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## SCIENCE, WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION<sup>1</sup>

By Dr. JULIAN SORELL HUXLEY

LONDON, ENGLAND

WHAT can a natural scientist say about war and reconstruction which can not be better said by a sociologist, a political scientist, a historian or a practical politician? He can at least attempt to see this war and the problem of war in general in the long-range perspective of science, even though, if he is not to indulge in the merest puerilities, he must not be afraid of leaving his last and becoming a "political animal" as well as a mere scientist.

War, in its proper sense of organized intra-specific group fighting, is a very peculiar phenomenon. So far as is known, it is confined to men and to a few species of ants. This does not mean that war is instinctive in man as it must be in ants. The evidence from some ancient civilizations, such as Mohenjo-Daro,

<sup>1</sup> The first address in America under the arrangement between the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the British Association for the Advancement of Science for exchange lectures on alternate years. Columbus, Ohio, December 29, 1939.

indicates that they were wholly pacific. In any case, the basic quality of man's nature is its plasticity, its absence of unalterable instincts. To say that it is hopeless to try to eradicate war because that would mean altering human nature is unscientific. It rests on a confusion between phenotypic human nature, as actually expressed, and human nature as something genetically given. The former can readily be modified, the latter can not. War is a phenomenon on a par with duelling and religious persecution. These latter have dropped out of civilized societies without any alteration in the genetic basis of human nature: and the same could be accomplished for war.

War is of course not the same as conflict. Conflict is a permanently inevitable feature of human life—internal conflict, conflict between individuals, conflict between groups. The overcoming of conflict in the right way is indeed an indispensable process in the development of human personality. But inter-group

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