

# TEACHING SCIENCE IN THE ATOMIC AGE

By Dr. Karel Hujer

Karel Hujer, D.Sc., an astronomer and physicist at the University of Chattanooga, Tennessee, was born in 1902 in Zelezny Brod, Czechoslovakia. He is a graduate of Prague University with extended studies in France, University of London and 3½ years graduate work at Yerkes Observatory of the University of Chicago.

Dr. Hujer has studied astronomy, ancient and modern, in most continents of the world.

In India he was invited and stayed as guest of Mahatma Gandhi in 1935, in his ashram at Wardha, lecturing at his evening meetings. He was also guest of Poet Tagore, and delivered a course of lectures at his university in Santiniketan.

In 1949 he was invited by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, now President of the Republic of India, to attend a World Pacifist Conference, held in India, December, 1949.

**T**ECHNOLOGICAL and democratic tendencies in education today seek primarily to enable man to earn a living rather than to acquire a life worth living. This becomes symptomatic of our civilization and points to ominous consequences that are particularly significant in the trend of most American colleges.

Here a desperate struggle now goes on for the survival of liberal arts as against the coming avalanche of trimmed, abridged, engineering courses and commerce courses which lack knowledge of history or philosophical orientation.

Satirising the university, the late C. E. M. Joad stated pathetically:

"You want an atom bomb? Right! We will make it for you. But we really can't concern ourselves with the use to which you propose to put it. . . . You want a cathedral? Right! The architectural department will tell you how to build it. But whether you should worship in it or keep pigs in it is a question which falls outside our province."

Thus, despite all external appearances, man in this twentieth century civilization places himself in the same category with the sub-human creatures—*primum vivere*.

He continues his oldest pre-occupation—hunting—only he now does it with greater

finesse. He jostles today under the pillars of a stock exchange or wrestles on the market of subtle but ruthless competition. His applied science without the background knowledge of history or a philosophical orientation leads him toward the abyss of recurrent crises and civil and international warfare.

## USE OF SCIENCE

As a result, in our utilitarian age, the average man no longer recognises a star in the heavens.

However, as an agriculturist, he is interested in meteorological reports, seeking the prospect of a good crop. As a pilot, he looks for and demands the direction of his navigation route but does not reflect on the wonders of our universe.

Also, the scientist, in general, does not seek the guiding light of wisdom which rests in overwhelming eloquence at the root of the harmony of natural laws.

Rather, he looks for the expansion of his scientific domain, to make effective some adroit way of exploitation of natural resources, to meet the competition of the market, or to subdue an international adversary on the increasingly disastrous human battlefields.

Science, indeed, is very well placed among various disciplines of human activity to indicate and reveal the glory of cosmic creation, but in the possession of human rational intellect, it does not escape the danger of human weakness.

There are great scientists who do contemplate the wondrous architecture of the universe in the spirit of the Psalmist who considered the heavens nearly three millenia ago, and having reached the true illumination of knowing, are the noblest torches of meditative and creative thought of love and devotion.

## TECHNOLOGY

But there are other great scientists who investigate and analyse this universe. They photograph it, microscope it, spectroscope it, they photometer it and scrutinise it in all sorts of clever ways, but because they lack the spirit of humble contemplation, they miss the glory of divine creation.

As specialists, they are the well repaid idols of our modern age. However, for the trees, they do not see the charms of the forest and God's garden of beauty.

Usually we present science as the magic source of comfort and of fast communication. Today we are over-anxious to accomplish a rocket flight to the moon. However, it was not the means of transportation used by Socrates nor the gadgets in the dwelling of Plato or Aristotle that counted, and we know of only one record where the Lord Jesus rode and that was sitting upon an ass.

Yet, it is His word and above all else, His supreme example of saintly life which warns us more eloquently in this scientific, atomic age than ever before.

The world of technological progress seeks to liquidate fear, superstition and ruthless power. It has arranged an air-conditioned paradise on the facile order of a push-button. In this scientific wonderland sorrow, starvation and suffering are to be no more, and in this New Eden there will be no need for God nor conscience nor for any other antiquated restriction upon a healthy, material and civilized fulfillment of life.

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## TRUE SCIENCE

Yet, portentously we hear the insistent voice of ages: "Jesus or Caesar, Jesus or atomic deluge."

Let us not compete with the material promises of the commercial world which entices the masses with a materialistic heaven of a soul-less life of a robot.

Let us not pervert science into a subtle tool of materialistic philosophy, the gospel of dialectic materialism, by reiterating the misunderstood meaning of science—science which eliminates and denies everything supernatural.

It is exactly this half truth which works in the interest of those dark forces now sweeping the world.

On the contrary, it has to be emphatically stated that science does not represent any last word in our knowledge of the universe.

True science could not be the instrument of such disastrous warfare as was witnessed in the first half of this twentieth century.

True science as illumination can only lead man to the revelation of his higher spiritual purposes. In this role science—as a wisdom of true knowing—becomes the channel towards the realisation of an ever-living presence of God.

This offers any teacher of science boundless opportunities of most responsible ministry in the age of an ominous crossroad in the history of mankind.