

The Urgent Need for an Academic Revolution

<http://www.scientistswarning.org/the-urgent-need-for-an-academic-revolution/>

The crisis of our times is that we have science without wisdom. This is the crisis behind all the others. Population growth, the terrifyingly lethal character of modern warfare and terrorism, vast inequalities of wealth and power around the globe, destruction of natural habitats and rapid mass extinction of species, pollution of Earth, sea and air, the impending disasters of climate change – even the elections of Presidents Trump and Putin: all these relatively recent crises have been made possible by modern science and technology.

In order to make progress towards a better world we need to learn how to do it. And for that we need institutions of learning rationally designed and devoted to helping us solve our global problems – make progress towards a better world. It is just this that we lack at present. Our universities pursue knowledge. They are neither designed nor devoted to promoting wisdom, to helping humanity learn how to tackle global problems — problems of living — in more intelligent, humane and effective ways. This is the key disaster of our times, the crisis behind all the others: our failure to have developed our institutions of learning so that they are rationally organized to help us solve our problems of living — above all, our global problems.

Having universities devoted almost exclusively to the pursuit of knowledge is a recipe for disaster. Scientific knowledge and technological know-how have unquestionably brought great benefits to humanity. But they have also made possible — even caused — our current global crises, above all the impending crisis of global warming.

We need urgently to bring about a revolution in universities around the world so that their basic aim becomes to promote wisdom, and not just acquire knowledge – wisdom being the capacity to achieve what is of value in life, for oneself and others, wisdom including knowledge and technological know-how, but much more besides. A basic task of the university would be to articulate our problems of living – including our global problems – and propose and critically assess possible solutions, possible actions, policies, political programmes, ways of living. Public education about what our problems are, and what we need to do about them, conducted by means of discussion and debate, would be a central task of the university. Social inquiry and the humanities would be conducted so as actively to help improve major problematic social endeavours, such as politics, industry, agriculture and finance, so that these endeavours become less harmful and more genuinely beneficial. Almost every department and aspect of the university needs to be transformed.