

Universities in middle ages



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1. UNIVERSITY IN MIDDLE AGES 1. 1 Origin of the University The main reason for the establishment of the universities in Europe was a spontaneous and enthusiastic desire for knowledge. Centres of learning had grown up from the monastic and cathedral schools - formed what might be called the secondary school system of the early Middle Ages - and were mostly concerned with the study of the liturgy and prayer. Towards the end of the twelfth century a few of the greatest old cathedral, monastic or some other form of schools claimed, from the excellence of their teaching, to be more than merely local importance.

These schools were generally recognized places of study, where lectures were open to student of all countries and of all conditions. However, for these places of study, it took a long period of time to become universities (Cubberley, 1920). The more ancient and customary term for an academic institution was studium generale. Let us explain the way studium was created in those days.

It began when the teacher of some ability and reputation attracted more and more students to study. In period of time more teachers and more students came. The addition of generale meant that the studium was attended by students from other countries and it was contrasted with a studium particulare, which taught students only from the neighbourhood. In the thirteenth century, according to famous historian, Hastings Rashdall, three characteristics were connoted by the term Studium Generale; a school which aspired to the name must not be restricted to natives of a particular town or country, it must have a number of masters, and it must teach not only the Seven Liberal Arts, but also one or more of the higher studies of Theology,

Law and Medicine (1969, p9). It was used in much the same sense in which we speak of a University to-day (Graves, 1914) The term universitas itself was a general Roman legal term and originally meant any legally defined guild or corporation unless qualified by other expression. The complete name of the medieval university was - Universitas Magistrorum et Scholarium - the body of masters and scholars.

Graves suggests that " it signified a company of persons that had assembled for study and, like any other gild, had organized for the sake of protection; since they were in a town there they were regarded as strangers. Thus it did not refer to a place or school at all, but to the teachers and scholars" (1914, p87). Lyte affirms that " in the earliest and broadest sense of the term, a university had no necessary connexion with schools or literature, being merely a community of individuals bound together by some more or less acknowledged tie. The term was, however, specially applied to the whole body of persons frequenting the schools of a large stadium" (1886, p5). According to Mullinger there are at least " three new factors in the intellectual activity of the older universities which clearly distinguish that activity from anything that had gone before.

Firstly, there is the introduction of new subjects of study, as embodied in a new or revived literature. Secondly it is the adaption of new methods of teaching, which these subjects rendered necessary. And finally there is the growing tendency to organisation which accompanied the development and consolidation of the nationalities" (1888, p4). Rashdall also concluded that the university had embodied three important educational values: " a commitment to providing not only useful professional training but also the

highest intellectual cultivation possible; a desire not only to conserve and transmit knowledge but also to advance it by research and writing; and the most important of all, the idea of joining together teachers of diverse subjects into a single harmonious institution, the ideal of making the teaching body representative of the whole cycle of human knowledge” (1969a, p12).

Practically in the second half of the twelfth century there were only few great centres where the highest education was attainable. The two great archetypal universities were those of Bologna and Paris. There was a great difference between them. The University of Bologna was considered to be the University of Students.

It means that the students had entire charge of the government of the university. They hired and paid for the teachers. The University of Paris was regarded as the University of Masters, where the government was in the hands of the teachers and was paid by the church. These two types served as a pattern for nearly all the universities in Europe.

The majority of the universities of northern Europe followed the system of Paris. On the other side the system of Bologna was the prototype of the southern universities. The other universities we focus on are the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge. For their formation the University of Paris served as an example. However, they were not supported by the church but by the crown and the state (Rait, 1912).

1. 2 Privileges granted to universities From the time of the early universities popes, emperors and kings bestowed a large variety of exemptions,

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immunities and other special privileges on the masters and students of the universities. Basis for many special privileges granted to the professors and students in the early universities was formed by the grant of privileges to physicians and teachers made by the Emperor Constantine, in 333 A. D. and the privileges and immunities granted to the clergy by the early Christian Roman Emperors. In 1158, Frederic I.

Barbarossa began the granting a privilege to the Studia Generalia in the document known as the Habita (the first word in the charter) in which he placed the students under his direct protection and declared them subject to the jurisdiction of their masters or of the bishop of Bologna. This grant was for the benefit of students of Bologna who were not natives of the city and were exposed to many dangers and disadvantages. It occurred that in case of any dispute between the students and a citizen of the town, the citizen had the advantage in the local court. Also the students were often robbed while travelling. So this emperor issued the following edict: " to all scholars who travelled for the sake of study and especially to the professors of divine and sacred laws..

. They may go in safety," he said, " to the places in which the studies are carried on, both they themselves and their messengers and may dwell there in security... In the future no one shall be so rash as to venture to inflict any injury on scholars or to occasion any loss to them on account of a debt owed by an inhabitant of their province. .

.. If anyone shall presume to bring a suit against them on account of any business, the choice in this matter shall be given to the scholars, who may

summon the accusers to appear before their professors or the bishop of the city, to whom we have given jurisdiction in this matter” (Graves, 1914, p82). During the period of time this privilege was also given for other universities by monarchs.

A similar edict gave Philip Augustus to the students of Paris in 1200. A reason for conceding this privilege was a fight between the students and the king's troops. The students were defeated and some of them even killed. Philip Augustus was afraid that the students would leave the school and it would be closed. He blamed his own official for the fight and gave the students full protection and immunity. It contained the obligation of every citizen of Paris to seize any one seen striking a student and deliver him to the judge.

He also relieved students from trial by the city authorities unless the serious crime had been committed; in that case all judges were commanded to hand over the cases of the student criminals to the ecclesiastical judge (Munro, 1888). In 1231 Pope Gregory IX published a statute that was looked upon as the Magna Charta of the University of Paris. The members of the university were granted the right of making “ constitutions and ordinances regulating the manner and time of lectures and disputations, the costume to be worn, the burial of the dead; and also concerning the bachelors, who are to lecture and at what hours, and on what they are to lecture; and concerning the prices of the lodgings or the interdiction of the same; and concerning a fit punishment for those who violate your constitutions or ordinances, by exclusion from your society” (Munro, 1921, p367). The universities had also certain recognized privileges that were specially granted by the civil or

ecclesiastical authorities. Such was the *jus ubique docendi*, which meant that a master in one *Studium Generale* had the right of teaching in any other without further examination (Graves, 1914). Moreover the masters and the students had the right of cessation, the privilege of suspending lectures and go on a strike when university rights were violated.

This right was frequently used to defend the university from the infringement of its freedom to teach, study, and discipline. This was closely connected with the right of migration. In the case that the members of the university were not satisfied they could leave the city and go to another town. Since the universities had no buildings and the lectures were held in the hired rooms, it was easy for them to move almost overnight.

This grant caused the rise of many new universities. Sometimes it happened that a special invitation was issued to a university exercising the cessation to come to another city or even country. It was the case of the University of Oxford in 1229. King Henry III.

promised the striking masters and scholars of Paris that “ if it shall be your pleasure to transfer yourselves to our kingdom of England and to remain there to study, we will for this purpose assign to you cities, boroughs, towns, whatsoever you may wish to select, and in every fitting way will cause you to rejoice in a state of liberty and in tranquillity” (Graves, 1914, p85). Later Oxford, in turn, was to suffer from a similar migration. These privileges were generally held by all the universities through which the universities obtained a great power. They were free of the threat of royal or civic interference.

An advantage of being self-governing corporations was that the universities were responsible for their own disciplinary arrangements and rarely had to deal with outside authorities. The liberty allowed to students resulted in recklessness, immorality, license, quarrels, dishonesty and carefreeness.

The students seemed to have become dissipated and quarrelsome. There were many conflicts with townspeople and even among themselves. 1. 3 Organization of universities The students for a long time naturally grouped themselves according to the part of world and to the nation from which they came.

These societies or confederations were generally known as “nations”. They came together for better protection and society. Every year each nation elected a chief, who was called the consiliarius (“councillor”). He represented the nation, looked after its interests and the rights and controlled the conduct of its members.

There were constant quarrels between the different nations. A contemporary writer Jacobus de Vitriaco, has left us an account of student life at Paris, in which he says: The students at Paris wrangled and disputed not merely about the various sects or about some discussions; but the differences between the countries also caused dissensions, hatreds and virulent animosities among them, and they impudently uttered all kinds of affronts and insults against one another”(Cubberley, 1920, p73). In each studium generale there were a larger or smaller number of “nations”. At Paris were four nations:” the honourable nation of the Gauls, the venerable nation of the Normans, the very faithful nation of the Picards, the very constant nation

of the English". Each was subdivided into provinces, and in a " province" might be included men from many lands.

(Munro, 1921) According to F. P. Graves, " by the early part of the thirteenth century the students of Bologna had merged their organizations into two bodies - the universitas citramontanorum (" Cisalpine corporation"), composed of seventeen nations, and the universitas ultramontanorum (" Transalpine corporation"), made up of eighteen; but not for some three centuries were these two united" (1914, p87). In turn, the teachers themselves were combined together into " faculties", - that is to say, as associates in one and the same branch of learning and instruction. As H. C.

M. Lyte states in his work that " the term faculty, which originally signified the capacity to teach a particular subject, came to be applied technically to the subject itself, or to the authorised teachers of it viewed collectively. Thus there might be separate Faculties of Theology, Law, Medicine, and the liberal Arts, coexistent within one university, although every university did not necessarily comprise all these Faculties" (1886, p7). Teachers and students were members of these faculties, and consequently also of the university.

The importance of the faculties was different in various universities. A good example is the University of Bologna. Its Faculty of Law was the most prominent, the Faculty of the Medicine was established in 1316 and the Faculty of Theology was added in the year 1362. So it was with many of the early universities.

All of four traditional faculties were found by the fourteenth century. Each faculty came to elect a decanus (" dean") as its representative in the

university organization. The deans, together with the councillors of the nations elected a rector, who was the head or president of the university. In a university of masters, he was generally chosen from the masters and in a university of students, he was usually a student (Graves, 1914). A long struggle aroused between the rector and the chancellor who was usually appointed by the Pope and represented the Church, to be the chief authority in the university. Ultimately the rector became the chief authority and the position of chancellor had no real importance.

1. 3. The Faculty of Arts At Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge the arts faculties were the most dominant and were preparatory to the other three faculties. There is no evidence of any formal requirement for entry into an arts faculty, but it was necessary to have elementary proficiency in Latin, however the lectures were given in this language.

The prescribed length of the course was six years with a minimum age of fourteen or fifteen for admission. According to Robert of Courson's statutes of 1215 the minimum age for graduation as a master was fixed at twenty years. The basis of the medieval curriculum in Arts is to be found in the Seven Liberal Arts of the Dark Ages. The term liberal, derived from the Latin *liberalis*, has its roots in the word meaning "free". It can implicate that a liberal arts education "frees" individuals from the chaos of irrationality. In the medieval period, the liberal arts were divided into the Trivium, which consisted of Grammar, Rhetoric and Dialectic, and the Quadrivium, which included Arithmetic, Astronomy, Geometry and Music.

These “ Seven Liberal Arts” were thought suitable for the development of intellectual and moral excellence (North, 1992). Grammar always had a central place in the curriculum, but it did not mean how sentences are constructed or the analyses of parts of speech. It was the foundation and source of all the Liberal Arts. In the introduction to an improved Latin grammar, published about 1119, grammar is defined as “ The doorkeeper of all the other sciences, the apt expurgatrix of the stammering tongue, the servant of logic, the mistress of rhetoric, the interpreter of theology, the relief of medicine, and the praiseworthy foundation of the whole quadrivium. Grammar also included the study of poetry and poetic structure.

It was also used for the analysis of secular writings, scriptures and biblical commentaries (Leff, 1992). By the definition, Rhetoric is the art of persuasion. Defined by Maurus, it was “ the art of using secular discourse effectively in the circumstances of daily life. ” Students learned about the techniques of oral expression and strategies of debate.

It also enables the preacher or missionary to put the divine message in eloquent and impressive language. Dialectics, or logic, was the study of the use of logic in debates. By means of its aid a student was enabled to formulate argument, expose error, unmask falsehood, and draw conclusions accurately. It also includes the theory that argument and debate are part of the learning process.

Its popularity was greatly enhanced by the acquisition of writings of Aristotle (Leff, 1992). The Quadrivium had relatively little importance and received small attention during the medieval period. The chief purpose of the

astronomy was to explain the seasons and the motions of the planets. The study of this field enables the priests “ to fix the time of Easter and all other festivals and holy days, and to announce to the congregation the proper celebration of them” For telling the time and for surveying purposes were used instruments which included a map of stars, the astrolabe and the quadrant. Other field of Quadrivium was also used for determining church days and calculating the date of Easter - Arithmetic. Moreover it involved the study of theories underlying the study of numbers and interpreting passages in the Scriptures involving measurements.

It has to be remarked that the Roman system of notation was used and the Arabic notation was not known until the beginning of the thirteenth century (North, 1992). Geometry, the science of measurements, was used primarily as a means of calculating and measuring. Its focus was on the relational values between objects and determining ratios. It involved the geography of Europe, Asia and Africa, too.

Music was based on the same principle as Arithmetic. While Arithmetic concerned the numerical manifestation of universal ratios, music was considered to be the expression of numerical relationships using sounds. According to Michael Masi, harmony in Music was “ the ratio and proportion expressed in musical terms. ” The primary focus of scholars was to become familiar with the mathematical nature of music.

John North cited Brunetto Latini who said that “ music was the second mathematical science, which serves for our delight and for the service of the Lord” (North, 1992, p343). The study of music was also important in religious

practises The education of Seven Liberal Arts prepared students for careers in the church, education, business and law. It came to be the standard for a university education for next centuries. 1. 3.

2 The Faculty of Theology This faculty was the most important of the four and it prepared students for the service of the Church. The book which received far greater attention than the Scriptures and the students put most of their time upon was Peter Lombard's Book of Sentences. The neglect of the Scriptures for the scholastic theology was characteristic for this period of time. Graves in his work A History of education during the Middle Ages and the transition to modern times quotes Roger Bacon: Although the principal study of the theologian ought to be in the text of Scriptures, in the last fifty-years theologians have been principally occupied with questions in tractates and Summ? , - horse-loads composed by many, — and not at all with the most holy text of God. And accordingly, theologians give a readier reception to a treatise of scholastic questions than they do to one about the text of Scripture" (1914, p90). The course usually lasted for eight years and some centuries later it was extended to fourteen years.

According to C. Munro, " while theology is commonly spoken of as the " queen of the sciences" and the seven liberal arts are termed its handmaidens, the faculties of the theology did not enrol a very large number of students in the thirteenth century" (1921, p372). 1. 3. 3 The Faculty of Law The course generally contained civil and canon law.

The authorized text for civil law was Justinian's Corpus Iuris Civilis which included compilation of imperial edicts, the Digest of opinions of Roman

jurists, and an introductory text for students. For the study of canon law it was Gratian's *Decretum* which included ecclesiastical offices, the administration of canon law, and the ritual and sacraments. As Munro says, "many students in the law faculty, however, did not aspire to proficiency in the laws themselves, but were content with the more humble but lucrative study of the *ars dictaminis*, or *ars notaria*. ...

and the *ars dictaminis* may be styled the complete art of letter writing. ...

Hence knowledge of this art was especially useful in law matters and came to be known as the *ars notaria*" (1921, p373). Bologna was the acknowledged centre of instruction in both the civil and canon law. 1. 3. 4 The Faculty of Medicine The Medical Faculty taught the knowledge of the medical arts which included the Greek and Arabic text-books, especially the treatises by Hippocrates and Galen. There was no dissection of the human body practised till the thirteenth century; therefore the only way to study human anatomy was from text-books or from the study of the anatomy of animals.

The year 1300 is almost exactly the date for which we have the first definite evidence of the making of Human dissections, and the gradual development of anatomical investigation by this means in connection with the Italian universities" (Munro, 1921, p374). 1. 4 Degrees The system of degrees was common to all universities during the thirteenth century. There were three grades of degrees - Bachelor, Master and Doctor. After the three year's course of trivium at the Faculty of Arts had been completed, the student

entered upon quadrivium, and became a “commencing” bachelor or a “determiner”.

According to Mullinger the “determiner was called upon to preside at certain disputations in the schools, and to sum up, or determine, the logical value of the arguments adduced by respondent or opponent.” (1888, p25). This meant nothing more than the student’s apprenticeship to a master but it was his admission to a degree of Bachelor of Arts (Verger, 1992). Performing the act of determining – to be tested in public disputations – made him a bachelor of arts.

To be tested in public disputations meant that “a student was permitted to present himself for a test as to his ability to define words, determine the meaning of phrases, and read the ordinary Latin texts in Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic (the Trivium), to the satisfaction of other masters than his own” (Rashdall, 1969a, p28). According to D. R. Leader a bachelor of arts was “in effect a journeyman master who partially shared in the masters’ privileges of lecturing and presiding at disputations” (1994, p22).

This term as H. C. M. Lyte states, “was used in a technical sense at all the medieval universities, to denote a student who had ceased to be a pupil, but had not yet become a teacher” (1886, p7). The Bachelor was a student-teacher who was seeking to obtain a license to teach in his own right.

At the end of quadrivium the bachelor was formally discharged from the state of apprenticeship and he could entreat the chancellor for the degree of master. If the masters of his faculty decided that he was a suitable candidate for the magisterium both by his learning and character, he was received into

the brotherhood of teachers and became an “ inceptor”, the candidate. After he passed the actual, “ rigorous” examination which consisted of a disputation upheld by the candidate over a particular question, he was regarded as “ graduated” but was not qualified to teach in the university. The “ graduated” had to also pass the public examination.

It was a ceremony during which he performed his first magistral act, usually a disputation with students, on a theme of his choice. There was no possibility of failing. After all these statutory requirements the “ inceptor” received the degree of master and he was authorised to lecture. However, he was obliged by oath to act for two years as a regent or teacher.

This period was known as his “ regency”. This rule guaranteed the supply of teachers for the university (Green, 1969). J. Verger says that “ the general attitude at the end of the Middle Ages was that the title gave its bearer genuine social dignity, giving him access to the world of the privileged, indeed, to that of the nobility” (1992, p145).

If the Master of Arts wished to enter upon a further course of study, he had to pass through similar steps of bachelorhood and magisterium in one of the superior faculties as well. The terms “ Master” and “ Doctor” were at first synonymous, but during the fourteenth century the title “ Doctor” began to be used instead of “ Master” for the chief degree in the Faculties of Law and Medicine (Verger, 1992). As F. P. Graves expressed “ the degrees “ master” and “ doctor” seem to have been originally about on a par with each other.

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. As soon as a candidate was successful in the one, he immediately proceeded to the other, upon which occasion he received both the license to teach and the doctor's degree" (1914, p92).