

The Globalisation of Academe: Myths and Reality

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Globalisation has many meanings. What is to some a purely economic trend others see as some inevitable phase of human development, others still as a perverse ideology. In the sense of unfettered extension of specific cultural and social contents to geographical areas all over the globe, it is a form shaping human settlement, trade, finance, ideology, religion, technology, language and so on, singly or (more commonly) in various combinations. It is the overarching synonym of (or euphemism for) words indicating the specific phenomena, like 'colonisation' (extension of human occupation), 'civilisation' (extension of culture and mores), 'imperialism' (extension of political and economic domination), or 'proselytism' (extension of religious or other ideology). It is not a new trend: it began in prehistoric times when *homo sapiens* settled all parts of the earth. It continued at the dawn of history, witness, among others, the black terracotta head, possibly Roman but definitely not Meso-American, found in a pre-Colombian site in Toluca Valley near Mexico City; and the puzzling residues of tobacco found in Egyptian mummies.¹ It was indeed the very world-wide nature of that settlement which allowed a single animal genus to develop separately during the past hundred millennia or so into distinctive and self-contained civilisations, with their various institutions, mythologies, languages and customs. That is why, whatever the contents of globalisation, this form is always dialectically and dynamically complementary to its opposite, particularity or, if you prefer, localisation; and it makes little sense to talk about one without

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taking the other into account, which unfortunately is what most people are doing.

This dialectic complementarity has been apparent at various times in history when particular nations spreading their political and economic influence over their neighbours eventually saw their empires torn by the revival of those very nationalisms that appeared to have been conquered and absorbed. It is no accident that the end of the second millennium is witnessing both tendencies: the trend towards world domination by huge transnational conglomerates and the strenuous defence of local and fractional interests. More evidence comes from linguistic history. Latin became the global language of the Roman Empire, so that many of those who gave it literary distinction were not Roman: Virgil and Catullus were born in Celtic-speaking Cisalpine Gaul; Horace came from Apulia; Seneca from Spain; Tacitus probably from Belgium. But this very force unifying Latin into a language spoken and written throughout a vast territory necessarily led to its fragmentation into various dialects, which became in due course national languages. The same is happening today to English, which is already divided into a multiplicity of Englishes, not always mutually comprehensible.² The dialectics of globalism and localism can be seen at work in one of its most representative embodiments: the Roman Empire.

How the Empire worked cannot be summed up in a few words, but it is not impossible to single out a few general criteria, which remain significant even when taking particular exceptions into account. Rome successfully imposed its domination also by being mindful of local interests. It enlisted the cooperation of the conquered populations, integrating its army with the local communities, delegating authority to local chieftains, granting citizenship and privileges first to important supporters, then, with the *Constitutio Antoniniana* proclaimed in 212 A.D. by an otherwise rather disreputable emperor, Caracalla, to all inhabitants of the Empire. Thus they gained access to Roman justice, often significantly better than local practice. Roman law was based on three principles which remain crucial even today: *honeste vivere*, live honestly; *neminem lædere*, do not infringe on other people's

rights; and *suum unicuique tribuere*, render to each one his or her own. Of course heavy taxes were levied and local produce exported to the benefit of the conqueror's markets, but on the whole rapacity was the result not of systematic depredation but of arbitrary arrogance, for which Roman representatives were occasionally punished by Senate (remember Cicero's prosecution of Verres in 70 BC). The structure that came closest to Rome in its imperial and colonial practice was the British Empire, whose policies were strongly influenced by the classical education of its lawgivers. One of the cornerstones of the influence and power of both empires, which explains the success of their colonies in attracting settlers, or in settling as freemen those who had been sent there as a punishment, was that abuse, however widespread, was not sanctioned by law, as it still is in some areas of today's world. Even the lowliest oppressed citizen had some chance of redress in the courts. Roman slavery was cruel, but not totally divorced from some sense of responsibility towards the slaves, for the very good reason that their existence was the precondition of continued and profitable exploitation. Some of them were freed and reached positions of importance in society: a few became teachers and educators (a process which seems to be reversed in present-day universities).

The executive structure of the Empire was often haphazard and unsystematic, yet even in the absence of direct government Roman rule was most effectively exercised and maintained by cultural and administrative means through a number of quasi-governmental instrumentalities involving the upper classes of subject nations in ritual worship, public spectacles, patronage of cultural activities and civil benefactions. Culture and education were important elements of social, hence political and economic, cohesion and success. Given the amount of writing required, even in ancient times, to run public administrations, literacy and literature were important. Allied to Rome's military and economic power, Latin culture had an overwhelming impact which absorbed some conquered cultures (as in the case of the Etruscans and of many Celtic nations). But on the whole Rome was very tolerant of other languages, mores and religions. The conquest of Greece

reinforced those many elements of Hellenism, which Rome had already accepted from the Greek colonies in Italy. A minor near-Eastern cult arisen within the administrative boundaries of the Empire, Christianity, suffered persecution because it rejected the tolerance extended to the many cults accepted and practised in Rome (like those of Isis, Serapis, Harpocrates, Mithras, the Great Mother, the Sun God, etc.). Unlike polytheism, with its plethora of competing gods and goddesses, Christianity aimed at providing a unified and dominant ideological framework for the interpretation of the world. It called itself, using a Latinised Greek word, catholic, that is 'tending to the whole' [καθ' ολου], in other words global. So long as the Empire upheld the fiction of the divine nature of its rulers, Christianity and the Empire were at loggerheads. But as soon as a more realistic understanding prevailed of the political power of religion, State and Church became allies, and the early disputes about supremacy were replaced by a relationship of fruitful complementarity. By Dante's times Rome could be identified with Christ and join Jerusalem as one of the metaphors for the Kingdom of God.³

According to the Japanese social philosopher Masazaku Yamasaki,⁴ the so-called Western civilisation, rooted in European culture, produced some of the most important social and political phenomena in human history (democracy, capitalism, communism, imperialism, colonialism) because it was shaped largely by the unified religious world view of the Catholic Church; whereas the more ancient and equally rich Asian cultures, tolerant of many creeds and ways of life, failed to produce a globalising ideology. But one should really look beyond Catholicism, because the various schisms which caused the adjective 'Roman' to be added to its name did not weaken Christianity's secular and political expansion: indeed they allowed various forms of heretically inspired liberalism and free-thinking to co-exist with Catholic authoritarianism and dogmatism. Christianity was enriched by them, as well as by Aquinas's gigantic intellectual effort bringing together classical philosophy and Christian theology. Its proselytising mission, from the Crusades to the present time, became the strongest supporter of secular

colonialism, imperialism and exploitation. To suggest that globalisation brings about general economic welfare and the improvement of the standards of living would be just as debatable as to maintain that both Empire and Church were beneficial by spreading civilisation to the barbarians.

Perhaps the most common sense of the word 'globalisation' is restricted to only a few among all possible contents, those in the area of trade, banking and other financial transactions, and information technology servicing economic needs. This use of the word ignores altogether the dialectical relationship between globalisation and localisation, and therefore neglects local aspirations and interests as if they were irrelevant to global development. Thus a potential form, as we defined it, which may be realised for either good or evil by different contents, is being confused with its actual contents, as if the mere fact of extending them all over the world was enough to justify them. World trade and world banking are seen as values *per se*, simply because they are global, without any regard to their effects on local societies. More often than not they are global only in name: those who maintain that globalisation spells the end of the national state tend to forget that about one half of all the globalising multinationals are based in one such state: the USA. Much of present-day globalisation is not merely imperialistic and exploitative but ultimately even more disruptive and disestablishing than the nineteenth-century robber-baron capitalism born out of the industrial revolution, itself worse than feudalism, when at least serfs and peasants had the right to be protected by their lord. Old-fashioned capitalism left workers totally unprotected by reducing the relationship employer-employee to the mere purchasing by one of the other's labour, with no other obligation; yet the disruptive effects of working-class exploitation were contained within the boundaries of a national state, visible for all there to see, susceptible to the political and economic remedies that charitable organisations and enlightened reformers saw fit to promote and legislate into place. Today, when communication allows capital to be moved across the world in a matter of hours and resources in a matter of days, globalists export workers' exploitation to faraway countries,

and find it easy and profitable to dispense with any sense of obligation towards a makeshift out-of-sight workforce whose lives they affect from a distance—just like bomber crews, dropping explosives from 30,000 feet on people they have in their sights but will never actually see.

A few economic facts. Global production of basic foodstuffs stands at 110 per cent of world needs, but only one in ten of the world population has enough to eat. Huge food surpluses are routinely wasted. The income of the richest 20 per cent is on average over 80 times higher than that of the poorest 20 per cent.⁵ The pay of Chief Executive Officers, which early in the twentieth century was only tens of times higher than the wages of their skilled workers, is now hundreds of times higher. Powerful financial interests try to give themselves the legal means to override national governments, as they recently did by pushing the Multilateral Agreement on Investments. The World Trade Organisation rides roughshod over national and local interests in the name of principles of equalisation and free trade, which were already unrealistic in the 1930s, as if small producers in former colonial states could be 'equal' to US multinationals. In the list of the hundred largest economic entities only about a quarter are national stock markets, whose value is often smaller than the stock of some big corporations. For instance, so long as Microsoft remains unbroken its stock value (around US\$546bn) will be larger than Australia's (US\$424bn). Much of this is being made possible by the extraordinarily rapid and exponential development of information technology. Its prophets herald the advent of a brave new world in which IT is going to change society for the better, giving everybody genuine participation to decision-making, and universal education over the Net. IT, others say, by allowing megacorporations to shift goods, resources and profits across peoples and governments, will bring about general prosperity. It is now possible to achieve for the first time in human history practically instant contact with others all over the world. Some therefore suggest that human beings are about to evolve into a superorganism, with individual components electronically linked, just as the cells of the body or, if you prefer, the members of an

anthill, are chemically linked.

All these visionaries tend to judge technology from its power and the means it offers; whereas technology, however sophisticated and potentially liberating, is merely a means to various possible ends, and it is to be judged by the ends and values it upholds. Chemistry and information technology are only links in the organism, not the driving force, which is derived from the set of principles defining its overall purpose. The many internecine wars ravaging our world, inexhaustibly supplied with motives, weapons and ammunitions by the hate and death merchants, who are also online, mean that there is something seriously wrong with society's set of values and principles. Education has always been supported by technological development. It is easy for us in the computer age to underestimate the impact on education of earlier technologies we now take for granted, like writing at the dawn of civilisation, or, about half a millennium ago, printing. Printing made efficient information retrieval possible for the first time: a scholar could refer to an item on a numbered page of a given book in the absolute certainty that everyone in possession of the same edition of that book could easily locate that item wherever he, or less frequently she, happened to live. Whereas a manuscript was ultimately the work of a scribe who could, and would, change, abridge, add comments to and even misinterpret the work he was copying, the printed book, published in hundreds or even thousands of identical copies, was meant to reproduce carefully and exactly the thought of its author; and was therefore inherently more reliable and authoritative. The various technologies successively developed to print illustrations, adding half tones and finally colour to line drawings, enhanced the information value of the book. Just over two centuries ago cheap pulp paper lowered the price of printed matter so much that nearly everyone could afford it for education and entertainment. Even today, with the electronic book a technological reality, nothing beats the paperback: it's cheap, portable, it does not need batteries or connections, it is networked through any references or bibliography it may include, it is interactive because one can scribble in its margins, it cannot go wrong.

I reached university age when the educational technologies available to teachers and students were only books, pens and pencils, chalk and blackboards and a few stencil or litho duplicators. Research papers were laboriously written in longhand and, if more than one copy needed to be submitted, given to a paid copyist who would produce four or five increasingly less legible carbons on a large desk typewriter. Very few in my age group owned a portable one. I have witnessed in the past forty years the advent in the lecture room of a variety of teaching aids, from wire-spool or tape recorders, slide and overhead projectors to camcorders, VCRs, computers and video-conferencing. Already in 1966 the University of Sussex, where I started Italian studies, had a very active and forward-looking Centre for Educational Technology. Its Director, Norman Mackenzie, a historian by training, had been looking at computer-assisted teaching in the USA, and reported enthusiastically to us the latest developments in some American institutions. Interactive teaching, programmed learning and automatic evaluation of student output, based on large mainframes linked to a number of student terminals, were already available over thirty years ago, and were duly presented as the technology that would free teachers from the drudgery of marking, enable all students to access the same high-level material, and achieve economies of scale. Language laboratories had been running already for a decade, and many saw them like some sort of technological Upper Rooms where knowledge would land upon the students' heads in the form not of a white dove but of earphones, miraculously enabling them to speak in tongues. A low-grade supervisor would suffice to administer this Pentecost by changing the master cassettes and pressing the relevant buttons. In the intervening thirty years, which should have been enough to bring to fruition those technological promises, we have not seen either a tidal wave of effective programmed instruction or an increase in language teaching efficiency. Even more startling promises are today being made by the proponents of Information Technology: we are going to have online interactive education with full-color graphics and movies, everyone is going to be able to access the best teachers and their best courses, distance is no

longer a tyrant once optic fibre cables connect us to the Information Superhighway.

The point the proponents of these bright new developments seem to miss now as they did then is that Technology is not Science, and Information is not Education. Education is not the result of consuming information packages mechanically assembled and distributed for profit ⁶ but a process of moral and intellectual growth stimulated and enriched by free interpersonal relationships. As a recent report confirms,⁷ it needs more than targeted information: it thrives on cross-fertilisation between seemingly unrelated inputs. There is clear evidence that parents and educators who wish to improve schoolchildren's basic skills should look for increased participation in apparently 'fringe' activities, like arts, drama and music; and that sustained involvement in them is directly related to success in reading and maths. My own tertiary education experience suggests that broadly based cultural interests improve specialisation, indeed are essential to it. Technology, whatever its level, is very good at providing us with the information we need: it has most efficiently done so by collecting it in libraries throughout the centuries in written and printed form and making it available to scholars. But information is a record of facts and events, unstructured by evaluation and opinion. Furthermore, about 95 per cent of all the contents of a research library is irrelevant to any given subject, and of the remaining five per cent which has some bearing on it at least part is incomplete, outdated, methodologically faulty, or misleading. If one excepts a few gifted individuals spurred by unusual circumstances, the mere access to this material will not enable people to educate themselves. If students and researchers are to make wise, relevant and proper use of all that is available in print, they must have teachers (who need not be hoary old gurus but other students and researchers) as filters and guides; and other scholars to discuss their work. In other words, they need educators: a need which is directly proportional to the amount of information available. Therefore the help of quality educators is even more essential to make sense of, and find one's bearing in, the unthinkably huge virtual library available on the net, which an

increasing number of what our academic managers call 'customers', implicitly sanctioning the demise of the educational ethics once implied by the concept of 'student', use not to learn but to cheat and plagiarise. A growing number of sites offers essays on every conceivable subject, with scale of payments adapted to the expected mark. Some academics see this as a problem, requiring expensive technological solutions, like 'search and compare' software. It could be simply solved by going back to the examination format universally used thirty years ago, when examination papers were written during special invigilated sessions.

Those who see the future of universities as being providers of education online should not only remember the poor show of programmed computer-assisted learning over the past thirty years, but also learn about even earlier attempts at distance education, perhaps by going online to <<http://communications.ucsd.edu/dl>> and reading what Professor David F. Noble, of York University, Toronto, has to say on the subject.⁸ About four decades from their foundation in the 1880s, American correspondence schools had expanded to over 300 institutions, with an enrolment four times higher than all the US colleges, universities and professional schools combined, and an annual income of more than \$70m in 1926 values. Yet a contemporary survey of 75 correspondence schools revealed that only 2.6 per cent of the students managed to complete their courses.⁹ Most schools had a no-refund policy. This enormous wastage was the result not merely of the irresponsibility and dishonesty of some schools, which took the fees paid up-front by dropouts as clean profit, but of structural reasons, which should seriously concern present-day onliners. Contrary to the widespread belief that it is a money saver, distance education, whether by postal correspondence or online, is very expensive to set up and operate. It requires complex organisation and equipment: duplication and postal distribution in the old days, and today much costlier computerised course design, software and hardware, and training in its use. These costs need to be covered by high recruitment, which is itself expensive, demanding appropriate promotion and advertising. History shows that between

50 and 80 per cent of tuition fees are absorbed by administration, leaving an insufficient amount for course preparation and revision, and student assignment reading and marking. These essential tasks tend therefore to be entrusted to ill-paid workers under pressure. Since the higher the dropout rate, the lower the pressure on tuition resources, there is no incentive to stem the wastage and improve quality even where there is no deliberate intention to exploit the market. Recruitment, rather than tuition, is the main concern. That is why those universities, like Chicago, Columbia, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Minnesota, Kansas, Texas and California (Berkeley) which also launched distance education courses in the 'twenties, together with some 60 other institutions and colleges, were soon caught up in the same racket as their commercial counterparts. After scathing criticism voiced by influential educators or government agencies over the next thirty years about the quality and completion rates of distance courses, most universities ended by discontinuing them, or hiving them off to extensions ostensibly unattached to the main institution.

Those universities that are now rushing into marketing online courses ignore past experience at their peril. Their overpaid administrators are intrinsically the least likely people to give unbiased advice on these programmes, since they are the only ones who are sure to benefit. The possible pitfalls are much greater now. In the 'twenties and 'thirties tertiary education, while benefiting from the endowments and bequests of the wealthy, tried to distance itself from the commercialism that made their benefactors' money. Universities got on with their teaching and research much more efficiently than they do now, when instead of maintaining that distance and innovating on the basis of well-tried traditions and educational principles, they are smothered by paperwork, hit by periodical reviews like malaria, haunted by the three Furies of accountability, quality audits and strategic planning, accompanied by the four Horsemen of bureaucracy, public relations, competitiveness and educational marketing. They eagerly ape business practice; yet, considering how poorly corporate managements all over the world have performed during the past half century, not merely in improving the quality of

human life (which is what education is about), but also in achieving satisfactory economic returns, it is a mystery why universities ever thought they had anything to learn from the business world. Some academic managers, alas, take the task of relating to the contemporary world as meaning that they should accept, and import into universities, its worst features: intellectual shoddiness, a defective sense of values, lack of concern for the rights of others, indifference to generalised social evils, exploitation of casual labour. They would defend their actions by proclaiming that new technologies offer marvellous educational opportunities; that globalisation has an irresistible momentum; that universities, for too long ivory towers inhabited by self-indulgent clerics, must learn to operate in the real world and bow to its demands; as if the real world was a strange supernatural or metaphysical entity and not what we ourselves make it to be.

The real reason for this attack on Academe is not its aloofness and unworldliness. On the contrary, if universities had not been the mainsprings of scientific innovation, economic debate, political reform and social development, often against government policy and establishment ideology, the dictators of the first half of the twentieth century would not have tried to curb academic freedom and sterilize the humanities. What they failed to achieve by censorship and repression has been swiftly and efficiently accomplished in the second half by economic rationalism, which has managed to turn university work from the intellectually provocative open-ended educational task it ought to be into a politically 'correct' and safe commodity defined by narrow market parameters. This absurd ideology, probably first defined in Australia by one of its opponents, Professor Michael Pusey of the University of New South Wales,¹⁰ purports to improve productivity by sacking the producers, to stimulate economic growth by restricting the incomes of workers who are the majority of consumers, to fight unemployment by making people redundant, to protect the family by cutting community services, to gain short-term money by privatising the very concerns capable of long-term profit and social benefit, to reform the tax system on the basis of the demonstrably false principle that consumption is

proportional to income. In the field of education, economic rationalists have decreed that, because there is a market in education, which is indisputable, the whole of education must be turned into a market; which is a *non sequitur*, like saying that, as there is a market for legal services, justice must be administered for and motivated by profit.

After a series of mergers or 'amalgamations' which in theory should have produced economies of scale and, as several Cassandras had accurately foreseen, resulted in fact in higher levels of waste, universities restructured their administration on the basis of 'leading edge' business practices, replacing cooperation with competition, equal retribution with market incentives, and collegiality with union-bashing attitudes. Their bureaucracy expanded threefold or fourfold without any noticeable increase in efficiency: especially when the rapid turnover of administrative staff geared to the experience-sharing business model caused a loss of institutional memory; and the eagerness of rapidly rotating middle managers to make their mark on the system meant that practices, forms, criteria and guidelines changed continually from one semester to the next. The new managers redefined their work as a kind of economic production, conflating educational and organisational targets in the form of quasi-product entities and placing them within a notional marketplace where they were given a largely arbitrary cost-value to be recovered by charging participants. Students came thus to be defined as 'consumers' or even 'customers', while at the same time being identified with the 'product' processed by the organisation: a contradiction in terms if ever there was one.

Let us now look at the next stage of the economic-rationalistic project. The distance education of old relied on generally available postal services. Marketing education in today's globalised world means selling it to those wealthy enough to acquire computers, software, modems, telephone lines, in a location served by net connection providers: not what one would call universal access. If past history is anything to go by and learn from, information-rich societies will have the advantage over information-poor ones. There is no reason to believe that the growing gap between the

haves and the have-nots in the areas of resources and disposable income will not also extend to information and education: those already information-rich will become richer, the information-poor even poorer. Local media producers cannot compete with the offerings of the big consortia. In mid-May 2000 Jennifer Katauskas from Wahroonga went to the movies in a small town in the Venezuelan Andes. The choice before her was: *American Beauty*, *The Talented Mr Ripley*, *Erin Brockovitch* and *Stuart Little*. As she wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (17 May), 'This was the same selection of movies available that week in Sydney, on the international flights on the way there, and I'm sure in towns in every corner of Australia and the rest of the world. Is this what is meant when we were assured that the level playing field provided by globalisation would allow the flowering of an enriched world culture where we could all have access to the products (materials and aesthetic) of every other country and culture?' Let me also quote Paul Byrnes, who, reviewing the Disney feature, *Dinosaur*, where animals living millions of years apart are seen together, asks the question: 'Why do we tolerate this?'

How can an enterprise that has so much credibility with children be allowed to consistently betray that trust with deliberate distortions of history, culture and, above all, nature? How are parents and teachers supposed to combat the politics of *The Lion King*, a film full of coded distortions on race, gender and zoology, when it sells 20 million cassettes in the United States alone? The great fairytales of the world evolved partly as a way of telling children about bad, dangerous and complex things without scaring them too directly: metaphor was the carrier of important information. The Disney Empire rests on the opposite: you can scare them all you want so long as you neither challenge nor educate them.¹¹

Clearly individual educators or universities will likewise not be able to compete with the enormous resources and distribution strangleholds of production houses like AOL-Warner, which already have contracts with major US universities, and have the power to swamp the market in the rest of the world with slick, homogenised, ideologically 'safe' degree courses. Contemporary universities, no longer interested in acting as the conscience of

society, will turn to the more profitable business of promoting the interest of the rich. In defending the debatable way in which Melbourne University launched its IT company on the stock market, its Vice-Chancellor Professor Alan Gilbert declared to the 'Four Corners' interviewer: 'Some people in Australian society are wealthier than others and perhaps have access to privileges more than others. But *that* ... everybody knows that! And if you are expecting the University to behave itself in such a way as to change the structure of Australian society, I just don't think it's a serious suggestion.'¹² The suppression of radicalism, dissent, and whistle-blowing research, already initiated by some academic administrators and copiously documented,¹³ will be complete and will have been painlessly accomplished.

At this point I can only sketch a few tentative conclusions. It is easy when voicing disquiet over globalisation and IT to be cast in the role of a Luddite or a prophet of doom. Nothing is further from the truth. Technology is value-free in itself. An aircraft can be used both to kill and to save life. Research laboratories can be used to banish disease and to create weapons of mass destruction. What is wrong is not the new technologies but the roles to which they are being put in a globalising framework where the overriding profit motive prevents them from achieving the beneficial social function of which they are capable. We live in an age when telephones are making it more difficult for us to talk meaningfully to other human beings, television is warping the way we look at things into a series of visual clichés, universal transport has eliminated the difference between travelling and staying put since everywhere is more or less the same; in an age when the manufacture of myriads of choosable products has removed effective choice. We must open our minds and realise that technology without values, purpose or direction is becoming increasingly absurd and a dangerous waste of time. If I can venture a positive prediction, it is that global information technology will make it impossible in the long run for its users to go on ignoring the all important issues of ends, values, social purposes, which are so far being culpably swept aside. It will make it increasingly obvious that those who in London, Seattle, Quebec or Sydney

raise their voices in protest against the ravages of globalisation are not its enemies, but its true and best proponents. Precisely thanks to the resources now at our disposal, we can recognise that globalisation and localisation are complementary; that the extension of new technologies to the furthest corners of this earth necessarily demand a deeper understanding of the particular needs of those who live there, of their society, of their ecology; that universal electronic information is mere noise, like the chirping of a modem heard over the 'phone, which needs to be sifted, interpreted, analysed, assessed against a set of moral values; that what we do over here for our own benefit may have momentous repercussions elsewhere, which for the first time we can take into account thanks to IT by acting locally while thinking globally. It is highly doubtful that the online university will become, as it should, a forum for the debate of political ends, moral and cultural values and social purposes, if it has to operate in a commercial context run by those whose interest it is that those issues to be swept under the carpet, aided and abetted by those whose main purpose is to cut degree costs by half. The ideology of greed prevailing in the second half of the twentieth century has manifestly failed. We need a change in the twenty-first, and educators in universities must not only be ready for it but also actively promote it.

Notes

- 1 See J. Knight, 'Latin America' in *New Scientist*, 12 February 2000, p.7, and related letter by Gunther Wagner in *New Scientist*, 8 April 2000, pp. 84–5. For the Egyptian mummies see Svetlana Balabanova, 'Tabak in Europa vor Kolumbus', in *Antike Welt* 25.3 (1994): 282–86.
- 2 See Tom McArthur, *The English Languages*, Cambridge, 1998.
- 2 'di quella Roma onde Cristo è romano', *Purgatorio*, 32, 102.
- 3 I owe this reference to Robert Fulford, of Toronto University. Yamasaki (b.1934), a distinguished playwright and translator based in Kyoto, expressed his ideas in a lecture given in 1996 at the Japan Foundation in Toronto, on the subject *Asian Civilization: Does It Exist?* Fulford quoted him in his column in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* on 1 October 1997.
- 4 Figures given by Ignacio Ramonet, in his editorial for the last issue of *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English version), 1999.

- 5 One hopes that the example of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which proposes to make all its courses freely available on the web, will be followed by other prestige institutions.
- 6 The report, entitled *Champions of Change: The Impact of Arts on Learning*, prepared in the USA for a Presidential Committee, combines the results of seven research projects conducted during the past decade, tracking the academic progress of some 40,000 students (news item in the *Sun Herald*, Sydney, 4 June 2000).
- 7 What follows is based on a paper by Noble, *The Correspondence Course Goes Online: Comeback of an education racket*, published in *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English version), April 2000, p.15.
- 8 John Noffsinger, *Correspondence Schools*, New York, 1926, quoted by Noble.
- 9 See Michael Pusey, *Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation-building State Changes its Mind*, Cambridge, New York, 1991.
- 10 'Decoding the dangers of Disney's world' in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 June 2000, p.14.
- 11 As broadcast by ABC-TV on Monday 5 June 2000.
- 12 See, for instance, W. De Maria, *Deadly Disclosures: Whistleblowing and the Ethical Meltdown of Australia*, St Lucia, Queensland, 1999; *Intellectual Suppression: Australian Case Histories, Analysis and Responses*, eds Brian Martin et al., North Ryde, NSW, 1986.