The Turtle and the Human Race

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Abstract

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HE TURTLE crawled out of the Solo River and up the slippery bank. The middle Pleistocene sun beat down on his shell and warmed his viscera. His eyelids were about to close when he noticed an animal drop from a tree and lumber towards him. He pulled his head under his shell and waited patiently.

The creature walked unsteadily on his rear appendages. When he had gained the site of the turtle, he squatted and stared at him curiously from under his heavy superorbital ridges. The creature picked up a short stick and rapped experimentally on the turtle’s back.

The turtle poked his head out timidly and said, “Please, I rather resent people knocking on me.”

The creature jumped back. “I didn’t know. Really, I didn’t know. I thought perhaps you were a rock.” The creature scratched his dolichocephalic skull (index 75).

“Well, you’ll learn. We turtles have been around a long time. Triassic, Jurassic, Cretaceous, Tertiary, Quantenary. It seems ages.”

“You must have seen a great deal.”

“My yes. But tell me, whatever prompted you to come down from the trees? You had a good thing there.”

“The trees were all right, but really limiting. Leaves and nuts do get tiresome. Besides, when I am on the ground I can stand on my hind legs and use my hands for useful work. See how clever they are? You will note the thumb is opposible. You will note how erect I can stand.” The creature stood erect and opened and closed his hands. A childish grin played across his massive jaw.
"You must be Pithecanthropus Erectus. I've heard about you." The turtle looked bored with the anatomical display.

"The same. And you'll be hearing much more from me in the future."

"Oh, God," the turtle moaned. "Another world conqueror. First the dinosaurs and now this. It's too much for us old turtles. You know what happened to the dinosaurs?"

"The dinosaurs were on the wrong track. The difference is up here." Pithycanthropus indicated his skull with a clever little finger of his clever little hand. "Nine-hundred cubic centimeters cranial capacity." He beamed proudly.

"Pooh," said the turtle.

"The trouble with you turtles is that you're reactionary. One hundred-million years to evolve a neck which will allow you to pull in your head. Some progress!"

"We've been around for one-hundred and ninety million years and it has taught us to stay out of trouble." The turtle's eyes were angry.

"Stay out of trouble and get nowhere. We men are going places."

"Did you say 'men'?" The turtle looked up inquiringly.

"Yes, we call ourselves men. We are progressive. We have formed something new—it is the social group."

"Group—stoop."

"You can go your lone way, but the future lies with the group."

"It will come to no good."

"You don't have any vision."

"Vision—collision. There's enough trouble with everyone trying to mind his own business."

"We can by-pass the germ plasm through the creation of culture. Instead of evolution we will write history."

"History—mystery. You will have to adapt to the environment or you will perish. You're like all the rest of us."

"We are different. We can create our own environment. Upward and onward is our motto." Lines were forming above the ridges of his heavy brow.
“Motto—blotto.”

Pithecanthropus used his clever hand to flip the turtle over. He then took a large rock and smashed the turtle into pieces of pulpy flesh and shell. He cried, “Upward and onward,” and walked away.

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Middle Pleistocene, late Pleistocene, and recent. A pinpoint in time. A flash and a bang and there are no more men. But millions of turtle eggs lie in the mud of the river bank. The sun warms them and they hatch.

— Jon Doerflinger, Sci. Sr.

Ah, to be a Cog

Ah, to be a cog in an intricate machine,
To turn as others do when the light turns green.
Ah, to be a wheel in the tunnel black,
Always looking forward, never looking back.
Ah, to be a rivet locked into a space,
To hold the ship together forever in my place.

Better to be the native ore hidden in the rock,
Than the shiny, finished product cast to fit the lock.
Better yet the leaf upon the budding tree,
Spring the rain, summer the sun, and in the fall set free.