenchantment, or death, is a hero of liquid evil. The existential Don Juan comes to establish the asymmetry of power whose very essence lies in being able to observe the other without being seen himself. “Chi son’io tu non saprai” (Who I am you do not know) – these words from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s opera *Don Giovanni*, written by the librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte (who had Don Juan getting intimate with two thousand women) reveal the crux of the modern manipulator’s asymmetry. You do not see me because I will withdraw and leave you when it will no longer be safe for me to stay with you and reveal too much of myself and my hidden suffering or weakness. Who I am you will never know, although I will find out everything about you.

Yet there is an illusion left to the object of obscure desire that they would get as much attention and self-revelation as they could possibly need. An anonymous internet comment delivering toxic lies, mortally wounding, hurting, and brutally insulting us, that is, individuals with our first and last names, is nearly a perfect expression of the liquidity of evil that operates on the ground and is deeply entrenched in our mundane practices. Who I am you do not know.

### **Zombie Concepts and Shallow Universities**

In our book of dialogues, *Moral Blindness*, Zygmunt Bauman and I have discussed a disturbing phenomenon, which I would describe as a post-academic university (see Bauman and Donskis, 2013). An awkward amalgam of medieval academic ritual, specialization, a blatant and blunt denial of the role of the humanities in modern society, managerialism and shallowness allows a perfect scene for such a post-academic university, the playground for enormous pressures, the latter coming from technocratic forces disguised as the genuine voices of liberty and democracy – first and foremost, the market-oriented forms of determinism and fatalism with no room left for the principle of alternative, including critical thought and self-questioning.

The sole mission and *raison d’être* of the post-academic university seems to lie in its overt shallowness, flexibility, submissiveness to the managerial elites, and also in adaptability to the calls and assignments coming from the markets and the political elites. Hollow words, empty

rhetorics, and countless strategy games appear as the quintessence of this sort of tyranny of shallowness best embodies in the post-academic university. It is a strategy without a strategy, as the latter becomes merely a language game. The Wittgensteinian idea of language games was applied by Gianni Vattimo to describe technocracy walking in disguise as democracy, or present politics without politics, both reduced to a series of language games. As Zygmunt Bauman would have it, present strategies without strategies, or politics without politics, are tantamount to ethics without morality.

“Outside the Church there is no salvation” (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*) – this expression is ascribed to Saint Cyprian of Carthage, a bishop of the third century. We have a modern equivalent of this sort of civilizational logic, though, since ours is a corporate and quasi-medieval world where an individual does not have their existence outside of an institution which frames and moulds them. The Academia is the New Church nowadays. This is why the role of dissent, secular heterodoxy and alternative in this world is far more problematic and complex than it may seem from the first sight.

The post-academic university becomes a place to practice shallowness disguised as flexibility and adaptability. Lecturing becomes merchandise, and so does academic performance as such. The unholy alliance of state bureaucracy and neoliberal practices – deregulation, dissemination, and privatisation coupled with bureaucratic control – results in academic community becoming a tiny and insignificant minority in what we call nowadays the academia. Enormous economic and political pressure coming from the university management and the state establishment makes academic and intellectual freedom vulnerable and fragile.

In some cases, there is an obvious backlash – especially in Eastern and Central Europe where nobody spoke about students as workforce for more than twenty years. Strangely enough, the propensity to assess universities as suppliers of workforce is increasingly getting stronger now. In the 1990s, Kavolis warned his Lithuanian fellow academics and state officials about the grave dangers and devastating consequences of the cult of pure specialists which he noticed in Lithuania at that time.

This propensity goes hand in hand with marginalization of academics, scholars and students in terms of their autonomy and their involvement in the debates about the future of their

respective universities. Whereas in nineteenth century Russia Alexander Herzen and Alexander Pushkin wrote about the superfluous human being, we may well call faculty in present universities if not superfluous, then at least not decisive and central when it comes to the visions and articulations of academic life and the future of universities.

The “publish or perish” imperative having been replaced with the “publish and perish” one, it is evident that permanent uncertainty, unsafety, and insecurity becomes one of the conditions sine qua non of the academia. Therefore, endless and never-ending reforms of the academic system and universities allows the state bureaucracy and university management to keep scholars in suspense without their being able to participate in the symbolic construction of reality otherwise than through their subordination and subjugation to that system.

Ulrich Beck and Zygmunt Bauman wrote about zombie concepts – concepts that capture and describe non-existent things, or phenomena that do not exist nowadays anymore (see Bauman and Donskis, 2013). Hollow words, empty phrases, and shallow rhetorics – all these signify the arrival of the state of affairs when words and their frames of meaning bid farewell to one another. They simply part leaving no trace.

The concepts of university autonomy and academic freedom are dangerously approaching the point of no return when they will be on the way to becoming zombie concepts – the enormous pressure put on the academia by the unholy alliance of local and international ideologues of neoliberalism, libertarian preachers of free-market fundamentalism, and political technocrats will sooner or later nullify the remnants of time-honoured autonomy and independence of universities.

High schools, colleges, and universities are increasingly being confined to a playground for culture wars; yet things are even worse with various sorts of pilot projects of management and business administration being tested and tried out in universities with the sole reason of exclusion of corporate relations-free and independent academics from the public domain where they serve as nay-sayers and social critics. Therefore, such terms as responsibility and academic ethics become obsolete and superfluous, since they can barely shed any light on zombie concepts and reality they are bound to represent – for how can you represent the domain from which you

are excluded by anonymous and irresponsible agencies of power structure that aim to manage, control and reform you without your consent and even without consulting academic community?

What is any sort of never-ending academic reform if not exercise of power using the news about it as a mere *fait accompli*? Policy makers do their utmost to reform universities without bothering themselves with the reform of the political system itself or politics at large; therefore, the longer you keep reforming the academia, the more insecure and unsafe academics become, which means that the imposed from above and vertical reform diminishes their powers of social criticism.

In addition to the explosive proliferation of zombie concepts, present universities fell prey to privatization of utopia as a blueprint for a viable moral order and as a dream of a good and just society. We knew for a long time utopia as a framework for a symbolic design within which we could explain ourselves and the world around us allowing room for value and dream. Yet since utopia bowed out to the dream of a good and just society becoming a personal success story re-enacted by every single celebrity and their accounts of success and Cinderella-like miracle of social metamorphosis, this dealt a painful blow to all visionaries of university life.

For how can we return to the university as a place of reconciliation of fact/truth and value, expertise and intimacy, verification and trust, free individual and critical community in a world which increasingly declares and takes pride of its value neutrality/ethical detachment euphemistically termed efficiency, adaptability, and flexibility? Here, again, we are in the realm of shallowness miscalled the ability to change, adapt, and be flexible. Bad news for the academia which still nurtures the dream to bridge the past, the present, and the future, thus confronting value neutrality, instrumentalism, and ethical detachment whose social effects have already proved disastrous for the modern world.

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