

Lesson 45
Of men and galaxies
人和星系

First listen and then answer the following question.
听录音，然后回答以下问题。

What is the most influential factor in any human society?

In man's early days, competition with other creatures must have been critical. But this phase of our development is now finished. Indeed, we lack practice and experience nowadays in dealing with primitive conditions. I am sure that, without modern weapons, I would make a very poor show of disputing the ownership of a cave with a bear, and in this I do not think that I stand alone. The last creature to compete with man was the mosquito. But even the mosquito has been subdued by attention to drainage and by chemical sprays.

Competition between our selves, person against person, community against community, still persists, however; and it is as fierce as it ever was.

But the competition of man against man is not the simple process envisioned in biology. It is not a simple competition for a fixed amount of food determined by the physical environment, because the environment that determines our evolution is no longer essentially physical. Our environment is chiefly conditioned by the things we believe. Morocco and California are bits of the Earth in very similar latitudes, both on the west coasts of continents with similar climates, and probably with rather similar natural resources. Yet their present development is wholly different, not so much because of different people wish to emphasize. The most important factor in our environment is the state of our own minds.

It is well known that where the white man has invaded a primitive culture, the most destructive effects have come not from physical weapons but from ideas. Ideas are dangerous. The Holy Office knew this full well when it caused heretics to be burned in days gone by. Indeed, the concept of free speech only exists in our modern society because when you are inside a community, you are conditioned by the conventions of the community to such a degree that it is very difficult to conceive of anything really destructive. It is only someone looking on from outside that can inject the dangerous thoughts. I do not doubt that it would be possible to inject ideas into the modern world that would utterly destroy us. I would like to give you an example, but fortunately I cannot do so. Perhaps it will suffice to mention the unclear bomb. Of making the effect on a reasonably advanced technological society, one that still does not possess the bomb, of making it aware of the possibility, of supplying sufficient details to enable the thing to be constructed. Twenty or thirty pages of information handed to any of the major world powers around the year 1925 would have been sufficient to change the course of world history. It is a strange thought, but I believe a correct one, that twenty or thirty pages of ideas and information would be capable of turning the present-day world upside down, or even destroying it. I have often tried to conceive of what those pages might contain, but of course outside the particular patterns that our brains are conditioned to, or, to be more accurate, we can think only a very little way outside, and then only if we are very original.

FRED HOYLE Of Men and Galaxies

New words and expressions 生词和短语
dispute

v. 争夺
mosquito
n. 蚊子
subdue
v. 征服
drainage
n. 下水系统
envision
n. 预想
Morocco
n. 摩洛哥
latitude
n. 纬度
heretic
n. 异教徒, 异端邪说
conceive
v. 想像
suffice
v. 足够
nuclear
adj. 原子弹的
original
adj. 有独到见解的

参考译文

在人类早期, 人类与其他生物的竞争一定是必不可少的。但这个发展阶段已经结束。确实, 我们今天缺乏对付原始环境的实践和经验。我断定, 如果没有现代化的武器, 要我和一只熊去争洞穴, 我会出洋相的; 我也相信, 出洋相者并非我一人。能与竞争的生物最后只有蚊子, 然而即使蚊子, 也由于我们注意清理污水和喷洒化学药品就被制服了。

然而人类之间的战争, 人与人, 团体与团体, 依然在进行着, 而且和以前一样激烈。

但是, 人与人的竞争并不像生物生物学中想像的那样是一个简单过程。它已不是为争得物质环境所决定的东西所决定。摩洛哥和加利福尼亚是地球上纬度极其相似的两个地方, 都在各自大陆的西海岸, 气候相似, 自然资源也可能相似。但是, 这两个地方目前的发展程度完全不一样。这倒不是因为人民不同, 而是由于居民头脑中的思想不同。这是我要强调的论点。我们环境中最重要的因素就是我们的思想状况。

众所周知, 凡是白人侵入原始文化的地方, 破坏作用最大的不是杀人的武器, 而是思想。思想是危险的。宗教法庭对此是非常清楚的, 因此从前它总是把异教徒烧死。的确, 言论自由的概念只存在于我们现代社会中, 因为当你生活在一个社团中时, 社团的风俗习惯会严格地制约你, 使你很难有破坏性的想法。只有外部的旁观者才能灌输危险的思想。向现代世界灌输一种思想以便摧毁我们人类是可能的事, 对此我并不怀疑。我愿为你举个例子, 但幸亏我举不出。也许提一下核弹就足以证明了。对一个沿未拥有核弹、但科技相当发达的社会, 如果告诉它制造核弹的可能性, 而且向它提供制造核弹的细节, 那么可以设想, 这将对这个社会产生何等的影响。如果把二三十页的情报交给 1952 年前后的任何一个世界强国, 就足以改变世界历史的进程。二三十页材料中的思想和情报会便当今的世界翻天覆地, 甚至毁灭这个世界。这是个离奇的想法。不过我认为这个想法是正确的。我常常试图想像这些纸上所写的东西, 不过我是做不到的, 因为我和你们大家一样, 是当今世界上的凡人。我闪不能脱离我们大脑所限定的模式去问题, 我们只能稍微离开一点儿, 就这也需要我们独创的思想。