CHANGES IN THE CONTEXT FOR CREATING KNOWLEDGE

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These essays were presented at the public program session of the April 1994 Annual Meeting of the American Council of Learned Societies.

This was the Council's 75th anniversary, an appropriate occasion for taking stock of the circumstances and purposes governing scholarship as we near the end of the twentieth century. The Executive Committee of the Delegates, chaired by James Millar, asked three speakers to address different dimensions of the changing context for creating knowledge today.

As participants on a panel entitled "Knowledge For What (and for Whom)?", George Keller (University of Pennsylvania) was asked to assess demographic changes reshaping society and higher education, Dennis O'Brien (University of Rochester) to address economic forces affecting colleges and universities, and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph (University of Chicago) to consider the globalization of research and teaching. Steven C. Wheatley, Director of American Studies at ACLS, served as moderator for the panel.

Taken together, the three essays depict a difficult but exciting landscape for conducting scholarship. We are grateful to the panelists for helping ACLS and its member societies find their bearings in the midst of these changes.
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The United States is going through some profound changes that have begun to affect colleges and universities and are likely to have further consequences in the coming decades. Though the changes are of numerous kinds, I will point here to just three demographic changes and three social shifts. Then I will suggest some of the ways they are influencing the practice of teaching and scholarship and the creation of knowledge.

The three demographic changes are immigration, the dissolution of the traditional family structure, and the emerging age profile of U.S. society.

Since the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act, the United States has been undergoing the greatest surge in immigrants in its history. For more than two decades now approximately 1 million persons have entered the country legally and illegally, equaling the previous two peak years for immigration, 1907 and 1914, when 1.2 million were admitted. In the fiscal year of 1993, for example, the United States admitted 880,000 persons legally, and another 200,000 to 300,000 immigrants are estimated to have entered illegally. For three decades, the United States has been accepting more immigrants and refugees each year than all the other developed countries of the world combined.

Unlike earlier waves of immigration, approximately 45 percent have been Latinos, and roughly 40 percent have been Asians. By the year 2010—five years from now—nearly 30 percent of all young people under 16 will be in just three states: California, Florida, and Texas.

The second change is in family formation and child rearing. The stable two-parent family with two or more children is increasingly rare. The number of one-parent families has risen from approximately 4 million in 1970 to 8.5 million in 1990; one-fourth of all U.S. children under 18 are now in one-parent families. In Britain the percentage with one parent is 17 percent, in France and Germany about 12 percent. Three in 10 births in the United States are now out of wedlock. For African Americans, two-thirds of all births are non-marital; and the illegitimacy ratio for whites has quintupled in the past 30 years.
Moreover, the divorce rate has reached 38 percent of all marriages; there were 1,187,000 divorces in 1993. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights argues that illegitimacy and divorces are “responsible for essentially all of the growth in poverty since 1970” (qtd. in Lawler). In 1990, 80 percent of the unmarried women who had a child before finishing high school were living in poverty, while only 8 percent of the married women who completed high school and had a baby after the age of 19 were in poverty homes.

As anyone who reads the newspapers knows, the percentage of children and teens in foster care is up; child neglect and abuse is increasing; teenage and preteen crime is widespread; and orphanage is returning. For educators, the decline of learning in American middle and high schools has been steep, and antisocial and anti-intellectual behavior is spreading among youths. Some campuses have begun regulating manners, speech, and behavior.

The third demographic change is the aging of American society. As the number of births has declined and better health care, nutrition, exercise, and family finances contribute to keeping older people alive longer, the population is getting older. Nearly 13 percent of Americans are now 65 or older. There are 11 million more retirees than teenagers. By the year 2020, the number of Americans over 50 will soar 75 percent, to more than one-third of the population; and the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in 2020, 9.5 to 10 percent will be over 80 years of age.

Today’s elderly are the healthiest and wealthiest old people in history. Their poverty rate is lower and median household wealth is greater than that of any other American age group. The over-50s have as much discretionary income as all other U.S. age groups combined, about half the nation’s total. The percentage of the U.S. federal budget going to retirees has gone from 19 percent in 1980 to nearly 30 percent in 1993. In addition, the elderly have become a powerful political force. The American Association of Retired Persons, or AARP, now has 31 million members over age 50—one of every five voters—and is the second largest membership organization in America (after the Roman Catholic Church).

Of the numerous social changes, I think three may be especially consequential for U.S. higher education.

Socioeconomically, the U.S. population is becoming more polarized and less middle class. Between 1973 and 1990 the poorest fifth of population declined in income about 12 percent, while the richest fifth increased about 25 percent. The United States now has the largest
“underclass” of any developed country, with the highest crime rate, rate of drug abuse, and percentage of homeless people. On the other hand, America has the largest number of Nobel Prize winners, research scholars, artists, female executives, trained physicians, and skilled musicians and poets.

Studies suggest that three factors are especially determining: family structure, level of education, and work patterns. For instance, the growing upper middle-income group is often composed of a married couple, both college educated, and both working.

A second social change is the growing importance to Americans of the Pacific Rim countries. In 1979 U.S. trade with Asia surpassed trade with Europe, and has been growing since. Long Beach, San Francisco, and Seattle are replacing Boston, New York, and Baltimore as leading seaports. Japan has become one of the world's great industrial and commercial powers, and China, with nearly one-fifth of the world's population, is breaking out of Maoist politics and economics.

For colleges and universities this poses an academic challenge. Our intellectual roots are in Israel, Greece, Rome, and Western Europe, and the curricula of most colleges focus on that area. But our social and economic life will increasingly consist of exchanges with Asian countries, and with Latin American nations and Arab oil states.

The third change is the outburst of new communications technology: computers, cassettes, films, satellite transmission, Internet, and the like. It is as significant as the invention and spread of printed books in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It has already resulted in the use of new ways to gather, store, and exchange information, novel teaching styles, new kinds of libraries, and radically different exchanges among computer-literate persons around the world. One in four telephone calls in the United States is now a facsimile transmission. Classicist Jay David Bolter wrote in his 1991 book Writing Space that, “Print will no longer define the organization and presentation of knowledge. . . . Electronic technology offers us a new kind of book and new ways to write and read” (2).

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The repercussions of these six changes—and others—have begun to be felt throughout academe, and will help shape the creation and dissemination of knowledge in the years ahead.

The increasing number of Latino and Asian students means different food in the campus cafeterias, different speakers and campus events, and more demands for separate residential living. It means we shall
have to train many new Latino and African American scholars, both of whom are in short supply, as exemplars for the young. It has already created a movement toward “multiculturalism” and major substitutions in liberal education’s canon, which is being denounced as a form of Western chauvinism and cultural imperialism.

The dissolution of the traditional, nuclear family has prompted the introduction of new speech and behavior codes at universities, increased student services, additional counseling, and a massive increase in remedial education at most colleges. It has also resulted in alarming increases in financial aid requirements that colleges must provide—some institutions now give back one-third of their tuition revenues in grants to students—and special summer programs on campus to help prepare students for college work. Colleges have had to invent costly substitutes for parental guidance, discipline, motivation, and support.

The emerging gerontocracy has brought a new constituency into higher education: retirees. Over 45 percent of all registered students in U.S. institutions are now 25 years old or older. Universities are moving from being educational camps for the young to serving like public libraries for persons 15 to 75 years old. Communities like Ithaca, New York; Oberlin, Ohio; Santa Barbara, California; and Sarasota, Florida have become new living-learning locations for elderly persons who wish to continue learning. Florida’s Eckerd College and New York City’s Columbia University both have new academies for senior retired scholars who wish to continue teaching and research. Hundreds of colleges and universities now have academic programs in gerontology or geriatric medicine, dentistry, and psychiatry.

The socioeconomic polarization has prompted an increase in the number of honors programs, fresh demands for three-year baccalaureates, and a swelling number of graduate students. More than one-half of all masters degrees awarded by U.S. institutions have been bestowed in the past 20 years. At the other end, a rising number of those wishing admission to college are unprepared for collegiate study. Many urban community colleges have been transformed into literacy centers and remedial institutes.

The expanding connections with Asian countries have begun to stimulate more courses in Chinese and Japanese language and culture, new programs abroad in Japan, and increased exchanges with Pacific Rim countries. Religion programs are now more comparative and inclusive; and international trade has altered national economic planning models.

Because of new electronic hardware and software, nearly every classroom and campus library will need to be renovated, as some have already been.
Huge training programs for students and faculty are being established to keep undergraduates and scholars abreast of the latest electronic communication techniques and possibilities. As Richard Lanham points out in his recent book *The Electronic Word*, modern electronics may transform scholarship as we know it.

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For the most learned persons in American society and their research, the changes I have briefly described seem to presage a new tension.

On the one hand, demographic, international, and social shifts are pulling scholars deeper into ethnic, gender, and social class studies, and into unique forms of knowledge. More research is devoted to analyzing distinctive voices and styles, and rhetoric is returning as a principal subject, aided by “deconstructionist” attacks. There is a growing cynicism about universal values and standards, and about the possibility of finding “truth.” We live in an age of disenchantment, of relativities, as Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor has documented so well. There are, it is said, only many kinds of knowledge; and all the kinds are subjective and context-bound and not really objective. The cold war era may have ended, but a new era of culture wars has begun.

On the other hand, technology is pulling everyone toward certain kinds of standardization, as is contemporary mathematical and scientific research. Scholars still search for underlying similarities, unifying theories, and fundamental, abiding truths. Many persons still subscribe to the idea of timeless verities, and most universities still demand objective, unbiased teaching and scholarship.

The learned societies, one of America’s most precious possessions, may need to collaborate on an analysis of what constitutes proper instruction in today’s higher learning and what is appropriate scholarship and research in the new environment of academic life.

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I have been asked to speak about resource restraints in the decade ahead. That means we won’t have enough money. But that problem is simple. The question I want to raise is why this problem appears so acute. Higher education has always been an expensive purchase. Even if it is now relatively more expensive, I think there is more here than mere money. I believe that beneath the dollar shortage is a fundamental shift in attitude. It is not our financial resources alone that are diminishing, it is the philosophy of financing that is eroding.

I have entitled my remarks “the paradigm drift” as a deliberate variation on Thomas Kuhn’s well-known concept of a paradigm shift. A paradigm shift in science marks a genuine revolution in science; the fundamental terms of the old science re-emerge in ways that would be wholly unintelligible in the previous paradigm. Einstein talks about “time slowing down”; for Newton this could only mean that you need to wind your watch.

Higher education does not move by such clear-cut revolutions. We operate more by paradigm drift, than clear-cut shift. I believe we are on the down side of a fundamental paradigm shift in higher education and that we have not yet fully understood that fact. Our revolutionary change is at least as significant as the rise of the “research university” in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

It is characteristic of educators in the midst of paradigm drift to have considerable problems finding the right terms and understanding for the change. Take “research university”: as late as 1906, Daniel Coit Gilman, the great founding president of the research university, Johns Hopkins, delivered a lecture at the University of Chicago objecting to the very term “research university.” “Research” was, he said, “not a felicitous term” and had only been an English word since 1875 when it was coined by a Dr. Appleton in a book entitled The Endowment of Research (qtd. in Wegener: 10). If Gilman had a hard time labeling the very revolution of which he was a founding father, it is no surprise that we may have a hard time seeing the direction of the current drift.

I want to suggest how certain long-accepted structures are undergoing significant change. The change can be noted by subtle alterations in language. As president of a private university, I was fascinated to read a recent speech by Chancellor Chuck Young of UCLA in which he
declared that he did not consider UCLA a “state university” but a “state related” university. This change in terminology is a result of the financial crisis of the California higher educational system. When I spoke to Chuck, he made it very clear that the trajectory was to “privatize” UCLA: raise tuition, fund raise, seek endowment, and all the tricks us folks in private education have been at for lo these many years. What happens to the hallowed distinction of public/private if Chuck succeeds?

UCLA’s urge to “privatize” stems from the fundamental anxiety for higher education in the decade ahead: funding. UCLA is moving as indicated to deal with a $38 million budget shortfall. (I should say that when I queried some of my other friends in state schools about how they regarded their institutions they agreed with Chuck: not state universities—maybe “state related” or “state assisted.” One poor president’s budget had been so reduced that he said he now regarded his institution as “state located”!

In order to discover paradigm change, I want to highlight a series of key understandings that are currently undergoing overt or covert drift. I will indicate one structure under strain in a variety of areas of academic life—research, financial aid, faculty, administration, students—and then suggest a grand overall design for the drift. Understanding and dealing with these changes will constitute the challenge of the decade ahead for all the constituencies of higher education from the state capitol to the student council.

**Research:** Gilman may have been uneasy with the term, but it is now firmly embedded in almost all of higher education. I was fascinated to note that one of my former employers now refers to itself as a “research college.” For the research university, however, the world of research is under fundamental stress. Whatever we may have called ourselves from the time of the founding of Johns Hopkins in 1876 to the beginning of World War II, the real era of the research university is a wartime and postwar phenomenon. During the war, massive government funding for everything from radar to radiation was undertaken by university professors in university settings. It is deeply symbolic of a new era that the first atomic fission took place under the stands at Stagg field at the University of Chicago.

At the end of the war, Vannevar Bush set out the fundamental terms of a new relation between universities and federal funding for research. He called for a *partnership.* What that meant was that the universities would offer the folks and facilities but the federal government would provide full cost for the research. This was an important shift. Universities had done research before, but the new sophistication and
cost of research went well beyond the financial means of even the wealthiest institutions. Rochester, for instance, is currently the national center for laser fusion. We would not have a $55 million, 64 beam laser under construction were it not for full federal financial support.

Starting sometime in the Reagan years, the federal government began to shift its understanding away from “partnership” toward “contract for service.” Universities were regarded as bidders on research proposals. To be sure, financial considerations, fiscal responsibility, and the like have been part of the “partnership” since the days of Vannevar Bush, but there is a fundamental paradigm shift when universities are moved from partner to contractor. I would hate to think what would happen to my marriage if I suggested to my wife that I wanted to move our relation from partner to contractor for service.

This shift in understanding can be detected all along the line in our dealings with the federal government—from the interminable squabble over indirect cost rates to the recent descent of the IRS auditors on select university campuses. At a recent meeting in the White House, President Everhart of Cal Tech noted to President Clinton the erosion of the sense of “partnership” in research. Frankly, I don’t think that the President fully comprehended the significance of the term or the problem. World War II and Vannevar Bush are more than a half century past!

Financial Aid: We should recognize this as a postwar term of art. Prior to World War II, one talked about “scholarships”: financial grants made for meritorious performance. After World War II, in an effort to broaden the outreach of higher education, it was decided to use university funds to help the needy, not just the performance stars. The term changed to “financial aid.”

There have been two fundamental changes in “financial aid” in the most recent past. In the case of most private institutions—with the exception of the handful of the highest prestige colleges and universities—financial aid is more a marketing discount to fill the seats than a simple response to need. Need may be at the base, but frankly it has become a bidding price for students.

The bidding price game has been accentuated by the recent antitrust threats from the Department of Justice. When financial-aid-for-need was introduced as a new concept, replacing “scholarship,” it was agreed among a number of institutions that they would not engage in a financial bidding contest for students. To assure themselves that financial aid was need based, the so-called “overlap group” was created to keep everyone tolerably honest. Lo and behold, the Justice Department decided during the Bush administration, that price bidding was exactly what should be going on and proceeded against the overlap
group for “price fixing.” In sum, we have moved in the last 75 years from merit to need to price discounting while retaining some vague aura of the old “scholarship” concept.

Faculty: In 1914 my grandfather accepted a position at Ripon College teaching economics. He had been a pastor in Lakota, North Dakota, and he decided that the only way he could educate his five children was by accepting an academic post and the free tuition that accompanied the appointment. Grandfather did not hold a Ph.D. in economics—I think he went to university before such degrees were given. It may be that his keenest economic insight was on how to educate the children.

There is a large story to be told of the seismic shift in faculty self-understanding from the days of pastoral faculty to professional professors of economics. I want to single out one strand of faculty understanding, however, which goes beyond, if it does not run counter to, the professionalization of faculties: the rise of faculty unions.

Having started my academic career at Princeton with the less than princely sum of $4,000 per year, I have considerable respect for issues of wages, salaries, and working conditions. At the same time, I do not believe that we have been able to construct a proper balance between faculty as professionals and faculty as employees. Traditional and proper union-type issues seem to me to quite swamp the voice of the profession-as-profession. Even at colleges and universities without formal unions, the universal financial crunch on higher education can quite overwhelm the deeper issues of the profession of higher education.

I happen to agree with the Yeshiva decision that faculty are not “labor” under the definition of the National Labor Relations Act. The Court ruled in that case that faculty “in fact substantially and pervasively operate the enterprise.” This is as true in most public institutions as it is in most private colleges and universities. If Yeshiva is correct, it is not clear in these financially pressed times whether faculty will act as individual employees or as managers concerned to sustain the “firm.” Specifically, to what extent do faculty identify with the preservation and enhancement of the special institutional structure at which they practice their several arts? The socioeconomic truth about most of the learned professions is that in our age they live their economic life in things called universities and colleges. While some lucky few may migrate in hard times to posher places, there are few of the latter so that most of us need to attend to the 3,000+ colleges and universities of the land. My view is that those institutions in which faculty join administration in understanding and preserving the essentials of the “firm” will be the success stories of the next decade.
**Administration:** Having worried about faculty as labor, I should hasten to object to administrators—at least presidents—as “managers.” The idea of the “manager-president” was put forth by Clark Kerr many years ago. Kerr, a distinguished labor mediator, was not all wrong in seeing traces of labor-management conflict in the university, and yet the idea of the administrator manager and mediator seems to me quite inadequate. This is particularly so if what he or she mediates are labor issues and constituency politics. Wages and working conditions do not define the peculiar institution of education; constituency politics confuses the free-for-all of civil society with the methodical pursuit of truth which traditionally defined the academy.

Let me explain that last remark by a diversionary comment on academic freedom. In my judgment, the idea of academic freedom has become hopelessly entangled with the notion of free speech in a civil society. Academic freedom is a particular license to teach and speak *on the basis of demonstrated specific competence*. Free speech is much broader since it allows anyone to say almost anything short of “fighting words.” Competence is not a prior issue. At one institution with which I was associated we had to decide whether a particular faculty member could offer a course on “creation science.” We decided he could not. He was not in any way a biologist and so we judged he lacked competence to address the issues. One might, on such grounds, not permit a Nobel *physicist* to give a course on “racial characteristics.”

If the university is a gathering of powerful methods of truth, the president-manager of the place cannot be a mere mediator of a marketplace of ideas. The “management” of the institution, in formal administration and in faculty administration, must undertake the deep and difficult task of shaping the educational and research missions in a manner which advances the students and the disciplines on sensible and productive pathways. I do not say that this is an easy or obvious task: it is much easier just to let every fad and fashion have its day and hope that it will all somehow progress toward enlightenment. I would not hasten toward dogma, but a four-year bull session may produce just what bulls produce—and that is not quite education.

**Students:** The student story is either much longer or much shorter than my other detections of paradigm drift. Let me take the longer story since it seems clearer.

American education began as an education for the ministry and, while that specific vocation may have faded in importance, the idea of *vocation* remains enshrined—if not embalmed—in the rhetoric of college presidents to this very day. One is supposed to get “the Princeton Experience,” not just learn calculus. As the nineteenth-
century evangelical colleges saw the annual religious revival as the crucial event in college life, so contemporary university and college rhetoric continues to emphasize the education of the whole person: a true discovery of the self.

Noble as that concept may be, it is not at all clear that the drift in student self-understanding is in that direction. Students are much more likely to see the university not as leading to a vocation, but to a job; and the week of classes as external work, not as soul searching. What, after all, is the deep significance of that most annoying of student queries: “Will it be on the exam?” Job and vocation may sound like the same thing, but of course they are not. My father was a doctor. I mean he was a doctor: it was not his job, it was his way of being in the world. For all sorts of complex reasons, we have a much more difficult time identifying public roles with private meaning, so that a radical separation occurs between job and private person.

Let me sum up the direction of the paradigm drift. We have moved from partnership to contractor, from aid to discounting, from professional to labor, from leader to manager, from vocation to job. It is relatively obvious that all those transitions appear to be moving in the same direction: from ends to means. Higher education is not a definer of ends, it is an instrument to goals set elsewhere. Value gets shifted toward jobs, low bids, discount pricing, better wages.

Stan Katz asked me to talk about the challenges of higher education in the decade ahead. In one sense there is only one challenge: economics. But the economic challenge exists at two levels: the actual budget and the re-understanding of higher education solely on economic terms.

We were recently dedicating a building at the University of Rochester: a new residence hall for the Eastman School of Music. It is a wonderful facility, charming and romantic in vision and execution. It was also way over budget. I chided the architect at the ceremony, noting the romantic character of the facility. “Oh yes,” he said, “you know the definition of a romantic: a romantic is someone who knows the value of everything and the price of nothing.” No one has to tell me—or any other university president—about the problems of price. Dollars are reality. We need to bring our buildings in on budget—and our budgets in on budget. What is worrisome is that we will not be able to balance price and value. We can run off with grand visions about our high calling, liberal education, the ultimate value of scholarship and research, and end up romantically broke. But, if we become obsessed with price—if we come to understand ourselves under the terms I have indicated, we can end up as just another consumer commodity.
I am not suggesting that higher education stands wholly outside the needs of the larger society in which it resides. We must be cognizant of new needs, new skills, new populations. But if we are a “business,” we need to understand the business of the business. Just as a financial analyst can dissolve the firm into its balance sheet, so we can dissolve the fundamental transactions of education into economic terminology—contracts, wages, jobs, services—and forget the business of the business which is “education”; education, not political persuasion, social reconstruction, or job training—useful as these may be.

Faculty need to address the fundamental university or college task—not just their departmental or individual needs. Administration must address the character and effectiveness of the university as an educational institution and for this presidents and deans need to have some leading concept of what is higher in higher ed. Students should ask for an education in deep habits of thought, not just today’s skills and fashionable frills.

This talk has been about resources—that always means money—but the resource that may really be lacking is a sense of education.

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The Paradoxes of Transnational Learning

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Stan Katz told me that I was expected to address the international dimension of the topic, “Knowledge for What (and for Whom)?”. Because sometime in the course of my remarks I will remind us that all knowledge is “situated,” let me start by situating myself with respect to this subject.

In my mode as scholar, I am a political scientist who likes comparisons, BIG comparisons, Weberian size comparisons at a civilizational level. As a teacher, I have been offering a course about South Asian civilization for more than 20 years, off and on. It is one of the five or six courses—African “civ”, East Asian “civ”, South Asian “civ”, and so forth—through which University of Chicago students fulfill the requirement that they must study a civilization. (I continue to use the term, civilization, in a provisional way despite its embarrassments: Who is civilized? What is a civilization?) I have worked with my colleagues to adapt that course as its constituency, like that of other civilization courses, became populated in part by the South Asian diaspora. The young woman in the second row from Peoria is no longer named Jean Bullock but Vidya Ramaswami. I also direct a South Asia center where some 30 faculty members teach the languages and politics and society of the Indian subcontinent, and send some eight to ten Ph.D.s into the world each year, many as teachers of teachers, some as policy intellectuals in government and in NGOs.

What justification do I have for such an enterprise? What warrants the kind of high intensity, deep knowledge, complex learning provided by an elaborate and not inexpensive “area” program at the undergraduate and graduate level? Let me try two justifications, one of the sort we are fond of telling Congressional representatives when Title VI of the National Education Act is up for renewal and they want to know why they should fund advanced Bengali classes with two students, and one of the sort I give when I am defending General Education as a humane enterprise.

I am going to locate one justification in the context of the contradictory trends of our decade, toward globalization on the one hand and localization on the other. The two feed each other. Globalization creates common languages, common concepts, common communities of praxis. It creates an expert brotherhood of computer specialists who
can communicate with each other even when they do not speak the same language. It creates a normative and practical community of technicians, scientists, and leaders of non-governmental and activist organizations addressing common problems of the environment in Washington, Ahmedabad, and Geneva. We all know that the media are an important force in creating these transnational epistemes.

But lo and behold, transnational epistemes do not eliminate the regional and local. They may even strengthen them in ways both benign and malign. The world is full of partisans of local communities to whom globalization presents itself as a threat, as an augur of rootlessness. One might say that the reason the Ayatollah Khomeini wanted Salman Rushdie dead was not so much because of what he had to say about the prophet, but because he inspired in Khomeini and his people a fear of flying. Fear of the detachment from solid earth, from rooted culture. It is *The Satanic Verses's* very cosmopolitanism, its heterogeneous complexity, its kaleidoscopic fragmenting and re-assembling of transnational identities, that inspires the fear of flying, and the compensatory nostalgia for a simple, homogeneous, local reality, that is represented always to have been there—though of course it was not. One way, then, that the global feeds and intensifies the local is when those frightened by the unending frontiers and boundary-less arenas of the global project it as a safe haven.

On the other hand the world is also full of local communities that look out on the global as a promise and an encouragement. Indians in Peru and upper New York State as members of transnational organizations of oppressed peoples recognize each others' common condition, learn approaches, and bring them home to adopt more effectively in local contexts. For them the global is not frightening but liberating. In either case, the local, contrary to what nostalgia insists upon, will not remain static but be recreated to correspond to the new world context. The global regenerates the local, though, to be sure, not the same local as before. An intimate and intense learning about a particular civilization is one of the ways to overcome the powerful propensity to believe the Other never changes, and to understand instead both the genealogies of the local and its transformations.

The global-local dynamic also generates conflicts, those that assail us every morning from our international pages—in Rwanda, Goradze, Zulu land, and Kashmir. Nor is there any reason to believe that these conflicts will disappear. I assume, with many others, that the predominant form of warfare over the next decade will be the organized violence that occurs within states and, in the case of ethnic and religious solidarities that cross state lines, can grow into international conflicts.
These wars do not threaten world survival as did nuclear threats. But they are just as vicious and deadly as was international conventional warfare.

Let me illustrate. The Indian and Pakistani armies fought several inconclusive international wars in 1965 and 1971. They were partly wars over Kashmir. The present conflict in Kashmir, largely generated by a history of insensitive Indian politics under Indira Gandhi and her successors, is not an international war. It is a war between Indian troops and local Islamic militants supported by training camps and weapons from the Pakistan side. There are no Pakistan troops in this conflict—no national army fighting a national army—any more than there is in much of the Eastern European conflict. The loss of life to the Indian security forces and civilians in this “domestic” imbroglio exceeds the loss of life in the two international wars of 1965 and 1971. To address “war” these days, we have to look at domestic conflicts. To do that, we need to address region and country and ethnie.

If the nature of international conflict has changed significantly in the last five years, and ethnic cleansing and internal warfare have taken the place of threatened global conflict among superpowers, how shall we grasp this new reality? One way to grasp it is the mode pervasive in much of the media, the mode that asserts these internal conflicts—in Rwanda, Macedonia, Bosnia, Kashmir—are the results of “ancient hatreds.” Ancient hatreds is what many Americans think other folks have; ancient hatreds, a category that conveys the belief that distant and unfamiliar persons are irrational, willing to kill and be killed in the service of passions with which they were apparently born.

The other day I was listening to National Public Radio going over Rwanda. Noah Adams was trying to extract from historian Alison Desforges the “real” reason for the Rwanda savagery. Desforges was trying to tell Noah Adams that actually the Tutsi and the Hutu, even though they had a history of mutual suspicions, normally lived together under peaceable circumstances. “There is intermarriage,” she said, “between Hutu and Tutsi. There are friendships between Hutu and Tutsi. There are very strong ties of many kinds. But what happened was that this group of extremists, in their reluctance to yield to a more democratic regime, began actively encouraging anti-Tutsi feeling and hostility towards members of the Hutu opposition.”

Desforges’ story could have been transplanted almost word for word to the Bosnian-Serbian arena, where intermarriage and neighborhood concord were equally the order of the day until a calculated media campaign working up the Bosnian-Serb differences, orchestrated by Slobovian Milosovich, transformed the situation within a matter of months.
Desforges was saying that where there is cultural pluralism, there are positive and negative possibilities. How events will move depends on historical conjunctures and on the way politicians and persons of power construe situations to their advantage. Noah Adams, reminding Desforges of earlier Tutsi-Hutu warfare, tried to push her into admitting there must be, somewhere behind all those complex historical events, a single cause. Said he: “If you don’t accept the one word, tribalism, what word would you replace it with?” to which Desforges said, “I guess I’m not into simplicities like that. I mean I don’t see the need for a one word explanation for anything. It’s not tribalism. It’s conflict between groups in a population who are struggling for the goodies in a system that has precious few.” Her explanation stressed political advantage, and how leaders manipulated extant identities to achieve it; it stressed economic competition and how the fight for scarce resources had become defined in ethnic terms—not dissimilar from one way of understanding the conflict between Koreans and African Americans in Los Angeles. But Noah Adams wanted “tribalism”—a category that relieves one from probing for the complexities, particularities, of all those obscure people.

One reason an intensive, particularistic, and complex education about other world civilizations is necessary is to create more journalists, teachers, writers who recognize the complexity and multifaceted nature of our civilizational counter-players. Such an education particularizes the denizens of the civilization, revealing the heterogeneity of social and cultural causes that account for their actions.

Recently my colleague Samuel Huntington, a most imaginative political scientist, offered a series of categories for understanding international politics in the postwar world. The conflict in the future, he said, would be among civilizations. The most significant marker of civilizations is religion. The world could be understood as consisting of civilizational units. Christianity, divided into North America and Europe; Orthodox Christianity in Eastern Europe and Russia; Islam; Confucianism; Hinduism. These divisions will supply the cleavage lines of the future, he said.

This Atlantic fortress vision of the West versus the rest evokes images of Europe crusading against the infidel. It slots into the explanatory boxes left empty when cold war ideology died. It doesn’t help for the same reason that Noah Adams’ one word explanation from “tribalism” obscures vital differences. Consider only the warfares of the last decade that have riveted our attention, and ask yourself to what extent such a schema helps. Iraq-Iran war; Saudi-Iran enmity; United Nations-Iraq war, where the United States fought in collaboration with much of the
Arab world. All of these are intra-civilizational wars, fought between Islamic brethren. "Confucian"? Does South Korea trust China and Japan more than it trusts the United States? Are patterns of alliance indeed most likely to be struck on an "intra-Confucian" basis? Religion is an element in international alliances and enmities but it is as likely to be used by states—as when Iraq’s left-secular government tried to wrap itself in Islamic robes—as to generate the basic relationships between them.

Back to the civilizational study component of international education. We need at least two kinds of international education, and there is a significant epistemological difference between them. We need international studies that recognize the emergence of a global community, global expertise, global epistemes, universal conceptual languages that tie together bankers in Rio and Bombay and Bangkok, or human rights activists in Boston, Ahmedabad, and Bonn. But we also need education for particularism, for the immense locales represented by China, Malaysia, India, Egypt, Kenya—locales whose ethnic, sub-national, class, and religious particularities explain much that we want to have explained: agrarian productivity, population decline, literacy lags, ethnic conflict, deforestation, bureaucratic rigidity, and other global issues.

One justification then for the study of particular non-Western civilizations is the hope of countering two-dimensional and stereotypical views of other civilizations by pursuing serious and particularizing knowledge. Politicians and policy intellectuals need to recognize that thin understandings of other cultures make bad policy, bad trade, bad neighbors, and handicap Americans in their interaction with the world.

Let me suggest another justification. The study of another civilization is not a one way street: We study Them. It is a two way process: we also study ourselves. Exploring another civilization makes evident the historically constructed nature of our self-understanding even as we confront the constructed nature of our understanding of non-Western others. It provides an opportunity to make students aware that the eyes through which Europeans gaze at non-Europe are loaded in particular ways. They can learn to be reflexive about themselves and their civilization.

In my South Asian Civilization course, I ask students to look at South Asian architecture and sculpture, temples, palaces, and monuments. They often find these visual presentations quite beautiful and quite strange. I then expose them to the writings of James Fergusson, the encyclopedic *soi-disant* art-historian whose representation of Indian architecture and painting disproportionately shaped English and Euro-
pean understanding for almost 100 years. Fergusson was in the grip of
the Hellenic infatuation which provided the civilizational measuring
tape of nineteenth-century Englishmen. Thus while the Taj Mahal is not
bad it ends up with a grade of 20 as against a grade of 24 for the
Parthenon. Fergusson is also obviously in the grip of an evolutionary
metaphor of progress, in which all civilizations have a known rank and
are either progressing or declining. India, it turns out, more rapidly in
decline the closer it approached contemporary times. “The Glory that
was India” was a favorite trope. South Indian Gopurams, towered
gateways, are degenerate and tasteless, overdecorated by contrast with
sensuousness. Barbaric.

Fergusson represents a powerful teaching exercise in cultural
ethnocentrism or, to phrase it otherwise, in the situated nature of
knowledge projects. What seemed natural to Fergusson, or to most
early twentieth-century Englishmen, is not at all natural to 1990s
University of Chicago students. They are very open and receptive to the
possibility that a variety of forms might be beautiful or powerful or
aesthetically satisfying. They have gone through impressionism and
surrealism and cubism and the tradition of the new. They are less
constrained by nineteenth-century versions of exclusionary Christian-
ity when judging an exotic icon. They are less constrained by Victorian
prudery about the sensuous dimensions of Apsaras carved on temple
columns. And they are not into the natural superiority of classical styles.
They do not share the happy nineteenth-century belief in a universal
civilizational metric, let alone a universal Greek metric.

The Fergusson “exercise,” then, has a sobering effect on the
students. They find it funny, a little absurd, an unacceptable framework
of interpretation. And yet it represents attitudes that were dominant for
almost 100 years. Fergusson provides a context for the cultural self-
reflexivity that a good civilizational course teaches. Civilization pro-
vides a context for cultural self-reflexivity. It teaches not only about the
Indian “other,” but about the Western “self,” and about how they are
related. Students recognize that representation of a civilization is not
just a transparent, self-evident, and positive “reality”. The view of our
own civilization and of another is itself produced by observers who are
in turn situated in the intellectual predilections and the power projects
of their time. I am not making a simple neo-Saidian case that Fergusson
served the imperial projects of Britain when he systematically deni-
grated the civilization of the colonized—although that too was woven
into his account. The cultural dispositions of his time—the Grecian
canons of art-historical judgment; the Judaeo-Christian canons of
monotheism; the neo-Darwinian understanding about which civilizations are winners and which losers—collaborated in Fergusson's construction of India. One hopes that students exposed to such learning experiences may cast an inquiring and skeptical eye upon themselves, problematizing the way we look at both Western and non-Western civilizations, as visions generated not by eternity, but by us ourselves, particular scholars embedded in and advancing the agendas of our own time.
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7. *Speaking for the Humanities* by George Levine, Peter Brooks, Jonathan Culler, Marjorie Garber, E. Ann Kaplan, and Catharine R. Stimpson
10. *Viewpoints: Excerpts from the ACLS Conference on The Humanities in the 1990’s* by Peter Conn, Thomas Crow, Barbara Jeanne Fields, Ernest S. Frerichs, David Hollinger, Sabine MacCormack, Richard Rorty, and Catharine R. Stimpson
11. *National Task Force on Scholarship and the Public Humanities*
14. *Scholars and Research Libraries in the 21st Century*
15. *Culture’s New Frontier: Staking a Common Ground* by Naomi F. Collins
16. *The Improvement of Teaching* by Derek Bok; responses by Sylvia Grider, Francis Oakley, and George Rupp
20. *The Humanities in the Schools*


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