

The University, the Universe, the World, and "Globalization"

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The discipline of the humanities - like the idea of "culture" - is a byproduct of the formation of the nation-state in the nineteenth-century West. Its decline began with the fundamental skepticism toward the idea of totality, authority, and centrality, which was replaced fairly rapidly by the ideology of difference, especially as the old colonies began to gain "independence." What has gradually emerged from this initially liberating movement, however, is social and intellectual fragmentation. Socially, it coincided with the neo-liberal development. Intellectually and institutionally, it has encouraged and has been encouraged by the emphasis on specialization and "theorization." Yet, the way today's scholars and writers of different "kinds" (in gender, ethnicity, class, and discipline) have ceased to talk together, discuss together, or even disagree together is quite alarming - especially now that the environmental deterioration demands that the planet be understood and experienced as a commonality that belongs to every single being on earth. The humanities can now seize this demoralized moment and reorganize itself around the planet and the universe, the ultimate totality as the central imaginary. Environmental sustenance cannot be considered without rethinking social totality. The ever widening gap between the rich and the poor both among and within nations is a part of the ecological deterioration. This time, in other words, the need for a radical reformation is not merely ethical or political, but a necessity for everyone. Far from being vulnerable to the assault by totalitarianism, this transformation is integrated with singularities and connectives. Unlike the nation-state, the planet (and the universe) is an inspiring commonality on which writers, scholars, and scientists can work together in a truly transdisciplinary endeavor.

I. Where We Are

The first two words in the title look connected, and in many serious ways they presumably are in our time. According to the OED, the word "university" made its appearance around 1300 - without a direct

and explicit relationship to the idea of the "universe," which began to circulate at a later date. The Latin word for the university, *universitas*, meant a community and the early medieval university was often a semiformal community of students and teachers. The *studium generale* was also a common term, designating a generally and "universally" - not locally - authorized degree-granting institution, a guild, throughout Christendom. The Pope was its ultimate authority. The "universe" as we employ the term in our secular age had to await the arrival of humanism and enlightenment, centuries later, with modern cosmology. The history of the university in medieval Europe was significantly different from its modern version, as I will elaborate later on.¹

The relationship between the ideas of the university and of the universe (or even the "universal") has never been a stable one throughout history. In fact, today's university is organized and operated in such a way that the two ideas seem to be significantly remote. In this paper I'd like to examine in what way the university and the universe (and the universal) are, and should be, connected today as we think about them from the perspective of our current economic, social, and environmental "globalization," another word associated with the universe. The consideration of such topics together, I hope, will offer some suggestions for the future of the now defunct discipline of the humanities.

Let me start out with "globalization." By now a thoroughly over-used but still abused term, globalization was a "new" development, at least during the early 90s, striking many people as a hopeful consequence of the end of the Cold War. Believers celebrated it as true cosmopolitanism, worldwide prosperity, utopia. Big corporations were in the forefront of the welcoming party. They would cast a wide net across national borders, and this seemed to promise an unprecedented great catch. Unlike those directly involved in business and international relations, academic and intellectual critics were wary and skeptical.² As things have unfolded since, it is clear that globalization, a version of "free trade," is an intensified form of capitalism with brutal results for a large segment of the U.S. as well as the world population. With the collapse of the Soviet economy and the triumph of neoliberalism, in-

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1. For the history of the university in medieval Europe, the most helpful publication is Walter Buegg, *A History of the University in Europe*, Vol. 1. Throughout this paper, I often depend on Volumes 1, 2, and 3 of this Cambridge History. Vol. 4 (that treats 1945 to the present) is yet to be published.
 2. See Featherstone; Robertson; Brecher et al.; Barnett; Greider; Sassen; Rosenberg; Hutton and Giddens; Mittelman; Stiglitz; and Sklair. It should be noted that despite these reservations, few scholars and intellectuals refused to enjoy the benefits of "globalization" such as an enormous increase in cross-border traffic and exchange.

dustrial and financial capital expanded enormously and circulated both widely and rapidly. Not just capital, but production, markets, and consumption also grew immensely. Communication, information technology, travel, and tourism - that is, "exchange" in a wider sense - also increased at a phenomenal pace. At the same time, as we have also come to understand, globalization did not evolve *globally* at all; it was ruthlessly selective in expansion and outsourcing. Only the rich and trained benefited from the increase in production and circulation. Labor interests suffered extremely as workers lost power - the "benefits" that at times reached low-wage regions were often temporary and miniscule, and the workers were placed under brutal working conditions. The poor have been unable to move, since they are stranded geographically and economically. Globalization, maximally exclusive and maximally profit-seeking, has led to two important developments, and another, more local but equally relevant, event: one, an unprecedented gap between the rich and the poor; two, an unprecedented environmental disaster; three, changes in the nature and function of higher education and culture. The three developments are closely interconnected. The one lesson people have learned from "globalization," albeit at an unimaginably high price, is that everything that happens anywhere is inescapably interconnected with everything else, and to every other place in the world. This goes for things as diverse as climate change, food production, starvation, human rights violation, fashion and fad, violence, academic freedom, political suppression, war, arts, epidemics, consumption, poverty, wealth, or fundamentalism.

The gap between the rich and poor has dramatically widened both among and within nations. Today, 1.2 billion people of the world live on one dollar a day, and nearly three billion people live on two dollars a day or less.³ The gulf between the richest and the poorest nations and regions has also risen immensely. It is difficult to remember that around 1800 - before the Industrial Revolution - today's first world and the third were substantially the same in wealth or the ratio was at most less than two to one. During the nineteenth century, the gap began to widen: by 1880, the per capita income of the first world was double that of the third; by 1913, the ratio was three to one; by the mid-twentieth century, it was five to one. As late as 1970, a mere thirty-five years ago, the gap was only seven to one.⁴

3. There are numerous book-length studies on the subject. On intra-U.S. inequality see Galbraith; Phillips; and Mishel, Bernstein and Boushey. As to international inequality, see Pomeranz. Mishel, Bernstein and Bushey's *The State of Working America* also has an excellent chapter on "International Comparisons."

In 2003, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the ratio of the per capita GDP of the richest countries (Luxembourg, Norway, Switzerland, or the U.S.)⁵ to the poorest, the sub-Saharan countries, for instance, is 90 to 100 to one, and these figures are becoming nearly meaningless year by year. (The figures change, of course; so does the ranking). The ratio of 100 to 1 is as hard to understand fully for those who live in the first world as it is to imagine what it is like to live on a dollar or two a day. On the other hand, the poor are well aware of how the rich live, if not in real life, at least through television, films, and the Internet - media that have spread everywhere, even in the remotest regions.

Within the United States, the gap at the end of the 1990s is about the same as during the Gilded Age; that is, a period preceding the Depression when the inequality in wealth was the greatest in history. The top one percent currently owns 40.1% of national assets, whereas its share of American income was at 15.8% in 1997. Black households remain poorer than Hispanic and white families. According to a recent report from the Pew Hispanic Center, the median white family in 2002 had assets (home, automobile, cash, etc.) of \$88,000, whereas the Hispanic family had 1/11th of that amount (\$8,000), and the black family had 1/14th (a little over \$6,000). One third of black families and 26% of Hispanic families had zero assets or were in debt, whereas 11% of white families were in the same predicament. Since 1996, the white family grew richer by 17%, and the Hispanic by 14%, while in the black family wealth fell by 16%.⁶ The assets of the richest compared to the median families throughout history are also interesting: in 1790, the ratio was 4,000 to 1; in 1890, 370,000 to 1; in 1940, 850,000 to 1; and in 1999, 1,416,000 to 1 (Phillips 38).

Some might argue that the widening gap in wealth distribution is not solely a result of globalization. James K. Galbraith, for one, argues that rising inequality is a result of "bad economic policy" that is, caused by economic, or more specifically "monetary" policy, and he considers globalization a matter of "secondary" importance (8-9). He is partly right; policy changes in the seventies did have serious consequences. But the monetary policy of Paul Volcker or Alan Greenspan is also a response to general economic conditions in the world. Besides, Galbraith ignores the fact that a similar trend occurs in most other countries, where the monetary

4. These figures are from Hobsbawm 15. Landes gives slightly different figures (xx, 194).

5. A recent OECD announcement. *The Economist* January 22, 2005: 104.

6. "Study Says White Families' Wealth Advantage Has Grown," *The New York Times*, 18 Oct. 2004.

policy of the United States does not apply. For the foreseeable future, the chances of reversing the trend look less than dim throughout the world.

Government could mediate the domination of the economy by big corporations. In a democratic society, elected officials are supposed to represent all citizens. And yet in the United States now, corporate power has not only bought and absorbed small local business on the Main Streets, but has also grabbed political power in every branch of government. Congress has no will of its own at present and is at the mercy of a White House closely allied with corporate interests. Even the bureaucracy in the executive branch is not responsible to the citizens but solely to the President, as if he were a monarch, as can be seen from Bush's cabinet appointments. Similarly, the judiciary is increasingly answerable to Presidential interests. Thus, the domestic goals of George W. Bush's second term are the privatization of the Social Security system, the further reduction of taxes for the rich, and the reorganization of the republic into an "ownership society," which in plain terms means a radical reduction or elimination of the safety net for everyone except the rich and the corporate. Environmental regulations are barely enforced when they are not altogether dismantled. What is striking about the United States now is that despite the dynastic concentration of power and wealth among the very few, the majority of the people are not showing any sign of resentment or resistance. While the Bush "mandate" was very slight, and the actual vote cast for Bush in the 2004 election was far less than one third (59.2 million) of the entire voting-age population (well over 200 million), the President can push his agenda with breezy insouciance, and the citizens either vote against their own interest, or stay home in abject apathy.

Internationally, many of the poorer economies pay more for debt service than for education and health in spite of the devastating spread of HIV/AIDS, making the rich in the North even richer. It is self-evident that for the poor - nearly half the human population - to survive, richer countries must make contributions as well as offer debt relief. In fact, 147 heads of state gathered in 2000 to adopt the Millennium Development Goals that included cutting extreme poverty by half by 2015, and to that end the rich nations agreed in 2002 to donate 0.7% of their GNPs every year. As of now, however, only five nations (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) have fulfilled the promise. The United States give 0.15% of GNP at present, the lowest in ratio of all the OECD countries. (Most Americans seem convinced that their country is one of the most generous nations, but that is simply erroneous. Even including private contributions - 0.06% of GNP - the U.S. donations rank side by side with Greece, which gives the second lowest share, 0.21%).⁷ It is clear that the donation of a mere 0.7% of GNP

is triflingly meaningless in terms of even the barest possibility of creating a truly "global" economy.

The second serious impact of the "globalized" economy is an alarming environmental deterioration resulting from a totally unprecedented growth of material production and consumption. I don't need to go into detail here about the by now indubitable list of changes that have been taking place on the planet. Depletion of natural resources, including fossil-based energy sources; accumulation of industrial and biological waste; toxic contamination of the atmosphere, ocean, soil, and, especially, aquifers; the loss of eco diversity; violent and frequent hurricanes and tornados; deforestation and desertification; climate change and flooding; ozone-layer depletion; epidemiological crisis; hunger and famine; excessive urbanization and decline in the quality of life. These developments affect each other: that is, some are causes and effects of other developments. This is perhaps only a partial list, and the range of damage may be even wider. More important, we may have already waited too long. Even if humans change their behavior now, it may already be too late, as some environmentalists have pointed out.⁸ I will return to this topic later in connection with future possibilities.

Let me move on to the third, and more limited, development within the "global" economy, the university, which I paired with the universe in my title. For a while after the 60s, the students and faculty believed that the university was traditionally an autonomous place where scholarship was freely and independently pursued. This faith did not last long. As the tide of the neoliberal economy rose, the original ideal was replaced by the idea of accountability and that, in turn, was replaced by accounting. Yet, it is

7. The United Nations Millennium Project is the most comprehensive and up-to-date source of information regarding world poverty. Jeffrey D. Sachs, the head of UNMP, announced an ambitious and detailed plan to end extreme poverty and save millions of children within a decade in January 2005. Daphne Eviatar, "Spend \$150 Billion Per Year to Cure World Poverty," *The New York Times* 7 Nov. 2004; Nicholas D. Kristof, "Land of Penny Pinchers," *The New York Times* 5 Jan. 2005; Celia W. Dugger, "U.N. Proposes Doubling of Aid To Cut Poverty," *The New York Times* 18 Jan. 2005; and Maggie Farley, "Ending Extreme Poverty Is Realistic, Economist Tells Us," *The Los Angeles Times* 18 Jan. 2005. Of course, the success of the project entirely depends on the contributions by wealthy nations. Doubling aid means spending 0.5% instead of 0.25% of GNP. For comparison, one might remember that the Marshall Plan of 1949-52 gave 2.0% of GNP for the rebuilding of Europe (and the European market for the U.S.).

8. See World Commission on Environment and Development; Durning; Daly; Daly and Cobb; Wackernagel and Rees; Davidson; Dasgupta; Brown, *Eco-Economy and Plan B*; Singer; Weart; Rees; Ehrlich and Ehrlich; Goodstein; Roberts; Gelbspan; Meadows, Randers and Meadows; and Spech.

accurate to say that the university had never been really autonomous, since the very beginning of its history.

During ancient Greece, the Sophists who were the mainstream of higher education, taught for profit, charging an enormous tuition to the sons of the rich who wanted practical training for statecraft, which presumably these teachers could provide.⁹ Socrates did not charge any tuition because he wanted to teach only those he found attractive.¹⁰ Plato was wealthy enough not to demand compensation, but he, too, was devoted to the training of the philosopher king in the service of the state.

When the modern European university was established, during the medieval period, its objective was to serve the prince and the bishop. The university was not organized to discover "universal" truth, but rather to promote the "absolute" truth of the church, according to which those on the peripheries and margins were heathens and heretics to be simply dismissed, ignored, or suppressed. During the Renaissance the universities remained conservative and hostile to new ideas. The neo-humanists as well as new scientists had to meet in "academies," i.e., private homes and patrons' palaces outside university campuses. In the Enlightenment, Reason, or the universal truth, appeared to dominate, as Immanuel Kant's last book, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798) demonstrates. But even Kant, as both scholar and administrator, accepted the structure of the medieval institution. Furthermore, he did not challenge the authority of the Prussian prince over intellectual matters. By the time Schiller, Fichte, von Humboldt, and Schleiermacher became the intellectual leaders of Germany, the idea of the university was thoroughly nationalized, first as a resistance to Napoleon's occupation of Germany, and then alongside the nationism and nationalism that generally marked European nation-state formation.

In the nineteenth century, it was the nation-state in need of justification of its colonial and imperial projects that aggressively promoted state ideology through higher education and culture (as J. A. Hobson powerfully argued in 1902, at the height of British imperialism). This nation-statism constructed the humanities and social science disciplines that were centered on the idea of nations administered by the states. From arts to music, philosophy to literature, economics to anthropology, history to geography - higher education was deeply implicated in nationism, if not nationalism. As the industrial revolution advanced, the state of course supported it. The disciplinary division of learning was a condition of specialization and professionalization.

9. Marrou, 48 ff.

10. "Lysis" 146-147. See also Marrou, 30, 44, and 45.

At the same time, "discipline" also meant behavioral control, submission to rules and authority. To learn was to become a disciple of a master, and any defiance had to be restrained and punished. Similarly, the disciplinary borders were guarded and the invaders forcibly repelled. Disciplinary separation was supposed to protect scholarly expertise, but in fact it guarded the privilege of a guild. At the bottom of the humanities - and, more generally, of intellectual and vocational training as a whole - lay this construction and reinforcement of the power and authority of the state that supported the guild system. During WWII, the mobilization of scientists was crucial to the U.S. victory. Defense research was assigned to the laboratories in and around the universities (the Manhattan Project was the most conspicuous example). During the Cold War, the work of scientists was far more expanded and deeply integrated into state projects. The discipline of area studies was invented to guide the state in understanding how to control foreign, especially "remote," countries. National defense played a central role in the development of science and technology, social science and the humanities alike.

"Globalization" has changed much of this nation-state centrality. Now the state is in the service of corporations, especially huge transnational corporations. The state still funds much of university research, both private and public, with taxes paid by the citizens, but the products of such assistance are made available to corporations in the form of patents - with the researchers (now called "inventors") and the universities sharing the profits. Since the passage of the Bayh-Dole Patent Act of 1980 especially, research universities and corporations have increasingly merged their goals and activities, raising serious problems of conflict of interest and commitment.¹¹ Research is not the only aspect of corporatization. The students, another product of higher education, are increasingly trained in practical skills, treated just like any other commodity - and they are eager to participate in the transaction.

Corporations have also taken over the management of culture. "Culture" is neither a critical activity nor a community practice or expression anymore, but a stimulant for a diffuse desire for consumption, which aims at generating and expanding markets. Thus the humanities are not exempt from corporate encroachment. The curriculum is dominated by the idea of utility. National art, national music, national literature, national history, in short, disciplines in the nation-state-based humanities, no longer energize or inspire students and scholars. Consumer culture triumphs in the name of popular culture. Of course, the state as the administrator of the now weakened and blurred nation

11. See my "Ivory Tower in Escrow." (See note 13 below).

is as powerful as ever, but its operation is unapologetically dedicated to business interests. Ditto for the creative arts. Novels and poems are still being written, but they are more often than not commercial activities. Further, there are far fewer "serious" readers, critics, and reviewers, as often reported in the media and elsewhere.¹² Literary studies are supplanted by cultural studies that sprang up with "globalization" - and with the rise of theories of difference and identity politics. But even cultural studies are beginning to show signs of exhaustion.¹³ The fine arts, too, are rapidly being absorbed into commercial and decorative design.

Corporations are no less determined to keep departments of learning and knowledge separate from each other. Corporate discipline (control and training) is more effective and thorough than its national counterpart. Their instruments are of course different. In addition to "the church, the press, the schools and colleges" that J. A. Hobson listed as the tools of imperialist Britain, advertisement and careerism are now most conspicuous (216). Advertisement is omnipresent in everyday life. And all performances in life are now directed to self-promotion. Information is nearly always mixed with promotion or advertisement; universities and colleges encourage it, too - institutionally, academically, and personally. Commodification is so complete that any traveling is now thought of as tourism. (In several countries a governmental office administers culture and tourism together, as if they were interchangeable). Finally, however, discipline works most effectively by turning every specialization and profession into an exclusive and autonomous territory that rejects any inspection and intervention by outsiders. In the humanities as in the sciences, scholars are expected to know their own fields and little else, thus virtually prohibiting any general criticism, either of politics, economy, culture, or society.¹⁴ Fragmentation is so thorough that few realize even the extent of fragmentation itself.

To briefly summarize my picture of "globalization" and its calamitous effects: one, the ever widening gulf in the distribution of wealth and power; two, the environmental catastrophe that is about to visit the planet or already here; three, the transformation of the university into a corporate system, and of learning into intellectual property and entertainment. Paradoxically, how-

12. There are numerous books on the decline of literary culture; see the volumes by Schiffrin and Zaid.

13. I have written a good deal elsewhere on the corporatization of the university. See, for example, "Sites of Resistance"; "Globalization, Culture, and the University"; "Ivory Tower in Escrow"; and "Turn to the Planet: Literature, Diversity, and Totality."

14. See Woese, "New Biology"; and Lovelock, *Gaia*.

ever, these three disasters might, just might, offer humanity and the planet an unsuspected chance to confront all these crises in an interconnected fashion.

II. Hope Born From No Hope

As I turn to the possibility of entertaining hope in the age of "globalization," I point out that my argument is built on the assumption that the utter hopelessness of this moment, paradoxically, might allow us to begin to imagine some space of hope. Thus, much of what I argue here as the place of hope in relation to worldwide economic inequity, environmental crisis, and university corporatization is actually not much more than a repetition of what I have already presented as instances of historical crisis. I am aware of this, but this hope born from hopelessness is far more convincing - at least to me - than the optimistic, wishful, and unachievable options thrown around by, for example, a surprising number of environmentalists.¹⁵ Of course we should vote for politicians who are dedicated to the restoration of equality, both nationally and internationally. Of course we must curb consumption and production and preserve natural resources. Of course we should regulate corporations. Of course we should restore the spirit of criticism and cultivation. But how? And where do we begin?

Let me first discuss the environmental problems. Awareness of the crisis began in the early 60s with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. There were occasional attempts by various U.S. administrations and other governments to face the problems. There were even a few success stories later, such as the halting of the depletion of the ozone layers in the last several years. The current Bush administration, however, radically changed the environmental policy. Bush and his Vice-President ignore the risks facing the entire world in favor of business profits, especially those of the energy industry. The Clinton-Gore regime, too, chose their favorite data and figures in the process of policy making, but they did not edit, revise, fabricate, and conceal major scientific assessments and their own official reports. The 2001 third assessment report of the nearly universally respected Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change¹⁶ has been dismissed out of

15. Paul and Anne Ehrlich's *One With Nineveh* is a pessimistic description of the environmental crisis. Toward the end of the book, however, the authors suggest political reforms including amendments of the Constitution, prohibition of corporate contributions to political campaigns, new anti-trust laws, etc. Even worse than those fantasies is their proposal of placing the governance of the U.S. "in the hands of carefully selected and monitored specialists" like the Supreme Court and the Federal Reserve System! (299ff)

hand, and the existent EPA and Energy Department rules and policies have been either ignored or altered. Before the 2004 election, forty-eight Nobel laureate scientists signed a protest against George W. Bush concerning environmental issues.¹⁷ The Environmental Sustainability Index report of January 2005 (compiled by researchers at Yale and Columbia Universities) ranks the United States 45th of 146 countries studied. So how could the extremely hostile anti-environmental policy of the United States allow any space to hope for the recovery of the earth and its inhabitants?

My hope - a bizarre word in this context - is that precisely because of Bush and Cheney's incomprehensible irresponsibility and ignorance, one can begin to see signs of unease and distrust about this administration's policies even among industrial managers and financial leaders. As a *New York Times* headline puts it, "Going For Broke Could Break Bush."¹⁸ Some, though not many, corporate managers are beginning to devise strategies on their own to cope with the imminent risks as well as with their clients' fear. George Soros' active efforts in environment and development are well known. The oil industry and OPEC are of course unlikely to change their course, but even in the oil industry the CEO of British Petroleum now insists the company's initials stand for "Beyond Petroleum." Royal Dutch Shell Oil is investing a large sum in alternative energy resources. To take a few more examples, American Electric Power, the largest electricity generator in the United States and a top emitter of carbon dioxide, has pledged to reduce emission from its plants 10 percent by 2010. Chevron is enforcing stringent environmental rules in its local operations in Indochina, as reported by Jared Diamond. Even General Motors says it has achieved its target of a 10 percent reduction in North American plant emission from 2000 to 2005.¹⁹ Of course, BP or Chevron are not environmentally friendly, nor are the products of General Motors adjusted in mindfulness of their environmental effects. They all continue to explore and exploit on a huge scale for oil and natural gas. Yet the companies are beginning to recognize that serious efforts, not just public relations, help their business. While Detroit (including General Motors) persists in manufacturing SUVs and Hummers and the White House continues to give them its blessings, German and Japanese manufactures are

16. See the IPCC website.

17. Andrew C. Revkin, "Bush VS. The Laureates: How Science Became a Partisan Issue," *The New York Times* 19 Oct. 2004.

18. Nicholas Confessore, 6 February 2005.

19. Mark Landler, "Mixed Feelings as Kyoto Pact Takes Effect," *The New York Times*, 16 Feb. 2005; Diamond 446-452.

committed to producing alternative fuel cars and cutting carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions. This is not necessarily out of environmental concern, but it does indicate willingness to invest in the future prospects of alternative energy-operated automobiles. The technology developed in the manufacture of hybrid or electric cars can be sold later as intellectual property. The U.S. auto industry may well end up buying patents from Germany and Japan rather than oil from Saudi Arabia!

Perhaps more importantly, economists are beginning to examine seriously how to internalize the "externalities;" those factors that have been consistently excluded from consideration in the manufacture process, such as environmental costs and "non-economic" factors, are being brought into the purview of economics. One remembers that only a few years ago, Lawrence H. Summers, now the President of Harvard, then the chief economist of the World Bank, dismissed the introduction of ecology into economics as "worthless."²⁰ Of course, scholars like Dennis and Donella Meadows, Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., Eric A. Davidson, Lester R. Brown and others have been thinking about the ecological economy for several decades. But more recently, even the mainstream economists are beginning to discuss ecological and environmental issues.²¹ There is little doubt that if economics is integrated with ecology, the whole structure of production and consumption, growth and stasis,²² including the pricing and wage-setting system, will have to be fundamentally altered. And a changed structure will also have to consider the quality of life: what is a good life, what do we live for, what do we really want - topics that have been forgotten and have not been raised often for generations. And this re-organization of studies and thoughts may well lead to a general shift in people's attitude toward the earth's health.

While the "global" economy is not global, the environmental crisis is. Though the rich will continue to try to escape from pollution and contamination, an exclusive and permanent escape is an absurd illusion. The global linkage of the environmental crisis is in fact the key to hope. Once people realize that there is no way of avoiding the omnipresent crisis, even the rich will be forced to face it. How soon the encounter is going to take place, and in what way? That is a more crucial question, contingent on other developments in the economy and "have/have-not" division that now splits the world.

20. Daly, *Beyond Growth* 6-7.

21. Arrow et al., "Are We Consuming Too Much?" 147-172.

22. Few recall that John Stuart Mill thought about the "stationary state" economy in his early book, *Principles of Political Economy*.

Thus this logic of true globality seamlessly leads to the second critical aspect of the neoliberal economy, the "have"/"have-not" division that now splits the world. Moral injustice is obvious to nearly everyone, but the ethical discourse that has continued ever since the emergence of poverty several thousand years ago at the invention of agriculture promises very little at this point. The well-to-do will ignore the sufferings of the poor as long as they can keep distant from them and as long as they can keep the poor under control. However, when the poor reach a breaking point (which they are rapidly approaching), they will try to close this gap with rage and force. One quarter or more of the human population now has no clean water and decent food and shelter, and the number is getting bigger, as has been described earlier. It is well known, on the other hand, that the rich live in obscene opulence and wastefulness.

The bridge over this gulf will take various forms. Hunger and deprivation breed diseases and epidemics (such as HIV/AIDS, Ebola, Marburg virus, west Nile virus, and many others). Few people would intentionally spread epidemics, but epidemics do break out even in developed regions. And the rich cannot quarantine all the poor and sick forever. There are too many planned and unplanned contacts between the disparate groups. To survive, the poor need to, for example, clear tropic woods and rain forests, and often they burn trees and bushes. At times, the fire spreads out of control as it did in 1997 in Southeast Asia and in 1991 in the Gulf War. The smoke and ashes traveled far, reaching Hawaii and beyond. As the poor in Brazil destroy tropical forests for cattle raising, settlements, or other uses, the pharmaceutical and agricultural companies in the First World lose the vast profits they might make from acts of biopiracy.

Perhaps the most precipitous form of the encounter is what preoccupies the leaders of the United States at present: terrorism. It is easy to dismiss terrorism as a criminal and self-destructive act that will exhaust itself in time. But terrorism is perhaps better understood when placed in the context of the confrontation with the hegemonic economy by the desperate opposites who have neither high-tech weaponry nor state support. Lester Pearson, a former prime minister of Canada, once said: "A planet cannot, any more than a country, survive half slave, and half free, half engulfed in misery, half careening along toward the supposed joys of almost unlimited consumption. Neither our ecology nor our morality could survive such contrasts."²³ He said this in 1969, and during the 36 years since, the conditions of the poor have far worsened in comparative and absolute terms. If the view of

23. Ehrlich and Ehrlich 234.

terrorism as a confrontation of the disconnected halves is right, the only conclusion is that such terrorist attacks will not be likely to cease until the halves are connected. Since terrorism is not a state project, developed nations have no way of waging a conventional war against it, as they can witness daily in Iraq, Israel, and elsewhere. Nuclear bombs and Tomahawk missiles will be useless in terrorist, guerrilla, or insurgency warfare. Am I arguing, then, that terrorism is an effective solution of the twenty-first-century global crisis? I don't believe that. Terrorism is unacceptable; innocent civilians should not be wantonly murdered. One does recall, however, that after the First World War, the idea of "total war" prevailed, and all citizens of an enemy country were presumed to be enemies. In Dresden, Hamburg, Nanjing, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Tokyo, mass murder of civilians was committed repeatedly during WWII; few have condemned these mass slaughters as war crimes or violations of human rights. It seems inevitable that the rich will remain in fear of terrorist attacks on their comfort and security, as long as they refuse to abandon the monopoly of wealth and indulgence and to share the earth's plenitude with the rest of the world. The current U.S. policy of the "global war on terror" means a fundamental transformation of the economy and law into an undefined security system (anywhere, anytime, and anywise). And it is more than likely to induce more terrorist assaults and to endanger democracy in the United States itself. The point then is the restoration of wealth equality in the entire world to the conditions that prevailed before the nineteenth century. The planet as a whole, its population in its entirety, is finally emerging as the only viable imaginary for all of us.

The third consequence of the global catastrophe is less significant in scale, although it is immediately relevant to those who live and practice in the university. The importance of culture and the humanities as tools for the nation-state projects lasted well into the mid-twentieth century, as I have already mentioned. The decline began with fundamental skepticism about the idea of totality, authority, and centrality alongside the decline of nation-statism. It was replaced in a fairly brief period by the ideology of difference, especially as the old colonies began to gain independence. Edward Said's anti-Orientalism was one of the movements emanating from this challenge, joined soon by gender, ethnic, and popular culture studies, which were advanced in the spirit of justice, equality, and liberation. Difference and diversity have been axial for several decades by now. What has gradually emerged from this initially liberating movement, however, is social and intellectual fragmentation. Socially, it coincided with the neoliberal development, as has been discussed, for instance, by David Harvey in his *New Imperialism* and his forthcoming *Neoliberalism*. Intellectually and institu-

tionally, it has encouraged and has been encouraged by the emphasis on specialization and professionalization. Now totality is being avoided if not outright dismissed. And culture, too, is no longer matter-of-factly accepted, as its activities and products become absorbed into the commodity market, or operate as residual hegemonic state symbols. The neoliberal economy also converted the university and the museum into professions, businesses, and corporations, and careerism further isolated and atomized disciplines and scholars. The sale of the museum and the university may in itself not be a catastrophe.²⁴ (Nor is it entirely new). Yet the way today's scholars, artists, and writers of different "kinds" (in gender, ethnicity, class, and discipline) have ceased to talk together, discuss together, or even disagree together, despite their own powerful counter-inclination toward transdisciplinarity, is dispiriting as well as egregious.

The abandonment of the humanities is evident in several ways. Preferring applied sciences (especially, biomedical technology), engineering (information technology, e.g.), and business administration for their majors and fields of specialization, fewer students now enroll in humanities departments and the courses they offer. Graduate applications have been decreasing. Those who persist and receive the doctorate have difficulties in finding employment. Those few who manage to land jobs face another difficulty, sooner or later, in publishing their dissertations, a requirement for tenure that stubbornly survives. It is a thoroughly familiar story.

What is still not widely acknowledged is that PhDs who finally convert their dissertations into books (that are likely to sit unread in the university library shelves) become so tired of their specialized subject matters, especially if they are literary, that as soon as they have an opportunity, they try to flee from them. Those in literature may well move on to film studies, or to fiction writing, or beyond the territory of arts into social and historical events, psychological questions, or political economical investigations. Brighter students especially crave fresh and comprehensive studies. In other words, "transdisciplinarity" describes the actual aspiration and practice of an increasing number of young, and also older, humanities teachers and scholars in higher education. For evidence one only needs to glance at university press catalogues. The category of literary studies has entirely vanished from many. What has taken place is, though publicly denied and

24. There have been numerous studies concerning the place of the museum in contemporary culture. To name just a few random scholars, Hal Foster, Tony Bennett, and Miwon Kwon have been raising important issues. See also a special section on "Museums," *The New York Times* 30 March 2005, as well as my "Leere Museen: Endzeit?" 84-88.

not openly admitted, the erosion of departments, disciplines, and professions. Integrative and holistic learning that involves the totality of the complicated fabric of life and the world is increasingly more desired, though again, not openly acknowledged. One notes a marked lowering of the walls that surrounded academic humanities research throughout the twentieth century.²⁵

Environmental deterioration also demands that the planet be understood and experienced as a commonality that belongs to every single being on earth. Here globalization is a compelling actuality. Knowledge and understanding of it, too, ought to be global, or universal, and inclusive. Economics cannot externalize environmental factors: pricing needs to be fundamentally restructured. History and geography cannot neglect paleontology and geophysics; it must discard its narrow preoccupation with the brief development of human civilization, not to say regions and nations. History ought to think about the future as well as the long pre-human past. The humanities discipline that was once sustained by the idea of the nation-state can now seize this moment of despondency and reorganize itself around the planet and the universe, the ultimate cohesive totality as the central imaginary.

Environmental sustenance cannot be considered without rethinking social totality. This time, in other words, the need for a radical social and class reformation is not just ethical or political, but a biological and psychological necessity for everyone, which even the richest in the world cannot dismiss any longer, however averse to it they might be. The environmental totality consists of a multitude of differences. Far from being vulnerable to totalitarianism, this commitment to totality is solidly based on the recognition of individualities, singularities, and their interconnectives. This environmental integrationism does not forget the world, the planet, and the universe, unlike the fragmentary principle of difference. Unlike the principle of dif-

25. A word of caution is needed here regarding "interdisciplinary" studies. Recognizing the intellectual demands for studies that cut across departmental borders, university administrators have been encouraging an arrangement of "interdisciplinary" studies by organizing conferences, programs, centers, and institutes. In these gatherings, experts from different fields get together to discuss urgent and attractive topics. In itself a salutary attempt, this project nonetheless falls short of serious achievements. First, these forums are always temporary. After assembling for a limited period, the participants head home to their separate departments where the same conventional disciplines dominate. Hiring, promoting, and firing are all carried out in the discrete units as if nothing had happened to disciplines, and the interdisciplinary gatherings were just a pleasant memory - like a summer camp. Serious studies belong to a profession and specialization that still reject contamination by other disciplines. "Interdisciplinarity" is finally a self-contradiction, a deception.

ference or the outdated one of nation-statism, the world, the planet, and the universe is a stirring and inspiring ground of commonality on which people, artists, writers, scholars, and scientists can work together in a truly trans-disciplinary endeavor.

And finally, environmental totality demands that knowledge and learning remain undivided and inclusive. Here James Lovelock's eccentric idea of "Gaia" might be instructive. First of all, Lovelock pursues his studies at home in a Devonshire farmhouse with no affiliation to a university or research institution. He says he needs to be alone so that he can avoid "peer review," which for him means self-imposed inquisition or surrender to authority, expertise, or gentility. His goal is to be free to range over all the disciplines of science. Transdisciplinarity is a precondition of his "geophysiology" that considers the planet a vast living organism, *Gaia*. *Gaia*, the totality of the evolving planet, contains all the species and their environment in interaction with one another. The humans in it are merely one species among others, and the life of the earth extends far back into its beginning - long before the evolution of micro organisms, plants, and animals, not to say humans. Such a comprehensive perspective requires even today's environmentalism to be reconsidered. How do we live with *Gaia*?

It is always from the action of individuals that powerful local, regional, and global systems evolve. When the activity of an organism favors the environment as well as the organism itself, then its spread will be assisted; eventually the organism and the environmental change associated with it will become global in extent ... If we see the world as a superorganism of which we are a part - not the owner, nor the tenant; not even a passenger - we could have a long time ahead of us and our species might survive for its "allotted span."
(239)

Though one should be cautious lest Lovelock's antihumanism should lapse into political indifference and historical ignorance, his rejection of anthropocentricity is both invigorating and liberating. His refusal to see the planet as an inorganic object and his disapproval of scientific disciplines as autonomous and discrete is something we ought to take seriously in our attempts to rethink the future of the humanities.

To sum it all up, the earth will have to be understood as inescapably interconnected. For living with the planet, sharing is our only choice. And the world and the globe and the universe must constitute the base of our studies and investigations - in fact of our consciousness itself. The university

- and the world that contains it - could be a happier place, if it were reorganized around this idea of planetary commonality and totality.²⁶

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26. See Guattari, *Three Ecologies*; and Bateson, *Ecology of Mind*. There are a few helpful essays in Bateson's sequel, *Sacred Unity*.

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