WOODROW WILSON ON EDUCATION

In 1960 the Woodrow Wilson Foundation published a book entitled Education in the Nation's Service: A Series of Essays on American Education Today *(New York: Praeger). August Heckscher, the Foundation's President, explained in his introduction that 'The essays in this book were written at the request of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation as part of its continuing program to explore Wilsonian ideas and ideals in the light of present-day conditions […] Later generations have come to see Wilson […] as an educator and reformer as well as an inspired prophet of a new world order.' The distinguished commentators who were commissioned include Jacques Barzun, Isaiah Berlin, MacGeorge Bundy and Archibald MacLeish.*

The reason why Isaiah Berlin's essay was not included was probably simply that it arrived too late. As he wrote to Pendleton Herring of the Foundation on 16 August 1959, 'This is shamefully late, and I am most apologetic.' But he continues, 'I doubt whether my piece is either short enough, or clear enough, or relevant enough to "Education in the Nation's Service".' This seems to be just a characteristic example of Berlin's tendency to undervalue his own work; but it is also possible that the piece did not suit the Foundation's purposes in some way.

At all events, it is clear to me that Berlin's essay deserves to be made available, even after the passage of more than forty years since it was written. It was in good shape, and needed comparatively little editing; I have also checked the quotations and added references.

Henry Hardy

SPEAKING on 1 July 1909 before the Phi Beta Kappa Chapter at Cambridge, President Woodrow Wilson told his audience what, in his view, a university in America should be. He spoke of the danger of academic specialisation on the part of university teachers, which, in his opinion, represented too narrow an ideal of university education, isolated the teachers from their students as mere purveyors of professional knowledge, unconcerned with the lives and characters of those they saw only in the lecture room –

an outlook which, according to him, they derived from their own training in German universities and from the German attitude towards the relation of the teachers and the taught. This seemed to him wholly inadequate:

> the object of the college, as we have known and used and loved it in America, is not scholarship […] but the intellectual and spiritual life. Its life and discipline are meant to be a process of preparation, not a process of information. By the intellectual and spiritual life I mean the life which enables the mind to comprehend and make proper use of the modern world and all its opportunities. The object of a liberal training is not learning, but discipline and the enlightenment of the mind. The educated man is to be discovered by his point of view, by the temper of his mind, by his attitude towards life and his fair way of thinking. He can see, he can discriminate, he can combine ideas and perceive whither they lead; he has insight and comprehension. His mind is a practised instrument of appreciation. He is more apt to contribute light than heat to a discussion […] he has the knowledge of the world which no one can have who knows only his own generation or only his own task.[1]

The purpose of the American college is not scholarship, but education; education in its highest and most fastidious sense:

> It consists in the power to distinguish good reasoning from bad, in the power to digest and interpret evidence, in a habit of catholic observation and a preference for the non-partisan point of view, in an addiction to clear and logical processes of thought and yet an instinctive desire to interpret rather than to stick in the letter of the reasoning, in a taste for knowledge and a deep respect for the integrity of the human mind.[2]

University teachers must rule their pupils, not merely during the three or four years of university life but throughout their existence:

[1] 'The Spirit of Learning', in Woodrow Wilson, *College and State: Educational, Literary and Political Papers (1875–1913)*, ed. Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd (New York and London, 1925), vol. 2, pp. 109–10.

[2] ibid., p. 110.

> not by what they know and inform [them] of, but by the spirit of the things they expound. And that spirit they cannot convey in any formal manner. They can convey it only atmospherically, by making their ideals tell in some way upon the whole spirit of the place […] The voices which do not penetrate beyond the doors of the classroom are lost, are ineffectual, are void of consequence and power.[3]

They will remain so unless 'the teacher comes out of the classroom and makes himself a part of that life'[4] (that is, the life of the entire institution). 'The comradeships of undergraduates will never breed the spirit of learning […] So long as instruction and life do not merge in our colleges […] so long will the college be ineffectual.'[5] 'If you wish to create a college, therefore, and are wise, you will seek to create a life.'[6]

I am not sufficiently familiar with the central points at issue in American academic life to venture judgement on whether Wilson's observations are wholly just; it would be mere presumption on my part to try to assess this. But whether or not American universities deserved these strictures, Wilson's point of view is perfectly clear and expressed with great and trenchant passion. The life of pure scholarship is not enough; the mere example of lives dedicated to learning will not produce those critical intelligences and civilised hearts which Wilson wanted men in general, and Americans in particular, to possess. The teachers must, consciously and deliberately, live in a single community with their pupils, and in this way create a form of life which, consciously and unconsciously, will shape all those who come to universities, and promote in them a love of truth and virtue and a capacity for achieving them. This point of view is contrasted with that attributed to Germany, in which the principal duty of universities is conceived as the promotion and dissemination of knowledge as an end in itself.

It is easier for me to believe that this was a critical issue in American academic life in 1909, since twenty years later, when I

[3] ibid., p. 112.
[4] ibid., p. 113.
[5] ibid.
[6] ibid., p. 114.

myself was an undergraduate at the University of Oxford in England, it was, if anything, more acute still. I should therefore like to consider this topic in the only context of which I know anything that is relevant – namely that of the life of English universities, and more narrowly still, of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which, it seems to me, typify (although not entirely) these two contrasting points of view. This statement is, as it stands, too sweeping and in need of much qualification. Nevertheless, it seems to me to have enough truth in it to serve at any rate as a basis for discussion of the subject.

Before I attempt the description of what has happened at Oxford and at Cambridge in modern times, I feel bound to say that Wilson's characterisation of German universities seems to me historically odd. It is no doubt true that towards the end of the nineteenth century German universities came to stand for minute and often pedantic learning, for a preoccupation with abstractions, and for academic qualities in the sense in which they are thought useless or comical by practical men. But quite apart from the value which men have placed on such qualities, or the justice of thinking them ludicrous or trivial, it is surely a strange thing that Wilson, with his profound interest in and familiarity with the history of education, should have forgotten the extraordinary political and moral influence which professors, more perhaps than any other class of professional men, exercised in Germany throughout the nineteenth century, for both good and evil.

Humboldt founded the University of Berlin not solely in order that it might contribute to the increase of learning, but with a far wider of what it should do. When Fichte was invited to the chair of philosophy, it was not merely to devote himself to remote paths of learning; nor did the Prussian Government, when it invited Schelling to succeed Hegel in the 1830s, merely intend to appoint the most competent philosophical brain then to be found in Germany: the authorities wanted their students to hold certain views and live a certain kind of life, and to some degree they succeeded. Ranke, Mommsen, Droysen, Wilamowitz were no doubt first and foremost magnificent scholars whose repute in the worlds of learning was second to none; and if they had not been that, perhaps their influence would not have spread very wide: but as it was, they certainly moulded the lives and outlooks of generations of Germans, directly and indirectly, by their lectures, by the teaching of their pupils, and by what they stood for and

were taken to symbolise by vast numbers of men who had never seen them or taken an interest in their subjects. This was done even more deliberately and directly by learned propagandists such as Treitschke and Sybel, and by great humanistic teachers of wide culture, such as Meinecke, Max Weber, Gundolf, E. R. Curtius, and by men still living, who probably see themselves, and are certainly viewed by others, as sages with a social or political or moral message about how life in general should be lived. Such 'philosophers of life' who occupy academic chairs are virtually a German invention – perhaps the result of Protestantism, or the secularisation of the religious values and functions of the nineteenth century. Be that as it may, it is, with all the dangers that it has entailed, a German contribution to the world. To charge the Germans with the precise opposite of this seems therefore inaccurate, but this is a mere historical footnote and does not take away from the cardinal importance of the thesis which Wilson defended unswervingly all his life.

To turn to English experience. The political professor, the professor as moralist, or as the voice of the national conscience, the 'professor as hero', whom Carlyle exalted, is not (to Carlyle's indignation) a typical English figure. Professors did no doubt mould undergraduates – the college system of the two ancient universities, growing as it did out of the very cognate monastic ideal, did have its effect, but this influence was a silent result of example and association, not of precept. Nevertheless the contrast between the ideal of 'rounded human beings' as the proper end of university education, and the pursuit of pure learning, became a great issue in English universities also.

The man with whom these battles are most naturally associated was of course the famous Master of Balliol College, Benjamin Jowett. His critics, notably the caustic and fastidious scholar, Mark Pattison, Rector of Lincoln College, who was a man truly devoted to learning, and a scholar of the purest water, certainly supposed him to be a traitor to learning, a man who, in his heart of hearts, and perhaps at a more visible level, put worldly success above the discovery of the truth, and regarded it as his duty to turn out men who would rise to the top of the social pyramid – statesmen, administrators, judges, men of weight and influence with strong, well-trained minds and generous but well-controlled feelings, able to impress their personality upon their generation and lift the English establishment to a place pre-eminent in the world.

Pattison thought that Jowett's motives were vulgar and his influence corrupting, and a danger to all that he held sacred – precise knowledge, incorruptible critical acumen, detachment, intellectual power, moral and mental independence, genius, pursuit of ends for their own sake. Pattison may have rated Jowett too low; but even his warmest admirers, and perhaps particularly these, will not wish to deny that Jowett did in many respects transform education in Oxford: by his radical alteration of the tutorial system, first in his own College and then by the power of example elsewhere in Oxford; by his insistence on and pride in the great success in examination results (and the reform of these examinations themselves) obtained by members of his College; by the fact that he steered the ablest young men among the undergraduates towards public life and was not indifferent to the advantages of birth, property, and the qualities most likely to succeed in the world – prowess in games, soundness of judgement, breadth of interests, and what later came to be called 'capacity for leadership'; by looking upon the teaching activities of his most distinguished tutors – T. H. Green (the philosopher), for example – not so much for their capacity to discover new truths (or upset old ones) as for the kind of effect they were likely to produce on the minds of the undergraduates of Balliol – how far it would and how far it would not fit them to be leading, or at any rate useful, members of the great expanding Victorian British social order.

It is difficult to say what would have happened without the influence of this dominant figure, and perhaps that of others – both contemporaries and successors – who held similar views or were turned into allies by an atmosphere which he had done so much to create. What seems certain is that education in Oxford became a superb means of training for undergraduates, but often at the price of destroying the capacity for disinterested pursuit of the truth on the part of their teachers. An Oxford college just before and just after the Great War of 1914 was, if it is not immodest for me to say it, a superb educational establishment. College tutors, that is, those who directly taught young men (and later young women) in their own rooms, individually, and who often entertained them at meals and were entertained by them in turn, were far more important in the eyes of their pupils – that is all that counted – than the professors, of whom there were relatively few, and whose business it was to seek knowledge and

disseminate it from their lecture platforms. I do not wish to say that professors as a class lived outside the social and intellectual life of the University; nor yet that among college tutors there were no, or even few, men of high academic capacity and pure love of learning, and with a capacity for promoting and disseminating their knowledge. Some of the most original work done at Oxford in the humanities, in the field of 'pure knowledge', especially in the classics, in history and in philosophy, was done by college tutors, from whose class, in any case, professors were drawn. Nevertheless, by looking upon dons as sublimated schoolmasters, sharing not a little in the spirit of Dr Arnold, conceiving their principal task as that of training men and not widening the frontiers of truth, Jowett and his allies placed burdens upon the backs of Oxford teachers which literally did not leave them time or energy enough, in many cases (particularly of those who were driven and over-driven by their conscientiousness towards their pupils), to do much original work.

Of course Jowett was not a philistine in the same sense in which his enemies so described him. He, and the Balliol that he created, did not forget that even the most devoted teacher cannot live indefinitely on capital accumulated by others; that someone must make discoveries and go to original sources and dedicate himself to 'pure, useless learning', for there to be something to teach. Nevertheless, it was a matter of emphasis. The scholarships designed to attract the ablest – those most likely to make a success of their academic life; the new, keen spirit of competition in the examinations, which, although they did not offer an automatic key to public positions, as in France and other countries, nevertheless clearly made a radical difference to the chances of preferment; the connections and links which the more eminent Oxford teachers now came to acquire through their new public position, through the position of their more eminent former students, and their own earnest and public-spirited (as well as, at times, ambitious and snobbish) aspirations – all these came to connect Oxford with the great world of which it became an ante-chamber; not with all of it perhaps, nor with all sections of that world, but sufficiently so to be clearly different from other academic foundations, such as the continental universities, the new modern universities in the great English cities, and, more significantly perhaps, the sister university of Cambridge.

Again, I hope not to be misunderstood: the dons of Oxford did not teach their pupils with one eye to what would be useful to them in after life, did not consciously train them in worldly attainments. They taught the academic subjects of their own choice as well as this could be done. There never was, perhaps, so gifted a group of teachers of philosophy, of the classics, of ancient history, as could be found in Oxford in this century. Nor do I by any means wish to imply that this is true merely of the past. But the notion of graduate study – knowledge and enquiry for their own sakes – was to that extent a more alien thing in Oxford than in many universities whose general intellectual attainment was far lower. Matters have changed now; but it has taken a second Great War and a vast alteration in the social conditions of England to produce this state of affairs, by some warmly welcomed, by others profoundly deplored.

Again it may be that I am guilty of an unscientific, over-individualistic, 'heroic' interpretation of social life by making Jowett responsible for this development. Perhaps more impersonal factors are at play, and Jowett's sense of responsibility to the State and society, like his perfectly sincere representation of Plato as an eminent Victorian – which in its turn created the moral foundations of many a colonial governor's and public official's conception of his duties as a Platonic guardian seeking the good of creatures less richly endowed with reason or the vision of the good – is a product of a vision of life for which economic or social factors more powerful than any individual or group of individuals were ultimately the cause. But whether this is so or not, the great debate I still vividly remember as going on in some of the greater Oxford colleges in the late 1920s, about whether the quality to be looked for in the Fellows to be appointed was their capacity for teaching in the widest sense – inspiring, moulding, creating a moral atmosphere, contributing to the Hellenic city-State which Oxford was conceived by the partisans of this view as being – or whether, on the contrary, intellectual power, ability to produce original work, pre-eminence in the academic field itself were rather to be preferred.

I remember the arguments well: those who believed in teaching as primary maintained that the pure researchers were remote, uninterested in the private lives of their pupils, insufficiently anxious about whether they were understood by their second- and third-rate pupils, who were morally and socially sometimes more

valuable than the very clever – 'good college men', likely to become, with proper treatment, useful and sometimes distinguished practical men – and that these researchers were therefore unlikely to contribute to the social texture and the traditions and the glory of their college (the University was always a weak central government, much as the US Government would have been had the Southern States won against the North). The pro-research party for their part maintained that unless dons were primarily and overwhelmingly dedicated to the unswerving pursuit of truth and possessed exceptional qualifications for it, standards would fall, dons would be reduced to the level of schoolmasters, subjects would lose their dignity in the eyes of even the least disciplined of pupils.

They maintained two theses which they regarded as interconnected: firstly that the business of academic institutions was the discovery of the truth and its dissemination, that when Aristotle and the Middle Ages put the contemplative life above that of action they were right, but that even if they were not, this and this alone was the purpose of universities; and secondly that what succeeds is not precept but example. No matter how eccentric, how distant, how self-absorbed a scholar may be, if his mind is of first-rate quality and the life he leads is genuinely dominated by an intellectual ideal, the undergraduates, however little they may be able to grasp the nature of his researches, will instinctively respect, and indeed venerate, such a man beyond those who are in some obvious way more human and approachable, but, equally obviously, intellectually of a lower grade; and the existence of such persons among college tutors would, of itself, create in students respect for disinterested values, for intellectual pursuits, for ideal ends; and nothing else could achieve this as well, or indeed at all.

> Young men are capable of great enthusiasms for older men whom they have learned to know in some human, unartificial way, whose quality they have tasted in unconstrained conversation, the energy and beauty of whose characters and aims they have learnt to appreciate by personal contact; and such enthusiasms are often amongst the strongest and most lasting influences of their lives. You will not gain the affection of your pupil by anything you do for him, impersonally, in the class-room. You may gain his admiration and vague

> appreciation, but he will tie to you only for what you have shown him personally or given him in intimate and friendly service.[7]

The Oxford defenders of research believed (and still believe) that the 'energy and beauty' of 'characters and aims' of which Wilson here speaks will shine through in the classroom, and not merely 'in intimate and friendly service'; perhaps more brightly, and memorably. They did not wish to deny that 'a college is not only a body of studies but a mode of association',[8] but they thought that the first of the elements was incomparably more important than the second.

But it is really for the first group, the party which favoured teaching before research, that Wilson seems to me to have spoken. 'We are not put into this world to sit still and know; we are put into it to act.'[9] These words, spoken by Wilson at his inaugural address as President of Princeton University on 1 November 1902, might have been spoken by Jowett, or any one of his followers and disciples.

> The chief glory of a university is the leadership of the nation in the things that attach to the highest ambitions that nations can set themselves, those ideals which lift nations into the atmosphere of things that are permanent and do not fade from generation to generation. I do not see how any man can fail to perceive that scholarship, that education, in a country like ours, is a branch of statesmanship. It is a branch of that general work of enabling a great country to use its energies to its best advantage and to lift itself from generation to generation through stages of unbroken progress.[10]

These words of Wilson's, spoken before the Western Association of Princeton Clubs in Cleveland, Ohio, in May 1906, could have been spoken by any one of the teachers in universities and schools, and equally by the civil servants, statesmen, judges, colonial governors – all those men, of whom Cecil Rhodes was

[7] ibid., p. 116.
[8] ibid., p. 118.
[9] 'Princeton for the Nation's Service', ibid., vol. 1, p. 459.
[10] 'The Preceptorial System', ibid., pp. 493–4.

only one, and perhaps not the most characteristic, example, with Asquith and Grey and Milner (who were in Jowett's Balliol) – as well as by many a high official public figure of the present day – in short, by those who, whether they know it or not, have been moulded by the Oxford whose foundations were laid in the 1870s and 1880s by men who, even though they may have been driven by forces of which they knew little, knew what they were doing, and why. They would have understood Wilson well, and he, I think, was acutely and sympathetically aware of their existence and their ideals.

The civilisation in which they believed and which they defended, sometimes at the cost of their lives, stands up well to comparison with other moments and attitudes in Western history in which men to this day feel pride. It is certainly preferable to the treatment of educational institutions as offices to which the professor comes to perform the task for which he is paid, neither more nor less, in which he sits for so many hours, from which he issues only to deliver his lecture or to eat his meal, and which, like an honest but limited official, he seeks to leave behind him and forget as soon as the hour of release in the late afternoon, or whenever it may be, duly strikes. Nevertheless, it is not all there is or can be in academic life. No one could accuse Wilson – as Jowett was accused, whether fairly or not – of worldliness in any pejorative sense. He laid down his life for a political ideal and rejected the possibility of compromise which 'sound' men and those not under the influence of what Jowett might have called 'a dubious metaphysic' – 'dubious' in the sense of not likely to lead to sensible, practical results – might have urged. Nevertheless – and it is no criticism of him to say this, only a statement of an important fact – his ideal was moral and political, and is not compatible with another ideal, which is moral and intellectual, which the opposite party – those whom, perhaps unjustly, he regarded as the advocates of dry-as-dust German academic discipline – have at their best defended.

I had occasion to remark that the University of Cambridge did not follow in the footsteps of Oxford (and I must again apologise for knowing little beyond the histories of these two universities, and not much of that), and remained relatively uninfluenced by the great Jowett reforms. There the tutorial system never burgeoned as luxuriantly as at Oxford. The primary duty of teachers was to lecture, and not to teach in private; and therefore more time was

left for the scholars' own work. I do not wish to compare the universities of Oxford and Cambridge in respect of intellectual achievement. No such comparison is profitable: the criteria are too many and multiple, and no convincing method of assessment – of awarding marks – exists. But it is noticeable, perhaps particularly during the first decade and a half of the present century – before the First World War – that the ideals of what may be called the élites of Oxford and Cambridge are instructively different. The admired figures at Oxford are public figures – the Balliol galaxy of liberal statesmen, led by Asquith and Grey and Milner; the magnificent lawyers, F. E. Smith, Simon; brilliant talkers and writers like Hilaire Belloc, H. A. L. Fisher, Gilbert Murray, and many others, some succeeding, others failing, to become Fellows of All Souls College, which in those years contained the quintessence of this spirit, directed primarily to public service, or at any rate to attainment in the field of public life.

At the same period in Cambridge the leading undergraduates, those who set the tone, whose names are remembered with veneration, are the friends of that singularly unworldly figure Lowes Dickinson, a man by no means uninterested in public life – indeed, one of the originators of the idea of the League of Nations – nor devoted primarily to scholarship, but, on the contrary, to the cultivation of the arts of private life, personal relationships, friendship; nevertheless, filled with scepticism of the notion expressed by the proposition 'We are not put into this world to sit still and know; we are put into it to act.' The ideals of his friends, Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf (and Virginia Woolf, his wife, also, by sympathetic adoption), Desmond McCarthy, E. M. Forster, Roger Fry, who afterwards came to form the nucleus of the first German–English intelligentsia – 'Bloomsbury', as it was sometimes known – were the precise contrary of the desire to be effective, not to be dim, which characterised Oxford at the time. Their achievements in philosophy, economics, literature, criticism are known to the world. But it was perhaps their ideals of life that influenced their generation and, beyond that, a large body of sensitive English opinion, more than their 'technical' achievements. They recoiled very violently from the hypocrisies and success-worship, not only of their Victorian parents, but of their older Edwardian contemporaries as well. They believed in the supreme value of truth, the contemplation of beautiful objects, and personal

relationships. They stood for private against public life. They were suspicious of success and disliked recognition by the 'establishment' as a symptom of the betrayal somewhere of the values of private life, some kind of quiet 'selling out'. When Keynes was made a peer he invited his friends to come and 'laugh at him', in order to take the curse off this absurd event. Honours, wealth, prominence, public faces were at a heavy discount.

Perhaps they went too far. The cultivation of the personal relationships of a coterie, of mutual affection and intimacy, belief that only within the circle or the sect can moral comfort or spiritual salvation be obtained; the respect for failure as such, distrust of all government, public action, big battalions, important persons, public recognition, piety towards the past, belief in a conventional framework of life, feeling of national or religious pride or solidarity – this swimming against the stream, brave and difficult as it is, can lead to an artificiality, a priggishness, a self-conscious self-righteousness, a stuffy, self-centred disregard for a large portion of reality, which can become both ludicrous and repulsive. Nevertheless the virtues of integrity, independence, intellectual honesty, and the preservation of what John Stuart Mill cared so deeply about, the untrammelled human personality, fullness of nature, not warped or bullied by the despotism of public authority or public opinion – all this is best preserved in an atmosphere where private virtues are allowed full scope, where they are encouraged to flower richly, where it is enough to 'sit still and know', where the citizens of a country are not continuously aware that it is a great country of which they are citizens, and that it is their duty to lift it to yet greater heights, and that all education is therefore 'a branch of statesmanship' in that sense.

Both these currents – Oxford 'realism' and Cambridge 'idealism', the first deeply modified after the end of the First World War, the second criticised with great charm and nostalgia, but not the less devastatingly for that, by Keynes himself, in one of his last writings – are the ripest fruit of the collegiate system: the first of the colleges which stressed teaching above research, the second of colleges which allowed greater freedom to teacher and taught. Neither, perhaps, would have been possible in a system where there was less privilege – where the number of pupils was far greater and the method of private instruction which Oxford and Cambridge could afford was not to be thought of – and, opposed as these tendencies are, each, obviously, plainly enshrines

a truth which is neither obvious nor trivial. The first is that man is not an island or an immense archipelago of islands, that personal relationships matter more than systems, techniques, blueprints, or rather that humane societies depend upon them and that they cannot be left to chance, but can be directed, whether for good or ill, and that universities exercise a decisive effect upon their inmates and, whether by commission or omission, play a crucial part in determining the moral and social quality of a community's life. The second conception stands witness to the proposition that only those societies are worth preserving which contain a sufficient number of persons who possess inner freedom – who do what they do and live as they live because their ends appear worth pursuing to them, and who are not twisted out of this course by the pressure of public opinion, anxiety to please, admiration for success as such, anxious self-questioning about how their own ideals – the pursuit of knowledge, or the cultivation of personal relationships, or the pursuit of an art or a craft, or a quiet life of whatever kind, or a noisy one for that matter – may strike others, what weight they may have in scales which others manipulate, whose workings are not clear to themselves.

These ideals are not, perhaps, in their full form, compatible. The destruction of either certainly leads to the ruin of one of the most genuine, widespread values in terms of which men have lived and communicated on this earth for a very long time. Wilson, with characteristic directness, honesty and lack of moral confusion, made a better case for one of these conceptions than ever was made by those who, since the Renaissance, had built it, until it reached its period of flowering in England in the late nineteenth century. Like all men of deep and settled conviction, he was not tortured by doubts or assailed by the thought of values outside his ken. Since then much has happened in the world to undermine the foundations of what both he and his opponents most deeply believed in. The problems before us today are not the same: the question of mass education, whether in England or America, cannot be answered in the terms laid down either by Wilson, or by those believers in the contemplative life and pure scholarship whom he distrusted. But unless the new social and economic order which is advancing upon us very rapidly now, and which makes protection of the *hortus inclusus*, whether of the intimate, collegiate kind, or of the remote professor on his platform, seem increasingly Utopian, is made compatible with the preservation of those

specifically academic values upon which the continuity of human civilisation – at least in its Western form – perhaps depends (as the Roman Church managed to perform this marvellous feat in the Dark Ages), Wilson's words will be rendered meaningless altogether too soon. No doubt this can be prevented only by conscious and deliberate action, by preserving both the possibility of disinterested learning, and personal relationships between teachers and students, against all pressures, particularly those of the well-meaning and the innocent.

In this sense, certainly, we are not put into the university to 'sit still and know; we are put into it to act'. The quarrelling parties of yesterday, as of today, have been drawn together by the common danger of technological specialisation, which, in spite of all the optimistic words of eighteenth-century philosophers, seems only too compatible with moral and intellectual barbarism. Oxford and Cambridge, Jowett and Pattison, Wilson and the German-trained professors, teachers and researchers – all are on the same side of the barricades. There is no possible doubt where Wilson would have stood today.

Posted 25 February 2004
Revised 21 September 2004