

## The 'post-historical' university<sup>1</sup>

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Dedicated to Jean-François Lyotard

### ABSTRACT

I want to take a more expansive view and attempt to relate the challenges facing universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand to a wider set of historical and philosophical issues. Taking my lead from Bill Readings I shall argue that three ideas of the university dominate the modern era: the Kantian idea of reason; the Humboldtian idea of culture, and; the technobureaucratic idea of excellence. The idea of the modern university, historically speaking, is to be identified with a set of founding discourses initiated by Kant, the Humboldt brothers, John Newman and others. While the University of Excellence is still modern in the sense that it is both regulated and unified through the force of a single idea, nevertheless, it significantly breaks with the set of founding historical discourses of the university.

### Introduction

Others in this collection have focused almost exclusively on universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand and have done so with particular reference to what we might call aspects of the emerging political economy of higher education: universities as positive instruments of nation-building; the politics and the reform of tertiary education; the vision and politics of newly established wananga; the New Zealand Business Roundtable critique of existing statutory provisions for academic freedom.

While I have strong sympathies with Jane Kelsey and Simon Marginson and share their concern to protect and enhance the university, it will come as no surprise that I disagree with Roger Kerr. He wants to relax conditions for academic freedom and to pare back, if not abolish, the critic and conscience role of the university. Academics, he says, should only speak out on public matters on the basis of their own disciplinary knowledge and expertise. He argues for this position by making a radical separation between the pursuit of truth and knowledge, on the one hand, and the notion of academic freedom and criticism, on the other. He suggests that the commitment to truth and knowledge is the essence of the university and that academic freedom and the role of critic and conscience of society flow from this commitment. By contrast, I will argue that the two cannot be separated; that Roger Kerr misunderstands the Kantian idea of the university and the notion of a critical reason on which it is based. The critical attitude is exactly what distinguishes the pursuit for truth and knowledge, and cannot be split off from it. The form of a valid argument does not change whether one's disciplinary background is in biochemistry, Elizabethan drama, computer science or urban geography. It is precisely this critical philosophy which is the modern source of criticism and provides a warrant for the 'critic and conscience of society. At one the same time it marks out the university as a founding democratic institution which protects the free society against both arbitrary

exercise of power by the state and social injustices engendered by the market. When I heard Roger Kerr say that he objected to the critic and conscience role and that academics should speak out on public issues only if they had some disciplinary warrant, I could not help thinking of his own case. As Executive Director of the New Zealand Business Roundtable since 1986 Roger Kerr has been responsible for reports on every conceivable aspect of economic, social and political life: not only aspects of economic policy but also constitutional, welfare and social issues. His argument falls down when we apply his principles to his own case.

I want to take a more expansive view and attempt to relate the challenges facing universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand to a wider set of historical and philosophical issues. Taking my lead from Bill Readings I shall argue that three ideas of the university dominate the modern era: the Kantian idea of reason; the Humboldtian idea of culture, and; the technobureaucratic idea of excellence. The idea of the modern university, historically speaking, is to be identified with a set of founding discourses initiated by Kant, the Humboldt brothers, John Newman and others. While the University of Excellence is still modern in the sense that it is both regulated and unified through the force of a single idea, nevertheless, it significantly breaks with the set of founding historical discourses of the university.

I differ from Readings because I think the founding discourses of the modern university have been ruptured by the discourse of excellence. The combined pressures of globalisation, managerialism and marketisation, have stripped the university of its historical reference points and threatens to permanently change its mission and to jettison both its freedoms and institution autonomy. I hasten to add that my use of the term 'post-historical' is not meant to suggest an 'end of history' or 'end of ideology' thesis: these are the melodramatic tropes of Hegelians who believe that history is motored by a dialectical struggle of opposing forces which ends when one side prevails over the other. Thus, right Hegelians like Francis Fukuyama, believe that the collapse of communism after 1989 and the end of the Cold War signals the triumph of capitalism, and, therefore, the 'end of history', in much the same way that doctrinaire Marxists believed that history ended with establishment of the 'classless' society and the rule of the proletariat. My use of 'post-historical', however, *is* meant to signify an 'end of modernity' and, consequently, an institutional transformation of the modern university.<sup>2</sup>

First, I trace Readings' argument concerning the three dominant ideas or grand narratives of the university, in terms first crystallised by the French philosopher, Jean-François Lyotard who died in April of this year. I would like to dedicate this lecture to him.<sup>3</sup> Second, I identify two neo-liberal or corporate forms of the 'post-historical' university as they are defined in the recent reviews of higher education in the United Kingdom (the Dearing Report) and Australia (The West Report). Finally, I return to Readings (1996: 119) who asks the question: 'How are we to re-imagine the university, once its guiding idea of culture has ceased to have an essential function?' He suggests that the university is in *ruins* and he asks us to ponder the question of what it means to dwell in the ruins<sup>4</sup> without falling back on romance or nostalgia. I acknowledge the force of his question but provide a different answer to the question.

## The modern ('historical') university

Timothy Bahti (1987: 438) discusses the historiography of the modern university in terms which not only emphasise its historical break with the medieval university but also echo the theme of the 'post-historical':

Standard histories of the university distinguish the 'older' and modern versions according to a chronology that is familiar from other such histories as the history of literature, the history of industrialization and modernization (urbanization, rationalization, etc.), and the history of warfare. Somewhere between the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, the model at hand changes: whether the opposition is (neo)classical/romantic, early capitalist/high capitalist, or manual/mechanized, the switch is made, the revolution occurs, and we are all henceforth 'post-' -

post-romantic, post-revolutionary, post-feudal - which is to say modern. With respect to the university, the opposition is medieval/modern, the place is Germany and the time is the end of the eighteenth century.

Bahti indicates that whereas the seventeenth century had been heyday for the European academies of sciences, the eighteenth had been the low-point for German universities with student rioting and drunkenness, dropping enrolments and little relationship between subjects taught and vocations. In the last decade of the eighteenth century there was talk of abolishing the university altogether, allowing the academies of sciences and the new practical vocational schools to take its place. And then in 1810, the University of Berlin was founded. In the intervening years following the defeat of Prussia by Napoleon, the reorganization of the Prussian bureaucracy occurred and, as Bahti (1987: 439) points out, also the discourse of German idealism becomes established with 'the philosophical writings on and for the university, from Kant and Schelling and then from Fichte, Schleiermacher, and Humboldt'.

For Kant it was the idea of reason that provided an organising principle for the disciplines, with 'philosophy' as its home. Reason is the founding principle of the Kantian university: it confers universality upon the institution and, thereby, ushers in modernity. As the immanent unifying principle of the Kantian university, reason displaces the Aristotelian<sup>5</sup> order of disciplines of the medieval university based on the seven liberal arts, and substitutes a quasi-industrial arrangement of the faculties.<sup>6</sup> The free exercise of a self-critical and self-legislating reason controls the higher faculties of theology, law and medicine, establishing autonomy for the university as a whole.

Readings (1996: 59) argues that there is, in Kant, a problem or paradox that haunts the constitution of the modern university: how to institutionalise reason's autonomy, or how to unify reason and the state, institution and autonomy? Kant attempts to reconcile this conflict through the *republican subject*, the universal subject of humanity, who incarnates this conflict. Thus, while it is one of the functions of the university to produce technicians or men of affairs for the state, the state must protect the university to ensure the rule of reason in public life. Philosophy, as the tribunal of reason, must protect the university from the abuse of power from the state and must act to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate conflict, that is, the arbitrary exercise of authority.

Humboldt's project for the foundation of the University of Berlin in 1810 is decisive for the modern university up until the present day. Once the idea of reason is replaced with the idea of a national culture, the university becomes pressed into service of the state. For the German idealists the unity of knowledge and culture has been lost and needs to be reintegrated into a unified cultural science (*Bildung*). The university is assigned the task of producing and inculcating national self-knowledge and as such becomes the institution charged with watching over the spiritual life of the people.

The English, under John Newman and Matthew Arnold, substitute literature for philosophy as the central discipline of the university, and, therefore, also of national culture. The possibility of a unified national culture is defined explicitly in terms of the study of a tradition of national literature (or *canon*, as in the case of the United States). Literature and the function of criticism is entrusted with a social mission in the Anglo-American university. In England, the idea of culture gets its purchase in opposition to science and technology, partly as a result of the threat posed by industrialisation and mass civilisation. Newman gives us a 'liberal education' as the proper function of the university, which educates its charges to be gentlemen, not through the study of philosophy, but through the study of literature.<sup>7</sup>

In 'Literature: A Lecture in the School of Philosophy and Letters' delivered in 1858, Newman (1968: 201-21) 'explicitly positions as the site of the development of both an idea of the nation and the study of literature as the means of training national subjects' (Rea dings, 1966: 76). Newman (1968: 230) suggests that 'A literature, when it is formed, is a national and historical fact; it is a matter of the past and present, and can be as little ignored as the present, as little undone as the past'. National language and literature defines the character of 'every great people', and Newman speaks

of the classics of a national literature by which he means 'those authors who have had the foremost place in exemplifying the powers and conducting the development of its language' (p. 240).

The grand narrative of the university, centered on the cultural production of a liberal, reasoning, citizen subject, in the wake of globalisation, is no longer credible. As Readings (1996: 5) argues: 'The University ... no longer participates in the historical project for humanity that was the legacy of the Enlightenment: the historical project of culture'. Excellence has become the last unifying principle of the modern university, yet the discourse of excellence brackets out the question of value in favour of measurement and substitutes accounting solutions for questions of accountability. As an integrating principle excellence is entirely meaningless: it has no real referent. Under corporatisation universities have become sites for the development of 'human resources'. As Readings (1996: 12) remarks:

University mission statements, like their publicity brochures, share two distinctive features nowadays. On the one hand, they all claim that theirs is a unique educational institution. On the other hand, they all go on to describe this uniqueness in exactly the same way.

He goes on to tell the true story about how Cornell University Parking services received an award recently for 'excellence in parking'. The discourse of excellence is content-less: it does not enable us to make judgements of value or purpose and it does not help us to answer questions of *what*, *how* or *why* we should teach or research.

### The 'post-historical' university

Anyone with a passing familiarity with Readings' thesis as I have presented it must recognise the traces of Jean-François Lyotard's influence.<sup>8</sup> *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984) originally published in Paris in 1979, became an instant *cause célèbre* because Lyotard analysed the status of knowledge, science and the university in way that many critics believed signalled an epochal break not only with the so-called 'modern era' but also with various traditionally 'modern' ways of viewing the world. It was written, Lyotard (1984: xxv) asserts, 'at this very Postmodern moment that finds the University nearing what may be its end'.

In *The Postmodern Condition* Jean-François Lyotard was concerned with grand narratives which had grown out of the Enlightenment and had come to mark modernity. In *The Postmodern Explained to Children* Lyotard (1992: 29) mentions: 'the progressive emancipation of reason and freedom, the progressive or catastrophic emancipation of labour ..., the enrichment of all through the progress of capitalist technoscience, and even ... the salvation of creatures through the conversion of souls to the Christian narrative of martyred love'. Grand narratives are the stories that cultures tell themselves about their own practices and beliefs in order to legitimate them. They function as a unified single story that purport to legitimate or found a set of practices, a cultural self-image, discourse or institution.<sup>9</sup>

Lyotard holds that capitalist renewal after the 1930s and the post-war upsurge of technology has led to a 'crisis' of scientific knowledge and to the internal erosion of the very prospect of legitimation. He locates the seeds of such 'delegitimation' in the decline of the legitimating power of the grand narratives of the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> In particular, the process of European cultural disintegration<sup>11</sup> is symbolised most clearly by the end of philosophy as the universal metalanguage able to underwrite all claims to knowledge and, thereby, to unify the rest of culture.

Since the late 1970s neo-liberalism has become the dominant grand narrative. (The publication of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* coincided with the election to power of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government in Britain.) A particular variant revitalises the master discourse of neo-classical economic liberalism and advances it as a basis for a global reconstruction of society. A form of economic reason encapsulated in the notion of *homo economicus*, with its abstract and universalist assumptions of individuality, rationality and self-interest, has captured the policy

agendas of Western countries. Part of its innovation has been the way in which the neo-liberal grand narrative has successfully extended the principle of self-interest into the status of a paradigm for understanding politics itself, and, purportedly, *all* behaviour and human action. In the realm of higher education policy at every opportunity the market has been substituted for the state: students are now 'customers' and teachers are 'providers'. The notion of vouchers is suggested as a universal panacea to problems of funding and quality. The teaching/learning relation has been reduced to an implicit contract between buyer and seller. As Lyotard (1984: 4) argued prophetically in *The Postmodern Condition* 'Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorised in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange'.

## Two corporate forms of the post-historical university

Fundamental to understanding the new global economy has been a rediscovery of the economic importance of higher education and structural shifts in the production of knowledge.<sup>12</sup> Equipped with this central understanding and guided by neo-liberal theories of human capital, public choice, and new public management, Western governments have begun the process of restructuring universities, obliterating the distinction between education and training in the development of a massified system of higher education designed for the twenty-first century. Recently, the governments of the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand have convened reviews of higher education to determine the shape and imperatives of the sector for the twenty-first century. I shall briefly describe the underlying visions of the Dearing Report (United Kingdom) and the West Report (Australia) as two corporate forms of the post-historical university.

### *1. The Dearing Report: The Corporate University in the Service of Global Capital*

The Dearing report recognizes globalisation as the major influence upon the UK economy and the labour market with strong implications for higher education. Analysing the Dearing report it is possible to talk of the *globalisation of tertiary or higher education*, according to three interrelated functions: the *knowledge* function, the *labour* function, and the *institutional* function (see Figure 1). We can talk of the primacy of the knowledge function and its globalisation, which has a number of dimensions: knowledge, its production and transmission or acquisition, is still primary as it was with the idea of the modern university, but now its value is legitimated increasingly in terms of its ability to attract global capital and its potential labour service functions to trans-national corporations. Knowledge is valued for its strict utility rather than as an end in itself or for its emancipatory or enlightenment effects.<sup>13</sup> The globalisation of the labour function is formulated in terms of both the production of technically skilled people to meet the needs of trans-national corporations and the ideology of lifelong learning, where individuals can 're-equip themselves for a succession of jobs over a working lifetime'. The institutional function is summed up in the phrase 'higher education will become a global international service and tradeable commodity'. The competitive survival of institutions is tied to the globalisation of its organisational form (emulating private sector enterprises) and the globalisation of its 'services'. With this function already a stronger and closer alliance between global corporations and universities has developed, especially in terms of the funding of research and development, and, in some cases, universities have become global corporations with international sites for teaching and research. The latter is a trend likely to develop further with the world integration and convergence of media, telecommunications and publishing industries.

It is important to note that the Dearing Report still acknowledges the British university as a site for the development, preservation and transmission of national culture, albeit in its commodified, tradeable and exportable forms. A commissioned paper for the West Report, by contrast, is even more unremitting.

### Globalisation (World Economic Integration)

#### *Main Causes*

- technological changes in telecommunications, information and transport
- the (political) promotion of free trade and the reduction in trade protection

#### *Main Elements*

- the organisation of production on a global scale
- the acquisition of inputs and services from around the world which reduces costs
- the formation of cross-border alliances and ventures, enabling companies to combine assets, share their costs and penetrate new markets
- integration of world capital markets
- availability of information on international benchmarking of commercial performance
- better consumer knowledge and more spending power, hence, more discriminating choices
- greater competition from outside the established industrial centres

#### *Consequences for the Labour Market*

- downward pressure on pay, particularly for unskilled labour
- upward pressure on the quality of labour input
- competition is increasingly based on quality rather than price
- people and ideas assume greater significance in economic success because they are less mobile than other investments such as capital, information and technology
- unemployment rates of unskilled workers relative to skilled workers have increased
- more, probably smaller, companies whose business is knowledge and ways of handling knowledge and information are needed

#### *Implications for Higher Education*

- high quality, relevant higher education provision will be a key factor in attracting and anchoring the operations of global corporations
- institutions will need to be at the forefront in offering opportunities for lifelong learning
- institutions will need to meet the aspirations of individuals to re-equip themselves for a succession of jobs over a working lifetime
- higher education must continue to provide a steady stream of technically skilled people to meet needs of global corporations
- higher education will become a global service and tradable commodity
- higher education institutions, organisationally, may need to emulate private sector enterprises in order to flourish in a fast-changing global economy
- the new economic order will place a premium on knowledge and institutions, therefore, will need to recognise the knowledge, skills and understanding which individuals can use as a basis to secure further knowledge and skills
- the development of a research base to provide new knowledge, understanding and ideas to attract high technology companies

Source: Compiled from the Dearing Report, 'The Wider Context', 1997.  
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/niche/index.htm>

**Figure 1**  
**Globalisation (World Economic Integration)**

## 2. The West Report: The Hollowed-Out University

The West Committee's discussion paper 'Review of Higher Education Financing and Policy', released in late November 1997, begins with a preface by its chairman, Roderick West, who asserts two 'certainties': first, 'the twenty-first century will mark the era of tertiary education and lifelong education for everybody' and, second, there are 'extraordinary possibilities in the provision of education through ever expanding technological advance'. These two elements dictate the approach to financing and policy.

The paper spells out a vision for 'learning for life', a seamless post-secondary education environment with commitments to building a culture of learning, civic values, scholarship, preparing graduates, advancing knowledge and skills, 'developing the industry', and equity. It lists the principles on which the future should be built, including a commitment to universal access, a consumer-driven system emphasising student choice, outcome-based assessment of quality, cost-effectiveness and greater levels of competition from the private sector.

The vision of a corporate form of the post-historical university is provided in a commissioned paper entitled 'Australian Higher Education in the Era of Mass Customisation' by Global Alliance Limited. Global Alliance Limited (GAL) is a Tokyo-based investment bank established in 1995 which specialises in providing investment and corporate advisory services mainly to Japanese and Taiwanese companies, especially in relation to the information technology sector. It has investments on its own account in Internet service providers and related companies.

The report proclaims both the end of 'the era of homogeneity' under state planning and the beginning of another era that will be consumer-oriented, more diversified and exposed to international competition. The remnants of an era of state planning show that while costs of production are world competitive, productivity incentives are poor and capital management requires reform. The existing providers, protected in the Australian domestic market, will be opened up to the forces of international competition as a result of changes taking place in the global economy.

The report identifies the following forces for change: the reducing Government fee structure, the associated shift of power to the consumer, increasing international competitive exposure and changes in the technology of production and consumption. Computers will lower costs of marketing and the provision of customer services while at the same time as promoting greater access to learning and enhancing the quality of the learning experience. Back-end systems will be automated and learning systems will increasingly apply computers so that courses can be delivered over the Web. The effects of these forces will lead to 'the hollowing out of the university'. The report is worth quoting at some length here:

The vertically integrated university is a product of brand image, government policy, history and historical economies of scale in support services. If government policy is no longer biased in favour of this form, and technology liberates providers from one location, then we would expect to see new forms arising such as multiple outlet vertically integrated specialist schools and web based universities ... Specialist service providers, such as testing companies and courseware developers will arise, as will superstar teachers who are not tied to any one university. Many universities will become marketing and production coordinators or systems integrators. They will no longer all be vertically integrated education versions of the 1929 Ford assembly plant in Detroit (p. 12).

The overall result of these combined forces will be an increased segmentation of markets, an increased specialisation and customisation of supply of courses and an increased specialisation of providers. The new university business system will take the form of one of a series of possible business models: low cost producer university; Asia middle class web university; Harvard in Australia university; world specialist school university.

## Reimagining the university

Readings asks how we might re-imagine the university once we have had to relinquish the notion of culture as the unifying idea: how should we attempt to live in the ruins of the university without romance or nostalgia. Since Kant the university has operated as a privileged model of free and rational discussion, one, based upon a notion of communication, that ties the individual to the nation-state. Readings provides us with a different answer. He offers us a new community of dissensus as a model for the post-historical university: not one based upon consensus and transparency but rather upon openness, opacity, incompleteness and difference.<sup>14</sup>

I have some sympathy for Readings' view but rather than explore the underlying notion of community at stake - its political dimensions and exclusions - I want to take a different tack. I want to suggest a form of the post-historical university that does not break with the founding historical discourses and their single unifying ideas but preserves them, reinterprets and adapts them to new conditions, reinvents and redefines these ideas as an imaginative basis for resistance against the narrowing of thought.

The university becomes modern when all of its activities are organized in terms of a single regulatory and unifying idea: the 'uni' of the 'versity', so to speak. The founding historical discourses are the primary intellectual resources from which it is possible to reimagine the university: on what other possible basis might we reimagine the university? Yet I am suggesting a sense of the 'post-historical' that is a return to the past which is *critical* rather than innocent or romantic: of moving from a single unifying idea to a constellation or field of overlapping and mutually self-reinforcing forces that constitute the university tradition. In short, the discourses of the modern university, themselves, exercise a unifying narrative that needs to be reworked and reinvented with each successive generation as effective history. Let me briefly sketch what I have in mind by reference to the ideas of the modern university.

### *1. The Kantian University and The Idea of Reason*

Kant's critical philosophy or critical reason as a source of criticism, critique and reflection inaugurates the modern discourse of the university and becomes the basis for self-criticism, self-reflection and self-governance (or autonomy). As the French philosopher Michel Foucault argues (1996: 312):

the thread which may connect us to the Enlightenment is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements but, rather, the permanent reactivation of an attitude - that is, of a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era.

### *2. The Humboldtian University and The Idea of Culture*

There are two critical reappraisals or returns in respect of the Humboldtian university: first a move from *Bildung* as self-cultivation and moral self-formation to learning processes (or pedagogy) based on the ethical relations of self and other; and, second, a move from the notion of 'national culture' to 'cultural self-understandings' and social reproduction which implies: a recognition and valuing of indigenous cultures and traditional knowledges; an awareness of 'nation' as a socio-historical and political construction; and, an acceptance of the reality of a global multiculturalism. For Aotearoa/New Zealand, there has been a slow and grudging acceptance of the significance of Maori knowledges as a basis for academic study that has gained some momentum only in recent years.<sup>15</sup> The development of wananga - both iwi-based and urban - with state-funding on an equal basis to pakeha institutions, will in years to come provide, perhaps, the most distinctive characteristic differentiating the national system.

### *3. The University of Literacy Culture (Newman-Arnold-Leavis)*

This idea concerns national culture as a literary culture revealed in the tradition of a national literature or canon and, critically, examines the structural shift from a literary to post-literary culture. The modern western university was primarily a print culture shaped by print technologies for the creation, storage and transmission of knowledge; the shift to a new techno-culture is being shaped by digital technologies for the storage and exchange of information and the radical concordance of image, text and sound in new multi-media forms of communication.<sup>16</sup> In terms of this critical reappraisal the national canon is not restricted to literature or the realms of elite high culture but is interwoven with a diversity of cultural products and traditions in film, music and television that reflect an acceptance of local and popular culture.



#### 4. *The Corporate Massified University*

It may be surprising to some that I should want to rescue or maintain anything at all from the corporate university and yet I believe there have been some positive changes. I shall mention only one here: the move away from the university's cultural elite formation function to principles of mass access and participation. It is this idea which still distinguishes the era of the state-funded university based on the idea of modern democracy and the one that promises the greatest institutional transformation of the university.

**Reimagining the University**

From a single unifying idea to a constellation or field of overlapping and mutually self-reinforcing ideas:

**1. THE KANTIAN UNIVERSITY AND THE IDEA OF REASON**

Kant's critical philosophy or critical reason as a source of criticism, critique and reflection – self-criticism, self-reflection and self-governance.

'the thread which may connect us to the Enlightenment is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements but, rather, the permanent reactivation of an attitude – that is, of a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era' (Foucault, 1996: 312).

**2. THE HUMBOLDTIAN UNIVERSITY AND THE IDEA OF CULTURE**

2a. From *Bildung* as self-cultivation and moral self-formation to learning processes (pedagogy) based on an ethical relation of self and other.

2b. From national culture to cultural self-understandings and reproduction which implies:

- i) a recognition of indigenous cultures and traditional knowledges;
- ii) an awareness of 'nation' as a socio-historical construction;
- iii) an acceptance of the reality of multiculturalism.

**3. THE UNIVERSITY OF LITERARY CULTURE (Newman-Arnold-Leavis)**

National culture as a literary culture revealed in the tradition of a national literature or canon. The shift from a literary to post-literary culture: the modern western university was a print culture shaped by print technologies for the creation, storage and transmission of knowledge. The shift to a new techno-culture is being shaped by digital technologies for the storage and exchange of information.

**4. THE CORPORATE MASSIFIED UNIVERSITY**

From cultural élite formation to mass access and participation.

**Figure 2**  
***Reimagining the University***

With these resources, with this constellation of ideas and their imaginative reconstruction, the university might be able to preserve its historical commitments to reason and to culture and, thereby, to play its part, alongside other international agencies, international movements and world-oriented bodies, in establishing and maintaining what I call an agenda for alternative

globalisations based upon the promotion of a global social contract, arrangements for global governance and cultural globalisation (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3**  
***Agenda for Alternative Globalisations***

The agenda of alternative globalisations is meant to begin the intellectual task of refashioning the university's role as the critic and conscience society in a global context. In a globally integrated world environment universities can continue to operate as something more than simply labour service centers for multinational corporations: they have an important role in their historic commitments to reason and to culture and yet at the same time must also assume new critical roles.

## Notes

1. Lecture presented in the Winter Lectures series, *The University in the 21st Century*, Maidment Theatre, The University of Auckland, 25 August, 1998. I would like to thank Professor Jim Marshall, Dr Peter Roberts and Matthew Fitzsimons for comments on an earlier version of this paper.
2. For the notion of the 'end of modernity' I have in mind see, for example, Vattimo (1988, 1991, 1992).
3. Both Lyotard and Readings exercised a strong direction over my thought and have been supportive of my work. Lyotard (1995) wrote the Foreword to the collection I edited, *Education and the Postmodern Condition* (1995), to which Readings (1995) contributed the final chapter. Readings invited me in 1994 to give a paper (see Peters, 1996) at his multidisciplinary seminar at the Universite de Montreal called 'L'Universite et la Culture: La Crise Identitaire d'une Institution' upon which his book was based. He died in an air accident on October 31, 1994.
4. For a history of the trope of ruins and modernity's preoccupation with 'the primordial unity and immediacy of a lost origin' see Readings (1996: 169).
5. The Aristotelian order of disciplines was divided into the trivium (grammar, rhetoric and knowledge) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music).

6. In *The Conflict of the Faculties* Kant (1799: 23, orig. 1798) writes:

It was not a bad idea, whoever first conceived and proposed a public means for treating the sum of knowledge (and properly the heads who devote themselves to it), in a quasi *industrial* manner, with a division of labour where, for so many fields as there may be of knowledge, so many public teachers would be allotted, professors being trustees, forming together a kind of common scientific entity, called a university (or high school) and having autonomy (for only scholars can pass judgement on scholars as such); and, thanks to its faculties (various small societies where university teachers are ranged, in keeping with the variety of the main branches of knowledge), the university would be authorised to admit, on the one hand, student-apprentices from the lower schools aspiring to its level, and to grant, on the other hand - after prior examination, and on its own authority - to teachers who are 'free' (not drawn from the members themselves) and called 'Doctors', a universally recognised rank (conferring upon them a degree) - in short, *creating* them.

7. Readings (1996: 78) argues that 'For Arnold, as for Eliot and Leavis after him, Shakespeare occupies the position that the German Idealists ascribed to the Greeks: that of immediately representing an organic community to itself in a living language'. In 'The Idea of a University' F. R. Leavis proposes that all study should be centered in the study of literature, centered in the seventeenth century and based on Shakespeare as the natural origin of culture. Leavis believes that the University of Culture can provide the loss center and heal the split between the organic culture and mass civilization.
8. See also Smith & Webster's (1997) *The Postmodern University? Contested Visions of Higher Education in Society* and Crittenden's (1997) 'Minding Their Business'. See also Derrida (1983), Habermas (1987) and Clark and Royle (1995).
9. He says in a now famous formulation:

I will use the term *modern* to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse ... making explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth (Lyotard, 1984: xxii).

By contrast, he defines *postmodern* simply as 'incredulity toward metanarratives' (Lyotard, 1984: xxiv).

10. The speculative narrative of the unity of all knowledge held that knowledge is worthy of its name only if it can generate a second-order discourse that functions to legitimate it, otherwise such 'knowledge' would amount to mere ideology. The process of 'delegitimation' has revealed that not only does science play its own language game (and consequently is both on a par with and incapable of legitimating other language games) but also it is incapable of legitimating itself as speculation assumed it could.
11. By European cultural disintegration Lyotard is referring, first, to the collapse of the monarchies and the two world wars, and, second, what Friedrich Nietzsche calls the question of European nihilism. For a useful essay which addresses similar themes see Shapiro (1991).
12. The OECD and the World Bank have stressed the significance of education and training for the development of 'human resources', for upskilling and increasing the competencies of workers, and for the production of research and scientific knowledge, as keys to participation in the new global economy. Both Peter Drucker (1993) and Michael Porter (1990) emphasise the importance of knowledge - its economics and productivity - as the basis for national competition within the international marketplace. Lester Thurow (1996: 68) suggests that 'a technological shift to an era dominated by man-made brainpower industries' is one of five economic tectonic plates which constitute a new game with new rules: 'Today knowledge and skills now stand alone as the only source of comparative advantage. They have become the key ingredient in the late twentieth century's location of economic activity'. See also Papadopoulos (1994: 170) and Delanty (1998).
13. The developments described here under the banner of globalisation which accentuate the primacy of knowledge, are further underwritten by recent advances in so-called 'growth theory'. Neoclassical economics does not specify how knowledge accumulation occurs. As a result there is no mention of human capital and there is no direct role for education. Further, in the neo classical model there is no income 'left over' (all output is paid to either capital or labor) to act as a reward or incentive for knowledge accumulation. Accordingly, there are no externalities to knowledge accumulation. By contrast, new growth theory has highlighted the role of education in the creation of human capital

and in the production of new knowledge. On this basis it has explored the possibilities of education-related externalities. In short, while the evidence is far from conclusive at this stage there is a consensus emerging that education is important for successful research activities (e.g., by producing scientists and engineers), which are, in turn, important for productivity growth and; education creates human capital, which directly affects knowledge accumulation and therefore productivity growth (see Report 8, 'Externalities in Higher Education', Dearing, 1997).

14. My 'Cybernetics, Cyberspace and the University: Herman Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* and the Dream of a Universal Language' (Peters, 1994) argues a very similar line, except I use the notion of a universal and transparent language rather than a model or mode of communication.
15. See Ranginui Walker (1999) 'The Development of Maori Studies in Tertiary Education'. Some indication of this process and the proximity to our colonial past can be gained from the fact that Maori Studies was only created as a department separate from Anthropology at University of Auckland in 1991.
16. See the essays by Timothy Luke and Brian Opie in Peters and Roberts (1998).

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