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COMMENTARY

The African Crisis in Context: Comparative Encounters with Educational Rationalization

Dominic Boyer

Higher education's contribution to development in Africa is being threatened... by four interrelated weaknesses. First, higher education is now producing relatively too many graduates of programs of dubious quality and relevance and generating too little new knowledge and direct development support. Second, the quality of these outputs shows unmistakable signs in many countries of having deteriorated so much that the fundamental effectiveness of the institutions is also in doubt. Third, the costs of higher education are also needlessly high. Fourth, the pattern of financing higher education is socially inequitable and economically inefficient.

—World Bank Policy Study, "Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization, and Expansion" (1988)

Universities are in crisis. The crisis they are in is not, however, a crisis of the universities. Nor theirs alone, at any rate. And only partly, if at all, of their own making.

—Zygmunt Bauman

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Introduction

Africa is not alone in its crisis of universities. This is to say that the critical analyses of contemporary trends in African higher education appearing in this special issue of the *African Studies Review* are by no means an exercise in African studies alone. The essays also represent important additions to growing international testimony of a global crisis of universities, higher education, and academic labor.¹ In Australia, Canada, Europe, and the United States (societies that compose most of the so-called West), one finds heated debates among academics, policy specialists, and public intellectuals over the trajectory and future of higher education. It is true that the term *crisis* is not always invoked to describe the contemporary state of affairs, but observers are increasingly expressing the opinion that higher education faces serious and “unprecedented challenges” (Altbach 1998:xxv) in these countries. Crisis, in other words, needs to be actively averted. Indeed, much of the symptomology of crisis encountered in this volume arises in these other debates as well: the dilemmas of unresponsive legislatures, of activist corporate donors, of insufficient infrastructure to meet student demands, of rising costs, of overworked, undercompensated, and demoralized faculty, and of an intensifying neoliberal discourse on higher education as a consumer economy (wedded to increasing expectations for higher education’s “outputs”).

Zygmunt Bauman, one of the shrewdest analysts of these phenomena, locates the origin of the contemporary sense of crisis in the changing institutional structure of postindustrial Western society. With the nation-state having “ceded most of the integrative functions it claimed in modern times to forces which it does not control and which are by and large exempt from political process,” the importance of the modern university as an arbiter of social legitimacy and force for cultural universality has been compromised, or better, pluralized (1997:48; cf. Readings 1996). Other “agencies” (Bauman does not specify them but he is likely thinking of institutions such as media organizations and knowledge industries [consultancies, corporate research facilities, development agencies, policy centers, etc.]) now fulfill in a pluricentric way some of the “integrative functions” (such as higher education and scientific research) once largely centralized in, and administered by, universities. This is not to say that Bauman believes that the university ever really was an “autonomous” institution or even a leading manager of political process.² But the modern research university had an ideological claim to autonomy from state and market forces in its production of knowledge-for-its-own-sake that was reinforced by its institutional legitimacy in the modern nation-state to monopolize epistemic arbitration. In a sense, the university was not able to recognize its dependency upon the state for its institutional legitimacy until the state began to gradually disarticulate itself from knowledge-management. (State socialist regimes, which believed and invested strongly in the centralized management of public

knowledge production, may have been among the last exemplars of this “modern” tradition.)

Since the 1970s, according to Bauman, during the “postmodern” or postindustrial transformation of the West, the university has lost its monopoly status on the definition, apportioning, hierarchization, and reproduction of skills and knowledge. Two processes are central: the rationalization of knowledge into a commodity-like form abstracted from its qualitative contexts of formation (1997:51) and the pluralization of channels and agencies which produce, disseminate, and accredit knowledge (1997:48–49). In the former case, we can think of the contemporary neoliberal emphasis on knowledge as a “thing-like” good, as procurable and securable “information,” rather than as a qualitative, experiential capacity for analysis and judgment which must be cultivated through education. In the latter case, one might consider how professions like consulting and advertising present parallel crucibles of knowledge-formation and networks of knowledge-dissemination beyond the institutional aegis of the university.³ The pluralization of knowledge-formation especially, according to Bauman, informs the pervasive phenomenology of institutional free-fall and crisis within universities: “One is tempted to surmise that it is this ever more visible absence of *institutional* anchorage that is reflected in the widely noted, and mostly bewailed, transformation of the intellectual atmosphere characteristic of academic work” (1997:49). The crisis of universities is therefore “not of their own making,” but rather a phenomenon of the fate of institutions in an era in which rationalization is increasingly proceeding outside the political process of the state. We thus suffer, in Habermas’s terms, from having passed the threshold at which “the mediatization of the lifeworld turns into its colonization” (1987:318ff).

Beyond this systems-theoretical perspective, there are of course a variety of other critical interpretations of higher education in the West. Most of these nevertheless focus on phenomena of neoliberalization and rationalization in higher education and thus are not analytically at odds with Bauman’s paradigm even if they are less interested in historical dialectics. I think it fair to say that there is a general consensus among critics that Western universities are losing their institutional autonomy in the face of a massive social shift to embrace unfettered marketization. The result, at least in the United States, appears to be that the classical Humboldtian concept of education as driven by, and oriented to, an imperative of the qualitative development of the individual is returning to its elitist roots after a brief and hopeful detour of broader availability in the postwar period.⁴ The Harvards and Stanfords, the universities whose fecund endowments occasionally allow their administrators to take their eyes off the bottom line, can create a kind of floating world of intellectual labors (research, teaching, and learning) that are insulated from the more overt manifestations of rationalization and marketization and thus become intellectual sanctuaries as desirable as they are serene.

Yet, while occupying the institutional space of Harvard remains a sanctifying “privilege,” for other institutions higher education is being pressed to evolve in the direction of a customer-driven service industry which markets itself through promises of upward mobility and the enrichment of human character. Even the preferred language for representing crisis seems to confirm this trend: One finds university administrators worldwide imitating the rationalistic and probabilistic language of business management as though this pan-institutional *zweckrational* language of “outputs” and “costs” were the only appropriate medium in which to conceive the challenges facing higher education. Such imitation is, of course, not merely sincere flattery—since the enactment of the Bayh-Dole Act in 1980 which allowed patent income to become university property, universities have been able to consolidate considerable economic power at the expense of becoming more intertwined in, and subject to, capital logics. The ensuing shift in administrative imagination unsurprisingly naturalizes educational rationalization as an interpretive a priori, offering a range of “solutions” to crises that seem equally abhorrent: Should less prestigious universities and colleges seek to broaden corporate sponsorship? Should they raise tuition (also making higher education unaffordable for more and more of the public)? Should they lower labor costs by cutting back on tenured faculty and increasing the number of short-term contract lecturers (thus gradually converting the bulk of the professoriate from professionals into wage laborers)? Should they set their sights on the growth of revenue possible through “distance-learning” initiatives like Internet-based education?

But the “abhorrent” character of rationalization is neither self-evident nor trans-contextual; it is instead phenomenological, and thus requires some discussion. Like many of my peers, when I confront “distance learning” as the possible new standard for mass education in America, I confront the phenomenology of educational rationalization and recoil, instinctively, from its approving vision of the further abstraction and alienation of learning. I am intuitively certain that there is no genuine education where questions cannot be asked of immediately present human beings who have the time and energy to answer them. I also am apt to lose my sense of proportion; any commitment to “distance learning” appears to me as evidence of a systemic degeneration of higher education, however irrational that reaction may appear upon later reflection. Yet this reaction says a great deal about how mass-produced education is nightmarish and anxiety-invoking for the deeply “artisanal” self-understanding that most intellectuals currently have of their labors. I consider what is natural and genuine also to be what is typical of my own experience of intellectual labor—its painstaking, craftlike character. The developments in higher education I signify as alienating are those that compromise the immediacy, intersubjectivity, and sensuous intensity of learning, those qualities that are of central importance to the labors of scholarship.⁵ “Distance learning” thus has the misfortune to serve as a locus for a more diffuse yet omnipresent anxiety about

the intellectual labor conditions in many, perhaps the numerical majority of, institutions of higher education in the United States: a poorly-compensated, harried faculty on short-term contracts, inadequate physical facilities including shortages of library resources, technology, and classroom space, the absence or ghettoization of critical pedagogy, an emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge as a consumer process, and a student body that often arrives on campuses ill-equipped with the basic analytical and expressive skills to survive, let alone to thrive in, higher education. Like all phenomenological anxiety, this vision is selective and occludes the many everyday satisfactions and privileges which the bulk of the American professoriate enjoys.⁶ But one also gathers enough first-hand experience with, and testimony to, educational rationalization to reach reasonable judgments about more general trends. The final blow to the reeling artisanal intellectual is that further ventures in educational rationalization are always offered as the solution to the problems that educational rationalization has already wrought. At no place, except perhaps at the Harvards, is the qualitative development of individuals still held forth as an unmediated virtue in its own right. The rest have to satisfy themselves with positive or negative fantasies of artisanal education.

This is the phenomenology of crisis that makes the essays in this volume so timely and essential for any student of higher education. The situation in African universities is acute and undeniably of crisis proportions. Yet the dynamics of crisis also appear to echo the “serious challenges” facing institutions of higher education worldwide. The essays thus restore a sense of proportion to Western debates over higher education even as they underline the importance of taking seriously the impact of the expansion of global capitalization and its ideological aura of neoliberalism upon higher education. Before evaluating the relevance of Bauman’s argument for the crises of African universities, however, I would like to summarize the several dimensions of the African crisis which these essays specify.

The Legacies of Colonial Higher Education Policies

The articles detail how legacies of colonial and postcolonial higher education policies continue to impede efforts to realize progressive (or even viable) higher education systems in the contemporary period. These legacies range from the spatial and financial organization of African higher education institutions, to their having been modeled upon European institutional and pedagogical norms, to their design as crucibles for an African bureaucratic class (see the essays in this volume by Amuwo, Kerr and Mapanje, and Nyamnjoh and Jua). Exorcising what Ali Mazrui has called the “ghost of African intellectual dependency” (1992:100) is a process that involves the confrontation of these legacies, since they both overtly and subtly set conditions of possibility for higher education in Africa that

impede the development of institutional cultures that are more responsive to local desires and needs. This is perhaps the most central challenge and invitation of this volume: to engage all of us in critical thinking and creative action about how African universities can compartmentalize their histories as institutions of colonial discipline and postcolonial modernization and chart new courses for the future (see also Ajayi, Goma, and Johnson 1996; Ngwane 2001).

The Relationship of African Universities and African States

Contra Bauman, in Africa, the locus of crisis is not always the decoupling of the university from political process; indeed the articles show the concomitant dangers of the overpoliticization of intellectual life (Amuwo, Kerr and Mapanje). The essays speak to a great variety of different reciprocities between African universities and state power, but it is clear that among the greatest challenges facing many African universities are their struggles with the state against financial neglect and academic censorship (Anugwom). The financial question is absolutely central to the future of African universities—can African governments be persuaded to spend more on higher education? Even with fuller state coffers, this seems doubtful so long as many African governments remain fearful about their universities' plurality of expression. African states seem unresponsive to the needs and agendas of their intellectuals and universities in part for urgent financial reasons and in part for pragmatic reasons that increasing the pool of educated and politicized persons in their countries does not serve their interests (Amutabi, Kasozi). The articles further demonstrate the variety of forms that political censorship is capable of attaining. On the one hand, there is the knowledge and fear of detention and/or physical violence which is utilized to quiet critical voices in some places (Kerr and Mapanje), but there is also the politics of professional advancement to be considered as well as the influence of party politics upon academic appointments and promotions (Jua and Nyamnjoh). The conviviality of scholars and political elites is a different mode of censorship highlighted by some of the essays (Amuwo). The privileging of certain intellectual factions as articulators of state ideology often comes at the expense of the rest of the intelligentsia and of higher education as a whole

African Universities, Marketization, and Educational Rationalization

In the introduction to this volume, Nyamnjoh and Jua make the captivating point that the “value of university education in Africa is best understood in comparison with the soft currencies of the continent.” Indeed, the

essays in this volume share a conviction that the departure from Western institutional paradigms of higher education and the development of an “African university” better attuned to local needs and realities must become a foundational goal for higher education reform in Africa. Alone it speaks to the cultural situation of higher education in Africa that such a university appears in these essays more as a horizontal appeal than as a tangible, attainable goal. The desire, nevertheless, is to establish institutions of higher education which will support sustainable, pragmatic, and poetic local economies of knowledge rather than serving as crucibles of regime ideology or as elitist imitations of Western institutions of higher education. The question remains as to how these local economies will insulate themselves from, or exchange fairly with, global economies of knowledge in order to “harden” their hermeneutic and epistemic currencies. The reality facing educational activism in Africa is that even where education systems do not face governmental interference, they face the predatory encroachment of neoliberal paradigms of international development organizations and their pressure toward the greater privatization of higher education. In such models, “knowledge” is invariably depoliticized into technical or pragmatic forms that fit rationalizing, neoliberal development agendas; critical knowledge is seen as a luxury commodity ill-afforded African economies of information (Nyamnjoh and Jua; also Nandy 2000:118). Seen from the perspectives of the authors, African universities appear to be facing the worst of both worlds. The universities have at best indifferent and at worst hostile relations with political power, yet the only financial recourse is linked to raising fees beyond the circumstances of most citizens or to international development agencies and multinational corporations, each of which have their own agendas for and models of higher education which potentially threaten a new cycle of intellectual dependency.

On a related point, the articles also note the problem of “brain drain” in African universities (Nyamnjoh and Jua, and Jua and Nyamnjoh). Here state policies, party politics, and the transnationalization of academia push talented critical thinkers toward relatively more lucrative and tranquil labor conditions outside of Africa. Such decisions to join the “diaspora” come, one suspects, along with feelings of guilt, anger, and even irrelevance. Professional academic life in places like the United States does not reward front-line political struggle despite certain discursive gestures to the contrary. This raises the question of insulation and whether diasporic critical voices can continue to have a formative influence upon political developments in their countries. I am reminded of an East German acquaintance who described his experience as a professional intellectual in unified Germany in what I believe are comparable terms: “Back in East Germany there was a constant fear about the consequences of saying the wrong thing because everything was monitored so closely. But the power of the written or spoken word was also exhilarating in a way. Now, in the West, I am free to say anything I want. But it has no purpose. No one listens to you.”

African Universities and New Technologies

The authors again raise the issue of finances with regard to new technological developments like the Internet that have had a powerful impact upon higher education. Especially for scholars, the Internet is a tool with revolutionary social potential to cultivate new translocal communitarian horizons and global communities of discourse and argument (as demonstrated by this volume for example)! But the costs of investment and maintaining such networks challenge cash-strapped universities (both in Africa and elsewhere) and there is the complicating issue that some regimes do not relish allowing scholars unregulated access to global streams of information and discourse (Jua and Nyamnjoh). The authors express the wholly legitimate concern that African universities may fall “further behind” their global counterparts if they don’t have access to the tremendous resources for research and scholarly exchange which the Internet offers (Kasozi). Given Western debates about the specter of “distance learning,” however, it is worth reflecting that new communications technologies like the Internet also have a “dark side” when viewed as platforms for the accelerated rationalization of higher education (see Skolnik 2000).

Student Cultures: Emancipatory Politics and Repressive Dynamics

Several of the articles in the volume speak to the role of student movements in African political cultures (particularly Amutabi and Konings). Here, student movements are shown to be engines of social resistance to governmental and institutional power and powerful loci of civil society across Africa. The socially and politically progressive role of student movements in demanding greater participatory democracy does not preclude a certain self-interest in winning prestige and legitimacy (and, it is hoped, authority) from public conflict with the state. Moreover, a few of the articles directly address problems of aggression and inequity within student populations—for example, the problem of sexual violence against female students perpetrated by male students and, occasionally, by faculty (Konings). This is a very helpful thematic addition because it complicates a tendency to envision the student population simply as a heroic body countering and confronting the abuses of state power. That students themselves engage in abusive practices toward one another and that some universities tolerate or condone widespread gender and ethnic violence demonstrates the depth of the cultural crisis within certain institutions of higher education and the breadth of the structural inequities which must be addressed in reform.

The Class Tension Embodied in African Universities between Knowledge Elites and the Rest of National Populations

Intellectuals, in Africa and elsewhere, often see themselves as the political and moral vanguard of a more just, genuine, and ideal society. Yet, intellectuals' labors to imagine and to realize more perfect states of society invariably come into tension with their own class interests and position as privileged experts in a complex economy of knowledge (see Boyer 2000). Studying intellectuals cross-nationally, one often finds a similar tendency to represent the terms of intellectual struggle against state and market forces as a fight waged "on behalf" of "the people." That intellectuals, as knowledge elites involved in global economies of knowledge-exchange, actually may have more in common from a sociological standpoint with intellectuals from other societies than they do with other segments of their own society is an issue that intellectuals (unsurprisingly) rarely bring to the fore. And yet the urge to voice and to guide "the people" clearly constitutes a process of social identification and political action unto itself (see Giesen 1998; Suny & Kennedy 2000). Like the previous point, this issue helps to complicate a certain valorization of the critical intellectual as a heroic figure whereas, like any social actor, critical intellectuals might better be seen as individuals who are also socially situated in a complex field of societal powers, class interests, professional ethics, and moral positions.

Conclusion

The six issues I have discussed above clearly do not begin to summarize the wealth of analysis and information provided by the individual articles but they do suggest some areas that are salient for thinking about the situation in African higher education in a global context. Based on the material in these articles, two conclusions seem warranted: 1) It is analytically helpful to see the crisis of African universities in a global context, but, 2) it is equally important *not* to reduce the African crisis to a local variation on a global theme.

On the first point, as noted above, many of the dimensions of crisis outlined in the articles, in particular those oriented to phenomena of educational rationalization, are also areas of great contemporary concern to intellectuals in the West. Public universities continue to exist in uneasy and sometimes mistrustful relationships with state powers in these countries (for example, Cameron 1991; Gumpert 1997; Spring 1995); and, new communications technologies have prompted a great deal of self-reflection in these countries' academic milieux with sometimes anxious and sometimes utopian consequences. Moreover, the post-1989 boom in global capitalism has led to the proportionally greater threat of marketization in Western universities. In the United States, for example, cutbacks in public funding

have left the majority of public higher education institutions either looking to shrink costs or to entice corporate sponsorship. Private university endowments are also heavily invested in markets, thus subtly harmonizing the “bottom line” of university administration with the exigencies and ideologies of capital management. It comes as little surprise, then, given their field of governmental and corporate interlocutors, that university administrators have also inherited the aggressive neoliberal discourse which accompanied the recent American bull market and have then applied this paradigm to structure debates over the future of the university as a site of “information transfer,” over the greater rationalization of educational standards through standardized testing, over the gradual dismantling or circumvention of the tenure system, and over the impact of new technologies upon the practice of higher education.

Although this discourse comes to African universities through the language of international development agencies, its embrace of educational rationalization is no less crisis-provoking. Here the colonial and postcolonial legacies of African universities seem to be intensifying the effects of educational rationalization, since (1) they have for decades undermined the institutional autonomy of African universities by making them into agents of imperial and governmental social agendas; and (2) this relative lack of institutional autonomy and legitimacy has left African intellectuals with little collective power, few forums for negotiating the future of the university as an institution, and even less institutional insulation from state and market powers.

Yet although educational rationalization clearly is a global process (or better, globally perceived by intellectuals as a process) this does not nearly characterize the entirety of crisis to which these case studies attest. It is clear, for example, that the crises that African universities currently face are products of social and historical forces which are not entirely comparable to European and American cases. The colonial legacies of higher education institutions as sites for the disciplining and cultivation of idealized “native subjects” already compose an inheritance largely foreign to European and American contexts (see Ngwane 2001). But there are other ways in which Bauman’s model—although it makes a great deal of sense in the context of the Western nation-state—glosses the specificities of African cases. Universities in Africa remain politically important institutions (due to their heritage as forges of the national-bureaucratic caste) deeply embedded in political process, and these articles’ sometimes livid commentary speaks to the authors’ immediate experience of the struggle to define the balance of power between the state and the national intelligentsia. This creates, it is my impression, an experience of crisis qualitatively different from Western reactions to educational rationalization since the specter of educational rationalization in Africa both (1) threatens a new phase of center-periphery imposition where unfettered marketization will thrive in the institutional anemia cultivated by colonialism; and (2)

threatens to disinherit African intellectuals of their hope to define the university as an autonomous space from which to redefine and renew national culture.

This latter point, it should be noted, was not foreign to modern Western discourse on universities so very long ago. Positioning the modern research university as the primary site for producing national culture was also the hope of philosophers and educational reformers like Wilhelm von Humboldt and Johann Fichte when they developed plans for the modern German university in the early nineteenth century (Ziolkowski 1990). Their belief in the coevolution of epistemic universality (*Wissenschaft*) and cultural wholeness and integrity (*Kultur*) was not metaphorical but rather ontological. Yet since the end of the nineteenth century, the ideal of the university as locus and crucible of national culture in the West has seemed increasingly fantastic given intellectual professionalization and specialization. In the last few decades, the circle has been closed as “national culture” has itself come to be treated in Western academic discourse as metaphorical, that is, as a discursive imagination of social solidarity reflecting elite interests (Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992; Giesen 1998).

Such skepticism has, I would argue, reciprocally if subtly influenced Western academic belief in the progressive potential of the university. This sense of disillusionment is also not the disillusionment one finds in this volume’s interpretation of the African situation. Against the backdrop of highly rationalistic critiques of educational rationalization (like Bauman’s and Habermas’s), these essays may seem strangely exuberant precisely because their critical voices do presuppose hopes for the institutional fluidity of the university and for the reformational power of collective intellectual agency which seem rather dim in the systems-theoretical imagination of crisis. For similar reasons, I am concerned that my own contribution’s comparative exercise should not dampen these essays’ fire of purpose by wrapping them in the asbestoslike quality of Western social theory. It is my position, however, that a vitalized dialogue over the crisis of higher education between intellectuals must develop globally precisely because the phenomenology of crisis is shared by intellectuals globally.⁷ Exchanging our impressions and the fruits of our analytical labors will benefit us all: It will help to make coordinated global intellectual action a possibility. The danger is simply that there is little possibility of balanced intellectual exchange, let alone coordinated action, where interlocutors intuitively accept the existence of an international hierarchy of analytical expertise—a hierarchy, one might add, that is promoted vigorously and equivalently by institutions like the World Bank and Western universities. It is too often the case that Western expertise (even in the innocent guise of “social theory”) is treated as an analytically superior, “hard” currency next to the “soft” currencies of local expertise. This is a particularly animate ghost of intellectual dependency that reflects the tacit absence of “intellectual recognition,” or the failure to apprehend the “Other” as intellectual equal—a problem

that has its historical roots in European colonialism and lives on translated into convictions about innate and differential intellectual powers.

For this reason, I would urge readers of this volume who are not immersed in the African crisis of education to recognize and to learn from the expertise of African intellectuals. Such recognition is one strategy for “hardening” the currencies of African intellectual labor available to all of us as scholars. One discovers quickly that theirs is not only a “local knowledge.” Among the reasons I am most glad to have had the opportunity to respond to these papers is that they have taught me to see something about my own intellectual impoverishment through professionalism. As a professional academic living and studying intellectual life in the United States, it is very difficult to believe that one actually has agency to transform the extant structures, while it is concomitantly very easy to believe that theoretical gestures of criticism can productively supplant other, more corporeal, modes of criticism. This is the almost autohypnotic consequence of professional investment in a comfortable and productive (if eminently criticizable) economy of expert knowledge. I found these essays both conceptually and spiritually refreshing, because, as Frantz Fanon wrote in a different context, they do not accept the political “amputation” of intellectual labors and institutions quietly (1967:140). They present a challenge to scholars internationally to envision ways in which higher education can transform itself—not as a response to political expediency or market teleology, but as a concerted effort to develop individuals capable of action (and thought).

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Notes

1. This literature is already vast and it is expanding. A short list of informative sources for further reading would include: Arnove and Torres (1999); Ash (1997); Hirsch and Weber (1999); Inayatullah and Gidley (2000); Martin (1998); Neilson and Gaffield (1986); Nelson (1997); Smyth (1995); Sommer (1995).
2. Jacques Le Goff (1993) shows vividly how the medieval institution of the university was very much a battleground of state and religious forces despite its incipient discourse on intellectual autonomy and its incipient ethics of intellectual professionalism.
3. Although schools of business and management do in fact harmonize these professions within the purview of many universities.
4. For a detailed discussion of the historical and social roots of the Bildung model of education see Bruford (1975), Readings (1996:63–67), and Ziolkowski (1990).
5. On the subject of intimacy and distance learning, Haythornthwaite (2000) offers evidence that different forms of intimate exchange are developed in distance learning contexts.
6. Moreover, there is nothing particularly contemporary about these anxious visions, as Francis Oakley wonderfully demonstrates in his essay of "the veritable geology of alienation" in the history of American higher education (1992). I would suggest that intellectuals' own intimate relationship to the epistemic objectification and interpretation of collective "national" wholes has a great deal to do with their propensity to induce either utopian or apocalyptic trends from more partial, nominal encounters.
7. Philip Altbach conveys this impression of universal siege aptly: "This is not an especially happy time for higher education worldwide. Academe is everywhere under attack. University leaders have been unable to defend the institution successfully from its critics and from governments committed to cutting budgets and shifting governmental priorities. The academic community does not speak with a united voice. Indeed, in general it does not speak at all. The contemporary university must present a vision of its role in the future and defend its past contributions to knowledge and to society" (1998:xxvi). Note the indexical formation of a universal academic "we" against the "they" of nonintellectual critics and governments. Such statements baptize and naturalize the figure of the "global academic."