

Down with us mammals.

We are being told, again and again, that we are spiritual beings, but this is of course nonsense. What we really are is mammals, although unusually brainy mammals. In that brain of ours processes go on which have us behave sometimes in an un-mammal-like fashion. For instance: for some time now we fly like birds, (and even better than birds), and recently our females have begun to lay their eggs and have them fertilized by our males in a somehow amphibian way, x (although fishes do that sort of thing better). Still: most of the time we live like the mammals we are: we eat, digest, sleep, copulate, are being born, get sick, and die more or less like monkeys. The reason is that we have, so far, used an unusual brain to change the world around us, but not to change our bodies. Therefore our surroundings have become very different from what they were in the times of the Cro-Magnon, but his and our bodies are identical for all practical purposes. This is surprising, if one comes to think of it: why change the things and not one's body, if one's purpose is to emancipate oneself from natural conditions?

However, there are signs which suggest that we have finally begun to apply our brain to our body. Those signs can be perceived within quite unrelated scientific disciplines, but they all converge upon a radical modification of our mammal condition. Robotics, (and automation in general), tend to render our hands, arms and legs redundant. Genetics tends to program our inherited information, and to make mutants of our progeny, (new sorts of organisms which are no longer mammals). Neurophysiology, together with electronics, permits us to simulate our unusual brain outside our skull, and thus render it even more unusual than before, and it also tends to permit brain transplants from one body to another. Informatics tends to extend our sensory organs, so that they cover the globe and beyond, and permit us to perceive simultaneously everything that goes on anywhere in the world. And pharmacology tends to have us experience everything directly within the brain without any necessity of body functions, (from visual and auditive experience to orgasm). All those tendencies converge upon a reversal of the mammal relation between brain and body: our body is to become an auxiliary organ of our brain, and to become less and less important as this cerebration process goes on.

If one considers this, one is taken by vertigo. Which may be resumed under the title: "The Adventure of Humanisation". What is happening to us is this: A few millions of years ago our ancestors left the forest and entered the African savannah, which had some well-known consequences; their bodies became erect, their

hands became free, and their brain grew more complex. In sum: our ancestors became something like humans. And then, a few years ago, those humans began to translate the virtualities contained within this savanna-penetration into realities, and to in fact overcome their animal, mammal condition. Thus the past three or four millions of years appear to be nothing but a hesitant preparation for what is happening at present. And the vertigo which takes hold of us may be explained as the excitement at the fact that we are permitted to witness the first stages of humanisation in the strict sense of the term.

Of course: vertigo and excitement are not ideal conditions for an appraisal of the present mutation. We have to climb over our excitement toward a more sober consideration, (by the way: climbing is inscribed in our genetic information, since we descend from monkeys). Now if we become sober, we find that we are not really happy about abandoning our mammal condition. We do not like the idea of becoming cerebral, grey mass, spirits, angels. We do not like the idea of becoming humans in the strict sense of that term. (Very probably those anthropoids over there in their forest did not like the idea either, and they clung with their hands and their feet to their branches.) It is not that we love our bodies unconditionally: sometimes we hate them. Not only if we think about dying, (by cancer, by circulation troubles, or even by "natural" death, which means by asphixiation). We hate our bodies even if we suffer from tooth-ache. Still: very often we feel well within our bodies, (one used to call this "the glory to be in the flesh"), and we do not want to give up this sort of feeling. We are just as reactionay as were those anthropoids in their time.

Why do we resist mutation? Here is an example: Suppose that we really become immortal. Of course: we are affraid of dying (our own dying, and the dying of the beloved person even more so), and quite rightly: it is very probably terrifying. Now suppose that it will become possible to transplant our brain, (our memory and our mental processes like perceiving, feeling, wishing, thinking and planning), from our aging body into the skull of a newborn baby. In that case our old body and the baby's brain may be disposed of without polluting the surroundings, and we can go on living within the new body until the next transplant. And if the brain itself gets old, its nerves may be substituted step by step by new ones. Why do we shrink from this sort of immortality, (and from similar, more refined methods to achieve it)?

The answer is: because all our categories for experiencing, thinking and acting are mammal categories. Death is inscribed within the mammal genetic information, (in a way not yet discovered), and if we become immortal, (if we lose that information), we no longer know how to experience, how to think, how to act, (unless we acquire a new type of information). All our categories, even the most abstract ones, are structured by our mammal condition, even if we are not aware of it, and even if we try to deny this. Here is a very troublesome example:

Science may be said to be an attempt at progressively explaining the world, (by describing the world through a system of theorems and algorithms). Now those theorems and algorithms have a distinctly mammalian flavor. Our body, (as most of the bodies of organisms descending from worms), is structured along a single axis of symmetry: "left"- "right". So are our theorems and algorithms: "wrong"- "right", and "tertium non datur". Now suppose that a different organism with a different symmetry, (say a starfish), were to propose a science. Would such a science obey to a different symmetry, (for instance a six-rooted logic)? Is therefore our science nothing but the way mammals perceive and explain the world? If so, what will happen if we overcome our mammal condition? Would it grow more objective, or would it become both impossible and unnecessary? This is the kind of questions we have to face if we are to give up our mammalian condition and become "spiritual", (really human). No wonder we shrink from it.

This is the way with utopias: as long as they are far away, (near the border of the impossible), they are splendid, but as they approach the probable they turn into a menace. The very moment it becomes no longer utopic to speak about an "immaterial", "purely spiritual" life and culture, we suddenly discover the beauties of living with a body. The very moment when biology turns from a natural science into a technique and an art, we suddenly invent body cult and body building. The very moment it becomes possible to create artificial life and living artifices, we begin to worship nature. We try to save nature from art, (for instance "natural" food from artificial manure), and we begin to love greenery the very moment chlorophyll becomes artificially synthesiseable. We love utopias as long as they stay in their place, which is "no place", and we hate them if they approach us.

As long as it was utopic to speak of the power of art and of the pure spirit, we said of art that it is "better than truth", and of the pure spirit that it is the supreme value. Now

that we begin to acquire some experience with the power of art, (for instance with artificial kidneys), we are no longer so sure about it being better than truth, and now that we face pure spirit, (for instance fractal equations on a terminal), we are no longer so sure that it is indeed the supreme value. We cling to our pre-human, body-bound and mammalian values just as much as the anthropoids did to their branches.

Those anthropoids were right in not wanting to leave their forest. It is more prudent to stay in the tree than to face the savannah with its un-known and un-knowable dangers. They would never have left the forest, if they had not been forced to do so, (for instance by climatic changes). So it is with us. We are being expelled from our body-bound values by things like the demographic explosion, by pollution and by the scarcity of material resources. Either our culture will become "immaterial" and our requirements will become ever less material and ever more spiritual, (ever less products and ever more services), or there will be no culture to speak of in the future. It is therefore not very reasonable to want to cling to the pre-human values. The initial vertigo which took hold of us when contemplating the adventure of humanisation is a more reasonable way to face the future.

We cannot know how our truly human children's children will live, but we can intuit it. They will still have to carry a mammalian body attached to their brains in the foreseeable future, but that body will become ever less interesting. Automats will feed, clothe and house those bodies without human interference, (they will provide those bodies with a minimum of material objects). Automats will multiply those bodies by extracting germ cells from them without our children's children paying much attention to this. The brains thus nourished and sustained by the ever more shrinking bodies will be inserted in a world-wide network of other brains and artificial intelligences. This super-brain will create continuously a stream of increasingly adventurous experiences, (art), and knowledge, (science)

Our children's children will lead a life of uninterrupted creative spiritual orgasm. They will be almost "immaterial", almost "pure spirits". A society of angels.

Of course: we know that our intuition of the future is quite wrong. The society of angels will never happen. We know this for two reasons. The one is that we have acquired some experience with attempts to establish societies of angels. The other is that we already dispose of examples for the "immaterial", "pure spirit" future: terminal-equipped kindergardens. Still: our initial verti-

go, when contemplating the initial stages of cerebration, (humanisation in the strict sense), was justified: what is happening is the opening up of a new horizon for freedom. Once the relation between mammalian body and brain is inverted, (once it becomes theoretically and technically understood that the body should serve the brain, and that it is the brain which makes us humans), man will become free for creation unhampered by matter. So far impossible, (because materially not feasible), things, ("immaterial things"), will be created, (alongside, of course, with a lot of banalities, stupidities, and other sorts of "immaterial" rubbish). The synthesized and digitalized computer images, the holograms of inexistent bodies, and the animated videos we know are nothing but primitive precursors. Having stripped himself from his mammal condition, (even if only in part), man will show forth what reason is capable of: he will show off that "reason has a heart the heart knows nothing of". Man will begin to become really human.

Thus we are witnesses to man's emergence from the virtualities contained within the Primates, like a butterfly which emerges from its pupa. It is we the pupae which are being torn and abandoned with contempt by this new man within us. Of course: we have a right to insist upon our own form of existence, and there may be quite a number of justifications if we do so. But is it not more reasonable to proclaim, (with mixed feelings): "down with us mammals"?