



## Science and the Modern World



Plenary Session, 11-13 October 1978, Part II

*Scripta Varia* 49

Vatican City, 1983

pp. 148

### Foreword

The Pontifical Academy of Sciences presents in this booklet the discussion on "Science and the Modern World" which was held in its Plenary Session of October 1978. The impact of science on our society has such manifold aspects that it cannot be treated in a simple way. The subject has been discussed in many meetings and has been the object of study in numerous books by important authors. Our publication is simply an addition to the current bibliography on the subject, but I think it will be useful. Though published belatedly it has the merit of bringing together the feelings of scientists working in different fields and belonging to different countries. In reviewing the papers and discussions now published, I felt that they have not lost their timeliness. On the contrary, the central theme which was treated needs every day more reflection in order that the moral and spiritual values that upgrade human dignity will not be subordinated by the technical advances resulting from the stupendous progress made in recent years in the fields of basic science. This subordination may occur as a consequence of economic and political pressures which may arise from national egotism or group interests. We must face and defy those pressures. Humanity must, can and will survive in conditions where the quality of life makes living a lovable situation, only if it can override the abuses of power in a civilization where men and women see the destruction of their human and physical environment by the inventions which the human mind has created. Thus any word, especially from some of those who have created modern science, is a blessing which can strengthen, and sometimes renew, the hope with which we all should and do envisage and admire the progress of science and of its practical uses. It is interesting to note that in treating the different topics of the meeting every participant drew from his scientific life, his own cultural background and his human experience a word of constructive criticism and of encouragement, which shows that science can still be one of the tools for acquiring the knowledge necessary to improve the human condition and defend the dignity of men and women. I am very thankful to all of my colleagues who so willingly and generously contributed to the meeting and gave to it the benefit of their talent and good will. I wish especially to thank Professor Marini-Bettolo for the exhaustive work he has undertaken, without which this booklet would not have been published, and my collaborators, Father di Rovasenda, Mrs. Porcelli, Mrs. Massa and Silvio Devoto for their constant help.

Carlos Chagas