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Presidential Address: The Future of the Academy

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## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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### THE FUTURE OF THE ACADEMY

In reviving the custom of an inaugural address, I have no desire to instruct my betters. My state of mind is beautifully set forth in the opening sentences of the earliest communication presented to this society when, in 1780, Governor James Bowdoin, our first president, said: "When I consider, that among the members of the Academy there are gentlemen of abilities superior to my own, especially in the walks of philosophy, I feel a consciousness, that its honours might in one instance have been better placed. But if a defect of abilities could be compensated by a good will to serve its interest, and promote the end of its institution, I should have the satisfaction to think myself not wholly unqualified for the station, with which your suffrages have honoured me." Indeed, if any incoming president were inclined to be pretentious or puffed up, a glance at the names of his predecessors ought to deflate an over-extended ego. Bowdoin, Holyoke, Bowditch, three members of the Adams family, James Jackson, Pickering, Bigelow, Asa Gray—these names adorn the first century of our corporate existence; and if he turns to later and living predecessors, he cannot be comforted. There is a tale concerning John Adams, second president both of this body and of the United States, which is pertinent. When Mr. Adams went to London as American minister, George III, who did not like rebels, said to him acidly: "You succeed Dr. Franklin, do you not?" "No, sir" replied the diplomat, "I do not succeed Dr. Franklin; I merely follow him." I do not succeed Harlow Shapley, I merely follow him.

I have chosen to speak of the present status and possible future of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. I have consulted nobody, and must bear the sole responsibility for any suggestions I shall make. If these suggestions are dismissed as proceeding from the valor of ignorance, I shall not complain. Many of the problems before an institution like this are perennial, and the only novelty in successive decades is the varying emphasis with which they press

upon us for solution. Much that I shall say has probably been better said before. But I shall be content if my remarks awaken in my fellow academicians a sense of our present need for taking stock of the Academy, of ourselves, and of our individual relations to the corporate aim. I have scarcely met with the administrative officers of the Academy, so new am I to this office, but I believe it to be true that neither the President, nor the Council, nor the whole administrative body of the organization taken together, can work out a destiny worthy of our pretensions, unless the lively and continuing interest of a great majority of the fellows is awakened. Disagree with me if you will and denounce me if you must. But if I succeed in arousing debate over the general program of this historic institution I shall have achieved my purpose.

In a period when most educational institutions and many learned societies are taking stock, we, too, can afford to speculate. But if we are to know what we are and whither we are moving, we ought to remember how we came into being and what we have been. The problems of a society like ours are in large measure the result of history. It is therefore wise to glance briefly at the history of academies. That history falls into three grand divisions. In the first of these, academies came into being. In the second, they developed in certain important directions. In the third, they lost ground. These three stages roughly correspond to the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

Following the release of intellectual and cultural forces in the Renaissance, forces which eventuated as humanism or the New Learning, and the new science or Natural Philosophy, it is commonplace that in seventeenth-century Europe, leaders of what was then a radical reinterpretation of man and nature felt the need of mutual support and criticism, and that out of this need such institutions as the French Academy and the Royal Society were born. From their great example we descend. It is again a common-

place that one of the principal issues leading to the creation of these bodies was the necessity of finding or creating a language common to the new dispensation, more accurate than literary language, and better shaped for the purpose than was the technical vocabulary of scholasticism. Much of the theorizing which preceded or accompanied the creation of academies concerned this problem of word and meaning; much of the writing of Bacon, Descartes, and others concerned the problem of communication. They sought an instrument of language which should be at once rational, perspicuous, uncolored by personal emotion, and unperplexed by rhetorical adornment. Their assumption was that all parts of knowledge were equally accessible to any educated person, and that the reporting of experiment and discovery in simple, rational and perspicuous words would render the results intelligible to all who participated in the style. In sum, the kingdom of knowledge was indivisible, its language universal. Membership in the Royal Academy was therefore equally open to poet and scientist, who shared without embarrassment in its discussions.

In the eighteenth century another great addition was made. Specialization in certain fields—for example, chemistry and physics—had increased, and some differentiation of function was necessary. But knowledge was yet sufficiently uncomplicated for a universal genius like Franklin to follow where Bacon, Descartes, Leibnitz and Newton had led, and to contribute to a dozen fields, scientific papers that are models of exactitude in language that is simple and plain. As there seemed to be no reason why this situation should not continue, Franklin founded the first American learned society, with a particular ideal in mind. Not research for its own sake, but research for social ends was the formal purpose of the American Philosophical Society held at Philadelphia for Promoting Useful Knowledge. The test of utility was social applicability. In striking contrast to the Renaissance doctrine that knowledge was a secret to be shared by the uninitiated only, the public diffusion of knowledge had now become a virtue.

This spirit presided over the creation of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. If we turn to the preface to the first volume of our

*Memoirs*, published in 1785, we read: "Societies for promoting useful knowledge may be highly advantageous to the communities in which they are instituted. Men united together, and frequently meeting for the purpose of advancing the sciences, the arts, agriculture, manufactures and commerce, may oftentimes suggest such hints to one another, as may be improved to important ends; and such societies, by being the repositories of the observations and discoveries of the learned and ingenious, may, from time to time, furnish the world with useful publications, which might otherwise be lost . . . Societies instituted for promoting knowledge, may also be of eminent service, by exciting a spirit of emulation, and enkindling those sparks of genius, which otherwise might forever have been concealed; and if, when possessed of funds sufficient for the purpose, they reward the exertions of the industrious and enterprising, with pecuniary premiums or honorary medals, many important experiments and useful discoveries will be made, from which, the public may reap the highest advantages."

This paragraph suggests that, the notion of social usefulness being granted, two important corollaries were drawn by the founding fathers. One was that the learned are under some obligation to hunt out and develop potential talent, and hence it is that academies established competitive prizes such as that, the winning of which first drew public attention to Rousseau. The second was that the proceedings of academies should be a public matter. In the seventeenth century learned men often communicated with each other by letter. Afterwards, the transactions of academies were published. The eighteenth century tended to transform these publications into periodicals which were important vehicles for the diffusion of knowledge to the enlightenment. Such periodicals served the eighteenth century for a variety of functions we have since differentiated, and were, in our terms, reports upon research and discovery, university monographs, extension lectures, correspondence courses, and technical trade journals. Because the fields of learning were still relatively close together, even when a mildly specialized magazine like *The American Journal of Science* was founded, under the shadow of academy practice it took all natural philosophy for its province.

And because universities were not yet what they have become, because industry was still simple, because research foundations were undreamed of, the academy remained a dynamic center for the intellectual world.

If the eighteenth century saw academies at their highest pitch of usefulness, the nineteenth saw their relative decline. The reasons are well known. The most obvious was the increasing differentiation of knowledge, the opening of vast new fields of research, the invention of new specialisms, and the development of unique technological vocabularies. The second was that government took over many of the functions originally developed by academies. The third was the development of the modern research university. The fourth was the creation of the independent research center, industrial laboratory, teaching museum, institute of advanced studies, or other endowed project for the advanced specialist. The fifth was the establishment of gigantic foundations like the Guggenheim Foundation, to search out and support younger research workers or to reward them with prizes and fellowships on a scale beyond the resources of academies.

As a consequence, the academy lost ground. Because specialization of knowledge was accompanied by specialization of vocabulary, one of the first results was to drive the scientist and the humanist apart, so that in the case of our own organization (as an example) humanists tend to stay away from a scientific communication on the ground that they cannot understand it. A minor, but unfortunate, result, has been that scholars in the arts have set enthusiastically to work to become as linguistically complicated as the scientists, thus insuring that the scientists could not understand *them*. Eventually, of course, scientists were driven apart from each other.

A second, and more fundamental, change occurred when (the old, undifferentiated academy meeting proving unsatisfactory to the new specialisms), the century developed the greatest number of professional associations the world has ever known. These in turn increased by fissure into still more specialized organizations, so that, to take a simple case, we have not merely the American Historical Association, but within that society or associated with it, groups like the

Catholic Historical Society, the Mississippi Valley Historical Society, a group in agricultural history, a group in local history, a group in military history, and so forth. And precisely as the undifferentiated academy meeting proved unsatisfactory, so undifferentiated publications proved also unsatisfactory, and academy publications must now therefore compete with technical and professional journals so infinite in number as to reduce librarians to despair.

The rise of the modern research university has further narrowed our field. It has not merely created, in laboratory and library, centers of personal contact among research workers far more useful than an academy building can hope to be, but it has also given us attractive training centers for young men. Graduate fellowships are a more satisfactory method of encouraging young talent than random academy prizes can become. Moreover, the publication of dissertations, monographs, and books of greater magnitude, at university expense removes from academy lists titles that might otherwise be there, and throws academy publication into competition of the severest sort. Finally, but in the long run most importantly, the universities have developed techniques of begging gifts from the wealthy that leave the simple-minded academician gasping in the rear.

The competition of government bureaus is equally interesting. The early years of the American Philosophical Society and of this academy saw its members writing papers about the weather, tides, weights and measures, geology, mastodons and other topics that, one by one, became the professional province of the Weather Bureau, the Coast and Geodetic Survey, the Bureau of Standards, the Smithsonian Institute and other parts of the national government. These agencies can accomplish cooperatively what, with all their genius, individuals like Franklin and Jefferson could not achieve. Government bureaus are subsidized by public money, the academy is not; and by definition they take over from the academy a role of public service and public education that was one of the original aims of our institution. To be sure, distinguished members of the government services become members of the academies, but this is not the same thing as assuming that the primary aim of an academy is the public service. Finally, of course,

government publication competes with academy publication.

Modern industrial research has further complicated our survival problem. Not to speak of the vast equipment ready for the research worker in industrial laboratories, and of the money which can be placed at the disposal of such a laboratory, once it has struck a promising lead, the ambivalent attitude of large corporations towards the results of research they have subsidized must be reckoned with. Some corporations are conspicuous for their sense of civic responsibility; others, it is notorious, buy up brains and hoard discoveries. This latter practice exactly contradicts the generous eighteenth-century belief that the diffusion of rational knowledge is the highest ethical obligation upon the expert; and where the practice of monopolizing research exists, it marks the failure of academies to convert the nation to a right philosophy. More important, however, is the fact that if industry finds it profitable to subsidize its own laboratories, it is not going to donate money to academies except upon terms that are agreeable to industry, and such donations, when they come, are more likely to be for specific projects than for the general public weal.

It would be tedious to rehearse the tale of other agencies which have innocently weakened the influences of academies. Textbook publishers are a single instance. Nor should it be assumed that academies are obsolescent. In an age of big money, when an ancient institution like the American Philosophical Society is given a large bequest, it wonderfully renews its youth. But if one looks at the general history of academies hopefully founded during the last two centuries, two observations will occur. The first is that many of these, especially those limited to a state or region, have been absorbed by some nearby university as an extramural outlet for research papers, or have become social bodies. The second is a tendency to make election something between an honorary degree and retirement, a recognition of things accomplished rather than a spur to greater things. This danger was recognized by our academy in 1921 when a special committee wisely reported: "It is the duty of the Academy, and its privilege, to encourage work in the Arts and Sciences and to be, through its meetings, a center for getting together once a

month a large number of persons interested in learning here in Boston. Reasonably prompt election of young men in this vicinity will aid in the accomplishment of both these purposes. We believe, however, that no one should be elected to the Academy who has not in his own name and by his own determination, already given good evidence, through his publications, of accomplishment, and further evidence of the promise of accomplishment in the future." Because war conditions have taken many younger men away from us, it is perhaps well to recur to the sound advice of the committee and to remember that the reasonably prompt election of young men in this vicinity is one of the most important guarantees that we shall not become senescent.

No one can say, I think, that in 1900 academies were as important in the total intellectual life of a nation as they had been in 1800 or in 1700. All the forces leading to the fractation of knowledge have been more vigorously operative in the last forty years than ever before. Nevertheless, two developments in the twentieth century have indicated an opposite trend. In some sense specialism has defeated itself. That is to say, what once looked like a separate compartment of knowledge, unique and apart from everything else, the more it is explored, the more its boundary lines seem to waver and vanish. The relation of fields is not that of pigeon-holes, but of living, interdependent cells. The historian depends upon the anthropologist, the anthropologist upon the sociologist, the sociologist upon the psychologist, the psychologist upon the biologist, the biologist upon the chemist, the chemist upon the physicist, the physicist upon the mathematician, and so on in an endless circle. It is hard to know whether a given problem lies in chemical physics or physical chemistry. I am supposed to be a literary critic, but I seem to spend most of my time with the historians. In certain advanced areas it is difficult to know whether one is confronting mathematics or theology. The area and language programs of the Army have fused into a common purpose a dozen so-called "disciplines." These random examples show how the very multiplication of specialities has forced the specialists to come together, to exchange ideas, to study each other's techniques, even—what is anathema to the old-fashioned, hard-boiled,

realistic investigator—to discuss the philosophy of what they are doing.

And a second pressure towards unity has come from the outside. Students of Western culture have freely said that if we do not recover a common set of ideas, a common tradition, and a common language, we are lost. The wheel has come full circle, but on another plane; and just as men sought in the seventeenth century a means of communicating with each other that would permit the easy flow of generalized ideas, so we, too, perhaps face the same necessity. Certain it is that in any meeting convoked to discuss the state of culture or of education, it is common to lament that knowledge is specialized, to compare its fractation unfavorably with the medieval synthesis or with classical unity, and to demand that we retrace our steps or learn some new mode of common speech.

Much of this appeal; to be sure, is specious. Much of its springs from a nostalgia after a perfect past that never was. Neither classical culture nor the medieval world embraced a fraction of the human beings alive under either dispensation, and the middle ages were not so synthesized nor classical minds so harmonious as this argument seems to imply. Nevertheless, it is an argument of weight, and the question is only: what knowledge is to be intercommunicated, and where can this intercommunication best take place? Let me glance at these problems in reverse order.

Government and industry aside, there are, it seems to me, three sorts of institutions in which specialists might talk to each other, and to some extent do so perform: universities; specially called congresses; and academies. The universities seem at first sight favorable places. None but has its committee on curricular reform. This reform takes the direction of something called "broad" courses, intended to synthesize knowledge for the young, and presumably indicates that their elders feel the need for synthesis. But the confusion of that which is broadening with that which is broad, has never been cleared up by the reformers, and it is amusing to note that this movement mostly creates a new type of educational specialist, the synthesizer. On the whole, moreover, this movement does not affect the mature work of the university, which is that

of graduate training and of research. The creation of specialists is the professional purpose of universities, and should not be altered. Therefore, laudable though the aim of the reform may be, it seems unlikely that university faculties, to whom research is the principal reward of their intellectual being, will cease to be specialists. But as specialists will they seek to communicate with each other? Yes and no, but I think "No" rather more than "Yes." What stands in the way of organic change is the economic structure of the American university. The basic unit of faculty organization is the department; and however we may pretend that a department is only a committee of the faculty, the truth is, of course, that departments are in grim financial competition with each other, engaging in a kind of *bellum omnium in omnes* for salaries, research funds, promotions, appointments, and endowment. In a universe of experts the unspecialized goes to the wall. The specialist cannot desert the professional flag, and must, *ex hypothesi*, stick pretty well to his department.

The next possibility is the special congress, of the type of the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion annually convoked at Columbia University. That these yearly meetings accomplish something in cross-fertilization and cross-simplification is probably true, but in the nature of the case their influence is intermittent and appeals only to the people to whom it appeals. Moreover, these congresses sometimes produce effects the opposite of what they intend. Their search for a common language leads to the creation of elaborate verbal structures that, in seeking accuracy, achieve a new complexity, and this search for absolute definitions throws emphasis upon techniques and procedures rather than upon ideational content. Their second weakness is an inevitable tendency towards evangelicism, which is socially laudable but not the same thing as using a language common to all disciplines. Let us not forget that one of the aftermaths of the International Congress of Religions at the World's Columbian Exposition was an increase in the number of sects.

An academy, however, is free from the interecine warfare of the departments and is a more stable body than the annual congress. There being no problems of promotion or salary increase

to disturb our republican simplicity, we ought to be an institution in which specialists can relax; and as we are committed to serve, but not to remake, the body politic, our processes can be ideological rather than passionate. Nevertheless, our usefulness is also severely limited, and unless we are prepared courageously to face these limitations, we may yet join other venerable Boston organizations of historical importance only. If this be treason, make the most of it.

In shaping this academy our predecessors recognized even in simpler times the differentiation of knowledge, by establishing the several classes and divisions of our membership. Yet, except as a device for maintaining balance in electing new fellows and except for fulfilling certain constitutional provisions, the academy seems not to recognize the problem set by its own organization. Our aims are contradictory. On the one hand, our monthly "communications," operating on eighteenth-century postulates, are supposed to be couched in such language that all sensible men can understand them. On the other hand, we exist for the advance of knowledge in the several fields represented by our sub-sections, the heritage of the nineteenth century. If a fellow presents the results of research in his specialty, it is possible that only members of his own class and sub-sections will fully comprehend him; yet if his research is to receive competent criticism by the academy, he ought not abate one whit of its intricacies, albeit in proportion as he is accurate and detailed, his audience will necessarily diminish. On the other hand, if members address the general meeting, as they do, they cannot hope to present specialized problems without simplification, thereby running the double risk of wearying the competent and of talking down to the uninitiated. Good sense, to be sure, gets many a speaker around this difficulty, and the very challenge of the occasion sometimes compels a useful clarification. Nevertheless, here is a difficulty which severely limits the program committees in its choice of speakers and of topics. It is also a difficulty which leads to eccentric results in the size and character of academy audiences.

But what most troubles me is not these pragmatic considerations, but the begging of the question of the relation of the academy to research. I do not believe we exist for the amiable

exchange of lectures. I think our primary duty is still that of our charter, which is "to promote and encourage . . . knowledge . . . and . . . to cultivate every art and science, which may tend to advance the interest, honor, dignity and happiness of a free, independent, and virtuous people." As I understand this language, it says that the cultivation of our several departments of work is the primary duty of the Academy, which, by bringing mature men and women together in their several fields, seeks to encourage their investigations. So far as we are under any obligation to inform the general public about what is going on in our separate specialties,—and that it is a duty I grant—that duty nevertheless seems to me secondary to our principal purpose—our directive, in modern lingo. But I am frank to say our meetings do not always carry out that principal purpose. I am by no means clear that our present type of monthly meetings is the sole type of program we can usefully support; and if we have to choose, I think we ought rather to imitate the work of the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton than the work of the Lowell lectures, excellent for their purpose though these latter may be. In short, I suggest the time has come to re-study the whole question of the nature, number, and function of our monthly "communications."

But if the encouragement of research is the primary business of the academy, what, it will be asked, becomes of the hunt for a common language? If I raise the question whether the present pattern of our meetings efficiently carries out the original aim and primary purpose of this society, I must not be understood as saying that all our gatherings should be devoted to matters so technical that only a few can comprehend them. I am far from implying that our general meetings should disappear. But they should not be our only type of meetings. I do most firmly believe that the spirit of research at advanced levels rather than the spirit of reporting even at high levels is essential to the healthy life of an academy. I do not see how we can hold the real attention of younger members unless we somehow vigorously implement the statement of the 1921 committee that this academy must be a center of learning in Boston. If we attempt to reduce complex problems of investigation to postulates

so simple that all the members of the Academy will immediately understand them, I do not believe young specialists are going to keep up an eager interest in our meetings. I therefore suggest that to study the problem of differentiating our meetings, to compare our success with that of the American Philosophical Society, which, as most of you know, follows a different plan, to review the purpose and function of these meetings, and, indeed of the Academy as a whole, seems to me primary business of our immediate future.

But I may seem to depart from the notion that academies exist in order that learned men may talk a common language. As I earlier indicated, this call to retreat up the stream of time to simpler eras seems to me specious. I do not believe such a retreat is practicable. I think the problem is wrongly phrased. I should myself put it this way: that our problem is not whether a common language can be artificially reinstated among learned men, but whether this Academy is not charged with the duty of creating a common climate of opinion. My observation is that the research spirit does not depend upon vocabulary but upon an exciting philosophy of values. In my wanderings over the republic it has seemed to me that those institutions were stimulating, not where the chemists were concerned lest the literary critics could not understand them, but where the chemists and the literary critics were alike committed to an exciting intellectual existence. I think institutions of learning grow or decline, are active or dormant, in proportion as they dare to foster great projects, dream of great issues, and dare to embark upon great and important programs. Will the American Academy of Arts and Sciences rise to the height of the great argument which brought it into being, or will it be content to become simply another Boston institution?

To be sure, we at present offer prizes and subsidize research projects in proportion to our modest means. That is all to the good. If we do not do better, our excuse is: lack of funds. I do not question the utility of our present practice, but it is utility on a lower level. I shall be bold enough to say bluntly that this academy does not now foster enterprises of that magnitude and daring the founding fathers had in mind when they wrote in 1785: "It is the part of a patriotic

philosopher to pursue every hint—to cultivate every enquiry, which may eventually tend to the security and welfare of his fellow citizens, the extension of their commerce, and the improvement of those arts, which adorn and embellish life." In an age committed to cooperative enterprise, we who are, or ought to be, the pattern of cooperative enterprise in New England intellectual life must realize our opportunity. We must think largely and generously, not in terms of *ad hoc* projects and parochially. What enterprises can we foster? What is our potential contribution as a corporate body to the life of Boston, of Massachusetts, of New England, of the nation? Dare I say that in any realistic census of the intellectual forces at work in the dominion of New England this academy would not now possess that commanding and central place it ought to have? But we should not be simply another Boston society, we should be *par excellence* the commanding intellectual institution in all the New England states. In place of searching the rolls of colleges and of industry for new members, we should have colleges and industry searching our membership for talent. In place of requesting Dr. X or Professor Y to tell us what is going on in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or at Washington or in the Museum of Fine Arts, we should have M. I. T. and Washington and the Museum anxiously and hopefully inquiring: what is forward at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences? We have, or had, or should have, a central position in New England culture; is it conceivable that this academy may again become a dynamic center from which lines of intellectual energy shall radiate to all parts of these states and even to the nation at large? I do not believe it is the excitement of the moment that leads me to say that the future before the American Academy is immense, provided the Academy will bestir itself. But it cannot remain passive. It must renew its life. It must announce programs of imaginative daring. It must not indulge that spirit of historical defeatism which a newspaper man has just told me is characteristic of Boston.

It will be said that money and time are lacking, that existing institutions, already heavily endowed, absorb potential funds and monopolize public attention. This is a weak argument. Money never comes to the timid, just as it never



comes to the planless. But if a millionaire came to this building tomorrow to inquire what the Academy had in mind, what could we say to him as a corporate body? No one is going to give to the Academy on the ground that it is vaguely a good thing to support. Only a dynamic program will attract attention to us. And though I would by no means confine the activities of our fellows to any restricted sphere, I am going to crown these audacities by suggesting one form of activity in which the Academy could make itself felt at once.

Boston, Massachusetts, and New England face difficult years, and so far as I can discover, no single body is at work to study the problems immediately ahead. To be specific: we do not know what to do with or for the Port of Boston. We do not know how to relieve the racial and religious tensions among us. We do not know what to do with the apparently moribund agrarian economy of New England. We do not know whether our industries can continue as they have been. We do not know precisely what our natural resources as a region are. If this meeting were held in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, it would be unnecessary for me to say that a survey and a study of the problems of the region at our doors is a primary obligation upon a learned body of disinterested men living in that region. As it is, I suggest that if, after mature consideration of these possibilities, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences were to announce in the public prints that it proposed to embark upon a generous and long-range study of these, and allied, problems, making public the findings of expert members of its body and having no further ax to grind than that of fulfilling the injunction of its founders to bring such information to bear upon our social life as may eventually tend to the security and welfare of our fellow citizens—I say, if the Academy, after mature deliberation, should announce this as one of its present aims (but by no means the only one) I am convinced the tonic effect upon the Fellows and upon the region in which we live would be immense. I venture to prophesy that money and means could be found. I venture to suggest, in fact, that we may even be under some obligation not to stand passive when the economic, the social, and the intellectual life of the commonwealth needs study and support.

Such a project might revolutionize some of our

activities, but I do not say that it should revolutionize all of them. I do not argue that our astronomical Fellows should calculate the orbit of the next comet only with reference to Newbury Street. But I feel profoundly that the American Academy of Arts and Sciences is one of the great enterprises descending from the eighteenth century, and I am deeply concerned that it should fulfill the measure of its greatness. I think it should have a place in the life of this commonwealth comparable to that of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Massachusetts General Hospital, or the great colleges, institutes and universities round about, which it would be invidious to particularize. I am concerned lest we shall be without vision. I am uneasy lest we break into disparate entities and fail of common purpose. I should like to see us launch greatly upon great enterprises. Unfortunately neither a scientist nor a social scientist, I cannot sketch a specific program of action, but I most earnestly hope these suggestions will be taken up by Fellows competent, as I am not, to translate them into action.

I believe we should create a specially appointed commission of Fellows of the Academy to review and re-examine the whole structure of this ancient institution. Without prejudice to the admirable work of the Council, the Secretaries, and the standing committees, I think this commission should be a special and independent body, having (within the limits of our treasury) funds at its disposal to implement its study, by travel, by calling upon witnesses, and by such other means as seems necessary. I think it should in good time bring in a printed report of such depth and magnitude as will bring immediately home to each of us the problem of the Academy and its future in a world that may seem to have outgrown these primitive institutions. I suggest this body might take as its principal inquiries these:

1. The nature of the organization of the Academy and of its meetings, in relation to the furtherance of research and of intellectual cooperation in New England.

2. The responsibility of the Academy for the intellectual life of New England, and the possibility of making this body and the building in increasing degree a focal point for joint enterprises, cooperative projects, and the like.

3. The question of the Academy building—cannot it be repaired and modernized so that it will better further the purposes of the Academy?

4. A campaign for increasing the endowment of the Academy, having in mind specific programs upon which the Academy may fruitfully embark.

This is, I know, ambitious. It may seem to many of you vague. Perhaps I am raising these questions in the wrong place or in the wrong way or at the wrong time. But I have a feeling that what we determine to do in the next two or three

years will powerfully influence our whole future existence; I have a feeling that, rich as is New England in institutions of learning, they will welcome some positive program to link together the interests of the learned and the problems of society in the years immediately to come; and I earnestly desire that the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the second oldest learned society in the United States, should assume the captaincy and take the lead because, it seems to me, history and tradition say that it should do so.