

EDITORIAL

THE IGNORANCE OF ISOLATION

We don't know how much we don't know. This is one of the tragedies of ignorance — its victims are unaware of their plight. This problem has become more apparent in our age of specialization when our limited intellectual capabilities force us into narrow areas of inquiry where we can still make significant contributions. As we specialize, our outlook becomes narrower and we become less aware of the broad complex of reality that we are ignoring.

We need specialization but not isolation. Specialization enhances knowledge, but it tends to narrow our outlook. For instance, the deep meaning that the artist tries to convey may not be fully appreciated by the scientist or the banker, and the theologian or historian seldom understands the philosophy of science. The common curricular components of our basic education give us a casual acquaintance with various areas of information but seldom provide a good understanding of the underlying premises. As an example, many courses in science are often taught mainly as established fact instead of a search for explanations.

A more serious problem caused by the isolation resulting from specialization is that individuals and small restricted groups proceed to develop a world view of reality based on a narrow segment of information. The commonly cited errors made by theologians during the debate about the geocentric universe is an example. Likewise, the theologians or artists rightly point out that science is a narrow view and there is more to reality than is amenable to scientific analysis. Wholly naturalistic explanations seem inadequate. Man's consciousness, free will, concern, morality, vision, and sense of duty and purpose seem to be a little too much to attribute to just naturalistic explanations. Many object to the tendency of science to reduce man down to a meaningless mechanism, while scientists tend to shun the less objective aspects of reality.

Based upon these limited views, individuals or groups develop their own life philosophy. This is a biased approach. To correct this, more emphasis should be placed on a broader view of reality. While we want to reap the benefits of specialization, we must also "specialize" in breadth. There should be more emphasis on interdisciplinary endeavors. Truth is the goal, and it will be reached more readily if we try to destroy the artificial barriers that have been erected between different domains of inquiry. Specialists in different areas should combine their efforts. Multidisciplinary approaches that combine very different areas of inquiry such as history, literature, science, and religion should be encouraged. Truth is broad; so should be our efforts to reach it.

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