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ANU Sacrifices Western Civilisation On Altar Of Leftist Warriors

Publish Date:

June 2018

Last week, Australians were once again shown just how appalling our universities have really become. They discovered – yet again – that the humanities departments in particular are occupied by left-wing ideologues who insist on feeding their students a diet consisting entirely of class, gender and race rather than nourishing them with the history and substance of rational inquiry bequeathed to us by Western civilisation.

The trigger for this latest round of discontent was the news that after six months of talks with the [Ramsay Centre](#) for Western Civilisation – whose stated purpose is “to advance education by promoting studies and discussion of Western civilisation” – the ANU has decided to [pull out from its partnership](#) to offer a Bachelor of Arts in Western Civilisation.

In a letter to former prime minister John Howard, the chairman of the Ramsay Centre’s board, ANU vice-chancellor Brian Schmidt stated that it had decided to withdraw because “the autonomy with which our university needs to approve and endorse a new program of study is not compatible with a sponsored program of the type required by the Centre”.

Despite the fact that the curriculum had nearly been finalised with the approval of both parties, Schmidt implied that the issue was essentially one of control about the curriculum’s content.

The truth is, however, that members of both the National Tertiary Education Union and the Australian National University Student Association did not want there to be any curriculum at all. The ANU’s rejection of a Bachelor of Arts in Western Civilisation is simply the latest proof that the concept of Western Civilisation has gone from being just deeply unfashionable to beyond the pale, among many academics in Australian universities.

Irrational antipathy

In the meantime, ANU is happy to accept donations for its thriving Centre for Arab and Islam Studies. Its rejection of the Ramsay Centre’s generous offer simply confirms academia’s profound and irrational antipathy towards its own civilisation.

As published in the Institute of Public Affairs audit *The Rise of Identity Politics: An Audit of History Teaching in 2017*, the substance of Western civilisation is simply not being taught in our



universities. Instead, undergraduates are being offered a version of the past looked at exclusively through the narrow lens of class, gender and race.

Last year the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Newcastle stated that Western Civilisation is “past its use-by date because, quite simply, it does not reflect the diversity of the classroom”. The dean is part of a coterie of academics who believe that Western civilisation is too white a unit of study for non-white students and thus there is no place for it within the confines of the university.

It is not surprising, therefore, that collaboration between the Ramsay Centre and ANU was rejected by some academics.

While no one these days would seriously argue that Western civilisation, or any civilisation for that matter, has been perfect, this does not mean that it should be ignored or discarded. The history of Western civilisation naturally has both good and bad aspects, and it is vital that we understand both. As British historian Niall Ferguson points out, “as is true of all great civilisations, that of the West was Janus-faced; capable of nobility and yet also capable of turpitude”.

Western civilisation is unique because it acknowledges rather than ignores its own “turpitude” and learns, or at least endeavours to learn, from it. It is constantly moving forward, examining itself and adapting itself to the passage of time. It has a remarkable ability to take the best and absorb from other civilisations. If it were a person, it would be adventurous and open-minded, rather than insular and bigoted.

But while other civilisations have claims to particular virtues and achievements – as well as their own failures and horrors – there are aspects of Western civilisation that have [universal importance](#) because they give the human race (even imperfectly) rights and freedoms which apply to all. They are part of a world heritage.

Christian foundations

These rights and freedoms are neither confined physically nor geographically, nor are they available only to certain groups. Its Christian foundations placed the individual at the centre, and gave us the notion of equality of man and individual dignity.

Through a combination of circumstance and luck, it has established ideas and institutions that manage to simultaneously practise and protect, even imperfectly, what are the general beliefs and aspirations of all people and cultures. The liberal values of equality before the law, freedom of speech, property rights and the economic foundations of modern prosperity are aspired to by people around the globe.

Western civilisation has also given the world inquiry, rationalism, the scientific mind, and the empiricism of the scientific revolution. It has combined the science and technology, in accord with



social ideals, to improve our material condition with modern medicine, electrical power, communication and so on. No other civilisation has done quite so much for the world, yet no other civilisation is as difficult to defend because of its very amorphousness.

ANU should look to the University of Colombia in the US. Every undergraduate, irrespective of their degree, is required to take "The Core Curriculum" which includes courses in the "Masterpieces of Western Literature and Philosophy", "Contemporary Civilisation in the West" and "Masterpieces of Western Art".

We should lament the fact that academics at ANU are depriving future generations of students in this country the priceless opportunity to benefit from the knowledge, wisdom and follies of Western civilisation.

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Original Link:

<https://www.afr.com/opinion/columnists/anu-sacrifices-western-civilisation-on-altar-of-leftist-warriors-20180607-h112qa>

Originally published in:

Australian Financial Review