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MEMORANDUM

ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANISTIC STUDIES

General Grant was the first of the great leaders of the Civil war to discern that East and West together formed one great front. We need some such sweeping and penetrating glimpses in university development at the present day. It is the lack of such breadth on the humanistic side, and of historical mindedness among the natural scientists, which have produced the modern cleavage between the natural sciences and the so-called humanities. Insofar as the natural sciences deal with historical sequences, as do astronomy, geology or paleontology, they are simply investigating earlier stages of the same process with which the historian of man is concerned. Similarly, and with equally unfortunate results, the exigencies of teaching have resulted in cutting up, sometimes into three or even four segments, an ancient or even a modern culture, which should be studied as a whole. The Greek language is taught by one department, Greek history and political development by another, Greek art by a third, and Greek thought perhaps by a fourth. The inevitable result is isolation of effort and mutilation of that symmetrical development of Greek civilization, a vision of which as a whole should be in the mind of every investigator working in the field of Greek culture. It is obvious that the students who hear such courses on these various subjects never piece together the fragments which they carry away.

From no merit of its own, but solely as a result of financial considerations in a university budget, the oriental civilizations as represented by the Department of Oriental Languages

have escaped this kind of dissection and mutilation. If any courses on ancient oriental history were to be given they had to be given by members of the Department. The same was true of art, literature and thought. The result has been striking and doubtless important. While it still continues to teach oriental languages, the Department has been essentially transformed into an agency for the study of a whole group of ancient civilizations, and every one of these civilizations has been studied as a whole. It has been the effort of the Department, furthermore, to correlate this group of civilizations into a great oriental culture complex, or, to alter the figure, into a unified stream of onflowing human development which later passed over into Europe. We have gained conceptions of man advancing, not only nationally, but as a whole, a kind of progress of humanity, and this coalescence of a whole group of ancient cultures has been a process which has taken place, not only in our own minds, but has been discernible as a historical process actually going on in the ancient world, which, having passed through one oriental empire after another, culminated in the vast organization of the Roman Empire.

E A gift from Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., in 1919, enabled the Trustees to approve the organization of the Oriental Institute. A new stage of our departmental development then began. The members of the Department were mobilized and transformed into a research staff. They were augmented by a considerable group of editors, field directors, and research assistants, not members of the Department, nor having any teaching duties. The various staffs now number forty-three people and are carrying on a series of ten or twelve leading research projects, six of which are operating in the ancient Near East, although the

Oriental Institute has its administrative center on the campus of the University of Chicago.

Method and purpose are inseparably bound together in this organization. Our method involves a series of stages: first, by actual excavation, exploration, or other operations on the spot, to find and recover ancient and hitherto unknown original sources; second, to preserve such sources in adequate copies and fac-similes; third, to study these sources individually and then in their relations with each other. These three stages lead directly to the realization of our purpose, which is to touch man at the earliest discernible point in his career as he emerges from the geological ages, and to follow him through successive stages of advancement, like the appearance of written documents, the emergence of the earliest civilized societies, and the creation of a whole series of great civilizations upon which the later civilized development of Europe was built up. It is intended that these researches shall contribute to the understanding of human life by furnishing a fuller knowledge of the stages and the processes of the long development by which we have become what we are. Eventually the work of the Oriental Institute will culminate in a history of civilization which shall reach backward to the earliest stages of human development and forward to the better known epochs of European history.

One of the most inspiring and instructive things in the short history of the Oriental Institute has been the influence which it has exerted upon the younger members of the staff who have been attached often in a merely clerical capacity. These young people, associating from day to day with the scientific assistants, have gradually gained an interest in the subject matter of the researches going on, and they have undertaken, on their own desire, to equip themselves professionally

for the continuance of such studies. The funds and research projects of the Institute have furnished posts for such young people and our researches are manned to no small extent with young doctors and other students of our own department. This experience of the last few years is in very marked contrast with the earlier history of the Department of Oriental Languages. The older men in this department are now surrounded with an eager group of young investigators, whereas we used to work with very scanty numbers and with no hope that we could ever supply such young students as we had, with posts which would furnish them living salaries.

In preparing plans for the general development of humanistic studies at the University of Chicago, the experience of the Department of Oriental Languages and the Oriental Institute may be instructive. A number of obvious conclusions stand forth at once. We cannot develop the work of the humanistic departments in any university by setting up a random list of research projects, as might be done, for example, in Greek civilization, if the Department of Greek were to begin researches in language, the Department of History investigations in the Greek wars, and the Department of Art, a study of the architecture of the Parthenon. Obvious as these remarks may be they serve to disengage more clearly the fundamental question which must be answered before successful plans for the development of humanistic studies in a great university can be draughted. This fundamental question is as follows: What, in general terms, or in a single comprehensive term, is the subject matter of humanistic research? And if this question cannot be answered in terms that may be reflected in an effective and practical organization, are we then condemned to such a series of disconnected researches as those just suggested in the field of Greek culture?



It seems to the writer that the backbone of humanistic studies in a great university must necessarily be the history of man, and a program of research in the humanistic field must be based upon a recognition of this fact.

Granting that the historical development of man is the backbone of any organization of humanistic studies, we are thereupon confronted with the further question: What are the outstanding elements of progress and development in the human career which demand investigation? This question was long ago decided by the traditional historians in their acceptance of constitutional and political development as the real substance of human history, and every one recalls Freeman's definition of history as "past politics". It is obvious that this absurdly insufficient point of view has long been abandoned.

If we look about us today and glance back across the last three centuries, there is one outstanding development which has transformed human life, and has done so more fundamentally than any other force that has ever operated in human history. This transforming power has been man's growing command of natural forces, gained by advances in natural science. This revolution, which has given mankind a power such as even the present generation could never have foreseen, is the greatest subject in the study of history. The development of the mind of man as evidenced in this growing control of natural forces is the transcendent thing in the human career. In view of the fact, however, that the subject matter of natural science is so far removed from the field of the traditional historian, he has failed to discern that the history of science, nevertheless does fall within the domain of the historian. No good history of science, whether ancient or modern,

exists; for the simple reason that this field has been almost entirely ignored by the historians and has excited little interest on the part of the natural scientists themselves.

The history of science, furthermore, involves us in a study and consideration of the resulting fundamental changes in human life,-- intellectual, social, industrial, commercial, economic, hygienic, medical,-- changes which penetrate deep into the whole structure of man's life, and have grown directly out of his new knowledge of nature. It will be seen, then, that in organizing humanistic research in any great university the core of the organization must inevitably be the study of history, and the chief substance of that study should at present be the investigation of the history of science.

As a matter of practical organization, a Historical Institute under the right kind of a director might undertake a carefully organized series of researches in the history of science from the earliest times to the present day. A long line of researches devoted to special periods and peoples might be articulated with the general plan. The later stages of these investigations would unavoidably be involved in the important changes in human society to which we have referred above, as having resulted from advances in science; such things as the Industrial Revolution, rapid transit and the rapid transmission of information.

It is obvious that the plans and announcements of such an institute must be, not only scientifically sound, but also of a character which will effectively appeal to modern practical men as worthy of financial support. The Historical Institute might expect wide spread public interest in response to an announcement of its purpose to produce a great History of Science, while the fact that its plans included

full consideration of all the modern social implications of the advance of science would appeal strongly to practical men.

Parallel with this series of researches in the History of Science there should be placed another such series concerned with the investigation of the development of the human mind, the unfolding spirit of man. This series of researches would employ the philosophers and psychologists on the one hand, and the students of art, architecture, and literature on the other, while the philologists would be involved in the work of both the institutes suggested above. There are whole stages in the development of the human mind, of which the only surviving evidence is language, where only the philologist can disengage it. While the researches of the Historical Institute might well be devoted chiefly to the History of Science, the other institute would include all manifestations of the human spirit, the expanding life of man as a whole.

Here again we might expect increased educational power, and a warm popular response to an announcement that an institute would be organized for a study of the history of the mind of man. Not least among the consequences of such a plan would be the opportunity for developing an Art Department, which might become the leading Department of the History of Art in the country. The researches of such an institute might become a center of cultural influence affecting the whole country.

It will be seen that this memorandum is suggesting the organization of at least two humanistic institutes, both of which are to do their work in the historical spirit. One might be termed the Historical Institute, to be chiefly, but not exclusively, occupied with researches contributory to a history of science; the other might be called the "Humanistic Institute", its researches to be concerned especially with the spiritual development of man as suggested above.

Both of these institutes would, as already intimated, include in their organization some of the members of the language departments, and the later phases of the history of science, as noted above, would involve the services of students in the other social sciences, economics, sociology, political science, etc. The organizations could easily be so planned and so announced that other departments need not feel that they were being ignored or sacrificed for the development of the History Department. It might be useful to organize a third institute which could be called the Social Institute, the work of which would be the investigation of man's present day behavior, his attempts at social control, his governmental and social problems, and all those organized efforts of humanity for social understanding or betterment.

It should be understood at this point, that by means of scientific assistantships attached to their learned academies, and by means also of specialized professorships in the universities, Germany has long supported lines of humanistic research, only slightly or even not at all represented anywhere in America, such as Indology, Sinology, Slavic, Celtic, and Byzantine studies, General Linguistics and Comparative Philology. The development of the proposed institutes should not only fill these important gaps, but also contribute to make a scientific career along humanistic lines financially feasible for gifted young men throughout the country. The quality of our new recruits in humanistic studies is declining, and is now noticeably lower than it was a generation ago. This is a serious situation which the establishment of these institutes might aid to remedy.

Some of the practical implications involved in the above suggestions should be noted in conclusion. In the first place the



personell requirements would involve a large increase in budget expenses. Each institute would obviously be under a director, while under him a ripe and experienced investigator with some administrative ability should be given charge of each major research project. It would be necessary to leave these leaders entirely free from all teaching duties. Each of these men should be able to select a group of junior investigators and should have the disposition of a sufficient budget to enable them from time to time to draw in promising graduate students as neophytes in the institute staffs, or even to employ in semi-clerical tasks more mature undergraduates who may eventually be interested to adopt a research career.

In planning a new history building, there should be included rooms and offices and practical arrangements for historical research, with dark rooms and a photostat equipment for the duplication of manuscripts. Sub-staffs and extensive filing rooms for the encyclopedic organization of card catalogues covering whole areas of research would necessarily be available; involving modern filing furniture for photographs of manuscripts, and the filing of large bodies of documents. Eventually each institute would need its own building.

The budget should include liberal sums for travelling expenses so that members of the institutes might go to Europe whenever necessary for study in European libraries and other institutes, or even for temporary residence in Europe for the purpose of studying social or scientific developments at first hand.

The work of all these institutes should be given a voice; at frequent intervals it should issue attractively illustrated bulletins, announcing plans, progress or results. These bulletins should be made

interesting reading for the average man, and they should gradually contribute to build up a real and permanent bond of interest and sympathy between the public and the University. They should contribute to raise the level of intelligence and culture all over the country. The ultimate output should be the sources, documents, investigations and results, in technical form, which should of course also be published in full. These would be blocks of indispensable materials building up a new body of fact, upon which to stand as upon a new and higher view point from which to look out over the human career.

These publishing activities of the institutes would require a special editorial office and the entire time of an editor with a secretary or two, and a group of stenographers. A liberal budget for this work, and especially to furnish subventions for publications not commercially feasible, should be provided.