

PROFESSION

The modern tendency to call every job, or calling, a PROFESSION, represents a certain failure of language. On the other hand, to restrict it to the three "learned" professions (law, medicine, and theology) is to give it merely historical meaning.

Profession is a significant word, representing an idea distinct from general vocation on the one hand and the three privileged callings on the other. From Plato to the present time its significance and distinction is a part of Western Civilization.

Mr. Peter Wright, in an article published in 29 Canadian Bar Review. (1951) set forth six elements in that which is named "Profession". The following is an adaptation of those elements to the medical profession:

- I. A holding out to the public of the offer of public service
 - A. The licensing of the physician and admission to practice and the taking of a physician's oath
 - B. The brass plate (or name printed on glass today), symbolically, and listing in the telephone directory
 - C. A moral duty not to refuse a patient without cause or explanation.
- II. Existence of Special Skill - An assumption (possibly invalid), but a "profession of skill nonetheless
- III. Training and Education
 - A. At the very least, there must be training
 - B. At the very most, there must be education in its broadest sense
 - C. Mr. Wright suggests that in the world today a profession requires not only training in technical skills, but a broader education inspiring the practitioner to relate his or her daily work to the life and problems of humankind.
- IV. Privilege of State recognition
 - A. License to practice (a monopoly)
 - B. Privilege of self-government
- V. A self-disciplined community
 - A. Responsible for maintaining standards and integrity of the community and its members
 - B. Responsible for the safety of those it serves
- VI. A measure of unselfishness or freedom from purely personal considerations
 - A. Toward Patients
 - B. Toward the profession
 - C. Toward the society