Ethical Challenges Regarding Globalization of Higher Education

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This paper places the question of ethical challenges in relation to the process of globalization concerning international education and the mobility of international students worldwide. It focuses on five areas of justice, namely, social and political justice, administrative justice, distributive justice, cultural justice and ecological justice. These areas of justice cannot be separated from one another, given the interaction among international students from different cultures, which do not all share the same level of cultural, economic and political power and influence internationally. While stressing the importance of all the areas where justice is called for, it is argued that the area pertaining to ecological justice enjoys primacy in relation to the others, given the growing indications that all of the world's inhabitants face an uncertain future on the planet in the face of anthropogenic eco-systemic degradation. If this is not addressed educationally, all the others would be addressed in vain.

Keywords: culture, ecological, education, ethical, globalization, international, justice, power

Introduction

In the current context of globalization at several levels of human existence, including the economic, cultural, political, technological and ecological, one cannot afford to ignore the impact of such globalization on education, especially where international exchanges in higher education are concerned. What interests the author specifically, in this regard, are ethical issues pertaining to the internationalization of education in such an already largely globalized world, especially if one considers that globalization entails the weakening of former barriers among nations in economic, cultural, social and political terms, in this way increasing the reciprocal "flows" among them (Steger, 2003; Olivier, 2007). This is the case in spite of the fact that, at the level of the political, increased security-awareness post-9/11 has placed significant restrictions on, and obstacles in the way of, travel and immigration among different countries.

In brief, the author would argue that what one might call "higher education ethics" is not merely a subspecies of applied ethics, insofar as ethical considerations concerning internationalization of education cannot omit addressing fundamental philosophical (ethical) questions. To be able to conceptualize the application of questions (or answers) regarding justice, for instance, to an increasingly international global student collective, entails a rigorous hermeneutic dialectic among all levels of ethical reflection, from the most abstract to the most materially specific, because of the fact that international contact between students and educational agencies (including lecturing staff) ineluctably includes a confrontation among different cultural values.

These different value-systems are not all of equal cratological (power-related) status, however, with the consequence that some students find themselves in situations where their own value-orientation seems fragile

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compared to hegemonic systems within which they may find themselves from time to time. Rather than diminishing the need for ethical intervention, however, this makes such intervention, at a rigorous philosophical level, all the more urgent.

Social and Political Justice in a "Globalized" World

When it comes to university education, there are distinguishable (and distinct) social ideals embodied in different models of what the university supposedly entails—all rooted, significantly, in distinct cultural epochs metaphorically in the form of city-names, and those of Athens, Berlin, New York and Calcutta (Naudé, 2005, p. 93; Olivier, 2005a). This is heuristically valuable, given the graphic manner in which it invites a critique of contemporary ethical consciousness. "Athens", as model of the university, for instance, signifies the universalistic ideal of rationality as organizing principle of society, regarding both theory and political praxis among the ancient Greeks, but what it hides is the fact that the society structured by this conception of reason was one shot through with inequalities of all sorts—Neither women nor slaves could co-determine their own places or potential contributions to society. Nevertheless, as Arendt (1958) has shown, Athens did give us the legacy of (a model for) democracy, even if its own version was a limited democracy, and foreigners were mostly regarded as barbarians (barbaroi: those who spoke an incomprehensible, "rebarbative" babble).

While the "Berlin" model of the university emphasizes the inalienable cultural (literary as well as scientific) role of the institution (harking back to the Von Humboldt-era in European cultural history)—one conspicuous in an age of globalization, insofar as universities face the task of having to reflect both the local and the universal in their faculties, the "New York" model represents one side of a more realistic appraisal of the function of universities, that of the role of the market in current knowledge-production in the contemporary era, the other side being reflected by the "Calcutta" model which emphasizes the educational needs of the developing world. The reason is, firstly, that contemporary universities (especially in the Western world) are increasingly market-related in the sense that knowledge itself, unlike in former eras, is treated as a commodity with the result that there is constant interanimation between the private sector of entrepreneurship and the university as training ground for future entrepreneurs. Needless to say, this does not fully capture the role of contemporary universities (even or especially, in New York itself!), insofar as critical disciplines co-exist with the market-related ones in these institutions—the New School for Social Science and City College, New York, to mention but two of these. At the other end of the scale, the "Calcutta" university-model represents the developmental needs of the so-called "Third World", to which one may add its hopes and fears, given the unequal development witnessed in the latter compared to the "First World".

Against this background, the author would approach the question of social justice in relation to the different university-ideals as actualized in the contemporary world in such a way as to do justice to the complexity of cultural differences and the social (including educational) interaction among different cultures. Insofar as particular universities, which are socially very differently situated (compare South Africa and the US, Canada, Japan or Norway, etc.), would emulate different models, instead of affirming that each of these models is equally "legitimate" (which can no longer be done in a situation where there is cultural heterogeneity existing side by side with a tendency towards global homogeneity (Steger, 2003)), the author would argue for a consideration and negotiation of their complex intertwinement at the scientific and disciplinary level. In other words, in a world characterized by extreme socio-economic inequalities among nations (and within nations), the legitimacy of each of these models, taken by themselves, should be subjected to radical theoretical-ethical

critique, and those aspects of each that can play a meaningful role in the present, postmodern world, should be placed in what Adorno might call a fecund "constellation".

Such a critique has been in the process of being articulated for decades, for example, in J. F. Lyotard's (1979) *The Postmodern Condition* (as well as, at least implicitly, in his subsequent work, especially "The Inhuman"), in the work of Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Julia Kristeva, Fredric Jameson, David Harvey, Emmanuel Wallerstein, and recently, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, to mention only a few relevant thinkers. When Lyotard (1984) argued in 1979 that international relations of power were being reconfigured by the link between economic power (itself inseparable from political and military power) and the generation of knowledge conceived of in terms of (technological) performativity, he was adumbrating a new world order theorized in an encompassing manner by Hardt and Negri in *Empire* (2001) and *Multitude* (2005). The latter claims that we are witnessing the emergence of a new form of sovereign power (Empire) at supra-national juridical, political, economic and cultural levels—a state of affairs where power can no longer be conceived in terms of the boundaries of the nation state of modernity, but which surpasses these—not only confirmed Lyotard's earlier insights concerning the structure of power in postmodernity, but also explained the noticeable global trend towards "supra-national", and no longer "international" structures of governance and organization. That this emerging new order is characterized by the dominant order of the so-called capitalist states being constantly challenged by the countervailing power of what Hardt and Negri (2005) called "multitude" (the vast numbers of people who, despite of their social, cultural and individual differences, share the common of producing modes of resistance against the hegemony of Empire), may not seem to be immediately relevant to this paper. And yet, one cannot leave this out of any consideration of education in a global context given the fact that education inescapably involves questions of power and dominance and the concomitant implications of less powerful cultures yielding to the pervasive, stronger, power of Empire in cultural (including linguistic), economic and political terms (Steger, 2003, pp. 37, 56, 69, 82).

Therefore, in light of the critique on the part of these thinkers, social justice in an international context will remain a mere mirage unless the "New York" model of the university is somehow brought into rapprochement with the "Calcutta" as well as the "Athens" and "Berlin" models, in this way yielding a truly "postmodern" university where social justice is strived for (however elusive it may be) by reconciling local and global economic, political, social and cultural needs and values in a forum of properly international institutional debate and restructuring. What this requires is that the economic weight of market-related, advanced computerized knowledge á la New York's Wall Street be mediated with the universalistic epistemological demands of the Athens model with the creative cultural and scientific ideals embodied in the Berlin model, as well as the developmental requirements and implications of the so-called Calcutta model. Universities in a postmodern, globalized world cannot avoid representing and negotiating the sometimes conflicting characteristics attached to these four divergent notions of the being of universities.

Until this is seriously addressed, only social injustice will be served worldwide at universities with the powerful nations (from which one cannot separate the economic power of the multinational corporations) reinforcing their power, even as they expose international students to the discursive and epistemic demands of the humanities, the natural and social sciences in their theoretically most sophisticated contemporary form. Having imbibed these intoxicating educational sources of information and potential enlightenment, probably as many of these international students opt (if this is possible) to stay in the country where their graduate studies took them, as those who return to their countries of origin with the hope of reaping the benefit of their studies

by investing their newly acquired knowledge at home. In the case of the latter, such intentions can can only succeed with great difficulty in uplifting local society, given the cultural and educational differences, at an institutional level, between the home country (the less privileged nations) and the host country, in this way, perpetuating the gap that exists between them (Olivier, 2004).

Moreover, the "New York" model for universities invites an ethical critique more urgently than any of the others by themselves (although such a critique ultimately has to be inscribed into a more encompassing critical field), given the economic (and therefore, also political) international hegemony of "First World" countries in a globalized and still globalizing world. This is related to distributive justice that is addressed below.

Administrative Justice in a "Globalized" World

The author believes that Naudé (2005, p. 95) was right when he indicated that a consideration of the ethical requirements pertaining to what he termed "administrative justice", which the author would rather think of in terms of the justice pertaining to international movement of students at a tertiary level, is just too many to enumerate and address in detail within limited space. By and large, those considerations he listed reflect some of the important areas of administrative activity where the needs of international students can and should be met, namely, marketing claims on the part of universities competing in the international arena, entry requirements, programme quality, accreditation agreements and feedback systems. What the author would like to add is that all of these, which are administrative measures aimed at the optimalization of success on the part of international students, should be seen in conjunction with the requirements of social justice addressed above. In other words, something like "programme quality" cannot be divorced from the question whether "quality" is solely determined in terms of Western criteria, by which the author does not mean only intellectual criteria on which the leading universities in Western countries can seldom be faulted, but also cultural and economic criteria of inclusion and exclusion. As soon as one admits that inclusiveness should be entrenched as a guiding principle, however, it impacts on intellectual criteria as well not merely in terms of so-called standards (which are often exclusive in terms that go beyond intellectual ability), but also as far as linguistic accessibility and cultural preconceptions are concerned. Too often, administration becomes the self-justifying discourse of bureaucracy, without critical questions being taken seriously regarding the underlying (often unjust) principles in which such administration is grounded, with the result that administrative injustice occurs in the guise of exclusion.

Distributive Justice in a "Globalized" World

For sometime now, it has been the case that internationalization of education cannot be separated from globalization as a multi-facetted phenomenon (Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2003, p. 1). This inevitably raises the question of whether such globalization, especially given its inseparability from advanced (electronic) communicational developments (partly as a means to the sharing of knowledge and, unavoidably, economic prosperity), is judged and/or regulated in light of the normative requirements of distributive justice. The answer to this question is, to the author's mind, an unambiguous "No".

The economic disparities between the "First Word" and the "Third World" are such that, even if thousands of international students are annually accommodated at universities in "First World" countries, those who return to their countries of origin do not seriously challenge the economic (political and cultural) hegemony of the "First World". Moreover, the ostensible international educational openness or hospitality on the part of

"First World" countries is usually a double-edged sword: On the one hand, it empowers international students regarding their chosen disciplines, while on the other, it serves to export (very conveniently) the ideology or discursive constraints implicit in the teaching of many of these disciplines, namely, a fusion of liberal democracy and late capitalism—something that conveniently serves the purposes of the dominant powers. And as Foucault (1980), following Nietzsche (1968) and Machiavelli (2010), has taught us, it is power that usually prevails and not critical-ethical reason (as opposed to the technical embodiments of instrumental reason). This is no reason to give up on such critical-ethical reason, though there is a more urgent need for its cultivation among students internationally than ever before.

This may seem innocuous or even desirable to some, but some of the world's leading thinkers, including the recently deceased Derrida (1994), in his powerful text, "Specters of Marx", have warned against a premature triumphalism regarding the global embrace of this (to the author's mind unholy) union of liberal democracy and advanced market-capitalism, for instance, on the part of Francis Fukuyama. The point is, as Derrida (1994) warned that one can all too easily confuse the freedom to satisfy one's material-economic needs with political freedom, blinding oneself to the surreptitious growth of the power of multinational corporations to the point where they hold democratic political leaders and parties in thrall, and insidiously undermine true political freedom (Steger, 2003, pp. 76-82; regarding the ownership of media companies by vast conglomerates, an ownership that largely determines what is printed and broadcast in the media). This question has too many sides and ramifications to pursue here; suffice it to say that distributive justice, as an ethical consideration, cannot be divorced from questions of hegemonic power-relations in the world, and fresh perspectives on the center of power, the "New York" model of the university, should be encouraged in an international educational context.

Cultural Justice in a "Globalized" World

This kind of justice is intimately related to those kinds briefly discussed above. As Naudé (2005, p. 97) indicated, it displays at least two faces, namely the countervailing ones of cultural homogenization and fragmentation. What he did not elaborate on is the unavoidable, related phenomenon of cultural hybridization which draws attention to the creative side of cultural globalization (Steger, 2003, pp. 75-76). Both homogenization and fragmentation also show their advantages and disadvantages.

On the one hand, the homogenization-process goes hand in hand with the threat to linguistic diversity in the world by the ever-increasing internationalization of (especially American) English via satellite communications and the global hegemony of (American) English television programming. And with linguistic domination comes cultural domination, to which many of the world's less powerful, sometimes, fragile cultures are simply not resistant. It is true of course that such homogenization offers the advantage of all cultures being able to avail themselves of the knowledge-dissemination that is occurring by means of the largely global accessibility of English as a medium. But the threat posed to linguistic diversity by this phenomenon should not be underestimated, especially when one remembers that every extant language represents a system or repository of indigenous knowledge accumulated over centuries. To lose any of these languages is tantamount to lose cultural and epistemological biodiversity.

On the other hand, the typically postmodern fragmentation of culture is accompanied by a salutary recognition of difference and otherness (Olivier, 2007), so lacking in modernity where a hierarchical subordination of the cultural (colonized and racial) other was the rule. This should, ethically speaking, be good

news for all cultures and both genders, if it was not for the sad fact that new global hierarchies are already in the process of establishing themselves—hierarchies that have consequences for international students as well. By and large, these hierarchies seem to have an economic basis. In his shockingly demystifying book, *The Enemy of Nature*, Kovel (2007) pointed out, for instance, that poor nations are still (even increasingly) being exploited by rich ones and that whatever the international gains of the women's movement may have been, today the socio-economic position of women in especially those cultures where the effect of gender-sensitive legislation has not been felt (or where such legislation has not even occurred) is worse than ever. One of the reasons for this is that women in many "Third World" cultures are more subservient workers than men, and therefore, preferred as employees by factory (sweat shop) bosses. The irony is that these factories are often set up in these countries by companies based in "First World" countries because of the cultural differences involved, according to which exploitation of workers in these "Third World" countries is easier, and profits higher than in the home countries of such companies. Clearly, then, otherness does not necessarily mean mutual respect; often it means exploitation of the cultural other, today no less than during the heyday of imperialism.

In such a situation, it is imperative that international educational authorities constantly test themselves in relation to the question, whether they are providing the educational means for not only the advanced technical training of international students, but also for their critical-intellectual development. In fact, one of the plagues of the present world-order (to borrow a phrase from Derrida (1994) in "Specters of Marx") is the neglect of critical-intellectual education in favor of mere technical training—What the young American philosopher, Farhang Erfani has aptly, in the course of a lecture in South Africa (in 2005), called the training of mere "labourers" instead of the education of (responsible and informed) "citizens" by universities.

Ecological Justice in a "Globalized" World

It would be irresponsible on the author's part not to add another kind of justice under the rubric of ecological justice, although (given its tremendous importance) it really deserves a lengthy discussion of its own. Briefly, this entails ethical considerations regarding the increasingly apparent fact of the destruction of natural ecosystems by human development. In the book by Kovel (2007; Olivier, 2005b, 2009) mentioned earlier (*The Enemy of Nature*, subtitled *The End of Capitalism or The End of the World*), a grim picture of the state of nature emerges, with Kovel inexorably listing all the evidence of nature's devastation at the hands of human beings, such as the depletion of the ozone layer, the pollution of the oceans to the point where people cannot swim in their waters in many areas (such as the coast of Florida in the US) without risking contamination by noxious bacteria, the accelerating extinction of animal and plant species the world over because of global warming as well as human destruction of natural habitats and many other such instances (too many to address here).

His argument which is carefully and persuasively constructed in the course of the book is that the main culprit regarding the destruction of nature is the economic system known as (neoliberal) capitalism, mainly because of the fact that it rests on the principle of unrestrained growth. In fact, the process known as capital implies such unlimited growth. Although there was a call to limit growth during the 1970s (ironically on the part of the capitalist elites themselves; Kovel (2007) on the report of the "Club of Rome" of 1972) point out nothing has come of this exhortation; on the contrary, growth-figures have multiplied and actual economic growth has accelerated in advanced capitalist economies worldwide, with the result that it has reached the point where no one even talks of limiting it any longer (perhaps because of a feeling of unlimited power, or

conversely, a feeling of helplessness in the face of the ostensibly insurmountable ecological and related social problems facing the world today; see Beck's (1992) illuminating, if disturbing, book, *Risk Society*, in this regard).

The ethical implications are, or should be, obvious, especially in an international educational context. Perhaps, this is the best place to start addressing these problems, which bear on the future survival and morally justified continued living of the people of this planet as well as the survival of all other living creatures on it. It cannot be emphasized too strongly: unless the leading powers of the world—symbolized by the "New York" model of the university—take the ecological crisis seriously enough to start implementing an alternative to energy-through-oil, for example, and put everything into play to limit economic growth in a judicious manner (which does not threaten livelihoods), it is a real possibility that humanity will have to take responsibility for the utter devastation of all natural life on this planet, as well as of the human cultures that have developed in dependence on nature. The rate at which forests are being destroyed for economic gain, for example, simply ignores the fact that these forests are the "lungs" of the planet and no financial profit could ever replace their indispensable function for our survival. Would not it be the greatest irony if the very beings (human beings) capable of taking responsibility for nature as its guardians turned out to be its (and their own) destroyers? And does this not point to the greatest international ethical (educational) priority of all—a truly holistic one?

Conclusions

The author, therefore, concludes this paper with a call on the educators, especially at tertiary level, of the nations of the world to attend to the urgent need for a radically different approach to education as far as priorities are concerned. This entails the realization that international education at tertiary level (but also lower levels) would be futile if the precondition is not satisfied that human beings be educated with regard to the indispensable requirements on the part of living ecosystems globally, which consists of the maintenance and preservation of intricate interconnections among all living beings and their inorganic environment. Instead of calibrating educational institutions worldwide for the promotion, through the "New York" model type of the university, of optimal economic development through growth, such development should be pursued in such a way that it does not impact so negatively or destructively on ecological conditions as to place the very survival of life on earth in peril. To return to the author's previous example, if the destruction of rainforests were to continue unabated for economic purposes, the capacity of the planet to maintain a viable biosphere (through carbon-absorption and oxygen-generation) for all living creatures may be impaired irreversibly. To this, it may be added the depletion of the fish-populations in the oceans through rampant over-fishing which threatens biodiversity, as well as many other critical issues may be added. This is, to the author's mind, the most urgent educational challenge faced by educators today. Without attending to ecological justice, therefore, promoting the other kinds of justice referred to would be an empty gesture, given the real possibility that the world in which they have to be pursued may not have a future. In a certain sense, in the interest of life itself, it must be given priority over the other ethical considerations at every level of education internationally across the globe.

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