



Perspective

Our Greatest Battle Is One of Wisdom of Body vs. Wisdom of Mind

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THE EVOLUTION OF GENIUS of the magnitude of Einstein, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Newton, and Aristotle, out of the homogeneous substance of the earth, stands as the greatest of the wonders of nature. The mystery is all the greater that the extraordinary capacities of man are now turned against himself to threaten his very existence. . . .

Nature is the supreme gambler. She deals out one mutation upon another and waits for the struggle for existence to determine who is cast upon the evolutionary scrap heap. She deals out a significant mutation which arranges the higher functions of the brain into two major compartments; one compartment encompassing the intellect, and the other compartment the emotions. She interlocks these compartments in a mysterious way so as to make the intellect subservient to the emotions. The emotions are primitive, for they are mainly concerned with the physical comforts of food and sex. "Survival of the fittest" perfects the technique of satisfying these simple needs.

Then, suddenly, comes the greatest mutation of all biological time. The progenitor of man is endowed with a vastly superior brain which gives him a decisive advantage over his competitors. Homo sapiens becomes undisputed "king of beasts."

All goes well with man until he emerges from the cave and awakens to appreciation of his powers. He increases in numbers. He takes interest in fire, iron, levers, wheels, and alphabets. Great repositories of science and technology spring up overnight in libraries, universities, and vast industries. Suddenly, he is confronted by a monster of his own creating and a frightening realization of incompetence to use his phenomenal attainments widely and humanely. He is, in short, caught in a physiological trap, and faced with the problem of escaping from his own ingenuity. This trap is not the simplest type of trap, for

it is composed of some sixteen billion nerve cells interlocked in ways to make us what we are and in ways which we have yet to understand.

The impact of the power of the intellect and the relative roles of the wisdom of the body and of the mind have, by strange circumstance, posed the great problems of the day.

Puny in body, deficient in tooth and claw, inferior in strength, lacking in fur and armor and venom, man has duplicated all of these gadgets of living *for himself by force of intellect*. The speed and streamlining of the mackerel; the jet propulsion and smoke screen of the squid; the echo location of the bat; the physical power of the rhinoceros; all of which were built into the substance of the creatures by hundreds of millions of years of evolution, have within recent years become available to man as artificially acquired accoutrements of living and fighting.

The dangers of instruments of destruction are presently uppermost in the minds of the world, but a vastly greater, far more insidious danger threatens. It is overpopulation, sometimes referred to as the "O" bomb, which despite man's remarkable intellectual achievements and his machines is threatening catastrophe. This is the most basic problem of man. Why then is society so indifferent to it?

According to Ernest Hooton, anthropological authority, man "is still a super-ape; savage, predatory, acquisitive, primarily interested in himself . . . the only possibility of improving the utilization of machines lies in the improvement of man himself."

A concerted effort on the part of society to bring about greater humaneness might possibly meet the grave situation which faces it. We must come to realize that it is the normal, healthy state of man, and not disease, that poses the major problems of civilization.

(From 1953 Henry Russel Lecture)