

Preface

Life science is a vast and ever expanding subject, and this book covers only a few selected topics of general interest in the field. The idea is to provide basic information on these topics without too many technical details.

The concept of liberal arts education originated in the United States, and has now been accepted by many schools and universities, including the National University of Singapore, where I have worked for many years. The liberal arts education ensures that those who enter a university, should be instructed not only in their chosen field, but also in the workings of nature, as revealed by science.

A scientifically illiterate society cannot expect to progress, and is bound to be relegated to the dustbin of history as has happened to many nations in the past. It was scientific and technical progress which enabled the European countries to colonize Asia, in spite of Asia being an older civilization. It is important that men of arts and humanities, jointly with the men of science, face the great ethical and moral dilemmas of modern times, and find a way to protect our environment and bring peace to this conflict ridden world.

This book is made up of essays accompanied with diagrams and photographs, to help in the understanding of the text. It has no references, but these could easily be obtained from the numerous text books on science, found in any library. I am hoping that the contents would be thought provoking and enjoyable, not only for

the students, but also for any person who is simply interested in science. The scientist is a citizen of the world, and rises above the confines of nationality and race, in an effort to understand the great mystery of existence. By embracing science, one feels liberated from man-made ideologies and self-imposed shackles. This is a great feeling, which I wish to share with you through this book.