

since the seer must always present his vision in terms which his audience will understand; i.e., in terms of the natural world as they know it. It follows that, as man's verifiable knowledge of the physical universe expands and changes, so will his religious and philosophic conclusions change, frequently in minor details, occasionally in more fundamental assumptions.

2) In arriving at general principles, man hungers for absolute certainty, while the best that he can attain is a tentative assumption--even our basic laws of natural science are unverifiable hypotheses. This craving for certainty drives men in different directions. A few seek to push the bounds of knowledge yet farther into the unknown and examine the basic assumptions of their age with a view toward modifying them. The majority find it easier to accept their assumptions as certainties, to let their thoughts become crystallized, so to speak. After every great period of discovery and mental ferment, such a crystallization tends to set in, with men resting comfortably in traditional views and occasionally defending them with fanatical intensity. It is not unusual for later adherents of a creed to be far more dogmatic and extreme in asserting its correctness than were those who formulated it in the first place.

3) In the present age, the accelerated speed of scientific discovery makes difficult the formulation of any system of thought based on the physical world which is not subject to immediate modification. Furthermore, the degree of precision attained in the natural sciences makes many people impatient with the less precise results which are possible in other fields of thought. The scientific temper which rejects conclusions not verified by experiment causes some individuals to dismiss contemptuously all religious and philosophic ideas which cannot be similarly verified. This tendency is unfortunately strengthened by the militant dogmatists who admit no possible error in an established religious creed and who breed an exasperated but equally ill-founded dogmatism in opponents to their point of view.

4) Modern college teachers have developed to a high degree the power of analysis, but to a much lesser degree the power of synthesis. Many teachers deliberately attempt to shock a student out of his previously held views which they feel to be incorrect, so that he may arrive at new conclusions on the basis of more accurate knowledge. Too often they leave him floundering, with a sense of lost values and a doubt that any values whatever are valid. He either tries to put the question from his mind or retreats into a shallow cynicism which masks his own inadequacy to cope with the problem.

It is just here that the teacher's greater experience should be of most aid to the student, in helping him to synthesize the various elements of his knowledge, to fit what he is learning into his previous scheme of facts and ideas. Often the teacher's most valuable contribution is not in imparting his own particular synthesis, or philosophy of life, but in making the student feel that an intelligent synthesis is possible, that there is no reason for despair.