

ALPHA OMEGA ALPHA LECTURE

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'THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE - PART 2'

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IT IS A PARTICULAR DELIGHT FOR ME TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY OF ADDRESSING THE MEMBERS OF ALPHA OMEGA ALPHA ON THIS MOST HAPPY OCCASION FOR ME. IT IS A KIND OF ANNIVERSARY WALTZ, IN A WAY. POSSIBLY SOME OF YOU KNOW, BUT MANY OF YOU MAY NOT, THAT I HAD THE HONOR AND GOOD FORTUNE TO DELIVER THE ADDRESS ON OCCASION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS CHAPTER IN 1960.

THE CIRCLE OBVIOUSLY HAS TURNED FULL AND I NOW STAND BEFORE YOU IN A NEW AND TOTALLY UNEXPECTED CAPACITY WHEN VIEWED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THAT FIRST OCCASION. AT THAT TIME I TALKED TO YOUR PREDECESSORS IN ALPHA OMEGA ALPHA ABOUT QUALITY IN MEDICINE. TONIGHT I PLAN TO CARRY FORWARD FROM THAT POINT OF VIEW BECAUSE THE QUALITY WHICH I HAD HOPED FOR AND PREDICTED FOR THIS SCHOOL HAS COME MUCH CLOSER TO ATTAINMENT THAN WAS TRUE AT THAT TIME - WE NEVER QUITE ARRIVE AT OUR GOAL BECAUSE THE STANDARDS ALWAYS ARE RAISED.

I AM SOMEWHAT EMBARRASSED, HOWEVER, AT SAYING THAT I AM PLEASED TO ADDRESS YOU, BECAUSE I HAVE SPENT A GOOD DEAL OF TIME AND EFFORT

OVER THE YEARS TO FIND SUBSTITUTES FOR THE FORMAL PAPER, LECTURE, OR SPEECH. ALTHOUGH I HAVE GIVEN MANY IN MY TIME, I FIND THAT I INSTINCTIVELY ATTEMPT TO AVOID IT WHENEVER POSSIBLE. IN FACT, MANY PEOPLE ATTEMPT TO AVOID THE FORMAL LECTURE, AND ONE WONDERS WHY THE EFFORTS DON'T WORK. THE MOST INTERESTING SUMMARY OF THIS POINT OF VIEW I HAVE SEEN WAS PRESENTED BY BERTRAND RUSSELL; "WHEN I WAS AN UNDERGRADUATE I MADE A VOW THAT WHEN IN DUE COURSE I BECAME A LECTURER, I WOULD NOT THINK THAT LECTURES DO ANY GOOD AS A METHOD OF INSTRUCTION BUT ONLY AS AN OCCASIONAL STIMULUS. SO FAR AS THE ABLEST STUDENTS ARE CONCERNED, I STILL TAKE THIS VIEW. LECTURES AS A MEANS OF INSTRUCTION ARE TRADITIONAL IN UNIVERSITIES AND WERE NO DOUBT USEFUL BEFORE THE INSTITUTION OF PRINTING, BUT SINCE THAT TIME THEY HAVE BEEN OUT OF DATE AS REGARDS THE ABLER KIND OF STUDENTS". YOU ARE THE ABLEST KIND OF STUDENTS AND ONE WONDERS WHETHER LORD RUSSELL MAY NOT HAVE BEEN RIGHT AND WHETHER I SHOULD SIMPLY SIT DOWN AT THIS POINT.

A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT VIEW, BUT AN INTERESTING COMMENTARY ON THE ROLE OF THE LECTURE THAT I HAVE SEEN, IS BY AN UNKNOWN MEDICAL AUTHOR WHO SAID, "LECTURES ARE A TEMPTATION TO THE MORE CONTEMPLATIVE MIND TO LEARN DISEASES BY THE STUDY OF MODELS, RATHER THAN OF THE THINGS THEMSELVES. THEY TEND TO DIVORCE HIM FROM THE

WORKSHOPS AND THE CHIPS AND FRAGMENTS AND RUDE DESIGNS THAT LIE ABOUT WITHIN IT, AND INTRODUCE HIM TO A ROOM SWEEPED AND GARNISHED AND HUNG ROUND WITH MASTERPIECES FOR HIS CONTEMPLATION. THIS MAY BE ALL VERY WELL FOR GENTLEMEN WHO PATRONIZE THE ARTS; BUT THIS IS NOT THE WAY TO MAKE THE ARTIST."

I WONDER, AND ONLY THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS WILL TELL, HOW MANY OF YOU ARE DESTINED TO BECOME ARTISTS, OR HAVE THE CAPACITY TO BECOME ARTISTS, AND HOW MANY OF YOU WILL BECOME PATRONS OF THE ARTS AS MOST OF US SEEM TO BE IN BOTH THE PRACTICING LIFE OF THE PHYSICIAN AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES.

I THINK WE HAVE MADE PROGRESS IN THIS DIRECTION, HOWEVER. AS ONE OF MY FORMER TEACHERS AND A CLOSE FRIEND, DICKINSON W. RICHARDS, COMMENTED; "FOR OUR OWN STUDENTS WE HAVE NOW THROWN THE LECTURE INTO OUTER DARKNESS, AS AN OUTWORN REMNANT OF AN EARLIER PEDAGOGIC ERA; BUT FOR OURSELVES, WE TEACHERS CONTINUE TO LECTURE TO EACH OTHER, ALMOST INCESSANTLY. WE DASH ALL AROUND THE COUNTRY, INDEED, HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD, WINTER AND SUMMER, SPRING AND FALL, LEAVING OUR APPOINTED TASKS - SUCH AS TEACHING STUDENTS - AND WHEN WE GET THERE, WHAT DO WE DO? WE SIT DOWN AND LISTEN TO LECTURES, OR WORSE STILL, WE STAND UP AND GIVE THEM".

NATURE OF LECTURES

ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE THE HABIT OF READING THE JOURNAL, PHAROS, THE JOURNAL OF ALPHA OMEGA ALPHA, OR OTHER ERUDITE TYPES OF JOURNALS, UNDOUBTEDLY WILL HAVE NOTICED THAT ANNUAL LECTURES ARE GENERALLY DIVIDED INTO THREE LARGE GROUPS: THOSE WHICH PAY HOMAGE TO OUR MEDICAL ANCESTORS FROM ARISTOTLE TO ZINSSER; THOSE WHICH INTRODUCE A NEW SCIENTIFIC CONCEPT, OR REVIEW THE PARTICULAR INVESTIGATIVE EXPERIENCES OF THE SPEAKER; AND FINALLY, THOSE WHICH MAY BE CHARACTERIZED AS LITERARY DISCOURSES ON PHILOSOPHICAL SUBJECTS. I REALLY DON'T KNOW HOW TO CLASSIFY THESE REMARKS. WHEN I AM FINISHED, I AM SURE THERE WILL BE SOME OF YOU WHO WILL MAKE THE CLASSIC REMARK OF STUDENTS OF EXCEPTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: 1) IT ISN'T TRUE, 2) I KNEW IT ALL THE TIME, 3) WELL, ANYWAY, IT IS NOT IMPORTANT.

I DO NOT PROPOSE TO BRING BEFORE YOU ANY SCINTILLATING SCIENTIFIC GEMS. WE SEEM TO LIVE IN AN ANTI-SCIENTIFIC PRO-HUMANIST AGE, IN ANY EVENT. I DON'T PLAN TO PRESENT TO YOU A DISCOURSE ON PHILOSOPHY AND I DON'T PLAN TO PAY HOMAGE TO ANYBODY EXCEPT TO YOUTH AND THE INHABITANTS THEREOF, THE YOUNG PEOPLE.

I WOULD LIKE TO CONVEY TWO RATHER SIMPLE MESSAGES TO YOU. EACH OF YOU AND EACH OF US SHOULD COUNT OURSELVES AMONG THE MOST FORTUNATE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, FOR HAVING CHOSEN AND BEEN GIVEN THE

OPPORTUNITY OF PURSUING MEDICINE AS A WAY OF LIFE. THE SECOND MESSAGE I PROPOSE TO PRESENT TO YOU IS THAT YOUR FUTURE USEFULNESS AND THE USEFULNESS OF ALL PHYSICIANS DEPENDS NOT ONLY ON YOUR COMPETENCE IN MEDICINE, BUT YOUR PERSONAL QUALITIES OR VIRTUES, I.E. THOSE NON-MEDICAL ELEMENTS THAT GO INTO THE MAKING OF THE PHYSICIAN.

I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS MYSELF TO THE FIRST POINT - WHY WE ARE ALL SO FORTUNATE. MANY MEMBERS OF OUR PROFESSION AT THE FIRST BLUSH WILL TELL YOU THAT THEIR CHOSEN DISCIPLINE DOES LEAD TO PERIODS OF FATIGUE, WEARINESS, FRUSTRATION, AND EVEN ANXIETY, HOWEVER, THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THESE INDIVIDUALS IN ACTIVE PRACTICE, WHEN PRESSED FURTHER WOULD ADMIT AT ONCE THAT THERE HAS RARELY BEEN A DULL OR UNINTERESTING DAY IN THEIR LIVES. I REALIZE THAT VERY MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN IN AN ALMOST ROMANTIC WAY ABOUT THE IDEALS OF THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE, CONCERNING THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SICK, THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPASSION AND THE HIGH ADVENTURE OF RESEARCH. IT IS NECESSARY, HOWEVER, TO REPEAT AND EMPHASIZE THE BELIEF THAT THERE IS NO MORE STIMULATING, DRAMATIC AND EXCITING WAY IN WHICH TO SPEND EACH OF YOUR DAYS THAN TO ENGAGE IN THOSE ACTIVITIES WHICH DEVELOP A MEANINGFUL, PERSON TO PERSON RELATIONSHIP, OR A PATIENT-PHYSICIAN PARTNERSHIP TOWARD THE PREVENTION OF OR RESTORATION OF HEALTH.

I THINK IF YOU WOULD ASK THE PHYSICIAN OR SURGEON TO STOP IN THE

MIDST OF HIS BUSY DAY AND TO DESCRIBE FREELY TO YOU THE ACCOUNT OF HIS AVERAGE DAY'S EXPERIENCES, HE WILL, IF HE IS THOUGHTFUL AT ALL AND A LITTLE BIT INTROSPECTIVE, TELL YOU MUCH THAT GOES FAR BEYOND AN ELABORATION OF A SERIES OF DIAGNOSTIC AND THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES. HE WILL TALK TO YOU ABOUT HIS PARTICIPATION, HIS OBSERVATION, OR HIS BEING CALLED IN AS AN ADVISOR IN THE COMPLEX INTERPLAY AND MANIFESTATIONS OF THE HUMAN CONDITION SUBJECT TO THE FRAILTIES WHICH IMPINGE UPON IT AS THE RESULT OF DISEASE OR EVEN FANCIED DISEASE. MANY OF HIS DAYS, PROBABLY MOST OF THEM, CONTAIN MINOR AND PERHAPS EVEN MAJOR THEMES OF KINDNESS, CRUELTY, OF SOUL-SEARCHING, OF LOVE, OF TRAGEDY AND OF COMEDY, THAT, WOULD MAKE THE ACTIVITIES OF THE THEATER, THE OPERA, THE MUSEUM, PALE INTO GROSS INSIGNIFICANCE BY WAY OF CONTRAST.

IN MY DAY AT YOUR AGE, IT WAS CONSIDERED THE MARK OF THE EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT OR EMBRYO PHYSICIAN, IF HE COULD TAKE A DETAILED SEARCHING HISTORY. PROBABLY THE PERFECT HISTORY HAS NEVER BEEN TAKEN BY ANYBODY, BUT A CAREFULLY PERFORMED ONE WHICH IS SYMPATHETIC AND CONSISTS OF DISCERNING AND SEEKING QUESTIONS WILL OFTEN YIELD INFORMATION FROM A PATIENT WHICH WILL ENLARGE YOUR OWN PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCE INCREDIBLY, AS WELL AS PRESENTING YOU WITH UNEXPECTED EXAMPLES OF THE DRAMATIC AND THE BIZARRE IN HUMAN AFFAIRS.

BRILLIANTLY ATTRACTIVE AND IMPORTANT THOUGH THIS ACTIVITY BE, THE TAKING OF THE HISTORY IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF THIS VAST HUMAN ADVENTURE BECAUSE WHEN YOU PURSUE IN AN ORDERLY FASHION THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PATIENT, THERE ARE THEN PERIODS OF TRIUMPHS, OF UNCERTAINTIES, OF FAILURES, OUT OF WHICH IS DISTILLED A COMPOUND WHICH GUARANTEES THAT YOU WILL NEVER BE BORED OR PHLEGMATIC IF YOU BUT VIEW THE PANORAMIC, DRAMATIC SCENE AS IT UNFOLDS BEFORE YOU.

THERE IS AMPLE ASSURANCE FOR YOUR FUTURES THAT YOUR LIVES WILL BE EXCITING, NO MATTER HOW MUCH KNOWLEDGE IS ACCUMULATED THROUGH RESEARCH OR THOUGHTFULNESS AND NO MATTER HOW MUCH CAPABILITY IS DEVELOPED BY THOSE INDIVIDUALS IN THE ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS, OR BY THE DEVELOPMENT OF SENSITIVE AND ABLE MACHINES TO HELP YOU. THIS INCREASED INPUT OF KNOWLEDGE TO YOU WILL ENRICH YOUR LIVES, RATHER THAN COMPETE FOR YOUR ATTENTION. THERE IS ALSO, IN THIS DRAMATIC EXPERIENCE WHICH ONE CALLS THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE, THE MARVELOUS CERTAINTY THAT NO TWO HUMAN BEINGS, EVEN IDENTICAL TWINS, ON THIS EARTH, ARE APT TO BE QUITE ALIKE FOR YOU. THE SPECIAL UNIQUE NATURE OF LIVING TISSUE IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE TO THE HEMATOLOGIST, TO THE IMMUNOLOGIST, TO THE GENETICIST AND NOW TO THE GENETIC ENGINEERING EXPERT. IT NEVER CEASES TO BE A SOURCE OF SUPREME THRILL AND

EXCITEMENT TO ALL WHO VIEW THIS MASTERPIECE OF NATURE CALLED, "MAN".

THINK HOW WONDERFUL EVEN A SIMPLE THING CAN BE. THINK IF YOU WOULD, THAT YOUR FINGERPRINTS, THE FINGERPRINTS OF EACH AND EVERYONE OF YOU IN THIS ROOM, IS UNIQUE AND DIFFERENT FROM EVERYONE ELSE'S IN THE WORLD. THINK OF HOW MANY OTHER THINGS ABOUT YOU ARE UNIQUE AND DIFFER FROM OTHERS. THE UNIQUENESS OF HUMANITY OFFERS AN INFINITE CAPABILITY FOR THE GENIUS OF THE POET, THE ARTIST, THE PHILOSOPHER, THE THEOLOGIAN; BUT TO THE PHYSICIAN, THIS ENDLESS VARIETY OF INDIVIDUALISM IS COUPLED WITH THE ADDED DYNAMICS OF THE STRESS OF ILLNESS, THE URGENCY OF DISEASE AND THE SOMETIMES ACTIVE PERIL TO LIFE.

THE EXPERIENCED PRACTITIONER KNOWS THAT NO TWO HUMAN BEINGS REACT PRECISELY THE SAME WAY TO DISEASE, EVEN THE SAME DISEASE. THEREFORE THE VARIETY OF SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS IN THE SAME ILLNESS, THE WIDE SPECTRUM OF RESPONSE BY DIFFERENT PATIENTS TO THE SAME DISORDER, AND THE MIMICRY OF ONE DISEASE BY ANOTHER, CHALLENGE THE TENDENCIES TOWARD THE LACKADAISICAL OR THE PHLEGMATIC IN ANY OF US AT THE BEDSIDE. EACH VISIT OF THE PHYSICIAN TO HIS PATIENT IS USUALLY COLORED BY A SUFFICIENT VARIATION FROM THE MEAN TO SUGGEST A NEW EXPERIENCE BE ADDED TO THE DOCTOR'S BASE OF CLINICAL MARKMANSHIP. THE SEASONED PHYSICIAN IS ALWAYS ALERT TO THESE

POSSIBILITIES.

IN APPROACHING A CAREER FOR DECISION, ONE OUTSTANDING SCIENTIST COMMENTED, "AS A MATTER OF FACT, MEN GO INTO THIS BRANCH OF WORK FROM A NUMBER OF MOTIVES, THE LAST OF WHICH IS A SELF-CONSCIOUS DESIRE TO DO GOOD. THE POINT IS THAT IT REMAINS ONE OF THE FEW SPORTING PROPOSITIONS LEFT FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO FEEL THE NEED OF A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF EXCITEMENT. INFECTIOUS DISEASE (ONE COULD SUBSTITUTE GENETICS AND MANY OTHER ACTIVITIES AT PRESENT) IS ONE OF THE FEW GENUINE ADVENTURES LEFT IN THE WORLD". THESE CREATIVE AND ZESTFUL ASPECTS OF LIVING PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES TO ALL PHYSICIANS. IT IS NO FORCED DISTORTION OF THE TRUTH TO STATE THAT ANY PHYSICIAN IS NECESSARILY A POTENTIAL CLINICAL INVESTIGATOR WHEN HE REALLY FULFILLS HIS RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE CARE OF EACH PATIENT IN HIS CHARGE. A SICK INDIVIDUAL PRESENTS A UNIQUE PROBLEM, SOMETIMES A COMMON PROBLEM, BUT OFTEN THE DIFFICULTIES MAY LIE BETWEEN THE POSITION OF COMPLETE MYSTERY TO AN EXCITING AND REWARDING EXPERIENCE. TO A PERCEPTIVE DOCTOR IT IS A GUARANTEE THAT THESE DIVERSITIES, INTERESTS AND SENSITIVITIES WHICH COME TO YOU, BURDENED WITH DISEASE WILL PREVENT YOU FROM HAVING A DULL DAY.

I NOW MUST TURN BRIEFLY TO THE SECOND POINT THAT I WISH TO MAKE AND THIS IS THE NON-MEDICAL QUALITIES THAT A PHYSICIAN MUST POSSESS

AND HOW HE MUST PERFECT HIMSELF TO EARN THIS OPPORTUNITY OF ALWAYS BEING ABLE TO HAVE AN INTERESTING AND EXCITING LIFE. IT MAKES LITTLE DIFFERENCE WHICH SPECIALTY YOU ENTER. THE FACILE FLOW OF INFORMATION INTO YOU AND THE USEFUL REFLEXES WHICH A GOOD PHYSICIAN DEVELOPS ARE JUST AS NECESSARY FOR A SOUND NEUROSURGEON, A SOUND OPHTHALMOLOGIST, A SOUND PSYCHIATRIST, A SOUND OBSTETRICIAN OR EVEN A SOUNDING UROLOGIST! ANOTHER WAY OF STATING THIS QUESTION, IS, HOW CAN YOU PRESERVE THOSE HUMANITARIAN TRADITIONS AND QUALITIES IN THE FACE OF THE AWESOME AND FULL WEIGHT AND AUTHORITY OF MODERN SCIENCE AND THE NEED TO SATISFY EMOTIONAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL NEEDS OF THE YOUNG. IS IT TRUE THAT THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN CARE FOR THE WHOLE MAN ARE HUMANISTS, CLERGYMEN AND GENERAL PRACTITIONERS? ONE OF THE WAYS IN WHICH WE CAN COPE WITH OUR PROBLEM IN MEDICINE IS TO RECOGNIZE THE THEORY ADAPTED FROM PHYSICS OF COMPLEMENTARITY. ACCORDING TO THIS VIEW, PHYSICAL PHENOMENA CAN BE EQUALLY EXPLAINED BY POSTULATING PARTICLES OR WAVES AND THERE IS NO POSSIBLE WAY OF DETERMINING EXPERIMENTALLY WHICH IS THE CASE. THEREFORE, TWO TOTALLY DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS CAN BE ACCEPTED AS TWO WAYS OF LOOKING AT THE SAME THING. I BELIEVE THAT IT IS RATIONAL TO ACCEPT THIS CONCEPT OF COMPLEMENTARITY IN OUR WORK AND IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR CHARACTERS: THAT SCIENTIFIC RIGOR, THE HUMANITARIANISM OF

WHICH I SPOKE AND THE NEED TO DO GOOD IN SOCIETY ARE COMPLEMENTARY ASPECTS OF MEDICINE. THEY MAY BE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE, BECAUSE FOR SOME PEOPLE IT IS DIFFICULT, PERHAPS IMPOSSIBLE, FOR ANY GIVEN INDIVIDUAL TO REACH EQUAL HEIGHTS IN THESE APPROACHES. HOWEVER, ALL OF US CAN AND MUST EMBRACE THESE POINTS OF VIEW. WE MUST SOMEHOW RALLY THESE APPARENTLY CONFLICTING FORCES TO A NEW AND HIGHER UNITY. I WOULD RESPECTFULLY SUGGEST TO YOU THAT YOU RECOGNIZE THE FACT THAT TO ATTAIN THIS KIND OF UNITY, THAT YOU HAVE TO HAVE A POINT OF VIEW ABOUT YOUR OWN LEARNING AND THE EXPANDING STORE OF KNOWLEDGE. THE TIME SPENT IN SCHOOL, EVEN MEDICAL SCHOOL, IS RELATIVELY SHORT COMPARED TO THE LEARNING TIME THEREAFTER. MANY OF YOU PERSONALLY THINK THAT EVERYTHING THAT YOU HAVE TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR FUTURE WORK YOU WILL LEARN IN SCHOOL. THIS IS CLEARLY WRONG BECAUSE DURING THE LONG TIME WHICH FOLLOWS SCHOOL YOU WILL CERTAINLY FORGET WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED HERE, AT LEAST IN REASONABLE PART. YOU HAVE TO LEARN ALL YOUR LIFE. WHAT MUST HAPPEN IN YOUR OWN NON-MEDICAL CHARACTERS IS TO LOVE TO LEARN AND TO ENJOY THE CREATIVITY OF THE LEARNING PROCESS. ESSENTIALLY, ONE MUST NOT LEARN THINGS, BUT MUST LIVE THINGS. THIS INCLUDES LITERATURE, THE DRAMA, MUSIC, PAINTINGS AND THE LIKE. THIS IS CERTAINLY TRUE FOR A LEARNING PROCESS IN MEDICINE.

THE WORK OF ACHIEVING ENDURING EXCELLENCE, WHICH IS YOUR
RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOURSELVES, IS THE LABOR NOT OF A YEAR, BUT OF
YOUR ENTIRE LIFE AND OF THE GENERATIONS IN WHICH YOU LIVE. YOU
ARE ALL SO LUCKY - TO BE BRIGHT, TO BE RESPONSIVE - AND TO LIVE IN
THESE MARVELOUSLY CHALLENGING TURBULENT TIMES. ANYTHING YOU TOUCH
CAN BE USEFUL AND REWARDING - OR IT CAN DISTURB YOU BEYOND
TOLERANCE. IT DEPENDS ON YOU.