

## BOOKS AND REVIEWS

---

**Main trends of research in the social and human sciences**, by René Maheu,  
*UNESCO Chronicle*, Paris, 1969, No. 12.

Science and technology have created entirely new conditions of life, opened up unheard of possibilities, given rise to unprecedented problems. The horizon of human experience has thus been appreciably broadened. At the same time, the development of media of expression and communication has brought about a veritable change of scale in our apprehension of all that exists around us. By bringing us close in time and space to events whenever and wherever they occur, it gives individual, social and cultural life a new dimension which is tending to equal that of the world as it now is, while at the same time threatening the quality of precious personal consciousness. More generally, the advances of knowledge transcend the powers of the individual mind, and for the elaboration of knowledge as well as for the continuing task of its reunification the human intellect needs to be supported by machines of its own invention; science, which is causing an upheaval in the current conception of the universe and affording us a new insight into man, is becoming more and more difficult to fit into general culture, save in debased forms.

The speed and magnitude of the changes that are currently affecting the life of all mankind impart a new acuteness to our sense of the transitory nature of the present, to the need for a dynamic interpretation of history in the making and for a reasoned anticipation of the future, which constitute the necessary bases for action properly adapted to the service of man and his values.

Lastly, the widespread assertion of the principles of democracy calls for new forms of political organization and community life. The world's structure has undergone a profound change following the accession of almost all nations to political independence and the establishment, at all levels, of new relations between them. In consequence, mankind, brought face to face with the vast variety of its components, is gradually taking the measure of its inner diversity and discovering a new notion and a new requirement of universality, based on mutual respect for and understanding of differences in a desire for dialogue and reciprocal enrichment. Having equipped himself with the means of attaining to power, man knows that he would henceforth be the instrument of his own destruction if he proved to be incapable of imagining and establishing on a world-wide scale a viable order, conducive to progress and consistent with a common idea of justice.

This situation suggests to the social and human sciences—nay, lays upon them—renewed and more ambitious tasks, while making available

## BOOKS AND REVIEWS

to them more powerful means of investigation, more extensive information and a strengthened conceptual apparatus. On the other hand, it increases the difficulty of their problems, aggravates some of their uncertainties, jeopardizes man's ability to make use of his knowledge, and calls for a constant effort to reconquer the unity of the life of the mind. It is by facing up to this global situation, by applying themselves to subjects of research that reflect its major aspects, that the disciplines concerned with knowledge of man can assume their rôle in mutual co-operation as truly modern and productive forms of intellectual inquiry.

At the same time, there is a common duty that must be accepted by all with the utmost urgency, namely, the eradication from the face of the earth of poverty, exploitation, ignorance, stagnation and humiliation, which are the lot of the human masses that have been unfairly treated by history. Without a deliberate effort on the part of the whole of man, in all men, these masses are liable to be confined by the ever more rapid movement of that history, become fatality, in the hopeless condition of a sub-humanity—a disgrace to the mind and the heart, doom to any chance of real understanding between peoples, and hence of peace, a negation of humanity itself.

To the task devolving upon the present generation, namely development, in the widest and loftiest acceptance of the term—the economic and social development of communities and the development of man himself—the contribution that can and must be made by the social and human sciences is of capital importance, provided they fulfil their twofold rôle: on the one hand, to contribute carefully verified data and effective operational techniques adapted to economic, social and cultural structures and duly analysed historical situations and, on the other, to help men to make their choices in the light of facts and to ensure that understanding, respect and a feeling of solidarity between men are established on a firmer foundation. This is a twofold function, for which no discipline taken in isolation can suffice but which calls for the widest co-operation between them all. It is a twofold ambition, by which they take it upon themselves to be the diverse but interrelated forms and processes of the same striving for knowledge, the same thinking and the same endeavour...

**1970, International Education Year**, by Leo Fernig, *The UNESCO Courier*, Paris, January 1970, No. 1.

What is the International Education Year (IEY)? It could be described as a combined effort by all the countries of the world to do something extra or special about their educational problems in order "to mobilize energies and inspire initiatives in education and training" (the phrase