

MESSAGE FROM TOKYO

Science and Culture: A Common Path for the Future

[The following message is being issued by the participants in the symposium "Science and Culture: A Common Path for the Future", jointly organized by the United Nations University and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in collaboration with the Government of Japan, the Japan Foundation and the National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan, from 11-14 September 1995]

Message from Toyko

*"Only those who see the invisible are able to do the impossible."**

Mechanistic science, which reached its peak in the last century, sought to separate the dispassionate observer from the object of inquiry. This led to a concept of blind progress that favoured a materialistic view of civilization. Thus, today we can identify two competing ideologies: a technological concept of "progress" through standardization of civilization, as opposed to a preservation of cultural identities and values through respect for diversity. Behind these powerful ideas is the untested belief that "science" and "culture and tradition" are incompatible with each other and separated by an unbridgable gulf.

We believe this apparent incompatibility is due to the fact that for the past 300 years—only about one ten-thousandth of human existence—Western science has moved away from earlier more holistic views of nature. This movement in science was characterized by a mechanistic and value-free view of nature that produced material, technological abundance, but led to increasing specialization and compartmentalization.

During the twentieth century, on the basis of empirical findings, leading scientists—not theologians or philosophers—began to reverse the assumptions of the previous three centuries. This reversal was led by the originators of quantum physics who found that there exists in the universe an order of wholeness that is akin to those occurring in the earlier views that science had abandoned.

* Attribution being researched.

Our message from Tokyo this September 1995 is, therefore, that the time is ripe for a new age of enlightenment in which universal human values will once again unite and orient the endeavours of humankind. In these endeavours women are a fundamental force for the promotion of a caring society by their participation in the creation of a culture of peace, one in which each woman and man is responsible for her or his own destiny. However, care must not be limited to those living today. To complement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in line with the concept of generational continuity, we call for an extension of those relevant rights to future generations.

Central to the theme of this enlightenment is the paradoxical complementarity of unity in diversity. Hostility to, rather than tolerance of, differences such as those in ethnicity, religion or colour brings not unity but despair. The holistic precepts, naturally arising from the new scientific awareness, in conjunction with a resurgence of traditional views, can be the basis for the attainment of perpetual peace.

A core characteristic of this new enlightenment is an appreciation of a fresh approach to unity in diversity. Natural and social scientists have long held an idea that first took hold in the visual arts: the whole is greater than, and different from, the sum of its parts. According to this idea, new attributes emerge as components come together in the special arrangements that signify a whole. But, science now has uncovered the existence of a totally different holistic aspect of the universe. This new holism recognizes the enfoldment of the whole in its "parts" and the distribution of the "parts" over the whole. Thus our message reflects the concepts of Mahayana Buddhism which represent a powerful holistic vision of the future of human existence within nature.

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