

UNESCO: ITS PURPOSE and PHILOSOPHY

by JULIAN S. HUXLEY

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The Aims of UNESCO

UNESCO—the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization—is by its title committed to two sets of aims. In the first place, it is international, and must serve the ends and objects of the United Nations, which in the long perspective are world ends, ends for humanity as a whole. And secondly it must foster and promote all aspects of education, science, and culture, in the widest sense of those words.

Its Constitution defines these aims more fully. The preamble begins with Mr. Attlee's noble words—"since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed"; it continues by stressing the dangers of ignorance—"ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war"; and then proceeds to point out that the late war was made possible by the denial of certain basic principles—"the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men"—and by the substitution for them of "the doctrine of the inequality of men and races."

From these premises it proceeds to point out that "the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace, are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfill in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern"; and draws the notable conclusion, never before embodied in an official document, that a peace "based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments" would be inadequate, since it could not "secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world," and that "the peace must therefore be founded,

if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind."

A Philosophy for UNESCO

BUT in order to carry out its work, an organization such as UNESCO needs not only a set of general aims and objects for itself, but also a working philosophy, a working hypothesis concerning human existence and its aims and objects, which will dictate, or at least indicate, a definite line of approach to its problems. Without such a general outlook and single angle of approach, UNESCO will be in danger of undertaking piecemeal and even self-contradictory actions, and will in any case lack the guidance and inspiration which spring from a belief in a body of general principles.

From acceptance of certain principles or philosophies, UNESCO is obviously debarred. Thus it cannot base its outlook on one of the competing religions of the world as against the others, whether Islam, Roman Catholicism, Protestant Christianity, Buddhism, Unitarianism, Judaism, or Hinduism. Neither can it espouse one of the politico-economic doctrines competing in the world today to the exclusion of the others—the present versions of capitalistic free enterprise, Marxian communism, semi-socialist planning, and so on.

FOR somewhat similar reasons it cannot base itself exclusively on any essentially sectarian philosophy or restricted outlook. Nor, with its stress on democracy and the principles of human dignity, equality and mutual respect, can it adopt the view that the State is a higher or more important end than the individual; or any rigid class theory of society. And in the preamble to its Constitution it expressly repudiates racialism and any belief in superior or inferior "races," nations, or ethnic groups.

Now for the positive side. UNESCO's main

concern is with peace and security and with human welfare, in so far as they can be subserved by the educational and scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world. Accordingly its outlook must, it seems, be based on some form of humanism. Further, that humanism must clearly be a world humanism, both in the sense of seeking to bring in all the peoples of the world, and of treating all peoples and all individuals within each people as equals in terms of human dignity, mutual respect, and educational opportunity. It must also be a scientific humanism, in the sense that the application of science provides most of the material basis for human culture, and also that the practice and the understanding of science need to be integrated with that of other human activities.

It cannot, however, be materialistic, but must embrace the spiritual and mental as well as the material aspects of existence, and must attempt to do so on a truly monistic, unitary philosophic basis.

Finally it must be an evolutionary as opposed to a static or ideal humanism. It is essential for UNESCO to adopt an evolutionary approach. If it does not do so, its philosophy will be a false one, its humanism at best partial, at worst misleading.

Thus the general philosophy of UNESCO should, it seems, be a scientific world humanism, global in extent and evolutionary in background. What are the further implications, practical as well as theoretical, of such an outlook?

UNESCO and Human Progress

OUR first task must be to clarify the notion of desirable and undesirable directions of evolution, for on this will depend our attitude to human progress—to the possibility of progress in the first place, and then to its definition.

Evolution in the broad sense denotes all the historical processes of change and development at work in the universe. It is divisible into three very different sectors—the inorganic or lifeless, the organic or biological, and the social or human. The inorganic sector is by far the greatest in extent, comprising the overwhelming bulk of the cosmos, both of interstellar space and of the material aggregates we call stars.

The biological sector is very much limited in extent, being confined to the outer surface of the single small planet Earth, and perhaps to a few similar very rare situations in the universe.

Finally there is the human sector. This is

still further restricted in extent, being confined to the single species, man.

Of special importance in man's evaluation of his own position in the cosmic scheme and of his further destiny is the fact that he is the heir, and indeed the sole heir, of evolutionary progress to date. When he asserts that he is the highest type of organism, he is not being guilty of anthropocentric vanity, but is enunciating a biological fact. Furthermore, he is not merely the sole heir of past evolutionary progress, but the sole trustee for any that may be achieved in the future. From the evolutionary point of view, the destiny of man may be summed up very simply: it is to realize the maximum progress in the minimum time. That is why the philosophy of UNESCO must have an evolutionary background, and why the concept of progress cannot but occupy a central position in that philosophy.

The analysis of evolutionary progress gives us certain criteria for judging the rightness or wrongness of our aims and activities, and the desirability or otherwise of the tendencies to be noted in contemporary history—tendencies of which UNESCO must take account.

IN general, UNESCO must constantly be testing its policies against the touchstone of evolutionary progress. A central conflict of our times is that between nationalism and internationalism, between the concept of many national sovereignties and one world sovereignty. Here the evolutionary touchstone gives an unequivocal answer. The key to man's advance, the distinctive method which has made evolutionary progress in the human sector so much more rapid than in the biological and has given it higher and more satisfying goals, is the fact of cumulative tradition, the existence of a common pool of ideas which is self-perpetuating and itself capable of evolving. And this fact has had the immediate consequence of making types of social organization the main factor in human progress or at least its limiting framework.

Two obvious corollaries follow. First, that the more united man's tradition becomes, the more rapid will be the possibility of progress: several separate or competing or even mutually hostile pools of tradition cannot possibly be so efficient as a single pool common to all mankind. And secondly, that the best and only certain way of securing this will be through political unification. As history shows, unifying ideas *can* exert an effect across national boundaries. But, as history makes equally evident, that effect is a partial one and never

wholly affects the opportunities for conflict provided by the existence of separate sovereign political units.

The moral for UNESCO is clear. Its task of promoting peace and security can never be wholly realized through the means assigned to it—education, science and culture. It must envisage some form of world political unity, whether through a single world government or otherwise, as the only certain means for avoiding war. However, world political unity is, unfortunately, a remote ideal, and in any case does not fall within the field of UNESCO's competence. This does not mean that UNESCO cannot do a great deal toward promoting peace and security. Specifically, in its educational program, it can stress the ultimate need for world political unity and familiarize all peoples with the implications of the transfer of full sovereignty from separate nations to a world organization. But, more generally, it can do a great deal to lay the foundations on which world political unity can later be built. It can help the peoples of the world to mutual understanding and to a realization of the common humanity and common tasks which they share, as opposed to the separate nationalisms which tend to isolate them.

It can promote enterprises which, by being fully international, demonstrate that nationality and nationalism can be transcended in shared activity. Examples of such enterprises are the UNESCO center of applied mathematics proposed by the Natural Science Section; the International Reconstruction Camp, proposed by the Education Section as a contribution to reconstruction; the activities centered round the World Bibliographical and Library Centre and the International Clearing House for Publications, proposed by the Cultural Institutions Section; the International Home and Community Planning Institute envisaged by the Social Science Section; the International Theatre Institute proposed by the Section of Creative Arts; and the work focused on the production of internationally-conceived films and radio programs envisaged by the Mass Media Section.

UNESCO also can and should promote the growth of international contacts, international organizations, and actual international achievements, which will offer increasing resistance to the forces making for division and conflict. In particular, it can both on its own account and in close relation with other UN agencies such as the FAO and the International Health Organization, promote the international application of science to human welfare.

As the benefits of such world-scale collaboration become plain (which will speedily be the case in relation to the food and health of mankind) it will become increasingly more difficult for any nation to destroy them by resorting to isolationism or to war.

In the specific cases of atomic fission, bacteriology and microbiology, UNESCO can do a great deal by large-scale campaigns of public education designed to throw into contrast the disastrous effects of using our knowledge for new warlike purposes, in the shape of atom bombs and the still greater horrors of "biological warfare," and the wonderful opportunities that open out if we use it for increasing human welfare.

With all this UNESCO must face the fact that nationalism is still the basis of the political structure of the world, and must be prepared for the possibility that the forces of disruption and conflict may score a temporary victory. But even if this should occur, UNESCO must strain every nerve to give a demonstration of the benefits, spiritual as well as material, to be obtained through a common pool of tradition, and specifically by international co-operation in education, science and culture, so that even should another war break out the world will not forget.

Quality and Quantity

THERE is one other general implication of the fact of evolutionary progress, which UNESCO must take into account—the importance of quality as against quantity. Throughout evolution, progress has consisted in the raising of the upper level of certain properties of the "world stuff" of which we as well as the stars are made. And in the human sector, progress has been increasingly concerned with values—intellectual, aesthetic, emotional and moral. In the realm of values, quantity, whether of number, size or extension, is irrelevant to progress.

UNESCO must guard itself against the tendency, current in some quarters, of reducing everything to quantitative terms, as if a counting of heads were more important than what was going on inside them. This tendency to think only or mainly in terms of quantity is partly a reflection of our mass-production age, but partly due to the debasement or misconception of the principles of democracy, in rather the same way as militaristic nationalism has been founded on a misconception of Darwinian principles.

The Age of the Common Man: the Voice of

the People: majority rule: the importance of a large population:—ideas and slogans such as these form the background of much of our thinking, and tend, unless we are careful, toward the promotion of mediocrity, even if mediocrity in abundance, and at the same time toward the discouragement of high and unusual quality.

Let UNESCO have a clear mind on this subject. Quantity is of importance — but as a means, a foundation for quality.

Meanwhile, UNESCO must devote itself not only to raising the general welfare of the common man, but also to raising the highest level attainable by man. This applies to the opportunities of experience and enjoyment generally available, to the quality of training provided and to the human material itself. Human progress consists partly in the raising of the average level within pre-existing limits of achievement and possibility, but also in raising the upper level of these limits and embarking man upon new possibilities.

The encouragement of variety, of genius, of quality in general, however incomprehensible to the multitude, must be one of the major aims of UNESCO.

The Principle of Equality and the Fact of Inequality

FINALLY we come to a difficult problem—that of discovering how we can reconcile our principle of human equality with the biological fact of human inequality. Perhaps the problem is not so difficult as it appears when stated in this paradoxical form; for the contradiction largely disappears as soon as it is realized that equality is used in two very different senses. The democratic principle of equality, which is also UNESCO's, is a principle of equality of opportunity — that human beings should be equal before the law, should have equal opportunities for education, for making a living, for freedom of expression and movement and worship. The biological absence of equality, on the other hand, concerns the natural endowments of man and the fact of genetic difference in regard to them.

At the outset, let it be clearly understood that we are here speaking only of biological inequality—inequality in genetic endowment. Social inequality, due to accident of birth or

upbringing, is something wholly different.

It is therefore of the greatest importance to preserve human variety; all attempts at reducing it, whether by attempting to obtain greater "purity" and therefore uniformity within a so-called race or a national group, or by attempting to exterminate any of the broad racial groups which give our species its major variety, are scientifically incorrect and opposed to long-run human progress. On the contrary, UNESCO should aim at securing the fullest contribution to the common pool from racial groups which, owing to their remoteness or their backwardness have so far had little share in it.

THE fact of human difference has another implication for UNESCO. Every encouragement should be given to the study of distinct psycho-physical types. For one thing, it will be of great value in job selection, in picking those who are most likely to profit from a particular sort of training or are most suitable for a particular kind of work. Conversely, we shall then be enabled to lay down that certain types of men shall be debarred from holding certain types of positions.

The principle of equality of opportunity must be amended to read "equality of opportunity within the limits of aptitude." Thus, it is a fact, however disagreeable, that a considerable percentage of the population is not capable of profiting from higher education. It is equally a fact that a considerable percentage of young men have to be rejected for military service on grounds of physical weakness or mental instability, and that these grounds are often genetic in origin. Again, many people are not intelligent or not scrupulous enough to be entrusted with political responsibility—a fact which unfortunately does not prevent quite a number of them from attaining it.

To adjust the principle of democratic equality to the fact of biological inequality is a major task for the world, and one which will grow increasingly more urgent as we make progress toward realizing equality of opportunity. To promote this adjustment, a great deal of education of the general public will be needed as well as much new research; and in both these tasks UNESCO can and should co-operate.

SCIENCE and WORLD CULTURE

by **T. SWANN HARDING**

The scientist and society have lived apart too long. Now, the scientist is awakening to the social meaning of the Aladdin's lamp he has created. And society, for its part, must understand the scientific method. For society has now to apply the jinn to its destruction, or turn them to its preservation.

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DIFFICULT as it is for us to believe now, the pre-atomic bomb scientist was a timid, socially introverted creature who kept close to his knitting, talked a strange, esoteric language, refused to recognize the unity of science as a whole, and prided himself on his abstention from social, political and economic affairs. Today, when prominent scientists get into brawls with legislators, and lecture the public avidly and vividly on the relationship between atomic fission and world affairs, their former abnegation indeed seems hard to credit.

Yet, in those leisurely old days before the bomb, the scientist had the most important things in the world to say and the least ability to say them in such manner as to be understood. Even then he foretold the destructive potentialities of the powers he was unloosing; we simply did not understand what he said, or on the rare occasions when we did understand, we lost the significance. For we had come traditionally to regard scientists as long-haired impractical fellows unacquainted with world affairs, who disavowed the ominous fruits of their laboratory findings.

The chasm between science and international politics has always been extraordinarily wide. It is wider still today, as can easily be sensed by reading some of the dissertations made before the United Nations by curiously anachronistic statesmen. Perhaps the most conspicuous example of these is Molotov, with his early eighteenth century doctrinaire dogmatism and his stark reactionary views on almost everything. But many others run him a close second in speaking for a bygone, pre-Einsteinian, pre-atomic-fission-bomb era we intuitively know to have vanished.

FEW statesmen have yet grasped what science has done, or have attained a proper understanding of the modern scientific age. Spheres of influence, naval and air outposts, rings of friendly nations, are as outmoded as battleships and fortresses in the new era of earth-girdling planes, atom bombs, poisons to destroy crops, and biological warfare to spread epidemics, epizootics, and epiphytotics world-wide. The nine eminent scientists who met in November 1946, as the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists—Albert Einstein, presiding, and Harold C. Urey, vice-president—told only part of the story.

More and more destructive atomic bombs can now be made at much cheaper cost and in great number. Against them there is no military defense, and science can at present conceive none; hence preparedness against atomic war is futile. If attempted, it would ruin our social and economic order. Other nations can easily rediscover our secret processes. If war breaks out, these bombs will be used and civilization will be destroyed. There is no solution to this problem other than the elimination of war. That is today's scientific manifesto. What will the world do about it?

ONE of the basic reasons for the global war in which the world has been engaged since the turn of the century, and which is now being pursued by diplomatic means for awhile, is the failure of scientists effectively to communicate to one another, and to the general public, the knowledge they created. Just as egregious was their failure to face the social, economic, and political implications of their discoveries until the explosion of the atom-fission bomb