REASONS
for
ANGER

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A caricature of the author by the Dutch artist, Fokko Mees.

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Stupidity

When the learned Dr. Karl von Linnaeus, like a second Adam, named the beasts of the field, he bestowed upon the most troublesome breed of the simian race the title of Homo sapiens, Man, the intelligent. The designation has been generally accepted as felicitous. In external appearance, the creature, which has been likened to a forked radish, is difficult to distinguish from other members of the same ungainly order, except by its nude epidermal condition, a disgusting peculiarity which it shares with some other animals, such as certain swine and the Chihuahua dog of Mexico. The abnormal functioning of its mental faculties is, however, quite peculiar, and renders the creature’s behavior almost unpredictable.

Since the epoch-making labors of the worthy Swede new and interesting light has been shed on the origin of species. According to those more recent views it would appear probable that the animal was not, as the blasphemous opinion formerly current alleged, created in the image of God. It is now generally held that it degenerated from some other species of ape as a natural result of vicious habits. Thus the unsightly nudity of the

\footnote{Our Neurotic Age: A Consultation, edited by Samuel D. Schmalhausen, Farrar and Rinehart, 1932.}
beast might be explained as the effect of its uncleanness, which would aggravate the epidermal irritation to which, as is well known, other monkeys are subject. The animal’s disposition to exhibitionism, intended to stimulate the lubricity of the opposite sex, leads both the male and female to stand obscenely erect. The use of tools, commonly regarded as the most conspicuous manifestation of its sagacity, which began with the malicious practice of throwing stones and has culminated in the construction of bombing planes and in the enslavement of men and women in cotton factories, is known to be the effect of an abnormally cruel, greedy, and predatory disposition, which contrasts with the gentle and affectionate temperament of most other apes. Other minor peculiarities not pleasant to dwell upon—one might instance the monthly fluxes of the female and the irreparable loss by the male of the bone in his corpora cavernosa—may be effects of depraved practices, such as the animal’s propensity to copulate in and out of season, in unnatural attitudes.

Similarly the cunning, or intelligence, which was detected by Dr. Linnaeus, and is manifested in the animal’s extraordinary behavior, far exceeding in buffoonery the familiar tricks exhibited by other monkeys, may well be viewed as an accidental disorder affecting its mental faculties. Means of knowledge, including both the senses and the mental faculties, have developed as special provisions to safeguard their possessors against danger and to assist them in their search for food and sexual gratification. By the operation of those beneficent provisions, animals are warned through unpleasant impressions of the proximity of danger, and their behavior is checked when it tends to become suicidal. Their mental impressions are thus automatically compelled to conform to the facts of their environment. That compulsory harmony is called truth, and the means by which it is secured, intelligence. All animals, except man, are intelligent. No animal species is permitted to depart to any large extent from a rational mode of behavior and to defy truth. Any disposition to do so, as by disregarding unpleasant facts and substituting pleasant fictions, is nipped in the bud by what used to be known as divine justice and is now more commonly spoken of as natural selection. That wise provision operates throughout the animal kingdom and discourages stupidity. It holds good of monkeys as much as of oysters, which latter gape when the surrounding water is charged with nutritious matter, and hold their shells tightly closed when it is polluted with injurious substances. The behavior popularly reported of the ostrich is a myth which, by a common anthropomorphic fallacy, imparts a quite human stupidity to the bird. The intelligence of apes, such as the chimpanzee, has recently been exhaustively studied by Dr. Köhler and others. It operates ingeniously with objective facts as it finds them, but is incapable of dealing with imaginary facts. The human observers describe this as a miserable limitation. Their humor is probably unintentional. They comment with commiseration on the poor chimp’s lack of imagination, and on its exclusive reliance on facts which stare him in the face. The intelligence of the chimp is obviously sane and reliable.

It is quite otherwise with Homo sapiens. He habitually deals with facts about which the experience of his senses gives him not the slightest inkling, and he is able to disregard those facts which stare him in the face. The
rational disposition to shun dangerous stupidity, which nature, through the operation of natural selection had slowly and laboriously evolved, thus became completely perverted. The depraved mental faculties of the degenerate ape ceased to discharge their salutary functions, and became instead employed in frustrating them, in concealing the truth and in pandering to the requirements of a hitherto unknown vicious propensity to make-believe. The human mind, addicting itself to that intellectual self-abuse, set itself to imagine things and to identify truth with its wanton desires, to forge evidences, corrupt the senses, and falsify experience. In Papua the fuzzy warriors, engaged on a perilous expedition and quaking with fear lest they should fall into an ambush, fortify themselves by referring contemptuously to their redoubtable enemies as “rotten tree trunks,” or by some other term of disparagement current in Papuan slang. American journalists and politicians do, of course, the same thing when referring to the opposite party or to Soviet economics. An Australian blackfellow who is compelled to leave his camp at midnight—the most fool-hardy thing, in his opinion, that he could be called upon to do—will declare that it is broad daylight, in precisely the same manner as the Chicago Chamber of Commerce refers to “the late financial depression,” and hangs out bunting to celebrate “the return of prosperity.” The Sudanese boy coming unexpectedly upon a lion will asseverate, with chattering teeth, that the lion “is not there,” in the same fashion as the pundits of the University of Pisa refused to admit the evidence of their senses when Galileo provided them with an ocular demonstration of the law that all falling bodies travel at the same rate of speed.

*Homo sapiens* is the only demented species known to zoology. It is, of course, easy enough to point out that the riotous disorder of the human mind is the basis of its astounding performances, of that “capability and godlike reason,” that “large discourse looking before and after,” which has enabled man to construct whole civilizations, religions, philosophies, moralities, the Constitution of the United States, and the exact sciences out of the depths of his consciousness and with little aid from facts. But to consider those performances without taking into account the perils, the scrapes into which the mental peculiarities of man have constantly landed him would clearly be an unbalanced and one-sided estimate. One shudders to think of the risks to which an animal so constituted is exposed. Imagine the plight of a luckless monkey which should be given to persuading itself that a poisonous snake is a banana. What responsible company would issue a policy on the animal’s life? Yet that is the sort of thing that man is constantly doing, and has done since the beginning of his precarious career.

How a race so handicapped, so unsafely constructed, so manifestly predestined to disaster ever managed to escape being indignantly fired off the planet by the most drastic outburst of natural selection is a problem which has been insufficiently pondered. The trick by which *Homo* managed to elude the consequences of his insane behavior is well worth careful attention. Had the animal acted, as does any other monkey, on his own responsibility as an individual, he would not have stood the ghost of a chance against natural selection. What did he do?
The cunning brute floated a company, formed a limited liability corporation. You perceive the trick? The individual was no longer responsible. He could act as madly as he pleased, he could always, as in every such questionable concern, pass on the responsibility to some one else, so that in effect nobody was responsible. Natural selection was nonplussed. It could no longer lay hands on the culprit. Natural selection broke down. It had to abandon the time-honored method employed since the wriggling of the first protozoon. It lost its hold on the individual, and was compelled, in conducting its prosecutions and carrying out its sentences, to deal with incorporated bodies, societies, empires, civilizations, as they have been styled. That is why the history of man deals with the rise and fall of societies, with a succession of bankrupt concerns pedantically termed cycles of civilization. The civilizations, the cycles are the incorporated limited liability companies apprehended at last and brought to justice by natural selection which is unable to deal directly with the criminal insanity of absconding directors. That is why, notwithstanding a mode of behavior so dangerous that he could scarcely have survived for a day as a responsible individual, man, as an incorporated company, is able to get away with it. That is why, incidentally, the blame for this bedlam is so often, and so unjustly, laid on God. It is time to put a stop to such blasphemy. God has been grossly and unfairly maligned for the consequences of monkeydom gone mad.

Primitive the disorderly character of savage man’s cogitation, the propensity of his ambition to outrun the facts of his experience was perhaps inevitable because the experience of savage man was limited. He understood imperfectly the relation between cause and effect. When he wanted a thing, he often managed to get it, and imagined that he got it because he wanted it, and not because he set about obtaining it. He excelled Dr. Köhler’s chimps in ingenuity, he became a skilled and cunning hunter. But his behavior was not confined to the use of skill and ingenuity. He invariably supplemented these with what can be regarded only as raving lunacy. The savage hunter uses a bow and arrow. But he never employs those devices without resorting, in addition, to incantations, charms, conjurations, to grotesque mummeries which make one blush. He does the same in regard to any activity in which he may be engaged, be it the preparation of his dinner, the cultivation of cabbages, the manufacture of pots, the procuring of females, the ordinary acts of private life. Every action of the simple savage must be accompanied by incredible antics intended to enlist the aid of imaginary agencies which operate fantastically, in defiance of the relation of cause and effect, inconsequently, supernaturally, irrationally.

The irrationality of savage behavior is referred to by anthropologists as magic. Dr. Preuss calls it primitive stupidity—Urdenkmheit. In more advanced stages it has received the more pretentious appellation of religion.

Primitive stupidity had, then, reference originally to all the commonplace activities in which a savage biped may engage in the course of his daily existence, to perambulation, mastication, copulation. Only a university professor could be so ignorant as to suppose that a savage ponders over the mysterious universe, the Great Questions, and the like. The savage is not quite as far gone as that. He is, like most people, profoundly uninterested in
metaphysics and theology, and has not the slightest notion of what the missionary means when he begins talking that way.

As experience hammered facts ceaselessly into the heads of generations of irrational humans, these gradually began to grasp the relation between cause and effect in the ordinary happenings of their lives. As tools and means of action became more varied and efficient, it came eventually to be perceived that antics and mummeries are not indispensable for the manufacture of pots, the cultivation of potatoes, or the preparation of breakfast. In short, the nonsensical make-believes of primitive stupidity gradually, but inevitably, withdrew from the ordinary operations of daily life, and had perforce to take refuge in regions inaccessible to experience, such as the mysterious universe. Religion was in fact driven off the face of the earth by the operation of common sense and had no alternative but to retreat to heaven. It ceased to be part of the routine of workaday existence, and special days were, by forcibly putting a stop to all intelligent work, set apart for primitive stupidity.

Primitive stupidity being thus inevitably driven back from the workaday world and confined to heaven and the Sabbath, it is obvious that man has become less stupid and more intelligent. Homo sapiens in the present year of grace is, in fact, incomparably more intelligent than was the pithecoid savage. That superiority is not due to any change in his personal endowments. It is not due to an improved brain. When skull measurements are compared, and the tools, devices, and artistic achievements of the gibbering savage are taken into consideration, he turns out to be a very capable fellow, and there is no telling

what he might have done had he enjoyed the advantages of a college education. The relative superiority of present-day man is, in fact, due to his college education, such as it is, or more fundamentally to the education forcibly imposed upon mankind by some ten thousand years of painful experience. A college graduate from Oklahoma could, humiliating as the fact is, lecture a class consisting of Newton, Kant, Galileo, Columbus, Julius Caesar, Archimedes, Aristotle, to say nothing of Moses, Zarathustra, and Ptah-hotep, and the distinguished audience would hang in rapt interest upon the words of wisdom of the lecturer. The indignity that he would be able to inflict upon the most intelligent persons of all ages is rendered possible by the collective education of mankind transmitted from generation to generation. It is a result of the ingenious device which enabled man to elude natural selection and defeat the ends of justice, abdicating his individuality and funding it as a going concern. What intelligence he possessed has thus accumulated at compound interest, and any fool inherits today the fructified wealth painfully garnered in the past by intelligent members of the corporate firm.

But the device has, like all devices, disadvantages which discount considerably its advantages. One might suppose that the gradual accumulation of intelligence would have in time eliminated primitive stupidity. So it has to a large extent in individual man, but not in Man, Inc. By a strange irony the same device which enables any fool to stand on the shoulders of the accumulated intelligence of the past likewise perpetuates primitive stupidity.

While rational intelligence has gone on increasing at compound interest, primitive stupidity has remained to
all intents and purposes as stupid in 1936 as it was at the
dawn of time. The reason is that primitive stupidity has
given rise to various institutions. Established institutions
provide a considerable number of persons connected with
them with subsistence and profit, varying from bare
security to scandalous wealth. Consequently while very
few people are vitally interested in the progress of intel-
ligence, a large number of people are vitally interested
in the maintenance of stupidity. It is almost impossible
to get rid of an established institution by means of any
rational argument, even when almost every one is agreed
that it is an intolerable nuisance. It may date from every
age of savagery, barbarism, and stupidity. But being an
established institution, it is irremovable, however much
human intelligence may advance. Sovereign nations,
the heirs and survivors of barbaric kingdoms, are so
dangerous, being by their very nature engines of war,
that the whole of mankind is at the present moment
quaking in its shoes lest they should blow up the world.
But that appears to be the only way of getting rid of
sovereign nations. Churches, which stand in the direct
line of apostolic succession from primitive stupidity in its
purest form, block the path of intelligent thought wh ich-
soever way it may turn, and render besides any decent
morals or justice impossible. But it would probably take
as much trinitrotoluene to blow up the churches as to
blow up sovereign states. Intelligence can’t do it. So with
the economic system of predatory capitalism which
stands in the way of industrial production, and manu-
factures commodities in order that people should not
have them. The system, which is an adaptation of savage
and feudal brigandage, is so stupid that it is now visibly
engaged in cutting its own throat, and any rash revolu-
tionary use of trinitrotoluene is therefore quite super-
fluous. But those products of primitive stupidity, being
established institutions which provide people with in-
comes, are no more to be amended by the action of intel-
ligence than obsolete trolley-cars are to be argued off the
streets. Only the suicide which is the circuitous opera-
tion of divine justice, alias natural selection, or trinitro-
toluene, or both, can serve as effective arguments in the
case of established institutions. Hence the absurdity of
politics.

The venerable institutions which constitute the firm
of Man, Inc. thus preserve the virginal bloom of primit-
ive stupidity while intelligence goes on accumulating in
individual men and women. As already remarked, there
is to be found in every part of Euramerica an increasing
number of men and women whose intelligence represents
on the whole the compound interest accumulated up to
date under the discipline of human experience. Human
nature was primitively stupid because the elementary
laws of cause and effect were imperfectly apprehended.
Man is no longer ignorant of those elementary laws in
the sphere of his immediate experience. He is no longer
disposed to grow melons by means of mummeries, to
provide his dinner by means of incantations and abra-
cadabra—unless it be with his tongue in his cheek by way
of exploiting his more backward fellows. He occasionally
offers prayers for rain or for peace, and a profitable busi-
ness was, it appears, opened some time ago in the Bronx
for providing for the safety of automobiles by sprinkling
them with holy water. But those primitive methods have
ceased to carry general conviction. Modern man no
longer depends on magic for the control of his material environment, although he surpasses in the extent of that control the feats of the savage medicine man. The accumulated intelligence of modern man may be in many respects inadequate and fallacious. But, however inadequate and fallacious, it contrasts more glaringly with the stupidity of medieval, barbaric, and savage ages that gave rise to established institutions than does the ingenuity of the modern mechanic with the floundering irrationality of the medicine man.

Yet it is not accumulated intelligence which controls the corporate activities of the firm of Man, Inc., but established institutions. The latter are ineffably orthodox, the former is ineffably heretical. Venerable institutions fashioned by the stupidity of remote ages, dimly known to the archeologist only, constitute the fabric of the world of man, while accumulated intelligence constitutes but an adventitious film spread over an abyss of stupidity. Intelligent men and women have to steer their way amid venerable institutions in the same manner as the exasperated motorist has to steer his way amid the rails and encumbrances of the streetcars and elevated railways of the last century. The discrepancy between accumulated intelligence and ancient, indestructible institutions becomes, of course, greater and greater, until, as today, that discrepancy becomes so abysmal that it looks as if something must snap.

Accumulated intelligence does not usually come into direct collision with established institutions, else all intelligent men and women would be in jail. It comes into collision with stupidity, a stupidity so colossal, so mountainous, so tough, that sensitive and intelligent people are filled with a sense of despair. Hence their usual lament that the world is incurably mad, that man is a hopelessly stupid animal. Such being the nature of the beast there is nothing to do about it.

The accumulated intelligence of present-day men and women falls here into a fallacy which has far-reaching implications. The rocky fastness of stupidity against which the very gods strive in vain, against which modern intelligence beats its luminous wings in vain, is not a constituent of human nature, except in so far as it is the product of the antique human nature which operated in the dim anthropological periods when venerable institutions became established. It is the product of those institutions. The safety of the incomes which established institutions supply requires, demands, that the world should be kept safe for stupidity.

The tireless, lavish, and gigantic expenditure of effort to that end is too patent to be dwelt upon. The organized machinery of education—e.g., the Public Schools which are the pride of England, the model educational institutions which are the pride of the United States—labors in that sacred cause. And people are not wanting who complain loudly that not enough is being done, that the precautions taken against intelligence are inadequate, that university professors occasionally exhibit sparks of intellectual honesty, that scholars are apt to be insufficiently stupid. The howl for religious instruction drones its unremitting bass to every educational tune.

Scholastic education alone is not sufficient to ensure traditional stupidity. Every available and desirable means, the press, the pulpit, the platform, must be mobilized against the menace of intelligence. No channel through
which thought can flow, and intelligence can leak in, may be left unguarded. The eye of constant censorship must be kept on the theater, the bookstalls, the films. A new medium, such as the radio, which might serve for the diffusion of intelligence, is immediately secured, held, and monopolized in the vital interests of endangered stupidity. To keep down intelligence is no easy enterprise. There is no task more titanic. The price of stupidity is ceaseless vigilance.

And deluded intelligence still imagines that the stupidity against which it is pitted is a constituent of human nature! Established institutions themselves proclaim the contrary. Unless infants are handed over to them before the age of seven, superstitious bodies declare, the task of preventing them from becoming intelligent is a hopeless one. Unless college students are handed over to drill sergeants, the task of supplying the nation with patriotic armies is a hopeless one, the military authorities complain. Need the tours de force of efficiently organized propaganda, enlisting the aid of press, pulpit, professors, and police, which are indispensable if the innate bellicose pugnacity of human nature is to be aroused, be recalled?

Modern man is imperfectly intelligent, his reason is feeble and fallible, as those who are anxious that he should not use his reason are careful to remind him. But it is not against the fallibility of reason that modern intelligence dashes itself in despair. It is against the stupidity of the Middle Ages, of the savage ages, of the long ages of fumbling infancy when man misused his feeble faculties. It is not primitive stupidity which baffles modern intelligence, but traditional stupidity. It is a stupidity deliberately, laboriously, vigilantly cultivated by the established insti-

stitutions of medievalism, barbarism, and savagery, whose survival in a world of multiplied intelligence requires that stupidity—a stupidity which is an artificial product. It is not innate, it is not natural, it is not inevitable. That stupidity against which the very gods strive in vain is no more inevitable than is the deformation practiced by certain savages on the skulls of infants, by the Chinese on women’s feet. It is a deformity produced by acts of violence perpetrated on human nature, by a cynical assault on the person, by abuse. Between the ancient practice of passing children through the fire of Moloch and the modern practice of passing their “souls” through educational institutions designed to protect the established relics of savagery against expanded intelligence, there is little to choose. Do not our traditional institutions declare, in their confused phraseology, the soul to be of more worth than the body? And the injury inflicted by civilized callousness upon the soul is of more profound import than any mutilation carried out by savage sadism upon the body.

Human thought is, in consequence, artificially crippled. Only by thus operating upon the intelligence of twentieth-century man can the traditional stupidity indispensable to the safety of institutions established in the nonage of the human race be maintained. The intelligent faculties of present-day man are accordingly amputated and hamstrung. His mind limps contorted upon the stumps of his maimed intelligence. No longer may it function in harmony with the physiological requirements which have called it forth as a means of sane progression. That mechanism is sabotaged and put out of gear. That it should function normally would constitute a menace
to the existing institutions, humorously styled civilization, and would strike panic into their shareholders. Hence provision must be made to render intelligence innocuous and ineffective. The latter-day thinker who has suffered that doctoring cogitates by means of a curtailed and disabled brain. Whithersoever he may turn, there rises up some fantastic mirage out of the world of savage witchcraft, of primitive stupidity, which intercepts his vision, interposing an insubstantial phantasimagoria between his mind’s eye and the realities which he would fain confront. To apply his intelligence simply, honestly, in accordance with the direct function which all animal organs of apprehension were fashioned to fulfill is what no thinker doctored by traditional civilization is empowered to accomplish. Would he scrutinize the form and worth of life, spell out the meanings of social facts, sound the problems of a world tottering to dissolution? Venerable moral traditions, barbaric tribalisms, pious metaphysical abracadabras, good-for-business ballyhooings, the pomposities and panic-stricken prudences of academic rabbits, cast up their mystic screens before him, which he must pierce before he can survey the immediate vicinity of his nose or accept the discredited testimony of his mind’s eye. Not by censorship, social censure, or circuitous suppression alone is the distracted thinker gagged. His thought is stifled within his own being. Need it then be wondered at that leadership in a distracted world there is none?—that the most daring dispenser of intellectual light proves to be after all a clandestine patriot, a deep-dyed Christian, a covert and furtive moralist, shamefully addicted to secret virtues? Had his organs of cogitation not been irremediably

maimed from birth onwards, the would-be thinker might have been intelligent. He might have been made an honest man.

Our psychologists inform us that the emotional disorders epidemic in our midst are the outcome of irreconcilable strife between man’s natural propensities and the violent repressions to which they are forcibly subjected. My friend Dr. Schmalhausen and the synod of sages that he has inveigled into symposing upon the desperate mental plight of present-day humanity have no difficulty in certifying it insane. But the strife is no less fierce and no less appalling in its effects within the sphere of thought than in the emotional life. The psychoanalysts themselves, in revolt against the smug intellectual fictions of academic tradition, are disposed to belittle the importance of intelligence. In their eagerness to set aside the ancient mythos that the springs of human behavior are, by definition, conscious and are “governed by reason,” and to proclaim that they are governed by emotions, the psychologists are betrayed into shaking hands somewhat too cordially with the ghosts of theologians who were concerned with repudiating and maligning reason and intelligence in order that primitive stupidity should retain unchallenged its authority as a guide. But the biological function of intelligence, whether in the oyster, the ape, or in Homo sapiens, is not to give rise to, but to guide determining interests and emotions to their fulfillment. Homo sapiens possesses more intelligent means of navigation than the oyster or the ape, although the springs and urges which set him behaving at all are much the same. To sabotage that guidance is to thwart life no less than by the shackles of artificial emotional values.
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To the practical psychiatrist the experience is familiar that liability to mental disorder, whether minor neuroses or maniacal psychoses, depends largely upon the nature of a person's intellectual equipment. Common sense is a prophylactic against craziness; lack of it a predisposing factor. The realistic thinker who is in the habit of satisfying himself as to the solidity of the ground upon which he treads enjoys against mental disaster a protection which the mystic and professional optimist lacks. Psychiatric institutions lodge few realistic philosophers and afford shelter to a large pious population of religiously minded persons and hard-headed business men waiting for prosperity to turn up around the corner. People must be lacking in common sense to qualify for admission to psychiatric institutions. Freud and the psychoanalysts discovered in that very fact their lead to mental therapeutics. In order to restore the psychoneurotic to relative mental equilibrium he should be made to apprehend realistically the imbecility of some intolerable artificial repression to which his mental apparatus has, maybe in tenderest infancy, been subjected. By whom? Here Dr. Freud himself grows mystical. He begins to speak unintelligibly about some mythological entity which he designates by the pleasant title of "endopsychic censor." Who, what, which, how, whence, wherefore this accession to an already overcrowded pantheon of abstract entities? Dr. Freud's "endopsychic censor" appears to be clearly enough recognizable under his quaint title. In him may be discerned the familiar features of quite fleshly and unpsychic censors, who in every system of institutions imperiled by the natural operation of human intelligence are concerned with preserving those institutions to the

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very unpsychic end that their own shares in those institutions may continue to be favorably quoted in Wall Street.

True, that quite unpsychic and grossly fleshed censorship does habitually assume the ingenious treachery of psychic entities, of "constituents of human nature." The squalid masquerade is an ancient stock in trade of institutions interested in inflating their Wall Street shares and in deflating the perilously intelligent propensities of human nature. Endopsychically accoutered so as to penetrate the recesses of human nature, the interested brokers of established institutions have long been wont to fob off as "instincts"—innate in the structure of human nature—patriotic instincts, instincts of pugnacity, instincts of private property, religious instincts, matrimonial instincts coupled with home-and-nursery feminine instincts, family instincts, social instincts, moral instincts—instincts galore and ad lib., anxiously intent upon promoting the welfare of established institutions and upon protecting them from the assaults of intelligence. Those vital interests and the importance of favorable quotations on the ticker tape are commonly designated as "the still small voice." But even innate instincts and the miracle of the moral conscience are insufficient to afford adequate protection from the assaults of intelligence. Those ancient bulwarks of civilization must themselves be protected by means of designed institutions where the sacred flames of natural instincts and the still small voices are fended from the harsh winds of natural common sense. Hence venerable Rockefeller churches raising expensive spires to heaven, hence seats of higher learning illuminated by the wisdom of pragmatic professors of sweetness and
light. Hence the universal practice of partial infanticide, that little children may be suffered to be permanently maimed into artificial nitwits. For of such is the kingdom of established institutions inherited from savagery.

The feeble efforts of intelligence have little power to bring down the venerable bastilles of institutions dating from the halcyon days of primitive stupidity. Their walls rest upon other foundations. They are not to be demolished by arguments. Nevertheless they are not imperishable. They are crumbling. Not the attacks of intelligence, but their own consolidated stupidity is bringing about their ruin. Natural selection, known at one time as divine justice, still operates. Even though the individual may contrive to elude its nemesis, the self-styled civilization which relies upon stupidity comes ultimately to the same end as the luckless monkey which mistakes a snake for a banana. It enjoys a longer tether, but only a little longer. Stupid behavior, whether in the individual or in corporate institutions, is a form of suicide. Established institutions founded upon stupidity cannot be disposed of by intelligence. They dispose of themselves.

Stupidity, doubtless, will be always with us. But artificial stupidity need not. The savages of Ecuador have abandoned the practice of deforming their children's skulls, the Chinese of deforming their women's feet. The vision of a world in which a stop shall have been put to the practice of deforming human intelligence is not a vision of Utopia. But it is a vision of a world in which *Homo sapiens* will have an opportunity of beginning to fashion a civilized existence, and will have acquired a better right to the title bestowed upon him by Dr. Linnaeus.

*The Economic Determination of Intelligence*¹

It is now recognized by competent persons that the human mind is essentially a social product. Subtract from it what has been communicated to it by the spoken and written word, by example, by the influences of the social surroundings from birth onward, and all that you have left is an uncogitating animal mind, actuated by purely animal urges and emotions, which does not differ notably from the mind of man's closest biological allies. The power of speech is imparted by social environment and cannot be developed otherwise; formulated conceptual thought depends on language; the character of emotions depends upon acquired systems of thought and training; the aims and desires which determine behavior are resultants of mentalities derived from the social environment.

The history of mankind, its emergence out of savagery, its rise to a condition of power which is capable of exercising control over its environments, is the history of a growth of mental contents, which are not part of the biological equipment of the individual, but of the body.

¹The Pacific Weekly, March 22, 1935, under the title Why They Are So Dumb, bestowed by the editors.