

**“The (Re)Discovery of Tutorial and Small-Group
Teaching: Driven by the Institution’s Marketing Strategy,
the Result of Academic and Pedagogic Commitment,
or the Product of Both?”**

**David Palfreyman
Bursar, New College
University of Oxford**

Thank you very much.

I offer thanks to Jill Beck and to Robert Beck for the chance to be here at this very interesting, stimulating conference.

Yesterday, you had the Warden of New College; today you’ve got the “B” team. I am going to talk about some slightly different issues than yesterday. But I do want to make a few comments on yesterday, which was labeled “Conceptual Foundations and Pedagogy.” I think I can answer these questions as a university administrator because I don’t have to answer them—it’s the academics who need to answer them. But they are difficult questions, and they are questions that the Devil, U.K. higher education, higher education in the European countries, in terms of how we interact with our politicians on the issue of accountability, and so on. I am not sure that we as an industry necessarily have very good answers to some of these questions and we sometimes find it difficult to articulate our answers.

So I want you to think in terms of the context of where this conference on liberal arts education and tutorial teaching fits into these other kinds of questions: What is higher about higher education? What is meant to happen at a university that hasn’t already happened in the K-12 system or, most notably perhaps, at the upper-end of the high school system in the U.S. context or the 6th form in the British context? What is good undergraduate teaching? How can you distinguish it from not-so-good or mediocre or bad undergraduate teaching? Is such good teaching better or best done by research active faculty (as is the claim in many university systems, most notably a line that is argued in the U.K.), or will scholarship-active faculty suffice? And if it is scholarship-active faculty, do they have to have once been research-active faculty? And, if so, how long ago before they can cease to deliver good undergraduate education? How do you deal with that kind of conundrum and that kind of argument that goes on? Does every university have to be a research university? Obviously the U.S. has got a different model from the U.K. and most mainland European countries. What is liberal education? And is it automatically a key aspect of a good undergraduate education? Is it a *sine qua non*? Is it a helpful precondition that liberal education is part of good undergraduate education?

I don’t pretend to have the answers to those questions; I find it difficult to find the answers. Until you have those answers used in the political debate that has been going on in the U.K. for at least twenty years since Mrs. Thatcher began the attack on the funding

of public higher education and which perhaps is beginning to open up as a debate in this country, with your recent federal Spellings Report. As any good academic concludes, what is needed is more research and preferably somebody should give me a lot of taxpayer dollars while I undertake it. John Dewey was mentioned several times yesterday, and I note from this little book, 1938, John Dewey's *Experience in Education*, he concluded with, "What we want and need is education pure and simple, and we shall make sure and faster progress when we devote ourselves to finding out just what education is and what conditions have to be satisfied in order that education may be a reality and not a name or a slogan." Perhaps some 70 years later I am not sure we have made a tremendous amount of progress in terms of that particular question posed. Fortunately I can ask these questions as an administrator for those of you who are academics in the audience to provide the answers.

Let me move on to today's topic which is "Evolution and Innovations," which sounds very dynamic and exciting for a Sunday morning. The theme I want to address is this issue of tutorial and small group undergraduate teaching: what drives that interest in it, that attempt to deliver it? Is it, as a cynic might suggest, the search for a marketing niche for an institution, the search which the business studies guys call a unique selling point, that help you market the institution, to sell to a particular niche in the marketplace? Is it driven by a search for the good pedagogy, the search for academic excellence, the search to deliver good undergraduate teaching, or is it—in reality—a mix of those two drivers of institutional mission and strategy, and iterative, a fuzzy mix of the two, a conversation between the marketing people in the institution and the provost and the dean and the academic component, and you try to work out what is the institution about and how it should deliver in the early 21st century? And perhaps it doesn't matter, as long as the end result is something that is educationally viable and also economically viable; maybe it doesn't matter what drives it as long as you get to the right location.

Now in considering that issue, I want to flag up various points which, I think, give a wider context to what we were talking about—the liberal arts, tutorial teaching—in the wider context of higher education provision, higher education systems, not only in this country but also in the U.K. and in the mainland European countries. So, a number of themes to think about to help inform the debate.

Yesterday touched upon one crucial issue: the interaction with the school system. We can have all sorts of ambitions in higher education for what we are going to do, but to some extent it does depend on the degree to which the kids arrive with some reasonable degree of preparation so that they can hit the decks running. Or whether you have to increasingly spend time with what might be labeled "remedial" education to bring them up to speed. That is an issue clearly as we have identified in the little book on the Oxford tutorial, that sometimes tutors find it difficult because the kids are not inculcated into a common language. They have not read the same sort of stuff that might have been read by students a generation before, before they came into the tutorial academic discourse context. So, one issue is this 6th form preparation, school preparation, and so on.

Another issue in the U.K. and perhaps less so here, I sense, is what we call the “declining unit of resource,” which is how much do we get of taxpayer pounds in the U.K. to spend on an undergraduate. Now, some of you may know as Britain discovered an empire almost by accident, equally we discovered a mass higher education system by accident in the mid 1980’s. We are pretty well the last European country to massify, to use an ugly word, where we move forward (in Martin Trowe’s taxonomy in terms of defining higher education systems) from an expanded elite system in the mid 1980’s to a mass system. So, in the last 15 years or so, U.K. higher education has doubled in size. We have twice as many undergraduates as once we had and that has been done with no proportionate increase in funding, so the unit of resource has effectively halved. We now spend half as much per student per year educating undergraduates than we did in the halcyon days, whenever they were, roughly about the 1960’s and the 1970’s.

That obviously has an impact on staff-student ratios, which have virtually doubled except in a place like Oxford or Cambridge (protected to a great degree by endowment income/private income), but it has in most of the public universities in the U.K. which, virtually, they all are. Effectively, in public universities, the staff-student ratio has doubled from something like 1:11 or 1:12 to 1:20+ in many institutions, and even in some of the elite British universities (University College London, Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh) it is probably hovering around 1:17 or 1:18 these days. And, of course, we have done exactly as you have done to some extent in the last 30 years or so, this process of using casualized academic labor—adjuncts—in the system. This can be good, they can be young and enthusiastic; they can also be people on rather dire contracts with minimal commitment to the institution and all sorts of problems including continuity issues in the teaching of undergraduates.

In addition to that we have, I think, seen undergraduate teaching (what I will call “T”) driven out, especially in the elite research-orientated universities, by this fight for the cash and kudos of research (“R”). So that is what you get rewarded for: you get rewarded for R-money, the more taxpayer money comes the more R you do and, really, there’s not much care about what you do by way of T. You don’t get rewarded as an institution in your funding mechanism for taking T seriously as opposed to, as I say, the pursuit of the cash and kudos of R. And that affects the institutional strategy and mission, it affects the professional mission of the academic community in the U.K. where clearly you get promoted for your R, you don’t get promoted (on the whole) for your T. You might not even get appointed for your T; it’s a minimal question as to whether someone can teach. Again, somewhere like Oxford teaching is taken more seriously; it’s more of an issue when we make appointments than, for example, when I worked at the University of Warwick where the R was the driving factor in making faculty appointments. And, of course, the personal commitment of academics: I think what is deeply astonishing is so many academics are so deeply committed to undergraduate teaching despite the fact there’s virtually no reward for it in terms of their career progression or institutional funding. That is a praise to the academic profession, that it manages to sustain quality teaching in the context of these financial pressures I’ve talked about.

So, I want again to think about what actually are the quality control mechanisms in the delivery of higher education. Do you rely on external inspection regimes? You have the accreditation system over here; in the U.K. we have a beast called the Quality Assurance Agency (we have lots of acronyms in the U.K.; you know it's time to retire when you've lost track of the acronyms and you can't keep up with the changing system). The QAA has got great expansionist ambitions; you find it popping up at European conferences in relation to the Bologna process, saying that we can "QAA" European-wide. Their ambitions know no limit—we will take in Asia, whatever. Do you rely on that kind of external policing regime? Actually I think not, because most of those agencies will not speak truth to power, they are not going to tell the politicians that quality is declining because that would mean finding more taxpayer dollars or pounds and the politicians don't want to hear that message. So I am very dubious that you can rely on external so-to-say quality control mechanisms.

Do you rely on the demands of professional bodies? To be an engineer, you have to have done curriculum X; to be a medic, you have to have done curriculum Y; that sort of stuff—those external bodies that, to some degree, set the undergraduate curriculum. I think that can be very helpful. There's a danger, of course, that they're setting a curriculum that's 30 years out-of-date because the professional body is dinosaur-like, but it probably helps. In the case of the U.K., you could argue that there has been less short-changing of undergraduate teaching with respect to those courses that, to some extent, have that professional body recognition status attached to them than, say, the short-changing that can so easily take place in the teaching of history or sociology or English or foreign languages, where there's no equivalent professional body to act as some sort of protective device.

Do you rely on the professional integrity of the academic profession? Of the faculty? Well, academics, just like any other professional group, can (of course) become a conspiracy against the laity given half the chance, like doctors and lawyers and all those other people out there. So you may not find that particularly helpful, especially if the academic profession is driven by the need to pursue the cash and kudos of research in certain kinds of institutions for certain kinds of career paths.

So, do you rely on the academic management of the institution (the provost or whatever you call it in the U.S.)? In the U.K. you now find on the labor board of university administrative offices a "deputy vice chancellor [quality]." That is a post that did not exist 10, 12, 15 years ago. We now find the need to have them and, of course, he needs to have various assistants and so on and so forth. I defy anybody to persuade me that the existence of such posts at vast expense, the growth of bureaucracy, actually has any impact whatsoever on quality as it takes place in the classroom on a day-to-day basis. That is the kind of stuff we have to go through, the game we have to play in the modern context of delivering higher education. Again, I would not rely on it as a consumer in terms of consumer protection, quality protection.

So, do you rely on student/parental consumerism, especially that very fierce element of student consumerism: "Mum Power." When Mum appears on the campus at the Open

Day, and asks awkward questions and so on—is that what you rely on? Parental power? Family power? Consumer power? Consumer purchasing power? Student consumerism (an issue that has floated around in our systems for half a century or more, as I shall quote in a minute)? Possibly you do. It might be that, sadly, the ultimate protection is going to be some process of greater student consumerism, especially in the U.K., in the context of us beginning to charge higher fees for the provision of public higher education than used to be the case—the fees are probably not dissimilar to your state university level. Further de-regulation and liberalization of the industry in the next few years may mean that Oxford will begin to charge the sort of figures that you are used to paying for private higher education over here.

Of course, the problem with student consumerism is obvious: the student is an ill-informed customer. The student doesn't know what he or she wants to buy by way of higher education and that comes back to how a student finds out. I know in the Spellings Report there was this issue that, well, they should be told more information, they should be able to compare institutions X, Y, Z, and it could all be reduced to some wonderful, straightforward process just like comparing Dodge cars with Chevrolet or whatever else in some consumer magazine.

This issue, as I say, has been around a long time and I am not sure the industry has made much progress on it. David Riesman, who was quite a famous sociologist in the 1950's and 1960's—it's called *Constraint and Variety in American Education*, it's dated 1958—says on the issue of student consumerism (which is nothing new, as discovered by Margaret Spellings in 2006; it actually has been around for half a century):

The more I have considered the matter, the more I have become convinced that the cause of improved education would be enormously aided if some *impartial yet fearless* [DP: this is my emphasis rather than his] agency could issue vivid and candid reports on colleges and schools of the sort Consumers Union publishes on commodities. It is astonishing when one thinks about it that the FTC [DP: which I guess was some kind of consumer protection agency, Federal Trade Commission, polices advertising for hard goods where often the worst that can happen is that one can be cheated of money and that various consumer research organizations provide reliable data on vacuum cleaners, dryers, radios, and canned goods, while no similar agency polices school and college catalogues and brochures and does research on the qualitative aspects of education from the students' point of view. If one loses a few dollars through misleading advertising, one can make them up. But if one loses 4 years through misleading schooling, one cannot make them up. On the contrary, in some cases one may formed false values, false estimates of one's self, of others, and of the universe.

He goes on to say why he thinks it should be possible, half a century ago, to try and invent some better consumer information for these student/family/parental customers. “I think it is conceivable that, with enough planning and inventiveness, a respected clearing house, the penetrating reports on colleges could be created.” He acknowledges there are difficulties: “No one should underestimate the difficulty of finding out anything beyond

routine data concerning the climates of sizeable educational institutions. Nor should one underestimate the resistance colleges would put up to this kind of investigation even where the results might be favorable to them.”

And finally, he concludes with what I regard as quite a perceptive analysis of what might be the future—the sort of issue we’ve got in the U.K. about the public provision of services, the quality of health care. Prime Ministers—Blair—attempt to improve the quality of the provision of public services. He says, “These considerations make it evident that the problem of consumer research on educational institutions is part of a broader issue. How can we get adequate consumer research on services, not commodities, as our society increasingly spends its surplus on them, on education, medicine, recreation, government, psychotherapy, and advice of all sorts.”

Another problem, of course, with the student consumer, the ill-informed student consumer, is, I think, the students’ depressingly, constrainingly instrumentalist and credentialist view of purchasing higher education. It has been argued—this is Maria Misra, who is an Oxford academic (teaches history), in our *Times Higher Education Supplement*, which is a kind of a dumbed down version of your *Chronicle* (it’s more tabloid)—by Misra, who has been teaching at Oxford for a decade or more, who says,

This obsessive preoccupation with exam performance and competitiveness is confirmed by my experience of teaching at Oxford University over the past decade. While the crowning glory of the Oxford system, the single or paired tutorial [DP: much discussed yesterday] is supposed to operate along the lines of an ideal Socratic dialogue, it is in danger, owing to student expectations and demands, of morphing into intensive sessions of high level exam cramming. But 20 years ago it was not the case, that students treated their education as merely a preparation for exams. The test-orientated and narrowly competitive environment of school has taught them not to value education for its own sake but largely as a preparation for exams [DP: and that is back to that issue I raised earlier about the link between what goes on in our school systems and what we can and should try to do in the higher education context].

Of course, the problem is, does the student want, or does the student need, does the student know that he or she wants or should want or need liberal education, let alone whether he or she or the family is willing to pay for it either via the tuition fees or via pressure to maintain taxpayer funding of public systems? Very difficult in terms of what people think they are buying and what they ought to be buying, in terms of what we think they ought to be buying. I came across this book just recently—Harry R. Lewis, former dean of Harvard College, *Excellence without a Soul: How a Great University Forgot Education*. So if your marketing departments in liberal arts colleges have not got this book, then clearly you need it because the next brochure will have extracts from it saying, “Don’t go to Harvard; come to a place where we take undergraduate teaching seriously.” This is quite damning stuff; presumably he could only write this once he had retired. He says,

In short, universities have forgotten their larger educational role for college students. They succeed better than ever as creators and repositories of knowledge. But they have forgotten that the fundamental job of undergraduate education is to turn 18- and 19-year-olds into 21- and 22-year-olds. To help them grow up. To learn who they are. To search for a larger purpose for their lives and to leave college as better human beings. So totally has the goal of scholarly excellence overshadowed university's educational role, that they have forgotten that the two need not be in conflict. In this book, I explain how Harvard and our other great universities lost sight of the essential purpose of undergraduate education. Education is not the teaching of dates and formulas and laws and names and places; education in fact is not mere classroom teaching at all.

He quotes, "A commentary on a liberal education is what remains after you have forgotten the facts that were first learned while becoming educated. By that standard, what education will today's college graduates take with them?" And he concludes the preface with,

Universities have lost the sense that their educational mission is to transform teenagers whose lives have been structured by their families and their high school into adults with the learning and wisdom to take responsibility for their own lives and for civil society. The loss of mission need not be permanent but the great universities will have to want to restore idealism to undergraduate education in order to realize their potential.

We touched on many of those issues yesterday.

Some bursarial comments about funding sources, money: What are the routes to one-to-one teaching? If what we are really talking about is, in what part of higher education—the undergraduate experience—do you get some element of one-to-oneness, some chance to have a real academic discourse with a real live academic rather than doing it through e-mail or rather being at the front of a lecture with 200 people or in a seminar of 20-25? Where does that fit into an undergraduate degree and how can it be afforded? What form does it take? What are the resourcing issues?

At our Oxcheps center, we did an economic study comparing the economics of the delivery of undergraduate education at Oxford using NACUBO, the American-developed costing mechanism that you've got in the U.S. It enables some degree of comparison. So, we applied that methodology to Oxford to compare directly with Berkeley, Princeton, and Harvard. If you want to look at those figures, they are there on the website; the paper is available (<http://oxcheps.new.ox.ac.uk>). What I think is interesting when looking at this is—in the U.K. context, as far as I can see—how does a student get that precious access to some kind of one-to-oneness over large lectures, over large seminars, declining staff-student ratios, and so on?

We do have things like independent study modules, so maybe 1 module out of 25 will be called independent study if the student elects for it and there will be an allocation of 4-6

hours of academic time to that student to take that module if the student can invent something they want to do within that particular degree curriculum.

We do have the undergraduate dissertation, which is probably the main route if not probably the sole route in many of universities now where a student gets to spend real quality time on an individual basis with an academic. Well, that can be disintegrated; that can end up as nothing more than an e-mail exchange while the student sends draft of chapter 2 of the dissertation for e-mail comment from the busy academic who is too busy attending research conferences to be available for the requisite theoretical 6 hours that's meant to be the case according to the student handbook.

I am not sure there is much else, outside of Oxford and Cambridge, where this one-to-oneness is taking place. Sadly. In fact, at one university (again, at was once probably an elite research university), the student union—the students themselves—are protesting and have produced a document and even a video saying we want more teaching! We are being short-changed! You academics are spending too much time off the campus! The management is doing nothing about it! Normally student unions in the U.K. are about drinking and cheap booze and stuff, and here they are essentially saying, as a consumer device, what happened to our teaching? That university, where a colleague of mine would have taught in groups of 5-7 in his office in the 1960's, found, by the time he retired a few years ago, he was teaching in seminar sizes of 1:15, 1:20. And there's no way that you could have the interaction that once he had at the beginning of his academic career in the 1960's, in the halcyon days, prior to massification in U.K. higher education.

In the U.S. we have heard about senior projects, freshman studies, honors school (not much talked about yesterday, but I gather that honors school is a device that can be used in state universities to give some kind of semblance of quality delivery on a smaller scale to certain selective students); you've got these kind of devices and—as we've heard—you wrestle with whether the resourcing should be put into the first year in some kind of preparation of these students to help them through the later parts of their student career or whether it comes towards the end when perhaps they can best appreciate it and it has the most impact. How do you decide where to spend your money and the degree of faculty time that you have available for that kind of intensive preparation?

There's a very interesting little book here, *Colleges That Change Lives: Forty Schools That Will Change the Way You Think about Colleges*. In here there's a very great degree of praise to a place called Lawrence University (and especially its rather dynamic president, so, well done, Lawrence; you're in there), but also New College, Sarasota, with which New College, Oxford is familiar since we have exchanged faculty for the last 30 years. New College, Sarasota get to come to Oxford in July when it's raining, at the height of the English summer, and we get to spend March or April in Florida in the benign sunshine of Sarasota. They've not worked out that they've got the thin end of the wedge in terms of this deal, but it's very good for us. Anyway, New College, Sarasota, again is one of these liberal arts colleges where they prepare students so well they go off to graduate school and so on. There's a great message of positiveness, a message of diversity.

I've just come back from a conference at Berkeley, which was called "The Crisis of the Publics." For those of us from Europe, looking around the Berkeley campus, we kind of said, crisis? what crisis? Well maintained; lavish library facilities, certainly by comparison with the French, German, Spanish, and Italian systems, even compared with the British system. During that time, all the discussion was about research. It was about how Berkeley is a great, elite research-orientated American university like Virginia, like Michigan; how does it compete with Stanford across the Bay? It wasn't about, how do we sustain a quality undergraduate education, which doubtless is taking place at Berkeley. But that is not the focus; the crisis is about research. All the time—that emphasis on that issue.

Now, I thought Berkeley looked pretty good until I went across the Bay and looked at Stanford. I know there is a micro-climate in San Francisco, and clearly the micro-climate meant that it was rainy and cold over on the Berkeley campus; when you went across to Stanford, the sun shone, they have palm trees (I assume they were real), everything was immaculate, the whole place was groomed—even the undergraduates looked immaculate. They were groomed, they were genetically perfect, and so on. We had coffee in the bookshop, and even the faculty looked immaculate. I guess they were business studies faculty; I can't imagine they were humanities faculty. As you will have detected, since you have seen 3 examples of Oxford faculty, we don't belong with the genetically, physically perfect end of the spectrum, unlike Stanford faculty.

But it was a good example: Berkeley is hardly Galbraithian public squalor, but I can assure you that Stanford was Galbraithian private affluence and—personally—give me private affluence any time. But, there you go; that was the kind of issue which I can see what you are addressing in U.S. higher education. Spellings cropped up several times at that Berkeley conference.

Now, what would be my recipe, if I were Spellings or if I were some centralizing politician in the U.K.? I would actually demand—this is what I would want for my children going through higher education, but they're not going to get it in the U.K.—I would want (a simplistic idea) a ratio of 2 unassessed assignments (unassessed so that the student doesn't feel that they're perpetually on this marking treadmill, where they can fly a kite, they can try some different line of argument, they don't feel that it's going to be marked down and counted on their transcript) to each transcript-assessed assignment, right? The sort of chance the students have to write, as they do in the Oxford system, as they once used to do in the British system but now they only ever write for formal assessment purposes.

And 30 minutes—I'll prescribe it precisely—personal oral one-to-one feedback on each assignment from real faculty as the chance to experience academic discourse. The moment these kids in the U.K. submit their assignment in WordPerfect, beautifully set out, carefully typed, spellchecked, all the rest of the it, and they get it back with a mark a few weeks later and—if they're lucky—some scribbled comments formally assessed by some terrible QAA regime. But they don't get to talk about what they've submitted, how

it might be better next time, etc. Nothing like the kind of process of academic discourse that takes place in the Oxford tutorial and, clearly, in the kind of models that were presented to us yesterday.

So that's what should be happening but isn't, because I don't want to have to tell the faculty that they have to deliver that kind of teaching because, of course, it has this resourcing issue. I think one of the factors about more interaction with students is that I think it's more difficult to plagiarize if you are actually face-to-face with an academic, who might spot what is being said or at least spot the discrepancy between this rather perfect essay and this tongue-tied individual that is meant to be having some academic discourse with you.

Another little book, Richard A. Posner (one of your famous-famous members of the judiciary, an academic), *The Little Book of Plagiarism*. In it, there's a lovely quote,

Some especially tony colleges [DP: I think "tony" means "swanky" in U.K. terms] such as Harvard did not subscribe to Turn It In or other plagiarism detection services, but prefer to preach to their students about the evils of plagiarism. These schools are naïve. True, their students are abler on average than the students at lesser colleges, but no college has a uniformly able and motivated student body when one considers athletic scholarships, legacy admissions, and affirmative action. Abler students tend also to be more ambitious than mediocre ones and ambition can be a tempter.

That's the experience of the judiciary.

The issue there, of course, is precisely that if you have got a more one-to-one, the student might be less likely to download the essay from Google or whatever it is and to cheat, because it is more likely to be spotted and the student is more active in participating in this great concept of the academic discourse.

Finally, let me turn to the talk we've had about the Oxford tutorial. Just for clarification, there is a place called Cambridge in the U.K. where they have things called "supervisions," but essentially it is the same sort of concept going on. I think in Princeton they call it "precept," don't they? Everyone has their fancy word for it. Of course, we did produce the little book here, back in 2001.

And what are the facts of the tutorial? We touched upon them yesterday. Externally, the threat is funding, and fortunately Oxford and Cambridge have got endowment each at, whatever, \$4.5 billion to \$5 billion—not much compared with good old Harvard at \$28 billion (probably \$30 billion today). We've got some endowment that has enabled us to protect undergraduate teaching to some degree against the pressures of the decline unit of resource that I referred to. But, obviously, the threat is there.

I think a greater threat within Oxford, and presumably in Cambridge, is internal; it's the resourcing threat of what the university and the collegiate university choose to spend

their money on and the temptation to spend it on yet more research and another cyclotron for the physicists or whatever else they need to do their job, compared with undergraduate teaching which you can chip away at and dumb down a bit and so on, and the students never really notice and you don't know quite what the impact is maybe for another 30 years. Of course, the academic career: the pressures on Oxford academics to publish or be damned, publish or perish just as in the U.S. system, and therefore can they really be expected to take on a college tutor post jointly with a university lectureship that involves some teaching (6 hours for scientists, 12 hours for the humanities—although 12 is being steadily reduced across the system to what will probably stabilize at something like 8; but 8 is still significantly more than—say—a Warwick academic would be teaching or a Birmingham academic, and often our academic faculty can be tempted away by a research professorship at University X where you don't have to ever look at another undergraduate ever again, you are kept in some preserve box well away safely from having to come into contact with things called “undergraduates”).

I think there is to some degree—again touched upon yesterday—a challenge to the undergraduate teaching system in the hyper-specialization of the modern academic profession. I'm an academic; I only want to talk about the 3rd angel on the left on the pinhead and I never discuss angels 2 and 4. Therefore, if you want to do a survey course in English history or whatever, then Cromwell you go to Professor X, and when you do the Restoration you will have to go to Professor Y, and then when you do Queen Anne or whatever you go on to Professor Z. That makes a bit of a nonsense of the idea, I think, of a liberal education where, quite honestly, any self-respecting decent academic ought to be able to cover all of that stuff even if they're not the world's greatest expert on Cromwell and they only do the Restoration bit of the pinhead.

But that specialization is a problem; that is an internal threat to something like the tutorial system coming from the academic community itself. That's not driven by politicians; that's our problem in terms of how we function. And maybe the loss of confidence, that I can't teach Cromwell because I've not read enough about him, as opposed to letting—as was said yesterday—the undergraduate do all the work and do all the reading and then I'll ask just a few relevant and pertinent questions and, lo and behold, Cromwell is being done and ticked.

What is the salvation? Possibly the salvation is post-2009/2010, when the U.K. Parliament reviews the next possibility of increasing tuition fees (we're currently at £1000-per-year/\$1800 for what we still like to think, in Oxford and Cambridge, is a global, world-class international higher education compared with a price tag of \$40,000+ at Harvard or Yale or Princeton or wherever). In the U.K., we may be allowed to move that up; it's moved to £3000 this last year (\$5,500). It may be that the cap will be raised. The industry will be de-regulated a step further towards the kind of fee levels of £8-10,000 (\$20,000), with (of course) an appropriate duty upon us to achieve social equity by the appropriate need aid processes, all of which you have the learning curve for and which we need to start copying from you if that brave new world comes about.

The other protection for the tutorial system is Oxford's federalism, a very valuable process where colleges are created and endowed as teaching machines and therefore, arguably, their endowment should be spent disproportionately and appropriately on teaching. You could argue that Oxford and Cambridge are the only two collegiate universities in the world where, as I think I've said before, the lunatics are in charge of the asylum. Academic *demos* rules. We don't have lay members, board of trustees controlling us, and so on. Those two institutions—you could argue—combine the best of the U.S. liberal arts college model (inside the colleges, on their small scale, their commitment to undergraduate teaching) with the best of the U.S. elite research university model (be it performed at Berkeley or at Harvard-Yale). That's an interesting combination, but it creates tensions, of course, in terms of the resourcing of the institution. But the colleges embedded within the federal system are, if you like, the liberal arts colleges nestling up against the research-orientated, elite research academic departments.

So, the question is: Is it sustainable for the future? Maybe the freedom to charge tuition fees would help; better support from alumni, of course (we'd appreciate trying to tell them what it is that they had and why they should help pay for others to have it in the future); and, obviously, sound financial management is important and the investment of the endowment.

But let me finish by sharing a few quotes, again from this book that was mentioned yesterday, because I think that helps set the picture. We did have, in this book, Duna Sabri, who did a survey of what current undergraduates think about the tutorial teaching system. This is James Clark, Fellow in Modern History, Brasenose College, "The Oxford Tutorial from the Student's Perspective," and he begins by saying: "A genuine insight into tutorial teaching can only really be gained from speaking to those students who are currently studying in Oxford before distance, dementia, or the desire for revenge has distorted their views." He talked of defects: the tutor can be drunk, asleep; the student can be drunk, asleep; preferably they are both asleep at the same time, in which case the tutor is quite a happy one. But, essentially, there can be defects; there are quality control issues, obviously, in that highly personalized delivery of a service. But, nonetheless, he said,

At the end of the day, the inner workings of a tutorial are not always, if ever, familiar to students when they first come up to Oxford. Many admitted that they had arrived with the image of an arrogant, authoritarian tutor whose only aim was to expose the intellectual weakness of his students. [DP: As if.] They are also uncomfortable about confronting an acknowledged expert in their field, fearing they will find themselves out of their depth. There is also a suspicion that the tutorial does serve as one unspoken mode of assessment even if a written assignment is not given a formal mark. For many, though, the greatest anxiety is quite simply not to know exactly what it is that their tutor expects from them in each tutorial.

But he goes on to say,

Once they've mastered the art of what this mysterious thing, the tutorial, is, there is no doubt that most of the students do find their tutorials to be a great source of stimulation. Current Oxford students are enthusiastic for tutorial teaching. They value them as a prominent and stimulating part of their course. The tutorial in contemporary Oxford is evolved into a dynamic, flexible, and popular method of teaching. Perhaps the only slight disappointment is that the eccentrics so prominent in the past are now so decidedly thin on the ground.

This was in terms when your tutor used to deliver the tutorial whilst lying in the bath or whatever. But we do, at New College, have one or two eccentrics and I will quote from one of them in the form of Robin Lane Fox, our Fellow in Ancient History who was the historical advisor to Oliver Stone's film, *Alexander*, and actually starred as an extra, riding in the one of the battles as the tallest Greek you've ever seen. "Tutorials and Greats in History: The Socratic Method," Robin Lane Fox, New College: he talks about the Socratic method as phases 1 and 2, but he concludes towards the end,

Each week a pupil has to work through a question for himself, put together an argued case, and—in my tutorials—deliver it verbally. Unlike a lecture, this experience forces him to commit himself and go through the supporting evidence in person. [DP: Much of what we discussed yesterday.] He has to reach a view, identify himself with it, and express it, which is an art in itself, and exposes those who have copied something out without appropriating it at all [DP: back to my plagiarism point].

And he concludes,

The transferable skills of asking a question, assessing the evidence for an answer, and then presenting it personally are rare and should never be endangered. So, too, is learning to think while also learning how others think and learning that even the most authoritative thinkers are fallible and sometimes wrong. The Athenians made a dreadful mistake and eventually condemned Socrates to death. You can kill a tutor, or wish he was dead, but you cannot kill Socratic methods. The tutorial may one day be martyred by others in ignorance, but it is not the guilty party.

Another comment from a colleague at New College, Richard Dawkins. In Richard's comment on tutorial teaching, the title of which is "Evolution in Biology Tutoring?" he said,

I still think the Oxford one-to-one tutorial was the making of my entire career. The important thing was the knowledge that my essay would be the object of one hour's undivided and serious attention from somebody qualified to judge it and discuss its topic with me. The educational value comes not from listening to what the tutor has to say, as if a tutorial were a private lecture, but from preparing to write essays, from writing them, and from arguing about them in an un-rushed

session afterwards. It is the feeling that one's essay will be valued and discussed for a whole hour that makes the writing seem worthwhile. It gives the undergraduate an inkling of how it might feel to be the world authority on a subject.

I think that was a theme again touched upon yesterday.

And, finally, since we began yesterday with the thoughts of a warden of New College, I am going to finish them with the thoughts of another warden of New College. This was Alex Smith, who was warden of New College in the 1950's. We extracted this and put it in the book because this was an address delivered to New College freshers in the chapel on the 11th of October 1953. I think it's a summary of what liberal education is about and where, of course, the tutorial process fits in that.

So, to finish with this:

We shall come, perhaps, to the heart of the matter. If we ask whether there is some temper of mind, hard to come by in the confusion, pressure, and excitement of the world's business, which yet the world needs; if we frame this question, does it not seem that what is perhaps most to be desired in our day is that which is hardest to obtain. For that of which I am thinking is the detachment and quiet of mind untroubled by recurrent anxieties and having, instead, the sense of an inner security, a spirit and temper in which a man [DP: and these days, also a woman, of course], without the bias which comes from fear or the craving from favor, seeks patiently to understand the bewildering problems with which, in the world as it is, he is continually confronted and to solve them to the best of his powers in all sincerity, soberness, and truth.

And Smith goes on to use phrases like "integrity of mind" and "an unswerving regard for truth," the "attainment of a quiet and secure tempered mind" and he finished this address, back 50 years ago, with telling our new undergraduates:

The sense which you may gain in your life here of a long tradition with its visible embodiment everywhere in the buildings of your college, the concept of what a higher education institution is about, that search for truth, that ability to create a sound mind but will continue learning decades afterwards, long after [DP: this was quoted earlier] you have forgotten the facts and all the rest of it that were part of it, but you've learnt the process of the liberal education.

It's a great pleasure to be here. To finish, we're here to celebrate, I think, the diversity of the U.S. system (which is its great strength), the existence of all these different kinds of ways of delivering higher education. But, of course, it's entirely proper that they should constantly re-visit themselves and ask themselves awkward questions while celebrating their strengths as they go on.

So thank you very much.