

KEY PROFESSION

The History of the Association of
University Teachers

Harold Perkin

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HAROLD PERKIN

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The History of the Association of University Teachers

Harold Perkin

*Professor of Social History
University of Lancaster*



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To the Memory of
ROBERT DOUGLAS LAURIE
Founder of the A.U.T.,
First President 1919–20, and
Honorary General Secretary, 1920–53,
whose creative ability,
dedication, modesty and charm
shine through the records



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*Borwicks,
Caton,
Lancaster*

HAROLD PERKIN
January 1969

Chapter I

The Demise and Resurrection of a Profession

University teaching is the key profession of the twentieth century. In a world increasingly dominated by the professional expert, on whose competence, reliability and integrity not merely the functioning of our complex industrial society but the very survival of civilization, if not of the human race itself, has come to depend, university teachers have become the educators and selectors of the other professions. Under whatever name we try to describe modern society in the 'developed' countries of East and West – 'managerialism', 'meritocracy', 'capitalism tempered by competitive education', 'socialism modified by bureaucracy', or, as I should prefer to call it *tout court*, 'professional society' – the defining characteristic which distinguishes it from the 'undeveloped' world is the organized application of trained intelligence. Not only are university teachers themselves the embodiment, which is not to say the monopolists, of trained intelligence and the competitive education on which it rests, but they are, in the words of one of the rare sociological studies of this most public and yet least studied of professions, 'the custodians of the selection process'.¹

Nor is their influence confined to those they themselves personally educate, intra-murally or through extra-mural classes. Through the graduates they produce for service in the schools, colleges, central and local government, hospitals, law courts, and all the other institutions of modern society,

pretty well every person in the country is moulded, directly or indirectly, by university training.²

1 A. H. Halsey and Martin Trow, 'A Study of the British University Teachers' (unpublished interim report, 1967, kindly lent to me by Dr. Halsey), chap. ii, p. 35.

2 Kenneth Urwin, 'Presidential Address', *Universities Review*, 1959, XXXII. 35.

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And through the direct application of trained intelligence in what is, too narrowly, called research they not only conserve by reappraising and in a real sense recreating for their own generation the inherited knowledge and the high culture which distinguish civilization from barbarism, but consolidate and extend that knowledge and culture by new discovery and fresh synthesis. Indeed, it is not too much to say that, in this century and for the future, the universities are the growth points of new knowledge, the leading shoots of intellectual culture, and the institutionalization of innovation in the arts, in pure science and even, to an increasing extent, in the technologies, both science-based and social.

It has not always been so. The rise of the university teacher to this key role in the reproduction of society and in its mastery of the physical and social environment is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Until little more than a hundred years ago the universities of England, if not of Scotland, were peripheral institutions, chiefly finishing schools for young gentlemen of the landed aristocracy and gentry, and, since the private tutor and the grand tour provided a superior and more relevant education, they were not essential even for them. If eighteenth-century Oxford and Cambridge were concerned at all with professional education, it was with the education of the clergy, and only the Anglican clergy, and was not even for them obligatory. Other professions were in theory catered for, notably the law and medicine, and in the latter case incorporation as an M.A. of one of the two ancient universities was a prerequisite for the diploma of the Royal College of Physicians;¹ but in practice the universities were irrelevant to professional training. The physicians were a small minority of medical practitioners, and many of them licentiates, educated in Scotland or abroad, or incorporated at Oxford or Cambridge after a nominal residence and payment of a fee. The surgeons and apothecaries who were the bulk of the medical profession were trained chiefly by apprenticeship to existing practitioners, as indeed were the vast majority of other professional men, barristers, attorneys and solicitors, surveyors, architects, and so on, whose training was in no way distinguished by contemporaries from that of any other occupation, from a

¹ Under an Act of 1676 – cf. Charles Newman, *The Evolution of Medical Education in the 19th Century* (Oxford, 1957), p. 7.

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banker, merchant or insurance underwriter to a tailor, potter or pin-maker.¹

Before the reforms of the early nineteenth century, in fact, it is doubtful whether there was a university teaching profession in any meaningful sense, at least in England. At Oxford and Cambridge the dons – strictly, the fellows of the colleges – were not, except occasionally and by accident, permanent members of a profession with a recognizable function and an articulated career structure. They were privileged but for the most part temporary members of a corporate, self-perpetuating, property-owning society, enjoying their ‘dividends’ in return for the moral rather than intellectual supervision of a small number of mostly wealthy young men only slightly younger than themselves. With few exceptions they were all in holy orders, and since, short of becoming master of the college, they could not marry without resigning their fellowships, most of them, like Parson Woodforde the diarist, sometime fellow of New College, Oxford, were filling in time while they waited their turn for presentation to a college living in the Church.² Only the confirmed and unambitious bachelor, the dedicated scholar, or the university politician with his eye on the mastership, had any notion of remaining in the university for life. Whether he did so or not, the fellow’s duties were light to the point of transparency, and almost completely voluntary. He could devote himself to learning, which still meant, in spite of the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution, chiefly the reading and exegesis of Aristotle and the fathers of the early Christian Church, but he was under no obligation to do so. If he were additionally a tutor at Oxford or a supervisor at Cambridge, he was paid to keep an eye on a small group of undergraduates, to talk to them occasionally and suggest what they might read, and, if the student wished to work, to listen now and then to a paper, an essay or a Greek or Latin composition in prose or verse. If he became a professor, he might lecture if he wished, but with a few exceptions like Sir William Blackstone the professors did not wish, and there was no one who had the power and wished to make them do so. Except for the strings of

¹ Cf. R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (1747), *passim*.

² James Woodforde, *The Diary of a Country Parson, 1758–1802* (World’s Classics, 1949); Woodforde was presented to a New College living in 1774, but remained a bachelor.

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questions and answers repeated parrot-fashion into which the virile and exacting medieval disputation had degenerated, there were no examinations, until Cambridge instituted the (purely voluntary) Mathematical Tripos in 1747 and Oxford the (equally voluntary) Public Examination Statute of 1800.¹

As for research in anything like the modern sense, that was not the university's function. As late as the 1850's Newman, though representing the conservative side of the debate on university reform, could still claim (with etymological inaccuracy) that a university was 'a place of *teaching universal knowledge*' and that research was the preserve of scientific academies like the Royal Society and the Antiquarian Society and of self-dedicated individuals like Bacon and Cavendish:

To discover and to teach are distinct functions; they are also distinct gifts, and are not commonly found in the same person. He, too, who spends his day in dispensing his existing knowledge to all corners is unlikely to have either leisure or energy to acquire new. . . . The great discoveries in chemistry and electricity were not made in universities. Observatories are more frequently out of universities than in them, and even when within their bounds need have no moral connexion with them. Porson had no classes; Elmsley lived a good part of his life in the country. I do not say that there are no great examples the other way . . . ; still I think it must be allowed on the whole that, while teaching involves external engagements, the natural home for experiment and speculation is retirement.²

No doubt by then Newman was out of touch with what universities were becoming – and there is little wonder that he failed as Rector of the new Catholic University of Ireland – but he was right about the preceding two centuries or more. If the universities, through the persons of Grocyn, Colet and Erasmus and through Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley, had played a part in the Renaissance and the Reformation, they had had little to do with the Scientific and still less with the Industrial Revolution. Trinity College, Cambridge, had offered house-room to Newton, though even he, it is said, had worked out his main discoveries before he returned as a fellow.³ Glasgow University had lent

1 Cf. Albert Mansbridge, *The Older Universities of Oxford and Cambridge* (1923), esp. chap. vi.

2 J. H. Newman, *The Idea of a University* (1873, Image books ed., 1959), pp. 7, 10–11.

3 Mansbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

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working space to James Watt to save him from the restrictive regulations of the City Corporation.¹ Apart from him, almost the only inventor connected with a university was the Rev. Edmund Cartwright, sometime fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and inventor of the power loom, a wool-combing machine, a precursor of the bicycle and even a form of internal combustion engine; but he resigned his fellowship to marry an heiress long before he turned his mind to mechanical invention.² Scientific and technological research had been left to rich individuals like Henry Cavendish and the Earl of Dundonald or to working craftsmen like James Hargreaves of the spinning jenny and Samuel Crompton of the mule. Indeed, the universities' indifference to research had led to the foundation of a whole series of research institutions – Newman's academies – from the Royal Society, which through Sir Robert Boyle's air-pump experiments and Thomas Savery's steam pump provided a direct link with Newcomen's steam engine, through the Society of Arts, which offered prizes for every kind of invention from the measurement of longitude to the spinning of textiles, down to the Royal Institution, which employed and fostered the experiments of Humphrey Davy and Michael Faraday. The very existence of these institutions was proof that the universities did not consider scientific research their business.

It is often claimed that the four Scottish universities, with their powerful professoriates and medical schools, were an exception to the neglect of teaching and research which characterized their English counter-parts, and to some extent they were. The powerful eighteenth-century Scottish historical school of philosophy which embraced such European-renowned figures as Adam Ferguson, Francis Hutcheson, Dugald Stewart, Adam Smith and John Millar, and which was the original fountain of classical economics, utilitarian philosophy and, some would claim, of modern sociology, was in marked contrast to the bumbling Aristotelianism of Oxford and Cambridge; while Scottish medical education, reorganized on Dutch lines in the early eighteenth century by the first Professor Monro, left that in England standing.³

¹ Samuel Smiles, *Lives of the Engineers* (1866 ed.), IV. 105–6.

² *Dictionary of National Biography*, IX. 221f.

³ Cf. R. L. Meek, 'The Scottish Contribution to Marxist Sociology', in John Saville, ed., *Democracy and the Labour Movement* (1954); C. Newman, *op cit.*, pp. 12–13.

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And certainly the Scottish universities preserved enough of the medieval and Continental tradition of the academic profession to be the main channel of its revival in the nineteenth century. Yet their flourishing state can be exaggerated and misunderstood, since their principal function was to provide the secondary education which in England was provided by the grammar and public schools. As *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* said of the largest of them in 1823,

The University of Glasgow is composed of two things; first, a school where boys from twelve years of age up to sixteen or seventeen, are instructed in the elements of Classical learning – for they do not know even the *alphabet* of the Greek tongue when they are matriculated – and also, in the first elements of Mathematics, Logic, Ethics, etc.; and secondly, of an institution in which lectures are delivered on Medicine, Law, and Theology for the benefit of those of rather riper years. . . . The boys who attend the school wear red frieze gowns – and miserable filthy little urchins the far greater part of them are. To dream of comparing them with the boys of Eton, or Westminster, or Winchester, or Harrow, either in regard to appearance, or manners, or what is of higher importance than all, in regard to SCHOLARSHIP, would be about as absurd, as it would be to compare a Spouting Club in Cheapside with the British House of Commons.¹

No doubt the admirable Scottish parochial schools and cheap university education provided poor boys of talent like James Mill and Thomas Carlyle with a ladder to fame and modest fortune, but the second step was not quite so high as it has been made out to be; while, as the careers of Richard Porson the great classicist, John Shakespear the orientalist, or even Stephen Duck ‘the thrasher-poet’ show, a ladder for the intelligent poor was not wholly absent in England.² It led less often to the university because the university was less obviously the field for exercising or rewarding talent or for training for a useful career.

It would be easy but irrelevant to blame the sloth and indolence of eighteenth-century Oxford and Cambridge. Society gets the universities it wants and deserves, and the two English universities were the creatures and expressions of an older, pre-industrial,

¹ ‘Vindiciae Gaelicae’, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 1823, XIII. 94.

² *Dictionary of National Biography*, XVI. 89f., XLVI. 154f., LI. 345f.; R. G. Furnivall, ‘Stephen Duck, the Wiltshire Phenomenon, 1705–56’, *Cambridge Journal*, 1953, VI. 8f.

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aristocratic society which is difficult for us, reared in a modern, post-industrial, meritocratic one, to understand. It was a hierarchical society based on property and patronage, in which men found their place according to their wealth, preferably unearned and therefore leisured wealth, or that of their friends, relations and patrons.¹ The ideal citizen of that society was the leisured country gentleman, with time and resources to devote to any activity which he valued, from sport, drinking or wenching to agriculture, literature or even science and invention; while the next-best thing to be was a client of such a patron, a Newcomen, Coleridge or Faraday, with the talent to make better use than he himself of his resources. Leisured patrons and their clients then supplied most of the cultural and scientific activity now catered for by universities, while the universities had a different function, to provide, along with the public schools and private tutors which in turn were supplied from the universities, a common cultural background for the leisured ruling class and for their chief lieutenants in the moral control of society, the Anglican clergy.

If the wealth, leisure and political power of the ruling aristocracy and the status and influence of the clergy were based on the ownership, inherited or acquired, individual or quasi-corporate, of land, so indeed were the power, wealth and autonomy of the universities and of the colleges which composed them. They were property-owning corporations, with the same 'right over their own wealth, to use it or abuse it',² as individual landowners. And if the individual dons were not the heirs but the appointed incumbents of official property, so were the bishops, deans, the parsons with their 'freeholds', and all the great officers of state. In that property-conscious society even office was defined by Blackstone, the undisputed authority, in proprietary terms, as 'a *right* to exercise a public or private employment and to take the fees and emoluments thereunto belonging.'³ In short, university dons were leisured gentlemen by appointment rather than inheritance, and, saving the rule of celibacy, were as free to do what they pleased with their time and

1 For a fuller account of 'the old society' before the Industrial Revolution see Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880* (1969), chap. ii.

2 W. Vincent, *Sermons* (ed. R. Nares, 1817), I. 281f.

3 Quoted by Emmeline W. Cohen, *Growth of the British Civil Service, 1780-1939* (1941), p. 211n. (my italics).

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resources, to teach or not to teach, to work or not to work, as the rest of the leisured but not necessarily idle class.

This view of the university don's role and function, so strange – and enviable – to a modern university teacher's eyes, was peculiarly that society, and could not survive its demise in the new industrial world of the nineteenth century. Nor for that matter was it older than the society, but had grown up with it as it emerged from the still older society of medieval England, when property was still contingent rather than absolute, a responsibility rather than an unfettered privilege, and office was a charge and a burden rather than an endowment. The story of that transition, in which the English landlords beat the peasants, the Church and the Crown to turn lordship into ownership and the institutions of Church and State into instruments of their power, is told elsewhere.¹

The universities were only one, and not the most significant, of those instruments, but they illustrate the change as well as any. The two English universities had grown up in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to meet the needs not of the State or the ruling class but of the Church and society. The Church needed trained, literate clerks, at least for its higher positions, society was developing the need for lawyers and medical men, and, perhaps most pertinent of all, 'poor scholars' from every level of society were crowding to the new, spontaneous centres of speculative thought and learning which, under the name *studium generale*, grew up around the cathedrals, of, most notably, Bologna and Paris. Paris under the influence of the dialectical scholasticism founded by Peter Abelard became famous for theology and philosophy, Bologna under a still older tradition for Roman Law. Both acquired the name of *universitas*, which had nothing to do with 'universal learning' but was merely one of the many medieval words for a would-be-permanent group or society of men organized for a common purpose, and cognate with the guilds of merchants and craftsmen which emerged at much the same time in most of the towns of Europe. Indeed, the parallel is still closer and embraces the stages and some of the nomenclature of membership. The students, scholars or undergraduates were the apprentices or tyros of the guild of learning, the bachelors of arts the bachelors, journeymen or yeomen (cf. the bachelors' or

1 See Perkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-5, 64-7.

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yeomen guilds attached to some of the crafts), and the masters of arts the masters, those qualified to set up on their own as teachers of others. There was an important difference in organization between the two: while Paris, like most of the guilds, was controlled by the masters, Bologna was controlled by the students, who employed, paid and could dismiss the professors.

Although the influence of Bologna can be traced in an educated form in the professoriate and the elective rectorship of the Scottish universities, the English ones followed the pattern of Paris, of which in fact they were offshoots, in the troubled times of the late twelfth and the early thirteenth century when the English kings' relations with the Papacy and the kings of France made it prudent for English scholars to remain in England, first, after the expulsion of English scholars from France in 1167, at Oxford and then, when internal quarrels caused some of them to migrate once more, at Cambridge. At first, in the tradition of the medieval schools, there were no colleges, but simply groups of students in cheap lodgings or later in halls under a master, and gathering where they could to listen to the acknowledged *magisters* expound the seven liberal arts. As time went on the course of studies became formalized, successful disputations (examinations in the form of debates with fellow students) in the *trivium* – the first three liberal arts of grammar, logic and rhetoric – conferring the 'degree' or status of bachelor, or journeyman-teacher, and in the *quadrivium* – the other four, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music – that of master of arts, the full licence to teach. In fact, the newly qualified masters were compelled to teach for at least a year, and as regent (that is, teaching) masters of less than three years' standing were in charge of the education of the unqualified scholars and bachelors. After this spell of repaying their debt to learning by teaching, they were free to continue their studies in the postgraduate faculties of theology, law and medicine, to become in six to twelve more years doctors of their subjects.²

It will be seen that the medieval university was thus concerned entirely with professional education. The students, undergraduate and postgraduate, were in process of acquiring, first, a

1 Cf. Hastings Rashdall, *Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages* (1936 ed.), esp. I, chaps. iv and v.

2 Cf. Mansbridge, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

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licence to teach and, second, a licence to practise law, medicine or theology. In a society divided mainly into feudal lords, peasants and a few merchants and craftsmen, the value of the learned (i.e. literate) professions to Church and State was well recognized: they were the only source of trained intelligence and intellectual labour for every purpose from the curing of wealthy bodies and the saving of complicated souls to the documentary preservation of great estates and the civil administration of Church and realm. King John conferred special privileges on Oxford in 1214, and Henry III on Cambridge in 1231. The latter in 1229 attempted to seduce the whole school of Paris to settle in England – ‘We will assign to you whatever cities, boros and towns you may choose, and in liberty and tranquillity. We will do all such things becoming to give you pleasure as shall suffice you and be pleasing to God’ – and two years later, in one of the first recorded attempts to stop the brain-drain, ordered the grasping lodging-house keepers of Cambridge not to drive away the university by exorbitant rents:

It is well known to you that a multitude of scholars flow together to our City of Cambridge for the sake of study from various places at home and abroad; which We hold right pleasing and acceptable for that from thence no small profit comes to our kingdom, and honour to Ourself; and above all you, amongst whom the students have their daily life, should rejoice and be glad. But We have heard that in letting your lodgings you are so heavy and burdensome to the scholars dwelling amongst you, that unless you behave yourselves more measurably and modestly towards them in this matter of your exactions they must leave our city, and having abandoned the University, depart from our land, which We in no respect desire.¹

The Pope recognized Oxford as a *studium generale* in 1296, and Cambridge in 1318, and at various times granted them legal privileges beyond those of any other corporation in Church or State. Henry VIII refused to extend the dissolution of the monasteries to the colleges:

I tell you, sir, that I judge no land in England better bestowed than that which is given to our Universities, for by their maintenance our realm shall be well-governed when we be dead and rotten.²

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9 and 10n.

² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

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In Queen Elizabeth's day John Lyly still emphasized their professional character:

the learning of them neyther lyeth in the free stones of the one, nor the fine streates of the other, for out of them both do dayly procede men of great wisdom, to rule in the common wealth, of learning to instruct the common people, of all singular kinde of professions to do good to all.¹

By 1580, however, the transition from training centres for the learned professions to finishing schools for young gentlemen was already well under way. Even in the thirteenth century the sons of feudal lords, seeking intellectual excitement rather than the military pursuits of chivalry, the tournament and the crusade, had mingled with the poor scholars at the universities:

Gentlemen's sons while young they be
Are sent to France to get a degree.

The colleges which from the fourteenth century had gradually taken over from the halls and regent masters the accommodation and most of the teaching of the undergraduates, though normally confined by poverty clauses in their statutes to poor scholars, began to admit 'gentleman commoners' as paying, and ultimately privileged, guests.² By the late fifteenth century newly-founded colleges such as Magdalen, Oxford (1482), provided in their statutes for *commensales*, 'the sons of noble and worthy persons, friends of the College,' and with St. John's and Corpus Christi, Oxford, in 1516 and Trinity, Cambridge, in 1546 provision for gentleman commoners or pensioners became the rule.³ With the Reformation and the Tudor secularization of society and politics came a veritable invasion by the landed classes, seeking the intellectual equipment and the social cachet of the educated man of affairs, the new, administratively competent courtier and non-clerical statesman. 'Beginning some time in the reign of Henry VIII, the sons of the titled nobility swarm into those citadels of clerkly learning, the English universities.'⁴ Bishop Latimer complained in a famous sermon in 1549 that 'there be

1 John Lyly, *Euphues* (1580), part II.

2 Mansbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

3 Kenneth Charlton, *Education in Renaissance England* (1965), p. 133.

4 J. H. Hexter, 'The Education of the Aristocracy in the Renaissance', *Journal of Modern History*, 1950, XXII. 4.

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none but great men's sons in Colleges and their fathers look not to have them preachers'.¹ By the end of the century the numbers of undergraduates had risen to over 2,000, by 1620 to 3,000 – more than at any other period before the twentieth century – while at Oxford gentlemen's sons outnumbered plebeians (*filii plebei*) by six to five.² In the 1593 Parliament over half the M.P.s had been to the university or the Inns of Court or both.³

It was not merely that the landed class had taken over the universities for their own purposes, the education of Renaissance gentlemen and the training of secular politicians. They had also distorted their whole pattern of pedagogy. The new and increasingly predominant type of undergraduate showed little or no interest in the traditional exercises and disputations of the scholar. Indeed, 'the vast majority of gentleman-commoners and pensioners stayed only for a year or two,' and only a small minority took even the bachelor's degree.⁴ Their failure to attend lectures and exercises encouraged their teachers, who were now almost automatically of inferior social status to most of their pupils, in that neglect of teaching to which they were traditionally prone. The statutory lecturing of the regent masters and their supervision of students' disputations and orations fell away. Attempts were made to revive them, and to compel the attendance of students, who stubbornly insisted, as at Oxford in 1599, on their right to pay the fine instead. In their place two other institutions arose, both ultimately of prime importance to the academic profession: endowed professorships, readerships and lectureships like the Lady Margaret Divinity Lectureships (1497) permanently endowed only in 1502, and Henry VIII's Regius Chairs of Divinity, Greek, Hebrew, Civil Law, and Physic (1540); and college lecturers and tutors appointed under the statutes of the newer colleges and the revised statutes of old ones. But the habit of non-lecturing infected the new professors and readers within a generation or two of their foundation. Archbishop Parker told the Queen in 1570 that 'in your university of Cambridge not two in the whole are able or willing to read the Lady Margaret Lecture', and Archbishop Whitgift in 1602 similarly

1 Hugh Latimer, *Sermons* (Parker Society ed., Cambridge, 1845), p. 179.

2 Charlton, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

3 J. E. Neale, *The Elizabethan House of Commons* (1949), p. 303.

4 Charlton, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

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complained that 'of those who should read four times a week some read not four times a year'. At Oxford in 1576 fines were laid down for failure to lecture but, witness the frequent repetitions of the order, without success. As for the college tutors, although there were some assiduous ones like Robert Norgate of Corpus Christi College and John Preston of Queen's, Cambridge, they do not seem to have been able to make much impression on their wealthier students.¹ As William Harrison put it in 1577, the colleges

were erected by their founders at the first only for poor men's sons, whose parents were not able to bring them up to learning; but now they have the least benefit of them, by reason the rich do so encroach upon them . . . being placed, most of them [the richer sort] study little other than histories, tables, dice and trifles. . . . Besides this, being for the most part either gentlemen or rich men's sons they oft bring the university into much slander. For standing upon their reputation and liberty, they ruffle and roist it out, exceeding in apparel and banting riotous company (which draweth them from their books into another trade), and for excuse, when they are charged with breach of all good order, think it sufficient to say that they be gentlemen, which grieveth many not a little.²

A decree of 1578 for 'the restoring of the ancient modesty of students, scholars and all others that shall be accounted the same' summed up the change that had taken place in an institution once dedicated to the training of poor scholars for the professions, which,

especially by suffering of sundry young men, being the children of gentlemen of wealth at their coming to the same university, contrary to the ancient and comely usage . . . shall become rather a storehouse or a staple of prodigal, wasteful, riotous, unlearned and insufficient persons to serve or rather to unserved the necessity of the realm both in the church and civil policy.³

The last stage in the decline of the ancient universities as centres of learning and professional education came with the final triumph of the landed class over the Crown at the Civil War and Revolution of the seventeenth century. Like other perpetual

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-3, 148.

² William Harrison, *Description of England* (1577, ed. L. Withington, 1876), pp. 252-3.

³ Charlton, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

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corporations the universities and colleges took their stand, initially in self-defence against royal intervention (including the catholicizing intervention of James II), on the inviolability of their charters and statutes. Many of them, like Magdalen College, Oxford, which had suffered – temporarily – for its opposition to James II, required their fellows to take an oath on election ‘not to seek for or to accept any change in the Founder’s Statutes’.¹ Like other corporations, of cities, boroughs, guilds and companies, too, this had the effect of turning them into self-perpetuating oligarchies, answerable to no one but themselves. The result was that torpor, indolence and complacency which characterized not merely the universities but most established and privileged institutions in eighteenth-century England. Great scholars like Bentley and Porson continued to work, though they enjoyed their lucrative rights and neglected their teaching like the rest, while there were still tutors who took the pastoral care of undergraduates seriously. But for the most part they resembled ‘the monks of Magdalen’ amongst whom Edward Gibbon spent ‘the fourteen months the most idle and unprofitable of my whole life’: ‘decent easy men, who supinely enjoyed the gifts of the founder.’² Under their regime even the numbers of undergraduates, which had risen to as much as 3,000 in each of them under the early Stuarts, shrank, as the private tutor and the grand tour of Europe replaced the non-learning and debauchery of the universities as the ideal education for a gentleman, by 1775 to 759 at Oxford and 396 at Cambridge.³ The declension of the profession into a privileged caste of self-perpetuating property-holders was complete.

The rise of a modern profession of university teaching in the nineteenth century, though a revolution in itself, was therefore a revival rather than a new departure, a rebirth rather than a genesis, a resurrection rather than a new creation. It took two forms, both of which left their mark on the profession in the shape of two distinct ideals which are still struggling for ascendancy. On the one side there was the creation of alternatives to Oxford and Cambridge in London and the great and growing provincial cities, which borrowed from Scotland and the Continent, where

1 H. A. Wilson, *Magdalen College* p. 252.

2 Edward Gibbon, *Autobiography* (World’s Classics, 1907), pp. 36, 40.

3 Mansbridge, *op. cit.*, p. xxn.

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it had been kept alive, the professional principle of a powerful lecturing and researching professoriate. On the other, there was the reform, partly self-generated, partly imposed from without, of Oxford and Cambridge themselves, which revived another and no less professional principle, that of the working college tutor, which goes back beyond the college system to the regent masters of the earliest days, whose 'catechetical lectures' were really tutorials and who were solely responsible for the pastoral care of the undergraduates. Both forms appealed to the professionalism of university teaching, the professorial to the principle of expertise and, ultimately, of a hierarchy of experts, which characterizes all modern professions; the tutorial to the principle of fiduciary service to the client (in this case the student and, perhaps, his family and the community) – which, indeed, is not absent from the professorial tradition – and, more challenging to the latter, the principle of equality not so much of expertise as of voice and status amongst qualified practitioners. Both were to operate, of course, in both types of university, the ancient collegiate where the professorial tradition – and, more challenging to the latter, intensive form, and the provincial or civic (including London, which in university matters was not initially metropolitan) where the tutorial tradition, in so far as it failed to inhere in the equality of the professors who at first comprised the whole teaching staff, crept in by the back door in the demand of their ill-paid and underprivileged assistants for a living wage and a share in the running of their universities which was to play so large a part in the origins of the Association of University Teachers. That the two principles were not totally incompatible is shown by the very foundation of the A.U.T. as a professional association embracing both professors and non-professorial tutors and lecturers, and (eventually) both Oxbridge and Redbrick. But that they make uneasy bedfellows is shown by the overwhelming support for the A.U.T. in non-collegiate universities where, paradoxically, the power of the professoriate both fosters its professionalism and provokes a demand for its egalitarianism, in contrast with its weakness in collegiate universities where, equally paradoxically, the strength of the gild principle of the equality of the qualified masters makes the A.U.T. seem less relevant.

To the mutually fertilizing contributions of these two professional traditions to the origins and development of the A.U.T. we

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shall return. Meanwhile, the revival of university teaching as a profession in the nineteenth century was not an isolated phenomenon, but one aspect of the general growth of professional expertise and the application of trained intelligence which accompanied as both cause and effect the Industrial Revolution. That Revolution was more than a transformation of industry. It was a revolution in human productivity which increased by a multiple, rather than a fraction, both the number of human beings who could be carried on a given area of land and their living standard or consumption per head of goods and services. It implied as its instrument a revolution in social organization, not merely in the creation of factories, mines, banks, commodity and stock exchanges, and other large-scale economic institutions, but in the increased scale and complexity of towns, local and central government, hospitals, churches, schools and, indeed, universities.¹ To provide the expert services for this new and more complex society there emerged a vast range of new or reorganized professions with their own professional institutions, beginning with the Institution of Civil Engineers, 1818, and the Law Society, 1825.² This development began, as in the decay of professional training there it had to, outside the universities, and what training was provided had to be supplied by the traditional means of individual pupillage or, as in the case of the Law Society from 1836 or the Pharmaceutical Society from 1842, by lectures and examinations offered by the professional bodies themselves.³ But since professional bodies have other functions than training, are always short of funds, and can at best only deal with the committed student who already possesses the necessary general education, there arose a public demand for institutions of higher education to prepare either specifically, as in the case of the provincial medical schools, or more generally, as in the case of the Dissenting academies and their successors the provincial scientific and commercial colleges of the early Victorian age, for the professions and business.

The effect upon the universities of this proliferation of professions and the demand for trained intelligence was twofold. It

¹ See Perkin, *op. cit.*, esp. chaps. i and iv.

² Cf. Geoffrey Millerson, *The Qualifying Professions* (1964), esp. pp. 120-9 and Appendix II, pp. 246f.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-3, 133-4.

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led directly, through the founding of local colleges, to the creation of new universities in most of the great cities; and it led indirectly, through the pressure of public opinion acting both immediately on the dons themselves and via Parliament, to the reform of the old ones. There had of course been many previous attempts to found new universities, beginning with the migrations to Northampton and Stamford in the thirteenth century,¹ but they had all foundered on the opposition of Oxford and Cambridge, backed by ecclesiastical or royal *fiat*. The difference in the nineteenth century was that there arose powerful new classes, the industrial and professional middle classes, who refused to accept the *fiat* of Church and State, and indeed considered Oxford and Cambridge as mere bastions of aristocratic corruption, to be outflanked and/or reformed along with every other organ of aristocratic rule.

For Thomas Campbell, Henry Brougham and the group of middle-class Dissenters, Catholics, Jews and Benthamites who founded London University with the blessing of the Whigs in 1828, the opposition of Oxford, Cambridge, the Church of England and the Tory Government in the person of the Home Secretary, Sir Robert Peel, was simply proof of the political and moral necessity of the institution. As Brougham described the original bill of incorporation to the Radical Sir Francis Burdett in 1825,

It is an event of the greatest moment in my view which will do more to crush bigotry and intolerance than all the Bills either of us will ever see carried, at least until a Reform happens. Accordingly the monasteries [Oxford and Cambridge] are loud in their howlings, but it all won't do.²

They went ahead, despite Parliamentary rejection of the bill, with the 'Godless college in Gower Street', appointed a group of professors on the Scottish model (half of them Scots), and within five years enrolled over 500 students, living mainly at home and paying a fraction of the fees charged at Oxford and Cambridge. The education offered was consciously geared to the needs of the professions. Chairs were established in medicine, jurisprudence, political economy, chemistry, natural philosophy (physics), as

¹ Mansbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 31; W. H. G. Armytage, *Civic Universities* (1955), chap. ii.

² M. W. Patterson, *Sir Francis Burdett and his Times* (1931), II. 554-5.