

## OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Inaugural Lecture under the  
'Thank-Offering to Britain Fund'

by LORD ROBBINS, *President of The British Academy*

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### I

I HAD better begin by explaining the *raison d'être* of this lecture. I think that most of you know that the Academy has recently been the recipient of a most generous endowment given as a thank-offering to Great Britain by a large group of people born in central Europe who, by reason of totalitarian persecution, sought asylum here in the inter-war period and who have since settled here and made this community their own. The money thus collected, which will eventually reach a sum substantially over £90,000, is intended to finance activities conducted under the auspices of the Academy which, directly or indirectly, may be conceived to advance the welfare of the people of this country; and the Council have decided that it shall be used to provide an annual lecture and senior fellowships for research in this field. These arrangements will not come into force until the forthcoming academic year. But in the meantime, as a tribute to this splendid donation, it has been thought fitting that this year's presidential address to the Academy should take the form of a lecture inaugurating the series; and that is why I am here this evening. I have said elsewhere with what deep personal emotion I have followed the progress of this conception—surely one of the most unsordid acts in the history of academic endowments. I will only say here that I regard it as a very great privilege to be asked to speak for the Academy in this capacity.

### II

In choosing a subject for my lecture I have been moved by two considerations. I am clear that academic freedom in the senses in which I shall try to explain it, is a matter of great importance to the welfare of our community: I have therefore a theme which is within the terms of reference which will govern the *Thank-Offering to Britain* series. But it has also been very much in my mind that it was to escape a state of academic unfreedom, and worse, that many of those who contributed to its endowment left the lands of their birth and came to these shores: and that it would be therefore not inappropriate to inaugurate this

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series by some examination of the conditions which are necessary if such a state of affairs is not to recur.

This last thought gives me an appropriate lead into my subject. It will speedily become clear as we consider the conditions of academic freedom in a society such as ours that a simple definition is by no means easy. When we think of the rules and duties essential to the proper conduct of any academic enterprise involving co-operation and division of labour, still more if we think of the complications which arise if such enterprises are financed at least in part by contributions compulsorily levied by the state, it is not at all easy to provide any simple statement of what constitutes academic freedom. Indeed, any objective examination of the possibilities of such a situation must involve recognition of so many constraints that it may even run the danger of being mistaken itself for an encroachment upon liberty rather than—what in this case at any rate it certainly aspires to be—a plea and a plan for its preservation. But—and this is the link with my pretext—it is otherwise with unfreedom. We may find it difficult to give a definition of freedom which is simple and universally acceptable. But at least we can recognize its negative. We know what unfreedom is: for we have seen it, and still see it, in many parts. We know that an academic institution is unfree if its members are forced to confine their teaching to modes and creeds in which they do not believe, if appointment depends, not on excellence of qualification and performance but on membership of a political party or of a church, and if the search for truth and values is subordinated to the exigencies of particular ideologies. We recognize unfreedom when we see Galileo forced to retract or the teaching of Einstein's theories prohibited because of their bourgeois or their racial origins. We recognize it when we see academic institutions unable in any way to initiate policy or development but dependent completely on rigid control from the centre. In this respect I think our position is but a special case of a more general experience in ethical speculation, namely, that it is much easier to specify what is bad than to give any final definition of what is good.

The fact is that academic freedom in the sense in which we understand it—and desire it—in modern societies, is a very special kind of freedom which, in some ways at least, transcends our normal conceptions of freedom in society and, because it involves exceptional privileges, also demands exceptional justification. We do not do justice to the complexity of the problems involved unless we see this very clearly.

To do this it is useful to begin by way of contrast. If we think of the provision of higher education among the Greeks and Romans as depicted by Adam Smith in his celebrated chapter on *Institutions for the Education of Youth*, we see a state of affairs in which most of the problems of academic freedom by which we are confronted simply do not begin to arise. According to this view, the purveyors of philosophy and rhetoric of those days offered their teaching to the public without support from the state: if there was a demand for it, they succeeded in making a living, if not they had to turn to other occupations. 'In this manner lived Zeno of Elea, Protagoras, Gorgias and many others.'<sup>1</sup> Unless they were persecuted by the state, as was Socrates, they were in no sense unfree. They may have been poor because their fellow citizens preferred other amenities. But they were not unfree. Like other citizens they were able to shape their lives without direct constraints by external volitions. The disposition of their fellows to purchase their services was simply a part of their external environment. As regards freedom, they were in the same position as isolated man of neo-classical economic analysis, save that the possibilities of division of labour offered scope for greater specialization.

It is fairly obvious, I submit, that such a state of affairs, however free, would not be regarded as satisfactory by modern standards. Adam Smith, recollecting his poor impressions of Oxford, was indeed moved to think that it had much to commend it. 'Were there no public institutions of education', he said,<sup>2</sup> 'no system, no science would be taught for which there was not some demand. . . . A private teacher could never find his account in teaching either an exploded and antiquated system of a science acknowledged to be useful, or a science universally believed to be a mere useless and pedantic heap of sophistry and nonsense. Such systems, such sciences, can subsist nowhere but in those independent societies for education whose prosperity and revenue are in a great measure independent of their reputation and altogether independent of their industry.' But, as is well known, this did not exhaust his thought on the subject. He argued that, in order to preserve standards of culture and character among the population in general, there should be established schools which should be dependent in part at least on public subvention. Nowadays we have carried this thought much further: as a matter of social philosophy we

<sup>1</sup> *Wealth of Nations* (Cannan's edition), vol. ii, p. 263.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

believe nowadays that, regardless of family position, education up to the university level should be available for those able and willing to benefit by it. Moreover, while acknowledging the dangers which Adam Smith indicated so pungently, we regard it as desirable in the general interest that provision should be made for teaching and research in many subjects which, if they had to depend only on the immediate demands of the consumers, would have little or no chance of survival. For both these sets of reasons, therefore, for reasons of distributive justice and for reasons of the advancement of learning, our conception of an appropriate academic system involves, in one way or another, very substantial subventions from the state, that is to say from the members of the public in their role as taxpayers rather than in their role as consumers—as purchasers out of their own incomes.

It is in this context that we are confronted by the problems of academic freedom; and it is very important that we should be quite clear concerning their fundamental nature. For the demand for academic freedom in institutions of higher education is not the same as the demand for freedom of thought and speech in general: it goes considerably beyond that principle. It is not merely a demand that the academic, *in his capacity as a citizen*, shall be free to think and speak as he likes; it is a demand that, *in his employment as an academic*, he shall have certain freedoms not necessarily involved in ordinary contractual relations and that the institutions in which he works shall likewise enjoy certain rights of independent initiative not necessarily granted to other institutions which are part of a state system. The one demand, the demand for freedom of thought and speech in general is, I should hope, a demand which in its general aspect would command widespread, if not universal, support in free societies—how otherwise should they call themselves free? But the other, the demand for freedom both *within* and *of* academic institutions is a demand which is still acutely controversial. It is a demand about which, although my own attitude is unequivocal, I should be prepared to admit that men of goodwill may hold many different positions.

### III

To fix our ideas on these problems let me specify rather more fully the nature of the demands involved.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A fuller account of the separate problems is to be found in paragraphs 704 to 724 of the *Report of the Committee on Higher Education*, Cmd. 2154, 1963.

Academic freedom for the individual is not difficult to describe. It does not mean freedom to neglect students who have been committed to one's care, to refuse to teach the subject for which one has been appointed or to participate in necessary academic activities which involve co-operation. It does not mean that once a man has been appointed he can do just what he likes. But it does mean appointment regardless of race, sex, religion, or politics; and it does mean freedom to teach what one believes rather than a prescribed doctrine, to speculate and investigate as the spirit moves one, and to publish without restraint. It also involves, at any rate after some period of probation, a right to participate in some way or other in the formulation of collective decisions regarding academic policy. There are of course difficulties of detailed implication in all these statements—no moral problems at this level are completely simple. But in the large the conception is reasonably clear.

The conception of an appropriate freedom for academic institutions is far more difficult to put concisely. It certainly does not mean freedom to do just anything: that does not prevail even in the case of financially independent corporations, which are still restrained by the terms of their charters. For institutions financed by public money, it does not mean freedom to run indefinitely into debt or to spend public money without giving some account of it to somebody. But it does mean very considerable powers of academic and administrative self-government. It means freedom to set standards of admission and graduation. It means freedom to devise courses of study and to make academic appointments. It means freedom, within certain limits which I will discuss later, to initiate and to regulate the course of development. It is evident that there must be all sorts of conditions and qualifications of such claims, even in conditions satisfying the most radical demands for freedom. But I hope that what I have said is a sufficient indication for my present purposes of the broad tendency of the conception.

For the purpose of these specifications was to make explicit the ways in which the demands for academic freedom are demands which are separate from, and supplementary to, the demand for freedom in general social and economic relations. And that should now be reasonably clear. A man in full possession of his senses who enters without coercion into a contract to perform a precisely described job is not unfree in his capacity as a citizen. He has entered voluntarily into the contract: it has been a bargain between a willing seller and a willing buyer.

But if the job is precisely specified, he is not free in the sense implied by the term academic freedom: he is not free to shape the product as he will, to initiate new products and new modes of production. And the same is true of corporations. A corporation in contract with the state to build a bridge is not free in the sense in which the higher academic institutions demand to be free. It must comply with certain specifications; it is not free to introduce innovations of its own. The demand for academic freedom is thus essentially a demand for the freedoms of a non-contractual status while in other respects in a contractual or a subsidized capacity; and it is this which is the stumbling block in public discussions of the subject. The maxim 'he who pays the piper calls the tune' has a magnetic appeal for those who attack the principles of academic freedom. And although we may have no sympathy whatever with such attacks, we must surely concede that these principles need a justification which goes beyond the justification of the general principles of liberty.

Such a justification in my judgement is to be found in the field of results. An academic system in which individuals and institutions are free in the ways I have described is more likely to work well, than one which is unfree. It is more likely to achieve the ends we ask of such a system. It is more likely to produce good teaching and fruitful speculation and to maintain appropriate standards. I do not wish to overstate this case. It would be untrue to history to argue that nothing good can come out of unfree systems, no efficient training, no advancement of knowledge, no fostering of worthwhile values. We know that this has happened, that great scholars have been produced, and some discoveries have been made, that some decent values have been preserved in conditions which answer to few or none of the requirements which I have laid down. This is not an all or nothing matter. But I would argue that there are solid grounds, both in reason and experience, for believing that in the long run the results obtained where academic freedom prevails are likely to be superior, according to the ultimate values of liberal societies, to the results where it does not.

This should not present many difficulties as regards individuals. The maxim that he who pays the piper calls the tune may be plausible enough in matters of routine repetition. But where matters of creation are concerned, it is common knowledge that to insist on what shall be done is to risk obtaining an inferior product. We may agree that there are many acts of teaching and research where freedom is not important, but we

know that there are many where it is and we know too—what is fundamental in this connexion—that it is extremely difficult to define them in advance. If society wishes the activities of the members of its institutions of university status to be fruitful, then society must accept that, in the senses in which I have already used this word, they should be free.

The case in reason is less obvious where institutions are concerned: and the historical evidence is less obvious. Much that is admirable has been done in institutions which from this point of view are unfree. But there is still great cogency in the argument for dispersed initiative. A society whose institutions of advanced learning have each independent or near-independent powers to shape their own ways of life and development is more likely to evolve standards and forms which are admirable than a society in which all such institutions are compelled to conform to standards and procedures dictated from the centre. I think there is an inherent probability in this. I think, moreover, it is supported by negative experience. A state of affairs such as prevails in many continental universities is surely hampered from the start in comparison with that prevailing in freer systems. It cannot be anything but a disadvantage not to be able to experiment with teaching methods or curricula unless such experiments are approved by central bodies with no experience of the circumstances or the problems which have led to their initiation. A system of appointments depending on central control and authorization is less likely to lead to opportunity for unusual or unorthodox talent than one in which powers of appointment are dispersed. I cannot regard it as altogether an accident that so much of what is liveliest and most excellent in French higher learning and education arises in the *Grandes Écoles* not all of which are subject to the same uniformity of regulation and ministerial control as the main university system. The case for freedom for academic institutions as well as for academic individuals seems, on examination, to have strong roots both in reason and experience.

But quite obviously it has its limits. It is not reasonable to suppose that subventions on the scale of the present grants to universities in this country should be given without understandings of some sort concerning their future use or without some check on the extent to which such understandings have been observed in past expenditures. It would not be reasonable to argue that where the provision of highly specialized plant or libraries is involved, there is no need for any co-ordination of

expenditure. It would not be reasonable to expect that public opinion would be prepared to tolerate it. Yet it is because of this that, in the absence of suitable safeguards and clear understandings, in a subsidized system the danger to academic freedom is always present. We may admit the legitimacy of the claim for some measure of public control. We may freely grant that some kinds of co-ordination and control can be positively beneficial. But there is always the danger that they may overshoot the mark and encroach on what should be regarded as legitimate spheres of academic freedom. And this danger is not imaginary. It is not necessary to go back to the remote past to find examples. The history of this century in many parts of the world is only too full of examples of what may happen when the power to control does not respect the principles of academic freedom.

#### IV

What then should be done? I do not think that there have been conspicuous inroads upon academic freedom yet awhile in this country. But the danger is always latent and to say that 'it can't happen here' is not good enough. If public subvention of our higher education system is to continue at its present level, still more if, as is almost inevitable, it continues to rise, it would be folly to argue that we are necessarily immune from the dangers which have arisen elsewhere or that we do not need as many safeguards as we can devise.

An essential first safeguard obviously is an informed public opinion. We must be prepared to argue the case patiently on its merits, not to rush it with dogmatic declamation. As we have seen, the case for academic freedom is complex; it is likely to be the more convincing the more we are willing to discuss each aspect in detail. I am sure that there is everything to gain and nothing to lose by making fully explicit the grounds of the claim for each kind of freedom within this field. And I believe that the case is so strong when stated with reason and moderation, that if it is so stated, it can count on the continuous support of a substantial proportion of the public.

But powerful though an enlightened public opinion may be, it is not enough. In matters of this kind, where the decisive judgements depend upon a complex of delicately poised considerations, there is always scope for misunderstanding and misrepresentation. We live in a fool's paradise if we suppose that, in the present circumstances, even with much enlightenment among the educated public, there is no danger in appeals to



'put the universities in their place', to 'see that the public gets value for its money', and so on and so forth. The more we can shape our institutional arrangements so as to insulate the academic world from this kind of pressure, without exempting it from the discharge of public obligations, the more we can hope for goodwill and understanding in what public discussion is inevitable.

The first safeguard which comes to mind is a reinforcement of the private resources of university institutions. I should not like to be thought to be giving unqualified approval to the state of affairs which prevailed when the few universities which existed in this country were financed entirely from their fee incomes and income from their own property; we all know that there were sometimes grave abuses which needed public intervention to correct and grave *lacunae* in university policies whose consequences we still suffer. But there can be no doubt that the possession of resources of this kind is a great safeguard of academic freedom and that their absence is a potential source of weakness.

We deceive ourselves, however, if we suppose that anything like a sufficient remedy for the dangers we are discussing is likely to be found on these lines in this country. If I were the chancellor or vice-chancellor of a British university today, I should certainly be devoting much energy to trying to raise funds for this purpose; and recent experience shows that such attempts need be by no means unsuccessful. But the tax system has gone far to dry up the sources of private benefaction; and the lack of willingness to give for such purposes which, with some shining exceptions such as that which we celebrate today, is too often characteristic of those who still have the power, makes it vain to hope for any but mild easements of the situation in this way. I do not know the alchemy which would make the British as comparatively openhanded as Americans in this connexion—although I can think of tax incentives which would go some way. But we know that at the present day, even in the United States, more and more institutions of higher education come to depend at least in part on public money.

Faced with these tendencies, there is a school of thought which hopes to remedy the situation by operating on fees. If the independence of institutions is jeopardized by dependence on direct grants from the state, it is asked, why should we not put things right by setting fees at such a level that such grants are unnecessary? It is not suggested that the cost of the increase should come

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out of the students' pockets, making it harder for the children of the poor to pay their way. At their new level on these proposals, the fees would continue to be paid—as they are now for the majority of students—by the local authorities, Treasury grants being increased for this purpose. Nor need there be any increased charge on the public purse. All that would happen would be that the public payment for this type of education would be made through different channels—instead of direct grants to institutions, direct grants to individuals—so that an increase in fee income would offset the disappearance of grants.

Let me say at once that I find much of the thought underlying this suggestion extremely attractive. I have no doubt that, other things being equal, an institution with a larger proportion of fees in its total revenue should enjoy a wider degree of freedom than an institution otherwise similarly placed with a lower proportion. I am attracted too by the idea that some at least of the power to grow of higher academic institutions should depend upon their capacity to attract students. I think it is a good thing that there should be some competition in this respect. I should be sorry if it resulted in a lowering of standards but I think there exist adequate means of preventing this—the external examiner system for instance. It is evident that the present low proportion of fee income in the revenue of universities is due, not wholly but in a substantial degree, to a failure of fees to keep pace with the inflation of costs; and I cannot see any justification whatever for the policies—or lack of policies—which have brought this about. Hence, I should applaud any decision to raise fees substantially above their present level, just as I should applaud a decision on the part of the University Grants Committee to give more of their grants on a capitation basis. I think it would be conducive both to efficiency and to freedom; and I am reinforced in my belief in the wisdom of such a policy by the fact that in this moderate form, it was suggested and said to be practicable by no less a body than the Treasury in its evidence before the Committee on Higher Education.

Nevertheless, I am sure that it would be a delusion to expect a complete solution of our problem from this kind of policy. This is where I part company with some of my friends who favour the fee solution. There are technical difficulties in the mere fixing of fees to cover full running costs, not to mention development. But I will not expatiate on these because I am convinced that long before the increase reached this level it would encounter difficulties which were much more relevant to

the problem. I find it almost impossible to believe that if publicly subsidized fees were raised to such a level, there would not arise a demand for other forms of control—scrutiny of curricula, inspection of premises, and so on—which might be just as embarrassing as anything arising under a grant system. Moreover, it is highly doubtful whether it would be practicable to finance new development this way: and the method which is, so to speak, ideologically complementary, of resorting to the capital market by the issue of debentures, does not seem a very likely starter. Hence, although I am strongly in favour of an increase of fees of such a magnitude as to produce a substantial supplement to direct-grant income, I do not think that the idea of full cost fees affords a release from our anxieties.

## V

Let me restate once more the nature of these anxieties. I do not think we should be complacent about threats to individual freedom: there is quite enough intolerance, even in the most enlightened societies, for the danger to be always present, if only in latent form. But the main anxieties, at least in the context of this society, concern the dangers to institutional freedom once institutional revenue depends largely on state subvention.

First is the danger of excessive bureaucratization—the multiplication of minute controls, particularly financial, of institutional expenditure. A university which has to submit to some central office proposals for the switching of small funds from one object to another—the appointment of a research assistant in place of expenditure on the time of a computer, for instance—is certainly not free. And this example is not imaginary. A high official in charge of education in one of the best known of the Länder of Western Germany assured me that that was the procedure in his sphere of jurisdiction. When I asked him if it did not cause occasional friction, he replied 'Never'; but a young man who was translating for certain members of the party added, behind his hand, 'because we are a set of sheep'.

A much greater danger than this, however, is the danger of what may be described as the inappropriate intrusion of politics into the business of higher education. Let me be quite clear about this. The decision to spend immense sums of money on higher education is essentially a political decision and no sensible person would wish to deny the right of ministers to lay down broad principles of policy and administration in this connexion—for me politics is not necessarily a dirty word. Whether any

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particular principle thus laid down is an infringement of academic liberty is a matter to be solved *ambulando*; we get nowhere by blanket prohibitions of any principles whatever. The danger arises rather one stage lower down. The evaluation of the performance of particular institutions and the allocation of funds between them is a function which if it is to be discharged efficiently and without danger to academic freedom needs to be done in an atmosphere from which political considerations are absent. So does the evolution of policy in regard to the development of particular disciplines. There is real danger, if the discharge of these functions lies with organs directly involved in politics, that much irrelevance and worse may intrude and impede the emergence of objective recommendations and decisions appropriate to the real needs of the situation. There is real danger that policies inimical to academic freedom may be adopted. I will not contend that this will necessarily happen. But I would contend that common sense and common experience unite in suggesting that it easily may happen.

Human nature being what it is, there is probably no complete safeguard against such dangers. But it is possible on the basis of actual experience to suggest constitutional practices which go far to reduce the probability of their emergence. If the state is willing to entrust the distribution of public money for this purpose and the scrutiny of the way in which it has been spent, not directly to a government department, inevitably subject to political control and influence, but indirectly to a non-political expert commission or committee, and if that body, so far as is consistent with the execution of the larger aims of public policy, makes its grants in forms which impose a minimum of precise specification on the detail of expenditure, then there is created a partial insulation which should be sufficient to protect academic institutions against the cruder incursions of politics and to create an area in which freedom to maintain their own standards and initiate their own development is reasonably well preserved. It can create, too, an organization in which what positive co-ordination and joint planning is necessary can take place without political coercion and without much more than the inevitable friction and necessary give and take which takes place between departments and faculties in a large university with a lay element in the ultimate organ of government. It is true that such arrangements are contingent on the willingness of ministers and Parliament to tolerate them and that, in times of great political tension, this willingness may easily be suspended.

But this is true also of many other arrangements which in normal times are an adequate safeguard of various individual and institutional freedoms. The fact that they do not provide a hundred per cent. guarantee is no reason for denying the likelihood of, shall we say, eighty-five per cent.

In fact the principles of the buffer committee, as such institutions have been called, have proved themselves in practice in this country in many connexions—in the government of museums and galleries, in the distribution of grants for research in science and the humanities, in the provision of state aid for the arts. But the most conspicuous of all, and historically much the most important, is the famous University Grants Committee which, needless to say, is the embodiment of this principle in the sphere which is the subject of this lecture. I will not conceal my belief that this is one of the happiest of our constitutional inventions. Whatever may be its role in the future, it would be difficult to deny that, so far, it has operated in such a way as to permit the transmission to the universities of an ever-increasing volume of public money without serious encroachment on essential academic freedoms. In the main, what criticisms can be made of the policy of higher education in this country in recent years must rest on the failure of successive governments to put sufficient funds at its disposal, rather than on any inequity in their distribution and administration. Whatever may be said from time to time at home by disappointed vice-chancellors and professors, there can be no doubt of the envy and esteem in which the University Grants Committee is held among academics and academic administrators abroad. It would be a great disaster if at a time when, more than ever, the functions for which it was devised are needed, it were to be superseded or relegated to a subordinate position.

But we must not believe that there is no danger in this direction. On the contrary, in spite of the fact that the principles involved have only recently been publicly accepted by representatives of both leading parties, it is my judgement that they have never been in greater peril than they are at this moment.

## VI

Why is this? Whence comes the menace to an institution which has been the object of so much lip service?

In the first instance, from conscious and deliberate opposition to the principles. We should not be blind to the existence among us of those who do not value freedom in general, let alone its

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special manifestation in academic arrangements. The Nazi and Communist mentality which fears and hates free discussion and free speculation is not without parallels in our own intellectual history. We produced John Stuart Mill, the eloquent apologist for liberty, but we also produced Thomas Carlyle, intolerant, authoritarian, anti-semitic:<sup>1</sup> and at the present day there are some to whom the concept of academic freedom, so far from being an ideal to be supported, is something which should definitely be opposed. The belief that academic life should conform to central regulations and discipline is not something which is only to be found east of the Iron Curtain.

But while it would be folly to ignore this danger, it would be much greater folly to ignore the dangers which arise from pure misconception and misunderstanding. I do not believe that malignant views of the type I have been discussing are widely held at the present time. The danger comes rather from men of goodwill who are inadequately informed of what is at stake. They see vast sums of public money being spent on higher education. They are not necessarily unwilling that such sums should be spent, but they are naturally anxious that they should not be wasted; and they are apt to believe that academic freedom means academic anarchy. They undervalue the advantages of dispersed initiative. They oversimplify the problem of organizing affairs of the spirit. And they do not know what is going on. In this frame of mind they are liable to be impatient with constitutional practices which operate at arm's length from direct political control; and they are prone to fall for all sorts of grandiose half-baked plans for alleged reform and reorganization.

It is in this connexion I believe that the situation could be appreciably eased by appropriate action on the part of the University Grants Committee. After what I have said in praise of this institution as an institution, and of the way in which it has functioned in the past, I hope that no one will suspect me of lack of recognition of the services it performs nor of the dedicated public spirit of its chairman and members. But I am inclined to think that it could add to these services, if it were to take the public rather more into its confidence. The tradition of doing good by stealth and pretending to little more than the passivity of a postbox may have been all very well in the past—it may indeed have been the course of superior wisdom. But in fact the

<sup>1</sup> See Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of his Life in London*, vol. ii, p. 449, for an example of an outburst as utterly despicable as anything from Julius Streicher.

functions of the Committee are considerably more positive than this nowadays: they involve functions of policy making and co-ordination—functions which, if they are not undertaken by the Committee, will almost certainly sooner or later be taken over by the Government. Indeed, in the modern age with all its complexity of requirement, if these functions were not discharged by the Committee, we might well feel that academic freedom was in danger—even those who resent the existence of the Committee, on the grounds of what they feel to be encroachments on the freedom of years ago, should fear the scorpions of direct state control rather than the occasional whips of a buffer committee. I do not ask that the Committee should operate in public session or any nonsense of that sort. I ask only that in some suitable way, perhaps by more frequent and more extensive reports, the public should be made more aware of its existence and its problems and should be made to feel that what policy making and co-ordination is necessary is in suitable hands. I can believe that there may be some who would urge that, by bringing such matters more into the open, the dangers to academic freedom would be increased. I can only say that I believe exactly the contrary. I believe that only in this way can the existence of solid public support for academic freedom be secured.

## VII

The argument of this lecture has been directed to show how the special problems of academic freedom arise from a state of affairs in which, for reasons of distributive justice and the fostering of advanced learning, institutions of higher education have become more and more dependent upon public money. It is desired to supplement the institution of the family by providing educational facilities for all able and willing to benefit by it. It is desired to preserve and encourage branches of knowledge which it would not be within the power of any individual or small body of individuals adequately to support. Hence state subventions are involved and, with state subventions, the special problems of preserving academic freedom. The object of the conventions and constitutional devices I have been discussing is to preserve in the modern world with its greater mixture of collective choice and collective provision, the freedoms we see exemplified in Adam Smith's picture of the world of the ancient philosophers.

Is all this worth while? Is academic freedom worth bothering about? I have argued already that it is, if only on grounds of

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efficiency—that in the world of the intellect you do not get the best results from individuals or institutions which are regimented and unfree. But I would argue also its worth on grounds which go deeper. I would argue for it as typifying that characteristic which from time to time distinguishes human action from instinctive response and the motion of brute matter. I would argue for it as a sign and symbol of the will to freedom in society as a whole. A society which respects and cherishes the freedom of its academic institutions and their members is much less likely to fall victim to the enemies of freedom in general than a society which does not. And without freedom, how little of what happens on this planet has ultimate moral significance?