THE IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SOME PRECEPTS AND PRACTICE

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The relatively recent publication of A. B. Cobban's *The Mediaeval Universities: their development and influence* is timely reminder of the continuity of tradition and purpose between the early fourth to the middle ages, and the universities of the twelfth century. As Cobban has observed, "Universities in the twelfth century, whatever their deviations from traditional norms and alleged innovations, are still the lineal descendants of mediaeval archetypes, and they continue to perpetuate a competitive degree system and habits of ceremonial procedure, which, however disguised, are fundamentally derived from the mediaeval universities."

This derivative link between mediaeval and modern universities was again highlighted recently in the Patridge Report on post-secondary education in Western Australia (1976). That Report, distinguishing the international links of Australian universities with universities from the localities which characterised colleges of advanced education, emphasised, inter alia, the nature of the international organisation of which they formed a part. This claim is perhaps best understood through a historical perspective which goes beyond a passive 'presentist' acceptance of more efficient air travel as being the main factor in this trans-oceanic transmission. It may be helpful, therefore, to examine the origins of the university and to see how the idea of a university in the mediaeval universities was again reflected in our modern universities, at least in its content and function.

The Origins of the University

Despite the assumption by the German existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers, in his *The Idea of a University*, that the university is "Greek in origin", presumably dating back, in his mind, to Plato's Academy, *Lyceum* or to the University of the 4th century B.C., there is no evidence to support this. There is no organic continuity from these ancient institutions. When referring to the mediaeval university of the twelfth century, with its university organisation and power structure which has remained substantially the same since then.

The origins of the university are obscure but we can be certain that they were mediaeval. The term 'universitas' was not in general use to describe the centre of learning in the Roman cathedral schools till the fifteenth century. Derived from the Latin 'universitas', it originally meant any independent corporate body such as a guild; the use of the term was first applied to the scholars was, therefore, achieved by accident and has nothing to do with mediaeval tradition, which observation has some bearing on J. H. Newman's ideas. *Studium generale* was rather the term usually applied to learned communities of scholars between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. By the fourteenth century, these centres were generally known as universities. The existence of 'studium generale' allowed the development of a tradition of learning in that all knowledge forms one whole, a notion which Karl Jaspers re-examines in his *The Idea of a University* when he declares:

> "There is nothing which is not worth knowing about an art which does not involve a term of knowledge. Only by uniting these various new lines of study can the university do justice to them."

The university is concerned with knowledge and the best possible knowledge; it is concerned with ethics and morality.

To return to the university of knowledge, i.e. the wholeness of it, this notion is subsumed by Newman's concept of liberal education upon which he expounds at some length.

For Newman, liberal education was to be equated with the 'enlargement of the mind': which "never views any part of the extended subject matter of knowledge without recollecting that it is but a part." This, of course, is an oblique attack on specialization, which is quite definite on the place of specialisation in higher learning in the pupil. In Newman's words, a truly great liberal is one which takes a connected view of old and new, past and present, for another word for knowledge is "whole", and the influence of all these on one another, without which there is no whole, and to which Karl Jaspers refers as the true enlargement of mind.

Liberal education, therefore, is consonant with universal knowledge. Apropos another aspect of his idea of a university in a celebrated passage, Newman epitomises the close student-teacher relationship arising from such teaching when he writes:

> "A university is...the place of science. The children of the knee.

One final point concerning Newman's idea deserves comment, i.e. his insistence on the value of residence. In mid-nineteenth century he adumbrates this particular weakness of English 'Red brick' universities as described by Bruce Truscott, author of *Red Brick University*. Newman, commenting in 1875 said: "I have no doubt having in mind the benefit he gained from his Fellowship at Oriel he writes:

> "Many students...applied to a co-called university which dispensed with residence and tuition supplement and gains degrees to any person who passed an examination in a wide range of subjects, and a university which had no professors or examinations...the one great advantage of young men together for three or four years...I have no hesitation in giving the preference to that university which did nothing."

For Newman, the main concern was the cultivation of the mind. The untrained mind he regarded as an evil which is forged upon us in every railway carriage, in every coffee shop or table d'hotel, or every hired conveyance."

His preoccupation with systematising the thinking of individuals to withstand or reject the inanities of the Press which supplied as always, ready-made opinions. This is a view shared also by the Spanish philosopher Gasset. Newman recognised that "knowledge is capable of being its own end" and as such adopts an Aristotelian position which rejected 'futurist' students concerns with a living. Instead liberal studies — the studies of a freeman or the study of books — are strongly advocated by Newman. In *The Idea of a University* he writes:

> "Liberal education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman...it is simply the cultivation of the intellect, as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence. It would seem that Newman regarded the Victorian cultivated gentleman as the educated man. He seems to be introducing the concept of the courtly academy of the Renaissance period into the university context. Place, Shakespeare, Castiglione and Newman in conjunction!

Newman enlanges on this theme of liberal education when he suggests that the end of liberal education is not mere knowledge but the building of an individual's world view. This notion is very similar to that of J. F. Herbart's concept of education which aimed at building up "a well-balanced, many sided interest" in the pupil. In Newman's words, a truly great liberal is one which takes a connected view of old and new, past and present, for another word for knowledge is "whole", and the influence of all these on one another, without which there is no whole, and to which Karl Jaspers refers as the true enlargement of mind. This is the power of viewing many things as once as one whole.

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Abraham Flexner and Universities American English

Abraham Flexner's Universities American English (Oxford University Press 1930) is generally regarded by educationalists as a second major contribution in the history of ideas concerning the university. In a critical review, Flexner suggests that universities, like all institutions, lie within the relativistic Weltanschauung of their time. Insistently he attaches a subject to the forces of change (in the twentieth century, to democracy and science) he affirms that Oxford of the twentieth century is not Oxford of the eighteenth century—and by implication the Oxford of nineteenth-century Newman.

This temporal relativism is admirably, if unwarily, demonstrated by Flexner himself when in 1920 he writes: "Competition becomes more and more intense for raw materials, for dollars, for pupils."

Flexner, then, establishes both by design and by accident a nature of differing Weltanschauungen in the process of time. For, there was a need to revise the concept of Newman's University which was not eternal as Augustine's City of God. In his analysis of the functions, Flexner perceived four major concerns viz., (a) conservation of knowledge and ideas; (b) the interpretation of knowledge and ideas; (c) the search for truth; (d) the training of students to carry on the University's functions. For Flexner, investigation had to be prior to instruction: advancement before the establishment. If Flexner dissented from Newman on priority between teaching and research, he was in agreement about the necessity of learning for the sake of detachment.

The overriding purpose of Flexner's Modern University was to encourage detached scholarship based on a concentrated and specialised study. Flexner's position is that of the German sociologist, Max Weber, who once wrote: "Man who is not capable of, or so speak, juggling on stilts, and of working himself up into the idea that the fate of his soul depends on whether, shall we say, his conscience about this particular passage in a manuscript is correct—then that man has had his education."

In his concern for research and detached scholarship rather than teaching, Flexner tended to downgrade the function of conservation and knowledge and emphasised instead the extension of knowledge and its application. This almost Deweyan approach to problems was based on his recognition of the unique position of the university as an entity in modern social life and to clear it of confusions. He wrote at a time, it will be recalled, when there was much confusion in society concerning values and the role of the universities in modern democratic life. Flexner's position, on this point, is very similar to that of José Ortega y Gasset who saw in his Mission of the University, the need for the university to step outside its chatterers and pretentious life. Ortega y Gasset wrote: "The university must be open to the whole reality of its time as it must be in the midst of real life and saturated with it."

Only when the university was at one with Society could it have the meritorious values encouraged by the Press.

Flexner, in his call to the universities to wrestle with modern problems, held that modern knowledge, in no way compromised the academic's traditional detachment. In his doctrine of university irrelevance, Flexner provided an alternative to utilitarian nature of the problems to be tackled. He wrote: "The modern university must neither fear the world nor make itself responsible for its conduct."

As he stressed the need for contact, at the same time he stressed the need for detachment from the subject of study. In his quest for 'pure' as opposed to 'applied' studies at the University, Flexner's acrimonious remarks about the university's most of the vocational studies. True it allows faculties of Law and Medicine but he is doubtful about Education (especially if it is concerned with training teachers) and vocation business studies, journalism, domestic 'science' and library science. He felt as though it should be studied in separate vocational schools.

Whilst on the one hand Flexner seeks to exclude technical, vocational and popular education from the university, he himself became as a second faculty in isolated research institutes. In his view research benefits by close contact with, or being within, the university. Flexner's concept of a university, if it would seem, is to a very large extent influenced by the German universities of every nineteenth century with their emphasis on research. Like the German traditions there is in this "liberal model" (for such an approach is utilitarian) an emphasis on flexibility in organization, of open-mindedness to all questions (the Lehrfreiheit of the Victorians) and on the adult as adult (its students become as good as they are regarded as responsible both for their studies and their private life). The Lehrfreiheit and theopen-mindedness to all questions.

Sir William Hamilton from the columns of the Edinburgh Review, Mark Pattison in his Suggestions, and Matthew Arnold in his Schools and Universities on the Continent—all nineteenth century thinkers—shared this Liberal idea of a university with Flexner, the twentieth century thinker. "Bruce Truscott, in his Red Brick University, writing in the 40's, adopts a similar stance to Flexner when he refers to research which should be the chief aim of every university. A. N. Whitehead, of Cambridge and Harvard, even, says 'Shelved, renewed, his Universities and their function' in his The aims of education and other essays, attempted to effect a compromise between Newman and Flexner when he wrote "The universities are schools of education, and the research."

But Flexner, at Hutchinson's request, in his "Justification for a university" that it preserved the connection between knowledge and the forces of modern life. He is the young and the old the imaginative consideration of learning." If Whithead's suggested compromise has been, in the process of development, a third concept.

Clark Kerr and the Idea of Multiversity

In his concept of a multiversity, the American educationist Clark Kerr, writing in 1963, sees this third concept as the responsibility of the "academic cloister of Newman" and the research organism of Abraham Flexner, both of which he felt were outdated.

Another analyst of the situation, Sir Walter Moberly, in his The Crisis in the University (1949) used the aphorism "Christian-Hellenic and Liberal to describe the three models respectively, whilst a third model he describes as the "academic cloister of Newman and the research organism of Abraham Flexner, both of which he felt were outdated.

This lack of culture has, of course, been a source of criticism by José Ortega y Gasset, G. H. Bantock and by F. R. Leavis. In Ortega y Gasset's view the transmission of culture should be the chief mission of the university which according to Bantock would go a long way to combat the insidious pop culture which lies behind the "crisis in consciousness". This pop culture is much evidenced in the blind devotion to noise pollution and the industrious pursuit of the latest, more mediocre, if a Platonic view is taken, against the absorption of the cultural values that Bantock probably had in mind.

In his Decline and Fall of the University idea, the anonymous contributor to the Paper I. "0 (probably Max Beloff), epitomises criticism of this lack of culture when he castigates oxymoronically those, "who insist on the proletarianisation of the universe, the common culture of the anti-culture." But the lack of culture is not the only source of criticism of the modern university. It has been criticised for its strangeness and the Business School which has had a comparatively long existence, has been seen as a separate school. It has been seen as a separate school. As Bantock points out, the methods of this new culture have served only to assert a utilitarian and not in a separate school. As Bantock points out, the methods of this new culture have served only to assert a utilitarian and not a third concept, the Oxford and Cambridge have been accused of "stingy". This is a constant critic of the third model which both Clark Kerr in the U.S.A. and Sir Walter Moberly in Great Britain saw as successor to the University of Newman and Flexner, although antecedents of this pragmatic model go back to the Morrill Act of 1862. If England, particularly Oxford, inspired Newman's concept of a university and Germany Flexner's, the United States of America has been the catalyst for the emergence of this third model. The rise of technology and applied science (vide MIT) and the democratization of the universities vide Berkeley, California) changed the emphasis in the universities even before the second half of the twentieth century. Engineering and Chemistry, which are at the heart of the modern culture are no longer on the periphery of university studies. The next generation of students is interested in the ultimate aim being increased productivity which the recent years of ecological gloom have served only to assert an anti-industrial and not a separate school. As Moberly points out, the methods of this new culture are "applied", critical, analytic and deliberately selective, concentrating only on what can be tested and quantified.

There was considerable optimism which, until recently, pervaded this new culture, early epitomised by Professor J. D. Bernal in his predictions concerning the conquest of space, disease, and even Death. Such an optimism had, until very recently, the force of an ideology or religion.

Contrasting ideas of a University

There is an ontological difference between the organic nature of Flexner's University and the fragmented mechanism of the multiversity. Robert M. Hutchins, in contrast, comments, "the approach to knowledge has lampooned the modern university according to Clark Kerr as "a series of separate schools and departments held together by a central heating system" Such is the price of academic development.

Another major difference affecting ideas of a university is in the clientele who now resort to universities. In nineteenth century Oxford and Cambridge, the clientele were middle class and upper middle class undergraduates, destined for politics, the law or the church, sharing the same ethos with the Oxford and Cambridge donors. In the nineteenth century German universities, although less socially elevated, the students were likely to be in the ranks of the future leaders in the state. In the late twentieth century, on the other hand, there is an egalitarian shift and a difference in the clientele who are generally lacking in culture and who cater to the "general education" market both in the United States and in Europe. This is a constan..."
fates merely vitiate commercial effort; the two are not and suitable bedfellows. Daniel Defoe, in a slightly different context, had much the same idea when he wrote in his The Compleat English Tradesman, Vol. II (1727):

A Wit turned Tradesman! What an inconceivable Part of Nature is to be found in the Composition of direct Contrarieties! HeUpon Strings will hold him, 'tis in vain to look for him amid Company, he's gone in a Moment, instead of Jaunt and Ledger, he runs away to his Virlt and Horse.

The University of the last two decades has both its sponsors and its critics. Amongst the former are to be found Clark Kerr, Karls Jaspers and Lord Robbins; amongst the latter are to be found R. M. Hutchings, V. H. Green; Sir Walter Moberly, Max Beloff; F. R. Leavis and José Ortega y Gasset. In the case of Ortega y Gasset, it would seem that he is attacking at a very early stage (1944) symptoms that others saw perhaps not as clearly at a later stage.

In his Mission of the University (1944) Ortega y Gasset attacked the uncultured average person, "the new barbarian" the professional man, "more learned than ever before, but at the same time more uncultured." For him it is imperative to set up once more in the university, the teaching of the culture, the system of vital ideas which the age has attained. This is the basic function of the University. This is what the university must be above all else."

Lord Bowden, on visiting Australia in 1965, addressed a meeting of the Australian Institute of Political Science in Canberra and made pertinent comments on the function of a university in the twentieth century. In his exhortation to the academic world to engage in the utilitarian function in the service of the State, Bowden emphasised the value of the perquisites available to the academic by such service. He offered confirmation of the dictum that "knowledge is power" thus raising the university to a "curiously privileged position as that of the church in earlier times. On reflection, the parallels between the church in the middle ages and the university in the twentieth century are not without considerable similarity."

(a) Both the Church and the University have been "hijacked" by Wolsey and Henry VIII; Cardinal Richelieu by Louis XIII and Dei Henry Kissinger by Presidents Nixon and Ford.

(b) The twelfth century Church has replaced religious faith of previous centuries.

(c) The University dominates the school system today as the Church dominated education in former times.

(d) Secular reason is pursued in buildings by livery, and if not as magnificent at least as prestigious, as the Gothic cathedrals of the middle ages.

(e) Graduation ceremonies have replaced ordination services; bishops, masters and bachelors have replaced bishops, priests and deacons.

(f) Convocation, partly decayed in secular doctoral robes, is not unlike the Congress of Cardinals — both indulge in colourful archaic dress and engage in equally colourful and archaic ceremonies.

(g) But perhaps imagination runs wild if the university police were to be compared with the Papal Guard!

This article has had a synthetic aim of examining through a historical perspective, the idea of a university. From the time of their obscure medieval beginnings, universities have had a supranational character which today distinguishes them, and largely, from other tertiary institutions. The characteristics of the university, underscored by both Newman and Flexner, are still today an essential thought modified part of university life. The links between the university and society and between the university and the state, however, are continually being forged and strengthened. Such a close relationship makes it ever more necessary to acknowledge the traditional characteristics of a university.

In accordance with historical traditions which have evolved since the twelfth century, it should be recognised that:

(a) local and national demands militate against the universit"s' supranational existence.

(b) if universities were only to be allowed to turn their backs on society and the state, and reside in their proverbial ivory towers and be concerned only with other ivory towers surrounding their death knoll.

(c) utilitarian studies, distinctly banal in character, militate against the universities' purpose of "pure research" and "learning for its own sake."

(d) perhaps such areas of knowledge ought to be studied elsewhere.

Time has come, in view of the growth of Colleges of Advanced Education and their effectiveness in serving society in many 'applied' ways, for a compromise to be effected based on a binary principal in which both types of tertiary institution pursue their intrinsic functions and both make their peculiar contribution to the welfare of the state. In such a way it should be possible to retain university autonomy, lehrrethet and leerfreihet whilst conferring present subsidies, if the state can but recognise the value of this independence for both the University and for the State.

As Ortega y Gasset observed, as early as 1944, the Universities had and still have a mission: albeit in the 1970s the mission has been metamorphosed not only to foster culture but also to preserve their autonomy pro bono publico.

REFERENCES

6. From Aristotle: "the use of the University is to raise up men who are to be useful to all.
10. Ibid., p. 152.
11. Ibid., p. 205.
12. Ibid., p. 305.
17. For a full development of this aspect of modern universities see 38. The University as a New Church, C. A. Waite, London, 1970.
18. In this sense the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), for example, is a University.

SOME STATISTICAL COMMENTS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES IN TERTIARY SELECTION

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Introduction

Recent articles by West and Slomanzow (1976a & b), Smutssmith and Smutswathe (1976) and West (1976) have called into question various aspects of the use of the Higher School Certificate (HSC) as a tertiary selection device in a way which suggests that it is both a relic of the apartheid era and has also failed as a selection device in academic circles as is to its identity.

The arguments for changing present tertiary selection procedures focus on three issues:

(a) the failure of HSC to predict success at university sufficiently, particularly around cutoff.
(b) the harmful effects of HSC on secondary education, and
(c) the failure of HSC to facilitate the greater equality of access to university.

We consider these issues in reverse order.

Equality of Access

Few would deny that there are inequalities of opportunity inasmuch as some people are deprived of entry into possible avenues of personal development by reason of socio-economic factors beyond their individual control, and most of us would like to rectify that state of affairs. This is not in dispute. The difficulty is the extent to which one can sustain the factual claim that current selection procedures per se do not provide equality of access and success because of the question of whether, in any case, equality of access is desirable as a paramount present time.

The second question pertains to the way in which the desired goal is to be attained and is one about which people might reasonably differ. For it could be argued, even if we did agree that present procedures favour the socially privileged, that the remedy is to eradicate economic inequality. In the meantime, however, we might advocate the retention of current procedures on the grounds that they do yield, among others, those best suited to academic studies, even though their present relative suitability has been determined, to some extent at least, by social privilege. To do so is, of course, to apprehend suitability for academic studies per se and, by distinguishing, on the one hand, between those factors which determine suitability and on the other, those factors which

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