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UNIVERSITY,  
STATE AND SOCIETY

*Inaugural Lecture  
delivered at the College  
on 23 March 1961*

by

J. H. PARRY

*Principal  
University College of Swansea*



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Chairman of Council, Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I begin by thanking you, Sir, for the flattering things which you have just said, and in a more general way for your unfailing kindness since my arrival in Swansea? May I, at the same time, thank all my fellow members of the University College, and, indeed, people in Swansea generally, for the warmth of their welcome? A warm welcome is better than a hot reception, and both are preferable to cool indifference. It seems to be characteristic of Swansea people that their reaction to any person or any proposal tends to be positive and definite, frequently outspoken. In my own case, it has been very kind and friendly, and I have been made to feel at home from the beginning.

Since arriving in Swansea, I have had the pleasure of presiding at the inaugural lectures of several of my newly appointed professorial colleagues, and I now find myself envying those happy men; not, I hasten to add, because their lectures are over and done. I know that some dons tend to speak as if they regarded lecturing as a tiresome interruption of their real work. I am not of their number; I enjoy lecturing, and even think that it has some value. No, my envy of my professorial colleagues arises simply from the fact that, within reasonable limits, convention decides for them what their inaugural lecture shall be about. An inaugural lecture is, or should be, a pleasant occasion, when a newly appointed professor can choose either to reflect in a general way upon the nature of his chosen discipline, or, if he prefers, explain to his new colleagues the nature of a specific piece of work upon which he has recently been engaged. He is called upon to give a performance in a well-tried classical form.



The head of a university institution, on an occasion like this, has no such clear traditional guidance. I have always believed very strongly that the head of a university should regard himself as *primus inter pares* in an association of scholars. He should be, or should try to be, a scholar himself. There is no recognized academic discipline of university management. It is possible, of course, that some ingenious academic promoter may seek to invent one, and that we shall all have to get Ph.D.s in it; but that has not, thank heaven, happened yet, and professional scholars are still tolerated in offices such as mine. This being so, I should very much have preferred to give my inaugural lecture within my own chosen discipline, which, as it happens, is History; and if my attitude towards a principal's office is the right one, then I should be within my rights in delivering such a lecture. I have resisted this temptation, however, because at the present time universities are the centre of an unprecedented public interest and the subject of a good deal of heated controversy. The place of universities within society, and their relations with the State, have never before been discussed so vigorously or from so wide a variety of points of view. Many prominent men, not only scholars (and needless to say throughout this lecture I use the word 'scholar' in the widest possible sense, to mean students of any serious branch of study), not only scholars, but statesmen and journalists, and many others, have given public expression to their views. Some of these views have been sharply critical, for widely varying reasons. Some have said that the universities are not performing the functions for which they were founded; others, that they are performing those functions all too well and ought to be doing something quite different. Ugly words of abuse, such as 'ivory tower', 'closed shop', and 'intellectual snobbishness', have been freely hurled

about. Most deadly accusation of all, from the point of view of the man in the twentieth-century street, universities are once again being called 'medieval'. Of course, many universities are medieval in their origin, and most modern universities have, by imitation, some medieval characteristics. The same is true of Parliament, of the Common Law, of trial by jury, of writs of *habeas corpus*, and many other features of our social life which still have living value. Like universities, all these quaint survivals of our rude and unscientific past still show external traces of their medieval origin, and all, the universities not least, have undergone continuous but gradual change in their forms and their functions with the passage of time. Before we abandon our faith in their capacity for gradual growth and adaptation, before we decide to sweep them away, or to alter them in any radical fashion, we should surely do well to take a very close look at any suggested alternatives or substitutes. I suppose that everybody who is concerned with the conduct of universities at present is exercised in mind about these problems: about the best way of adapting universities to the true needs of society in so far as they can be identified, without losing those traditional elements of university life and work which are of permanent value. All who are concerned with the well-being of this university college—its council, its senate, its members both senior and junior, its well-wishers in Wales and elsewhere—may reasonably expect to be told where, in all these controversies, their principal stands. That is why you are getting, not an attempt at a scholarly lecture, but a series of personal reflections upon the nature of universities and their place in society. If much of what I have to say appears to be conservative to the point of platitude, I can only answer that these are personal reflections rather than considered declarations of corporate policy; and, further, that there are



some aspects of the life of a university which are so basic that they tend to be taken for granted; so easily taken for granted that they can be forgotten; and so often forgotten that they need to be recapitulated from time to time.

A university, like the elephant in the old story, is comparatively easy to recognize but hard to define precisely. One of the greatest university principals under whom I have ever worked was once asked, publicly and without warning, what he believed to be the true function of a university, and replied, on the spur of the moment, that he supposed it was to provide a place where young men could sow their wild oats in civilized surroundings and under reasonable supervision. This dictum was pronounced at a conference of social welfare workers, and was ill received. Personally, I think that this is an aspect of the work of a university which has some importance and which is, perhaps, too much ignored in these earnest times. Possibly a recent and welcome decision of the council of this college may do something to remedy this omission. But seriously, a university is a self-governing association of scholars, formed for the pursuit and the diffusion of knowledge and understanding. It is an association, because people who are dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge need some mutual protection against a public opinion which may not consider their pursuit to be, in an immediate and practical sense, useful or desirable; also because most scholars find that their wits are sharpened and their capacity for original and serious thought is increased by regular contact and discussion with others of like mind, though perhaps of different specific interests. The university is self-governing, at least in its internal, its scholarly, aspects, because it is required, above all things, to be a community whose members are encouraged to think critically, clearly, and objectively; to exclude from their scrutiny nothing which

is of serious interest or importance; to identify and to formulate, in the vast complexity of empirically discovered fact, principles of general validity, and not merely devices of temporary expediency. To perform these duties effectively, the university must, itself, be free, as far as possible, from the pressures of immediate policy, of sectional interest, and of temporary fashion. This, of course, is always a potential source of conflict. Objectively stated facts are often inconvenient and unwelcome; distortion or suppression may appear expedient. We scholars, as responsible and moderately influential citizens, have, of course, a duty and a loyalty towards the State; but we have also, as scholars, our own special duties and loyalties: towards our students as thinking individuals, towards the great republic of learning in general, and towards objective truth in so far as we can discover it. These are loyalties which acknowledge no local or national boundary. We are all familiar, at least by report, with the painful dilemmas which arise from conflicts between national policies and scholarly ideals. It is, for men of our calling, a cardinal point of belief that a steadfast adherence to the special loyalties and duties for which universities profess to stand is in the true interest of society as a whole. It is to the real advantage of any civilized society so to order relations between the universities and the State that these painful dilemmas shall not arise avoidably or in an acute form.

The pursuit of knowledge within a university should include research not only in the narrow sense of discovery of facts hitherto unknown, and the formulation of hypotheses hitherto untried, but also in a wider sense including any attempt at serious and original reflection, creative work, and the reformulation and reinterpretation of existing knowledge. Similarly, the diffusion of knowledge, as practised by scholars within a university, includes



equally teaching in the ordinary sense, both formal and informal, and the writing and publication of books. As associations of scholars, universities have always included teachers and taught; but the special value and the special vitality of their teaching has always depended upon the fact that in one sense or another the teachers have also been learners themselves. Though there have been periods of torpor and decay, in general the universities have been the pace-makers, throughout the Western world, in a very wide and essential range of intellectual activity. Traditionally, the greatness of a university, its value to society, lies not simply in the efficient performance of one or other of these duties, but in the simultaneous performance of them all by a close-knit body of trained people pursuing widely diverse specialized interests but dedicated to a common purpose. This is what constitutes its entitlement to be called a university. To separate the different functions of a university would be to weaken its value as a whole. Of course, some men are by temperament and cast of mind best equipped for original work of some kind, others for helping and guiding the studies of their juniors. It is understandable and entirely legitimate that a man should wish to concentrate more upon one than upon the other, whichever way his bent lies; but if he proposes permanently to abandon one, and to devote himself wholly to the other, then a university is probably not the place for him.

Throughout their long history, the universities of Western Europe have shown a remarkable continuity in their basic character. They began as associations of scholars incorporated for mutual protection in the pursuit of learning. They very early added teaching, of a personal and informal kind, to their activities. Although they were initially ecclesiastical foundations, they included in their curriculum from a very early date not only the basic

intellectual exercises of the time, grammar, logic, and the rest, and not only Theology, but at least one professional study, that of Law, and at least one technology, that of Medicine. In the later Middle Ages the importance of the teaching function of universities was thrown into very sharp relief by a major catastrophe which offers a curiously close analogy in some ways with the wars which have recently convulsed the civilized world. This was the Black Death, which levied a toll of death and destruction far more wholesale than any war which mankind has so far experienced. It killed very large numbers of educated and responsible men; it drastically reduced the available labour force and so put a high premium upon organization and technological advance; and it created a vast demand for trained intelligence for the process of reconstruction. Many famous colleges were founded with these considerations in mind, in the half century following the Black Death; and all contained in their charters of incorporation specific requirements for organized teaching. If we tend to be appalled sometimes by the demands now being made upon us for the expansion of our facilities and activities, we might reflect that our predecessors in the fourteenth century were confronted with a similar demand on a scale (relative to the population of that time) at least as great. I have a certain personal interest in this. The Lady Elizabeth of Clare, who founded my Cambridge college, was a devoted and very intelligent patroness of learning, who perceived clearly the nature of the damage done by the Black Death, and the remedy. She was inhibited by her position in late medieval society from engaging in propagandist writing, but she gave practical expression to her opinions by founding a new kind of college, and by providing it with a handsome endowment. Clare was the first college in Britain to make statutory provision for both fellows and



scholars living a common life, and to require as a duty the systematic instruction of the scholars by the fellows as a body. It was an important departure in educational history. As a modern beneficiary under both heads of the Lady Elizabeth's generosity and foresight, I hope I may be allowed, from piety, this slight digression.

The marriage between disinterested scholarship and teaching, and the harnessing of both to the long-term, rather than to the temporary and immediate, needs of society, have remained basic characteristics of European universities ever since that time. The usefulness of the combination was so clear that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the growing secularization of society, large numbers of young men who were neither clerics nor professional scholars, but who by their birth, their social position, or their ability seemed likely to occupy prominent positions in society, sought admission to universities, so that to the duties of the pursuit of learning and the provision of specialized professional training, the universities added another duty, that of providing a general education for unspecialized men of affairs. This further marriage in the universities, between learning and the world of affairs, also became and has remained an essential characteristic of university life. It gave rise, in the eighteenth century, to the institution of college tutors, another fruitful innovation which we recognize as important and valuable today.

One final modification should be mentioned in this brief historical sketch, and that is the development of modern specialized research. Two or three hundred years ago, the idea of research as discovery, the idea of a new world of knowledge beyond the horizon of the classics, ancient philosophy and the teaching of religion, was almost unknown, or at the best new and strange, the vision of comparatively few men. Today, of course, it is

a commonplace, but it is well to remember that only in the last hundred years or so has the regular practice of research become part of the function of universities. Only a comparatively small part of the research which is carried on in this country today is undertaken within universities, but it is a vitally important part, because a university is still almost the only place where an investigator can have the freedom and the support to pursue a line of inquiry which is interesting and promising for its own sake. Of course the distinction between pure and applied research has never been a clear one, and in recent years it has become more indistinct than ever. It is commonly accepted today, at least among educated people, not only that knowledge can be indefinitely extended, but that all extensions are potentially useful—that all new knowledge will somehow or other, sooner or later, be turned to practical account. Conversely, it is fairly generally accepted that a technological approach need not inhibit pure inquiry; on the contrary, it can prove fruitful in giving rise to problems of a purely theoretical kind. It can help the inquirer, both in the natural and in the social sciences, in the fundamental task of selecting problems; and it imposes a discipline upon his speculative inclinations, by forcing him to submit his theories to definite standards of clarity and testability. Nevertheless, there is a difference between pure and applied research. All research is in some sense a gamble. In applied research the stakes are limited; the prizes, and the likelihood of winning them, are—admittedly within wide limits—predictable. In pure research, the element of chance is much greater and the likelihood, so to speak, of hitting a jackpot is correspondingly less. But some jackpots in the game may be of immense, unforeseeable, and enduring value; and the game itself is fascinating and rewarding for its own sake.



Universities have in recent times become recognized as homes of research, chiefly of the pure or fundamental kind. This is consonant with their own traditional nature, and it has, of course, vitally affected their functioning as places of education. All of us recognize today that a large part of what we teach is in the process of being rendered obsolete by research, and what we have to teach is not so much a body of accepted fact as an understanding of the methods and processes by which facts are established. This is another example of the way in which universities have served society by, so to speak, marrying two different types of intellectual endeavour. Research enlivens teaching by keeping it up to date. Teaching enlivens research because it requires those engaged in research from time to time to explain to eager and critical young minds what they are trying to do. It is perfectly true that in a purely technical sense both teaching and research could be carried on efficiently, perhaps more efficiently than at present, in separate institutions; but over the long term both would lose in vitality by such a divorce, and it is the duty of universities, more than of any other institution, to keep them together.

The modern university, therefore, is an organization, or rather community, of great complexity, performing a wide variety of different tasks and pursuing a wide variety of different intellectual interests. All the tasks and all the interests are in some degree the concern of all the members of the university community; they modify and enliven one another. Universities are not by any means the only institutions of higher education available to modern society; but they differ from other types of institution in their autonomy, in their wide comprehensiveness, and in their concentration upon general principles and long-term aims. They enjoy, and have enjoyed for centuries, a special kind of intellectual

and social prestige, and this, no doubt, is why they have attracted far more public attention than most other types of higher institution. This public attention is inevitably directed still more closely and still more urgently upon the universities in times when, for one reason or another, society is suffering from a shortage of educated people. At such times, naturally enough, public concern tends quickly to become translated into government action. We are, of course, living in such a time now. The recent wars, like all wars, have caused a very rapid technological development in many different directions. They have stimulated intense interest not only in technological problems, but in the moral and social problems consequent upon technical change. At the same time, war has interrupted the normal processes of education to a considerable extent, so producing a serious shortage of men trained and educated to deal with these technological and social problems. Public concern has reached a pitch where government is willing, for the first time at least in British history, to provide very large sums of money for higher education, and almost automatically the greater part of these sums is being allocated to the expansion of universities. It is true that the amount allocated is never quite enough to pay for everything which the universities are being asked to do, but it is far more than we have ever had before, and the fact that it comes from public sources creates, for us, a new and unfamiliar situation. Up to a generation or two ago, the greater part of the cost of higher education was met directly or indirectly from private sources—from the endowment of specific institutions, from gifts, and from fees. It is worth noting in this connexion that private generosity and a steady growth in the value of endowments had already, before 1914, financed a very considerable extension of university facilities. University



expansion is not a new thing, and it is quite untrue to suggest that expansion has been forced upon reluctant universities by public opinion and by governmental pressure. Nevertheless, the size and speed of the expansion programme now contemplated by government far exceed anything we have known before, and the financing of such a programme by any means other than public funds would be quite out of the question. This situation, of course, presents both opportunities and dangers to the universities. I think that we tend sometimes, perhaps out of timidity, to emphasize the dangers and to forget the opportunities. The foundation of new universities offers us a chance of much needed experiment in the organization of higher education and research without abandoning those characteristics of universities which I have suggested are fundamental. Similarly, in many instances, the expansion of existing universities presents an opportunity of widening their comprehensiveness and increasing the healthy diversity of interests within each one. In this university college at present, for example, in the Faculty of Arts the range of historical studies which we can pursue is very limited; in the study of languages and literatures we make no provision for Romance languages other than French, for Russian studies or for oriental or African studies. In the natural sciences we have no biochemistry and almost no genetics. The proposal to expand our student numbers, and the offer of money for the purpose, will enable us in the next few years to fill many of these serious gaps in the range of our interests. In the applied sciences the range of our interests is fairly comprehensive already, but expansion will enable us to develop those complementary social studies which are essential if we are to help society to deal with the social upheavals which always follow major technological change. At present we are able to pay very little attention

to social studies; in the near future we hope that this defect will be remedied. Similarly, our expansion programme will enable us to make much more adequate and much more economical provision for residence within the university, with all that that means. This, in turn, will enable us to effect a subdivision of our community into units other than purely academic departments, and this, if we handle it intelligently, can lead in an enlarged university college, to a more varied and intimate range of contacts between senior and junior members. In enlarging and diversifying this university college, we merely reflect the increasing range of serious interests in society as a whole, without necessarily damaging in any way the nature and value of an identifiable college community. I think this is true of many—though certainly not all—university institutions in this country. Some of our universities are already too large; but more, including this one, are still too small.

And now the dangers. The dangers of excessive size are obvious enough: the weakening of the sense of community, the increasing difficulty of constant and informal contact between senior and junior members, the submergence of individual students—not only the weakest but also some of the ablest—in an academic machine designed economically to produce an average level of competence—a high level, perhaps, but an average none the less. Optimum numbers are obviously a matter of opinion and must vary from one institution to another, and some universities will probably have to take a very firm stand against pressures to exceed them; but I think that for a university institution placed as we are the best safeguards at the moment are, in general, subdivision of our community, by such means as the development of vigorous halls of residence, and, of course, a high level of competence and professional dedication among our



own body. I do not think that in Swansea, at the moment, we have any reason to fear that our proposed enlargement of numbers need entail any deterioration of standards of performance; provided, of course, that our senior body increases in size and comprehensiveness, proportionate with student numbers. Naturally this last proviso is ground for some anxiety; but equally naturally, the best way to ensure recruitment—apart from paying adequate stipends—is to preserve jealously those characteristics of university life—freedom from interference, diversity of interests, time and encouragement for study—which are most attractive to the kind of men and women we need. The extent to which these characteristics can be preserved is the real measure of the extent to which the dangers of rapidly increasing size can be avoided.

In saying this I assume that, given comparable development in the quality and number of secondary schools, a sufficient number of young men and women of adequate ability will be forthcoming to fill enlarged universities as well as enlarged technical colleges and other institutions. Some people have misgivings about this, but personally I have seen no firm evidence on which those misgivings could be based. We simply do not know how many men—and even less, how many women—who could respond to and profit by university training, are now denied it. The mere number of those seeking admission is not, by itself, a clear guide; we should be guided by suitability and need, not only by apparent demand; but the experience of other European countries where provision for university places is much more generous than it is here, would seem to support an optimistic view, provided that we remember—and this is a thing which we professional scholars are always tempted to forget—that most of the men we teach have no intention of becoming professional scholars. It is one

of our commonest delusions that our main duty in life is to train other people to be as like ourselves as possible: a delusion sternly to be resisted. The duty of helping along those men who by capacity and temperament are suited to a life of professional scholarship is so pleasant that it is very unlikely ever to be neglected. It is the great majority of others of whom we should be thinking.

Another obvious danger in our present situation is that of narrow concentration on the immediate task of vocational training. The need for such training is pressing, and even more obvious than the danger; and when the State is paying for the development of universities it will inevitably be tempted to spend most money on those developments which seem to be of the most urgent practical importance. These may not necessarily be the things which are really important in the long term, or the things which universities are best fitted to do. The government of the day must necessarily give its attention first to urgent and immediate problems. This is in the nature of all government. Universities, on the other hand, as I have suggested, are pre-eminently institutions concerned with long-term aims. Obviously, this is true in all fundamental research; no man can predict with confidence what knowledge will be possessed or will be required by the next generation. Similarly in teaching: a university graduate makes his most important contribution to the well-being of society not when he leaves the university, but twenty or thirty years later, when he is likely to be placed by seniority and experience in a place of responsibility. Universities in planning research and teaching must always bear these considerations in mind, place the greatest possible emphasis on flexibility, on capacity for development and change, and must often resist arguments of purely immediate and *ad hoc* usefulness. If, for example, as is sometimes suggested, the main purpose



of the expansion of higher education is to make British industry more competitive by a 'crash programme' designed to supply it immediately with large numbers of technically competent young men, then it may be doubted whether universities are the most suitable or the most efficient institutions for this particular purpose. As I have suggested, there are many other kinds of institution for higher education which ought to be developing along their own particular lines at the same speed as the universities are developing along theirs. A diversity of institutions can surely do nothing but good. I am not much impressed by the argument that because colleges of technology, for example, might develop what is loosely called an inferiority complex in their relations with universities, therefore all such institutions should behave as universities and award pieces of paper called degrees. If colleges of technology are, as they appear to be, an appropriate device for meeting one part of the national need, and if they can meet it successfully, as they appear to be doing, then they, and the certificates which they award, will soon achieve a place in public esteem as firmly assured as that of the universities, though in a different line of work. We shall not get rid of intellectual and social snobbishness by weakly pandering to it. Incidentally, there can be no doubt that closer contacts between universities and colleges of technology would be to the benefit of both. I hasten to add that I am not for a moment suggesting that we should resist the expansion of technological studies in universities as well. Technology, of one kind or another, has always had a place in the universities, and few people would nowadays deny that it can offer as firm an intellectual basis for a sound education as any other specialized form of study. In parenthesis, I might add that I have been very impressed in this college by the evident concern of the heads of

technological departments with problems of general education. What I am saying, however, is that in our technology, as in all our studies, we should concern ourselves as far as possible with scientific principles and not primarily with the teaching of the tricks of particular trades.

The main danger in the minds of most of us in the new era of government financing of universities is that those who pay the piper may seek to call the tune; that academic decisions may come to be made on non-academic grounds by people who have no direct knowledge of universities from the inside; that excessive governmental regulation may cause universities to decline in intellectual vigour. We must keep a sense of proportion about this. Every sovereign state may regulate, by legislation, the affairs of universities or other corporations within its jurisdiction, and its undoubted power to do so is not necessarily incompatible with academic self-government. In some continental European countries universities are declared to be organs of the State and professors are civil servants; but if in such a country the responsible minister is required by strong convention to exercise his powers with respect for the special characteristics of universities and in consultation with their leaders, then academic self-government can in practice be preserved. In this country, no ministry is responsible for universities; but government has often legislated about them, and has sometimes intervened, when the universities appeared in need of reform, to regulate the conduct of their affairs. In so doing, however, it has confined itself to ordering their constitutional and financial structure and has invariably upheld the principle of internal self-government. Academic self-government, indeed, in so far as it has any explicit basis, rests today mainly upon charters and statutes issued by the Crown.



Are the provisions of these instruments now compatible with a state of almost total financial dependence? Or are they likely to degenerate into mere archaic fictions?

It is still commonly accepted, as it has long been, that within each university the academic community should decide for itself what shall be taught, to what level, to whom, and by whom. All this, together with freedom to pursue one's own line of study or research and to publish the results (if they are worth publishing) comprise what is generally understood by academic liberty. It is probably the aspect of our work which we most tenaciously prize, and I have already suggested reasons why universities can only give their best service to society if this liberty is scrupulously respected. It is indeed very many years since it was seriously challenged in this country. The last attempts on any serious scale were made by King James II. In a time, however, when many universities are financed almost entirely by government grant, this liberty might be threatened in a number of different ways. Academic liberty has been safeguarded in recent years by an arrangement whereby government grants to universities are distributed by a committee, whose membership is predominantly academic, and which is advisory to the Chancellor of Exchequer. The working of this system has been remarkably smooth, and has aroused the admiration of scholars in many other countries. Its success has depended upon three favouring factors. One is that all the recurrent grants, or almost all, are quinquennial block grants, leaving each university a very wide discretion for the use of its allocation within a total amount. This safeguard, however, is less comprehensive than it seems, since recurrent spending is necessarily connected with capital grants, which are appropriated in considerable detail. The second safeguard is in the fact that the officials who administer the system are themselves men

with knowledge of universities, and sympathetic to their aims. There is no reason to suppose that this circumstance is likely to change. The third factor in the situation is that, until very recently, the total amount expended in grants to universities was too small to become a matter of serious controversy. Recently, however, as we have seen, the grants to universities have been very greatly increased, and they have now reached a figure where they enter into quite serious competition with the demands of major spending departments within the government. It may be doubted whether the present sensible and informal arrangement for the allocation of grants can go on indefinitely, now that so much more public money is involved. I do not think that we are in any danger, certainly in any immediate future, of being told by some outside body what we are to teach, or how we ought to appoint our staff, or admit our students; and I am quite sure that we are in no danger at the moment of being made to subscribe to any official doctrine on the major questions of the day. We are not threatened by anything as crude as that. We have no purges or oath controversies, though we have all been distressed to see that sort of thing going on in other parts of the world, and no doubt we should do well to be vigilant against disguised witch-hunting here. We must expect, however, that as government grants increase in amount, detailed scrutiny of the way in which they are spent will increase also. It would not be reasonable to expect Parliament, in voting large sums of public money, to leave the manner of its expenditure entirely to the judgement of those who are to do the spending. More and more we shall be expected to justify by detailed argument everything we intend to do, and this will mean that it will be more and more difficult to find money to do things which have no obvious and immediate usefulness (even though we may



think that their ultimate and potential usefulness could be very great indeed). It will become more and more difficult to experiment, and to pursue promising ideas, both in teaching and research, at short notice. This is not intended in any way as a criticism of present arrangements; it seems to me to be inherent in the increasing scale of our operations. There is here, not so much a danger of academic dictation by the government of the day—no one seriously suggests that—as a danger of loss of vitality and flexibility, due to the cost of universities and the unwieldy machine needed to finance them while still preserving their constitutional autonomy. I do not think that there is any easy answer to this problem. Certainly in modern conditions and with modern methods of research and teaching, there can be no hope of a return to a state of affairs in which most universities were handsomely endowed in their own right. I do think, however, that it is vitally important that there should be some measure of appeal from the financial decisions of government, some flexibility, some loopholes. The University Grants Committee must inevitably make its decisions according to definite rules; such rules cannot possibly foresee all possible circumstances; and there must be some means whereby a university can take action on its own initiative in exceptional cases. It seems to me very important that each university, even if it is supported almost entirely by public funds, should have, in addition, some money of its own, for the use of which it is accountable to nobody save its own governing body. This money should be available for projects which are sound in themselves, but upon which, for one reason or another, the expenditure of public funds would be difficult to justify. This is the real reason for appeals to the general public, such as the appeal which this college has made in recent months and is still making; an appeal which, I am

happy and grateful to say, is meeting with a most encouraging response.

Apart from this small measure of financial independence which I think every university ought to have—and in the nature of the situation it is bound to be small—I think it is extremely valuable for a university, particularly a relatively small institution like this one, to have a firm geographical base, an anchorage, so to speak, in the pride and affection of the people of a particular area. This is not mainly a matter of admission of students; our students here at Swansea come from all over the world, and their geographical distribution will be even wider when we have more residential accommodation, though I hope there will always be a core of men and women from south-west Wales who come to us from motives of regional loyalty. Quite apart from the origins of our students, however, we are in a much stronger position as an institution if we can count upon the loyal support of our own geographical home. The most important element in this support is the institution of so-called 'lay' councils, which are a familiar constitutional feature of all modern British universities. The council of a modern university does not exist only to bring to it the advice and the wisdom of experienced men of affairs, valuable and important though this is. Nor—most certainly not—does it exist to supervise professional scholars in the discharge of their duties in teaching, in research, and in the general running of the university as a place of learning. The council is the focus of local loyalty and sympathy. It is the guarantor, to the general public, that the money which they subscribe, both through their taxes and through their private generosity, is being wisely and usefully spent. It is the support and the shield of the university and all its members, against public misunderstanding, against short-sighted parsimony or neglect,



even conceivably, in extremities which we hope may never arise, against actual oppression. I should be churlish if at this point I did not express my grateful appreciation of the tact, the skill, and the firmness with which my council here discharges its delicate and highly responsible task.

Two final considerations. One is a word of warning. We talk a good deal these days, and I have said something today, about the possibility of universities being urged to undertake developments which they, in all honesty, might consider undesirable, or, alternatively, being denied opportunities for developments which they consider important in the general interests of society. If we claim, as our profession always has claimed, that decisions concerning the running of universities ought to be made by people in universities, because nobody else is really competent to make them; if, that is, universities are to continue to be, as they have long been, self-governing communities, we must be very sure that we really have the long-term interests of a greater society always in the forefront of our minds. We are professionally trained, all of us, to be as objective as it is possible for us to be. If we are to continue to be in some sense judges in our own professional cause, we must be severe judges, and make sure that we do not allow unreflecting conservatism or mere laziness to masquerade as concern for liberty or the safeguarding of standards.

Finally, since we profess the pursuit of knowledge to be our principal aim, I believe that we should think more carefully than we habitually do, and encourage our students to think also, about our own motives in this pursuit. Knowledge and understanding are, of course, desirable in themselves. They are also tools for the use of man. If we think that knowledge should not be merely a tool for material use, nor, let us remember, should it be

merely a series of abstractions for the amusement of professional scholars. In our concepts of knowledge and understanding, and in our motives for pursuing them, we must each find for ourselves the right intellectual harmony, the right balance between these two extremes; and as far as we can, we must help our students to do the same.

I can, perhaps, most fittingly conclude by quoting what Francis Bacon had to say on this subject—on the motives for the pursuit of knowledge, on the balance between learning for its own sake, and learning for the sake of society. I quote from the famous passage in *The Advancement of Learning*, a book revolutionary in many ways when he published it in 1605, and which contains many ideas of value to the professional scholar today:

For men have entered into a desire for learning and knowledge, sometimes upon a natural curiosity and inquisitive appetite; sometimes to entertain their minds with variety and delight; sometimes for ornament and reputation; and sometimes to enable them to victory of wit and contradiction; and most times for lucre and profession, and seldom sincerely to give a true account of their gift of reason, to the benefit and use of man. As if there were sought in knowledge a couch whereupon to rest the searching and restless spirit; or a terrace for a wandering and variable mind to walk upon with a fair prospect; or a tower of state for a proud mind to rest itself upon; or a fort or contending ground for strife and contention; or a shop for sale or profit; and not a rich storehouse for the glory of the Creator and the relief of man's estate.



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