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The Planned Obsolescence of the Humanities: Is It Unethical?

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Abstract The humanities have not enjoyed preeminence in academe since the Scientific Revolution marginalized the old trivium. But they long continued to play a subordinate educational role by helping constitute the distinguishing culture of the elite. Now even this subordinate role is becoming expendable as devotees of the profit motive seek to reduce culture to technological delivery of cultural products (Noble, *Digital diploma mills: The automation of higher education*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2003). The result is a deliberate downsizing of the humanities as traditionally understood. Personal preferences aside, is this planned obsolescence morally defensible? Arguably not, if one appeals to traditional ethical norms. But what if its legitimacy is assessed instead according to the quite different norms of capitalism that figure so prominently in university administrators' rationales as they embrace corporatization? The corporatization of American universities has had multiple effects, and some of these have not been entirely positive. In particular, it has had an adverse effect on the professional status and values of faculty. But how faculty respond to these changes varies according to their institutional situation.

Keywords Capitalist ethics · Corporatization · American Universities

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of capitalism that figure so prominently in university administrators' rationales as they embrace corporatization?

The corporatization of American universities has had multiple effects, and some of these have not been entirely positive. In particular, it has had an adverse effect on the professional status and values of faculty. But how faculty respond to these changes varies according to their institutional situation. Faculty in research institutions tend to view themselves as autonomous scholars protected by academic freedom and tenure. Those in third-tier teaching institutions, far removed from the autonomous scholar model, have sought collective power through unionization (Johnson et al. 2003) Those in mid-level institutions locate their academic identities somewhere between these two extremes. This professional stratification has, however, become less determinative because corporatization is subordinating both autonomy and solidarity to capitalist hegemony as it reduces academe to a sector of big business. So perhaps, as many seem to assume, corporatization effectively removes the question of ethical propriety from the academic decision making process. There is certainly some basis for this contention; but, I submit, it should not go unchallenged. For, the corporatization of academe enlarges rather than diminishes the scope of ethical issues that arise in connection with university employment and educational opportunities.

To recognize this to be the case one might, first, consider the negative impact that corporatization has had on both the autonomous researcher model and the unionized worker model of the professoriate. The researcher model has lost its integrity to commodification, which buries juridical support for academic freedom under contractual and patent law limitations. The worker model, which takes corporatization for granted, would offer faculty greater security if unionization were widespread and coordinated. This, though, is not typically the way it is, because of anti-union legal constraints, perpetuation of the autonomous researcher model in the form of income-generating superstars, and such reorganization strategies as downsizing, post-tenure review, and increasing reliance on a no-benefit temporary workforce, which tend to disempower university faculty politically.

One major cause of these transformations has been a shift from public sector to private sector funding of higher education; for this has led to radical changes in the priorities and practices of university boards of directors, researchers, administrators, and rank and file teachers. As a result, neither what remains of a traditional professoriate nor unionization seems able to constrain the marketing model of higher education; and, though still paid lip service by administrators, academic freedom now lacks meaningful political import. Moreover, the forces now in control of academe give a very low priority to traditional knowledge and its disseminators, especially faculty in the arts and humanities. Yet these latter do have some instrumental value, and arguably also have inherent value in light of other, more substantive ethical considerations. So the question I wish to pose is this: what sort of ethical arguments support the value of traditional knowledge workers to society?

This, I suppose, comes under the heading of a metaethical question, which perhaps explains why it is rarely addressed in connection with the myriad ethical aspects of academic behavior. I will try to address it in a preliminary way on the basis of a distinction between traditional and capitalist ethics. In so doing I will be drawing on what I know about ethics, on my years of experience in academe, and on a tentative hypothesis that capitalism represents, perhaps is, an ethical system. My objective is first to recognize that there are conflicting views about what constitutes an ethical issue in a corporatized university setting, then insist that there are indeed ethical issues in a capitalist context, and finally suggest some approaches to addressing these ethical issues responsibly and effectively.

The Profit-Oriented Model of a Corporatized University

The corporatization of academe is acknowledged by anyone familiar with higher education in the United States since World War II. Along with its initiators, some observers of this process approve of it without qualification and wish only that higher education in other countries could be as enlightened (Wooldridge 2005). But those who have experienced corporatization from within academe tend to be less supportive, especially if their intellectual domain is a discipline targeted for marginalization. Take, for example, my own disenchantment with corporatization.

I was a full-time faculty member for 32 years, mostly on the expanding urban campus of a Midwestern state university. From the outset I focused on being a philosophy scholar and teacher, and in time I became chair of the philosophy department. But I did teach some courses and wrote a book in labor studies (Byrne 1990); and in response to administrative encroachment on faculty prerogatives I became active in a faculty union. Along the way, I like others came to see my employee role no longer as that of an appreciated scholar but as an institutional functionary. At the time I attributed this change in self-image to bureaucratization, but in retrospect this was simply a visible sign of corporatization.

Much has been written about corporatization, and most contributors to this literature aver or at least imply that it should not be happening. Corporatizers disagree, because to them what is happening is just another stage in the neoliberal process of privatizing all public goods (Byrne 1997, pp. 92–190). It does take different forms in different institutions, of course, especially because some are deemed private and others public institutions. But these differences do not determine how their administrations exercise their authority. For even if an administration has an office assigned to dealing with traditional ethical issues these are not the focus of an educational enterprise viewed primarily as a business venture. Reorganization, for example, is to a capital-oriented institution no more problematic than would be any other management decision to downsize to advance the long-term interests of a corporation. For, to the extent that a capitalist worldview is operative this is at bottom just a matter of reallocating assets from less to more profitable endeavors and as such just another aspect of the cost of doing business. Thus to the corporatizer profit maximization at the expense of the less profitable arts and humanities is morally indistinguishable from a company's quest for market share by phasing out an old product, e.g., film cameras, to focus on a new one, e.g., digital cameras. The latter reorganization, now being faced by Eastman Kodak, is an unavoidable consequence of progress, hence not in and of itself unethical. So what if anything is unethical about an academic institution's managers opting to employ a smaller percentage of historians or philosophers or language specialists than was done a quarter century earlier?

By appealing to any of a number of traditional approaches to ethics, one could make a case in defense, say, of an underemployed historian. Leaving the more traditional approaches for later, let me just note here that such twentieth century creations as an ethics of care or an ethics attentive to the needs of the least advantaged might, morally speaking, come to the aid of the job seeking historian. The latter approach in particular, initiated by John Rawls, introduces a principle that requires a society to take the needs of all into account as its wealth increases, thereby modifying such economic standards as that of Pareto optimality. Rawls postulates this "difference principle" as what social planners would come up with behind a veil of ignorance, that is, not knowing their actual status in the real world so not able to slant outcomes to their advantage. If assiduously applied in the real world, then, this hypothetical construct would constrain the behavioral ideals and aspirations of capitalism enough to effect a just distribution of goods.

Rawls clearly intended a normative modification of capitalist ethics. This in itself bears mentioning because capitalism is not ordinarily thought of these days as an approach to or a version of ethics. This, however, was not formerly the case. Even Karl Marx saw positive value in the rise of capitalism, however much he faulted its discriminatory distributional system. Sociologists Max Weber (1930) and Richard Tawney (1947) even traced capitalism's roots to various church teachings. Such views were downplayed for decades, however, as capitalism came to be regarded as an approach to the world that draws almost exclusively on economics and various ancillary disciplines as its guide to policy and procedure. As such, it is often portrayed as if not the only then at least the best way to do business, especially big business (Madden 1977). Even this stance, though, is not a report of empirical data but a set of normative assertions about a significant segment of human behavior. In other words, capitalism is itself a kind of ethic.

This claim, admittedly, is not in the mainstream; but it does have some support among scholars. Especially pertinent in this respect is a work by philosopher Allen Buchanan (1985) in which he distinguishes between two kinds of argument regarding the market: efficiency-oriented, which is the focus of economists' discourse; and morality-oriented, which attracts a broader range of scholars. In treating the latter Buchanan does not say in so many words that capitalism constitutes an ethical theory or even recommendations about ethical practice. But this, I suggest, is because he sees the market as his object of concern rather than views about how best to approach the market. In other words, what he chose to call "moral arguments for and against the market" might be understood as a discourse about morality that focuses on business – that is to say, as business ethics writ large. In defense of such an interpretation one can cite scholars who challenge the hallowed maxim that anything having to do with economics must be value-neutral (Myrdal, Klappholz, and Schumpeter, in Hausman 1984, pp. 249–292). Other scholars have also helped advance this view in some way, e.g., Virginia Held (1984), who urges shifting the focus of ethics from abstract theories to role-based moral domains, Christopher Stone (1991, ch. 28), who identifies "corporate culture" as a set of attitudes about what to do and how, and Thomas Donaldson (1982, pp. 126–127), who recognizes a corporate moral status which differs from that of the individual on the basis of various added factors. Then, too, there are publications actually entitled The Ethics of Capitalism (Judson 1923; Acton 1972; Koslowski 1996; Hattwick 2000–2001). Drawing on such works as background, one could identify a distinctive ethical outlook that is adopted by people who work in and for a corporation.

I propose to do just that by declaring that capitalism is, in one of its guises, an ethical system which competes with other worldviews that are more likely to be associated with ethics. As an ethical system, it has priorities and preferences galore. Apply these to academe, and corporatization ceases to be so problematic, e.g., with regard to that job-seeking historian.

As a devotee of capitalist morality, I would recognize that there are bound to be anecdotally regrettable side effects of change, but I would find nothing obviously unethical about a managerial decision that would reduce labor costs. Institutions of higher learning are dynamic entities, subject to change over time in response to new challenges and opportunities that relativize and even invalidate what has gone before. Thus there came a time when universities in Europe dropped Latin as the language of instruction and turned to vernaculars instead. The old ways survived, of course, in the requirement at prestigious and/or church-related institutions that both Greek and Latin be studied; but after heated debate in the late nineteenth century this too was phased out. A package of required courses endured until after World War II when University of California president Clark Kerr and

others proclaimed the arrival of the multiversity. Now, with the introduction of electronics into the process of learning, new majors and new means of instruction are rendering obsolete many long held assumptions about how people are to be educated. Printed books long ago replaced scrolls and calligraphy; and now even libraries are giving way to online texts and catalogues. These changes in the educational delivery system are inevitable. This, however, does not mean that course content, or personal contact, is no longer important. It is still important for a medical student to learn the bones, muscles and organs in the human body, even if assisted in doing so by computerized models. So too the cultural value of Shakespearean drama is not necessarily undermined if presented to the student electronically. But is an institution of higher learning as obliged to offer a course on Shakespeare as it is to offer one on human anatomy? If long-term revenue generation is the deciding factor, Shakespeare doesn't stand a chance. The Shakespeare specialist would no doubt prefer teaching the course on a campus rather than, say, in a pub; but if the university's administrators seek to exclude it from the curriculum, does she have a basis for complaint? In other words, are there any enduring moral reasons why Shakespeare should still be taught in a university setting?

My Experience with Corporatization

A common theme running through corporatization literature is how faculty have been fighting a losing battle to be recognized as professionals even as academe becomes ever more bureaucratized. Another way of putting this is to say that professors once saw themselves as professionals, albeit not self-employed like (once-upon-a-time) doctors and lawyers; more recently they have had to acknowledge that they are in fact employees. This acknowledgment was especially difficult for the officials who set policy for the American Association of University Professors, relating as they did mainly to prestigious universities (Hutcheson 2000). There is no doubt some basis for their reluctance, especially in view of the intellectual values asserted by those prestigious universities. But it had little to do with my career, which illustrates one variation on the theme of campus corporatization.

It was with a view to getting a job as a philosopher that I studied for the doctorate. And once I had earned my doctorate I began looking for such a job, preferably at a respectable institution. Indeed, I needed employment to earn a living; and I was encouraged to think in these terms by the professional organization to which I belonged (the American Philosophical Association), because it unapologetically informs its members of openings in a periodic newsletter called *Jobs for Philosophers*. I was first hired in the 1960s to teach existentialism – not because this was my specialty but because the people who hired me felt my having studied in Europe gave me cachet as a person steeped in this alien lore; and enrollments in my courses validated their marketing strategy. They soon abandoned this strategy, though, with another even more grandiose: by combining my salary line with funds in an endowment until then used to pay invited lecturers, they would bring in a superstar for one quarter out of every year thereby entitling them to display the superstar's name on the department roster. Terminating me did prove more awkward than they had anticipated, because since appointed I had become the published author and co-author respectively of two books. Such traditional considerations did not change their strategic priorities, however, so I found myself on the so-called meat market in need of employment.

My next appointment came about because my publications offered a different cachet to a new department on a new undergraduate campus that sought to build a quality program. This I helped my colleagues achieve until in the 1980s the administration introduced what

they called Responsibility Centered Management (RCM), which meant that each academic program had to generate its own income to fund its budget. The faculty on our more prestigious main campus refused to go along with this somewhat draconian departure from previous practice, thus making ours its testing ground.

RCM was an exceptionally cynical approach to budget allocations on the IUPUI campus because of this campus's rare if not unique financial complexity. For, it was primarily a cluster of professional schools to which an undergraduate program was belatedly appended. At its origins early in the twentieth century it had consisted only of Indiana University professional schools, and these continued to be the focus of the state-funding budget for the "Health Division." In the 1960s undergraduate education was introduced under a second "General Academic" budget that addressed programs separately administered by the main campus bureaucracies of Indiana University and Purdue University respectively. Bond issues and private donations underwrote most of the funding needed for the many building projects that followed; and undergraduate tuition though raised from year to year was comparatively low, that is, barely over the forty-second percentile nationally. Only about 35% of some 29,000 enrolled students (in the late 1990s) were undergraduates, and only about 40% attended full-time. The administration spent very little on student services (in the sixth percentile nationally) and devoted only seven percent of student tuition and fees to scholarships (26th percentile).

The state's total funding for higher education dropped from 18.4% of allocations in 1975–76, to 13.2% in 2006–07, and Indiana University's from 7.2% to 3.9%. In response to this trend, then President Myles Brand (2002) raised tuition fees for new and transferring students at IUPUI. He had to do this, he explained, because higher education was now being viewed not as a public good but as a private good deserving less state support than "K-12, prisons, Medicare and other entitlements," thereby placing Indiana University and Purdue University "9th and 10th in the Big Ten in support per student." Fortuitously, he added, "IU ranks first among all US public university [sic] in voluntary support" – this being due largely to money directed to medical research.

Due almost exclusively to professional, mainly medical, research-related funding, IUPUI's campus-wide revenues (over $834 million in 1995–1996) were in the 99th percentile nationally, and tuition-derived revenues were in the lowest percentile.[1] This, then, was the context within which we in the School of Liberal Arts had been trying to fund our programs under the RCM regimen.

Not favored with substantial grants from public or private sources, we had to fund our budget mainly from the tuition and fees students paid to take our courses. This in turn intensified our incentive to raise course enrollment ceilings beyond what was appropriate for our subject matter, increasing our total income but lowering the per capita efficacy of our teaching. To further maximize our income flow, we came to depend ever more on low-paid part-time instructors who receive no benefits (see Hoeller 2006). The flip side of this dependency is that we rarely won approval for any new full-time position and were rarely able to give our full-time faculty cost-of-living increases. Yet in accordance with a hypocritical university policy we went through the motions of assigning pittances "solely on the basis of merit". Efforts of a substantial minority of our unit's faculty members to modify this state of affairs by forming a union failed because we were denied enabling legislation and the administration-proposed bargaining unit included predominantly anti-

[1] Data cited here is contained in "Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis In A Nutshell," which is a part of Critical Comparisons of American Colleges and Universities, created by The Urban Universities Portfolio Project, available online at http://www.imir.iupui.edu/portfolio/campus/IUPUI-cc.htm.

union faculty in schools dedicated to science, engineering, and various pre-professional programs. Meanwhile, task-oriented money began to appear to underwrite new multi-disciplinary programs dedicated to, first, organizing and publishing (nineteenth century philosopher) Charles Saunders Peirce's papers, then developing career ladder degree programs in Philanthropic Studies, and, most recently, doing likewise for Biomedical Ethics. In each instance faculty positions were created and filled, some in my department (philosophy), with a view to the program's rather than the discipline-based department's priorities, both as to hires and as to courses and research for which the hires would be responsible.

Such was my experience of how corporatization is inserted into an academic context and gradually comes to dominate its decision-making processes. To cite an early example, in my role as then chair of the Philosophy Department, I was told by an administrator (coincidentally tenured in our department) that he had selected an individual to direct the Peirce Project, and this individual would be housed in our department if I agreed or in another more hospitable department if I did not (the idea of consulting fellow faculty members never arose). I was in that instance "put in my place." But was any ethical norm being challenged?

Viewed within a narrow business ethics perspective, corporatization generates little criticism. Some may wonder if it satisfies such norms as those of corporate social responsibility; but others could respond that what university administrators do to advance their corporate agendas is on balance for the benefit of society. What else, after all, are they about when they obtain patents on products such as pharmaceuticals that help people live healthier lives? The matter is, however, by no means that simple, as I now propose to show.

The Ethical Limits of Corporatization

The scenario presented by critics of corporatization and in some ways instantiated in my experience supports the claim that most university professors are institution-driven minions, however impressive some individuals' roles and income. This scenario is rendered suspect, however, by some pro-faculty benefits that the critics rarely mention, e.g., sabbatical leaves, which are available to full-time English teachers as well as to nuclear physicists. These leaves have come under some scrutiny (Lively 1993) and thus inspire education researchers to assess whether and how they contribute to the overall well being of the institutions granting them (Kang and Miller 1999; Sima 2000; Sima and Denton 1995; Boehning and Miller 1997). Yet even if they are retained because still deemed administratively advantageous (e.g., to reduce burnout, enhance productivity), they do constitute both a monetary and a professional benefit to the recipient. So arguably even a corporatized campus may accommodate an intellectual value that is not reducible to its commodified worth; and this in turn invites inquiry about whether there is a place for managerial ethics in a business-style university. I believe there is.

This can be seen by drawing upon certain features of goal-oriented (consequentialist) and principle-based (deontological) approaches to ethics. The former looks to the foreseeable results of a particular course of action to determine whether and to what extent it is morally justifiable. Corrective surgery that leaves a scar is defensible; elective surgery that is untested and causes statistically significant fatalities is probably not. A key consideration here – one that British philosophers addressed at length in the nineteenth century – is whether one can rank some good results above others on the basis of their quality. I believe we can, because the benefits derived from attending a meaningful and

well-acted play would ordinarily surpass those that come from a night of barhopping. That this is relevant to defending a place for the humanities in higher education is perhaps apparent on its face, but its relevance is in fact quite complex. For, it requires us to update the nineteenth century debate by asking whether any values surpass the monetary ones that now dominate a capital-oriented campus. If revenue generation is the unique determining factor, then only rarely will the good done by, say, comparative literature outrank that produced by such programs as varsity football and cell biology. A fortiori, programs heavily supported by corporate interests are easier to justify in bottom-line terms than those that are not, especially on the campus of a public university that is afforded only minimal state funding. If we shift our attention, however, from revenue intake to students' personal and professional fulfillment as output, the scale tips to the other side. For, a society benefits immeasurably from graduates who have learned things that enhance their appreciation of human values and enable them to apply what they have learned to problems we face in the world and need to resolve equitably.

A deontological approach tends to focus primarily on the moral principles by which our every action is to be guided, including in particular the so-called Golden Rule. According to a strict observer of this approach, such principles are obligatory apart from their consequences; but more thoughtful analyses make room for favoring some, e.g., family members, over others for whom we have no comparable specific responsibility. Deontological critics of the capital-oriented campus are well advised to avoid such modifications and apply their norms strictly to academic policies and practices, that is, to assign an undifferentiated value to each academic program that has a coterie of supporters. For, once preferences are admitted into one's moral calculus, it becomes difficult to fault administrators for subordinating intellectually superior performance to revenue maximization. Where the latter is the operative norm, what a traditional ethicist might consider ethical lapses are merely nontraditional applications of market-based guiding principles.

A moral concern from the point of view of a consequentialist usually involves selecting from among more or less exclusive alternatives. Any academic administrator obviously has to address this sort of concern with some frequency. But challenges to traditional norms are likely to be more intense for one whose base of operations is a capital-oriented campus. For, in that context, traditional norms are often just irritating distractions. Thus they are often ignored, especially by administrators who instinctively calculate the dollars at stake if they impose penalties on wrongdoers. Such monetary priorities take many different forms, e.g., a granting of virtual immunity to misbehaving but otherwise productive athletes or laboratory researchers. The bottom-line attitude that prevails regarding such potential sources of embarrassment is, of course, inconsistent with traditional norms; and, on occasion, a court or investigatory body does so find. At least on the surface, such findings justify a claim that some unethical and even criminal behavior does take place on a capital-oriented campus as in other institutional settings. However, they do not justify an open-ended claim that the modern capital-oriented university is intrinsically unethical. After all, it still offers courses in which learning presumably goes on and makes it possible for a subset of its consumers (students) to take those courses, complete program and degree requirements, and then take their place in and contribute to society. To be sure, the university may be unduly tolerant of plagiarism and other forms of student cheating, especially if the perpetrator has a privileged background. Similarly, its admissions policy may favor applicants whose parents are able to contribute substantially to the university's coffers rather than to applicants who on paper are best qualified; and this is all the more likely the more prestigious the university in question. Inversely, a university that relies heavily on distance learning and a fortiori on nonrefundable tuition fees (dropout income) to bolster its coffers should be faulted for

unconscionably exploiting students whose life circumstances do not permit their matriculating in the traditional way (Noble 2003, ch. 1). But again what amassing of data and/or process of reasoning justify generalizing from such distorted monetary priorities to a blanket condemnation of the capitalist university as a whole?

This is not by any means a hypothetical question. For, some broadsides condemn capitalist universities in their entirety as monopolists that turn their position as passageways to success into a means to exploit consumers for whom success is a value for which they are prepared to pay. But backing off from this extreme we can surely say that the service a university provides is at least as valuable as that provided by a betting agency or a fast food restaurant. To go further, is it not of greater and more long lasting value than what a person gains by purchasing admission to a rock concert or an athletic event or a brothel? As often as not, these latter yield transitory pleasure that arguably exceeds that gained from understanding a passage in a difficult text or mastering an irregular verb in a foreign language. But are not such instances of learning more beneficial to the individual and collectively to his or her society in the long run? Immanuel Kant asserted (but never proved) that one has a moral obligation to actualize his or her potential as a human being; and whether this is the case or not it certainly squares with the Zeitgeist of our times. In this regard I would be willing to debate which method of learning is more effective, but I will not entertain the assertion that ignorance is bliss.

The Social Benefits of the Arts and Humanities

In light of these reflections on the differences between traditional and capitalist ethical analysis, I will now address the issue that I initially formulated, namely, is it unethical for a university administration to seek consciously and deliberately to phase out the humanities? I respond first by reviewing some twentieth century defenses of the humanities. Then I will suggest anecdotally ways in which the humanities are socially valuable assets. Finally, I will suggest capitalist-oriented ethical approaches that limit the extent to which campus bosses (administrators and boards) are at liberty to determine dictatorially which programs will or will not be supported.

The humanities as a teachable body of knowledge were put on the defensive from the very outset of the Scientific and then the Industrial Revolutions, which prioritized economic advancement over all other social values. After the Civil War in the USA, pragmatism emerged as the preferred philosophical outlook, thereby setting the stage for a principled reduction of the good to more or less measurable quantities. In this context, colleges began to prepare not just the wealthy for law and ministry but a middle class with more practical aspirations (Reynolds 2005). Disturbed by this massification of higher learning, William James (1907) contended that our democracy's survival depends on people with a college (i.e., humanistic) education because they can identify genuinely good men to support politically, unlike others whose education consists of the narrowly focused craft-skills taught in professional schools. John Dewey agreed as to the political importance of education but urged that this involve a community-based, populist orientation. Up until World War II, though, the elitist rationale for teaching the humanities prevailed, e.g., in the views of Robert Maynard Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago (whom Dewey debated on this subject), and the tendency of Catholic universities to subordinate mercantile incentives to religious values (Gleason 1995). But then the USSR launched Sputnik, and the US government initiated funding programs (notably the National Defense Education

Act) that enticed all components of advanced learning, Catholic institutions included, to focus on science and technology.

In that Cold War context science-aping logical positivists found themselves severely challenged to come up with (to them) rationally respectable reasons why the humanities merited anyone's continued attention (Broudy 1958; McClellan 1958). The British novelist C. P. Snow (1959; 1963) then stirred up a trans-Atlantic debate by positing "two cultures" so alienated from one another that scientists would have to solve the world's problems because "literary intellectuals" have no understanding of science. Out of this debate came cross-disciplinary degree programs, e.g., in Science, Technology, and Society at MIT and elsewhere. But such gestures were ultimately to no avail; for, as John Hersey (1980) observed, numbers had become dominant over words. In time, then, the issue raised by the "two cultures" thesis fell out of favor; and increasingly university boards, most of whose members were corporate executives, and their CEO-emulating administrators translated the dominance of numbers over words into a massive reallocation of resources on campuses from coast to coast. Their profit-oriented motives for this neoconservative restructuring of higher education were given added impetus, some argue, by the predominance of humanities rather than science faculty among the Vietnam era antiwar protestors (Crawford 2001). This explanation is credible on its face, moreover, given how harshly entrenched governments deal with academics, usually in the arts or humanities, whose views allegedly challenge their hegemony (Saunders 1999).

Faced with such pervasive biases, scholars in the arts and humanities have at times sought to remedy their alleged inferiority to scientists and engineers by aping the sciences, e.g., a colleague of mine who counted how often novelist Joseph Conrad (born in Poland, wrote in English) used certain grammatical forms. Similarly misguided approaches to history, geography, philosophy, and political science are well known and need not be listed here. Such "research" notwithstanding, we have much to gain by turning to the authentic practitioners of the arts and humanities: dancers, actors, painters, poets, novelists, etc. As bioethicist Jonathan Glover (2006, pp. 94–97) puts it, these practitioners enable us to see human nature from the inside, subjectively, thus complementing the outer view provided by science. In addition, the humanities yield an abundance of objective though not definitive information. This is apparently well understood by the dean of an engineering school who recently declared that to fully understand, say, climate change, his students will need to know not just technology but sociology, economics, politics, and public policy (Glater 2007) – drawing upon a variety of appropriate methods that do not ape the natural sciences. And beyond the pragmatic motivation for such peripheral learning, what matters is that one's life is enriched by becoming familiar with the complexity of social, political, and other dimensions of this planet he or she inhabits.

This familiarity is, of course, partial and fallible but incremental. Not every account of the bombing of Pearl Harbor or of surviving the Holocaust is equally reliable, but surely one is better able to contend with contemporary concerns if disposed to learn what one can about such events. Granted, a neo-Manichean extremist who reduces the world's cultures to two opposing factions could mislead me; but I might transcend my own cultural myopia by learning how to deal with diversity in my own neighborhood. No music appreciation course however well taught will make me a concert soloist, but if blessed with a good teacher I might be enriched by performances I experience whether live or recorded. No one course in philosophy will facilitate my solving the mysteries of the universe, but it might help me think about the mysteries that arise in my own life as I try to make sense out of what far transcends crossword puzzle expertise. And, to put a point on all this, such fulfillment factors are just what brings many technically proficient professionals back to classrooms in

the humanities: to fill a perceived vacuum in their understanding that their narrowly focused education left unattended.

Reasoning along these lines, one can deem it beyond question that the arts and humanities have a lot to offer to people who prefer – and whom we prefer – not to live their lives and fulfill their destinies with only the mentality of a Philistine. After all, one so enriched would presumably be less inclined than many others to base their support for a proposed war on nothing more profound than the latest jingoist slogan contrived to support defense industry priorities (Byrne 2006; Byrne 2007). Inversely, we need to recognize that science and technology are not spontaneous fountains of plenty but depend for their accomplishments on deliberate, persistent, and extensive funding by principals and agents who focus their attention on maximizing the likelihood of preferred outcomes (Rose and Rose 1973). In other words, a major reason why science and technology advance more than do the arts and humanities is not nature but nurture.

Such considerations, of course, do not justify obligating university administrators (and funding agencies) to build their budgets entirely around humanistic values. But they do call into question the widespread assumption that universities are now essentially corporations and as such may be used to fulfill whatever purposes their corporate shareholders favor. For, even if this corporate ownership thesis is conceded, that would in no way exempt academic administrators from tending responsibly to the various extra-corporate interests that are now included among the charges of any corporate management. This being the case, no apology is called for if in our society's long term interest we resist narrowly conceived decisions that capitalist-oriented administrators seek to impose on academe. And if we are told we have no right to demand that the arts and humanities be taken into account in the formation of academic policy and practice, we may cite in our defense such approaches to business ethics as stakeholder theory, corporate social responsibility, socially responsible investing, and value-oriented management. More to the point, these now being an important and influential part of business ethics discourse, we should be able to bring them to bear even in university settings in which only corporatized ivy is allowed to grow.

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