

715  
Pro-50

THE SCIENCE OF MAN

by

Warren Weaver

November 29, 1933

915  
1210-5a

# THE SCIENCE OF MAN

by

Warren Weaver

November 29, 1933

In April 1933 the Trustees of The Rockefeller Foundation approved a new program for the several divisions. In the sciences, both medical and natural, the essential emphasis in the new program is placed upon what may legitimately be called the new science of man. This new science of man is at present in an early formative stage, and no one can see clearly the extent or significance of its ultimate form. It is, however, more than an idea and a hope. It has already emerged sufficiently for one to be convinced of its potentialities.

The new science does not involve an abandoning of the older classical interests; but it does involve a change in emphasis. For centuries it has been considered that physical nature is orderly, that it is subject to discoverable laws, that it may be brought under a considerable degree of control; but it has likewise been considered that the phenomena of life are, in some dark and foreboding way, irrational. Even during the magnificent progress made, in the last century, by the medical sciences there continued the attitude that certain gross and relatively simple disorders of man were analysable and curable, but that man as a conceiving, child-bearing, thinking, behaving, growing and finally dying organism presented problems that were in great part outside the range of rational analysis. The last quarter century has seen a considerable reversal of this view. No decision of the mechanist-vitalist controversy is necessarily involved

in the present conviction that discoverable laws govern the basic physiological and mental activities of man.

In a recent presidential address before the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins said:

"A few years ago the Cambridge philosopher, Dr. C.D. Broad, who is much better acquainted with scientific data than are many philosophers, remarked upon the misfortune involved in the unequal development of science; the high degree of our control over inorganic nature combined with relative ignorance of biology and psychology. At the close of a discussion as to the possibility of continued mental progress in the world, he summed up by saying that the possibility depends on our getting an adequate knowledge and control of life and mind before the combination of ignorance on these subjects with knowledge of physics and chemistry wrecks the whole social system. He closed with the somewhat startling words: 'Which of the runners in this very interesting race will win it is impossible to foretell. But physics and death have a long start over psychology and life!' No one surely will wish for, or expect, a slowing in the pace of the first, but the quickening up in the latter which the last few decades have seen is a matter for high satisfaction."