

# Magnitude and Importance of Legal Science

*David Dudley Field*

*The following remarks were delivered at the dedication ceremonies of what was eventually to become Northwestern University Law School very near the time Langdell took over as dean at Harvard. In his speech, Field not only indicates his general agreement with Langdell on the "science" of law but also explains in eloquent terms why law, viewed as a science, is critical to any society. Field was both a lawyer and legal reformer. He is best known for his authorship of the "Field Code" and his leadership of the movement to codify the common law by setting forth its principles in clear, coherent, and concise language.*

There are undoubtedly several topics, which might properly be considered, in connection with the establishment of this school—as, for example, its relations to the public, to the university and to its own pupils, or the most advisable course of study; but I shall only ask you to consider with me now the magnitude and importance of legal science. And though all knowledge has value, and all the arts their uses, yet, as there are differences in value as in use, I hope to

show you that, of all the sciences and all the arts, not one can be named greater in magnitude or importance than . . . the science of the law.

Law is a rule of property and of conduct prescribed by the sovereign power of a state. The science of the law embraces, therefore, all the rules recognized and enforced by the state, of all the property and of all the conduct of men in all their relations, public and private. . . . No engagement can be entered