

Divided Universities: The Postcolonial Experience of Contemporary Ukrainian Higher Education

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The paper considers the problem of Ukrainian divided universities, which appear at the result of Revolution of Dignity, annexation of Crimea by Russia as well as formation of quasi-republics of the East of Ukraine. Most of educational institutions from these territories were evacuated (students and teaching staff), but “twin universities” appeared using campus and facilities of migrated ones. Author demonstrates the heuristic potential of using the interdisciplinary approaches for understanding the essence of this situation applying metaphors like “university cloning”, “university mitosis” and so on. This approach is strengthened by the ethical judgment through the basic axiological values of modern “idea of university” (freedom of thinking, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, will of knowledge and truth etc.) collected at Magna Charta Universitatum.

From these positions, migrated universities comprehend as an active bearer and translator of “idea of university”. The “twin universities” have a lot of formal arguments to be comprehended as authentic ones, but author stresses on the fact that these institutions don't fit the universities axiological criteria: these universities rejected ones' own tradition; teachers are ready to work in censored conditions and manipulate the knowledge; teachers and students risk to become subjects of violence; the autonomy and academic freedom are absent. Author also appeals the historical facts on the example of Cambridge University origination that let make the optimistic conclusion concerning the perspectives of migrated universities.

Key Words: divided university, idea of university, Ukrainian higher education, postcolonialism, quasi-republics, Revolution of Dignity, university cloning, university mitosis, Magna Charta Universitatum

Introduction

There is a well-known fact, that Ukraine as a national state passes the complex processes of modernization trying to overcome one's post-totalitarian “heritage”. These processes started at the beginning of the 1990s as a result of USSR break-up. Political and cultural transformations at Ukraine have two opposite poles (the European-oriented and Russia-oriented ones). During more than twenty-five years, Ukraine tries to build independent, democratic national state and stop being the “little brother” for Russia. The intensiveness of these processes differs from the political courses of the Ukrainian presidents.

The extreme activating of democratic activity at 2013-2014 initiated the political crisis in relations with Russia. The most tragic aspects of this crisis are following: the annexation of Crimea by Russia; the inspiration and support of terroristic organizations at the East of

Ukraine, which caused the origination of temporary uncontrolled territories at Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

From the one side, these territories are supported by Russia that let them imitate the independent political and cultural activity at the form of quasi-republics (DPR — Donetsk People's Republic and LPR – Luhansk People's Republic) or annexed Crimea. From the other side, origination of these political subjects was promoted by the specific worldview orientations of the territories citizens. Mentioned regions had industrial economics. They are territorially close to Russia. Most of people lived at the Soviet Union and can be characterized using metaphor of “homo sovecitus.” Thus, the majority of these regions' people feel the nostalgia for USSR transformed to respect of Russia.

As a result, these people do not share the Ukrainian national idea and European values. This situation fits the logic of postcolonial interpretation of mentioned Ukrainian territories: “The intersection of imperial and local cultures creates different kinds of practices and ideas. While some of them articulate the colonial values, others destroy them. Meanwhile, not always the local holds authentic meanings as culturally productive practices. In some cases, the imperial brings development to the local. For example, the modernization of a large part of former modern colonies took place due to the interaction with metropolises” [Gomilko et al, 2016: 180].

The quasi-republics originated at the result of military conflict, which takes place up-to-date. This conflict caused large-scale migration processes. The millions of Ukrainian people become the subjects of migration trying to escape from the direct military activity at their cities. The Ukrainian politicians also understood the need of saving the social and intellectual capital of the regions. At the result, most of the scientific and education institutions performed the migration procedure too. However, this migration had a special nature: the institutions migrated without facilities and resources; the stuff of migrated institutions was not full too (sometimes, the majority of the institution stuff stayed at the territory of “new republics” sharing ones' ideology or at the result of life occasions) and so on. The Ukrainian national state strived to grant the facilities for these migrated (evacuated) institutions trying to save their potential as well as help Ukrainian citizen to avoid possible violence. The institutions at uncontrolled territories saved ones' institutional status becoming a part of new social order of quasi-republics.

Ukrainian philosopher Roman Dodonov describes the contradictions of universities migration in a following way: “The question about evacuation of 18 Ukrainian universities and 10 academic institutes form the zone of counter-terroristic operation raised at the beginning of 2014/15 academic year. Most of them relocated ones' studying process to own affiliated branches within the bounds of Donetsk' and Luhansk' regions... At the same time, almost every evacuated university had one's “duplicate”: many students and teachers declined to leave the bounds of their own city factually bearing with the military occupancy and re-subordination to “governments” of self-proclaimed republics» [Dodonov, 2015]. For the situation described by Dodonov, we can find many descriptions in modern discourse of philosophy of education. There are some of them: “divided universities”, “cleave on two universities”, “evacuated universities”, “in exile universities” and so on.

At the research author is also going to discover the heuristic potential of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methodological approaches for understanding the essence of the universities multiplication at the social and cultural landscape of modern Ukraine. Author hopes to find the correct methodology, which would help to understand the logic of classification of these

“coupled” universities and substantiate the possibility to interpret one of them as an authentic university on the theoretical basis.

Author substantiates the idea that it is important to provide the clarity in problematic situation and answer parallelly the questions alike “Is modern university a sum of teachers and students?”, “Is modern university a lifeworld (sum of practices, places like campus)?”, “Does idea of university work for both types of divided universities?” According to author’s point of view, it would let estimate, which one of the paired universities can be comprehended as authentic. It also would let make some prognostic conclusions depending the future of Ukrainian higher education modernization processes.

Theoretical and methodological approaches of research

Modern philosophical discourse is characterized by the wide series of methodological approaches for discovering the complex educational problems of globalized world. The multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methodological approaches demonstrate ones’ heuristic potential at this context. Education is a social and cultural phenomenon that has productive connections with economic, spiritual and other spheres of human life. Thus, approaches of philosophy of education sometimes can be productively augmented by the methods or concepts of other sciences.

We understand that using of methodological approaches of other sciences should be predicted by the proper theoretical estimation and substantiation. The same position demonstrates William Spady, saying that using interdisciplinary approaches scientists laments the lack of conceptual clarity, methodological rigor, complexity of design, breadth, and analytic sophistication that characterizes most existing work, their recommendations regarding new and more thorough research approaches also lack a definite theoretical basis [Spady, 1970: 64].

At the research we stand on position that educational problematic can be fruitfully discovered using approaches of not only similar sciences (sociology, history, pedagogy and so on). The analysis of contemporary researches at the sphere of higher education demonstrated that researchers heuristically used the approaches of geography, mathematics and other disciplines to enrich their research potential. Some scientists stand on position that metaphor can be a productive research instrument at the context of linguistic turn at philosophy of the 20th century. Metaphor starts being comprehend not only as a literature phenomenon or as instrument for everyday language complement. It is an effective instrument for understanding the ontological essence of the processes of contemporary world. The special place at this context has educational sphere of human being.

As an example of productive (sometimes metaphoric) using of the potential of other sciences can be concept of “axiological palette”. This concept productively complement the term “axiological system” when idea of system (hierarchy, unity and so on) does not work. In addition, we can find a lot of researches where authors used the concept of “education matrix” [Jones & Oleksiyenko, 2011]. The postmodern discourse of philosophy of education actively uses “risoma” term, which was borrowed from biology. The next demonstrative example is research of Serhii Terepyshchyi “Modern Education Landscapes” [Terepyshchyi, 2016] where author performs the analysis of education landscape concept through the prism of transdisciplinary interrelationship of natural science knowledge as well as humanitarian one.

According to this logic, we think that processes of universities division at Ukrainian social and cultural space can be reviewed using the metaphors of cell biology. At the research, we

attempt to use the biological concepts trying to pierce the logic of the mentioned processes. For example, trying to check possibility to comprehend the universities division as cloning, mitosis and other metaphors of cell biology.

The cloning metaphor has two following biological notions: 1) a cell, cell product, or organism that is genetically identical to the unit or individual from which it was derived; 2) a population of identical units, cells, or individuals that derive from the same ancestral line [Cloning, 2017]. According to this logic, evacuated universities are only the “clones” of the “original” ones stayed on the territory of DPR, LNR and Crimea.

For demonstrating of methodological potential of mitosis metaphor, we use the following definition: mitosis is a process where a single cell divides resulting in generally two identical cells, each containing the same number of chromosomes and genetic content as that of the original cell [Mitosis]. According to this logic, both universities seem like equal.

The natural science metaphors look heuristic being strengthened by the ethical component. We stand on position that there is a need to evaluate the fact of idea of university correspondence for both (evacuated and “twin”) universities. These steps will be performed at the next parts of the article and help to make conclusion depending the perspectives of the current situation development.

One of the methodological orientations of the research is comprehension of social and cultural situation in Ukraine through the idea of postcolonialism. We want to underline, that approaches of postcolonial studies could be fruitful for understanding the special social and cultural landscape of modern Ukraine. The postcolonial (post-totalitarian, post-Soviet) status of Ukraine is preciously proven on the modern philosophical discourse.

Ukrainian higher education also feels the influence of the mentioned phenomenon: Ukrainian socio-cultural space can be considered through the optic of mixing the features of postcolonial (imperial — Russian, Austro-Hungarian), post-totalitarian (Soviet), national (Ukrainian), modern (European / Western) and global (world high standards) paradigms of higher education [Gomilko et al, 2016: 178]. The tragic facts of Revolution of Dignity, military activity at the East of Ukraine, annexation of Crimea demonstrates that Ukraine can be reviewed through the postcolonial methodological optics. Ukrainian situation is very similar to the following ideas of Fazal Rivzi and other authors: “Independence from colonialism does not mean liberation, and that ‘national consciousness’ often fails to achieve freedom because its aspirations are primarily those of the colonized bourgeoisie, who simply replace the colonial rule with their own form of dominance, surveillance and coercion over the vast majority of the people, often using the same vocabulary of power... Even after independence, the colonial subjects remain colonized internally, psychologically” [Rivzi et al, 2006: 251].

Social and cultural prerequisites of universities division processes in Ukraine

The processes of political modernization after the fall of Soviet Union have an extremely active phase since 2013. This year is an edge point at the chronology of Ukrainian modernization activity. Viktor Yanukovich, former president of Ukraine, tried to change the modernization direction radically from European one and initiate Russia-oriented political activity. The Yanukovich regime is also known as an organized system with highest level of corruption.

The series of political steps of this politician initiated the protest activity called Revolution of Dignity. Yuriy Shveda describes the logic of revolution activity and one’s preconditions in

a following way: “The most salient reason for the revolution is the failure of the new (post-Soviet) political elites in reforming Ukraine and building up a new statehood. Despite its newly earned independence, Ukraine has remained as an inefficient hybrid of the old (Soviet) and new (oligarchic) in its management and leadership. That is, the current political crisis in Ukraine is simply the external manifestation of a systemic crisis: the political elite’s lack of will to reform and their inefficiency in policymaking since the 1990s” [Shveda, 2016:86].

We share the opinion of Yuriy Shveda who stresses that the Revolution of Dignity was not a direct reaction against the Yanukovych regime’s rejection of Ukrainian national values. Three fundamental causes were:

1. Indignation of citizens toward the unprecedented rise in corruption.
2. Failure to sign the Association Agreement with the EU for the prospects of rapprochement with Russia.
3. The brutal violence that the police used on those who dared to express dissatisfaction with Yanukovych’s policies [Shveda, 2016:86].

The president escaped from Ukraine to Russia and the crisis in relation between Ukraine and Russia get deeper and deeper. At the result of direct and hidden military activity, Russia performed the annexation of Crimea. Two quasi-republics were originated at the East of Ukraine. This situation caused intensive refugees movement. The educational institutions also became the subject of evacuation processes.

Tragic experience of Ukrainian higher education and universities division

We already underlined that postcolonialism is comprehended as a fruitful methodological approach for discovering the logic of the contradictions of Ukrainian modernization. Higher education of Ukraine (HEU) is also the subject of postcolonial social and cultural dynamics: “The remains of colonial and totalitarian systems in HEU are perceived as its own originality and uniqueness. The danger of such narcissism is romanticization and glorification of reality that actualize the pre-modern practices and forms of education. Nostalgic motives about the “effectiveness” of Soviet HE contribute to hybridization of totalitarian colonial educational elements into the system of global education, creating its illusory and imitative substitutes” [Gomilko et al, 2016: 182].

At the previous parts of the articles, we paid some attention for discovering the social and cultural preconditions of divided universities problem. Also we tried to substantiate the need of performing of ethical evaluation procedure at the “idea of university” values coordinate system. To check the fact that university fits the requirements of “idea of university” we decided to analyze the fundamental principles of contemporary universities declared at Magna Charta Universitatum.

This document contains the following fundamental principle: “The University is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organized because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching. To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power” [Magna Charta Universitatum, 1988]. It is a proved fact, that universities at uncontrolled (annexed) territories have no autonomy. Maybe one’s research and teaching are morally independent of political authority? We have no reasons to answer positively.

Magna Charta Universitatum also places an emphasis on the fact, that freedom in research and training is the fundamental principle of university life, and governments and universities, each as far as in them lies, must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement [Magna Charta Universitatum, 1988]. This fundamental principle is also violated in case of the universities operated at the territory of annexed Crimea, some territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

From the other hand, students and teaching staff that performed troubled (and even danger for their life) procedure of evacuation should be comprehended as people who are firm to the principal of Magna Charta Universitatum. This document rightly comprehended as a dense collection of the basic principles of modern idea of university. Thus, evacuated universities are evaluated positively by us from the ethical positions: these universities stayed firm to Ukraine as well as to university fundamental principles.

Trying to be independent during the judgment steps, we also want to use the potential of history of Cambridge University origination. According to author's vision, it is very similar to the processes described above. We underlined, that divided universities phenomenon is a result of geopolitical clash between Ukraine and Russia when it was necessary for people to evacuate from the territories with military activity to avoid the violence for having alternative opinion. The similar situation took place in Oxford according to the research of the famous historian of this institution Ross Anderson: "Successive popes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries incited the mob against lepers, gays, Jews and other undesirables, in the process forming a culture of persecution of outgroups and minorities that has blighted Europe ever since. It was against this background that our founders fled Oxford in 1209 and settled in the newly chartered town of Cambridge. The townsfolk of Oxford had hanged two clerks for a murder of which they were apparently innocent; the king backed the townsmen, and the scholars dispersed for five years. Some of the refugees came to Cambridge, and established our university" [Anderson, 2009]. Thus, the history of European higher education contains the facts that moving from violence can become a fruitful possibility for university to build one's own successful way.

Conclusions

The research of the problem of divided Ukrainian universities demonstrated the complexity of the procedure of evaluation of "paired" universities from the position of their authenticity. The easiest way was to judge them according to the principles of international law, marking evacuated universities as legal and declaring universities from uncontrolled territories illegal. Avoiding this, we tried to find the heuristic natural science metaphor of describe the logic of this division.

We expertise the possibility to interpret university division process as cloning mechanism. According to this logic, evacuated universities seem like "clones" of "original" which stayed at the uncontrolled republics or annexed territories. The logic of "mitosis" postulates the equal status of both universities: the university produces two equal "daughtery" universities. From one hand, evacuated universities lost one's campuses as well as part of students and staff. From the other hand, the universities at the uncontrolled territories accepted new values, which could contradict with the idea of university in general.

Author substantiated, that these natural science metaphoric approaches should be complemented by the ethic estimation through the fundamental axiological principles of "idea of University". According to Magna Charta Universitatum, autonomy of thinking, academic freedom, autonomy from political authority and economic power are the mentioned principles.

All these principles are violated by the institutions stayed on quasi-republics and annexed territory. The evacuated universities seem like bearers and active translators of fundamental values of the modern universities.

It is pity, but it looks that geopolitical clash between Ukraine and Russia passes to “frozen” stage. Thus, it is hard to predict the date when uncontrolled territories will join Ukraine again. The next big question rises concerning the content of complex procedures of the territories reintegration of the world-view level. It may happen that strengthened (after period of being a part of non-Ukrainian national state) postcolonial axiological orientations of the people will bring many contradictions to reintegration processes. These problems could be the subject of the series of future scientific researches. And the question of higher education system reintegration is also at the “order of the day”. As a very minimum, Ukraine should actualize the potential of the researches for substantiating the national educational strategies directed on the actualization of Peace idea [Bazaluk, 2015a]. According to our opinion, the heuristic way for prevention of such tragic events is searching and implementation of the strategies for the overcoming of postcolonial (post-Soviet, post-totalitarian) heritage on the world-view horizon of Ukrainian people as well as socio-cultural landscape of Ukraine.

Roman Dodonov writes the next ideas concerning the potential of any futurological predicts at the field of divided universities reintegration: there is no granted safety for students and teachers till we hear the sounds of shots – the problem of divided universities has a lot of uncertain aspects to formulate the perspective of ones’ future [Dodonov, 2015]. At the same time, remembering the historical experience of Cambridge University origination, we stand on optimistic positions concerning the future of evacuated universities.

The tragic bloody experience of territorial disintegration could be interpreted as a painful evolutionary step. At the result of external influence, the group of students, teachers and administrators can became a social capital for new educational institutions starting one’s activity “tabula rasa”. These people are firm to the values of university, firm to the European values such as freedom and democracy. They are firm to own Motherland. Thus, they may become a fundamental spiritual and intellectual resource for these institutions.

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