

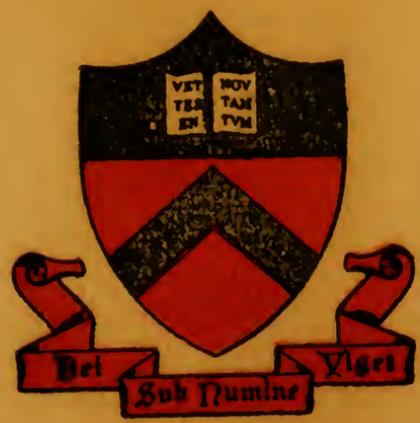
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*The*  
**ESSENTIALS OF LIBERAL EDUCATION**

THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS  
OF  
JOHN GRIER HIBBEN  
PRESIDENT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY



MAY 22 1912  
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OF  
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In entering formally upon the duties of the high office of President of Princeton University I wish to present in my inaugural address the essential principles of our philosophy of education. We believe that the chief end of an education is the making of a man. It is the process of developing a power within which enables the human being to dominate the instincts and habits of his animal nature, assert himself as a free personality, and direct his life according to the light of reason. While he is a part of the natural world, man belongs also to the world of mind and of spirit. The particular function of education is to give him the power of freedom and to make him sensible of the duties, and worthy the privileges of a *person* in the midst of a universe of things.

Personality, however, is not mechanically formed from without, but must be evoked from within. The appeal of the teacher therefore is constantly directed to the inner spirit of the student, that spirit of life which informs the man and puts him into possession of his powers. The forces which find play in the activities of the mind are like the architectonic principle which is at work in the inner nature of a plant, fashioning it into the form of grace and beauty. Thus with the emancipation of a free spirit at the sources of his being, the man within begins to develop both in power and in promise.

It is of the very nature of education, however, that it

does not result in a complete and finished product, but rather in a progressive process. There is nothing final about it. Its achievements always mark new beginnings. It is the power of an endless life. To say that a man is educated signifies that he has finished merely the preliminary stages of a continuous and progressive development. Education, therefore, must always be defined in terms of life, of growth, of progress. Its peculiar function is the conservation of those great human forces which make for the advancement of knowledge and the civilization of the world. We hear much to-day of the conservation of our national resources, our forests, the treasures of our mines, and the vast material wealth of our land. But while we are emphasizing the necessity of a national economy, we should not overlook the fact that the task of conserving and of developing the resources of the intellectual, moral and spiritual power in our nation is the one supreme task. To conserve these powers, to cause them to develop and to prevail, to deliver free spirits from the bondage of ignorance and of material impulse, from the bondage of authority, of tradition, of public opinion, of passing fashion and of prejudice, and to direct these liberated human forces to the highest ends, that is the art of education.

There is a common phrase, "to *receive* an education," against which I would most emphatically protest. No one receives an education any more than he receives health, or strength, or life. It is the fruit of a firm and intelligent will. It is gained only by active

effort, continuous and determined. An education is won by work; and the labors to be undertaken and the end to be attained may all be summed up in the command—*be a person*. This is a command which is not merely the word of the teacher, but is essentially an inner compulsion possessing the solemn authority of self-legislation. It is the determination to be something more than a creature of circumstance; it is the purpose to realize in the full measure of one's possibilities the power and the dignity of humanity. While plant and animal develop according to the power which they may possess of adapting themselves to their environment, it is the distinctive characteristic of man that he progresses through his ability to adapt his environment to himself, and thus he determines the world in which he lives.

As freedom is the distinctive mark of a vigorous personality, all the processes of education must be directed to secure this essential end. Therefore, the ideal university education may be described as consisting of two phases,—a phase in which every effort is directed to the attainment of freedom, and secondly a progressive phase of development in which the freedom gained in the earlier stages finds for itself varied pursuits and pleasures in the fields of knowledge.

It would seem essential, therefore, that in the early years of one's university experience those studies should be pursued which are peculiarly conducive to the discipline and training of the mind, and eventually to the evolution of a self-determining and self-realiz-

ing will. They deserve the name of liberal studies so far as they may tend to free the mind from the natural and artificial obstacles to its progressive development.

One who is to maintain the health and growth of his intellectual life must come, however, at some later period in his development to delight in the tasks of the intellect. To rejoice in the labors of the mind is not a prevailing characteristic of the natural man. As Aristotle has put it, 'all men naturally desire knowledge, but not all men desire the labor of learning.' It often happens, however, in intellectual discipline as in the development of moral virility, that a course of action which is done for a time under the stress of a sense of obligation and as a grievous duty, becomes after a time a pleasure and a joy. Just as it is possible to grow into an enthusiasm for that which is right and honorable and of good report, so also it is possible by the discipline of one's intellectual powers to develop an enthusiasm for the activities and pursuits of the mind.

The practical problem, therefore, for the teacher, and particularly for a faculty of teachers, is to choose that body of studies which will best produce a spirit of devotion to the cause of knowledge and of joy in its service. Any satisfactory solution of this problem must rest upon the basal principle that true intellectual freedom is gained only through discipline. If there is to be intellectual power in the world it must be the power of a free spirit; and the power of a free spirit in turn can arise only out of a spirit of docility.

To this doctrine, however, there are many who would enter a most emphatic dissent. They very stoutly insist that there should be no body of required studies whatsoever in a university, but that each student should follow his own free choice in selecting the particular subjects he may be pleased to pursue and that such initial exercise of freedom is itself the best training for the wise uses of freedom in general. It is a very serious question, however, whether the freedom of an ignorant and undisciplined mind may not come to defeat its own ends and purposes.

In Princeton we have very positive convictions on this point. We believe that the teaching body of a university should select a consistent group of required studies for the express purpose of developing in the student to the highest degree of efficiency the free powers of his intellectual life. We believe that it is absolutely necessary to have a certain schooling in preparation for the responsibilities of freedom; and that the hit and miss choice of an immature mind in new and strange surroundings, the blind groping for truth by the process of trial and error, form a poor pro-paedeutic to the serious tasks of free investigation, of original thought and of practical efficiency. We believe, moreover, that the best preparation for the freedom of the life of reason is that group of studies whose very nature tends to the training of the powers of the mind, developing in a man both capability and resource, and at the same time giving him a knowledge of himself and of the world in which he lives.

Such studies are humanistic so far as they give a man a knowledge of the human setting of his life, and create within the deep places of his being a universal interest and sympathy in humanity in whatever sphere it may manifest itself. They put him in possession of the race experience so that in his own mind he may hold the treasures of the world. Therefore he must be so led in the way of knowledge that he will come to know something of the human world in which he lives, something also of the world of the past whose achievements are his heritage, something of the form and spirit of its classical languages and literature, something of its history, its art, customs, manners, morals and institutions,—in a word, he must know the thought of the world which possesses universal meaning and universal significance. There are indeed certain fundamental ideas which we may securely reckon with as constant factors in the equation of life. I do not for a moment believe that the whole world of knowledge is composed of shifting and variable elements, so that we are constrained to acknowledge that whatever is true to-day, may be false to-morrow. On the contrary I would urge with all the emphasis of my deepest conviction that there is a body of universal truths, independent of age and of race, which vitally concern the ultimate values of life and which determine the possibilities of human development. Such truths the scholar must command, if he in any sense is to command the world in which he lives.

Not only the human world, but also the world of

nature must be a part of this general body of knowledge. In these first stages of education the study of science should form a very central and essential part of this prescribed course of study. Pure science is a liberal study, it belongs truly to the humanities; for it not merely gives knowledge of facts, it does more, it is a training in habits of precision, in accuracy of observation, in closely articulated modes of reasoning, in devices of experimentation and in an appreciation of the valid grounds of proof, and the logical basis of correct generalization. A study of scientific method, and of the history of scientific attainment is in itself a course in inductive logic, which tends not merely to fill the mind with items of information, but to expand it as well by an increased demand upon its powers of judgment and of inference. Princeton has been at times misunderstood as regards her attitude to science, and upon this occasion particularly I wish to state distinctly and emphatically and in words which give no uncertain sound, that we regard the study of science as essential to a liberal education. So firmly grounded is this conviction that we require every candidate for the Bachelor's degree to pursue some one course at least in science. Princeton, which was the first college in America to introduce the teaching of chemistry in its curriculum, Princeton, which has been the home of Henry, of Guyot and of Young, hardly needs further to defend her old time and continued interest in scientific discovery and scientific attainment.

Within this same group of studies also there should

be some provision for a training in the accurate and facile mode of giving expression to knowledge. The ability to put thought into appropriate and adequate form essentially characterizes a free spirit in the world of mind. To see, to think, to feel, and to remain dumb withal,—is any bondage more intolerable? Certainly the educated man should be able to understand his own language with some appreciation of its power and beauty, be able also to speak it as to the man born and not as a barbarian, and so to express himself by the written word as to reveal and not obscure his thought and feeling. He alone can give life to knowledge who has acquired the art of communicating it to others.

At this early stage there should be also some instruction in the beginnings of logic and psychology, at least to the extent of leading the student to understand the workings of his own mind and the laws which govern the processes of reason. In such a course there must emerge some comprehension of the philosophical methods employed in various fields of investigation, of the relation of universal laws to facts, and of the nature of those central correlating and constructive ideas which in every sphere of thought and in every complex situation give a key to the solution of difficult and perplexing problems. It is no little gain in the uses of knowledge to appreciate the significance of universal concepts, and to grasp the import of that great logical idea that there may be a unity in variety and an identity in difference. In my own experience in

the teaching of philosophy, I have come to the firm conviction that it is of incalculable advantage to the ordinary student to know something of the nature and the range of the main philosophical problems; for they are indeed the problems of life which will inevitably confront him in his own thinking. If in these preliminary discussions at the threshold of philosophy the student can begin to develop for himself some interpretation of life as a whole, he has gained immeasurably in the possession of ideas which will tend to unify his thought and ground his conviction through all the wide extent of his experience.

Such is a brief description of the body of studies which should engage the first years of a student in his university career. At a time when he himself is learning to put his own mind in order, he is unconsciously reinforced in his efforts, if he finds himself daily engaged with a consistent group of studies which themselves form a system. A systematic mind does not develop naturally out of a miscellany of intellectual interests and activities. The idea of system and of systematic organization and of the logical correlation of essential parts within a consistent and comprehensive whole should characterize any body of required studies which is capable of justifying itself. Familiarity with a logical group of studies is itself a schooling in logic.

After this early period of required studies, the liberty which is born of discipline can be wisely encouraged to manifest itself in the free choices of

studies for the remaining years of the university course. It is in accordance with the Princeton program that this freedom of choice is granted to every student at the beginning of the second half of his undergraduate course,—at the opening of his Junior year; but the choice is not allowed to lose itself in a maze of unrelated subjects. Here again we believe that there rests upon the teaching body a peculiar obligation to prevent an unintelligent and indiscriminate choice of studies which will inevitably result in a corresponding dissipation of energy. No compulsion is laid upon the student in the upper years of his college course to enter any particular field of study, or to engage in any particular pursuit, but when according to his own free will he decides upon the definite line of special work he wishes to undertake, we believe that he should give himself to some systematic effort within a group of cognate subjects. We require him, therefore, to give a substantial part of his time to the courses of the particular department which he selects. Two courses, however, of the five required in each of the upper years may be chosen in any other fields particularly appealing to his interests. Freedom is thus secured without the danger of a loss of power in fruitless and confused activities.

While the student's work is centered in the region of his special interests, it must be taken up in a broad minded spirit which transcends the utilitarian demands of any particular profession or technical pursuit. The undergraduate courses are not specifically designed for

the purpose of fitting a man directly for the daily duties of his future work in life. They should not attempt to develop a particular talent for a particular task, but the whole man. No faculty of the mind can be satisfactorily trained in isolation. There must be a symmetrical growth of all faculties. The high potential of stored energy, moreover, acquired in the process of a fully rounded development of all a man's powers, lends an increased momentum and driving force to the particular activities of his speciality, and thus allows many lines of capability to meet in one point of practical efficiency. Methods of instruction should not narrow down to an anticipation of the customary procedure of the office and counting room. The undergraduate education should not attempt to train specialists, nor to drill the students in any definite routine, or rules of practice. It is not rules of practice, but the fundamental principles and governing laws of a subject which are of supreme value to one who would win his way to the heart of knowledge. Fit a man for the day's work, but at the same time equip him to meet the crisis and the emergency which the day's work will inevitably bring forth. He who has laid a broad and secure foundation will have no difficulty in erecting the superstructure. Whatever he builds he will be able to build himself into the work of his hand and brain. Make a man and he will find his work.

At this stage of the developing mind every effort should be put forth to secure originality of thought. By originality of thought I do not mean an original

contribution to the world of knowledge necessarily, but an individual appropriation of the truth which by such a process becomes peculiarly one's own,—the independent ability to think oneself into and through a subject, to be the master of one's knowledge and not its slave, and to acquire a critical sense of appreciation that will nicely discriminate, in the face of the crucial situations and the significant problems of life, between the things essential and the things unessential, between that which has value and that which has no value. We should not require of our students mere acquisition, but a high order of reflective thinking which manifests itself in methodical habits of clear and efficient reasoning, in breadth of vision, in an intellectual curiosity, in a tolerant spirit and an open mind. Let us not standardize either the teacher or the student, but allow the full play of fresh original impulse.

Among all of the forces which tend to develop the strength of personality, one of the most efficient in our experience at Princeton has been the preceptorial method of instruction. This rests upon the principle that nothing develops personality so fully and so satisfactorily as personality itself. To bring the inquiring mind into daily contact with the knowledge, the art and the enthusiasm of one who is skilled in his own special field of attainment,—this is the supreme end of education. The most satisfactory results are gained when instruction becomes individual. It is only by individual care and guidance that the man of one talent can be developed as well as the man of ten talents.

The university has also a responsibility in ministering to the needs of the average man, and enabling him to raise his factor of efficiency to its highest power. To discover native ability, to guide it into proper channels; to quicken ambition, to fire the imagination, to watch and attend at the birth of a soul, that is the highest privilege and most solemn function of the teacher.

The results which by the four years of training we hope and expect to produce I would characterize in a single sentence: It is a transformation of the school-boy into a man of the world,—a man who can move freely and familiarly in the midst of the world's varied activities, who speaks its language, who is conversant with its manners, and who can interpret its thought. Do not misunderstand my meaning, however; it must be the world conceived in no narrow and limited sense of the term. The true man of the world is not confined to the knowledge merely of his own day and generation. He must know the world of the past, as well as the world of the present. For if he knows the past, he is more capable of serving the present. He must be free from provincialism, not only as regards space but also as regards time. His knowledge should not be restricted to any particular class of pursuits, or of interests, but should comprehend a cross-section of all social strata and embrace in intelligent and sympathetic regard the man whose life is a fight for bare existence, as well as the one whom he may seek as a companion and friend. The more profound and widely extended his knowledge of the world, the

more powerfully will he dominate it. Let the college man be a man of the world, but let his world be the world of all time, of all lands, and of all sorts and conditions of men.

After the four years of the strictly college course have been completed, there should be satisfactory facilities offered in a university for the varied pursuits of advanced students, where all of the powers broadly and profoundly developing during the preparatory years may be concentrated upon some subject which is to become the absorbing work of life. This is the region where many lines of effort converge in one focal point of heat and light; where special scholars may be trained; where the spirit of productive labor may be fostered; where they who learn may become in turn teachers and masters in the school of thought; where the once faltering mind may finally speak in tones of authority in the great world of knowledge. The buildings of our new Graduate College, now in process of construction, form a home where our special scholars through daily intercourse one with another may broaden their friendships and interests, and at the same time find themselves stimulated in their zeal for the particular subjects which they are pursuing. There the communal life of those who have consecrated themselves to the sovereign decrees of truth should illustrate the devotion, the self-sacrifice, the austerity and the enthusiasm of scholarship.

These buildings of the Graduate College are to centre in the Cleveland Memorial tower, a national gift

presented by those who love the man whose name it bears, and who wished gratefully to express their appreciation of his distinguished career as the chief magistrate of our country and as the servant of the American people. This memorial has been placed most appropriately in the midst of our Graduate College, because this educational enterprise appealed with peculiar force to Mr. Cleveland, who in the latter years of his life as Chairman of the Trustees' Committee on the Graduate School, was determined in the belief that the one who is to become a master in the world of knowledge must be most thoroughly equipped for the duties and the privileges of his high office. The Cleveland tower, therefore, will stand not merely as a memorial to the statesman and the patriot, but also to the one whom we in Princeton will ever gratefully remember as the wise and vigorous advocate of advanced scholarship.

We hear much to-day of vocational studies. Princeton has ever recognized the value of vocational study, but we would reserve the privilege of interpreting the word vocational in its highest and most significant sense. We would give no meagre nor secondary significance to this word. The truly vocational study in my opinion is that which fits one to respond intelligently and with free conviction to the vocation of man,—that high calling which is the summons to no particular pursuit nor profession, but which is a world-wide and common call to every man to take his place, to do his work, and to play his part in the community

of his fellows. Whatever may be our special field of work, as men we are to live our lives within the great social organism of humanity. As Kant has splendidly put it, "Man's greatest concern is to know how he shall properly fill his place in the universe and correctly understand what he must be, in order to be a man." The years of intellectual discipline should create in everyone who is a sincere seeker after the truth a profound sense of human obligation, of an obligation which is the natural complement of the privileges which he has enjoyed. While our teaching must develop power, it must also develop a sense of responsibility for the use of that power;—that sense of responsibility which makes the scholar peculiarly responsive to the claims of his less highly favored fellows.

If there is an especially favored class in the world, it is the group of men who have profited by the privileges of an education. It is their duty to prove themselves worthy of recognition as an aristocracy,—as an aristocracy however in the original meaning of that word. And their rule and influence in the community in which they live will show itself to be the best so far as it is determined by a wise purpose to devote the power of knowledge to the betterment of human conditions, and to the satisfaction of human needs. It is in no sense a survival of the *fittest*, if he who survives is content to survive alone. Our universities must teach to their students in season and out of season this lesson of life:—With all their getting let them get understanding—that understanding of their station and their

duties which will reveal to them this supreme law of privilege, that he who commands the sources of light must become a bearer of light to others. The perplexing political questions of the day arise largely out of strained and perverted social relations of man to man. If our social relations are to be satisfactorily adjusted, the privileged classes must give to their less favorably conditioned fellows some wise thought, some measure of sacrifice, some active sympathy and consideration, and thereby make success tributary to service. They who are coming more and more to be regarded as the natural leaders in this cause of humanity, and they who are under compulsion to lead by example as well as by precept and suggestion, are that very class of men who have come into possession of the highest of all privileges,—the trained mind and the human heart.

We are highly honored upon this occasion by the presence of our distinguished guests,—His Excellency, the President, and the Chief Justice of the United States. Your illustrious predecessor in office, Mr. President, the first President of our country and the first American, received in this building the grateful acknowledgements by the Continental Congress for his service in establishing the freedom and independence of the United States. For a part of the year 1783 from June to November, Nassau Hall was the capitol of the young Republic, and here Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, Oliver Ellsworth, and their distinguished colleagues sat in counsel. And now by your presence on this occasion, Mr.

President, and Mr. Chief Justice, you give an enhanced value to our patriotic possessions. The love of country has been a central lesson in the teachings of our University. Naturally we can not expect our students generally to attain to the highest offices of public trust in our country, but we do expect every man who bears the Princeton mark and who is true to the Princeton traditions to serve his day and generation with fidelity, and to bear upon his soul the burden of humanity.

This institution was not founded in the spirit of civil liberty alone, but in the spirit of religious liberty as well, in that Christian faith and hope which is our most treasured tradition. Our fathers learned the lesson of the Great Teacher, that the law of life is a law of liberty,—a liberty which finds expression, however, in a law of service and a law of sacrifice. Our hope and our prayer is that their sons who bear their names and who are of their breed and blood may keep faith with the past while moving forward to possess the new lands of promise and of plenty.

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These publications include:

The Catalogue of the University.

The Reports of the President and the Treasurer.

The descriptive booklet of the University.

The Announcements of the several Departments, relating to the work of the next year. These are made as accurate as possible, but the right is reserved to make such changes in detail as circumstances may require.

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