

GENERAL SCIENCE

Science Has Not Failed Man; Man Failed To Use Science

**Prof. Carlson Charges We Are Devoted to Gadgetry;
Make No More Use of Scientific Method Than Peking Man**

SCIENCE has not failed humanity; it is humanity that has failed to make use of the scientific method for its own benefit, declared Prof. A. J. Carlson of the University of Chicago, in the Sigma Xi lecture, delivered in connection with the meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The annual lecture of the Society of the Sigma Xi, honorary scientific fraternity, is an outstanding feature of these midwinter meetings.

People who talk glibly about this being the Age of Science, Prof. Carlson said, are very apt to be thinking only of the applications of science in technology and invention and the ready popular acceptance of these benefits, not of the essence of science itself; the painstaking acquisition of masses of accurately known facts, the critical and objective interpretation of these facts, and the direct application of principles thus discovered to the problems of everyday life. We are devoted to gadgetry, not to science, the speaker maintained; the great mass of humanity, still traditionalist, makes no more use of the scientific way of thinking than did Peking Man a million years ago.

There are three outstanding causes for the failure of modern science measurably to influence human drives and conduct, according to Prof. Carlson's analysis:

1) Prevailing education, from infancy in the home on through college, is largely education by dictation—indoctrination

rather than education by understanding the why and wherefore through experimentation. "You can teach a parrot to talk Latin," said Prof. Carlson, "but the Latin-speaking bird would still be a parrot."

2) Many scientists all too readily abandon the scientific method of thinking as soon as they are outside their own specialty, becoming as emotional and prejudiced as any non-scientific person. They get caught at this inconsistency by the man in the street, who thereupon weakens in his faith in science.

3) Man has a tremendous resistance to new ways of thinking and new ways of life. He resists science, which is after all a comparatively recent thing, as stubbornly as he resists religion, which has been pushing at him for thousands of years using sanctions of promised reward and threatened punishment that are not in the armamentarium of science at all.

Yet despite all these discouragements, Prof. Carlson refuses to be dismayed. He concluded:

"I think we can say, that during the ups and downs of a million years man has gradually acquired more understanding, more freedom from fear and hate, more dignity, greater kindness, and a clearer conception of justice.

"Even though for the moment, 'the bird of sorrow' is not only flying over our heads, but is actually nesting in our hair—to borrow a Chinese proverb—that bird will not nest in our hair forever, unless the torchbearers blow out the light.

"For, slowly but surely, the method of science will help to make life more intelligent, toil more cheerful, fear and hatred, pain and tears less abundant for mankind. If in any place or time the blind fury of hatred and the insane violence of war render the pursuit of science impossible, and the scientific method submerged and forgotten, it will be rediscovered, in better days, by better men."

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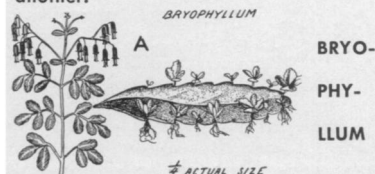
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