

Science Integral In Arts Program

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The natural sciences play an integral part in any genuine liberal arts program. Their function is to develop the objectivity and veracity which should mark the liberally educated man. For this reason it is regrettable that congested curricula make it difficult and in some places impossible for non-science majors to include as part of their program of studies one year as a bare minimum of training in one of the physical sciences.

A scientific background is well-nigh indispensable to the philosopher, and for one who would aspire to such a role Maritain prescribes not only a thorough knowledge of the entire body of the natural sciences, but also a deeper grasp of at least one specialized branch.

It might be urged that the men who devote themselves to scientific studies are unaware of this aspect of science. Their approach is a quite pragmatic one. They are motivated by such concrete objectives as careers in research, industry, medicine, or engineering. And yet their training consists not in mere mastery of scientific fact or mere acquisition of technique, but in their submitting themselves to the exacting demands of the scientific method.

Paradoxically enough, it is in this very submission that they experience the liberalizing influence of the sciences. There is developed in them a spirit of inquisitiveness, a healthy regard for things as they are, an objectivity in evaluating data, an intellectual honesty, and above all, a reverence for truth no matter where it is to be found.