

Science and Humanism

I am particularly attracted -- as you would expect me to be -- by the definition of the civilized man as being "a citizen of the entire universe". I shall return to that definition in a moment. But before I do so, I would wish to say a word about one aspect of education which I am convinced twentieth century man cannot afford to ignore. And that is the relationship between science and the scientific tradition, on the one hand, and what is broadly described as the humanistic tradition on the other. My own firm belief is that we cannot look upon these two constant strands of Western thinking and Western civilization as separable. Each has made a rich contribution to our cumulative Western experience and to the formation of Western man as we know him today.

There have been times when there might have been a tendency to diminish the contribution made by science. That is not, of course, a risk we are likely to run in our time. There is, however, a need to see this problem in proper perspective. We cannot, I think, any of us, discount the vast new opportunities which science and technology have opened up by mitigating the rigours of poverty, disease and hunger; by easing the drudgery of labour; by enabling us to communicate more extensively and more meaningfully with one another; and, generally, by increasing our control over the vagaries of our environment. In all these respects, the achievements of science have been instrumental in enlarging our horizon and the area within which we are called upon to exercise our responsibility. But we cannot do this by recourse to the scientific spirit alone. The exercise of this enlarged responsibility is a function of the complete man and the complete man must encompass the spiritual man, the man of moral commitment and religious conviction. It must also encompass the social man, by which I mean man as the product of his society and his culture. If the civilized man is truly to be "a citizen of the entire universe", then it surely requires a universally oriented education to fit him for his responsibilities.

I should like now to consider some of the circumstances in which we are called upon to exercise our responsibilities as world citizens. We all recognize, I think, that the world in which we live is a much smaller world than that of our ancestors. This has been the achievement, in large measure, of what we have rightly come to describe as a revolution in communications. As a result of that revolution, we know more about one another; we have a better understanding of one another's conditions and problems; we have become more conscious of the myths and prejudices with which man has always invested what is alien to him; we have been able to break down human barriers and, in a positive way, to interchange skills and ideas. In short, we are witnessing the genesis of a genuine world community.

Idea of World Community

The concept of a world community has a number of important implications. First it must be informed, as Dr. Radhakrishnan -- the present President of India -- once put it, by a "common conception". I would myself define that "common conception" in terms of the dignity of man and his equality in the sight of God. Secondly, the concept of a world community implies a continuing need to push outward the boundaries of knowledge and understanding. We must learn, in a figurative sense