

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROFESSIONS

Though it is commonly thought that professional bodies are modern institutions, they are in fact as old as the universities. They originated in the Middle Ages, and are therefore earlier than constitutional states and liberal democracies. That professional bodies have survived into the modern age reflects society's need for structure, a backbone.

The doctrinaire liberalism of the early nineteenth century viewed professional bodies as anachronistic, like trade guilds, and brought about their suppression. The argument was then part of the dominant liberal strain and its principle of non-intervention by the state.

From the second third of the nineteenth century onwards, the long tradition of professional bodies in Spain slowly recovered, until it acquired the structure still recognisable today. The *ley Moyano* of 1857 established a link between academic qualifications and professions. With time, technology, science and knowledge in general evolved through the spread of university education, the development of practical training and even through everyday activities.

It has been suggested that engineering emerged with the first humans, who used primitive forms of technology to survive. They shaped stone to make tools and used fire as a source of heat. At first, there was no distinction between the various engineering activities, including architecture; rather, knowledge was a diffuse amalgam that finally brought forth the early wonders of the Sumerian civilisation.

Egypt and later Greece and Rome were worthy heirs to the first known civilisation, but polished and refined its techniques and developed new architectural styles. Vitruvius, in his treatise *De architectura* (first century AD), framed the ideals of western architecture – beauty, strength and utility – and defined architecture as “a science, arising out of many other sciences, and adorned with much and varied learning: by the help of which a judgement is formed of those works which are the result of other arts. Practice and theory are its parents.”

Cicero's oratory laid the foundations for the future Roman *advocati*, professionals who specialised in the practice of law. The fall of the Roman empire relegated these branches of knowledge to secondary importance. At the dawn of the modern age, the legal professions started to be minutely regulated with a view to a future of statutes and codified law.

It was in the Renaissance that there emerged another profession still active in our day – the quantity surveyor and architectural engineer. It was at this time, too, that empirical science had its beginnings, coupled with the anthropocentrism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Da Vinci pursued his enquiries into human anatomy, optics and engineering, but also, like many of his contemporaries, into magic and alchemy. But the difference between classical Greek magic and Renaissance alchemy was that the former rested on myth and speculation, while the latter ventured into experiment. One example of this quantitative leap was Galileo, who pioneered the



use of experiments to validate theories of physics. Without Galileo, Newton would not have been able to build his three great principles of physics, nor would optics have developed as it did in the late nineteenth century.

The Renaissance of humankind after centuries of medieval darkness brought about a revival of technique and a new wave of experiment surrounding the notion of citizenship and all that it implies. This new kind of thought was further enriched and widened by the Enlightenment.

The birth of medicine, like that of engineering, sprang from human awareness of our limitations in space and time. It was then that humans sought to cure illness, distribute space and lend structure to reality. Illness, which the earliest scholars conceived of as an invasion calling for exorcism, had almost mystical and religious connotations, which it would only lose with the fading of myth and the rebuilding of knowledge on the basis of objective facts. The key exponent of the ancient discipline was Hippocrates of Cos, the father of medicine, who created the oath still taken by the medical profession today. Closely linked to medicine in the modern age was the apothecary, who, with a knowledge of herbs and specifics, prepared the first pharmaceuticals.

Thought and the free market came together in the early nineteenth century. The French Revolution gave shape to the principles of the liberal politics that was to mark the economy of our times. From Adam Smith to Karl Marx to John Maynard Keynes, successive economic models and ideas led eventually to a world politics of economic blocs and the Cold War. Economic liberalism finally emerged supreme, and the professions became increasingly present in the economy.

Europe, with the aim of developing into an economic powerhouse, resolved to implement the Lisbon agenda and achieve leadership through the development of knowledge, in which the professions must play a key role. Modern professional bodies have emerged to optimise the benefit to society of the professions, in consonance with an increasingly service-oriented society, and as safeguards of fundamental rights. The responsibilities of professional bodies are tied to the very nature of the professions. A lawyer or a doctor, therefore, owes one duty as a member of a profession, and another as a citizen, because social rights have evolved and are now enshrined in the Spanish Constitution.