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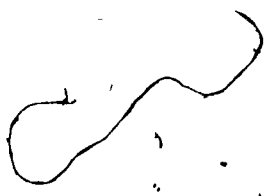
ABSTRACT

The traditional European university is now extinct. The conditions in higher education that have succeeded it are highly unstable and therefore transitory, and its eventual replacement is now dimly perceptible on the horizon. The European university is of course an abstraction, meant to approximate the attributes of higher education in Germany, France, Italy, Scandinavia, and the Low Countries. The system in each of these countries is largely controlled by public authorities, and in every crucial area the future of the universities depends on actions that will or will not be taken by the state. In the not too distant past they were professors' universities with respect to their internal affairs, and elite in their relationship to society. All of them have passed through fundamentally similar transformations since World War II, and now the questions of access to higher education (recruitment and selection) are vital to the universities' individual and collective futures. (Author/MSE)



EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES — THE UNFINISHED REVOLUTION

by

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The thesis of this paper is that the traditional European university is now extinct; that the conditions in higher education which have succeeded it are highly unstable and therefore transitory; and that its eventual replacement is now dimly perceptible on the horizon. Accordingly, the first section attempts to describe what it is that has passed away, the middle sections analyse the processes involved in both death and transformation, and the final section assesses the prospects for the future.

The subject of these speculations, the European university, is of course an abstraction. It is meant to approximate the essential attributes of higher education in Germany, France, Italy, Scandinavia and the Low Countries. The systems of higher education in each of these countries is largely controlled by public authorities. In the not too distant past their institutions of higher learning were Ordinarienuniversitäten, or professors' universities, with respect to their internal affairs, and "elite" in their relationship to society. These institutions also, it will be argued, passed through fundamentally similar transformations since World War II. The purpose of this endeavor is not to describe these events, but to identify the processes at work behind them. The ultimate end, then, is a conceptual scheme for interpreting the recent past and immediate future of European universities. This scheme will undoubtedly not

fit any country perfectly, but it should be adaptable to the unique institutional situation and pace of events in each country. Because the aim is thus general, no attempt has been made to amass relevant statistics, even though many of the arguments are numerical in nature. The basic data on growth and social composition of enrolments are well known and widely available.

I. The University of the Professors; The Education of an Elite

Although many of the universities of continental Europe have venerable histories extending from the middle ages, in their modern incarnations they have nevertheless been predominantly products of the nineteenth century. If the founding of the University of Berlin in the first decade of that century symbolizes the beginning of this development, its full fruition did not occur until the turn of the twentieth century. The form in question is usually designated as the "German idea of a university," in recognition of the priority of German practice and the attractiveness of the German example. The distinguishing feature of this conception of a university was its dedication to research and its consequent apotheosis of the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. To accept this as the informing principle of European universities, however, conveys only one facet of a complex social institution. The uniqueness of the pre-World War I university can be grasped better by viewing it both from without and from within. For society the university was a component in the vital process of the reproduction of social elites; while internally it was a remarkably self-contained system that operated on principles which had little connection

with its manifest social purpose. Seen from this perspective it will be evident that the traditional European university was neither a German monopoly nor an emanation of German idealist philosophy. Rather, it was an institution which evolved into the same distinctive form across the European continent.

For the upper-middle class of pre-War Europe, whose position in the social hierarchy was guaranteed by neither hereditary titles nor immense wealth, a university education was above all a means of transmitting their dignified social status to their offspring (males only, of course; a woman's social rank was determined through marriage). This meant that a university degree was not only a socially respected title and a badge of culture which separated its holder from the masses, but also that it provided access to the most prestigious occupations. For non-scientists the largest single category of these occupations was provided by the bureaucracies of the different levels of government. If secondary school teachers are added to this group, it becomes clear that the majority of these graduates ended up on the government payrolls, while the rest were absorbed into a variety of positions in the private sector. For either alternative it would appear that a university education was a virtual guarantee of a prestigious job and concomitant social status.

Yet appearances can mislead. Although a university education might appear to be the cause of its recipient's subsequent high status, it was actually only one stage in a process of social reproduction that involved other crucial factors. Before a student ever reached the university he had already undergone a rigorous pre-selection. Entrance to the university was, and for the most part still is, completely open to all who have completed an academic secondary school-leaving certificate (baccalauréat

in France, Abitur in Germany). While standards for these degrees were generally demanding, selection nevertheless depended far more upon social criteria. Fees were quite high; the commitment to this type of education had to be made between ages nine and eleven, or preferably earlier by attending special preparatory classes; the course of study lasted until the eighteenth year, at a time when the majority of youths entered the labor market at age fourteen; and, the classical curriculum was culturally remote and rather forbidding for the vast majority of the population. Social selection for secondary schools, then, can be visualized as a series of filters that operated to the disadvantage of non-elite pupils, even if the financial barrier were overcome with the help of the few available scholarships.[1] So, even though secondary education was never entirely closed to non-elite sons, the operation of the system gave an overwhelming advantage to the progeny of the elites.

For most of the nineteenth century the achievement of finishing secondary school was enough in itself to bring the strong likelihood of a prestigious occupation. However, by the twentieth century this was apparently no longer the case. For the generation that attained maturity before the First World War, following the Abitur or the baccalauréat with a university education became a matter of course. The demand for higher education consequently expanded considerably in the three decades prior to the War without the social basis of that demand significantly widening. With their educational attainments thus compounded, the elite buttressed their social standing with another level of degree. But how important these credentials were for attaining a prestigious occupation is open to question.

Even though a university degree was absolutely necessary to become a doctor, lawyer, secondary teacher, or many kinds of civil servants, there

was a considerable latitude of achievement, and hence status, in each of these professions. In the determination of who received the most coveted positions social selection once more became a significant, perhaps the dominant factor. This could be expected in the establishment of a medical or legal practice;[2] and, personal and family connections must have always been crucial for graduates obtaining the best positions in commerce or industry. It would really only cause surprise in government employment. Yet, in the ostensibly meritocratic French civil service letters of reference routinely stressed the worthiness of the candidate's family rather than his personal abilities.[3] In German universities the fraternities served as a mechanism for both social screening and assistance in securing suitable jobs. "Making-it" in the upper-middle class of pre-War Europe obviously required a combination of educational attainment and talent, not to mention luck; however, the tangible benefits of family connections together with intangible advantages of cultural background were powerful factors favoring the perpetuation of those at the top of the social hierarchy. This does not mean that neophytes were systematically excluded from prestige positions, nor that the old elites had an automatic right to them. In fact, for those near the top of the social pyramid the suction of downward mobility was a strong and ubiquitous force. It was precisely for this reason that they sought more education for their sons as an additional guarantee against backsliding. Hence, by the twentieth century university education had become an integral part of the social reproduction of elites, but by no means an independent factor. A university degree without a high social background generally led to respectable careers in teaching or the middle ranges of the civil service; the combination of a degree and elite background, however, promised a superior place within the prestigious occupations.

The fact that there was a pre-selection of university students by the secondary schools and a post-selection of graduates in the labor market meant that the academic selection within the university was comparatively unimportant. The level of university work required to "get-by" was in all likelihood not significantly more difficult than that necessary for a secondary school-leaving certificate. A university degree thus signified at the very least a modicum of diligence and perseverence. As for the content of this education, the universities had comparatively little responsibility here as well. Outside of the sciences there was little vocational knowledge which had to be imparted.[4] The absence of responsibility in these two areas, or the lack of social accountability, was the negative condition which made university autonomy possible. The definition of what a university education would comprise was thus left to be determined internally.

It was under these conditions that the German idealist conception of a university became dominant, first within the Germanic States, then within the orbit of German learning, and finally, after accommodation to national traditions, throughout the Western World. At its heart was the idealization of learning and the pursuit of truth, primarily for the ennoblement this conferred upon the searcher. In practical terms this made research and the advancement of knowledge the paramount institutional goal of the university and its professors. For the latter this meant a disciplinary orientation--participation in an open exchange of knowledge with others in their field, and a concomitant system of recognition and rewards for intellectual contributions.[5] The prestige and intellectual authority of the professor thus depended upon his position within his science. When universities accepted these disciplinary standards as the most important criterion of a professor's worth, they in effect made

intellectual authority the basis of institutional authority as well. This evolution consecrated the nineteenth century university as the domain of the professor.

Raymond Aron has described the chair-holding professor as "the sole master of his affairs before God." The breadth of unfettered authority accorded to university professors was unequaled by any other category of state employee.[6] Collectively they elected the chief officers and deliberative bodies of the university. They had an extraordinary power over the careers of their subordinates and played the predominant part in choosing the occupants of vacant chairs. As examiners they determined those worthy to pass both the university and the state exams. Individual chair-holders often administered considerable resources as directors of seminars or institutes, and each professor was accorded complete control over teaching in the area covered by his chair. In general, for whatever fell within his intellectual sphere the authority of the individual professor was supreme; for whatever concerned his faculty or the university as a whole he shared authority with his colleagues.

The aura which surrounded the disinterested pursuit of knowledge set the tone for the university and determined the character of its education. Any subject with practical applications was rigorously excluded from the university as not being wissenschaftlich. The faculties of law and medicine, on the other hand, were rescued from being mere trade schools precisely because they were associated with this hallowed pursuit by being part of the university. If the prestige of scientific inquiry shone most brightly upon the professors, it also reflected upon all those connected with this process. For the assistants and junior staff it was the chief compensation for a difficult and penurious existence. But, perhaps the students were the ultimate beneficiaries, since for them the intellectual

prestige of university scholarship was translated into the social prestige of a university education. Diligent students, of course, had an extraordinary opportunity to study with acknowledged scholars, but even the more dilatory were considered to have acquired a distinctive quality of mind from their transitory association with scholarship. Hence the principle of Lernfreiheit: it mattered little educationally what the student studied since it was participation in scientific inquiry which provided the ultimate benefit of university work.

The success of the professors' university as a model for higher education did not depend upon the supposed intellectual qualities it fostered in its students. Rather, it was the scholarship of the professors themselves that caused the German ideal to be emulated in universities throughout the West. The capacity of this form of academic organization to propel the advancement of science became apparent in the second half of the nineteenth century -- a period when the rate and breadth of progress in natural science, philology and history was increasing dramatically. States perceived a vital national interest in emulating the German model at the same time that the international community of scholars realized the necessity of meeting German standards. The ensuing efforts to duplicate the conditions of German learning took different forms within the contexts of different national traditions in higher education; however, because the goal was to generate scholarship, these efforts replicated in essence the university of the professors.

By the eve of the First World War, then, the universities throughout Europe conformed to the general pattern outlined above. Internally they were dominated by professors whose governance stemmed from their intellectual authority as scholars. For the one in fifty young men who were privileged to study with these scholars, the university might provide an

intellectually rewarding participation in the creation of knowledge. Whether or not it did, however, was only loosely connected to the social meaning of this experience. The university, from this external point of view, provided a cultural capstone to a social elite, thereby making them all the more worthy to follow their fathers into the prestige occupations of their societies. As a university education changed during the last half of the nineteenth century from a prerequisite for some occupations to a prerequisite for all prestige positions, the primary social purpose of that education became to provide the qualifications for those positions.

II. The Advent of Mass Higher Education

Institutionally and intellectually the university of the professors was long considered to be an absolute -- the essence of what a university was supposed to be. Yet its position in society was no more stable than the social relations it reflected. During the traumatic generation that separated the outbreak of the First World War and the termination of the Second, social expectations throughout Western Europe were profoundly altered. As Europe began to overcome the effects of World War II, it became apparent that the demand for secondary and higher education had expanded to previously excluded groups. This was the beginning of a process of demographic expansion that was shortly to transform the traditional European university.

The increased social demand for education had its initial impact on secondary education. There the demands for wider access which had been largely resisted during the interwar years were gradually and often grudgingly met. This allowed a far wider segment of the middle class to seek respectable careers for their children through educational attainments and credentials. However, since secondary education by itself had a limited -- and dwindling -- currency in the labor market, this enrolment

growth was transmitted directly to the universities where there was no institutional bar to discriminate between the increasing number of secondary-school graduates. The resultant rate of growth in university enrolments was modest at first, but soon revealed an exponential pattern. Typically, the post-war enrolment level was doubled by the late 1950s, and then re-doubled by the mid-sixties. In the decade since enrolments have doubled again in several countries, although a slackening in the rate of growth has occurred virtually everywhere. Only in Sweden was this upward trend temporarily reversed. Although the figures are not in for 1976, it is probably safe to say that more than 20% of each age cohort now enter higher education in all of these countries.

The shape of this growth was due partly to the prolonged post-war economic boom and in part to educational expansion feeding upon itself. Prosperity undoubtedly allowed a far greater number of college graduates to find a niche in expanding government bureaus or private enterprise than had been feasible in former labor markets. Over the course of the boom this greatly expanded precisely those groups which would orient their children toward higher education. Education itself was the most significant of the growth industries providing new graduate jobs. However, another powerful factor in the overall growth of higher education derives from what could be called educational inflation. Just as when the government overproduces currency it then takes more money to purchase goods, so as the universities mint larger numbers of diplomas an individual must acquire more diplomas to attain a given anticipated status level.[7]

The nature and limits of this expansion were difficult for contemporaries to judge during the 1960s. If pessimists could point to an undoubted lowering of overall standards, optimists had the seductive American example before them, where the percentage of young adults

entering higher education was then triple that of the advanced nations of Western Europe, and still in a state of rapid expansion. Probably for most the growth of universities was one of the most laudable features of the post-war transformation of Western Europe. Under these conditions it was not always possible to distinguish growing pains from serious structural problems. Planners, however, did show concern when the rate of growth consistently topped 10% per year in the 1960s. The magnitude of the problem only became apparent toward the end of the decade when a succession of crises revealed a profound and pervasive hostility to institutions that only shortly before had seemed eminently successful. The cause of this startling turnabout, paradoxically, was its very success. The unprecedented expansion of university education had transformed both its internal and its external relations.

III. The Crisis of Academic Authority

The universities that experienced this post-war growth were essentially like their turn-of-the-century predecessors; that is, they were dominated internally by the prestige and academic authority of their professors. For this reason the most immediate consequences of university expansion redounded to their benefit. Governments gradually at first, then rapidly from the late 1950s, increased the resources devoted to higher education and research; thus, in effect, increasing the resources controlled by professors. Institutes grew and assistants multiplied. If the means for professorial scholarship had never been so ample, their burgeoning administrative responsibilities seriously eroded the time and energy available for it. Moreover, securing and maintaining those resources required an involvement in academic politics at the level of the faculty, the university and the national ministry. A nominal effort at teaching had to be maintained, even though the bulk of those responsi-

bilities could be delegated to assistants. Scholar, administrator, politician, teacher -- all these demanding roles were thrust upon eminent chair-holders, thereby stretching the area of their authority to the point that it became insupportable. As the malfunctions of the system became increasingly apparent, that authority began to be challenged by those over whom it was exercised.

For students in the 1960s a university education had long ceased to provide the opportunity for independent intellectual development under professorial tutelage. The famous German seminars mushroomed to unwieldy size; the lecture rooms of the Sorbonne could not begin to accommodate the students enrolled; and in Italy professors conducted oral examinations with their assistants on an assembly-line basis.[8] The problem was not merely one of over-crowding, but rather was due to the incongruity between the means and the ends of university education. This form of instruction, at best passive and at worst perfunctory, was incapable of producing either a learned professional or a man of culture. Conversely, given the methods available the ends attainable were of dubious value. It was with some justification, then, that students rebelled against the professors who defended unrealistically high standards, while doing little to assist students to meet them.

The professors' position was weakened further by the alienation of the junior staff. The early stages of an academic career have traditionally been arduous, insecure and unrenumerative. The chief compensation for these frustrations has always been the promise of future rewards -- specifically, the prestige and satisfaction of some day attaining a professorial chair. The expansion of the universities, particularly during the 1960s, completely swamped former practices of appointment and promotion, and ultimately dashed the expectations associated with junior

positions. The multitude of assistants recruited to assume the teaching load during the 1960s soon faced a virtual blockage in their careers. And, the few promotions which were available seemed, from their somewhat biased view, to be monopolized by a few powerful patrons.[9] As the system lost legitimacy in their eyes, resentment rose against those who both controlled it and were its chief beneficiaries. For the assistants the professors ceased to be senior colleagues in a common endeavor; instead, they resembled bosses who cynically exploited their subordinates while shirking their own responsibilities, especially toward students.

The erosion of academic authority within the university was not the cause of the subsequent crises, but their precondition. This was apparent as that authority collapsed in the face of challenges across Western Europe. However, the character of the crises which ensued was determined by the prominence and direction of radical groups -- either anarchist or Marxist. Indeed, the predominance of the extreme Left in university turmoil from the late '60s to the present day has been the feature of the problem most resistant to coherent and convincing explanation. Traditionalists, both liberal and conservative, have preferred to interpret it as an essentially irrational phenomenon related either to the Zeitgeist or to some obscure qualities of adolescent psychology. Those in political sympathy with the student movement have applauded its perception of the university as a bourgeois institution, and taken solace in the romantic vision of bourgeois society being repudiated by its children and apparents heirs. It would seem, however, that any explanation that presumes to delve below the external manifestations of the crises ought to start from the void of legitimate authority left by the transformation of the traditional university.

The change in the class composition of the student body from upper-

middle class to broad middle class created a disjunction between the means and the ends of education, particularly in the humanities. Unreceptive to disinterested study for cultural enrichment, this broader constituency instead groped for relevance to the external world in their studies. Not only was this lacking, but it was antithetical to the ideology of the traditional university. Moreover, by the standards implicit in much university teaching, society outside the university was philistine and morally corrupt. Anomie was the result among students who could orient themselves neither by the norms of traditional academia nor by those of society at large. It was to this anomie that the ideologies of the extreme left afforded succor.

What these ideologies provided, in spite of their considerable diversity, was a reasonably coherent analysis of the problems within the university and the shortcomings of bourgeois society of which it formed a part. Judged by realistic standards the expectations of the exteme Left were largely utopian; however, by the unrealistic, moralistic criteria prevailing within the university they possessed a large degree of rationality. The Left consequently led the challenge to the academic authority of the traditional university, and middle-class students, who had no real interest in the ultimate political goals of the Left, nevertheless supported or acquiesced in that leadership. For them the critique offered by the Left articulated their real frustrations and legitimate grievances toward both the university and their society.[10]

In the actual crises of the late 1960s students and assistants marched under the banners of the Left to challenge the university of the professors. Despite the temporary strength of these movements, there was little reason to believe that they could force fundamental changes in the university against the entrenched power of the professors and their

employers, the state. In the light of the events that followed the crises, however, it seems apparent that the professors possessed surprisingly little support in the various ministries of education; nor was there sympathy beyond the ministries in the highest political authorities of the state. The professors, it would seem, had antagonized their superiors at the same time that they were alienating their subordinates. The reasons for this were both practical and political.

The rapid expansion of the universities brought problems of adaptation that had become acute by the 1960s. Perhaps foremost was the need to diversify curricula and programs in order to provide students with vocational alternatives to the increasingly over-crowded traditional careers. The alarming rates at which students were failing to complete degrees or over-extending the length of study for degrees represented an insupportable wastage of human and financial resources. And, the accelerated growth of scientific knowledge demanded a flexibility in research facilities and a capacity to accommodate new fields of inquiry which were deficient in existing universities. All these matters concerned the vested interests of the professors as well as their academic ideology. Consequently, efforts by educational planners to deal with these issues often collided with entrenched professorial power at the level of the university, the faculty and the individual chair. In effect, the autonomy of the traditional university coupled with the de facto domination of the professors seemed to preclude rational adaptation to contemporary conditions.

It is more difficult to generalize about politics across national lines, but it nevertheless appears that political differences may have exacerbated state disaffection toward universities. The French professoriat, with its traditionally Leftist political orientation, was overwhelmingly hostile to Gaullism, despite an enormous investment in higher

education by the Fifth Republic. In Sweden the situation was reversed as conservative professors opposed Social-Democratic attempts to democratize the university. Political factors thus often can be discerned in the willingness of the state to see professorial powers attenuated.

In the aftermath of the student revolts the dissatisfaction of the states with professorial governance was undoubtedly the crucial factor in bringing about extensive structural reforms in the university. If the ostensible goal of these changes was to appease the students' and assistants' demands for "participation," the ulterior motive of the governments was to make the university more flexible and more responsive to changing conditions by adding other viewpoints to those of the professors. This pattern unfolded most dramatically in France. There the government responded to the 1968 crisis by completely dismantling and reconstituting the universities. In the process the former bastions of professorial power, the faculties, were entirely eliminated. In the Unités d'Enseignement et de Recherche which replaced them representatives of the student body and junior teaching or research personnel were placed beside those of the professors on the governing council. Elsewhere university government was reorganized in a similar way to provide "participation," although the external forms of the university were largely maintained. Student protest in Sweden, following directly that in France, quickly achieved their inclusion on university bodies. Unrest in Dutch universities exploded the following spring (1969) which led two years later to the University Government Reorganization Act. Sustained student agitation in the univerisites of the German Federal Republic has produced new constitutions for virtually every one. Pressure from students in Italy forced informal changes within the faculties even before the parliament managed to pass reform legislation (1973). In all these cases "participation" was achieved because the

state had a common interest with the university insurgents (who were otherwise its virulent detractors) to diminish the power of the professors.[11] It soon became evident, however, that the states wanted to encroach upon that authority from above as well as from below.

There were, in fact, several compelling arguments why the state could no longer allow the university complete self-government. Higher education had become by the 1970s an issue of such public concern that it could no longer be ignored in the political process. In a practical way it affected the lives of a significant portion of the population; ideologically it had become a major battleground; and financially it laid claim to considerable governmental resources. The demands of rational planning, diversification and efficiency all required that an authority superior to the democratically constituted university bodies be capable of intervening in the direction of the university. In practice this has recently taken the form of either direct government intervention in higher education, or the establishment of a stronger university administration. In the case of the recent comprehensive reform in Sweden (1975) both these developments are evident. The overall evolution of higher education there has become part of the social policy of the ruling Social Democrats, while on a local level the universities will apparently be brought under strict administrative control. In France, where the power of the national government over the centralized system of education has always been strong, the 1968 reform introduced university presidents to provide stronger administration and greater individuality. The widely recognized need for competent administration has produced either university presidents or stronger rectors throughout West Germany. Problems of planning, coordination and financing have also prompted the federal government to take a larger role in German higher education. The "Framework Law of Higher

Education" (Hochschulrahmengesetz) passed early this year set guidelines which all German universities will have to meet. The German law, and parallel legislation in the Netherlands, have attempted to remedy problems on which democratically constituted universities are incapable of taking decisive action because of student opposition. These include limiting the length of study in universities to five years and establishing penalties for disruption. Taken together these measures reveal a definite pattern of superimposing government control over the usual spheres of university sovereignty. How far this trend might go depends upon several factors which will be shortly discussed. What is certain, though, is that the obsolescence of the university of the professors in the face of mass higher education has unleashed a chain of events that has utterly transformed university governance in Europe. Professors are by no means powerless today, but the power they still possess is wielded under far different conditions than it was a decade ago.

IV. Higher Education and Higher Occupations

The meaning that a university education has in society is only loosely connected with how the universities are governed and what is taught there. It depends primarily upon the capacity of a university degree to lead to a desirable job, suitable financial rewards, and a respectable social status. This connection between education and status gives rise to the social expectations underlying the demand for higher education. Although these expectations are relative to the social position from which one originates, they nevertheless in the aggregate pertain to a restricted group of occupations with a limited number of positions. In Europe the bulk of these positions have always been provided by the government. In both Germany and France an estimated 70% of university graduates are employed by the state, and this approximate figure would in all likelihood hold for the

other countries under consideration. The fact that industry and commerce are only weakly involved in the demand for university graduates serves to emphasize the finite limits of this portion of the labor market. Nevertheless, this has not prevented an unprecedented expansion of graduate careers since the end of the War. During the early stages of the post-war boom there was considerable excess demand for highly trained personnel. The growth in national wealth combined with increased demand for social services produced a sizable expansion in government employment. Then too, by a complex process of redefinition more jobs were deemed to require university training. Yet, as impressive as this growth in the demand for university graduates has been, it was bound to be outstripped by the supply.

Although the demand for university graduates increased steadily during the years of the economic boom in Europe, the supply increased sharply when the large classes of the sixties began to graduate. These labor markets tightened rather abruptly as the major areas of government employment were filled. When the French students revolted in 1968 underemployment was already a serious problem.[12] Now, graduate unemployment is present to some degree in every country. It has reached alarming proportions in France, and is approaching the grotesque in Italy where there are no jobs for 90% of the graduates in some fields. The situation naturally varies from subject to subject. Considerable demand still seems to exist in most technical areas while the social sciences, with great popularity inside the university and no regular occupational slots outside of it, offer the bleakest prospects. In general, the lack of suitable employment affects most severely those who have sought in disinterested humanistic study the cultural attributes traditionally associated with a university education.

The solution to the present anomalies has long been apparent to all concerned with the advent of mass higher education: diversification must be introduced to channel a significant portion of the student population into careers that will correspond to the manpower needs of the economy. The difficulty with this solution has also been apparent: it stems from the maxim that diversity produces inequality.[13] Higher technical or vocationally oriented training does not bear the same cultural prestige as the subjects of the established university faculties. Moreover, a vocational path virtually precludes attaining the high social status that university matriculants expect.

Educational planners have faced the first of these obstacles by trying to overcome what they regard as the "irrational differences in prestige value of various kinds of higher education."[14] This has been done by both boosting the prestige of technical institutions and assimilating them with universities in the hope of lessening the cultural differences between them. In France, for example, the Institutes universitaires de technologie (IUTs) established in 1966 to provide two-year technical courses were given the right to select their students in order to provide them with a "grandes-écoles" image.[15] In the reorganization mandated by the 1968 Loi d'orientation the IUTs became units within the new universities. Despite these measures the French IUTs have not so far become attractive enough to acquire an optimal share of French students. The U68 reform recently enacted in Sweden has dealt with this situation in a much more determined manner. Enrolments have been frozen at the existing universities while all expansion has been forced into occupationally relevant fields. The West Germans have committed themselves in principle to the "comprehensive university" where vocational subjects will no longer be excluded as inappropriate to higher education. They have also

been forced into a type of channeling through the numerus clausus which can require a potential student to wait years for an opening in a preferred field. However, just as in France, these measures have proven incapable of redistributing student enrolments.

The explanation for the disappointing results of short-cycle, technical or vocational training are not difficult to find. The prestige value of different forms of education are not inherent to any particular institution, but are determined by society at large. This means that they are not only strongly resistant to change, but also that they are "irrational" only in the artificially ordered minds of educational planners. Since the demand for higher education is geared to certain levels of social expectation, it cannot be drained off by an inferior level of expectation. Recently this relationship has been depicted as a game situation in which the players must choose between (traditional) long university education and (vocational) short-cycle programs.[16] The average returns for each choice are defined as being identical, but those choosing the long cycle will receive either high, average or low rewards, while those choosing the short cycle all receive an average return. By the terms of this game the informed players will always choose the long course for two reasons: 1) they have nothing to lose (on the average), and could be lucky enough to secure a high return; and 2) for every player who chooses the short course, competition decreases and the odds improve for those choosing the long course. In this respect the game mirrors reality where the bulk of the students choose a traditional university education for analogous reasons. However, unlike the game these students differ in abilities and social background, and the quality of the university education they receive differs as well. Who actually receives the high rewards, then, cannot be considered a matter of chance.

The training available in universities is by no means homogenous. In every system there are certain paths that lead quite directly to upper-middle class occupations. Medicine is presently one of these in every country; certain grandes écoles form a special kind of elite track in France. In addition, there are marked differences in prestige and quality between different institutions, even though their degrees may be nominally equivalent. The path that a student would be likely to take will depend greatly upon his motivation, his orientation and the resources at his disposal. All these factors, in turn, are strongly affected by social background.

Entrance into the elite tracks of higher education is in such demand that it often requires years of extra preparation, as in the preparatory classes for the grandes écoles, or the "holding patterns" forced upon many aspiring medical students in Germany by the numerus clausus. This not only requires the wherewithal to defer earnings for a long period, but it presupposes a strong orientation and motivation. Students from higher social backgrounds are quite likely to have this motivation because failure to enter the elite track threatens them with downward social mobility. (Psychologically, abhorrence of backsliding is far stronger than the lure of social climbing.) Yet, probably the most crucial factor is orientation toward the educational system and its relationship to elite occupational goals. Upper-class students receive this orientation from their families, and enter higher education with a clear idea of the means necessary for the ends they desire. Students from low social backgrounds who eschew vocational tracks are likely to have vague ambitions coupled with an absence of this kind of orientation. They consequently become oriented after they enter the university, which means that they drift into a major field that has a clear and compelling identity within the academic world,

but little occupational relevance outside it.[17] This, then, is the group whose expectations concerning higher education are most likely to be frustrated under current conditions. But more importantly, since the majority of today's students fall within this category, their plight reveals once again the dysfunctions of the traditional European university under conditions of mass higher education.

University training is now more than ever before a prerequisite for the most desirable occupations, making it an absolute necessity for all those who seek an upper-middle class status. Unfortunately, under present conditions in Europe the available positions conferring that status are much fewer than the number demanding them. Inevitably this has meant a de facto condition of selection. This process actually takes place in three stages, corresponding to entering the university, following a course of study there, and entering the labor market upon leaving the university. Although natural ability plays a role in this selection, it would still appear that factors based upon social background predominate at each stage. Scholars concerned with this topic have focused most of their attention on the problem of access to higher education. Their work has revealed that mass higher education is in reality dominated by the middle class as a whole, for whom this training is necessary to maintain their social position or (in the case of the lower-middle class) to advance a step. The argument presented above has stressed that students from the upper-middle class are more likely to be successful in selecting, entering and surviving the elite tracks within higher education.[18] Under the present conditions of flooded labor markets and widespread unemployment of university graduates, the selection that takes place at the egress from higher education assumes especial prominence. Here again those with the proper social background and good family connections are far more likely to

succeed in this intense competition.

It would seem, then, that the external relations of the university have undergone a significant alteration as a result of prolonged growth. For the student of higher social background -- i.e., roughly those who would have been the clientele of the traditional university -- the expectations and the rewards associated with university study have remained constant. They still possess the best chance of eventually attaining elite positions, even though the pressure of competition has made this process of social reproduction more difficult than ever before. For students of middling or lower backgrounds who pursue liberal rather than vocational studies, however, a cruel disjunction has become apparent within the last decade between the expectations and the results of higher education. Unless they have possessed extraordinary ability, they have faced increasing difficulty becoming assimilated into the occupational structure at all, let alone in an area related to their training. Since the demographic expansion of higher education has been caused by just this type of student, their plight emphasizes once again the obsolescence of the traditional university under conditions of mass higher education. The present imbalance between the supply of university graduates and the demand for their labor cannot persist in the long run. And, since higher education shows no sign of shrinking back to its former size, this can only indicate that profound changes are in store for the nature of university training. By extrapolating the preceding developments in the light of the fragmentary evidence available, some idea might be had of what these changes are likely to be.

V. Egalitarianism and the University

The engine of change responsible for the demise of the traditional university has been fueled by one principle element -- the demographic expansion of higher education. There is good reason to believe that these

forces are for the moment largely played out, so that the continuing process of adjusting to the consequences of this recent expansion is not likely to be swamped by a new wave of student enrolments. The remaining sources of growth are comparatively minor, such as an increase in the rate of participation from women or from less-developed areas. Also, diploma inflation and tight labor markets may keep students enrolled for extra years. Nevertheless, countervailing forces are likely to keep this growth within manageable proportions. First, most countries can expect university-age cohorts to be smaller in the near future. And secondly, the social demand for higher education seems unlikely to spread to presently marginal groups, no matter how open access becomes. Consequently, no major expansion of higher education is likely to occur until the late 1980s, when the children of the university generation of the 1960s begin graduating from secondary school.

The limits that objective conditions in society or the economy impose on the development of higher education are easily discerned. There are, however, other conditions created by prevailing social and cultural values which are far more difficult to pin down, but which nevertheless have an important bearing upon higher education. This point can be illustrated more readily than it can be proven. At the beginning of this century a consensus prevailed about higher education in Europe that, 1) the university ought to be governed in a patriarchal fashion by those who were most knowledgeable, experienced and responsible; 2) that except for a few individuals, it was psychologically damaging and socially dangerous for anyone to attempt to transcend his social origins through education; and 3) that there were inherent differences in prestige associated with various curricula, the liberal arts having greatest esteem. In the present democratic age these assumptions have been either labeled as reactionary or completely

displaced. In their stead there is widespread acceptance of a set of egalitarian assumptions about these same issues. Even though these are vaguely articulated or merely tacit, they nevertheless hold that, 1) university decisions should be made democratically through the participation of constituent interest groups; 2) that everyone should maximize his formal education, and that the social make-up of the university population should approximate that of the general population; and 3) that prestige differences between subjects should cease to exist. Although they are stated crudely here, these egalitarian assumptions represent a real force shaping the emergence of the new European university. Yet, they are in contradiction with many of the social processes identified in the previous sections of this paper. The future of higher education in Europe may well depend upon the outcome of these antagonisms.

The Gruppenuniversität, in which representatives of students and junior faculty participate in university decision-making bodies with their counterparts from the senior faculty, is already an accomplished fact in some form or other throughout the universities of Europe. However, it is not yet clear what long-term consequences these changes in governance are likely to have. The situation has remained rather fluid because it takes time to establish a modus operandi between new administrative bodies, and because the situation of the participants is often unstable. If the material situation of the assistants has in general improved considerably, their chances of ever being promoted to professor are now worse than ever due to slackening growth and governmental austerity. They thus threaten to become a permanently disgruntled faction within the university, but now far better organized than in the past. The instability of the student population makes projections about their political commitments rather uncertain. However, since their grievances transcended the university from

the outset, they could never be appeased by curricular or organizational changes. Even after the far-reaching reforms in German universities, for example, a recent poll revealed a miniscule 3% of the students favoring the status quo. Some 41% advocated moderate reforms, while 46% were holding out for revolutionary changes. It thus seems likely that the political sympathies of both assistants and students will remain predominately with the Left. The question of their influence then becomes inseparable from that of the future of the radicalized university.

A recent New York Times report (April, 1976) on the mood at the University of Heidelberg indicated that far-left groups had dwindled to insignificance, and that student life had largely returned to its former tranquility. An analysis of conditions at the Free University of Berlin, by way of contrast, reported that various communist organizations controlled several departments and institutes as well as the university presidency. [19] This state of affairs has been produced by the premature institutionalization of the student movement at Berlin. The crucial difference in these two situations seems to be that at Heidelberg student activism is in the process of dying a natural death, while at Berlin the spontaneity of the student movement has been replaced by organization. Throughout European universities the Berlin pattern (though less extreme) has been more common than the Heidelberg one. Furthermore, whenever organization has replaced spontaneity it has worked to the benefit of the communists because of their greater dedication and superior organizational skills. Their ability to get out the vote has allowed them to dominate student elections, and also to control the most important student organizations. What began, then, as a movement of the "New Left" has now fallen under the tutelage of the old left.

The consequences of this development have not been as calamitous as

had been widely feared -- although they have been dire indeed at places like the Berlin universities where left-wing communist majorities have been attained on governing bodies. Nevertheless, the long-term results are likely to be counterproductive from the students' point of view. The predominance of the Left, whether communist or not, has had the effect of stereotyping student reactions to all issues. Automatic ideological responses preclude more pragmatic ones, with the result that student interests are perceived in a narrow, tendentious manner. The French Left, for example, has led the opposition to reforms which were intended to make graduates more employable in order to prevent business from having a voice in university curriculum and to defend the vested interests of the academic unions. The value of student participation under these conditions becomes questionable. However, at the same time there is little doubt that participation will remain part of European universities for the foreseeable future. The organizational effectiveness of the communists is a virtual guarantee of the longevity of the institutions they have come to dominate.

An intransigent contingent of communist representatives is only one reason why the Gruppenuniversität is unlikely to adapt well to future conditions. Any governing body based upon the representation of groups with vested interests is likely to be intractable in institutional matters. University democracy thus constituted can be expected to produce a deadlock of internal forces and strong resistance to externally mandated change. Yet, what the university of the future requires is flexibility to make the inevitable accommodations demanded by the labor market. If it is unable to make these changes itself, which seems certain to be the case, they will be imposed upon the university by either the recently strengthened administrations or, more likely, the educational ministries of the state. As a result the scope of decision making for elected university bodies will be

narrowed to the least significant internal matters, while planning and policy in higher education are increasingly imposed by the state. However, this eventuality is by no means foreordained. In all likelihood the encroachments of the state will be strongly resisted within the universities. In fact, the present controversy in France is just such a struggle. But regardless of its immediate outcome, the hegemony of the state is far more likely to determine the future direction of the universities than the representative councils established in the wake of the student revolts.

The idea that higher education should be largely restricted to the wealthiest groups in society has been repugnant to most post-war Europeans. The long-range benefits of desirable occupations and the short-range advantage of a public subsidy, it is generally held, should be open to all. In the German Federal Republic this is even a constitutional right. It has also been widely believed, particularly in academic circles, that higher education is an unalloyed blessing which everyone should want to attain. Across Europe these beliefs have gradually been translated into practical efforts to establish equality in the opportunity of each child to reach the universities. The results that have been achieved have not begun to match the prevailing egalitarian expectations. The great expansion of the university population has turned out to be a middle-class phenomenon. The degree to which states undertake to change this will have an important effect in determining the future of higher education.

At the present most national systems seem to be moving in the direction of making higher education open to anyone who could conceivably want it. This involves accepting all types of secondary training as suitable preparation and creating multiple branching points between different educational programs. Sweden, which has gone farthest in this direction, has dispensed with all academic requirements if the applicant is at least 24

years old and has worked for five years. Such provisions are nevertheless unlikely to significantly alter the social distribution of students, because the demand for higher education is primarily determined by social position. Thus, the Swedish working class which comprises half of the population only provides a quarter of the university students. To achieve a more egalitarian statistical profile, then, it becomes necessary to offer students from lower backgrounds positive inducements to take actions they do not find otherwise compelling. This makes such strategies costly, and, since rates of academic success are lower relative to normally recruited students, they are also inefficient. There consequently seems to be little practical justification for extending the present degree of access, even though there may be strong political and ideological pressure for doing so.

There is another facet to the problem of access which is seldom raised because it is abrasive to egalitarian values. It is that under present conditions the marginal utility of a university education is relative to both ability and social position. It was argued above that students from lower-middle-class or working-class backgrounds who pursued non-vocational programs were most likely to fall victim to the current graduate unemployment. Unless current conditions are radically altered efforts to increase their participation would be not only foolish, but cruel. There are two prerequisites for a rational incorporation of these groups into the ranks of higher education: greater diversification in the development of vocationally oriented programs, and a system of counseling which would channel them into feasible educational paths. Unfortunately, such a solution would not "democratize" higher education except in an artifical, global sense. It would in fact tend to make it more stratified. Yet, despite the strength of egalitarian sentiments, this is precisely the direction in which European higher education seems to be evolving.

In the last several years the pressure to enter the elite tracks has decidedly increased in response to labor market conditions and some disillusionment with liberal subjects. This has forced a system of selection to be imposed in those places where it did not already exist. Such selection invariably favors those with the advantage of higher social backgrounds. Not only do they usually possess better preparation, but they also have superior information about how the system works, plus the motivation and staying power to achieve their goals. Moreover, the existing mechanisms of selection have the effect of magnifying these inherent advantages of privileged backgrounds. The numerus clausus in the German Federal Republic allows those who can afford it to wait for an opening in a preferred field; and, the concours which control entrance to the grandes écoles in France are hardly open when one has to wager two or more years of costly preparation on the chance to be admitted. There is, of course, the possibility of democratizing higher education slightly by mitigating the effects of this kind of prolonged selection. An obvious mechanism would be to imitate American testing practices. Standardized tests like the College Boards and the Graduate Record Examinations no doubt reflect social background, but to a lesser extent than does school achievement. Such practices have been strongly resisted by most European educators until recently. They are now under serious study in West Germany, and may eventually become a part of the reformed numerus clausus system which will go into effect next year. Standardized testing will in all likelihood continue to be opposed by those groups which benefit most from the existing system.

So in the near future competitive pressure may make recruitment to elite tracks slightly more inegalitarian. This may in a longer perspective turn out to be a product of the historical moment. Inasmuch as the

transition to mass higher education is quite recent, the university-trained parents of today's students are the product of an elite system and therefore limited in number. In the next generation of students a far larger percentage should have the social background to compete most effectively for coveted openings. This will not produce democratization, but it will certainly prevent the establishment of educational castes.

The preceding remarks touch upon one of the most problematic aspects of future developments in higher education. The traditional university systems of Europe have been relatively unstratified by British or American standards. The necessity to diversify and to institute selection has recently created or emphasized status differentials between institutions and programs. Egalitarian assumptions about the value of university education has, however, prevented educational planners from reacting to these developments. They have found it more congenial to assume that institutes of technology would possess their own intrinsic prestige, or that Gesamthochschulen could offer as good an education as the universities. These polite fictions have a certain utility within the various systems, but at the same time they preclude facing the consequences of this evolving stratification.

A highly stratified system of higher education like the American can deal quite naturally with a set of problems which vex the European systems. Stratification allows, 1) diversification to take place at intermediate or lower levels which do not threaten the most prestigious institutions; 2) selection to channel students to a level commensurate with their preparation; and 3) the research function to be protected at peak institutions from the implications of mass higher education. The resistance to stratification in Europe has largely prevented the realization of any of these benefits.

It nevertheless seems inescapable that stratification of sorts will continue to take place as diversification and selection are implemented. From the planners' standpoint the most beneficial development would be an increase in the desirability, effectiveness, and hence prestige value of new vocational/professional programs, plus a willing abandonment of liberal subjects in reaction to the dismal job prospects. Whether the market will work such a benign redistribution depends upon uncertainties like cultural values and employer preferences, as well as tenuously controlled variables like the effectiveness of new programs. If it does not, the only real solution would seem to be a determined intervention by the state. This could either attempt to enforce levelling, like the recent Swedish reforms; or it could take the anti-egalitarian and politically unpopular path of squarely facing the existence of stratification.

The future of European universities is therefore far from being settled. In every crucial area it depends upon actions that will or will not be taken by the state. In most countries the state has already begun to impose its will in domains traditionally controlled by the university. This year's student demonstrations in France may therefore be only the beginning of a power struggle whose major confrontations lie in the future. But, even if the governments are successful in establishing their preponderant authority over the universities, they will face paradoxical alternatives in their planning. The most politically attractive course, for progressive conservatives as well as the Left, will be to broaden access while maintaining institutional equality. However, this is almost certain to be counterproductive: university standards would continue to sink; graduates would become more numerous at the same time they became less employable; and the competitive pressure for entrance into the elite tracks, in restricted parts of the university or outside of it, would

become more intense and the results less egalitarian. On the other hand, any state that seeks to restore the value and the integrity of a university education will have to take the politically unpopular course of differentiating between students and between institutions. Although this would appear to be an undemocratic measure because the social basis of recruitment would undoubtedly differ from one level of institution to another, it would nevertheless be an improvement over the current situation. If the expectations associated with most levels of such a system would be moderate instead of extravagant, they would also represent real possibilities rather than dangerous illusions. Furthermore, the position of university graduates in the labor market is unlikely to improve until a university education recovers some measure of its former luster. Thus, in the long run only a rehabilitated and respected university system can truly serve as the avenue for social advancement that so many presently demand. Whether any democratic regime could move in such a "reactionary" direction remains an open question.

Perhaps the question should also be posed of what will happen if the state does not assert its authority over the university, and it continues to drift along its present course? It would not be inconceivable that these venerable institutions could lapse into decrepitude, as they have in past centuries, with their vital social functions being absorbed by other institutions and their resources denied by the state. Should this be the case the exhortations of academics will be powerless to stem the decline; for they are no longer the masters of their fate.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Raymond Boudon, Education, Opportunity and Social Inequality, (New York: 1973), 66-77 and passim.

[2] The evolution of these professions during the last half of the nineteenth century is an important facet of this situation which cannot be considered here. Theodore Zeldin has demonstrated the enormous differences in income and status between French doctors before the end of the century (France, 1848-1945: Ambition, Love and Politics (London: 1973)). Probably by the beginning of the twentieth century these professions were closer to being automatically prestigious as they are today.

[3] Richard Seabold, "Normalien Alumni in the Faculties and Lycées of France," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1970).

[4] This would be true even for law: continental law faculties taught a far more general curriculum than American law schools.

[5] Cf., R. Steven Turner, "The Prussian Universities and the Research Imperative, 1806-48," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1973).

[6] Raymond Aron, "Quelques problèms des universités françaises," Archives européennes de sociologie, III (1962), 105. See also, Friedrich Paulsen, The German Universities, (1906); and Abraham Flexner, Universities: American, English, German, (1930).

[7] Boudon, 141ff.

[8] Burton R. Clark, Academic Power in Italy: A Study of Bureaucracy and Oligarchy in a National System of Higher Education, University of Chicago Press, forthcoming.

[9] Cf. Frederic Gaussen, "The Human Costs of French University Expansion," Minerva, XI, 3 (July 1973).

[10] Raymond Boudon, "La crise universitaire française: essai de diagnostique sociologique," Annales, 24 (May-June, 1969), 738-64.

[11] Cf. Edward Shils, "Change and Reform," in Philip Altbach, ed., University Reform, (1974).

[12] Boudon, "La crise universitaire..".

[13] Martin Trow, "Reflections on the Relationship between Higher Education and Occupational Structures," Higher Education: Crisis and Support, (1973).

[14] Krister Wahlbäck, "University Autonomy in Sweden," in Paul Seabury, ed., Universities in the Western World, (1975).

[15] John H. Van de Graaff, "The Politics of Innovation in French Higher Education: The Short-cycle IUTs," Journal of Higher Education, 5 (1976), 189-210.

[16] Raymond Boudon, Philippe Cibois, and Janina Lagneau, "Enseignement supérieur court et pièges de l'action collective," Revue française de sociologie, XVI (1975), 159-88.

[17] Boudon, "La crise universitaire." A large proportion of such students have traditionally drifted into teaching careers for just this reason.

[18] Cf. Noelle Bisseret, "La naissance et le diplôme: les processus de sélection au début des études universitaires"; and "La sélection à l'université et sa signification pour l'étude des rapports de dominance," Revue française de sociologie, IX (1968), 185-207 and 463-496. Also, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, Les Héritiers, (1964) and La Reproduction (1970).

[19] Jürgen Domes and Armin Paul Frank, "Problems and Prospects of the Berlin Free University," Minerva, XIII, 2 (1975). A non-communist has very recently been elected as the new President of the Free University.

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