HIGHER EDUCATION: ITS EVOLUTION AND PRESENT TREND

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Higher education as we know it today in the European tradition began in the twelfth century AD and was then for hundreds of years principally concerned with the training of an elite of public and private administrators as well as with some training for the earliest professions. By the mid-nineteenth century it had also taken on, within separate national settings, the role of training of engineers, scientists, technologists in aid of the competitive positions of nation-states in the accelerating industrial revolution. A century later it was part of national social compacts. However, by the end of the twentieth century the notion of extensive higher education as social justice began to be erased and the pathway to higher education of a new elite began to be cleared. This is the argument of the present paper.

The third transition can be seen, albeit not as something particularly coherent, in the particular case of Australia. The process is one of concentrating public and private resources onto a small group of universities with long-established research pretensions. This process appears to be crowding out what various commentators have spoken of as a possible alternative third transition, one involving a process of developing the different strengths of all existing colleges and universities and of opening up of pathways between them.

Higher education is education developed beyond a secondary level. However, not all education beyond the secondary level is higher education: there is also 'technical and further education', as it is known in Australia. Higher education was synonymous with universities until the nineteenth century. It was a progression from the more scholastic

type of secondary education. A concern with the development of the intellect that had already been awakened at secondary school remained an essential and explicit tradition until perhaps the middle of the twentieth century. That development meant the encouragement of broad reading, nurturing of intellectual independence, and rigour in thinking and argumentation. The curriculum had evolved from the ecclesiastical origins of the European universities. Learning was a general learning of the manner of interactions between people, between humans and the natural world, and between humans and the divine, rather than instrumental (as in what does one need to know to act on the world in such and such a way).

Students were from the bourgeoisie in the main but included some who were the bright offspring of the petty bourgeoisie and upper strata of the working class. The oldest universities in the Anglophone world were self-governing and, in particular, were ostensibly autonomous of the state. Some were ruled by religious hierarchies. They were administered as was thought to be conducive to the training of agile and alert minds of young men for the administration of government and public administration and of large-scale private businesses (such as they were), and of the church. The proper pursuit of these vocations was thought to be within the capability of only a few people with the learning, vision and leadership that could be gained at the universities.

The nature of universities changed as they were harnessed variously (and in some cases uncertainly) to the development of industrial capitalism. In the second part of the twentieth century, with discoveries in a diversity of branches of science, with the greater need for coordination of production, distribution and exchange, this sort of change became more pronounced. At the same time, with a rise in workers' expectations as to income and social status, it came to be expected that the universities could become more accessible to the people and that the colleges of post-secondary education that had multiplied beyond teachers' colleges could be given the status of universities, issuing the same certificates. Thus would the efficiency of work in general, as well as the incomes and social status of the aspirant class, be improved.

Now, though, it seems to be acceptable to say – in so many words - 'enough is enough', that this social project of generalised university

education is evidently inefficient and may be harming the possibility of nurturing a necessary leadership in tackling the complex challenges of science and social organisation. It appears that, generally, the way that is being chosen to reform this state of affairs is to focus resources on a 'big (global) league' of universities which eventually will be (re)separated from 'vocational colleges'. The 'big league' will be publicly or privately endowed but in either case will be run by boards that are avowedly independent both of the state and of particular private interests. There will be lip-service to pathways to the universities from the host of 'popular', vocational colleges so that it is possible to attest to the endurance of the equality of access to universities. Whether such pathways will indeed ensure equality of access, and whether they will ensure that the best of talent among poorer households may be recruited to the leadership, are quite different matters.

The Nation-state and British Higher Education to the End of the Nineteenth Century[1]

Historians in the West are inclined to the view that the first of what we now describe as universities came into being in Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in Paris and Oxford, Bologna and Padua (although Bologna claims to be older). They were at first known as *studia generales*. There were evidently places which also we may call *studia* in the Middle East and the Far East (for example China and Vietnam) as long ago as the preceding millennium. Arguably, however, these were not progenitors of the universities in those countries that were established in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which resembled closely the universities established during that period in the West. Gordon Leff

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1   Not all of British higher education to the end of the nineteenth century, at least, was English higher education. Indeed, the quality of Scottish higher education was much greater than that of the English in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Scottish universities (especially Edinburgh) are regarded by some (for example, Wittrock, 1993: 310) as having reflected a 'Scottish enlightenment'. However, the impact of the Scottish universities eventually declined with a transition in the organisation of knowledge from about the turn of the eighteenth century, and an exodus of the Scottish intelligentsia to London with the abolition of the Scottish parliament (Wittrock, 1993: 311).

claims Oxford and Paris universities represented the model of the masters' university (the 'northern' model) for subsequent universities and Bologna the model of the students' university (the 'southern' model) (Leff, 1968: 20).

The *studium generale* in Paris grew out of the cathedral school of Notre Dame but was concerned with 'profane' knowledge as with ecclesiastical learning. Oxford was also originally ecclesiastical; but by the fourteenth century it looked increasingly to the king for protection, which was enthusiastically given. Faculties were regulated at Oxford from the year 1215. The founding of a university at Cambridge dates approximately from the same decade, as does the founding of universities in the Italian cities of Reggio, Vicenza, Arezzo, Padua and Naples (Cobban, 1999). During the thirteenth century, 'the universities institutionalised higher education' (Leff, 1968: 116). The curriculum changed from the liberal arts (grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music) to a greater concentration on philosophy and dialectic (logic), especially with the import of the Greco-Arabian corpus of knowledge and ideas; and the universities began to undertake the preparation of young men for the professions of law, medicine, the church and teaching. The development of other medieval universities was comparable, not surprisingly, given that there were extensive exchanges between them on the basis of Latin as a common language[2].

In England, the landed aristocracy was slow to take advantage of the new institution. For approximately two centuries to the late fifteenth century, undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge were recruited from families of artisans, minor gentry, civil servants, merchants, teachers, manorial officials and the like. The recruits were financed by parents or local patrons, or entered university as friars (Cobban, 1999). Oxford and Cambridge universities played a major role in the propaganda in support of the Hundred Years War. Only after the turn of the fifteenth century did the aristocracy begin to penetrate Oxbridge, thereupon to stultify the intellectual and ideological pretensions of the two universities for nearly four centuries. Oxbridge education then remained 'traditional' until well

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2   However, on the Continent, according to Leff, law and medicine found their homes in the southern universities of Bologna, Padua, Toulouse and Montpelier (Leff, 1968: 177).

after the founding of the University of London and other 'civic universities' and well after reforms in Germany, France and other parts of Continental Europe (Anderson, 1995).

Oxford and Cambridge only began to transform themselves after Thomas Arnold had engendered changes in the English 'public schools' in the second half of the nineteenth century, and after the rise of the grammar schools. Reformers such as Matthew Arnold, Thomas' son, worked to create what R D Anderson has called a 'clerisy'[3]- an educated ruling class capable of providing intellectual and spiritual leadership to the mass of the British people (Anderson, 1995 and 2004: 113). Bjorn Wittrock and Reba Soffer (Soffer, 1987: 169ff as quoted by Wittrock) have observed that the 'liberal education' of Oxford and Cambridge was orientated to preparing young men for 'the eventual governance of the outside world' or the formation of an administrative and political elite capable of managing Britain and its empire (Wittrock, 1993: 325). Entry into the civil service became dependent on success in competitive examinations. However, the examination was biased in favour of university graduates. Entry into the civil service required also demonstration of 'the complex of ethical and social qualities identified with the gentleman' (Anderson, 2004: 196)[4]

In England two universities, the University of London and Durham University, joined Oxford and Cambridge in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. By the end of the century, however, many towns had founded 'civic universities', later to become known as the 'red-brick universities'. These new universities were fed by the burgeoning grammar schools (Anderson, 1995). The aims of the founding city fathers, who were mostly in business locally, were something like 'civic aggrandisement' and the local establishment of a capacity to train local young people in the skills that local businesses required (including traditional professional skills) (Trow, 1993: 284). Oxford and Cambridge

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3   The term was attributed by Anderson to Samuel Taylor Coleridge
4   The boundary between higher education and 'lower' education has differed between countries since universal secondary schooling spread throughout the developed world in the late nineteenth century, with England setting a relatively high standard of schooling and the US a relatively low one (Rothblatt and Wittrock, 1993: 4)

came gradually to incorporate professional education by the turn of the century. Trow has described the conflictual relationship between the two overarching aims of the modern British university, namely the formation of an administrative and political elite and the development of research especially in science, professional and even vocational education, as 'bedevilling' the universities. All of the civic universities aspired to the social and political status of Oxford and Cambridge, while also being concerned with more practical matters. In time, there was also a rise of science and 'practical' subjects at Oxbridge (Anderson, 1995)[5]. The common aspiration is said by Trow to have led, along with the beginning of state support for the universities, to the creation eventually of a national system in Britain (the *whole* of which remained 'bedevilled' by the conflict of ideas about what a university should be).

The demands of the new manufacturing capitalists appear to have been more slowly met in British universities than in Germany, in particular. Perry Anderson is quoted by R D Anderson (1995: 33) as taking the view that the landed aristocracy prevailed over the new manufacturing capitalist class in control of British universities in general[6]. On the other hand, the difference may have been more a consequence of the tradition of relatively autonomous governance of British universities (originating in the governance of Oxford and Cambridge *colleges* by fellows, then emulated by the *universities*), as opposed to the state-directed

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5   R D Anderson says of Matthew Arnold that he was anxious to utilise the resources of Oxford and Cambridge in support of provincial centres of higher education and thus 'to produce the leadership of an urban, industrial, democratic country by fusing new and old elites, bound together by a rejuvenated high culture and serious intellectual learning' (Anderson, 2004: 114)

6   Interestingly, Martin Wiener has shown how hostile the most influential English writers became in their attitudes to capitalism, growth, materialism, business and commerce. Some changed their positions drastically during the course of their writings. Wiener quotes especially John Stuart Mill, Matthew Arnold, Charles Dickens and John Ruskin (Wiener, 2004: 30-40). In the case of Arnold he noted considerable inconsistency but concluded, like R D Anderson, that what Arnold wanted to see for 'middleclass schools' was a curriculum more or less that of the reformed 'public schools' (p 35). Of Dickens Wiener wrote that '[h]is fictional world led from the Old England of John Bull and stagecoaches through the feverish new urban and industrial society to end in a cathedral town among public school men' (p 35).

governance that characterised German universities of the time (Trow, 1993: 292).

The Nation-State and Higher Education in France, Germany, the US and Japan

Following the French revolution the revolutionary government enlisted the *Grandes Ecoles* and created more such institutions to help train people to advance the revolution. The Faculties of Letters and Sciences of the University of France became principally the places in which the teachers of the famous secondary schools, the *Lycees*, were educated and trained (Clark, 1973). Most other students going on to the University on completing their *baccalaureates* entered the Faculties of Medicine, Law or Theology. Napoleon employed the principles of indoctrination perfected by the Jesuits during the *ancien regime* to undermine dissent (Clark's comment) and created a hierarchical structure linking *lycees*, faculties, *grandes ecoles*, and *academies* (clusters of faculties), with the Ministry of Education at its apex, to organise education in the interests of the state. The structure was kept by subsequent regimes and only began to open up with the establishment of the third republic, after 1870. By that time, and in the wake of the unification of the German states, German technical and scientific progress was all too obvious (Clark, 1973).

In the early part of the nineteenth century there occurred in the still-separate German states the beginning of the first grand transition of higher education[7]. This led rapidly over the course of the next one

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7   Wittrock (1993: 309) proposes a different set of 'transformations', notably the crisis and rebirth of the idea of the university at the turn of the eighteenth century, the emergence of the modern research-orientated university in the late nineteenth century, and the current period of reappraisal 'in the wake of experiences of a less than all-successful planning euphoria on the one hand and rapidly growing streams of demand ... from government, industry and the educational system at large'. I have run together the first and second transformations, with some damage to the idea of the first I confess. The absence of a place in Wittrock for the second transition mentioned in this paper is curious. Of the third transformation and how it corresponds with the third transition posited here more will be said towards the end of this paper.

hundred years to the secure harnessing of higher education to the purposes of the state. The universities themselves were bureaucratised; and university administrations were connected to a central state bureaucracy, which was also true even of the US (Wittrock, 1993: 329).

The reform of Prussian universities was guided by the aristocratic Wilhelm von Humboldt, evidently supported by Goethe, in the first half of the nineteenth century. Humboldt's vision (Wittrock, 1993: 317-319) was of a place of intellectual and academic freedom, the invention of a new cultural community, and general education rather than specialisation. The vision was first embodied in the creation of the new University of Berlin, the later planning of which was superintended by Humboldt. Despite the fact that the Humboldtian university is contrasted with the Napoleonic university, Humboldt did insist on the appointment of professors by the state. It has become a commonplace to point out that the Humboldtian vision soon gave way to the university of many specialisations and of scientific research which quickly began to propel unified Germany (now led by the conservative Otto von Bismarck) to great industrial successes and established the University of Berlin as the model of a research university for the rest of the developed world for decades to come. Bismarck was himself a *junker* or member of the old rural aristocracy who spoke of feudalising the bourgeoisie and who appointed to the civil service and the military only people prepared to serve the nobility (Simon, 1968); but it was Bismarck who built thereafter the extensive state on which German industrial progress and imperial expansion was based.

The US had eight universities by the time of the War of Independence (Trow, 1993). These were colleges and Harvard was the first of them. In the early nineteenth century, the US Supreme Court ruled that private groups and bodies could establish and maintain colleges *despite* the state, whereupon there was a proliferation of small colleges. After the Civil War the Land Grant Acts enabled the administration of the United States to finance programs and colleges to teach a combination of the liberal arts and subjects in agriculture, engineering and the like. From 1887 the US administration was able to fund Land Grant Colleges directly. With the founding of Johns Hopkins University in 1876, the modern European university first came to the US (Wittrock, 1993: 323); it was replicated

rapidly in the establishment of research universities by the state (at State and Federal levels) throughout the country.

In Japan at the end of the feudal period and of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the Chinese Confucian tradition of teaching was still being used as a means of suppressing and controlling the people (Teruhisa Horio, 1988: 50). However, for a couple of decades at the beginning of the Meiji period, Western liberal ideas seemed likely to take root, with the passionate backing of reformers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi. This promise did not last long. Fukuzawa and his colleagues believed that true national progress in Japan and success in competing with the West would come from the involvement of the people in their learning, that this would empower the people to challenge the lingering elements of feudalism. In some way the people would be responsible ultimately for a new 'cultural academy' which would have control of curriculum matters in association with teachers, whereas the state would retain control of fiscal and administrative matters – apparently at arm's length from decisions about the curriculum and day-to-day management of schools and universities (*ibid*: 59-60). In fact, not twenty years into the Meiji period, the new imperial state repudiated the ideas of Fukuzawa and insisted on the separation of scholarship and education, so that the practice of education became the two-fold 'propagandization of the masses and cultivation of the elite' (*ibid*: 102). The elite was increasingly required to keep non-technical knowledge secret from the people. The acceptance by scholars of their role in nurturing an imperial elite and fascism brought about the final decay of scholarship: the state handed out severe individual punishments to academics who failed to respect the state's requirements. Such was Japanese higher education in the early 1930's and such was it at the end of the Pacific War (see also Marshall, 1992).

Let us sum up the period to the early part of the twentieth century. What can be discerned is an early period during which universities and their teachers and students developed the liberal arts and then, at different times, took on studies for the earlier professions (although not exclusively so). By the beginning of the eighteenth century, capitalism had become more complicated than simple commodity production, and nation-states had developed from or begun to replace the old monarchies;

and many had begun vast geographic expansions (the era of 'classic imperialism'). New skills were required of workers and new capacities were required at the helms of business and the state. The university and the university experience proved to be appropriate for the nurturing of the leadership capacities of a small proportion of young men who would later become the managers of the vast enterprises of the emerging capitalist world and of the public institutions concerned with their promotion and regulation.

Thus the first great transition of universities was the re-fashioning of these institutions to take on the nurturing of the elite in new circumstances of industrial capitalism and, to a degree, to take on the technical tasks of developing that mode of production[8].

The Second Great Transition of Higher Education – a Limited Popularisation

World War II was a major marker in the development of higher education, especially in the Anglophone world. There were evident imperatives facing the leaders of industry and hence the victor states at the end of the war. The first was a re-fashioning of the 'social compact' or 'social contract' between the industrialists and the mass of citizens, primarily workers. Thus social investment and social consumption expenditures were raised dramatically. More specifically, higher education was expanded; and accessibility to higher education was made much less dependent on income or social class. In the first instance, returned servicemen and women were enabled to enroll in universities and colleges. The enabling Federal bill in the US was known as the GI

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[8]   There are interesting sub-plots in the study of the timing of incorporation of new areas of learning into the curricula of universities. Choices as to where to locate the study of engineering, architecture, agriculture and veterinary science (not to speak of 'estate management') have their own interesting histories. Law could be studied at the University of Cambridge in the thirteenth century; on the other hand, professional certification in law has been obtainable in some countries from outside the university until very recent times. As interesting as the histories of training in the major professions undoubtedly are, space considerations mean that they must be set aside from this paper.

Bill (Brubacher and Rudy, 1976: 230)[9]. Similarly in Australia the Federal government funded a large enrolment of discharged members of the armed forces at the end of World War II, while taking great care to circumscribe this incursion into a field of traditionally State government responsibility[10]. The incursion, though circumscribed, can be said eventually to have eased the wider Commonwealth funding of higher education. In the UK, the principal instigator of a broadened access to higher education was the wartime Minister for Education, R A B Butler, whose blueprint can be said to have been endorsed in a highly acclaimed report by the economist Lionel Robbins in the 1960's. This report also effectively endorsed (perhaps inadvertently) what later became known as a 'binary distinction' between universities and colleges (as did the Australian Martin Report discussed below), as if to acknowledge that there could be a serious contradiction in incorporating higher education in a social compact too freely (Davies, 1989: 136-7).

The second imperative was to train the men and women who would incorporate into the physical capital stock the vast range of industrial innovations waiting to be adopted and which would later drive the post-war expansion of industry world-wide. This would involve enormous state expenditures because the speed required, the risks to be faced and the difficulty of privatising the bulk of the benefits of the investment would defeat or at least seriously encumber the private sector. Linked with the acknowledgement that the public sector was crucial was the presumption that investment in human capital was required to complement investments in physical capital stock, although doubts were expressed about just how critical higher education may be. It was widely agreed that talent had to be recruited and nurtured wherever and in whatever class it was to be found. However, notwithstanding the monumental war efforts of women in industry, there would be a strong discrimination in favour of men.

The story of the second transition we pick up in Australia, where admittedly it came a little later than in the US and more uncertainly than in the UK; and to what occurred in Australia we confine our attention.

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9   The GI Bill of Rights or, formally, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944).
10   S J Butlin and C B Schedvin, *War Economy, 1942-45*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial, 1977, pp 724-733

The Rise of Higher Education in Australia

At the end of the Second World War there were still only six universities in Australia, 'civic universities' of the sort that that had been established in the UK in the nineteenth century[11]. These were the Universities of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania.

In 1951, the government of R G Menzies began recurrent Commonwealth grants to the universities (Davies, 1989: 9). A later Menzies government in 1957 appointed Sir Keith Murray, chair of the University Grants Committee in the UK, to head a committee to examine the funding of Australian universities in light of the demands being put on higher education for the graduates who would be necessary for the modernisation of Australian industry. Commonwealth involvement in education was confronted by the States' constitutional powers and responsibilities in the area. The Murray Report recommended to the Prime Minister that the Commonwealth financial contribution to the funding of universities be substantially increased. The Committee also played a part in the creation of additional universities in Victoria and NSW and ushered in the Australian Universities Commission to fashion a national policy for the universities (Davies, 1989). The first chair of the AUC was Sir Leslie Martin.

In 1964, a committee under Martin reported to the Commonwealth government on the advisability of expansion of Australian capacity in higher education and on the manner of such an expansion. In the decade after the Commonwealth's adoption of the recommendations of the Martin Report, the number of universities grew from seven to seventeen and the number of colleges of advanced education, including pre-existing teachers' colleges, grew to 77 (Marginson, 1997: 21). Both the UK and Australia endorsed the 'binary divide'. It appears that Commonwealth funding of higher education (universities and colleges) grew at about the same rate at the Commonwealth's total outlays on education. At the same

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11   In this historical sketch, I freely acknowledge a debt to a major figure in the study of education in Australia, Professor Simon Marginson (see, in particular, Marginson, 1997).

time, the total education expenditure met by the state (Commonwealth
and State governments) rose by almost 250% in real terms and
substantially as a proportion of GDP. The Commonwealth became
increasingly important in relation the States. Over the same decade,
roughly, Commonwealth expenditure directed to social programs
altogether (that is, including education) accounted for the entire increase
in the proportion of total Commonwealth outlays to GDP (Marginson,
1997: 20-26).

Martin approached his work with a conviction that 'honours students'
should be separated from 'pass students' and that there should be a
corresponding distinction between a core of institutions concerned with
research and research training in areas such as science, technology,
medicine, agriculture and so on, and a periphery of 'colleges' concerned
with 'vocational training' in accounting, journalism and the like (Davies,
1989: 55). On the other hand, Menzies' riding instructions to Martin
were that an expansion of higher education should be achieved while
restricting the number of universities. Martin, as chair of the AUC, was a
servant of the Commonwealth government (Davies, 1989: 155).

At the same time, the report stated the opinion of the Committee that
there was no conflict between the provision of higher education for 'all
citizens according to their inclination and capacity' and community
needs for graduates. (Commonwealth of Australia, 1964; 11). Marginson,
on the other hand, said of the Martin Committee that it gave scant
attention to the paradox that to assert growing private needs for education
is also to create a need for the continuous expansion of the social supply
of education facilities (Marginson, 1997: 12). Presumably, the link is that
higher education is a 'positional good' for which people compete and in
so doing create a greater demand for places in higher education.

The Martin report argued that an increased state provision for higher
education was warranted not only by increasing private needs for higher
education but by increasing public needs. The Committee appeared to
regard as the greatest social need the need to develop citizens with a
capacity to make well-considered decisions about a wide range of
increasingly complex matters. The Committee was silent on the matter of
any limit to the expansion of higher education. This silence must be
understood, however, in the context of the emphasis which the

Committee put on colleges in the expansion of higher education and on a corresponding increase in part-time study[12]. In addition to achieving a more responsible and capable citizenry, the increased provision of places in higher education would increase the equality of opportunity to pursue intellectual merit through higher education. It would do much to replace wealth and class with intellectual merit as determinants of entry into the highest echelons of national decision-making. The questions of whether university courses encouraged intellectual merit, whether courses should become more specialised and whether specialised learning is inferior to general learning in 'merit-making' were not clearly addressed.

The eminent sociologist Sol Encel noted (1965: 149-158) that three pervasive influences in particular had contributed to the structure generally of higher education of the time. These were: 'firstly, the demand for professional training of various sorts; secondly, the pressure of national political policies, especially under the pressure of nationalism, imperialism, or militarism; and, finally, the use of higher education as *an instrument in training some sort of governing elite*' (emphasis added). The first influence encompassed the practice of the US and the then USSR of harnessing higher education to vast national efforts during the Cold War. Encel was not optimistic that the Commonwealth or the management of universities would be able to comprehend the possibilities of any such national effort in science and technology within Australia.

Stuart MacIntyre and Simon Marginson, in an essay published in 2000 (MacIntyre and Marginson, 2000), described the major concern of the Commonwealth government in the 1960's as being with 'nation-building' and national security.

When the then Whitlam government decided to take over the funding of higher education from the States and abolished fees for higher education, the contribution of private fees to the costs of higher education had already declined to five per cent in 1973 (Marginson, 1997: 28), and thus had the importance of family incomes in access to higher education also declined. Although the abolition of fees was not fiscally momentous,

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12   The college expansion involved a substantially greater increase in enrolments than in the number of 'equivalent full-time students', Davies, 1989: 164.

there is little doubt, however, that the Whitlam governments increased public recognition that higher education is a 'positional good' and raised awareness of access to it. The period of the Whitlam governments was also a period of optimism among academics and students about the prospects for the democratisation of teaching and learning.

In 1987, John Dawkins, Minister for Employment Education and Training in the then Hawke Labor government, published a Green Paper on higher education. Among that paper's recommendations were the abolition of a distinction between universities and colleges of advanced education – the creation of a Unified National System of higher education (with amalgamations of institutions wherever possible) - and the expansion of private sources of university funds (which contributed to paving the way for the re-introduction of fees for higher education). After some months of discussion of the Green Paper, the Minister announced that its various suggestions had become government policy. As Marginson commented (1997: 161), Labor was able to represent the consequent larger numbers of places in 'universities' as an improvement in the equity of access to higher education. At the same time, some sorts of courses (notably undergraduate diploma courses) were diminished in number and significance in favour of courses with higher entrance requirements, which itself may have reduced the access of some students to higher education. Whether the quality of teaching and research in what were once colleges of advanced education has increased during the past decade and a half since the Dawkins reforms is an open question, notwithstanding the serious efforts made to enable the transition of teachers from the old colleges into their new roles as university academics.

A Third Transition in Australia, or Going into Reverse?

There is frequently talk of a further (third) transition and talk of its being underway already. This would involve easy pathways between all institutions of higher education, much more teaching and learning on-line, a more permeable interface between formal institutions and places of employment in private companies, the public sector, community organisations and other non-governmental organisations, and life-long

experiences of more-or-less formal learning. But that doesn't seem to be where the action is at present. Instead, from the early 1990's, if not before, it has seemed a more urgent matter to cut the public cost of the universities' undergraduate teaching, by reducing the average cost and by transferring an increasing proportion of the total cost burden to the private sector[13]. This suggests a different sort of third transition.

Not far into the 1990's complaints were to be heard in Australia about the Commonwealth's treating all of the universities which existed by then in the same way ('no one size fits all', it was said). As if! A Group of Eight universities (Go8) was formally constituted in 1999 to look after what were said to be the particular interests of the research universities (those in which there were aspirations to engage in research across-the-board rather than in a few selected areas, such as viticulture at Charles Sturt). The Go8 consisted of the oldest, 'sandstone' universities in each of the five mainland states (Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Western Australia and Queensland), Monash in Victoria, the University of New South Wales and the Australian National University. The mechanisms of the Commonwealth's two major agencies allocating research grants (the Australian Research Council or ARC and the National Health and Medical Research Committee or NH&MRC) were already at work during the next decade to concentrate research grants in relatively few universities (broadly the Go8); and the distributions of recurrent grants to university administrations plus 'private' university incomes also acted to favour the Go8. (The relevant figures are provided in Appendix 1.) These universities were quick to introduce fees for undergraduate and postgraduate enrolments by international students and to set them at levels lower than US and UK universities were charging. The fees contributed the largest proportions of 'private' incomes[14].

The same universities were the first to enroll full-fee-paying *local* students; and their success in persuading significant numbers of students

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13   My anecdotal evidence is that in the US the problem of how the middle class can finance the direct private costs of educating its children at state universities, let alone at the private institutions that are characteristic of US post-secondary education, has worsened prodigiously in the past decade.

14   The enrolment of students from Asia also provided a temporary complement to the supply of higher education places in Asian universities.

with the means to pay substantial fees to do so made those universities seem more attractive to applicants for subsidised places. Later, in the early years of the twenty-first century, the same universities argued for - and subsequently quickly put into effect when they won it - a capacity to charge direct fees on top of payments required by the Commonwealth to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme. This capacity was bolstered by clever manipulation of course quotas and course names in order to raise the university entrance scores that students had to achieve for admission into many areas of study in the universities involved, as a result of which admission into these areas of study was made to seem more desirable. While assiduously campaigning for the fee changes, the Go8 proclaimed that the government gave the universities no choice and that there was no point in trying to argue against the government's policy[15]. The Go8 strategy campaign plainly did not have the support of the other universities.

It has been suggested that what the new century has seen in effect is the re-introduction of the binary divide between institutions of higher education. According to this suggestion, the re-introduced divide is between a minority of universities with academics who are able to be research-active and who teach the 'honours students' (to hark back to Sir Lesley Martin's vision) and the majority which are concerned, in broad terms, with the teaching of 'pass' undergraduates and perhaps particularly in vocational courses thought to be appropriate to the 'new economy'. The 'university experience' is increasingly being protected for students within the 'top' universities alone.

Academics' unions have had to campaign against practices which would produce a two-tier market for academics (particularly the creation of teaching-only posts and research-only posts) and have had only patchy success. Practices by which academics in the same sort of position in different universities may be paid substantially different salaries (notably the payments of various types of salary loading) have spread quickly. Perhaps most importantly, most universities (not only the Go8) have

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15   The present author was a member of the governing council of The University of Sydney (its Senate) for six years, a period which covered the introduction of a supplement to HECS. He and others in a substantial minority of the Senate were unsuccessful in their opposition to the supplement.

capitulated to the Howard governments of the last decade in accepting the establishment of Australian Workplace Agreements (for some but not yet all staff)[16].

What has been going on here? There have been moves to cut public funding, to make funding increasingly conditional on things like workplace reform and the willingness of the less well-off universities to amalgamate, the assertion of national research priorities, and so on. MacIntyre and Marginson (2000: 67) may be right in ascribing to the Howard governments the expectations of a university that it now serve '... as a teaching institution engaged in vocational training..., as a place of research ...linked to practical and commercial uses, and as a business with the potential to generate foreign income'. There is the more dramatic possibility, however, that the Howard governments have reverted to the idea of using the university as 'an instrument in training some sort of governing elite' (to use the term Encel used in regard to an earlier time). It is possible to see Howard's moves as being deliberately to reverse the popularisation of university education in line with a traditional Liberal Party conviction that, when it comes to empowering the people, government by, for and of the people can probably never have been expected to work. Note that there are trends other than Commonwealth government moves in the direction of restricting access to the Go8 universities. The concentration of private and public resources at high school level is already a remarkable Australian phenomenon. The best placed in high schools are the best placed to win entry to the most expensive universities and most prestigious courses[17]. On the other hand, is it that Howard has been moved more by hostility to the ideological and intellectual independence of academics, to the legitimacy of

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16   The industrial relations policy of the present Commonwealth government is to force employers, including universities, to employ their staff on individual contracts. The move away from national salary and wage awards in the 1990's to enterprise agreements was largely unsuccessful of itself in establishing different profiles of labour costs in different universities, thanks to the efforts of the National Tertiary Education Union. That task now falls to the campaign for WorkChoices, the Howard government's campaign to destroy solidarity among workers and directly to undermine union power.

17   Annually indicated by the over-representation of the top private schools and selective high schools in the list of best-performing students in the HSC exams, the competition for the highest University Admissions Index scores.

intellectualism and to the ostensible persistence of sanctuary within the universities for public intellectuals and gadflies, and by 'parsimony for the sake of it'?

What has persuaded the Vice-Chancellors to match their steps with those of successive Howard governments, especially in regard to the evidence of narrowing access to the Go8 universities? The Vice-Chancellors of the Go8 affirm a managerial duty to ensure the most effective use of public and private resources, a national duty to maintain exemplars of the highest standards of higher education and research (see for example Brown, 2007; Davis, 2007; Appendix 2) and, at least implicitly, a commitment to internationalism[18]. The most effective use of today's resources may be expected to lead to the recruitment of even better academics[19] and the garnering of larger endowments. And thus a virtuous cycle. The most effective use of resources for the Vice-Chancellors can arguably be said to entail also the enrolment of the very best students – few enough of them not to strain the resources - in what can be understood as the most socially valuable courses. For the time being these latter include the humanities and the social sciences, law, medicine and health sciences, architecture and urban design, and so on. However, the reintroduction of elitism may demand grander notions of what is socially valuable than are consonant with the traditional disciplines of study.

I am inclined to the view that what is happening in Australia is part of a world-wide change. The global project of the senior management of the richer universities and of the more far-sighted political leaders is about making more effective a very expensive set of institutions - the largest universities with substantial traditions of research in science and technology and in scholarship in the humanities and 'social sciences'. It need not mean an end to expansion, but it does entail reducing the rate of expansion and refining the institutions. It entails the streamlining of research and teaching in science and technology - and in medicine, and it may mean requiring greater input by other professions into the training of

18   Although this latter notion seems never to be deeply examined by the universities
19   Hoping despite disappointments that 'the best' academics as indicated by success in publication and grant applications - the 'stars' – will actually be well equipped to lead young apprentices

their apprentices. It *also* means involving many fewer but better students in the humanities and the social sciences (and law), in programs that may cost more per capita[20]. Thus resources are concentrated on the higher education of a small proportion of all post-secondary students, leaving the remainder to more straightforward occupations ('much better fitted to their comfort zones') and to education of lower cost and less complexity. To the students consigned (ostensibly on merit) to the second rank of institutions it is said that they do not have to bear the responsibilities that come with an education of the first rank, that agenda-setting and decisions can be left to ordained leaders, and that of course there is access to the opportunity of a first-rank education but that prospective students must be able to indicate that they can take advantage of it.

At the very least one would expect some reference by the Vice-Chancellors to profound global challenges to which highly intelligent and highly educated people must commit their efforts. It may even be possible for them to identify a paramount challenge, namely that of understanding how the public/private interface can be managed to secure the peace and well-being of humankind and the sustainability of the planet. The intellectual, political and practical dimensions of this domain are supra-national. An education that helped to prepare young people to face global challenges would be popularly recognised as a public good[21] and would earn its proponents widespread esteem. At the very least, *some* profound justification should be demanded of Vice-Chancellors who collaborate in the reversal of the popularisation of education and the renewal of elitism.

The Vice-Chancellors of Australia did themselves no favour when they replaced the collegial decision-making in Australian universities that briefly flowered in the 1970's with 'top-down' management

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20   These students will learn about geo-politics, try to comprehend ecological sustainability and climate change, explore the development of the meaning of citizenship, undertake exchange programs in foreign universities and the like: they will *not* enroll in any business program that has a penchant for learning about company finance, brand marketing, and management accounting, and the possibilities of critical path analysis; and like as not they will not enroll in any equivalent public administration program for that matter.

21   A notion which has been severely damaged in the evolution of public education (see Butler, 2001).

('managerialism') and repudiated the assistance that academics collectively might give in articulating and understanding the profound and universal and unifying challenges. They do themselves no favour in so far as they defer to and depend on industrial capitalists in many of the large research efforts of the university[22]. The global challenges are unreachable through a logic of private profit-making. Moreover, the short horizon of the planning decisions of the dominant *financial* businesses is evidently inconsistent with the span of time required to confront the profound challenges facing humankind. Finally, all capitalists are rivals; any tendency for university research and teaching to become sites of their rivalry must directly threaten those endeavours and divert them from addressing the profound challenges.

Wittrock's final chapter in the book by Rothblatt and Wittrock is a stimulating reflection on where the university was towards the end of the twentieth century (Wittrock, 1993). He raises what are to this reader's mind three salient questions. The first is whether it was possible to sustain universality of learning in a late twentieth century university in the face of increasing specialisation of fields of inquiry and difficulties of maintaining bridges of communication between the specialisations. The second is whether the research-orientated university was ever likely to be consistent with including universities in the commitment to wide access to higher education ('mass higher education'), notwithstanding Clark Kerr's famous insistence that it is and was (at least at the University of California) possible to achieve the 'multiversity'. The third is where the universities will turn to sustain universality, from the end of the twentieth century.

Wittrock does not provide even the suggestion of an answer to the third question. However, one answer may be interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary efforts to master the thought and understanding necessary for meeting the paramount global challenge to which reference has already been made.

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22   See, for example, Christian Downie, 'Uni independence eroded by degrees', *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 10, 2007. There are anecdotes suggesting a more widespread problem of influence by business donors over academic processes.

In this challenge all people have the right to participate. Thus it is necessary to 're-democratise' higher education. This will be a daunting task. It cannot be denied that the challenges of science and social organisation today are complex and require the collective and individual exercise of high levels of intelligence and high levels of education. The first part of the challenge is to ensure that all children can realistically aspire to reaching the highest stages of education – that it is never a lack of 'social provisioning' by the state and civil society that prevents them from proceeding to the highest stages. The second part is to ensure that there are different stages in and different modes of post-secondary education but no such things as a first class education, a second class education, a third class education, at any stage. And then, of course, there is more ... .

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Appendix 1: The Go8 Universities and Funding

The figures below are for the Australian Research Council (ARC) alone. (The concentration of NH&MRC grants reflects the concentration of medical and health faculties.) The Annual Report of the ARC for 1999-2000 (ARC, 1999-2000: 60-68) shows that 66.3% of Large Research Grants and 53.6% of Commonwealth funds for Strategic Partnerships with Industry went to academics in the Go8 universities in 2000, while the Annual Report for 2006 (ARC, 2005-6: 210-238) shows that in 2006 72.3% of new funding for Discovery Grants and 71.25 of new funding for Discovery Grants for Early-Career Researchers, and 51.0% of new funding for Linkage Grants and 63.9% of new funding for Linkage Infrastructure Grants, went to the Go8. (Obviously the categories do not match precisely.) The figures were calculated from the tables provided. In 2000, Large Research Grants and Strategic Partnerships were by far

the largest items, while in 2006 the two sorts of Discovery Grant together and the two sorts of Linkage Grant together were by far the largest.

In 1996, 41.5% of the Commonwealth's recurrent grants plus payments from the HECS fund went to the Go8 universities, and in 2004 that figure was 44.2%. In 2005 the Go8 universities taught 31.3% of the student load (EFTSL, and excluding the ANU and student load in the ACT for obvious reasons). 'Private' sources of funds (principally up-front payments of HECS, fees and charges, investment income, contract research and consultancy fees plus other private   income strongly favoured Go8 universities. In NSW in 2004, for example, the two Go8 universities earned together 45.8% of this income (and 43.5% of recurrent grant income plus payments from the HECS fund for all of NSW while teaching 31.5% of the student load). The proportion of the total NSW sum of recurrent grants plus payments from the HECS fund going to the two Go8 universities had fallen to 43.5% from 51.6 % in 1996. The proportions of Commonwealth recurrent grants plus payments from the HECS fund as a proportion of the total incomes for the two Go8 universities in NSW dropped from 62.5% in 1996 to 49.3% in 2004. All of these figures have been calculated from tables in (DEST, 2007: Table (ii)), (DEST, 2005: Table 1), and (DEETYA, 1996: Table 1). The mismatch of periods as between higher education funding and ARC funding is attributable to peculiarities in the sources.

Appendix 2: Sustaining Go8 Pressure

There have been some recent examples. On June 5, Gavin Brown, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney wrote (Brown, 2007) that it is necessary to ensure that the dividend from Howard's proposed endowment should be concentrated on the Go8 universities (perhaps only on Sydney, Melbourne and ANU) to ensure that in the intense competition for places among the top universities internationally a few Australian universities can survive. The competition is evidently for the 'best'academics, the top post-graduate students, the brightest undergraduates, and a 'seat at the table'. What this last means is not

clear. It *appears* to mean recognition as being of the highest academic standard, as being able to have a say in the greatest convocations of humankind on the basis of little other than a university *testamur*.

Professor Glyn Davis, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, announced earlier this year the institution at the University of Melbourne of what he calls 'the Melbourne model', of few broad undergraduate degrees designed to lead to professional training in second degrees and to postgraduate degrees (Australian Broadcasting Commission, *7.30 Report with Kerry O'Brien*, 16.04.07, Transcript). This model is represented as being that of major public universities in the US. Davis admitted the model will restrict undergraduate teaching, increase the proportion of fee-paying students (under the current regime), and represent tighter selection of students. He stated that the University would be 'rolling out' a vastly expanded scholarship scheme.

Davis was later reported to have argued, as chair of the Go8, at the National Press Club in early June 2007 (Alexander, 2007), that the Commonwealth should finally adopt a sort of voucher system to help all local students pay university fees of up to 125% of the cost of the course concerned. (Actually the report attributes the term 'scholarships' to Professor Davis, and not vouchers; but the term is not defined and may have referred to scholarships offered by an individual University to cover fee gaps.) No local students would be full-fee-paying students in the sense that some are at present. International students would pay the same fees but, of course, would not be eligible for vouchers. The course costs would be assessed by the Productivity Commission.

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