

# BLINDED BY SCIENCE?

*The Study of Stomachs, Brains and Brawn Indicates  
A Disturbed Future For The Human Race*

**B**OOKS on science can make stimulating reading; but a week-end spent over a psycho-physiological tract convinced me that a certain degree of ignorance, if not bliss, is at least a shelter.

This tract reported the efforts of science to make the countless kinks in human nature, and the nuances of kinks, conform to a system of classification. The idea is to make things simpler. In reality it makes them worse.

Viscerotonics, somatotonics, cerebrotonics. Modern science, in point of terminology anyhow, has far outdistanced the lore of the ancients. Alongside Dr. William Sheldon, Hippocrates is nowhere, although he remains illustrious as a pioneer. It cannot be taken from him that his guesses were valid enough to have been respected for centuries.

Clearly he was a man of exceptional powers of observation and insight who first thought of classifying humanity in terms of its "humours." Hippocrates laid it down that temperament was a matter of blood, making you the sanguine type; of phlegm, making you phlegmatic; of black bile, making you choleric; or of yellow bile, if you happened to be of the melancholic type.

From Hippocrates down to William Sheldon in our own day this humoral pathology was accepted as a near enough explanation of the causes underlying the temperamental differences observable in people. Dr. Sheldon's dissatisfaction with it prompted him to investigate the phenomenon more searchingly. It seemed to him that something more exact and systematic was needed if psycho-physiology was to be made a genuine science.

## Three Main Types

The result is that we have three main psycho-physiological categories now instead of four. Instead of resting on blood, phlegm, and bile, black or yellow, modern hypothesis is founded on viscera, muscles and brains: or, to be more strictly correct, on observation of which of these sets of organs predominates in a person's physical make-up.

It would be interesting to hear Hippocrates' views on this. My own feeling is that he might not be impressed. In all likelihood he would suggest that these researches constitute no significant departure from his own method. Indeed, that they are scarcely a departure at all, since the line of investigation is the one followed by him. Decidedly, he would be within his rights in pointing out that it has taken an unconscionably long time for his theory to be advanced beyond the point at which he left it himself, ages ago.

The real advance, it might be argued, consists in Sheldon's having classified the physical types with which specific patterns of temperament are identified.

## Dominated by Digestion

Let us start with the viscerotonics, in whom the sum total of their physical characteristics is called endomorphy. Then the somatotonics. A person whose

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temperament puts him in that class is sure to be, in terms of physical constitution, a mesomorph; and cerebrotonic is pretty well certain to be an ectomorph.

Nobody, of course, ever wholly or purely exemplifies any single one of these varieties of physique, just as no one is ever an absolute specimen of any of the varieties of temperament.

Endomorphy, for instance, signifies a physical make-up dominated by the digestive tract; a fat type of person, fond of food and usually fond of eating in company, ceremonially. But nobody was ever just a walking digestive tract (the outstanding endomorph awkwardly waddles rather than walks) and so nobody could ever belong exclusively to that variety. To qualify as a human, as well as a digestive tract, a person needs brains, however little he may use them, and, literally, he cannot get along without muscles, though he may allow them to degenerate.

In the same way no one was ever just a cluster of muscles, but the man whose strength and vigour are his pride will be a mesomorph. And by temperament, unless he veers from the norm to a freakish extent, he will be somatotonic. He is the energetic, unprocrastinating, often inconsiderate but usually effective fellow. A psychologist would register him as an extrovert.

## Mind Over Muscle

Together with a cerebrotonic temperament, we get the physical variety known as ectomorphy. Both descriptions are largely self explanatory. The ectomorph is remarkable neither for the capacity of his digestive tract nor for his muscles. A palm reader would probably assure him that his head line is excellent but that he does not shine at sports or in company. True enough; he is dominated by his brain and likes being left alone to think things out. At school compulsory sports are a nuisance to him, if not a torture. Quite possibly, if we become civilised meanwhile, future generations of school-age cerebrotonics will have Dr. Sheldon to thank for being spared an imposition under which, in the dark ages, their ancestors were made sullen.

In the psycho-physiological sense none of us, I repeat, are purebreds. Dr. Sheldon classifies us according to our more prominent physical and temperamental traits. He has so systematised his findings that he has formulated a method of determining the ratio in which our types are a composite of characteristics drawn from each of the three main physical varieties and each of the three varieties of temperament.

Thus you may be a viscerotonic and an endomorph and yet vary by a point or two from the true (which is only an abstract) standard. Temperamentally you may be in that slight degree something of a somatotonic, physically something of an ectomorph. So to speak about

the key to someone's character would not find favour with Dr. Sheldon. In place of a key a combination of numbers, representing your psycho-physiological ratio, is required in these efficient times.

## Chaos is to be Expected

Whether the Sheldon method could be employed posthumously to get anyone's measure, I do not know. But I should like to see Hitler's ratio or Charles the Twelfth's of Sweden, or that of any of the abnormals who have made memorable nuisances of themselves. Among living celebrities, Tony Galento would be interesting. In him we have a conspicuous endomorph who is equally noted for boxing performances of a kind natural to a mesomorph. About his temperamental category it is less easy to speak; but from all accounts he is convivial enough to be recognisably a viscerotonic and yet aggressive and ambitious enough to measure up as a somatotonic.

In a world where it is possible for men to be as protean and two-typed as this, what is to be expected but miscalculations, surprises, and a continuance of chaos?

## Applied to Politics

It is in the political field that the most spectacular changes might be effected through the Sheldon method. Bernard Shaw is constantly railing against the haphazard manner in which we allow men of doubtful intelligence and literacy to present themselves as candidates for political honours. Shaw's contention is that they should be compelled to sit for some kind of examination, severe enough to ensure that the morons anyhow would be ploughed. Well, why not a psycho-physiological test for them? According to circumstances we could then vote for a somatotonic as the right type for a Public Works Minister. Or for a cerebrotonic, say, in the hope that he would become Minister of Education.

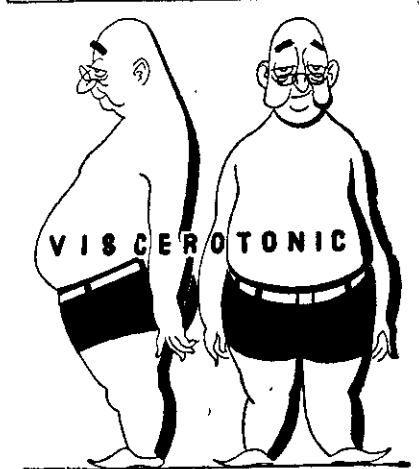
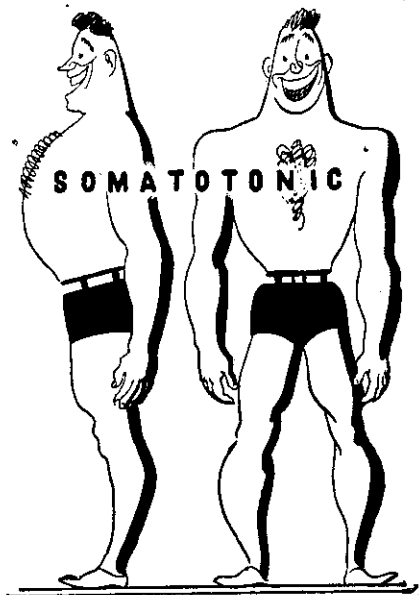
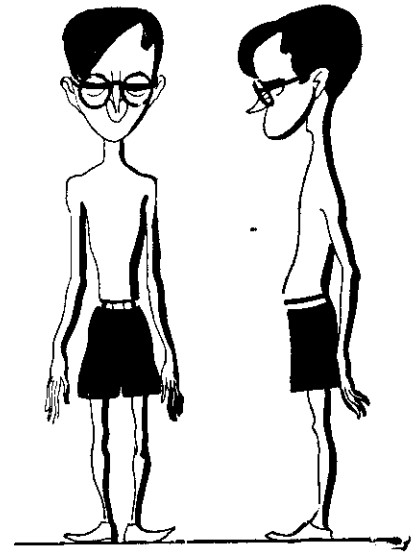
Election propaganda, in that case, would necessarily be on a higher level, voting a matter of scientific calculation rather than of self-interest or mere whim. Party considerations would be superseded by interest in the psycho-physiological ratings of the candidates. "Vote for X. A certified cerebrotonic." "Y is a somatotonic. Somatotonics have been responsible for all the strife in history. Vote for X."

Perhaps, after all, it is wrong to imagine that the propaganda would be on a higher level. The approach would be unfamiliar; the posters, advertisements and leaflets would speak in the language of science; but the election, in spite of everything, would remain as intrinsically primitive as ever.

Dr. Sheldon's theory, in terms of which he explains the present era of violence, is that we are going through a Somatotonic Revolution. The men of muscle and bustle are revolting against the dominance of the men of thought, against the tenets of Christianity, against ethical constraints in general. This sounds as convincing an explanation as

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CEREBROTONIC



THE PERFECT SPECIMEN?