

REVISED 5/19/2015

TRACTATUS LOGICO- ACADEMICUS

GK
Agence 'X'/Scholars Minor

In association with the US Fulbright Commission, the University of
Ljubljana, and Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory

2015

AGENCE 'X'/SCHOLARS MINOR
LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA
MAY DAY 2015

Not-published by
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O take me to the slaughterhouse
I will wait there with the lamb ...

–Leonard Cohen (1967)

Missing image – Diego Velázquez, *El Cristo Crucificado*, 1632. Courtesy of Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

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1.0 – Neoliberal capitalism’s assault on academia is an assault on academic freedom.

2.0 – The assault proceeds by way of dictates imposed on faculties by the bureaucratic regimes of the university in concert with corporate and quasi-governmental entities.

3.0 – The practices associated with so-called Big Data are the primary concern of scholars as they attempt to protect their Intellectual Property and/or circulate and network their research.

4.0 – The first order of exploitation via Big Data is to collect and control academic research with the double agenda of monetizing it and selling it back to the university and/or scholar on a pay-per-view or subscription basis.

4.1 – This includes current practices associated with e-books, e-journals, e-licensing, and e-aggregation.

5.0 – The monetization of research proceeds by the imposition of metrics on academic performance in the form of approved or recommended venues (lists) for publication of research with the attendant metrics imposed measuring its “value” (“impact”).

5.1 – This practice discourages the writing of books and favors the publication of papers and essays in journals and proceedings generally owned by or controlled by the corporate platforms that control data.

5.2 – In discouraging the publication of books by awarding few points in the research output mechanisms associated with performance, neoliberal academia is further conceding ground to the e-aggregation of research and the marginalization of conventional publishers of books (academic or otherwise).

6.0 – The corporate entities engaged in exploiting academic research offer two primary means for academics and scholars to “give their work away”: A/ The construction and rental of publication platforms and databases for the e-aggregation of the same, and the control and marketing of academic books and journals; B/ The sale and/or rental of the same back to the very institutions that create and often fund the production of Intellectual Capital.

6.1 – Open Access platforms for publishing research, while nominally outside this model, are insufficient means to protect Intellectual Property insofar as publication of works to The Cloud (university owned or otherwise) generally leads to piracy, plagiarism, and loss of copyright control.

6.2 – Alt-academic Open Access (not-for-profit presses and “pre-publication” platforms) is, as well, a questionable practice, given that it circumvents predatory publishers yet proceeds as above – viz., permits piracy, plagiarism, and loss of copyright control.

7.0 – The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the European Commission (EC) have done nothing to update the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (est. 1896) to reflect the digitalization and corporate (for-profit) exploitation of Intellectual Property.

7.1 – The United States (US) has instituted a non-punitive update to US Copyright Law in the form of avenues for filing complaints and issuing “Take-down” orders. This applies exclusively to the Internet, not the proprietary databases of corporate e-aggregators.

8.0 – The universities engaged in converting research in the Humanities to scalable and saleable data (with data- and text-mining the most recent examples of the mutability of the model) have either capitulated to the global model or are part of its very construction.

8.1 – The administrative regimes currently associated with neoliberal academia generally conform to what is called “vertical integration” in the corporate world, a term that is, in turn, derived from media empires of the order of News Corp. and Facebook.

9.0 – The result of all of the above is both general confusion (on the part of academics and scholars unaware of the reasons for metrics-driven performance) and increasing anger and rebellion (by academics and scholars well aware of the implications for metrics-driven performance).

9.1 – Rebellions are currently underway in the US, the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, and the Netherlands.

9.2 – The very definition of neoliberal capitalism confirms the non-democratic nature of its practices. Thus, the rebellions noted above have been ignored by the administrative regimes at which they are aimed, with no resultant conversation of any significance.

9.3 – The second line of defense for the Humanities is to forestall further inroads into faculties by such practices by strenuously invoking and installing multiple and diverse paths for PhD and Master’s students.

9.4 – This might take the form of alternative PhD models, such as Thesis by Exegesis (Creative work plus written exegesis) and Thesis by Publication (written works published along the path of the PhD with a summary submitted upon completion justifying the overall project). Such creative substitutes for the conventional thesis, which is increasingly the primary location for the imposition of the above-mentioned metrics-driven practices on students, might serve to circumvent the mechanisms of control and discipline otherwise visited upon faculties and students from above.

10.0 – There are creative ways of dealing with all of the above that are productive of a nuanced and intentionally spirited defense of the Humanities and speculative inquiry. Foremost, it is the Humanities (Arts and Letters) that might best develop alternative new-old methodologies for the production and dissemination of scholarship that restores to academia the inalienable and timeless rights associated with the very production of knowledge as theoretical praxis.

10.1 – The primary mode for this defense is the creation and safeguarding of a combination of media types and platforms that includes conventional publication but also addresses in a critical manner the proliferation of mediatic practices in the Arts and Humanities.

10.2 – The types and modalities of scholarship (experimental and otherwise) to be protected include: Exhibition; Folio; Limited Edition; Lecture (Public or otherwise); Performance; Visual Essay; Visual Poem; Film-essay; etc.

10.3 – In terms of analog publication or print media (books, articles, essays), the lists associated with metrics-driven performance must be amended and expanded.

10.4 – In terms of digital and non-analog works, new conventions must be created for assessing and protecting from piracy the author’s moral rights.

10.5 – The Moral Rights of Authors are included in the Berne Convention. It is these rights that have, in fact, been fully neutralized by predatory practices in academic publishing while also neutering the contractual concept of “derivative work” (any work created after the primary work).

10.6 – The re-definition of “derivative work” is, thus, the primary course of action for protecting the Moral Rights of Authors in the digital age. These moral rights, inclusive of copyright, represent the Achilles’ Heel for predatory capitalist practices and the campaign to data- and text-mine academic research.

10.7 – The Moral Rights of Authors remain the primary address for all adjustments to, resistance to, and the possible overturning of the most pernicious aspects of the current crisis in the production, protection, and preservation of Intellectual Property.

“The future belongs to those who prepare for it today.”

–Malcolm X

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