

(November 14, 1970)

REVEREND HESBURGH

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the problem that faces every participant in these symposiums is that the further down the list you are put you find that many, many, of your points have been taken by those who preceded you; and that the only secret is somehow to wangle yourself on to the first place on the program -- It's a little late for that.

I thought that I would take as a starting point here this afternoon something to hang my remarks on -- a suggested three point stage of education which you can find in Alfred North Whitehead's book "The Aims of Education." He is somewhat criticizing the modern concepts of education -- or how we all get educated. He makes out that this is a continual process and he says that he believes all of our education is somewhat cynical -- that it follows a certain series of stages and that these continue on through life or at least they should

He begins by making them somewhat analagous to Hegels thesis, antithesis, and synthesis but he feels these words perhaps would not mean very much to most people so he coined some simpler words and he speaks of the stage of romance, the stage of precision, and the stage of generalization. The interesting thing about these three stages is you can apply them to a child; and you can apply them to yourself this afternoon. If I tried to briefly describe them, perhaps you will find yourself situated somewhere along this particular cycle because, he says, "While cycles repeat itself, certain stages of the cycle tend to be dominate at certain times in life or at certain parts of our education process."

The stage of romance, I suppose, is best illustrated by the child who first opens his eyes and looks around. It is characterized by some qualities we should try to keep all our lives, I believe, -- an open mind, intellectual curiosity about everything, a kind of vividness with which we are able to perceive seemingly unrelated facts, new things, and new experiences -- a kind of continual ferment of the mind so that it doesn't get deadend by what Whitehead called 'inner ideas' -- a kind of a sense of newness that comes with first knowledge (the first time you see something) -- a kind of general first perception of facts in all their generality. I think this first stage of romance is a stage of wonderment that hopefully we could keep all our lives if we are not going to go stale -- that we are constantly in wonderment at the new things that we can learn about ourselves, about others, about the world, and even about God. I think

it is a mentality that is willing to question all things but not to question just for the sake of questioning because the man who questions is a man who is in search of wisdom as Dr. Hook said. It's a sense of intellectual interest that keeps with us through life and that there is a romance about it -- it isn't dull and dead. And certainly today, in an age that we are living and in an age which this institution will be celebrating in this symposium, there is much to be excited about -- much even to be romantic about -- much that comes to us new and vivid -- a new picture of the moon -- a new way of understanding the planet Venus, and many other things of ultimate excitement from the inner recesses of the atom to the brilliance of a super nova in outer space.

When he applies this to education, and I think we must -- oh, and when I say education, do not think of coming here to class or coming any place to class; it is that constant process of growing, and learning, and being alive in your mind. It seems to me that in life you experience people who are bright and people who are dull. The definition is very simple, the people who are bright simply have never gotten over the romance that began the day they opened their eyes and looked upon a new world -- they never cease to see things, to experience things, to cherish the learning process. And so this first stage of romance is with us all of our lives and if it is not with us; we become very dull.

The second stage is a little more gruesome, I'm afraid. It's the stage of precision, this is learning a lot about certain things. It's the kind of stage that Whitehead says characterizes the youngsters in high school most of the time where they are bent over their desks studying, learning how to do algebra and calculus and learning how to do science, learning how to try to understand something about history, language, or literature. And he said, "In this age of precision we learn how to take these disaggregate facts that come up in the age of romance and we learn how to analyze them one by one -- we apply a certain methodology, we organize them into a certain kind of knowledge." In a sense we classify to them our knowledge and then all the new facts fit or try to be fitted into these classifications. The stage of precision is necessary in all of our lives because we have to be confident about something. I suppose, for the purpose of this symposium, we should be reasonably confident about being human beings.

That leads me to the third stage which is the stage of generalization. Whitehead said if

this stage should characterize anything -- it should characterize a university experience because when you come to the university you should no longer be a school boy bending over your desk -- you should stand up and look around the world and see what there is to be seen, and try to make some sense, or as Dr. Hook said, some meaning -- or try to get some order out of this totality of facts even within a given subject that you have learned well. I think that the question of the stage of generalization really is that stage which comes to bear upon what might be called the philosophical man because it is in this stage, and it should occur throughout our lives, that we try to see some meaning -- meaning in life -- meaning in ourselves -- or meaning in vocations -- or meaning in all of the reality that surrounds us. You can jump beyond the purely philosophical, as Dr. Hook said, and you can find the meaning of eternity as well as the meaning of time if you have faith. You can try to find some meaning that relates to your salvation or the lack of it -- but this is getting beyond the philosophical man into what might be called the theological man and I think that that is not part of our subject matter here this afternoon. It seems to me as we look into this world at the enormous change that is taking place and the great difficulty of generalization in our times -- I would look upon it more as an opportunity rather than as a danger or a simple confusion. I like to believe that if you look at the intellectual history of mankind -- we've gone through various stages of knowledge -- we have a philosophical age when the Greeks like to call everything philosophy including science, as we know it today, and theology and everything else. Because they have looked for the one thing that they thought was important and indeed it is still important today namely, wisdom. There was an age in medieval times when theology was the queen of science and it, too, like philosophy tried to establish its own hegemony; it was a kind of monopoly and kingdom unto itself. And when the first science came along, especially in the famous case of Galileo, he had difficulty with the theologians because they felt that he was impinging upon their territory or their reserve. And now in our day you look around and you get into this cumulation or cumulativeness of inventiveness, as Dr. Hook said, and here, indeed, you are at an age where you are struck by the enormous change in movement -- in new activity, new formulations, new potentials that come through science and technology. And it seems to me that man has run his race in each of these philosophical, theological, science, and technological fields and now the great thing we need

if we bear down on this stage of generalization is some how to come up with some unity of knowledge -- to learn how to live with all we have and all we yet will have in our lives -- to learn how to get deeper meaning and order and understanding out of the world that we live in and that is evolving , rather than to live in confusion and what is worse -- to live in fear. And I think to do this we need philosophers; the sad thing is that the professional philosopher today is, I believe, I am not one of them -- but I believe the professional philosopher today spends so much time talking about words and their meaning and analyzing every little bit of meaning and inter-relations that somehow he misses the big question -- now I'm not referring to the previous speaker when I say that because he is a philosopher of a different stripe; thank God. But anyway, the real questions that face people when they look at science and technology and the world that it is giving us these questions are really philosophical -- they are ultimately theological too. But you can't solve them by science and technology unless you've developed this unity of knowledge -- unless everybody becomes, in a sense, a philosopher and asks for himself these ultimate questions. We are not going to make much sense out of this world we have inherited and the world we are still going to live to see because the ultimate questions-- if you put it this way -- Is science good or bad? There is no answer to that because science is neither good nor bad -- it is neutral. What makes science good or bad is a human being -- to what purposes he puts it -- how he uses it -- how well he understands whether it contributes or derogates from the nature and destiny of man -- what man is meant to be -- what relationship it has to all of his rights including some rather simple but very important rights, such as Dr. Price referred to when he talked of privacy and individuality and living ones' own life ----- equality and all the rest.

I would not worry about anything that science and technology might bring us whether it is a knowledge of other intellectual beings or anything else. If only it brought us just one thing that we knew was being dedicated to service of mankind in our day -- that it was making for man that one thing that man has never been able to make for himself which is a material situation in which his human dignity may come to some fruition where it becomes a possibility and not a travesty. I don't mind the change as long as the change has got a direction and indeed it will have a direction if man -- all men including the scientists and technologists become a little

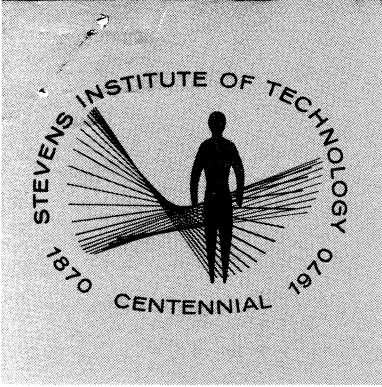
philosophical about finding the goodness or badness in that which takes up so much of their time -- makes so much of their knowledge -- which is so much a part of their own stage of precision. And I would like to hope that all of us can find something very romantic in science today -- but that the very romanticism should come from what it could do for mankind. And here, indeed, we find a great deal of alienation among many people because if, indeed, science has given us in our day the potential to feed people, and clothe people, and house people -- the potential to give people the material situation that I speak of -- which is not all important -- because man does not live by bread alone. But it is important to man's freedom that at least he have economic viability, that at least he have decent health and the hope for education -- that at least there is some chance of his improving his human lot and realizing something about the human dignity that God gave him. Now if he doesn't have this chance, you can talk all you want about freedom, equality and dignity and it doesn't really mean very much because it's hard to be dignified if you are hungry, or if you are poor, or if you are hopeless. And so I would think that in this symposium -- The Philosophical Man -- or at least put it another way -- the man with the philosophical bent of mind -- the man whoever he is who is not afraid of this stage of generalization -- the man who can be confident through the stage of precision and who can be excited about all knowledge through the stage of romance -- that he is not afraid to enter into the stage of generalization to really make something of this world that we have -- to really make something of the enormous potentials of this world -- to really make it for the first time in the history of mankind -- a different kind of world. Now I think to do that we have to have values, certainly, we have to have ideals, we have to have some perception of the nature and destiny of man -- we have to have some sense of value and proportion and order that some things are more important than others. But what we need more than anything else is this deep sense of conviction on the part of every human being that his life and whatever he has learned from the romance of learning, and whatever he has perceived from this stage of precision, will somehow be generalized into a total commitment of his own life to do something with all he has -- that as he learns more each day he somehow becomes more of a human being. And it seems to me in our day that becoming more of a human being means developing some kind of compassion for the totality of human beings. that are so poorly off and yet have in our day the potential of becoming

much better off.

What I am saying in a word is that there is not much satisfaction in using the enormity of our science -- which is knowledge. But also even more -- power to destroy rather than to build, to deepen the gulfs between the haves and the have-nots in our day, to be a cause of contention among mankind rather than a cause for unity. Because all of these great potentials that we have as human beings, and especially this potential to keep on learning must somehow be geared to the potential of serving, because Whitehead also said that while education gives you knowledge -- more than anything else it gives you power -- and that the very style of our lives should be a use of that power a restraint and focus use of that power. That the young boy of knowledge who comes to an education leaves a man of power. But the power undirected, unfocused, and especially not guided by values and commitments often, I think, becomes a menace rather than a promise. And I would hope that the philosophical man or the man with the philosophical bent brings anything to our day -- he would bring some focus of meaning because of his commitment of use power in the service of mankind and not his destruction.

Thank you very much.

MAN AND THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



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March 14, 1968

Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh
President
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

Dear Father Hesburgh:

We are enclosing two copies of your talk at the Stevens' Centennial Convocation. If you will return to us one edited copy for use in our publication of Convocation events, it would be greatly appreciated.

We are still receiving a large number of very enthusiastic commendations on the two-day affair which you had no small part in making possible.

Thank you again for your assistance.

Cordially yours,

James H. Duchine
Convocation Director

Enclosures

NOVEMBER 14 AND 15