

Educated Inanity and the Future

By *Marvin Schissel* — May 19, 2016



First, some definitions:

Intelligence: The ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills.

Stupidity: Lacking this ability; the opposite of intelligence.

Wisdom: The ability to use good judgment.

Foolishness: Lacking this ability; the opposite of wisdom.

We have a civilization dependent on science and technology, but in which almost no one understands science and technology. This is a prescription for disaster. -- Carl Sagan

Particularly fatal is the combination of Foolishness and Intelligence. -- Matthijs Van Boxsel

Most people have intelligence, but few are wise, few have the ability to wisely use their intelligence. And this can have disastrous consequences to humanity, today facing problems that foolishness will not solve. Physical problems include global warming, overpopulation, growing ineffectiveness of antibiotics, diminishing fossil energy resources, pollution of the oceans and threats to ocean life, threats to clean air and fresh water supplies, and many others. Then there are the societal problems stemming from the inability of humans to get along with each other, to live in peace with each other.

Humanity's social problems today likely stem from the genetic make-up that has enabled our species to survive. Paranoia and self-interest are examples. Paranoia helped primitive man to survive attacks of animals or hostile tribe members. But today the consequences of paranoia are negative, promoting unpleasant and society-damaging causes. Malevolent leaders utilize paranoia to maintain their absolute control and their fortunes, focusing the paranoia of their populace away from themselves and on to scapegoats, often using religion as a tool. Paranoia is also behind many misguided causes backed by the educated but unwise.

Then there is self-interest, which generates productive incentives. But to enable essential social cooperation, extreme self-interest that damages the self-interest of others must be constrained.

Today, science offers the best, perhaps the only method of solving humanity's problems. But, as our problem-solver, science is ineffectual without wisdom. In our country, as the general level of

education rises one would expect a concomitant rise in the wise use of intelligence. But, sadly, sometimes it seems that the opposite is true. In too many cases, the better-educated a person is, the more likely he is to espouse a wrong-headed cause. A step in the right direction would be to mandate the appropriate and wise teaching of proper scientific protocols throughout the country's educational system.

Here is a small, partial list of typical causes strongly promoted by many of the educated, but completely unsupported, even condemned, by science:

- Alternative "holistic" medicine
- Anti-vaccine
- Anti-mercury in dental fillings
- Precautionary principle (zero tolerance)
- Organic food and farming ("all natural")
- Anti-GMO's (Genetically Modified Organisms)
- Religion-inspired causes
- Anti-stem cells
- Anti-abortion
- Anti-birth control
- Murder for God (If you think this is just a new radical Islamic idea, read the Bible)

Science opposes all these positions. Unless humanity can, somehow, globally uphold the intelligent and wise use of science, and reduce the disagreeable use of paranoia, and set some limits on self-interest, there may be little hope for our future.

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