IQ vs. Wisdom

By: Clark M. Thomas

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Abstract

It is a mistake to equate, or even correlate, high IQ testing and real wisdom. Many people have superior intelligence, but few individuals in today's machine societies have profound wisdom. AI can easily generate confusing perspectives having little or nothing to do with real humanism. There are deep dangers associated with assuming all high-IQ people are ethically wise. Advanced societies are rarely ecologically more wise than the collective wisdom of traditional cultures. It is now easier to do great global harm, than to do great global good.

Those who have read my original essays understand the difference between "smarts" and wisdom. Even "country wisdom" is often more profound than greedy plans within technocracies. Adolph Hitler had a high IQ, but few would now call him wise.

Non-human creatures have a set of specialized skills designed to optimize their own survival and procreation, which could be partially equated with *structural-functional* wisdom. Humans, since the beginning of modern extractive technologies in England about 1750, have developed a social sense of apex superiority over all the natural world. For generations our *hyperkeystone species* **[1]** could heedlessly minimize accumulating biosphere toxins. We have without wisdom created an Anthropocene epoch uniquely *structural-**dys**functional* for our global home.

It's one thing to be very smart. It's quite another to be "too smart" for our own collective good. It's wrong, for example, to

seriously fantasize about moving post-apocalyptic humanity's remnants to Mars. It's another thing to wisely realize that *only* Earth is the real Garden of Eden within hundreds of astronomical light years — and Mars is a psychedelic doomsday nightmare. **[2]**

A Case Study of Science vs. Wisdom

Recently a very impressive survey of the *strontium isoscape* of sub-Saharan Africa was undertaken to explore the local origins in southern Africa where healthy slaves with specific skill sets were captured, then shipped by custom order to plantations in colonial Brazil. **[3]** The methodology relied on numerous studies of strontium isotopes, many of which are traceable to small regions in mostly southern Africa. This study in some ways rivals the detailed archaeology of Italy. **[4]**

Not surprisingly, Portuguese dominated regions of southern Africa provided most of the mineral samples from contemporary slave burials in Brazil. In contrast, slaves from NW Africa — who were shipped to the Caribbean sugar plantations, and later to colonial American tobacco and cotton plantations — did not share the same mineral isotopes from Portuguese influenced regions. Historians already knew more about the northern slave trade in northwestern Africa, than southern African enslavement patterns.

In experimental science sometimes data tells a limited story that is not the full story. In this case, the data does not have sufficient vertical historical context, just quality antiquarian value. This study could have been enhanced to include a generational historical perspective, but expansion might require separate essays. Social science *without* full historical perspective rarely inspires wisdom. As such, it could be used or misused. Science *with* the proper perspective has the potential to help us become humanely wise.

Their field samples were of necessity dealing with history going back several hundred years. Modern Brazil is a blend of African,

indigenous American, and European blood lines. Very few, if any, modern Brazilians with plantation roots can therefore trace themselves to specific dehumanized first slaves, or even to their several towns of origin. Even in North America slave genes are hard to trace back to specific African villages. In modern America few people of color can do this, but the fortunate few are linking to 18th-century slaves, not to 16th-century slavery.

In the end, all people on this planet belong to one genetic species, *Homo sapiens*, and that's the *key takeaway*. **[5]** There is no racial component in deciding who is a modern human or not. Given this treasure trove of genetic data linkable to specific growing areas, we can speculate that the plantation enslavers ordered skills best suited to their Brazilian plantations, and also diverted some of them to building intimidating churches.

In other words, black bodies were selected, not just collected at random, for shipment. That's a very dark evil, justified at the time by efficiency and profitability, and by *dehumanization*.

Going deeper, this enslavement survey could be integrated with global cultural and religious narratives. A basic knowledge of intercontinental trading networks will help explain how colonial-era Europe was able to afford all their fancy cathedrals and royal residences that modern American tourists to Europe love to visit. Europeans were only doing what the Roman emperors did with treasures stolen from sacked Jerusalem in 70 CE, when the emperor financed construction of his massively evil Roman Coliseum.

There is much more to say about the total slavery history, where decent humans were *treated like things* (which is called *reification* in sociology). We don't need to know everything about the slavery era, just enough to help us achieve a level of wisdom.

Slavery has also existed in NE Africa, mostly in the form of Arab Muslims seizing non-Muslim tribal Africans. In some areas of the world human slavery still persists in various forms.

Mechanized societies have many tools to mess up our entire biosphere — but apparently not sufficient wisdom and time to avoid self-destruction of all that we love. Our vast power to destroy ourselves is indeed *a sword with two blades and no handle*. Earth for good reason hosts multiple keystone species, but only one brilliantly arrogant hyperkeystone species.

IQ Test Follies

Even though the first IQ tests were designed in the 19th century to identify mentally retarded schoolchildren — it seems today that interest has shifted to brain games where IQ test snobs claiming high scores like to brag they are smarter than others. Some even go so far as to say they are stable geniuses, whatever that really means.

Machine intelligence is emerging rapidly, which makes the idea of one person being the most intelligent irrelevant, at least in areas where IQ tests test. A recent example occurred when the greatest *Jeopardy* TV show champion, Ken Jennings, was defeated by an early version of IBM's *Watson* database computer. Ironically, that early brainiac program would be quickly crushed by newer versions. Meanwhile, human brains have spent many thousand years overcoming, and even crushing, all other sentient challengers to our imagined global superiority.

Stand-alone human intelligence never stands alone. We are social creatures, and we learn by studying, and by daily existing. Machines in contrast can defeat human data memory very easily. However, ordinary humans can defeat most machine algorithms when it comes to agile wisdom.

Emerging forms of human-machine *synergy* offer golden opportunities for later this century, not just another version of the "us versus them" games. In other words, *in a perfect world IQ and wisdom would be blended*.

I am fascinated by the uniquely dynamic architecture of our human brains, all three or four pounds each. One typical human brain has about 100 billion neurons of different types. There are about 1000 or more synaptic connections to and from each neuron. That gives us 100 TRILLION synaptic connections all within one small volume. Compare that tiny-space efficiency to giant data farms that consume large amounts of electricity. It may be easy to accumulate "smarts" in a database way; but the real key is what we do with all that cybernetic data. It takes a lot more than a link to *ChatGPT* to become wise.

In a century or so machine intelligence should become generally autonomous and nimbly wise at human levels. Today's AI is our best tool to advance our experimental sciences, but it is not independent of established technologies. Envision today's cybernetic "data guns" that we can aim at problems. Compare that tool with a holistic brain "data gun" directed by enlightened wisdom, not merely by transactional greed. The trick, of course, is graduating these guns from today's machine world to a better world guided by authentic Wisdom.

The first step in solving any science problem is discovering that we could solve it. The next steps are to solve the problem itself, and then move onward and upward toward new discoveries. The challenging transformation from machine intelligence to wisdom is the greatest challenge science and political science face today. This sentient world needs fewer selfish "smart" people — and many more good and kind people of all races, ages, and sexes.

References

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