

The Problem of an Excess of Educated Men in Western Europe, 1800–1850

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The purpose of this study is to determine whether there was in fact an overproduction of educated men in England, Germany, and France in the first half of the nineteenth century. The assumption that there was such overproduction is fairly commonly made and, as will be argued, probably correct, but there has been little attempt to bring together the evidence on the subject.

Educated men will be understood to include (a) members of all the learned professions, whether or not trained at a university; (b) all other persons who attended universities; (c) all persons who received an advanced (i.e., beyond the age of fourteen) secondary education of the traditional, classical sort.

The word "overproduction" requires explanation. It is meaningless to say that there were too many trained men for the real needs of society; the mass of the population, for example, could have used far more doctors and teachers than were provided. What can be said is that too many men were educated for a small number of important and prestigious jobs, so that some men had to be content either with underemployment or with positions they considered below their capacities. There was a disparity between an individual's estimate of his own worth and the rewards in money and status that his society accorded him. Edward Wakefield wrote of the want of room in all areas of the English economy: "By a want of room I mean a want of the means of a comfortable subsistence according to the respective standards of living established amongst the classes."¹

A distinction must also be drawn between the long-range and the short-range problem. Population was rising all through the century; almost certainly the increase in professional men was not in the long run disproportionate to the increase in total population. This does not mean, however, that there could not have been temporary imbalance between supply and demand in certain professions at certain times and places, and the evidence suggests that this was actually the case.

From the most general point of view such imbalance can be ex-

¹ E. G. Wakefield, *A View of the Art of Colonization, with Present Reference to the British Empire; in Letters between a Statesman and a Colonist* (London, 1849), p. 66.

plained as an aspect of early industrialization. With increased industry demands for new services arose and new professions began to form, with an attendant need for educated men. It was not yet clear, however, precisely what kinds of educated men were wanted and in what quantities; the new professions lacked prestige; the patterns by which an individual could rise in the unfamiliar areas of the economy were not yet set. It was a period of widening opportunity, but young men could not always evaluate what opportunities were available. Nor could they always, either for lack of money, or an appropriate education, or psychological preparedness, take proper advantage of the possibilities. A disorganized labor market with disequilibrium between supply and demand characterized the situation of the intellectual worker as well as that of the manual laborer.

Analysis can be further broken down by an examination of the situation in each country in terms of a number of factors: prevailing expectations, the nature of the political system, the structure of education, and the growth of an industrial economy.

There was an increasingly widespread assumption that men could and should rise in the social scale, and along with this went a tendency toward greater political equality. Both the expectation of upward mobility and the growth of democracy were given impetus by the French Revolution, though in unequal degree in different countries.

The result was to emphasize the importance of education as an avenue to wealth and power; the diploma might do what a title of nobility had once done. At the same time higher education remained committed to the classical and literary disciplines which were regarded as the proper preparation for the older professions. These learned professions, moreover, retained all their traditional prestige. As a consequence, business pursuits and the new professions were neglected and undervalued while pressure remained constant or even increased in regard to the law, medicine, the churches, the military, and the bureaucracy.

The resulting imbalance was mitigated by the growth of the economy, which increasingly opened up more promising and interesting opportunities than men had been accustomed to expect in the business world. The effects were of course uneven; in England there was a great deal of new opportunity quite early, in Germany very little until after mid-century.

Last, there was the factor of national traditions. It made a difference whether government was absolute or constitutional, whether ascribed or achieved status was dominant. Middle-class Frenchmen, Germans, and Englishmen were beginning to share certain general be-

liefs about social and political equality, but their specific demands and emphases showed significant differences that can be explained only in terms of differing historical developments.

Contemporary foreign observers concurred in the belief that there was an overproduction of educated men in Germany in this period. In 1820 the traveler and writer William Jacob wrote of "there being a greater portion of learned education than the wants of the community demand,"² and the *Quarterly Review*, in commending Jacob's book, referred to the "superabundance of professorial knowledge with which Germany is deluged."³ In 1844 William Howitt's widely praised book on Germany noted the intense competition for university professorships.⁴ An article in the *Revue des deux mondes* in 1834 by Xavier Marmier, a journalist with an extensive knowledge of Germany, observed in partial explanation of the decline in the number of German university students "that the number of young people who have completed their studies is already more than sufficient to occupy all the positions, and the prospect of creeping along behind others for a long time . . . discourages those who would be drawn to take the same road."⁵ In the forties the strong-minded Scotch observer Samuel Laing deplored the prevailing inclination of Prussian parents to spend their small capital to send a son to the university rather than to set him up in business. Laing admitted that a smaller proportion of the Prussian than of the Scottish population attended universities, and acknowledged that in Prussia almost all occupations except the military required academic qualifications. Nonetheless he concluded that "the proportion is by far too great for the natural demand, or for the real benefit of the country, the unemployed surplus being, in fact, literary idlers abstracted from the paths of productive employment, and hanging on in expectation of preferment to office."⁶ In Prussia in 1835, according to Laing, there were 262 candidates for every 100 livings in the church, 256 candidates for every 100 judicial offices, and 194 candidates for every 100 medical appointments.⁷

² William Jacob, *A View of the Agriculture, Manufactures, Statistics, and State of Society of Germany, and Parts of Holland and France* (London, 1820), p. 231.

³ *Quarterly Review* 23, no. 46 (1820): 448.

⁴ William Howitt, *German Experiences: Addressed to the English; Both Stayers at Home, and Goers Abroad*, 3d ed. (London, 1844), pp. 161-62.

⁵ Xavier Marmier, "Les universités allemandes: Goettingue," *Revue des deux mondes*, 3d ser., 3 (1834): 441.

⁶ Samuel Laing, *Observations on the Social and Political State of the European People in 1848 and 1849* (London, 1850), p. 212.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 211. Laing gives no source for these figures. In the course of this particular argument he refers to Karl Venturini's *Chronik*, but I was unable to

Germans of high position were troubled by the situation. As early as 1809 Wilhelm von Humboldt was warning the king against training too many men and then finding that the state was under moral pressure to employ them as officials.⁸ In 1830 the leading Rhenish businessman David Hanseemann criticized the extreme bureaucratic character of the Prussian government and observed that "the number of candidates for the privileged class of officials . . . grows appreciably each year, and regardless of the great number of officials a large group of candidates cannot be accommodated."⁹

Much of the controversy about education in this period can be understood as an aspect of this problem. Many opponents of the prevailing Gymnasium curriculum argued that its emphasis on study of the classics was unwise since, by producing graduates unsuited for practical activity, it both retarded the country's economic development and helped to increase the number of applicants for state positions. Thus the liberal educational reformer I. H. von Wessenberg wrote in 1835: "The crowding into the learned studies undoubtedly belongs to the most damaging of contemporary social circumstances, since on the one hand it removes many members from the productive classes, and on the other hand it fills society with people who make claims to positions in public service that cannot well be satisfied without disadvantage to the whole society because a great number of these claimants lack true capacity for office."¹⁰ Friedrich Thiersch was one of the most committed supporters of the existing Gymnasium, but he could not ignore the problem of its connection with state service. His rather lame defense was that since classical education was superior to any other it should be given to as many young men as possible, but that those who could not be absorbed into state employment should be encouraged to seek other types of work.¹¹ The respected Baden minister

find these figures in Venturini. Since completing this paper I have had the opportunity to read the major study of Reinhart Koselleck, *Preussen zwischen Reform und Revolution: Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung* (Stuttgart, 1967). On pp. 438-47, Koselleck presents extensive evidence in support of the view that the pressure by educated men for state jobs in Prussia was important.

⁸ Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Werke*, ed. Andreas Flitner and Klaus Giel, 4 vols. to date (Stuttgart, 1960-), 4: 218.

⁹ David Hanseemann, *Über Preussens Lage und Politik am Ende des Jahres 1830* (Aachen, 1845), p. 19.

¹⁰ I. H. von Wessenberg, *Die Elementarbildung des Volkes in ihrer fortschreitenden Ausdehnung und Entwicklung*, 2d. ed. (Konstanz, 1835), p. 90 (see also K. W. E. Mager, *Die deutsche Bürgerschule: Schreiben an einen Staatsmann* [Stuttgart, 1840], pp. 217-18).

¹¹ Friedrich Thiersch, *Über gelehrte Schulen, mit besondere Rücksicht auf Bayern*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1826-37), 1: 246-47, 253; 3: 438-39;

C. F. Nebenius strongly advocated extended technical education for Germany. He warned, however, against putting too much stress on advanced technical training. The result, he thought, would be that too many would seek to enter the higher ranking technical occupations and the same disadvantages would result that could be observed when the number of entrants into academic studies was too large. Nebenius considered the possibility of relieving pressure on the state for employment through a restriction of the number of students in the higher schools, the number to be determined by the extent of available state positions.¹²

That these contemporary observations were based on more than subjective impressions can be demonstrated by analysis of the attendance at German universities, and by study of the reactions of the German governments to the demand for state employment. In the twenties a large increase in the number of university students caused concern to various governments. The Prussian government issued repeated warnings against attendance at the universities with a view to entering state service, and in 1827 thought it necessary to make its examinations for state employment more severe.¹³ In the 1822–23 session of the Baden

Friedrich Thiersch, *Über den gegenwärtigen Zustand des öffentlichen Unterrichts in den westlichen Staaten von Deutschland, in Holland, Frankreich und Belgien*, 3 vols. (Tübingen and Stuttgart, 1838), 1: 111, 195–97, 201, 330, 491, 495; 2: 26–27; Heinrich Thiersch, *Friedrich Thiersch's Leben*, 2 vols. in one (Leipzig and Heidelberg, 1866), 1: 351–52; 2: 467; Franz Zwerger, *Geschichte der realistischen Lehranstalten in Bayern* (Berlin, 1914), pp. 12, 18, 49, 71, 96, 159, 161, 190, 248.

¹² C. F. Nebenius, *Ueber technische Lehranstalten in ihrem Zusammenhange mit dem gesamten Unterrichtswesen und mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die polytechnische Schule zu Karlsruhe* (Karlsruhe, 1833).

¹³ Johannes Conrad, *The German Universities for the Last Fifty Years* (Glasgow, 1885), pp. 19–24. Conrad relied heavily on J. H. Hoffmann, *Sammlung kleiner Schriften staatswirthschaftlichen Inhalts* (Berlin, 1843). They explained the sharp rise in university attendance in the twenties as due to the facts that after the defeat of France men looked to the improvement of their country and devoted themselves to service of the state and to scientific instruction, that there was an increased need for state officials, and that many new schools were established and this brought a demand for teachers. Also entrance to a university was fairly easy because the universities' testing of applicants was lax; in 1834, for the first time, the Gymnasien in Prussia were required to examine their graduating students to determine if they were fit to enter a university, and testing became more rigorous.

University attendance declined in the thirties. Conrad and Hoffmann saw this as due to recovery from economic depression and to a growing interest in practical education. Both agreed that overproduction was marked in law and theology, but did not affect medicine to anywhere near the same degree (but see n. 7 above). There seems no indication in their work that the number of philologists going into teaching was excessive. In a well-informed French periodical devoted to German affairs (*Nouvelle revue germanique* 2 [May 1829]: 76–77), I have seen one report that the number of university students preparing for teaching on an advanced level was

Landtag, Freiherr von Liebenstein, speaking for the government, explained the necessity "to protect the state against the pressure of the constantly increasing demands for office in the public service, demands that in future it will be progressively less possible to satisfy."¹⁴ In 1822 the number of legally trained candidates for state service in Bavaria was so far in excess of requirements that it was calculated that all those seeking positions in that year could not be placed in office before 1830, and in 1827 the minister of justice in Baden announced that the number of legally trained men for whom there were no positions open at the close of 1826 was 140, and the number was still growing.¹⁵

The number of university students throughout the country declined in the thirties, but in 1836 Wilhelm Dieterici, director of the Prussian Statistical Agency, published an analysis of attendance at Prussian universities and concluded that more students were preparing in theology and law than could be immediately employed by the state.¹⁶ In 1839 the Prussian minister of justice again appealed to

too great for existing opportunities. However, Conrad Varrentrapp in *Johannes Schulze und das höhere preussische Unterrichtswesen in seiner Zeit* (Leipzig, 1889), on p. 401 reports that Schulze when first in office had to hire non-Prussians for the Prussian Gymnasias, but that as a result of his work there was later an excess of Prussian teachers who then began to be hired outside of Prussia. It is possible that by the forties there were too many applicants for jobs in teaching. The Clarendon Commission in England in 1864 reported on the state of the higher schools in Prussia using information supplied by the Prussian minister of education, and said that the supply of trained teachers was not keeping pace with the growth of schools, in contrast to the situation twenty years earlier when fully trained candidates had often to wait for an appointment. Twenty years earlier would refer to the forties (see *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Revenues and Management of Certain Schools and Colleges* [London, 1864], appendix G).

¹⁴ Quoted in Leonhard Müller, *Badische Landtagsgeschichte*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1900–1902), 2: 123. Liebenstein explained the urge to university study by pointing to the general trade depression, to the lack of a demand for soldiers since Germany was at peace, and to the constant increase in population that was leading to complaints about overpopulation from all classes.

¹⁵ Karl Venturini, *Chronik des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 32 vols. (Altona, 1805–37); vols. 1–22, 1801–25; n.s., vols. 1–10, 1826–35; 19 (1822): 239–40; 2 (1827): 326–27, 359–60, 409. Also Ignaz Rudhard, *Ueber den Zustand des Königreichs Baiern nach amtlichen Quellen*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1825–27), 1: 104; 3: 221.

¹⁶ Wilhelm Dieterici, *Geschichtliche und statistische Nachrichten über die Universitäten im preussischen Staate* (Berlin, 1836), pp. 118–22. Dieterici pointed out that the excess of evangelical theology students was probably not so great as it appeared, since many went into teaching, and those who became house tutors often drifted into other occupations. In medicine, where he thought there was actually need for more students, it was not a matter of a limited number of offices; the population could certainly use more doctors, particularly in the countryside and the eastern provinces—young doctors understandably preferred to go to the large cities. The excess of jurists was real, and was made worse

parents and young men to give up thoughts of preparing to enter the judicial service, and gave figures showing the disproportion between candidates and positions. There was a slight decline in the number of law graduates between 1835 and 1845, but after 1845 a further rise. The civil service in Prussia not only did not expand to absorb these graduates but seems to have contracted during the forties, the official explanation being the need for economy.¹⁷

Inevitably there was frustration and resentment. Heinrich Laube, writing of his student days in the late twenties, outlined the prospect faced by the law students: "They had before them a decade of unremunerated service so that, with good luck, they might finally gain a salary of eight hundred talers, and everyone looked only to the state for his advancement; the world was enclosed by a fence called office, minor office."¹⁸ The literary critic Hermann Marggraff described the younger generation in 1839 as being both more sophisticated and more demanding, and in consequence discontented, because "in the crowding of the young into the learned professions only a few can obtain an office suited to their demands and needs."¹⁹ In 1851 the conservative novelist and sociologist Wilhelm Riehl, in a postmortem on the 1848 revolutions, designated this surplus of unemployed and underemployed talents an intellectual proletariat, and asserted that it constituted a permanent problem in German society: "Germany produces a greater intellectual product than it can use and support."²⁰ Evidence for Riehl's view is found in the large part played by the lawyers, journalists, and teachers in the radical wing of the middle class in 1848.²¹

The explanation of the situation in Germany is found in a specific

by the fact that frequently young men who came from another state to Prussia to study law wanted to remain, and so increased the competition for Prussian posts. This was not true, he notes, of non-Prussian theology students. Dieterici repeatedly argued that the total situation was not too alarming, since increasing population and a rising level of civilization were constantly creating new opportunities.

¹⁷ J. R. Gillis, "The Prussian Bureaucracy, 1840-1860: A Study of Social and Political Transformation" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1965), pp. 87-92, and "Aristocracy and Bureaucracy in Nineteenth-Century Prussia," *Past and Present*, no. 41 (December 1968), pp. 105-29. In contrast, it seems that the supply of engineers and technicians in the forties was not great enough for the needs of the state (see Dietrich Eichholtz, *Junker und Bourgeoisie vor 1848 in der preussischen Eisenbahngeschichte* [Berlin, 1962], pp. 178-79).

¹⁸ Heinrich Laube, "Erinnerungen," *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. H. H. Houben, 50 vols. (Leipzig, 1908-9), 40: 310.

¹⁹ Hermann Marggraff, *Deutschland's jüngste Literatur- und Culturepoche* (Leipzig, 1839), p. 292.

²⁰ W. H. Riehl, *Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart, 1851), p. 300.

²¹ Lenore O'Boyle, "The Democratic Left in Germany, 1848," *Journal of Modern History* 33 (December 1961): 374-83.

combination of those factors mentioned earlier. There was the new thinking about society that came in large part from the experience of the Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars; moderate as much of this thinking was in Germany, it nonetheless represented a real departure from previous norms. The young had experience of a different kind of society, and expected and hoped for a freer and more rewarding life. Yet these new hopes were formed in a society without a highly developed economic base. The country was barely beginning to industrialize, and the opportunities offered by agriculture and small-scale business were not very attractive or profitable. Added to this was the prestige of the state, a prestige surely equaled neither in France nor in England. It arose from the past successes of German absolutism, and it meant that for decades a government position, either as official or as employee, remained the summit of individual ambition. Last, the young, repelled by business and drawn toward state employment, found it comparatively easy to acquire the kind of education that qualified men for government. The German universities in modern times had been founded expressly for the purpose of training state officials; they were controlled and supported by the state. They were, moreover, inexpensive to a degree that impressed English and French observers. This relative cheapness meant that a poor boy with any brains and energy at all could usually obtain a higher education.²² The university thus became the great means of rising in the world. The result was that too many young men attended the university, and too many of them looked to the state for employment.

The picture in England is less clear than that in Germany. There does seem to have been a surplus of educated men but to a lesser extent than elsewhere. The problem was most marked in the legal profession. Increasing prosperity in the early century enabled many fathers to make better provision for their sons' careers, with the result that from 1802 to 1832 the number of attorneys holding practicing certificates rose from 5,270 to 8,702. It is true that in relation to the total increase of population the number of attorneys was slightly less in 1831 than it had been in 1801, but since the chief population increase had come about in the lower classes, who benefited most from those factors making for a healthier life, by 1831 a much larger number of attorneys were trying to earn a living by serving a section of the

²² E.g., A. H. Niemeyer, *Beobachtungen auf Reisen in und ausser Deutschland: Nebst Erinnerungen an denkwürdige Lebenserfahrungen und Zeitgenossen in den letzten fünfzig Jahren*, 4 vols. (Halle and Berlin, 1822-26), 2: 309. Niemeyer, at the University of Halle, was a leading figure in German education. See also Freiherr Karl von Stein, *Briefe und amtliche Schriften*, ed. Walter Hubatsch, 6 vols. to date (Stuttgart, 1957-), 3: 296.

population whose numbers had not increased at anything like the rate of the working class. After 1840, it appears that the rate of increase among attorneys slackened.²³

There was probably also a real surplus of barristers, though here the situation was ambiguous. By 1852 it was estimated that membership in the bar had trebled since 1830.²⁴ One reason for this was the growing practice among attorneys of training one son for the bar; he could then count on all the business of his family and family friends.²⁵ Changes in court procedure increased the process of transferring to solicitors business that had formerly been handled by junior members of the bar, and while the remuneration of successful leading counsel actually tended to increase over the years, for junior members of the bar there were fewer sources of income. In 1846 county courts were established, and it was feared that these would take business away from the superior courts and thus create unemployment at the bar.²⁶ The problem of the "briefless barrister" impressed contemporaries, perhaps more so after 1850 than before.²⁷

One important qualification, however, must be made. Many men were called to the bar who never had any intention of practicing. There were country gentlemen who desired a knowledge of law for the management of their own property and for a role in local government; some men planned to go into politics; some wanted to be called to the bar as a prerequisite for certain official appointments. In 1835 Samuel Warren, in his *A Popular and Practical Introduction to Law Studies*, distinguished three classes of candidates for admission to the bar. "The first class comprises merely nominal students; the second, those who seek to qualify themselves for the duties of the legislature or magistracy; the last, those who purpose becoming actual practitioners." And of the nominal students Warren wrote: "These are the students that form the dead weight of the profession; these the precious personages, that, under the name of 'briefless barristers,' contrive to attract the sympathising notice of the public as melancholy instances

²³ Michael Birks, *Gentlemen of the Law* (London, 1960), pp. 174–75, 214–15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 214–15.

²⁵ See the interesting review of Horace Twiss's life of Lord Eldon in the *Edinburgh Review* 81, no. 163 (1845): 131–80, and J. A. Roebuck's review of the same in the *Westminster Review* 42, no. 2 (1844): 456–91.

²⁶ Brian Abel-Smith and Robert Stevens, *Lawyers and the Courts: A Sociological Study of the English Legal System, 1750–1965* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), pp. 55–56.

²⁷ William Johnston, *England as It Is, Political, Social, and Industrial in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols. (London, 1851), 2: 148–52, 169; T. H. S. Escott, *England: Its People, Polity, and Pursuits*, 3d ed. (London, 1885), pp. 555–56. The first edition of Escott's book was in 1879.

of neglected merit—afflicting evidences of an over-stocked profession!”²⁸ It is clear that the number enrolled at any one time could not be equated with the number of barristers actively seeking professional success.

There was real unemployment also in the military profession. Army and navy officers, though not necessarily highly educated, were still upper-class men with some special training. They suffered severely from the demobilization after 1815 and the constant desire of Parliament to reduce the expense of the military and naval establishments. The lack of any sensible scheme of retirement meant that far too many officers lived on half pay; it has been calculated that throughout the twenties and thirties and most of the forties, about 100 officers were in competition for every ten naval posts. Many of these officers on half pay lived abroad because it was cheaper, and many went to the colonies.²⁹

Beyond this point it becomes difficult to identify particular groups. What one sees is a category of men of the upper classes, usually exposed to some degree of higher education, who for one reason or another had failed to make the grade in English society. They were the less successful professionals, or the men of no particular profession. Often this type of man went to the colonies. If lucky he would obtain an official post through his connections, or he would go as a remittance man, subsidized by his family and friends to make a new start.

Colonial reformers like Edward Gibbon Wakefield, Charles Buller, and Sir William Molesworth, made a great deal of the argument that colonization was necessary for England not only because there were too many laborers unable to find employment but because there was a surplus of ability in all areas of life. Wakefield saw “all trades

²⁸ Samuel Warren, *A Popular and Practical Introduction to Law Studies* (London, 1835), pp. 61, 64. Warren practiced as a special pleader from 1831 to 1837, in which year he was called to the bar. This book was first published in 1835 and went through several American editions. Warren later became a famous novelist and an M.P. The historian Thomas Macaulay might serve as an illustration of the “briefless barrister.” In the period from 1829 to 1834 Macaulay was supposedly setting himself up in the law. His income, however, was derived in almost equal parts from his Trinity fellowship, his office of a commissioner of bankruptcy, and his writings for the *Edinburgh Review* (G. Otto Trevelyan, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, 2 vols. [New York, 1876], 1: 135. Also see W. J. Reader, *Professional Men: The Rise of the Professional Classes in Nineteenth-Century England* [London, 1966], pp. 22–23, 154–55. Reader suggests that if the census figures have any validity, then it seems probable that the total number employed in the three ancient learned professions barely kept pace with the general rise in population during the fifty or sixty years before 1914).

²⁹ Michael Lewis, *The Navy in Transition, 1814–1864: A Social History* (London, 1965), pp. 19–25, 71, 99 ff.; J. W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, 13 vols. (London, 1899–1930), vol. 11, chaps. 1, 2, 4, 19.

and professions . . . full to overflowing";³⁰ the bar and the established church "crowded with hungry competitors."³¹ Sir William Molesworth in 1840 said that "in every branch of industry, in every description of trade, in all the professions competition is excessive."³² Wakefield dated this overcrowding, plausibly enough, from 1830. "Indeed it was then a new circumstance in our political economy, having grown up from 1815, with the cessation of war, which promoted a rapid increase of capital; with the improvement and spread of education, which augmented the numbers of the educated classes; and with the diminution of public expenditure, which cut down the fund for the maintenance of the children of the gentry."³³

The colonial officials were singled out for particular denunciation. Wakefield described them as persons "who, in consequence of their want of ability, have broken down in some career at home, or have had no career but that of being supported in idleness by their relations."³⁴ Molesworth enumerated them: "Poor relations, or needy dependents of men having political influence; officers in the army or navy who have been unsuccessful in their professions; briefless barristers; electioneering agents; importunate applicants for public employment, whose employment in this country public opinion would forbid."³⁵

It seems more than likely that these reports of competition at home were exaggerated in order to strengthen the case for colonization, but there is evidence that the kind of man described by the reformers was in fact emigrating.³⁶ The consistent implication of the reformers' arguments, of course, was that it was the second-rate men who were going to the colonies, and no doubt this would as a rule have been the case, since successful men had no reason to emigrate.³⁷ The colonies

³⁰ Wakefield, *A View*, pp. 74-75. I am indebted to Mrs. Helen Taft Manning for helpful suggestions on the relevance of colonization to this subject.

³¹ E. G. Wakefield, *England and America: A Comparison of the Social and Political State of Both Nations*, 2 vols. (London, 1833), 1: 94.

³² H. E. Egerton, ed., *Selected Speeches of Sir William Molesworth, Bart., P.C., M.P., on Questions Relating to Colonial Policy* (London, 1903), p. 87 (hereafter cited as *Selected Speeches*).

³³ Wakefield, *A View*, p. 66.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

³⁵ *Selected Speeches*, p. 204.

³⁶ R. B. Madgwick, *Immigration into Eastern Australia, 1788-1851* (London, 1937); Martin Turnbull, *The New Zealand Bubble* (Wellington, N.Z., 1959), pp. 40-41; an article by R. S. Neale which has called my attention to A. W. Martin, "Review of Volume I of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1788-1850*," *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand* 12 (April 1967): 584-86.

³⁷ *Selected Speeches*, pp. 213-14, Molesworth argued that "no gentleman, no man of birth or education," wanted to go to a penal colony without self-government. "But if the colonies were properly planted, and self-governed . . . then our kinsmen and friends, instead of overstocking the liberal professions, instead of

must have served as a safety valve, removing some of those whose frustrated ambitions would otherwise have been a source of potential trouble at home. Wakefield noted that while the competition among the educated classes was not so obviously dangerous as that among the laboring class, "we may yet believe that it is an element of political danger: for it is a competition even more distressing to behold than that of the labourers, because the other classes feel more acutely than the common people, the uneasiness and anxiety arising from excessive competition. Thus we have considerable numbers capable of exerting the power which knowledge gives, who are dissatisfied with their lot, and prone to attribute its evils to the actual order of things political."³⁸

Somewhat the same function seems to have been served by the civil service in England. When Sir Charles Trevelyan in the early fifties introduced his case for reform of the civil service, he based it very largely on the claim that the civil service was a refuge for aristocratic failures and what he described as "the incompetent, the habitually idle, the imperfectly educated & the unhealthy."³⁹ Sir James Stephan and others objected strongly to this characterization of the service, but an impressive list of witnesses supported Trevelyan with the argument that the more able and ambitious of the young chose to enter the free professions, where more initiative and talent were required and the rewards in money and prestige were far greater.⁴⁰ Repeatedly it was stressed that the status and pay of officials must be made commensurate with those of the professions if the best men were to be attracted to the service.⁴¹ From this one must conclude that in

overcrowding the army and navy . . . would seek their fortunes in the colonies and prosper." Turnbull (n. 36 above, pp. 40-41) notes that in every case he examined, the professional man who left a good job did so for reasons of health.

³⁸ Wakefield, *A View*, pp. 72-73.

³⁹ Quoted in Edward Hughes, "Sir Charles Trevelyan and Civil Service Reform, 1853-5," *English Historical Review* 64 (April 1949): 227. One notes that the civil service commission failed half of the nominated candidates between 1855 and 1856 (E. W. Cohen, *The Growth of the British Civil Service 1780-1939* [London, 1941]: p. 117).

⁴⁰ *Papers Relating to the Re-Organisation of the Civil Service* (London, 1855): R. M. Bromley, Accountant-General of the Navy, p. 53; Henry Cole, pp. 244-45; Edward Romilly, chairman of the Board of Audit, pp. 274-75; H. U. Addington, late undersecretary of state for the Foreign Department, pp. 348-50; H. Waddington, undersecretary of state for the Home Department, pp. 383-86; Sir A. Y. Spearman, secretary and comptroller general of the National Debt Office, p. 398.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, John G. Shaw Lefevre, clerk assistant to the House of Peers, p. 4; Sir James Stephan, p. 75; Dr. Vaughan, headmaster at Harrow, p. 90; Edwin Chadwick, p. 217; John Wood, chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, p. 306; Sir Thomas Freemantle, chairman of the Board of Customs, p. 319; Benjamin Hawes, Deputy Secretary at War, p. 370.

contrast to France and Germany, where competition for even the lowest bureaucratic position was intense, in England the free professions had been expanding at a rate sufficient to provide adequate opportunities for competent and highly educated men. One notes an interesting letter sent to Trevelyan by John Ball, an M.P. from Carlow County. Ball wrote on February 24, 1854: "Some exaggerated fears have been expressed lest the Civil Service should under the new system absorb too large a share of the active ability of the country." Ball thought the fears might be justified if civil service salaries were to be materially increased; Trevelyan wrote on Ball's letter that the rewards of public service were already sufficient and increases in salary were not contemplated.⁴²

There were indications that for those of something less than first-rate ability civil service reform might be a godsend. The master of Marlborough College, G. E. L. Cotton, testified that if sons of clergymen and others in the rank of gentlemen were emigrating to Australia and accepting situations involving manual labor, then he would think that many highly respectable boys who were not likely to succeed in the learned professions would be glad to accept something less than a top civil service appointment.⁴³ Dr. Vaughan, headmaster at Harrow, told the commission that everyone who had to advise students knew how increasingly common was the case of the young man who scrupled to take holy orders, had no chance at the bar, and yet possessed a kind of ability and attainment inapplicable to engineering and wasted on farming.⁴⁴ Here was indicated at least the beginnings of that pressure of job applicants on the civil service that was to be more marked in the second half of the century.⁴⁵

There were warnings in this connection that England might suffer from some of the same developments as the Continent. James Booth, secretary to the Board of Trade, thought that the reform as outlined would stimulate overeducation, and thus create a group of discontented men educated beyond the opportunities open to them; England

⁴² Hughes, "Sir Charles Trevelyan," p. 216.

⁴³ *Papers Relating to the Re-Organisation of the Civil Service*, pp. 58-61.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89; also Rev. F. Temple, principal of Kneller Hall Training School, p. 34.

⁴⁵ Frank Musgrove, "Middle Class Education and Employment in the Nineteenth Century," *Economic History Review* 12 (August 1959): 99-111. Musgrove deals mainly with the second half of the century, but his argument is that after 1830 there was more education provided for the middle class but fewer career opportunities because the well-paid professions did not expand. Musgrove's article was questioned by H. J. Perkins, "A Critical Note," *Economic History Review* 14 (August 1961): 122-30, and defended by F. Musgrove, "A Rejoinder," *Economic History Review* 14 (December 1961): 320-29.

might thus experience the same evils as countries like Prussia, where government had provided an artificial stimulus to the number of applicants to public office.⁴⁶ Edwin Chadwick noted that at one time too many men had received a university education in Germany. They had ended in consequence either ruined or discontented, unfit for private service but unable to find positions in the public service.⁴⁷ The same observation was made by Dr. Lyon Playfair, joint secretary to the Department of Science and Art.⁴⁸

Several witnesses thought that reform would benefit not only the middle but even the lower classes. Edward Romilly, chairman of the Board of Audit, pointed out that the comparatively modest prizes of the civil service rose in value as one descended the social scale; two to three hundred a year meant something quite different to the son of a farmer and craftsman than it did to the son of a nobleman or squire.⁴⁹ The dean of Carlisle called attention to the fact that large numbers of primary teachers and pupil teachers were being created, and he thought that these people should have some prospect of employment if they decided ultimately not to go into teaching. Otherwise it might be found that society had trained a "large and important class of dangerous and discontented men" who had been encouraged to cut themselves off from trade and had been educated beyond their equals.⁵⁰ No doubt it was an influx of just such persons that was in the mind of Rowland Hill, secretary to the post office, when he suggested that novices in the civil service should be put on half pay so as to guard against persons applying under pressure of immediate necessity rather than any settled purpose.⁵¹

In the light of this evidence one can conclude that England probably did have an overproduction of educated men, but that the problem was neither widespread nor severe. It was most apparent in the legal profession, not surprising in view of the fact that in England law was generally regarded as the greatest of the professions and inevitably attracted the most able young men. In general the colonies and the civil service seem to have helped to lower the pressure of competition by drawing off secondary talents.

Economic growth was perhaps the factor of prime importance in

⁴⁶ *Papers Relating to the Re-Organisation of the Civil Service*, p. 135.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 189. This situation, Chadwick added, had now been corrected.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 288; also Hermann Merivale, undersecretary of state for the Colonial Department, pp. 316-17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46. See the interesting study by R. W. Rich, *The Training of Teachers in England and Wales during the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 43, 74, 85-94, 177.

⁵¹ *Papers Relating to the Re-Organisation of the Civil Service*, pp. 243-44.

explanation of the English situation. The expansion of industry that was so much more marked in England than elsewhere had created vastly increased openings for young men in both business and the professions, so that the pressure for jobs in all areas of the economy was diminished.

A second explanation was the lack of a tradition of absolutism and bureaucracy. Individuals did not look to official position as the source of all honor, nor did they depreciate trade and manufacturing. Society acted upon government rather than government upon society; individual initiative was encouraged rather than obedience to government regulations. There was certainly place hunting in England, but it never assumed the proportions it did in France and Germany.⁵² In those countries the bureaucracy became the prime focus of competition, while in England it was apparently more of a refuge for those who could not survive the competition of business and the professions.

Personal ambition and the desire for advancement were of course important, but for the ordinary member of the middle class the tendency was to seek advancement by entering directly into business life. There was less emphasis on formal education as a means of upward mobility. England remained an aristocratic society, in the respect that men continued to believe in the virtues and rights of an aristocratic ruling class, formed by tradition and wealth, and separated from middle-class society by a certain kind of education and by the possession of political power. Individuals could enter this class, but only if they possessed great wealth or great ability and could gain access to very restricted educational facilities. The average middle-class son did not aspire so high, and it was possible for him to accept his exclusion from the top reaches of society because opportunities for economic advancement were comparatively abundant.

Higher education was set up so as to provide entrance into the upper class for only a few. The universities were not an important means of rising in the world for any appreciable number. Oxford and Cambridge were very expensive; the historian Hippolyte Adolphe Taine, visiting England in 1859, judged that the cost of education for a law or medical student in France was far less than for a student at Oxford.⁵³ The two great universities, moreover, were believed to exist in order to train the clergy and to provide a living for a leisured and

⁵² Witness the shocked reaction of many Englishmen to the scramble for office in France in 1830 and 1848, and how much they were impressed by the political activities of French journalists.

⁵³ Hippolyte Adolphe Taine, *Notes on England* (Fair Lawn, N.J., 1958), pp. 113-14.

cultivated class, and few at Oxford or Cambridge regarded themselves as having any particular obligation to society at large.⁵⁴ There were a small number of other, less prestigious, universities, but not nearly enough to take care of the needs of more than a small minority. Matthew Arnold in 1869 testified before the Taunton Commission that England, with a population of slightly more than 20 million, had 3,500 matriculated university students as against 6,362 for Prussia with a population of 18.5 million.⁵⁵

Although the Scottish universities and Dublin provided considerable opportunities for professional training, professional education in England was on the whole less organized and developed and in most cases probably more expensive than in either Germany or France. Germans were struck by the contrast between the systematic study of law in German universities and the casual, even haphazard, arrangements of the Inns of Court.⁵⁶ Legal and medical instruction remained essentially on an apprenticeship system. Members of the older professions, when they let in new members, seem to have thought of themselves as admitting educated gentlemen to small, self-governing groups of social equals; it was assumed that the applicant would be known personally to those who were to judge his qualifications.⁵⁷

The great public schools changed during the century to admit more of the middle class, but their aim, met at least in part, was to initiate the richer of the middle class into the manners of aristocratic society rather than to become themselves middle-class schools. The curriculum remained largely classical; the moral and social values inculcated were those of a ruling class. The public schools remained very expensive; Taine's estimate was that a classical education cost five times as much in England as in France, and in France there were numerous state scholarships.⁵⁸ It is true that the period saw an impressive increase in the number of secondary schools. From 1837 to

⁵⁴ I am indebted to Colin Clark for his kindness in making suggestions on this subject. Nicholas Hans, *New Trends in Education in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1951), pp. 210–11, argues that there was more educational opportunity for a poor boy in the eighteenth than in the nineteenth century. On the prevailing attitude toward the old universities, see V. H. H. Green, *Oxford Common Room: A Study of Lincoln College and Mark Pattison* (London, 1957), pp. 146–83.

⁵⁵ Reader, *Professional Men*, p. 130.

⁵⁶ E.g., Friedrich von Raumer, *England in 1835: Being a Series of Letters Written to Friends in Germany, during a Residence in London and Excursions into the Provinces* (Philadelphia, 1836), p. 485.

⁵⁷ Reader, *Professional Men*, pp. 47, 61–62.

⁵⁸ Taine, *Notes on England*, pp. 113–14. The Taunton Commission reported that English school fees were higher than French, and French fees higher than German (*Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission* [London 1868], pp. 70–71).

1869, thirty-one classical boarding schools were founded, and along with this went the renovation of many old grammar schools and independent day schools. In some cases curriculum was broadened to include more modern subjects. Nonetheless the opportunities for secondary education for the country as a whole remained very limited, and the emphasis in such education continued to be on classical studies.⁵⁹ Public school graduates certainly did go into business, but Matthew Arnold noted that while on the Continent the upper and middle class were brought up on the same plane, this was not true of England. There the professional men were stamped by an aristocratic education; they helped the aristocracy to rule, and were themselves cut off from the industrial middle class who received an inferior education.⁶⁰

The situation in France is the most difficult to judge. Numerous writers, educators, and politicians spoke of an overproduction of educated men as if it were a self-evident fact. France was commonly regarded, for one thing, as a country in which place hunting was carried to unparalleled extremes. There were never enough jobs in the administration to go around. Balzac, in *Lost Illusions*, wrote of the young men that "under all circumstances they wanted places, and politics provided none for them."⁶¹ Count de Guernon-Ranville, minister of education in the Polignac government in 1830, reports how his plans to create a number of secondary schools of law outside of Paris in order to decentralize education were rejected in the council of ministers; according to his opponents, "the multiplicity of schools could only serve to increase the number of students and to throw a crowd of new aspirants into the career of public employment."⁶² An aggravating factor was the predominance of youth in the population.

⁵⁹ T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools: A Study of Boys' Public Boarding Schools in England and Wales from 1837 to the Present Day* (London, 1967), pp. 34-36, 174-79.

⁶⁰ Matthew Arnold, "Schools and Universities on the Continent," in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R. H. Super, vols. 1-6 (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1960-), 4: 308-9. Bamford (n. 59 above, pp. 212-22) concludes that in midcentury the graduates of the various kinds of public schools followed a common pattern in selecting occupations. Church provision was everywhere on the decline; science and engineering were almost ignored until the end of the century; there was a marked increase in boys going overseas; business gained rapidly in prestige even for graduates of the great public schools, particularly in the sixties; the armed forces and law remained very popular; the position of medicine varied considerably.

⁶¹ Honoré de Balzac, "Lost Illusions," *The Novels of Honoré de Balzac*, 53 vols. (Philadelphia, 1895-1900), 31: 255.

⁶² M. C. Guernon-Ranville, *Journal d'un ministre*, ed. Julian Travers (Caen, 1873), p. 104.

The periods of the Revolution and Napoleon, and even the Restoration, had seen relatively young men put into administration, so that now those even younger were effectively blocked from advancement for what promised to be a long time. The population as a whole was sensibly younger than in this century, yet the Constitutional Charter set forty as the minimum age for a deputy;⁶³ Balzac repeatedly lamented the neglect of "the flower of that admirable French youth so much sought after by Napoleon and Louis XIV . . . by the senile government under which everything in France decays."⁶⁴

The professions seem to have been equally crowded. The journalist André Cochut wrote, in the *Revue des deux mondes*, that the number of persons engaged in careers "where a cultivation of intellect is necessary . . . are without doubt far too many for the resources that our society offers them."⁶⁵ Saint-Marc Girardin reported that as the literary professions became encumbered young people increasingly turned to scientific study, so that now the scientific professions in their turn were becoming full.⁶⁶ The satirist Albéric Second asked how there could be any question that the world was overpopulated, "when there were twenty times more lawyers than suits to be lost, more painters than portraits to be taken, more soldiers than victories to gain, and more doctors than patients to kill?"⁶⁷ This was a favorite theme of Balzac: "There are a hundred lawyers, a hundred doctors for every vacancy."⁶⁸

The fault was often imputed to the French system of education. For the upper classes there were the *lycée* and *collège*, secondary schools whose diplomas opened the way to the professions and government service. The universities and the great special schools of Paris like the *Ecole normale* existed essentially for advanced study. Critics of the system believed that there was too much emphasis on classical studies and abstract thinking, so that graduates were fit only for careers in the professions or government. This, the critics argued, worked to

⁶³ Guillaume de Bertier de Sauvigny, *La Restauration* (Paris, 1955), pp. 319-23.

⁶⁴ Honoré de Balzac, "A Prince of Bohemia," *Novels*, 8: 365.

⁶⁵ Quoted by Adeline Daumard, *La bourgeoisie parisienne de 1815 à 1848* (Paris, 1963), p. 80.

⁶⁶ Saint-Marc Girardin, *De l'instruction intermédiaire et de son état dans le midi de l'Allemagne* (Paris, 1835), p. 311.

⁶⁷ Jules Janin, Honoré Balzac, Cormenin, and others, *Pictures of the French* (London, 1840), p. 42.

⁶⁸ Honoré de Balzac, "Z. Marcus," *Novels*, 35: 9. In "Old Goriot," *Novels* 19: 152, Vautrin, speaking to Rastignac, points out that fifty thousand young men beside Rastignac himself want to make a fortune quickly: "'You must all kill one another like so many spiders in a pot, if there are not fifty thousand good places.'"

the detriment of the economy; it was at once a cause and a result of the backwardness of French economic life. The journalist Émile de Girardin wrote of the successful business men and proprietors who gave their sons education in a *collège*, then could not or would not do more for them: "They cast them loose to follow one of the liberal professions, the law or medicine . . . or to gain a precarious livelihood by the public press, or to solicit (long, perhaps, and vainly) employment in a public office. Agriculture and commerce are repudiated as beneath young men who are at one bound to overleap many steps in the social scale—to start at once to eminence, perhaps to the foremost seats in the Chamber of Deputies . . . or at least are to shine in the world of letters, and take rank among the *milliennaires* of 'Journalism.'"⁶⁹ An English reviewer of Girardin's book, writing in 1841 in the *Quarterly Review*, noted that while France was sharing in the general increase of population she was still not experiencing the increasing commercial activity of England or the expansion of the frontier as in America, both of which helped to absorb superfluous population. "In the higher as well as the lower classes there is the same want of straight and regular paths in which steady industry or persevering ambition may ensure success in life."⁷⁰

The existence of overeducated and underrewarded men was seen as a social danger; such men were a "floating mass of unemployed and inconstant [persons] who form an army always available to the ambitious and the instigators of revolt."⁷¹ Charles Dupin, a leading exponent of industrial education, wrote of the young men who had acquired a purely literary education that "their intelligence, formed along no precise lines, remains without application. They are sunk in misery if they cannot obtain some place as a subordinate clerk in a department."⁷² Victor Cousin, arguing for a new type of education suited to middle-class needs, wrote of the effect on many of an education in a *collège*: "Thus numerous generations are educated in our *collèges* who, having early formed habits incompatible with their natural destiny, reject it, and spreading themselves throughout society look for a place they do not always find, bringing everywhere a fatal unrest, always ready to throw themselves into every disorder."⁷³

⁶⁹ Quoted in the *Quarterly Review* 134 (March 1841): 424–25.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 397.

⁷¹ Saint-Marc Girardin, *De l'instruction*, p. 315.

⁷² Charles Dupin, *Géométrie et mécanique des arts et métiers et des Beaux-Arts*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1825–26), 2: xiii–xiv.

⁷³ Victor Cousin, "Instruction publique," *Oeuvres*, 5th ser., 3 vols. (Paris, 1850), 1: 172; and see R. R. Bolgar, "Victor Cousin and Nineteenth Century Education," *Cambridge Journal* 2 (March, 1949): 357 ff.

Debates on educational legislation in the Chamber revealed the same impressions and fears. Thus Guizot, speaking in 1836 of the unsuitability of a classical education for all:

From this, gentlemen, [comes] that perturbation so often deplored, which diverts a great number of the young from their natural situation, excites their imagination without providing strong nourishment for their intelligence, inspires them with literary tastes without a true and serious knowledge of letters, encumbers the learned professions with idle and sickly pretensions, and thus spreads throughout society a multitude of misplaced and restless people who weigh on society and trouble it without obtaining for themselves the fortune or reputation to which they vainly aspire. . . . I do not insist upon these facts, gentlemen, they have frequently occupied your thoughts; they are attested by many and longstanding complaints, public and private; they are indirectly revealed by the efforts of the last twenty years to effect in our system of secondary education the modifications which will satisfy the needs of the social state.⁷⁴

Against all the preceding evidence, however, must be placed the report made by Abel-Françoise Villemain as minister of public instruction in 1843; this was the first thorough report drawn up since 1802. According to Villemain's figures, the total number of pupils in all types of secondary schools was still less than the number receiving secondary-school training in the last years of the ancien régime: in 1789 the ratio was one pupil to 382 inhabitants, in 1842 one pupil to 493 inhabitants. Villemain calculated that there were 60,000 positions in public administration and the liberal professions. Of these, 3,000 fell vacant every year, and 3,000 was just about the number graduated annually from the various types of secondary schools in the country. Secondary education thus was barely sufficient to meet the needs of the nation.⁷⁵ In 1847 Narcisse-Achille Salvandy, occupying the same ministry, argued in his turn that secondary education was not furnishing the number of educated men necessary and desirable for the administration and public services.⁷⁶

Statements from such authorities should dispose of the matter if it were not for one point; Villemain and Salvandy were talking about those who actually graduated from the *collège* or *lycée*. Yet in France, as in Germany, it is clear that some students wanted only a few years of classical education, mainly for reasons of prestige, and were either

⁷⁴ *Archives Parlementaires de 1787 à 1860*, Chamber of Deputies, February 1, 1836. On the subject of French education I am indebted for suggestions to Peter N. Stearns.

⁷⁵ Frederick B. Artz, *The Development of Technical Education in France 1500-1850* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), pp. 195-201. Georges Weill (*L'histoire de l'enseignement secondaire en France (1802-1920)* [Paris, 1921], pp. 71-72) says that Villemain's figures can be contested, but does not develop the point.

⁷⁶ *Procès-Verbaux des séances de la Chambre des Députés* 5, no. 118, suppl. (1847): 267-69.

not able or not willing to finish the course.⁷⁷ Secondary education was expensive; moreover the amount of government and municipal scholarship money for education declined steadily from 1815 to 1848.⁷⁸ Salvandy himself seemed aware of the problem; he remarked that classical studies began too late and ended too early, and he added that the difference in fortunes kept down the number of those who desired a complete education.

In general, to get established in any career was difficult and costly, involving years of training, high fees, and often good connections. Balzac's *A Start in Life* outlines the possibilities for a young man without money. Madame Clapart is speaking to her son, who has by foolish conduct lost the support of the only powerful man who might have aided him:

You have no fortune, and you must make your own. . . . There are only four great careers for you young people—trade, government, the privileged professions, and the military service. Any branch of trade requires capital, and we have none to give you. For want of capital, a young man brings his devotedness, his capacity; but trade means great discretion, and your conduct of yesterday does not give me any hope that you would succeed in it. To enter a public department one must serve for a long time as a supernumerary there, have backing in it, and you have alienated the only protector that we had, and the most powerful of all. Moreover, suppose that you were endowed with the most extraordinary means by the aid of which a young man gets there at once, either in trade or in a government office, where would you get the money to feed and clothe yourself during the time that one spends in learning his duties?

Madame Clapart thinks about her son:

After trade and the government, careers of which her son must not dream, because of inability on her part to support him, came the privileged professions of the notaryship, the bar, attorneys and constables. But he would have to take his course in law, study for three years, and pay considerable sums for entrance fees, examinations, theses and diplomas; the large number of aspirants, compelled one to distinguish one's self by superior talent.⁷⁹

Evaluation of the French situation is particularly difficult because of two features of French society: the fear of revolution, and the

⁷⁷ F. Thiersch, (n. 11 above), 2:254, 318, 359; and see Saint-Marc Girardin in the Chamber of Deputies, June 14, 1836; also n. 69 above.

⁷⁸ Weill, pp. 71–72; M. Arnold, "Schools and Universities on the Continent," *Complete Prose Works*, 4: 51–52.

⁷⁹ Honoré de Balzac, "A Start in Life," *Novels*, 5:162–63. This situation helps to explain the prominent role of the journalist in France. Writing for the press was probably the most attractive and most accessible way to earn a living for a young man with a general education and limited means. Perhaps an excess of intellectuals always tends to appear first in the literary field, simply because no special qualifications are needed.

importance of the city of Paris. An intense fear of political and social unrest existed among the upper classes. Memories of the Revolution were very much alive, and these memories alerted men to the danger of discontented lawyers and of journalists exploiting popular discontents. One index of the fear of party strife was a preoccupation with the press. The journalists were regarded as leaders of political factions stirring up the public to gain office for themselves, and willing if necessary to incite revolution. Such fears were not unfounded, as the leading part played by the journalists in 1830 and 1848 made clear. Nonetheless they may have been excessive; it is at least possible that there were never in fact as many underemployed lawyers and journalists as someone like Guizot seemed to think, but that the number was exaggerated, consciously or unconsciously, through fear.

The same fears may have operated in discussions of education. No one can read very much in this area without being made aware of the extent of upper-class distrust and resentment of those below them. Educational policy was aimed directly at providing a different kind of education for each group in society—primary education for the laboring class, a more practical sort of secondary education for the bulk of the middle class, classical education for the upper-middle class—and it was not intended that there should be crossing over from one type of school to another as a regular thing. Each social class was to remain in its proper place. One result of this was to cut off the lower classes from entrance to the professions; the *lycée* was to provide education for the upper-middle class and to prepare the future civil servants and professional men. The rich accordingly retained a practical monopoly of the most desirable jobs—the steady decline in scholarship funds was part of this policy.⁸⁰

The less prosperous middle class continued to send their sons to the *lycée* and the *collège* anyway. They were not convinced that the schools intended especially for them were as good, and they remained dominated by the traditional belief that a superior education meant study of the classics.⁸¹ Thus the principle of the career open to talents clashed with the attempts of the upper classes to preserve their privileges.

The position of Paris, with its overwhelming attraction as the

⁸⁰ Douglas Johnson, *Guizot: Aspects of French History, 1787–1874* (London and Toronto, 1963), pp. 111, 148; Weill, p. 72. F. Thiersch, *Über den gegenwärtigen Zustand* (2:108–9) wrote that nowhere more than in France, for all the talk of equality, were those with privileges and money more jealous of the attempts of others to win the same. Those on the top had arrived there through education, and they defended limited suffrage and expensive education with equal vigor.

⁸¹ Weill, pp. 112–14.

center of France, must also be considered. No capital city, not even London, so overshadowed the provinces. The result was that the talented and ambitious went to Paris if they possibly could, and it seems extremely probable that in Paris there was always an excess of talented young men relative to the immediate need for them, while no such surplus would be found in the provinces.⁸² These men, concentrated in one spot, had high visibility; it was impossible to ignore the underemployed journalists and lawyers, and difficult to forget the danger they represented. The end result, however, may well have been to mistake a phenomenon peculiar to Paris for a problem of the whole nation.

The evidence points to the conclusion that there was a real problem of intellectual overproduction in this period, at least in Paris. The French economy was relatively underdeveloped; for an educated young man there was no such range of economic opportunity as existed in England. Certainly there were opportunities in business, but as a rule they required capital, hard work, and ability, and while it was a period of general enrichment, economic growth favored the great capitalists, with lesser men remaining at the same level of fortune.⁸³

At the same time, however, the principle of the career open to talents had entered deeply into French thinking, and postrevolutionary attitudes sanctioned the most extravagant hopes of personal advancement. In the absence of other opportunity men naturally looked to the state for positions. The tradition of absolutism led them to identify government position with power, honor, and economic security; in addition there was now the new system of representative government under which all positions, in theory, were open to everyone. It was therefore not surprising that France continued to be notorious for the extent of place hunting.

Talent and training accordingly were channeled into the bureaucracy and the professions to an unhealthy degree, and this tendency was only encouraged by the prevailing system of education. One can say that there might have been less of a problem of intellectual underemployment if, on the one hand, there had existed more opportunity in business and the professions, or, on the other hand, there had been a

⁸² This is a prominent theme in all Balzac wrote. Other capital cities exerted a comparable effect; even in Germany, Karl Venturini and Wilhelm Dieterici noted the reluctance of young men to go to the provinces (see nn. 16 and 17 above). Raymond Carr (*Spain, 1808-1939* [Oxford, 1966], pp. 49-50, 138, 158, 167, 201, 217, 230-31, 287) makes acute and suggestive observations about this subject and about the professions in general.

⁸³ Daumard (n. 65 above), pp. 95, 216-17.

different kind of political system and less concern with social advancement.

What, if any, was the historical importance of this surplus of educated men who might justly be said to have formed an intellectual proletariat? The political history of the period points to the conclusion that their presence made for social and political instability. They played an important part in 1830 and 1848 in France and Germany. Where they did not constitute a serious problem, as in England, the danger of revolution was lessened. Their presence, obviously, was only one factor among many but, other things being equal, it does seem to have provided an index to the degree of social stability prevailing in each country.

There seems no reason to believe that this was a problem only of this period. There is evidence that similar groups existed in late eighteenth-century Germany, late nineteenth-century France, and late nineteenth-century England.⁸⁴ In the twentieth century this kind of intellectual proletariat was important in the growth of Fascism and Right Radicalism, and has been crucial in the history of the underdeveloped countries.

The problem may well be a chronic one in any society with a large population and a relatively free market. The prestige and intrinsic interest of intellectual as opposed to manual occupations are perhaps enough in themselves to cause a permanent oversupply of trained talents. At the present time technological growth may be leading to a demand for scientifically-trained persons so great as to be virtually unlimited. It is doubtful, however, that the demand will be equally great for the humanistically educated. In the period studied here it was essentially the older fields, not those of science and technology, that suffered overcrowding, and it remains true today that the majority of the young, for whatever reasons, still do not select scientific study.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Henri Brunschwig, *La crise de l'état prussien à la fin du XVIII^e siècle et la genèse de la mentalité romantique* (Paris, 1947); R. F. Byrnes, *Antisemitism in Modern France* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1950), passim. For a dark picture of the life of the literary man in London later in the century, see George Gissing's novel, *New Grub Street*, first published in 1891, and n. 46 above.

⁸⁵ See Norman Podhoretz, *Making It* (New York, 1969), p. 159, on the discontented young men of his generation: "They had, in other words, been educated, just as I myself had been, by liberal-arts courses in college, by the most advanced literature, and by the prevailing assumptions of what Trilling calls 'the Second Environment' to be as unhappy as possible in the only jobs their training fitted them to perform. Their number was and is legion all along Madison Avenue."

Historically the problem of having too many educated men seems to have been most serious in countries with an underdeveloped but expanding economy. New expectations of advancement were formed, but in practice economic opportunities remained very limited. Secondary education was scarce, expensive, and much valued; those with such an education naturally developed a high degree of self-importance and put forward claims for social recognition and reward. The result, predictably, was discontent and, frequently, revolt. Conversely, of course, an excess of educated men could become a problem in a mature capitalist economy that had ceased to function effectively, as in pre-1933 Germany.