

**A DISCOURSE ON  
THE STUDIES OF THE  
UNIVERSITY**

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A Discourse on the Studies of the University by Adam Sedgwick

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**ADAM SEDGWICK**

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DISCOURSE  
ON THE  
STUDIES OF THE UNIVERSITY.

BY  
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TO  
THE MASTER,  
FELLOWS AND STUDENTS  
OF  
TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,  
AND  
ESPECIALLY TO THOSE AT WHOSE REQUEST  
IT IS PUBLISHED,  
THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE  
IS DEDICATED  
BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE AND FAITHFUL SERVANT  
THE AUTHOR.



## P R E F A C E.

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THE substance of the following discourse was delivered in the Chapel of Trinity College, on the day of the annual Commemoration in December last, and is published at the request of the junior members of the Society, to whom it was more immediately addressed. As the long delay in its publication requires some apology, the Author begs leave to state, that the request, on which he is now acting, first reached him during the christmas vacation, when he was absent from the University; and that for some weeks after his return he was so much occupied in completing a course of lectures and in passing two memoirs through the press, that the Lent Term had nearly expired before he had time to revise his MS for the printer. Without any further delay it was then struck off as far as page 33; and he hoped to have published it at the commencement of the Easter Term.

During its progress through the press he found however that he had undertaken a more difficult task than he had imagined: for having animadverted with much freedom on some parts of the Cambridge course of reading, he felt himself com-



pelled, before he dared to give what he had written to the public, to enter at more length on a justification of his opinions. On this account, his remarks on the classical, metaphysical, and moral studies of the University (extending from p. 33 to p. 91) were cast over again, and expanded to at least three times their original length.

Before this part of his task was completed, an attack of indisposition compelled him for a short time to quit the University; and on his return the languor of ill health, and a series of engagements of which it is not necessary here to speak, prevented him from immediately resuming it: so that the latter part of this discourse was not printed till a late period in the Easter Term, when most of the junior Members had left the University for the long vacation. On this account (as the Appendix was not written, and perhaps he ought to add, as the determination fell in with the ready excuses of a procrastinating spirit) he resolved not to publish before the University re-assembled in the October Term.

Lest he should be accused of printing a discourse too widely differing from the one he was requested to publish, he wishes to state, that (with the exception of mere verbal corrections) it is, as far as p. 33, in the form in which it was first written, and that the conclusion has undergone

no change: and in the two parts which have been so much expanded, he has preserved the scope and sentiments, and in many instances the very words of his first sketch. The notes added in an Appendix are not written to serve any purpose of ostentation. By most academic persons they may be considered unnecessary: but should a single reader find them of use in explaining or enforcing what is stated in the text, the Author will not regret that he has written them.

He has attacked the utilitarian theory of morals, not merely because he thinks it founded on false reasoning, but because he also believes that it produces a degrading effect on the temper and conduct of those who adopt it. It is, however, more easy to pull down than to build up; and he thinks it unfortunate that there is no English work on morals at once unexceptionable in its principles, and cast in such a form as to meet the wants of the University. Bishop Butler's three Sermons on Human Nature and his Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue have lately become subjects of examination in Trinity College. Of their kind, they are works of inestimable value: but they are devoted rather to the discussion of the principles of morality than to the establishment of a system of moral philosophy; and they are considered by most persons, who begin to speculate on such questions, both difficult and uninviting.

Before concluding this Preface, the Author disclaims any notion of holding out the following pages as a formal dissertation on academic studies. Such an attempt would be far above his powers; not falling in with his usual habits of thought, and requiring research for which he has neither time nor inclination. What is here printed treats of subjects treated of a hundred times before, and professes no originality, except what it derives from the circumstances under which it was delivered and the persons to whom it was addressed. Should it be the means of leading even a small number of them to think more justly on any of the subjects of academic learning, and to combine moral and religious habits of thought with those severe physical studies, during which the best faculties of the mind are sometimes permitted to droop and wither, his most earnest wishes will be accomplished.

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,  
Nov. 5, 1833.

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