

THE IDEA OF SERVICE

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The idea of culture was, and to a large measure is, the central ideal of the colleges of liberal arts whether a part of a University or an independent college. The idea of vocation was introduced with the higher educational institutions when the demand for technical education arose; it is represented in the universities by colleges of agriculture, engineering, schools of chemistry, commerce, journalism, etc. The idea of research came into the American university in a large way when Johns Hopkins was founded; it is now regarded in the greater universities as of correlative importance with that of culture. In a broad sense the idea of culture, the idea of vocation, and the idea of research are held and developed in order that the institution may perform service; and thus the idea of service may be said to be the ultimate purpose of the ideas of culture, vocation, and research.

It is to be presumed, however, that in assigning to me the subject, The Idea of Service, following addresses upon The Idea of Culture, The Idea of Vocation, and The Idea of Research, something different was meant. I shall assume that what was meant was something more direct than the great service of the institution through the students who are benefited by its instruction or the inestimable benefits of research to mankind. I shall assume that what is meant is the service of the institution directly to the people of the state and nation.

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GENERAL PRINCIPLES INVOLVED

The principles which demand such service may be clearly formulated. To about the middle of the 19th century the advancement of knowledge was comparatively slow and at least a fair proportion of the knowledge that the people could apply had been assimilated by them in the more enlightened nations. But since the year 1850 the advancement of knowledge has been greater than in a thousand and probably in five thousand years before. The result is that the accumulation of knowledge has far outran the assimilation of the people. Much of this knowledge has accumulated during the past twenty-five years--since men still in full maturity have left the schools and colleges.

To illustrate: We know enough so that if that knowledge were applied the agricultural product of the nation could be easily doubled. We know enough about soils so that they could give this result and improve in their fertility instead of deteriorate. We know enough about scientific medicine so that if the knowledge were applied infectious and contagious diseases could be practically eliminated within a score of years. We know enough about the breeding of animals so that if that knowledge were applied to man, the feeble minded would disappear in a generation, and the insane and criminal class be reduced to a small fraction of their present numbers. Even in politics we have sufficient scientific knowledge so that if it were fully used there would be vast improvement in the government of this country.

The specific idea of service under consideration is then that the university shall carry to the people the knowledge which they can assimilate for their betterment along all lines.

It may be suggested at this point that, while this idea of service cannot be gainsaid, it is not a function of the university but rather of some other instrumentality. If it is meant by this that it has not been the function of the traditional university, to this dissent cannot be made. But it seems to me that whether it is the function of the University should be decided by the simple criterion as to whether the university is the best fitted instrument to do this work. If it is so, it should do it without reference to any person's preconceptions as to the scope of the university.

By the phrase "carrying out knowledge to the people" I do not mean to include the regular instruction of the elementary, secondary, and vocational schools to children of school age, nor the instruction in colleges and universities. To those having the opportunity of elementary, secondary schools, colleges, universities, and professional schools, the best means of transmitting knowledge is the regularly organized educational institutions; but as has already been indicated a large part of the knowledge which could be applied to the advantage of the people has accumulated since men and women of middle age have left the schools; and also large numbers of men and women, now engaged in the active work of the world have not had the opportunities of the schools. It is this great class of people, constituting roughly about four-fifths of the population that is now being

considered.

Carrying out knowledge to the people requires the highest grade of experts. It involves comprehensive knowledge of the more recent advances along all lines. The work of carrying out knowledge must be organized at some center. What other organization can meet these specifications better than a university? Objection has been made to this undertaking by the university on the ground that it will involve work which is not of college grade; a further objection has been made that so far as the work is of university grade it cannot be done elsewhere as well as at the central institution. The hypothesis upon which the first objection is based is that the university shall not extend its work beyond traditional boundaries. The second objection is a theoretical one which must be weighted by results; and even if the objection be sound with reference to some subjects, it does not follow that this is true for all.

If a university is to have as its ideal, service on the broadest basis, it cannot escape taking on the function of carrying out knowledge to the people. This is but another phraseology for university extension, if this be defined as extension of knowledge to the masses rather than extension of the scope of the university along traditional lines. The history of university extension shows that the point of view above given was appreciated in a measure by the Oxford Commission which drew up a scheme for extension in 1850, more than sixty years ago.

I therefore conclude that the broadest ideal of service demands that the university as the best fitted instrument shall

take up the problem of carrying out knowledge to the people so far as the same is necessary to supplement the work of the elementary and secondary schools.

By the above it is not meant to imply that the university is the only instrument which can perform extension service. Work of this class has been done for many years by the Lowell Institute in Boston, the Cooper Institute in New York, the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, and by other less noted institutions. These institutions have special foundations, the money of which was largely granted for what now may be called extension work; they are conclusive evidence that the founders had a clear appreciation of the needs of the people for the extension of knowledge. Other important instrumentalities for extension are the various lyceum bureaus, Chatauquas and their summer schools, literary and scientific circles, and the various American schools of correspondence.

With a few notable exceptions, however, it is clear that the university is the institution which is most advantageously organized to carry on extension work. A few years ago it might have been a moot question as to the advisability of recognizing as a function of the university, in addition to the instruction and investigation, this third great field. But now the consensus of judgment of men in charge of universities has clearly decided the question. As has already been indicated the idea originated at Oxford; Cambridge followed Oxford's lead.

So far as I am aware university extension was first definitely organized in this country by the University of Wisconsin. In that institution Agricultural extension in the form of farmer's institutes had an annual appropriation of \$12,000 as early as 1885;