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## The Future of the Humanities in the Corporate University

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“Once professors presumably professed; they are now merely professionals.”

Masao Miyoshi, “‘Globalization’, Culture,  
and the University”

When I was a graduate student in the School of English at St. Andrews University in the late 1980’s, the faculty was more or less evenly divided between those who held the PhD and those who did not. Many influential faculty members—including the Chair at the time—belonged to the latter. Instead of a sense of anxiety for not having achieved the “terminal degree in one’s field,” there reigned an older establishmentarian preference for the well-read but uncredentialed practitioner. The research degree was the rite of passage for those uneasy souls that didn’t put sufficient trust in their literary instincts, and were therefore in need of extramural validation. Those who could really ride did so on their own, the fewer letters the better.

This is a story that was already a bit quaint in its own time—could *become* a story because it seemed a studied anachronism. Today the point risks being lost entirely. “The fewer letters the better”: what does this mean? Every hiring committee everywhere—every Dean, President, and Human Resources manager—expects to see “PhD” on a faculty application, without which no tenure-line job offer. As soon attempt to enroll at university without a high school diploma as hope for a reputable appointment in Philosophy, History, or the Modern Languages without the doctorate. Such is the *vita academica*.

Given the wide dissemination of Pierre Bourdieu’s work (1986, 1988, 1993) to English-speaking audiences in recent years, the structure of this *vita* should not surprise us. If the modern history of taste, both in cuisine and in art, is the history of freedom from necessity—thereby distinguishing a coterie of cultural aristocrats from both mass culture and a newly affluent bourgeoisie—then the history of academic distinction is also, surely, at least in part the history of opposing the instrumentalization of intellectual work through degree credentialing. The more degrees you have, in other words, the less qualified you are, and especially so if these degrees are in vocational side-subjects, from minor institutions, or acquired online through pay-for-paper promotions.

In truth, of course, the prestige factor embedded in degrees and degree programs that do not need to justify themselves in the marketplace (and whose curriculum is characteristically distanced from practical ends) goes at least as far back as the earliest attempts at education policy among the Greeks. One remembers Socrates’ philosopher-king (Plato, 2006), fit to rule because cleansed of conventional desires for status, fame, or riches; or again Aristotle’s separation, in books VII and VIII of *The Politics* (1997),

of *theoria* (contemplation) from *phronesis* (practical wisdom) and *techne* (applicative know-how) in the training of a ruling caste. Those entrusted with public service, the thought runs, should not be balasted with narrowing self-interest. In the symbolic economy that emerges therefrom, the cultivation of an image of disinterestedness becomes a touchstone of the cleristocracy.

Yet insofar as distinction in Bourdieu's sense is only distinctive vis-à-vis a leveling norm, the survival of the former depends upon a vigilant regulation of group behavior. If the traditional status claim of university faculty is that they do not hold the same values or aspirations as those active in business or technology, they will only be able to maintain their ritual separateness by excluding the too enthusiastic votaries of Henry James' bitch goddess. If coterie habits are not tightly regulated at the margins, the palladiums of privilege will be exposed to attack by what another generation quaintly referred to as "the wrong sort." And once the first wave of barbarians gains a foothold (so the argument runs), good luck keeping the rest out. Once in charge, furthermore, the new entrants will triumphantly reveal the flimsy ideological carapace under which the whole cult of distinction was organized: the fact that prestige, like the godhead, exists only so long as it commands belief. Where prestige is discredited, new criteria of scholarly, financial, or administrative *performance* take over, forcing the ethic of disinterestedness to compete in the field of pragmatic deliberation at which it holds an inherent disadvantage.

We need not subscribe to the image of barbarian hordes storming the citidel to accede to the surely unexceptional claim that some such process of academic deregulation, with its attendant unwinding of a disciplinary center, has characterized the recently shifting fortunes of the humanities in what Eric Gould and others have referred to as the "corporate university" (Gould, 2003; Kirp, 2003; Washburn, 2005). The corporate university, in turn, is one feature of that especially amorphous inkblot known as "globalization," which, for all its varied definitions and applications, remains in a fundamental sense the international diffusion of the logic of economic markets as underlying all significant forms of public exchange (Hirst and Thompson, 1999; Friedman, 2004) is sought. As the common "currency" of international cooperation, the maximization of financial and related benefits is sought for a restricted number of constituents through the security of contract over the short or long term.

In this corporate, globalized world, higher education is expected to orient itself according to the same ideological playbook as every other institution (Miyoshi, 1998; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). Macrologically, each university or university system is expected to justify its existence by reference to efficiency criteria and "bottom line" accounting. Micrologically, the behavior of all relevant actors should conform to the principle of self-interest. We are all "utility maximizers," and to the degree that utility in market-oriented societies is determined by consumer demand, the worth of anyone's store of intellectual capital will be set by what fee paying students, their parents, legislators, and other donors consider value for money.

In the thirty years that this model of university governance has been in the ascendancy, the humanities have predictably been on the defensive. How much is an interpretation of *Bleak House* worth? Does the ability to distinguish the early Heidegger from the later offer value for money? Is the goal of becoming "a good person" sufficient reason for the state to underwrite courses in the liberal arts? To the extent that answers are forthcoming, they tend to be the kind favored by Bartleby the Scrivener: no, not much, I'd rather not. Derek Bok (2004) is no doubt correct in arguing that measuring learning outcomes according to quantifiable impact criteria is both difficult and open to abuse. But the argument has trouble staying aloft. Robert Maynard Hutchins' claim (1943) that a liberal education doesn't enable you to be anything, but rather enables you to be anything you want, sounds too clever by half. It is artful phrasing—rhetoric being the device, and the study, of those for whom the higher numerology has failed.

But it might also be argued that this thirty-year development belongs to a *longue durée* that effectively begins with the incorporation of the "humanities" as a set of degree subjects in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This

is a story that has been told before in disciplinary and institutional histories, from both documentary and critical-theoretical perspectives. It can be understood as an Arnoldian narrative of the softening of habits and the refinement of taste: culture as antidote to angular self-interest. Alternatively, it is the story of the university as laboratory for entrenched social conflict: a controlled experiment by which the past may be understood (Mistress Philosophy spreading her wings in civilization's twilight), and the future changed, on the order of Marx's 11<sup>th</sup> thesis on Feuerbach (Tucker, 1978).

In both narratives, a particular social institution—the university—is called upon to absorb and express cultural ideals that are at least implicitly felt to be absent or underrepresented in society as a whole. The university, in other words—and the humanities within the university—must do something that a larger, more diffuse population has failed to do or cannot do.

The institutionalizing of culture, and of the community values and ideals this culture embodies, invariably functions in the mode of the ironic. On one hand, culture is fastened upon as something worthy of preservation. Its values are crystallized, differentiated, defended. On the other, the desire to preserve implies a risk of attrition or extinction. It is precisely because cultural values are no longer generally implied in civil society that they need to be fenced off. Dickens will appear on the university syllabus, in other words, roughly when those who might be expected to learn from him would predictably not do so on their own. It becomes necessary to teach Hegel, Saint-Simon, and the history of colonial America in an official curriculum because these are thought important for the image of a class or nation, yet appear inadequately represented elsewhere.

The full exfoliation of this argument would admittedly include any nominally organized form of instruction as signaling a postlapsarian fall from cultural wholeness. As a species of "writing," this fall has been investigated at length by Derrida and the deconstructionist school generally (1978). It is also a feature of Heidegger's narrative of the recession of being, rooted for him in the coalescence of the Idea in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens (1995). In tighter focus, however, we can see how the formation of complex social fields and institutions gives us, if anything, a sharper take on the problem. In the early 90's, as interest in the culture of academic institutions acquired momentum in humanities research, Bill Readings and others (1996; Guillory, 1993) reemphasized the link between the function of the modern university and the development of the nation-state.

The thesis here—not new, but salutary in accent and fresh in detail—was that the initially close connection between higher education and the expansion of the professions and state bureaucracy was a centrally enabling force in the creation of the modern state. Although this connection was visibly tighter in Germany and France than in the Anglo-American sphere, the thesis could be meaningfully applied to the universities of all industrialized countries by 1900: nation building and culture building were intricately twinned. Where nation building became empire building, moreover, cultural diffusion acquired an even greater importance. The ideological force of this diffusion was detectable by those with an understanding of its liniments. For the ideology to function at all, however, any decisive incompatibility between politics and culture would need to remain latent. In fact, ideology in its broadly Marxian sense was necessary in the first place to tamp down disruptive stirrings from below.

20<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-European history is in part the history of how this ideology has been outed, its rhetorical force eroded. One of Walter Benjamin's (1999) trenchant criticisms of the Nazi state was its subsumption of politics into aesthetics. While not eliminating the possibility of a fruitful integration of the two, Benjamin's position clearly delineates one relationship fated for disaster: the transmogrification of the state into a cultural icon or image.

International modernism provides another take on the issue. The *dérèglement de tous les sens* by which French symbolism anticipates High Modernism in Europe and America invests art with a coterie esotericism: not necessarily apolitical, but clearly anti-consumerist. There is, as Yeats would put it, a

fascination with what is difficult, and a concomitant rejection of what Adorno (2001) and others have labelled the culture industry. The representation of the state and of commonly projected national values in art and criticism, never simple, is now seen to be particularly vexed. With Eliot, one shores fragments against one's ruins; with Pound, one speaks of western civilization as an old bitch gone in the teeth; with Freud, one projects world history as a psychodrama of sublimated urges and sublimating images; with Conrad, one witnesses the rag end of colonial impulse in a primordial question mark; with the Dadaists and Surrealists, one reconfigures the everyday as the grotesque; with Kazantzakis and Joyce, one returns to embedded story cycles in which the political dissolves into the mythic.

In all of these cases, the fissures between culture and society—or at least, between culture in theory and society in fact—acquire a destabilizing urgency. While hope is generally held out for some future healing, the consequences will be as uncertain as the method is unconventional. “After us,” Lawrence has his protagonist in *Women in Love* exclaim, “after us, not out of us” (1987, p. 287).

Institutionally, this same division can be found not only in the very existence of humanities degree programs after 1900 but in the institutional form they acquire. In 1912, Alexander Meiklejohn will make an appeal for the liberal arts college to counteract the accelerating presence of the public university prerogative (1969). Honors curricula, often in the form of Great Books syllabi, begin to appear at Columbia, Swarthmore, and elsewhere in the early 20's (Rudolph, 1962). Robert Maynard Hutchins (1943), maverick reformer and Yale law school dean, takes the helm at the University of Chicago in 1930 with the aim of developing not only a program but a university given over to the study of intellectual history: the so-called “Chicago Plan.” The New Critics, at times with a conservative, agrarian agenda, seize on the formal and thematic oddness of modernist poetry as a vehicle for social criticism. Similarly, as Fritz Ringer (1990) has emphasized, the Heideggerian school from the 1920's distances itself from mainstream 19<sup>th</sup> century German philosophy by pitching the existential problematic of *Dasein* and the phenomenological one of Being against the superfluities of public life embodied in “Das Man.” Even if Heidegger was politically implicated in National Socialism as a university administrator, and on grounds not incompatible with his philosophy, it is arguably a rogue state that he affirmed—Benjamin's aestheticized political order that is itself a protest, albeit a tragic and inexcusably destructive one, against the prosaic conquests of capitalism.

What has happened in the last thirty years, as adumbrated above, is the general failure of a segregated cultural sphere to sustain its legitimacy, much less its vibrancy, in exile. In a Hegelian historiography favored by Francis Fukuyama (1992) and others, this development can be read as the reintegration of the negative moment or alienated consciousness into a new institutional order. Culture alone—alienated and ineffectual—has once again rejoined the progressive mainstream.

Yet this process of incorporation leaves it unclear what, if anything, has been sublated from the cultural inventory. The task of thinking, to invoke another Heideggerian phrase, might be able to justify itself as central to any defense of cultural literacy, but it is less obvious why the university should commit itself to such defense and what the pursuit of knowledge, wherever it is conducted, contributes to “bottom line” efficiency, wealth, or control objectives. Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. And if Caesar has become a totalitarian force, unto it all shall be rendered.

As noted above, Bill Readings viewed this dialectic in the context of the rise and fall of the western nation-state. We can take the terminological step he did not and identify its current phase as the age of globalization. In this sense, the “global” and “globalized” express, in institutional form, the progressive commodification of university teaching and research as business functions. It is not only that the curriculum reflects a new emphasis on practical and professional degree subjects or that classroom teaching has become more technologically process-oriented. Rather, the globalized university is one in which the microeconomics of the firm in nominally competitive markets is adopted in all its essentials to govern the organization, aims, and practices of institutional work.

It is in this world that students and parents emerge as resource maximizing consumers, senior administrators as entrepreneurs, and faculty as educational consultants and contractors. It is in this world that professors, who once did or did not profess, are now evaluated primarily as professionals. Kittredge's quip about his not acquiring the PhD ("who would have examined me?" [Morison, 1965]) gives way to the consumerist egalitarianism of the student questionnaire and research publication list. To invoke the "Micawber Principle", 2 papers, 3 articles, 3.45 on the annual Dean's evaluation: happiness; 1.9 papers, 2.87 articles, and 3.42 on the same measure: misery. And while Mrs. Micawber might well have refused to abandon her husband, the university of excellence will exercise no such scruple.

I have admittedly set my historical markers with some exaggeration. The university of excellence that Readings discussed has not dispensed with the humanities, nor does the reconceptualization of higher education as a business necessarily mean that individual institutions will function according to such a logic, even where they most wish to. In his *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line*, David Kirp (2003) provides examples as well as an explanation for the failure to run State U. on the model of General Motors or Gillette. Yet beyond the volume of books and articles dedicated to the neo-liberal refashioning of higher education in Europe and America, ground-level changes in policy—the shift from government grants to loans in the US, the institution of high tuition-high aid models, the withdrawal of state and federal funding for academic programs, the explosive growth in student services and student service providers, to name but a few—identify a paradigm shift away from the old college and toward the new multiversity as a business venture irreducible to the irritated carping of the marginalized.

The western university today does not stand for "culture" in any general, unifying sense, either for itself or for the larger culture in which it operates. The question, therefore, is not whether the university has become more commercial, but to what extent. Put somewhat differently, the issue is whether the humanities will be able to carve out a meaningful role within an institution unfavorable to its survival.

There seem to me to be at least three reasonably clear projections for the future of humanities education in the "globalized" university as defined here. The first is a response that we have already seen in English, History, and Cultural Studies departments (broadly conceived) in the last twenty years: the focus on the culture of specific groups identified by gender, class, geography, or ethnic background. The second is the recalibration of these and other disciplines as employer-conscious and consumer friendly. The third is a re-emphasis on the difference of high culture from other forms of social action, and a lobby for the university as the social sector best suited to meeting the need for such a difference. Although this third alternative would appear the least promising as a mechanism for ensuring the institutional vitality of the humanities, it is nonetheless, with some trepidation, the option I wish to advocate here.

With respect to the first projection, the cultural, women's, and ethnic studies programs that began to acquire program and departmental status in the early 70's, and with accelerated success in the late 80's, have responded to the dissolution of a broader cultural mandate in society by retaining the form of such a mandate while narrowing its ideological focus. No longer committed to the prerogatives of a general or western culture—in fact, it is this culture that is often viewed as compromised or eviscerating—the Cultural Studies advocate nonetheless views himself or herself as representing some less inclusive, typically marginalized group. The advocacy draws its force in part from the conviction that what is being championed has social, and not merely academic, relevance. Now, however, it is not simply a literature or history of thought in danger of being abandoned by the dominant society, but life practices threatened with extinction. The appeal is obvious: one can advocate, advocate for the excluded, and advocate for the survival of much more than elite culture.

This academic balkanization compels for another reason: it reflects larger socio-political developments

in which the neoclassical discourse of rights—framed as universal and rationally binding—has found itself increasingly complicated by a new emphasis on values, understood to operate locally through the group-molding idiosyncrasies of religion, language, food, history, ethnic heritage, and the like. If Stephen Daedalus’ “Jewgreek is Greekjew” sounds the trumpet for cultural modernism, the contemporary, perhaps post-modern values debate attempts to show that not only is Jewgreek NOT Greekjew, but “Jews” or “Greeks” are themselves not simply Jews and Greeks. These labels effectively mask a world of essential differences between Hasidic and Sephardic, new world and old world, orthodox and lapsed, Roman and Byzantine, Ottoman and hellenistic, northern hemisphere and southern. Each sub-heading, in turn, can be submitted to similar treatment, divided and subdivided according to what is eaten and not eaten, worn and not worn, spoken and not spoken, by whom (and not by others), when (and not at other times), and with what illusions and allusions (and not the ones outsiders might assume).

In a sense, the unifying role envisioned for an older discourse of political inclusion, embedded in republican government, anchored in a written constitution, and legitimated by universal suffrage, has gradually been transferred to the economic sphere and renamed, “globalization.” The newer discourse of political exclusion, in turn, has been taken up by academics and pitched as an alternative to the kind of economic universalism deemed suspect or dangerous. Consequently, the macroscopic relationship between economics and politics finds itself mirrored in the institutional relationship between corporate university governance and cultural advocacy in humanities departments. To the extent that Cultural Studies is able to represent broader political struggles, it can lay claim to an important form of institutional legitimacy.

On the other hand—and this, I think, helps account for Cultural Studies’ failure to match achievement to mission—the legitimacy it might claim under the best of circumstances will still be that of a secondary actor to a primary one, of slave to master, dominated to dominating. In Terry Eagleton’s words (2003, p. 21), “the rich are global, the poor are local.” However unfair or obfuscating this global reach, moreover, an appeal to local values only becomes possible once an international order has been established and found wanting, and a challenge to this order through the reaffirmation of universal values ruled out. An ethics grounded in the politics of the everyday, no matter how compelling, will never be able to compete evenly with an economics striving for a hegemony of payday, however cant-ridden.

There is another important reason to doubt cultural advocacy as adumbrating the future of the humanities in the western university: the representation of local values by a cadre of academic professionals is fraught with sociological complications. Despite the frequent use of “we” to denote group solidarity, the member of an ethnic minority born to rural poverty who ends up Vice-Provost at an Ivy League university no longer “represents” that minority group in any simple sense (Guillory, 1993). One’s gender and skin color remain the same, but one’s social world has been dramatically altered. One forms different friendships, speaks a different language, adopts different forms of distinction, and—most tellingly of all, perhaps—is called upon to be a formal analyst of a group in which one also wishes to claim ethnic membership. The non-academic minority may well be interested in gender and race relations, but not through the alembic of “scholarship in the field” and the need to maintain research output. In the eagerness to chart local practices, it is easy to forget—or at least to pretend to forget—that the university has its own set of local practices, and that these determine the shape if not the existence of this urge to begin with.

The second projection for humanities education is already in some respects anticipated in the first. The growth of cultural studies in its many forms is in part a demand-driven response to the changing demographics of higher education in Europe and America. Students without any training in or ideological attachment to the western tradition increasingly ask for cultural referencing closer to home. And while the resulting demand schedule for the study of non-traditional works is the product of a number of factors, including alterations in high school curricula and the advancement of women and minorities to tenured faculty positions, without student-consumers receptive to such works, the *petits récits* of culture would

arguably exist today, if at all, in much more muted form.

Considered across the institutional spectrum, however, the demand for what might be called special interest culture will remain precisely that: a special interest. In fact, one would have reason to think that *general interest* in women's, ethnic, and cultural studies has declined in relative terms in American universities over the last twenty years or so. As the political mood sways rightward, and rising tuition forces more students, including more non-traditional students, into carefully boxed professional careers, the history and literature of the marginalized would itself seem increasingly marginal—a luxury on the one hand, and a mild insurrection on the other hand. Cultural Studies becomes an option for the *committed*, with the rites of identification and entry/exit barriers this implies. Only a selective, non-traditional liberal arts college could hope to market itself successfully on such a politics of commitment.

For the great majority of universities in America and elsewhere, the education market lies in fields with established job placement success and with student-consumers able and willing to incur substantial debt to reserve their deck chairs among the haves. In such a world, Business, Law, Medicine, and Engineering become the majors and degree options of choice. Philosophy, History, and English, on the other hand, find themselves consigned to futures easily seen to be uncertain, unremunerative, or both.

A teaching vocation, traditionally the preserve of the liberal arts graduate, still exists, of course. But it has been altered in at least two significant ways within recent memory. On one hand, demand for primary and secondary teachers, at least in the US and Britain, has not kept pace with increases in student numbers. On the other, the need for remedial coursework, fostered by state exit examinations and the dramatic increase in second-language learners, has variably shifted the pedagogical focus from literature to reading and writing, and almost completely eliminated already moribund subjects such as Classics and Philosophy from the public high school curriculum. As the stress on content (countered to some extent by state and federal proficiency measures) reconstitutes itself in a method-heavy pedagogy, moreover, graduates of education schools, not to mention the military service, often seem better prepared to address the challenges of classroom management than do the sensitive plants of the *artes humaniores*.

At the post-secondary level, the employment crisis in most liberal arts fields that began in early seventies, and that at its most dramatic in the late eighties saw 500 applicants per tenure-line position in American History at state universities in the US (www.nces.ed.gov, 2006), has necessarily affected the ability of related graduate programs to encourage promising candidates to take the PhD. Philosophy has recently experienced a minor revival as business and professional schools beef up their ethics components in response to malpractice suits and prominent corporate scandals.

By far the most visible adjustment in the humanities, however, has occurred in American and to a lesser extent British departments of English, where the traditional focus on preparing secondary teachers has been progressively challenged and even overshadowed by burgeoning writing programs. In a market-driven approach to curriculum design, Writing has a number of conspicuous advantages: as first-year composition, it prepares beginning undergraduates for academic study in substantive disciplines; as technical, business, or legal writing, it hones the expository skills of future professionals in these fields; and as the research essay, it offers a synopsis of important work done for the major. To judge by job announcements, moreover, effective written communication is still valued by prospective employers: "excellent communication skills" (albeit itself a less than excellent formulation) remains a prominently featured tag among commonly listed personal and professional qualifications.

The success that writing programs have had in appealing to a range of constituents is attested to by the growth in demand for writing instructors with advanced training, a development that has in turn given rise to an explosion of PhD tracks in rhetoric and composition. The very flexibility of comp-rhet., however, can also be seen as its signal institutional weakness. If writing can be taught for all the disciplines, and is understood as a desired qualification for graduates in all academic fields, then its successful teaching

would appear to lie in the mastery of a fundamentally contentless “method” or “technique.” And although methods can be intricate enough to require extended training and practice, they characteristically do not require the years of preparation appropriate to content-based subjects. In order to teach a course on European phenomenology, for example, I will need to have read Heidegger, Husserl, Jaspers, and the early Sartre in some detail. I should also be familiar with central issues in post-Cartesian epistemology, and be versed in some general way in the history of western thought. For a business writing course, on the other hand, I need to recognize the different types of memo and profile statement, and should have a general ability to rank and organize ideas. But no substantive knowledge of business practices, individual companies, or the history of business writing will be expected. In order to teach Philosophy, I must know some philosophy. In order to teach technical writing, however, it is not necessary that I know business, engineering, computer science, or any other technical field under review.

Now, it might be countered that while writing programs recruit faculty on the “no previous experience required” label, this is not how it should or must be. Staffing needs for writing courses have exceeded the number of properly qualified instructors, while the standing army of literature and philosophy PhD’s offers a refillable pool of recruits. Speaking of these and others, the former Chair of the English department in a large private university in the Massachusetts once proposed an interim solution: “we’ll just clean out the taverns.” Better-trained and—one assumes—soberer candidates might be expected to have experience or course-work in the fields in which they offer writing instruction. Alternatively, writing programs might be outsourced to departments and schools that also offer academic coursework: technical writing for engineers within the Engineering department, for example; business writing taught by faculty within the Business School (Kirp, 2003).

The sources for outsourcing can be extended even further. If the professoriate rejects (with some cause) the imposition of teaching language, what about writing instruction on the corporate campus—at McDonald’s U., for example, or as a mid-career training component with IBM? If on one hand the teaching of writing is primarily methodological, it can be readily mastered by corporate trainers. If on the other it requires field- or company-specific expertise, on-site instruction would seem to be preferable to the irregular and largely unmonitored structure of campus-centered coursework. In a nutshell, and following the best economic logic, if university writing programs are such a bonanza, is it also necessarily the case that the university is the most effective host for such a feast of potential riches? My hunch is that in 20 years the general answer will be, “no.”

All of which leaves us with the third projection for the future of the humanities in a globalized or corporate university setting: the affirmation of literature, philosophy, history, classics, as performatively different from anything available in the commercial or political spheres. At first blush, this might seem the least promising of alternatives. It offers no succor to those who believe that commercializing the humanities is the key to their survival in a commercialized university. It will only partially please advocates of sectarian political, ethnic, or gender interests, who share with the older heresiarchs of high culture a belief in the thematic importance of their discipline, but differ on the type of culture to be championed and on the approach to its advocacy. It might even strike high culturalists themselves as damagingly anachronistic, “some strange second flowering after date,” as Pater (1889, p. 213) opined on the new aestheticism of the Pre-Raphaelites. If obfuscatory, not worth reviving; if moribund, not worth the effort to resurrect.

Yet it is this alternative I wish to argue for, and on the following grounds: to thrive in the western university of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the humanities will need to offer an education directed to the broadest student audience possible in fields that cannot be reduced or outsourced to commercial interests. To wage war on the corporate university in the name of minoritarian splinter groups will only barricade intellectual work in the humanities behind self-defensive posturing (Bender and Schorske, 1998). Viewed as strident and hostile to institutional planning objectives, cultural studies in this vein will only be tolerated to the extent



that any conspicuous narrowing of curricular diversity risks negative publicity and escalated litigation. Humanities courses and programs that can be effectively outsourced to industry, on the other hand, will almost certainly be done so in the long run to reduce administrative costs and control product outputs.

By insisting that the study of literature, art, culture, and ideas is not only valuable in its own right but appropriate to university study under faculty who profess rather than being simply professionals, humanities departments are provided with a defensible teaching and research mission. It is also, I think, a marketable mission, insofar as the humanities can attempt to fill a market niche for the kind of education not offered in the professions or technical trades. There is reason to believe this niche larger than one might initially suppose. Art and ideas belong to the non-instrumental realm of existence that has, if anything, expanded with the increase in leisure time for the middle range of society over the last two centuries. And while it is not to be doubted that much of this extra non-work time has been absorbed by the proliferation of non-participatory sports and entertainment options spun out by the culture industry, it is also true that the appeal to art and ideas has not been made to students as strongly as it might have been. One powerful reason for this lukewarm advocacy is that many instructors remain themselves unconvinced of its purpose or validity.

It would be overly dramatic to call this state of affairs a *trahison des clercs*, though I believe that one can make a strong argument in principle for a demand-driven higher education system that is not necessarily consumerist. The demand schedule for any general product or service, in other words, is an abstraction of a plurality of vendables targeting buyers with variably different needs and wants. Because “demand” in this sense IS an abstraction, it is easy to reduce it to its simplest, most quantifiable terms, and particularly so where the “good” in question has not conventionally been subjected to any consistent or rigorous economic modelling. So, for higher education, we might be tempted to view the demand for courses, majors, and degree programs as a function of tuition investments, subject difficulty, and anticipated future earnings.

Yet at least SOME of the demanders covered by the model will make curricular selections according to different, even incompatible, criteria: they will choose to take *difficult* subjects in unremunerative fields even if it means incurring substantial debt to do so. Why? For any number of reasons, including influential instructors, peer or parental pressure, snobbery, the love of challenge, intrinsic interest in a particular field, status consciousness, and so on. These criteria can be individually examined elsewhere. The important point here is that the survival of high culture in the university is not *partout* incompatible with economic models of institutional functioning. Although the demand for the liberal arts might be calibrated differently than the demand for more instrumental degree programs, demand curves do exist for both.

To the extent that the humanities promote an education in values, and to the extent that this education is a demand-driven factor in student enrollment, university humanities departments have every incentive to exploit these connections as part of a thriving institutional mission. In the end, it may well be that the non-instrumentality of a liberal arts education will emerge as the best instrument for marketing its importance to prospective students.

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