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THE STUDY OF MAN

By Professor L. J. Henderson
Harvard University

The subject of this address is neither man nor the propriety or the appropriateness of the study of man; it is that study itself. It is not an examination of what chiefly interested Pope and Bolingbroke; it is a consideration of certain biological and social sciences. It is not even primarily the study of man; it is the study of men as organisms, of their structures and functions, in sickness and in health, and of men as persons, in their activities and their interactions; for the characteristics of man are but the uniformities observable among men. Again, our subject is not the examination of what such studies ought to be; it is merely a fragment of a description and analysis of what they are, of how they have been, and of how they have not been, effectively prosecuted. Let us note at once that effective work involves both doing what is effective and not doing what is not effective.

The study of men—even the scientific study—is ancient and respectable. It goes back to Aristotle, to Hippocrates and beyond them to obscure beginnings. To-day it is one of the chief studies of the learned. Like our other activities, it may be divided into two parts, the successful part and the unsuccessful part. Speaking very generally and with due regard to numerous and important exceptions, it may be said that the successful part of the scientific study of men is related to medicine, the unsuccessful part to philosophy and to the social sciences. These relations are not only historical, they are also to be seen in methods, attitudes and traditions.

The successes of medicine and the medical sciences have not been lightly won; from a multitude of failures...
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