

In the second half of the fifteenth century these business schools appear to have been gradually phased out at Oxford. In part, their disappearance may be explained by the superior competition provided by the Inns of Court in London where a parallel range of vocational studies was taught. No evidence has so far come to light to prove that a system of "university extension" operated in Cambridge, although the likelihood is that something similar to Oxford's system of vocational studies would have found an echo in England's other university. The fact that between the early-thirteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries Oxford University permitted non-degree courses to flourish shows that it was prepared to cater to some extent for the rudimentary and technical skills that did not properly fit the normal university experience. However, the teaching at Oxford of business and administrative techniques and elements of legal procedure was conducted on a more fragmented and less systematic plane than was the case with the sophisticated presentation of these topics in the Italian universities.

It is abundantly clear that the groups on the margins of the academic community made a substantial contribution to the life of the English universities. Whether college founders, university and college benefactors, university and college servants and "privileged persons", the varied role of women within the university environment, master-craftsmen and their skilled and unskilled workforces, and those engaged in "university extension", all of these groupings added to the vibrancy of university life and gave a necessary support to the academic core, the guilds of masters and associated students.

CHAPTER FIVE

Teaching and learning

Despite the many differences between the medieval universities in northern Europe and those in Italy, the Iberian peninsula, and the south of France, the essence of the system of teaching and learning at Oxford and Cambridge would have been immediately recognizable in any European centre of study. It is true that there were marked variations in the intellectual diets on offer. In the Italian universities legal studies predominated, often followed in importance by medicine. Arts subjects in Italy occupied a rather subordinate position until raised to prominence in the era of the Renaissance. Similarly, in the French provincial universities law was generally the leading area of study, although Montpellier was extremely important for medicine. The Spanish universities were less specialized and usually provided a fuller spread of disciplines, including theology, that had a rather low profile in the Italian and French provincial universities. The northern universities, those of England, Scotland, Scandinavia, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bohemia and Poland, often had large arts faculties as an accompaniment to their superior faculty studies, and catered for a younger student clientele than was common in southern Europe. But whatever the particular academic concentrations of individual or groups of universities, the methods of teaching and learning were relatively similar throughout Europe.

Students at the English universities, in common with their counterparts right across continental Europe, were the recipients of a conservative teaching process. The main function of university teaching was to inculcate in students the appropriate segments of an inherited corpus of learning that was an amalgam of Greek, Graeco-Roman, Arabic and

the European Christian traditions of scholarship. Whatever the disciplines in question, whether the arts subjects of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* or one of the superior faculties of law (Roman or civil and canon law), theology or medicine, university teachers aimed to transmit a cumulative body of learning that had been digested, debated and commented upon over the centuries by a series of accepted authorities. Study was usually conducted within the limits set by the recognized authorities in each discipline. Undergraduates were encouraged to question more as a form of training than as a genuine attempt to challenge the authoritative sources.¹ In theory, the accepted authorities were supposed to be subject to the supreme governance of the Bible, although the polarized nature of some of the ingredients of classical and Christian thought made this an often insoluble dilemma.² Scholars, both in arts and in the higher faculties, were expected to absorb in a measured form a body of received wisdom relating to their subject of study. At the same time, their critical acumen was developed through their training in Aristotelian logic. From the twelfth century logical analysis had come to be applied to virtually all branches of learning and students, whether in arts, law, theology or medicine, had to equip themselves to be adequate practitioners of logic. In so doing, they gained a facility in the application of rational argument to intellectual propositions, the essence of the scholastic method as it had evolved from the twelfth century and even earlier.³

The crucial role assigned to logic in the learning process is exemplified by the fact that Aristotelian logic and philosophy came to have primacy of place in the arts course leading to the BA degree at Oxford, Cambridge and Paris in the thirteenth century. That is to say, from an early stage in the lives of these centres of learning logic and philosophy had reduced grammar and rhetoric, the other subjects of the *trivium*, to subordinate positions.

The twin arts of grammar and rhetoric had been fundamental pillars of the literary humanism of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. But the

dramatic revival of logic that dates from the late-tenth and eleventh centuries and reached its apogee in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries led to an eclipse of the literary aspects of the classical heritage. The reduction of classical literary studies in the curricula of Paris and the English universities to basic Latin grammar and to elementary forms of rhetoric was the climax of a movement that, a shade earlier, had brought John of Salisbury, the Christian humanist scholar, into the field as trenchant critic. John of Salisbury was not opposed to logic or dialectic as such. Logic had a useful role to play as part of a broad educational programme. Logic, by itself, was an instrument of enquiry and not an education. John of Salisbury and fellow Christian humanists were deeply convinced that the excessive place accorded to logic in the arts faculties of Europe's earliest universities would produce shallow logicians who had taken short cuts in education and were ill-prepared as teachers of the next generation of students. They were not properly educated because they were not versed in the liberal arts and the classical authors.⁴ Here was thrown into direct conflict the utilitarian or vocational and the non-utilitarian concepts of education. However, the intellectual currents of the age ran counter to the arguments of the Christian humanists, and the engulfing tide of logic could not be stemmed. The recovery of the greater part of Aristotle's logic seemed to provide scholars with a method of analytical enquiry whereby they could arrive at a more profound understanding of the apparently chaotic world. Through the subtleties of logical analyses, it seemed possible to penetrate to the heart of every field of human study. For its supporters, logic or dialectic was the embodiment of all that was innovative and exciting in the intellectual life and was the key that would unlock universal truths.

While logic is now generally regarded by society at large as a purely academic and even esoteric subject, in the medieval period it was viewed as a discipline of direct community value. A thorough training in logic was considered to be an excellent preparation for a legion of professional employments. Expertise in logical analyses sharpened the mind, attuned it for fine distinctions and placed a premium on intellectual

1. Cobban, *Medieval English universities*, pp. 170-1.

2. On the overriding authority of the Bible see Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries*, p. 5.

3. On the revival of logic or dialectic see, for example, D. Knowles, *The evolution of medieval thought*, 2nd edn, D. E. Luscombe & C. N. L. Brooke (eds) (Harlow, England, Longman, 1988), pp. 85-97 and on scholasticism, pp. xiv, 76-82. On logic see also Cobban, *Medieval English universities*, pp. 12-13.

4. See John of Salisbury's views in D. D. McGarry (trans.), *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury* (Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press, 1955), pp. 13-16, 93-5, 100-1, 244-5; see also McGarry, "Educational theory in the *Metalogicon* of John of Salisbury", *Speculum* 23, 1948, pp. 659-75.

precision. These were the qualities of mind that were prized for almost any type of professional activity in the Middle Ages. Dialectical training was equally relevant for service in government or in the church, in the law, in a teaching post in a school or university, for service in a lay or clerical household, or for royal or papal diplomatic business. It is therefore no surprise that logic, and indeed the whole training in arts, was valued as a vocational branch of education, no less utilitarian than the disciplines of law or medicine.

There is some truth in the criticism of humanist scholars of the late-medieval period that logical excesses were a block to constructive argument. In the hands of less able scholars logical analyses could be reduced to an arid formalism, and nonsensical discussion of absurd propositions undeniably damaged the reputation of the scholastic method. But to imply, as did some humanist scholars, that this was the intellectual norm in the three centuries preceding the Renaissance era is a historical distortion of some magnitude. For the most part, a sound training in logic was both an essential grounding for most areas of study and an appropriate mental asset for extra-university careers.

It is clear that the study of logic dominated the lives of English students throughout the whole of the arts course, and overwhelmingly so in the first two years. The principal texts used were those works relating to the "old logic" and to the "new logic" of Aristotle, along with their many commentaries.⁵ Supplementary to Aristotelian logic were treatises that were compiled in the medieval period and known as the *logica moderna* or modern logic. A Cambridge statute of the late-fourteenth century specified three that were in current use in the university lecture rooms.⁶ The Oxford statutes do not actually mention logical texts of medieval vintage, but manuscript sources reveal that medieval logic was used extensively to supplement Aristotelian texts at both of the English universities.⁷ Indeed, the proliferation of logical tractates by English scholars in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries made Oxford an eminent European centre for logic. Writers on logic such as Robert Grosseteste, William of Sherwood, Robert Kilwardby, William of Ockham, Walter Burley, John Dumbleton, William Heytesbury,

5. For the main logical texts used at Oxford and Cambridge see Leader, *The university to 1546*, pp. 123, 124; Courtenay, *Schools and scholars in fourteenth-century England*, p. 32.

6. *Camb. Docs*, I, p. 384.

7. Leader, *The university to 1546*, p. 124.

Thomas Bradwardine, Richard Swyneshed and Richard Billingham produced logical texts that were widely used in continental universities, some of them being adopted as official works. This is not to say that these Oxford writers were everywhere well received. In particular, the works of Ockham, Heytesbury and Swyneshed that belonged to the nominalist philosophical school were unpopular among many Italian scholars who regarded their type of logical scholarship as pernicious and corrupting.⁸ Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that Oxford University was a fertile producer of material for the study and teaching of logic in Europe's universities. Cambridge fared less well. It produced fewer writers on logic and it was clearly not as creative a centre of logical writing as Oxford. It is probable that many of the Cambridge texts on logic, some of them anonymous, were derivative versions of Oxford treatises.⁹

Apart from Aristotelian texts and their commentaries, the *logica moderna*, and specialist treatises dealing with logical questions, there were general primers on logic that were an aid to the undergraduate population. These primers were made up of tracts concerning different aspects of logic, some of them by named authors and others of anonymous attribution. The Cambridge tradition of primers was called the *Logica Cantabrigiensis*, and the corresponding Oxford tradition the *Logica Oxoniensis*. These were designed mainly for arts students who were not complete beginners, and they may also have been used by bachelors of arts for teaching purposes.¹⁰ The commanding role of logic in the arts course at both Oxford and Cambridge is further underlined when it is considered that the four years that were usually necessary for a student to acquire the BA degree, the lower arts degree, was longer than that required for the MA, the superior arts degree, at many continental universities.

While logic was the bedrock of a training in arts in the English universities, grammar and rhetoric had subordinate but recognizable parts to play in the course leading to the degree of BA. Before a youth could embark upon the faculty of arts, a proficiency in Latin was necessary. The expectation was that this would normally be acquired in a

8. See Fletcher, "The faculty of arts", pp. 393-4.

9. Leader, *The university to 1546*, pp. 126-35.

10. For these primers see *ibid.*, pp. 133-4; also P. O. Lewry, "Grammar, logic and rhetoric 1220-1320", in *HUO*, I, pp. 407-9.

grammar school or through private tuition before the youth came up to university. However, some youths had not made adequate progress in Latin when they arrived at university, and this could be remedied by attending the school or hostel of a grammar master in the university town. One such grammar hostel in Cambridge was run by a master of grammar, Thomas Chambre, and later by Thomas Ayera, in the closing years of the fifteenth century.¹¹ Once launched upon the arts course, students would receive instruction in modal grammar, a type of speculative grammar concerned with the logical analysis of language, and with signification. Signification was an exercise that arose from the perennial question of universals that had resolved itself throughout Europe and in the English universities into the opposed realist and nominalist philosophical schools of thought.¹² In grammatical terms, signification was the act of determining within a particular sentence whether the words represented universals or only individual entities. For a realist, a word such as "women" was a general concept with its own inherent reality. For the nominalist, the term was only a name for a group of individual women. It had no meaning beyond this, and no reality as a general concept. In this matter of signification it is clear that grammar within the arts course incorporated both logic and philosophy. Such exercises in signification were probably quite taxing for arts students in their first or second year at university.

For those students at Oxford and Cambridge who were fired by an interest in grammar and wished to specialize in the subject, there were opportunities to train as grammar masters in order to teach either in a school or university. Teachers of grammar at both universities operated under the aegis of the faculty of arts, although they were not accepted as full members of it. It seems that very few students in any given year opted to pursue the specialist course in grammar that could lead to the MGram degree. Of those that did follow the course, some seemed not to have aimed for the degree. Rather, they persevered until they had reached the stage where they were deemed sufficiently qualified to teach grammar even without the formal seal of degree approval.¹³

11. Stokes, *The medieval hostels of the University of Cambridge*, pp. 46–7; Stamp, *Michaelhouse*, p. 21; Emden, *BRUC*, p. 25.

12. On signification see Leader, *The university to 1546*, pp. 112–13.

13. For a discussion of the grammar texts in use at both English universities see *ibid.*, pp. 111–16.

The third component of the *trivium*, rhetoric, remained a very subordinate part of the arts course in the pre-humanist age. More often than not it was regarded as a mere element of grammar. It is difficult to define the content of rhetoric within the arts course at any given time because there were several different facets to this subject. It could include classical rhetoric, poetry, *dictamen* or the *ars dictaminis*, drama and preaching. Apart from *dictamen* at Oxford in the fourteenth century, there is not much evidence of systematic teaching of rhetoric at either Oxford or Cambridge before the fifteenth century.¹⁴ What desultory teaching of rhetoric there was appears to have relied upon an amalgam of classical and medieval texts. With the coming of the northern Renaissance, however, there was a renewed emphasis upon classical and recent humanist works.¹⁵

While logic, supplemented by elements of grammar and rhetoric, dominated the lives of students at Oxford and Cambridge during their first two years, the third and fourth years of the course leading to the BA degree followed different patterns at each university. At Cambridge, the third and fourth years seem to have been largely given over to the study of Aristotle's natural philosophy.¹⁶ By contrast, Oxford students were required by statute to study a series of texts relating to the quadrivial subjects, broadly defined as mathematical and scientific, and treatises on natural philosophy are not specified.¹⁷ However, the evidence of dispensations from statutory requirements in fifteenth-century Oxford indicates that at least some of Aristotle's natural philosophy was indeed studied.¹⁸

It is not possible to determine with complete accuracy the precise ingredients of the course leading to the BA degree, and the same applies to the curriculum to be followed by a bachelor of arts in preparation for the MA. What may be said with reasonable surety is that it consisted of further study of quadrivial subjects in conjunction with the three philosophies, natural and moral philosophy and

14. *ibid.*, p. 118; also Murphy, "Rhetoric in fourteenth-century Oxford", *Medium Aevum* 34, 1965, pp. 13–14.

15. On rhetorical texts used in the English universities see Leader, *The university to 1546*, pp. 117–21.

16. Hackett, *The original statutes of Cambridge University*, pp. 297–9; Leader, *The university to 1546*, p. 93.

17. Gibson, *Statuta antiqua*, p. 200.

18. Leader, *The university to 1546*, pp. 94–5, 159.

metaphysics.¹⁹ The quadrivial disciplines comprised arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy.²⁰ In the English universities the average scholar did not pursue these subjects to any sophisticated level.

Arithmetic was a necessary groundwork for all study in the *quadrivium*, and was a skill that was fundamental for music, then seen as a branch of mathematics. Music, as a theoretical discipline, was concerned with the study of harmonic proportion, and this was balanced by a training in musical practice. Some scholars sought to specialize in music, and from the late-fifteenth century music degrees were granted at both Oxford and Cambridge. The first known recipient of a music degree at Cambridge was Thomas St Just, who became warden of the King's Hall in 1467 and who acquired a doctoral degree in music in 1461–2.²¹ By the early-sixteenth century candidates for a musical degree were sometimes required to compose a mass and antiphon. Occasionally, it is stipulated that these compositions are to be performed on the day of the admission to the degree.²² Some degrees in music were awarded, not so much on the basis of university study, but as a recognition of a successful career as a practising musician, although matriculation was always necessary.²³ Musical instruments are found in the inventories of goods of deceased university personnel that are listed in the Oxford chancellor's register of the fifteenth century. Among the items specified are an old harp (*antiqua cithara*), a broken lute (*lute fracta*), a hornpipe, and another *lewt* and harp (*harpe*).²⁴

Geometry was an umbrella title for a variety of topics including geometry itself, optics, statics and the mechanical arts. It had important applications for measuring and surveying, and was a vital preparation for the study of astronomy.²⁵ In connection with geometry there is the intriguing case of William Malleveray who was made a "bachelor in

geometry" at Cambridge in 1492.²⁶ If this was an attempt to establish a precedent for such a degree it seems to have failed because there are no further references to this type of degree at either of the English universities. Linked with geometry was the science of perspective (*perspectiva*). This was concerned with the properties of light and the study of light rays. Among the pioneering texts used for this subject were thirteenth-century works by Robert Grosseteste, Roger Bacon and John Pecham, and treatises by Witelo, the Polish scholar whose scientific interests were closely aligned to those of Grosseteste.²⁷

Of the quadrivial studies, English scholars on the arts course probably devoted most attention to astronomy, using a mixture of classical, Arabic and more contemporary sources.²⁸ In addition to astronomical theory, astronomy had several practical applications. For centuries, astronomy had been used to calculate movable dates of the feast occasions of the ecclesiastical year. Because the planets were believed to have an influence on human affairs and on human health, physicians often acquired a knowledge of astronomy so that they could take account of astronomical data in their medical treatments. Physicians commonly had recourse to circular diagrams of signs of the zodiac as an aid to cures.²⁹

Astronomical tables were widely circulated in European universities. Although they were not prescribed by statute at Oxford and Cambridge, there is abundant evidence from manuscripts belonging to scholars that they were in common use.³⁰ Many of these tables were modified versions of the celebrated astronomical tables that were compiled for Alfonso X of Castile, and others were of wholly Arabic origin. These tables were deployed to monitor the movements of the planets and to predict eclipses and other celestial phenomena. The interest in astronomy brought with it the need to invest in a certain amount of hardware. Astrolabes that were designed to take altitude readings might be owned by more affluent scholars as is evidenced by

19. *ibid.*, p. 95; *Camb. Docs*, I, pp. 360–1; Gibson, *Statuta antiqua*, pp. 234–5.

20. Much information on quadrivial subjects in the twelfth century and earlier is provided by G. Beaujouan, "The transformation of the quadrivium", in *Renaissance and renewal in the twelfth century*, R. L. Benson & G. Constable (eds) (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 463–87.

21. Emden, *BRUC*, p. 503; Cobban, *The King's Hall*, pp. 286–7.

22. F. L. Harrison, "Music at Oxford before 1500", in *HUO*, II, pp. 367–8; Leader, *The university to 1546*, p. 144.

23. Harrison, "Music at Oxford before 1500", p. 367; Leader, *The university to 1545*, p. 143.

24. Salter, *Registrum cancellarii oxoniensis*, I, pp. 37, 160; II, pp. 101, 129, 327.

25. Leader, *The university to 1546*, pp. 144–5.

26. For this case see Bateson (ed.), *Grace Book B Part I*, p. 38.

27. For more details see Leader, *The university to 1546*, pp. 145–6.

28. For the standard texts used in astronomy see, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 146–7.

29. Such a diagram is reproduced by M. Hussey, *Chaucer's world: a pictorial companion* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 103 (plate no. 71).

30. Bennett, *Chaucer at Oxford and at Cambridge*, pp. 73–9; Leader, *The university to 1546*, p. 148.

the fact that they were sometimes given as cautions.³¹ It is true that the young Oxford scholar, Nicholas, in Chaucer's *The miller's tale* kept an astrolabe at the head of the bed. This, however, is unlikely to have been typical for the average scholar because of the expense involved. It has to be borne in mind that, as the author of a treatise on the astrolabe, Chaucer had a special interest in this instrument and was likely to give it fictional prominence. In addition to the astrolabe, scholars who had the means might invest in a quadrant, an instrument for taking angular measurements, or a planisphere or globes made of wood or metal. Astrolabes and other instruments for the astronomer's craft were purchased by individual colleges, and Merton College, Oxford, had an impressive range of such objects as was fitting for a college with an innovative scientific reputation.³²

Astrology was ambiguously regarded in the English universities as it was in universities throughout Europe. Many ecclesiastics denounced the subject because of its pagan associates and affinity with magic and the black arts. Some scholars argued that it was a flawed subject that did not rest on scientific principles.³³ Nevertheless, astrology had an organic relationship with the important university discipline of astronomy. A basic knowledge of mathematics and of astronomy was essential for an astrologer in order to perform the complex computations relating to the workings of the planetary system.³⁴ Using the framework of astronomy to confer a degree of respectability, scholars versed in astrology and astrologers outside the university context followed their predictive art in relation to mainstream and domestic events and to personal fortunes of the horoscopic kind. Magdalen College, Oxford, provides an interesting case of a college that officially hired the services of astrologers. In 1502 the fellows of Magdalen made payments to

31. S. M. Leathes (ed.), *Grace Book A*, Cambridge Antiquarian Society, Luard Memorial Series I (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1897), pp. 181–2; Bateson, *Grace Book B Part I*, pp. 127, 207; M. Bateson (ed.), *Grace Book B Part II*, Cambridge Antiquarian Society, Luard Memorial Series III (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1905), p. 18.

32. Bennett, *Chaucer at Oxford and at Cambridge*, pp. 75–6, 78; Leader, *The university to 1546*, pp. 148–9.

33. See the discussion by J. North, "The quadrivium", in Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *A history of the university in Europe*, I, pp. 357–8.

34. See, for example, M. Feingold, *The mathematicians' apprenticeship: science, universities and society in England 1560–1640* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 18.



3. A brass astrolabe of c.1350 in the possession of Merton College, Oxford. This instrument was probably commissioned by the college or by one of the fellows and it is indicative of Merton's reputation as one of the foremost scientific centres of Europe in the fourteenth century. This astrolabe is similar to the one described in Chaucer's *Treatise on the astrolabe* of c.1380. It is known that Chaucer had connections with Merton.

several astrologers, one of them from Westminster, in an attempt to discover who had stolen £112 from the bursary.³⁵ The importance of astronomical data for the diagnosis and treatment of patients has already been mentioned. In this regard, the specific study of astrology may well have been promoted in European medical faculties in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. There was, however, considerable variation in the emphasis placed upon medical astrology in Europe's

35. R. Chandler, *The life of William Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester* (London, White & Cochrane, 1811), pp. 277–8, n. k.

universities. At universities such as Bologna and Padua the teaching of astrology for the benefit of medical students was seemingly actively encouraged.³⁶ There was probably less official endorsement of astrology in the English universities, but it was certainly a recognized component in the arts course, albeit one that sheltered within the respectability of astronomy, the parent subject.

In conjunction with further study in the quadrivial subjects, bachelors of arts in pursuit of the MA made a prolonged study of philosophy. It has already been pointed out that the third and fourth years of the arts course leading to the BA at Cambridge were heavily committed to the study of Aristotle's natural philosophy. At Oxford, undergraduates in their third and fourth years were obliged to place more weight on quadrivial subjects, although it is known that a fair amount of natural philosophy was studied as well. In the three years or so between the lower and higher arts degrees the three philosophies, natural, moral and metaphysical, formed a vital part of the curriculum. This training in philosophy was considered to be valuable for intellectual growth and a necessary preparation for scholastic theology. These philosophical disciplines were based upon the fundamental texts of Aristotle and augmented by the works of a galaxy of commentators ranging from the outstanding Arabic scholars, Avicenna and Averroes, to a lengthy chain of Christian theologians and philosophers. Of particular note were Boethius, Robert Grosseteste, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, Walter Burley, William of Ockham, the Catalanian followers of Scotus, Antonius Andreas and John Marbres (Johannes Canonicus), and the enigmatic John Dedecus.³⁷ The central texts for natural philosophy were the *Libri naturales* or scientific works of Aristotle. These embraced the *Physics*, *De anima* (on the soul), *De caelo* (on the heavens), *Meteorae* (meteors), *De generatione* (on generation), *De animalibus* (on animals) and the *Parva naturalia*, the lesser works on psychology.³⁸

The texts of Aristotle, in conjunction with their many commentaries, were studied by means of the scholastic method. The essence of this

methodology was the examination of propositions or questions from a text by means of logical analyses. Considering the opinions of different commentators on the issue, arguments for and against were adduced and compared, and conclusions were reached that seemed to embody the best rational solution to the problem. Sometimes Aristotelian propositions appeared to be wholly irreconcilable with Christian assumptions, and this was the inevitable consequence of trying to fit the cumulative body of Christian learning and doctrine within a pagan philosophical frame. This dilemma raised the massive problem as to whether philosophy was to remain forever the handmaid to Christian theology or whether it was to become an independent discipline. Allied to this was the question of whether a truth arrived at by philosophical means could be true even if it ran counter to theological truth. Such issues were fought out with fierce intensity at Paris University in the late-thirteenth century. The *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas of c.1270 had attempted the most mature and comprehensive synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology. Arguing that too many concessions had been made to Aristotle's philosophy, some of Aquinas' propositions were condemned in 1277 by the Bishop of Paris, supported by the conservative theologians of Paris. Eleven days later, and in imitation of Paris, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Kilwardby, condemned several propositions of Aquinas at Oxford.³⁹ Presumably, the divisive theological and philosophical debates of Paris that found a reflection at Oxford would also have reverberated among Cambridge scholars. There is, however, no dramatic evidence of condemnations of intellectual propositions in late-thirteenth century Cambridge. Nevertheless, the repercussions of these monumental intellectual contests must have percolated down to English students who were studying philosophy on the arts course. The inherently controversial nature of the material would have given it a vibrancy and relevance that heightened its appeal even for the most mediocre of students.

Moral philosophy, divided by Aristotle into ethics, economics and politics, occupied a far smaller part of a bachelor's study for the degree

36. N. Siraisi, "The faculty of medicine", in Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *A history of the university in Europe*, I, pp. 376, 383-4.

37. See, for example, Leader, *The university to 1546*, pp. 155-9; Fletcher, "Developments in the faculty of arts", in *HUO*, II, p. 344.

38. Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries*, p. 132; Courtenay, *Schools and scholars in fourteenth-century England*, p. 32.

39. For the complexities surrounding these condemnations see, conveniently, Knowles, *The evolution of medieval thought*, 2nd edn, Luscombe & Brooke (eds), pp. 265-73; J. I. Catto, "Theology and theologians 1220-1320", in *HUO*, I, pp. 498-9; M. Haren, *Medieval thought: the western intellectual tradition from antiquity to the thirteenth century* (London, Macmillan, 1985), pp. 194-211.

of MA. The key texts employed were Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*, with commentaries on these works by Thomas Aquinas and Walter Burley. Many classical texts, including those of Seneca, Ovid and Cicero, were harnessed to the study of moral philosophy as also were the works of humanist writers such as Boccaccio and Petrarch.⁴⁰ The availability of Aristotle's *Politics*, through the Latin translation in 1260 of William of Moerbeke, the Flemish Dominican, brought with it a radical challenge to contemporary political thinking. From this stimulus there emerged the *De regimine principum* (on the rule of princes), written in 1277–9 by the Augustinian friar, Giles of Rome (Aegidius Romanus), and which became a much studied work for moral philosophy at both Oxford and Cambridge. In addition, Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae* (on the consolation of philosophy) remained a popular standard source for ethical debate.⁴¹

The third branch of philosophy, metaphysics, was considered suitable for only the most advanced students in arts. The fundamental text was Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, augmented by commentaries by Averroes, Aquinas and Duns Scotus. Of greater import than any of these, however, was the *Quaestiones super metaphysicam* (questions on the *Metaphysics*) by Antonius Andreas, a close follower of the realist philosophy of Duns Scotus.⁴²

The discussion so far has concerned the arts curriculum before the impact of humanism. The humanist infiltration from the second half of the fifteenth century was a gradual process. It began in a superficial and haphazard manner, put down deeper roots towards the close of the fifteenth century and became more institutionalized through endowed university and college lectureships in the course of the sixteenth century.⁴³ Moreover, St John's College, founded at Cambridge in 1511, and Corpus Christi College, established at Oxford in 1517, were in part designed as havens for humanist teaching. Despite these developments, there was no comprehensive humanist plan for the systematic reformation of teaching and learning in the English universities, only

40. Leader, *The university to 1546*, p. 163.

41. *ibid.*, pp. 163, 165, 166.

42. *ibid.*, p. 168.

43. See, for example, R. Weiss, *Humanism in England during the fifteenth century*, 2nd edn (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1957) and J. McConica, *English humanists and Reformation politics* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 76–105.

an incorporation of selected elements of the new learning done in a piecemeal manner. During the sixteenth century no more than modest adjustments were made to the arts course, and this also applied to the curricula in theology, civil law and medicine, canon law being suppressed in 1535.⁴⁴ For this reason, the English universities never became prominent centres of humanist activity comparable in scale with many universities in continental Europe. Humanist tracts were added to the arts course in the English universities, especially in relation to rhetoric and mathematics, and there was an emphasis on Greek, humanist Latin and Hebrew, the languages that were important for the comparative study of biblical texts.⁴⁵ At Cambridge there was a statutory reduction in 1488 in the amount of logic to be studied.⁴⁶ This apart, the Aristotelian system of logic remained largely intact. One beneficial effect of humanist influence on logic is that it may well have countered some of the more introspective technicalities of the discipline. By setting logic within a humanist framework, the subject was probably rendered a more suitable training for scholars who were to participate in public service in a world that had partially succumbed to Renaissance values.⁴⁷

Taking stock of the arts course leading to both the lower degree of BA and the higher degree of MA, it can scarcely be said to measure up to a realization of the Graeco-Roman notion of the seven liberal arts, the theoretical underpinning of medieval education. While there was a laudable spread of disparate elements, the overriding grip of Aristotelian logic and philosophy prevented an equal emphasis on each of the trivial and quadrivial subjects. This was a clear departure from the concept of the seven liberal arts as the basis of the educational experience that had been transmitted to medieval Europe through scholars such as Cicero, Varro, St Augustine, Martianus Capella, Cassiodorus and Isidore

44. See the comments of J. McConica, "The social relations of Tudor Oxford", *TRHS*, 5th ser. 27, 1977, p. 132.

45. J. M. Fletcher, "Change and resistance to change: a consideration of the development of English and German universities during the sixteenth century", *History of Universities* 1, 1981, pp. 10, 12, 13; also L. Jardine, "Humanism and the sixteenth-century Cambridge arts course", *History of Education* 4, 1975, pp. 16–31. See also Cobban, *Medieval English universities*, pp. 250–4.

46. *Camb. Docs*, I, p. 361; D. R. Leader, "Professorships and academic reform at Cambridge: 1488–1520", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 14, 1983, p. 218.

47. See the discussion by J. McConica, "Humanism and Aristotle in Tudor Oxford", *EHR* 94, 1979, pp. 291–317.

of Seville. Cicero's ideal of the learned man, the *doctus orator*, was one who combined a deep knowledge of all the branches of learning with a broad experience of the practical problems of life. It was a type of education that aimed to make a man learned, humane and just, and qualified to take a leading role in society.⁴⁸ This educational ideal that was echoed by the Christian humanists of the twelfth century could not be accommodated by universities that had evolved as responses to the need to provide a utilitarian brand of education to meet the professional, governmental, and ecclesiastical requirements of society.

One point of considerable interest is that the utilitarian emphasis in the arts course did not support the notion of a rigid division between the arts and sciences. While the polarity between classical and Christian learning was an ever-present reality and gave rise to many exacting difficulties, near-insoluble problems and much fierce intellectual debate, English scholars were shielded from the modern idea of a cultural divide that seeks to separate the arts from the sciences. The combination of arts with scientific and mathematical subjects in the course leading to the MA is a convincing negation of such an artificial dichotomy. Moreover, the primacy of logic for so long in the arts course at Oxford and Cambridge, and indeed at Paris, and its equally important application to the higher faculty studies of theology, law and medicine, meant that the analytical talent was deemed to be the most valuable asset that a university scholar could have in the quest for a penetrative understanding of the problems and mysteries of the world. The contemplative or meditative approach to truth found a full expression outside the English universities in, for example, the forms of mysticism prevalent in England in the fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries and also, to some extent, in the monastic orders. Within the universities, however, rational enquiry, as embodied in logical analyses, reigned supreme as the fundamental building-block of intellectual life in all its manifestations.

A training in arts was the groundwork for most areas of further study. The degree of MA was necessary for all secular scholars who wished to proceed to theology. This consideration did not apply to the

friars at Oxford and Cambridge. The most prominent of the mendicant orders, the Dominicans and Franciscans, were supported by a hierarchy of schools ranging from elementary to advanced levels and embracing a spread of subjects in arts, philosophy and theology. It could be said that the orders harboured what were tantamount to decentralized universities that were wholly adequate for the educational needs of many of their members. The ablest scholars, however, aspired to study for theology degrees at Oxford and Cambridge under their own mendicant masters. The mendicant orders would only allow their students to associate with the faculty of theology, contending that their students were already well trained in arts and furthermore that they should not be exposed to the alleged profanities that were inherent in the teaching of the secular masters. The claim of the friars to be exempt from taking the degree of MA before entering upon the study of theology was a much-contested issue, but eventually it was accepted by secular masters at both universities.⁴⁹ This privilege was also extended to monks at Cambridge. Monks at Oxford, however, were denied the same automatic exemption, although some monks, without an arts degree, were granted graces or dispensations to proceed to theology.⁵⁰

Theology in the English universities was based largely upon the study of the Bible and the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard along with numerous glosses and commentaries on these texts, the works of the early Church Fathers, including Jerome, Augustine and Gregory, sermon collections, treatises on preaching, *florilegia* or excerpts of biblical and patristic passages, and books of *exempla* or short stories for use in sermons. Until modified to some degree by the advent of humanism, theology at Oxford and Cambridge took the form of scholastic theology. This was characterized by the application of logical analyses to theological and to selected philosophical propositions that had theological implications. The philosophical questions were often derived from Aristotle's

48. For Cicero's educational philosophy see, for example, A. Gwynn, *Roman education from Cicero to Quintilian* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1926), pp. 57-8, 100-1, 118-22; see also P. A. Olson, *The journey to wisdom: self-education in patristic and medieval literature* (Lincoln, Nebr., University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 14.

49. See Leader, *The university to 1546*, pp. 54-8, 171. For the series of disputes between the friars and the secular masters at Oxford see Rashdall, *Universities*, III, pp. 66-76; Rashdall, "The friars preachers versus the university to AD 1311-1313", in *Collectanea* II, M. Burrows (ed.), Oxford Historical Society 16 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1890), pp. 193-273; Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries*, pp. 103-6. For disputes between friars and secular masters at Cambridge see, for example, Hackett, *The original statutes of Cambridge University*, pp. 241-4.

50. Aston, Duncan & Evans, "The medieval alumni of the University of Cambridge", p. 60, n. 141.

philosophy or from the opinions of a multitude of Aristotelian commentators. In this manner, theology, philosophy and logic were intimately intertwined.

For most of the thirteenth century Oxford theologians seem to have followed in the wake of Paris. By the 1280s, however, Oxford masters were beginning to make contributions to theological controversy on a par with those of their Parisian colleagues. It is perhaps fair to argue that Oxford's original theological era was launched with the realist philosophy of Duns Scotus towards the end of the century, was continued along very different nominalist lines with William of Ockham, and reached a zenith in the first half of the fourteenth century. Indeed, the originality of the thought of Scotus and Ockham was scarcely equalled anywhere in contemporary European universities.⁵¹ This level of innovatory theological scholarship was not sustained after the university was embroiled in the throes of Wyclifism in the late-fourteenth century. In the fifteenth century Oxford masters of theology were prone to adopt conservative attitudes, and to regard the perpetuation of sound and established theological scholarship as more important than the subtleties and potential dangers of unrestrained originality. A renewed emphasis upon unvarnished biblical instruction, a strong commitment to preaching, more reliance upon the work of the early Church Fathers and less upon the highly-wrought speculative learning of the fourteenth century, and an openness to new ideas filtering through from the Italian Renaissance, these are some of the features of Oxford theology in the fifteenth century.⁵²

While less is known about theology at Cambridge than at Oxford, it needs to be stressed that before c.1359 only Paris, Oxford and Cambridge had the right to confer degrees in theology.⁵³ This fact alone would seem to testify to the European regard for the Cambridge

faculty of theology. The prominence of theology at Cambridge, especially in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, is to be attributed in large measure to the friars who dominated the faculty before their grip lessened in the fifteenth century.⁵⁴ A significant proportion of the friars in the theology faculty had come from the Continent attracted, in part, by the university's capacity to grant theological degrees. This international mix in the faculty of theology was a welcome feature in a centre of learning that recruited relatively few foreign scholars who were not members of the mendicant orders. It may be remarked that Cambridge theologians were vigorously attuned to the religious controversies of their time, whether it was the Great Schism, Wyclifism and Lollardy, or the celebrated attack by William of St Amour on the mendicants.⁵⁵ The activities of the Cambridge faculty of theology mirrored those of Oxford, although in a seemingly more subdued manner. Speculative theology, biblical scholarship and an emphasis upon the practicalities of preaching were the central ingredients of Cambridge theology in the medieval period. It has to be said, however, that much research needs to be done before anything like a fully rounded appraisal of Cambridge theology can be made.

Whereas a degree in arts was a prerequisite for theology, it was not a necessity for a law course, although many law students, if they did not possess an arts degree, would have spent one or two years in arts as a sensible basis for their legal studies. Exceptions do occur, and the fellows of King's College, Cambridge, were actually forbidden by statute to proceed to canon or civil law unless they had taken the degree of MA and had completed their necessary regency in arts, the obligatory time to be spent teaching in the arts faculty upon reaching the position of a qualified master.⁵⁶ It was certainly an advantage for an aspiring law student to have some experience of arts because a grounding in grammar, rhetoric and above all in logic were all suitable tools for a legal training.

The faculties of civil and canon law at Oxford and Cambridge were in theory separate, but in practice they were interlinked. This arose from the fact that some study in civil law was required for a degree in

51. See Catto, "Theology and theologians 1220-1320", in *HUO*, I, pp. 471-517.

52. J. I. Catto, "Theology after Wycliffism", in *HUO*, II, pp. 263-80.

53. It seems that Florence University had acquired this right by 1359: see Rashdall, *Universities*, II, p. 50, n. 1. Bologna had the right to grant degrees in theology only from the inception of its faculty of theology in 1364. The university that was established by Pope Innocent IV in the Roman curia in 1245 conferred degrees in theology of a rather unusual kind. They were given largely to members of religious orders, mostly Dominicans, and the Pope claimed the right to dispense with residential or study requirements: *ibid.*, II, p. 30.

54. Aston, Duncan & Evans, "The medieval alumni of the University of Cambridge", pp. 59-63.

55. Leader, *The university to 1546*, pp. 182-3.

56. *Camb. Docs*, II, p. 483.

canon law, and a candidate for a degree in civil law was obliged to have studied a measure of canon law.⁵⁷ In the thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries it appears that the faculty of canon law was the more dominant of the two faculties at Oxford and Cambridge. With the increased demand for civil lawyers, however, arising from such movements as the Hundred Years War and European Conciliarism, the faculties of civil law became important areas of study in their own right. This developing interest in civil law was reflected in the emergence of colleges with strong legal concentrations, at Cambridge especially the King's Hall and Trinity Hall, and at Oxford New College and All Souls.⁵⁸ It was not uncommon for students to take a bachelor's degree in both civil and canon law, although to become a doctor of both laws (*doctor utriusque iuris*) was a more taxing achievement. The combination of degrees in civil and canon law was a useful one for a scholar because it increased the options for different types of employment. Even in England, where the common law prevailed, a qualification in civil law was a marketable asset. In this regard, it is well to remember that a knowledge of civil law was necessary for any scholar who wished to make a career as a practitioner in the ecclesiastical courts.⁵⁹

The principal text for the course in civil law was the sixth-century codification of the Roman law by the Emperor Justinian. This had been restored and commented on by Italian jurists from the eleventh century onwards. The main parts of the *Corpus* of Justinian were the *Codex* (Code), a set of laws, the *Digest*, a compendium of the opinions of Italian jurists, the *Institutes*, a textbook, and the *Novellae*, Justinian's legal enactments after 534. Along with these basic texts were studied the glosses and commentaries on aspects of the Roman law by a host of European jurists, generally known as the Glossators and the later Post-Glossators or Commentators.⁶⁰ The Post-Glossators had many original

ideas on the nature and function of law in society, and their works must have been very stimulating for fledgling lawyers just as they are for modern scholars. Two of the most favoured of the Post-Glossators for English university consumption were the Italian jurists, Baldus of Ubaldis and Bartolus of Sassoferrato.⁶¹ The central texts for canon law in the thirteenth century were Gratian's *Decretum* and the *Decretals* of Gregory IX of 1234. With the passage of time, there were added the *Liber sextus* (the *Sext*) of Boniface VIII of 1298 and the *Clementinae* (*Clementines*) of Clement V, issued by John XXII in 1317. As in the case of civil law, a galaxy of glosses and commentaries on the canon law were studied in conjunction with the set texts. An important indigenous source on English canon law was William Lyndwood's *Provinciale seu constitutiones Angliae* of the early-fifteenth century. This remained a widely read textbook through to the Reformation, although it may not have been part of the official curriculum at Oxford and Cambridge.⁶²

Medicine, the last of the superior faculties, was by far the smallest of the five faculties at each of the English universities. Medical study or physic at Oxford and Cambridge was little geared to empirical medical practice. Rather it was taught as an intellectual and discursive discipline. The end product was to equip a graduate to teach the subject and not necessarily to function as a medical practitioner.⁶³ As an intellectual pursuit, university medicine, as any other discipline, was based upon the study of authoritative texts. In this respect, the Aristotelian texts on logic and the natural sciences of the arts course were essential for the speculative or philosophical nature of medical study. Of the scientific subjects, astronomy and astrology were deemed to be of importance, as previously mentioned, for the alleged influence of the planets on human health. The close nexus between arts and medicine meant that medical students were required to have a prior arts training, either a degree or at least two or so years in arts. Some of the abler scholars

57. See the requirements at Oxford in L. E. Boyle, "Canon law before 1380", in *HUO*, I, pp. 539, 542, 543; for Cambridge see Leader, *The university to 1546*, p. 194; also p. 196 for graces relating to law degrees.

58. Cobban, "Theology and law in the medieval colleges of Oxford and Cambridge", *BJRL* 65, 1982, pp. 61-5, 68-70, 77.

59. For many aspects of civil lawyers in England, including career opportunities, see C. T. Allmand, "The civil lawyers", in *Profession, vocation and culture in later-medieval England*, C. H. Clough (ed.) (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1982), pp. 155-80.

60. On the revival of Roman law, the Glossators, and Post-Glossators, see W. Ullmann, *The medieval idea of law* (London, Methuen, 1946), pp. xv-xxxix, 1-6.

61. E. Leedham-Green, *A concise history of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 20.

62. For a detailed discussion of the texts used for civil and canon law at Oxford see Boyle, "Canon law before 1380", and J. L. Barton, "The study of civil law before 1380", in *HUO*, I, pp. 531-64, 519-30. See also Barton, "The legal faculties of late-medieval Oxford", in *HUO*, II, pp. 281-313. For Cambridge see Leader, *The university to 1546*, pp. 192-201.

63. See the discussion on medicine at Oxford by F. M. Getz, "The faculty of medicine before 1500", in *HUO*, II, pp. 373-405.

combined degrees in medicine with degrees in arts, in theology and occasionally in law, and a few of them had double doctorates in medicine and theology.⁶⁴ This is in direct contrast with the situation at Paris and Bologna where efforts were made to preserve the standing of medicine by preventing medical students from studying for other degrees after obtaining a qualification in medicine.⁶⁵ In England, the medical student proceeded from a preparatory course in arts to study the inherited canon of Greek and Arabic medicine in Latin translation, accompanied by the appropriate commentaries.⁶⁶ Medicine or physic at the English universities had to compete with the variety of practitioners who plied their trade outside the universities, whether surgeons, barbers, apothecaries and those who were not members of any guild. In the late-medieval period Oxford and Cambridge tried to establish that a university licence was the only legitimate means by which medicine could be practised. The need for regulation was recognized by Henry V who, in 1421, enacted that only medical graduates of Oxford and Cambridge could practise medicine, although surgeons were given the right to control their professional activities within the kingdom.⁶⁷

Teaching at Oxford and Cambridge, as in all continental universities, was based primarily upon the twin devices of the lecture and the disputation. Lectures in all faculties were divided into ordinary and extraordinary or cursory lectures. These distinctions depended upon the status of the lecturers in the academic hierarchy, the mode of lecturing and the subject matter of the lecture.⁶⁸ Ordinary lectures, the official statutory lectures, were the province of the regent masters. They were delivered on days that were designated for lectures (*dies legibilis*), at fixed hours, usually in the morning, and they were of at least one hour's

64. *ibid.*, p. 382.

65. V. L. Bullough, *The development of medicine as a profession* (Basel, S. Karger, 1966), p. 81.

66. For the key medical texts and other works used see Getz, "The faculty of medicine before 1500", pp. 373-405.

67. Bullough, *The development of medicine as a profession*, pp. 105-6.

68. For ordinary and extraordinary lectures in arts at Oxford see, for example, J. A. Weisheipl, "Curriculum of the faculty of arts at Oxford in the early-fourteenth century", *Medieval Studies* 26, 1964, pp. 143-85. See also L. E. Boyle, "The curriculum of the faculty of canon law at Oxford in the first half of the fourteenth century", in *Oxford studies presented to Daniel Callus*, pp. 135-62. On ordinary and extraordinary lectures at Cambridge see Hackett, *The original statutes of Cambridge University*, pp. 133-8.



4. An initial from a legal text of c.1330, probably from Oxford, that illustrates a teaching master lecturing to students who are seated on benches and who have their own copy of the text.

duration.⁶⁹ Bachelors in the different faculties, who had to give lectures as part of their training, were not permitted to do so at the times when ordinary lectures were held. Within the context of the ordinary lecture the position of the regent master was paramount and, unless suspected of heresy, the teaching master was not subject to evaluation by academic peers or by any external body. After giving a thorough exposition of the work under review, the regent master would then deliver rulings on the complex questions (*quaestiones*) arising from the text or from the

69. Hackett, *The original statutes of Cambridge University*, pp. 135-6; Gibson, *Statuta antiqua*, pp. lxxx.

glosses or commentaries upon it. One of the perennial problems confronting regent masters was the extent to which they should take into account the associated glosses and commentaries when lecturing upon a set text. It is understandable that students were keen to encompass the glossatorial literature because of the potential challenges it might harbour for the established text. This would make for more lively sessions in the lecture hall. Clearly, regent masters had to steer a difficult balance between rendering a faithful exposition of the text and allocating time to the opinions of the commentators.

It sometimes happened that when a skilful master tried to resolve *quaestiones*, the problems generated by the text, using relevant glosses and commentaries, new lines of enquiry would be opened up that might transcend the parameters of the authoritative text. In this way, original ideas could flow even within the conservative format that was geared to the transmission of an inherited pattern of approved knowledge.⁷⁰ Evidently, the scholastic system gave scope for considerable disagreements to arise between teaching masters, and it also allowed individual masters to disengage to some extent from tradition while paying lip service to the authoritative texts. In this sense, there is perhaps an analogy with Marxism as the central ideology of the former Soviet Union. As long as a formal acknowledgement was made to Marxist-Leninist doctrine, Soviet academics could, within cautious limits, present what were recognizably their own scholarly opinions. The situation was similar for medieval scholars, although they were dealing, not with a wholly unitary ideology, but with a range of hallowed texts in each discipline. The medieval universities were essentially teaching institutions and not research centres in the modern sense. Nevertheless, by exploiting the flexibility inherent in the system of lectures and related *quaestiones* a teaching master could arrive at intellectual positions that went beyond the confines of received wisdom and were tantamount to an advance in the understanding of the subject.

The official or ordinary lectures were concerned with the set texts of the curriculum in each faculty. They had to be attended in order to acquire a degree, although dispensations or graces were commonly given to students in arts or scholars in the superior faculties who had not met the full statutory requirements. Ordinary lectures were supple-

70. See Fletcher, "The faculty of arts", in *HUO*, I, pp. 375-6.

mented by extraordinary lectures. These were given by teaching masters on texts that were not part of the official curriculum.⁷¹ Masters were not obliged to wear their formal habit when delivering extraordinary lectures. This type of lecture could be staged either on days not assigned to ordinary lectures (*dies non legibilis*), or on days specifically set aside for extraordinary lectures, or on days in which ordinary lectures were held (*dies legibilis*) but at some point after their conclusion. The importance of the system of extraordinary lectures is that this was a mechanism whereby new works or older texts that had never been included in the official syllabus could be brought to the attention of students. The availability of a range of fresh material served as an invigorating counterpoint to the authoritative texts of the ordinary lectures. Moreover, a text that had been the subject of extraordinary lectures and, with the passage of time, was deemed to be of proven value might qualify as a work to be treated in ordinary lectures. The process also worked in reverse. A good example comes from the faculty of canon law at Oxford. Gratian's *Decretum*, which had been an exceedingly important ordinary text, had become an extraordinary book by the early-fourteenth century. By contrast, the *Decretals* of Gregory IX of 1234, which had started life as an extraordinary text, had been elevated to the ranks of the ordinary works by 1333.⁷²

It seems that bachelors in arts and in the superior faculties may sometimes have given extraordinary lectures in place of regent masters.⁷³ Whatever the extent of this practice, the term more commonly applied to the lectures of the bachelors was "cursory", and the cursory lectures usually refer to those delivered by bachelors studying for the degree of MA and by bachelors in the superior faculties preparing for the higher degree in theology, civil law, canon law or medicine. These lectures were given under the supervision of a master or doctor, and they were an essential part of the training of a bachelor prior to becoming a fully-fledged teaching master in the appropriate faculty. What was designed as a form of practical training for an apprentice regent master

71. On extraordinary lectures see Hackett, *The original statutes of Cambridge University*, p. 135.

72. Boyle, "The curriculum of the faculty of canon law at Oxford in the first half of the fourteenth century", pp. 148-9.

73. *ibid.*, p. 148; also Hackett, *The original statutes of the University of Cambridge*, pp. 133, 138.

was also of benefit for the student. As the name implies, cursory lectures were of a less learned and less complicated character than the ordinary lectures of the teaching masters. They seem to have consisted primarily of a literal exposition or outline of the main points of a text with only the minimum of commentary. In this way, cursory lectures gave students the opportunity to learn the salient features of a text as a basis for further and more complex study. This service for students was all the more valuable in view of the costly nature of texts and the scarcity of library provision.

The complementary method of university instruction was provided by the disputation. As part of their responsibilities, regent masters in the English universities were required to mount public disputations on assigned "disputable days" (*dies disputabilis*).⁷⁴ As with lectures, disputations were also divided into ordinary and extraordinary categories. An ordinary disputation was a public and formal occasion. It was conducted along strict procedural lines, utilized Aristotelian logic and was adversarial in character. Although there were many variations and changes over time, the typical disputation was directed by a regent master and involved several disputants. One or two of these, usually bachelors, assumed the role of principal respondents or defenders of the opinion debated, and another, often the presiding regent master, took the position of opponent and marshalled arguments against the proposition. Other disputants participated in lesser roles. When the disputation had ended, it was the task of the regent master to sum up and to give a ruling or determination on the question disputed, either immediately or within several days. Ordinary disputations were attended by bachelors of the faculty, sometimes by other masters, and, in arts, by undergraduates who were expected to play a minor role.⁷⁵ Two of the most favoured types of ordinary disputations in the faculty of arts were those dealing with logical matters and called *de sophismatibus* or *de problemate*,

74. For disputations at Oxford see Weisheipl, "Curriculum of the faculty of arts at Oxford in the early-fourteenth century", pp. 176–85. For disputations at Cambridge see Hackett, *The original statutes of Cambridge University*, pp. 138–42. A lot of detailed information on the different types of disputation is given by A. G. Little & F. Pelster, *Oxford theology and the theologians c.AD 1282–1302*, Oxford Historical Society 96 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1934), pp. 29–56.

75. Fletcher, "The faculty of arts", pp. 387–8; Little & Pelster, *Oxford theology and the theologians*, p. 37 imply that regent masters at Oxford were reluctant to attend the ordinary disputations of another master.

and those titled *de quaestione* that related to areas of quadrivium study.⁷⁶ Disputations were often captured in a literary form, and the redaction of disputed questions (*quaestiones disputatae*) became an important contemporary source of study that helped students to develop intellectual rigour, to avoid illogicalities and to be consistently relevant.

The term extraordinary disputation was an umbrella one and denoted any disputation that did not measure up to the criteria for an ordinary disputation. For instance, any regent master could hold a disputation for the sole benefit of the teacher's own students. This was a private disputation (*disputatio privata*) as opposed to a public and formal exercise.⁷⁷ Another form of extraordinary disputation was that held on the occasion of the admission of new masters and doctors to their degrees. These were sometimes called "solemn disputations".⁷⁸ One of the most exciting types of disputation was that known as the *disputatio de quolibet* or *quodlibet* (the disputation on anything).⁷⁹ Such disputations were general debates when those present could raise any point for discussion. There was no fixed agenda, and the subjects debated might refer to contemporary ecclesiastical or political affairs or to intellectual issues of a contentious and radical nature. These open debates, that reached their fullest maturity in theological faculties but were also staged in law, medicine and arts, gave a welcome opportunity for scholars to express their opinions with a freedom that was not always possible within the restraints of the more formal atmosphere of the ordinary lectures and disputations. The loose structure of the *quodlibet* encouraged a wide participation, and so it proved to be a useful training ground for the cut and thrust of logical argument among scholars of differing intellectual attainments. It is not surprising that the *quodlibet* was a seedbed for new and challenging ideas. Although disputations of this kind were likely to attract lively audiences, they were held sparingly throughout the year. Quodlibetical disputations were being staged in theology at

76. Weisheipl, "Curriculum of the faculty of arts at Oxford in the early-fourteenth century", p. 154.

77. Little & Pelster, *Oxford theology and the theologians*, p. 37.

78. *ibid.*, pp. 37–52.

79. For an account of disputations *de quolibet* see Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries*, pp. 171–3; see also Lawn, *The rise and decline of the scholastic "quaestio disputata"*, pp. 15–17. For the different types of disputations in universities in Italy see A. Maierù, *University training in medieval Europe*, D. N. Pryds (trans. & ed.) (Leiden, New York & Cologne, Brill, 1994), pp. 62–9.

Cambridge by the early 1270s and at Oxford by the early 1280s, and in arts at Oxford in the fourteenth century.⁸⁰ The spontaneity of these disputations was probably at its height in the thirteenth century, but in the fourteenth century they declined in popularity as they became more organized and controlled in character.⁸¹

Not a great deal of evidence has survived concerning note-taking by students at lectures and disputations. There is enough, however, to convince that it was a general practice. In the university schools where lectures in the higher faculty studies of theology, law and medicine were held, it was usual to provide the scholars with desks as well as benches.⁸² In the superior faculties scholars were commonly required to buy or to borrow copies of the central texts that were deployed in the lecture room.⁸³ These would rest on the desks, and the scholar would either make separate notes or gloss the margins of the text. For instance, a manuscript of c.1200 contains a student's notes on the opinions of John of Tynemouth and Simon of Sywell, two Oxford teachers of canon law who commented on aspects of Gratian's *Decretum*.⁸⁴ From the theology faculty at Oxford there has survived a notebook of a theological student of the early-thirteenth century. The notebook includes notes on Robert Grosseteste's lectures on the Psalms and notes on lectures on the Psalter.⁸⁵ In the lecture rooms of the arts faculties at Oxford and Cambridge it was apparently uncommon to find desks, only benches being provided for the students. Physically, this made note-taking more difficult. Nevertheless, students in arts did take notes. The case of Henry of Renham is instructive. In c.1300 Renham emended and made notes on a copy of Aristotle's *Libri naturales* while attending a course of lectures at Oxford on this topic.⁸⁶ Scholars not only made

80. Hackett, *The original statutes of Cambridge University*, p. 141, n. 2; Weisheipl, "Curriculum of the faculty of arts at Oxford in the early-fourteenth century", p. 183.

81. Lawn, *The rise and decline of the scholastic "quaestio disputata"*, pp. 16-17.

82. Pollard, "The *pecia* system in the medieval universities", in *Medieval scribes, manuscripts and libraries*, p. 150.

83. For Oxford see Gibson, *Statuta antiqua*, pp. 43, 44, 46. There appears to be no specific statute on this matter for Cambridge.

84. Boyle, "Canon law before 1380", p. 531.

85. Catto, "Theology and theologians 1220-1320", pp. 479-80.

86. Parkes, "The provision of books", in *HUO*, II, p. 424 and plate XI (between pp. 404 and 405) which shows Renham's lecture notes on the text of Aristotle's *Physics*; see also Emden, *BRUO*, III, p. 1565.

notes at lectures, they also took down the arguments of the main participants in disputations. Notes on lectures, disputations and sermons were sometimes fashioned into connected prose and arranged as booklets. Such booklets were useful aids for study, and some of them were copied and circulated among students who added them to their own store of academic material.⁸⁷ Notebooks of lecturers have also survived. These contain notes on a variety of academic exercises, drafts of the writer's own lectures or descriptions of disputations.⁸⁸

In the thirteenth century English students had to rely largely upon lectures and disputations as their main form of instruction, with perhaps occasional private tuition from regent masters according to need. Early types of tutorial and lecturing facilities seem to have been established in the monastic colleges at Oxford in the fourteenth century.⁸⁹ The pioneering modes of monastic teaching that were supplementary to public university instruction were transplanted to the halls and hostels where they were further developed. When mandatory residence in a hall, hostel or college was decreed for all Cambridge scholars in the late-fourteenth century and for all Oxford scholars in c.1410 and reaffirmed in 1420, it was natural that internal teaching would eventually become the norm in the places where the academic population mainly lived.⁹⁰ Hall lectures probably date from the fourteenth century and they became common in the fifteenth century. They were generally given in the mornings and were followed in the afternoon by a *recitatio* or repetition, that is a revision exercise at which students were examined orally on the content of the day's lecture. This type of instruction was complemented by discussion groups and disputations.⁹¹ As was shown in Chapter 1, the chance survival of the logic notebook of John Arundel, the principal of an Oxford hall in 1424, proves that Arundel acted as tutor to undergraduate commoners and managed their finances.⁹² From the

87. Parkes, "The provision of books", p. 425.

88. *ibid.*, p. 454; Catto, "Theology after Wycliffism", in *HUO*, II, pp. 268-9.

89. For details see Cobban, "Decentralized teaching in the medieval English universities", pp. 193-4; Cobban, *Medieval English universities*, pp. 176-7.

90. For obligatory residence at Cambridge see *Camb. Docs*, I, p. 317 and at Oxford Gibson, *Statuta antiqua*, pp. 208, 226-7.

91. See the Oxford aularian statutes (*statuta aularia*) in Gibson, *Statuta antiqua*, especially pp. 579-80; see also Emden, *An Oxford hall*, p. 208.

92. See above, Chapter 1.

ENGLISH UNIVERSITY LIFE IN THE MIDDLE

notebook, it is clear that Arundel had the assistance of at least three other tutors.⁹³ The evidence of Arundel's notebook demonstrates how far lectures and tutorial arrangements had become entrenched in one Oxford hall in 1424, and it has to be assumed that this was fairly typical of the larger halls of the period. The aularian or hall statutes of 1483–90 give many details of the lectures, revision exercises and disputations that were stipulated for halls towards the close of the fifteenth century. These presumably reflect the teaching practices that were growing up in halls over the whole of the century.⁹⁴ Concrete evidence has not yet been found concerning tutorial arrangements in the Cambridge hostels, but teaching developments similar to those in Oxford halls would almost certainly have occurred.

There were customary practices in most of the early English secular colleges whereby the senior fellows would encourage and teach the younger fellows. This embryonic tutorial system was formally established on a salaried basis at New College, Oxford, from 1379, money being set aside as payment for fellows or scholars who acted as tutors (*informatores*).⁹⁵ The tutorial system at New College was confined to fellows and scholars of the college. The earliest known evidence for tutorial arrangements involving undergraduate commoners in any secular college in the English universities occurs in the 1430s at the King's Hall, Cambridge. Here, fellows of the college acted as tutors to undergraduate commoners, called *pupilli*, for whose finances they were responsible.⁹⁶ A similar system in which fellows served as tutors to undergraduate commoners, again referred to as *pupilli*, is found in operation at Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 1476 and 1477.⁹⁷ At Oxford, William Waynflete, the founder of Magdalen College, made statutory arrangements in 1479/80 for the admission of up to 20 sons of nobles and other well-connected persons. They were to pay for board and lodging after the

manner of undergraduate commoners and they were to be under the direction of a tutor.⁹⁸

The growth of tutorial facilities in a few of the colleges in the fifteenth century, and their firm entrenchment in virtually all of the colleges in the sixteenth century, was accompanied by the emergence of the college lectureship. In the fifteenth century an endowed lectureship was in force at Godshouse, later refounded as Christ's College, Cambridge, from 1439, and lectures were given at King's College from at least 1456.⁹⁹ An endowed lectureship was established at Queens' College, Cambridge, in 1470 and was operational by 1484–5, and at Magdalen College, Oxford, the statutes of 1479/80 made provision for three salaried lectureships, one in theology and the other two in natural and moral philosophy. These were complemented by lectures in logic and disputations in arts and theology.¹⁰⁰ In 1492 a lectureship in canon law at the King's Hall was endowed by the will of Robert Bellamy, a fellow of the college.¹⁰¹ In the first half of the sixteenth century most of the English colleges, old as well as new, introduced collegiate lecturers for the benefit of undergraduate commoners who were in the process of migrating piecemeal from the halls and hostels to the colleges. This was tantamount to an academic revolution because the availability of lecturing and tutoring within the colleges meant that undergraduates had less need to rely upon the lectures of the regent masters in the university schools.

Attempts were made from the late-fifteenth through to the seventeenth centuries to regenerate university instruction by establishing a corps of salaried lecturers or professors, the terms being interchangeable in this period.¹⁰² Salaried university lectureships had originated in the thirteenth century and are found in the universities of Palencia in Castile, Toulouse, Vercelli, Siena, Modena, Padua, Vicenza and, at the

93. Cobban, "John Arundel, the tutorial system, and the cost of undergraduate living in the medieval English universities", *BJRL* 77, 1995, pp. 146–7.

94. Gibson, *Statuta antiqua*, pp. 579–80.

95. Cobban, *The King's Hall*, pp. 66–7; Cobban, "Colleges and halls 1380–1500", in *HUO*, II, pp. 596–8.

96. Cobban, *The King's Hall*, pp. 67–72; King's Hall accounts, IX, fols 29v, 44, 92v; XIII, fol. 19v; XV, fol. 118; XVI, fol. 115v; XIX, fols 17, 17v; XX, fol. 15v.

97. Pembroke College archives, Registrum Aa, y, column 2; Cobban, "Pembroke College: its educational significance in late-medieval Cambridge", *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 10, 1991, pp. 2–3.

98. *Statutes*, II, ch. 8, p. 60.

99. Cobban, *Medieval English universities*, pp. 196–8. For lectures in theology see King's College archives, mundum books, III, fols 23, 24v, 99, 99v; IV, fols 67v, 124v; VI, fol. 67; for lectures in civil law, III, fol. 100v; IV, fols 67v, 124v; VI, fol. 47; for lectures in canon law, III, fols 81v, 100v; IV, fols 67v, 124v; for lectures in astronomy and medicine, III, fols 81v, 100v.

100. For lectures at Queens' College see Queens' College archives, journales I, fols 23, 47, 51v, 57, 81, 97, 116, 131v, 141.

101. On the Bellamy lectureship see Cobban, *Medieval English universities*, pp. 200–1 and Cobban, *The King's Hall*, pp. 77–9, 80; King's Hall accounts, XX, fols 36v, 60v.

102. For details see Cobban, *Medieval English universities*, pp. 204–7.

end of the century, in Bologna.¹⁰³ From the late-fourteenth century salaried lectureships invaded the northern university scene and were important in the development of the German and Scottish universities. Salaried lectureships came very late to the English universities and, apart from earlier abortive ventures, the first successful endowed lectureships were launched at Cambridge in 1488.¹⁰⁴ The climax to the efforts made to revive university teaching in the sixteenth century came with the establishment at Oxford and Cambridge of Henry VIII's regius professorships of divinity, civil law, medicine (physic), Hebrew and Greek that were in place by at least 1542.¹⁰⁵ In the seventeenth century professorships were founded in geometry and astronomy at Oxford in 1619, chairs in history were instituted by William Camden at Oxford in 1622 and by Fulke Greville at Cambridge in 1627, and a professorship in Arabic was established at Oxford by Archbishop Laud.¹⁰⁶

Despite these attempts to breathe renewed life into public university instruction, the colleges held their ground as the principal venues for undergraduate teaching. In the course of the sixteenth century the colleges became largely self-contained teaching corporations, although students were still officially supposed to attend university lectures. At Oxford, students were expected to hear public lectures until at least the mid-sixteenth century.¹⁰⁷ As late as 1562 the Cambridge chancellor, William Cecil, stipulated that university lectures were to be attended by all members of colleges.¹⁰⁸ There is no doubt, however, that the system of university instruction was heavily eclipsed by college teaching in the reign of Elizabeth, and the pattern was set for the English universities to be transformed into decentralized bodies based upon the collegiate unit. There is one qualification to be made. While university

103. Cobban, "Elective salaried lectureships in the universities of southern Europe in the pre-Reformation era", *BJRL* 67, 1985, pp. 662-3.

104. *Camb. Docs*, I, p. 361.

105. F. D. Logan, "The origins of the so-called regius professorships: an aspect of the Renaissance in Oxford and Cambridge", in *Renaissance and renewal in Christian history*, D. Baker (ed.), *Studies in Church History*, 14 (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1977), pp. 271-8.

106. See K. Sharpe, "The foundation of the chairs of history at Oxford and Cambridge: an episode in Jacobean politics", *History of Universities* 2, 1982, pp. 127-52; Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge in transition*, p. 102.

107. Pantin, *Oxford life in Oxford archives*, p. 36.

108. D. R. Leader, "Teaching in Tudor Cambridge", *History of Education* 13, 1984, pp. 111-12.

lectures went into a progressive decline, it seems that university disputations at both Oxford and Cambridge retained their importance right through to the seventeenth century. As evidence of this, members of colleges were urged to participate in them as a useful addition to their own college disputations.¹⁰⁹ This was one of the few reminders of a once vibrant system of university teaching that had fallen victim to the relentless march of collegiate teaching.

The contrast between the English students of the thirteenth century, who relied largely upon the twin props of university lectures and disputations for their educational development, and the students of the sixteenth century, who received most of their intellectual training from undergraduate to doctoral level within the walls of a single college, is the measure of the academic revolution that had occurred.

109. Leader, *The university to 1546*, pp. 106-7.