

and technology that provide the only conceivable tools for our survival. We must be willing to challenge courageously the conventional social, political, economic and religious wisdom. We must make every effort to understand that our fellow humans, all over the world, *are* human. Of course, such steps are difficult. But as Einstein many times replied when his suggestions were rejected as impractical or as inconsistent with “human nature”: What is the alternative?

Mammals characteristically nuzzle, fondle, hug, caress, pet, groom and love their young, behavior essentially unknown among the reptiles. If it is really true that the R-complex and limbic systems live in an uneasy truce within our skulls and still partake of their ancient predilections, we might expect affectionate parental indulgence to encourage our mammalian natures, and the absence of physical affection to prod reptilian behavior. There is some evidence that this is the case. In laboratory experiments, Harry and Margaret Harlow found that monkeys raised in cages and physically isolated—even though they could see, hear and smell their simian fellows—developed a range of morose, withdrawn, self-destructive and otherwise abnormal characteristics. In humans the same is observed for children raised without physical affection—usually in institutions—where they are clearly in great pain.

The neuropsychologist James W. Prescott has performed a startling cross-cultural statistical analysis of 400 preindustrial societies and found that cultures that lavish physical affection on infants tend to be disinclined to violence. Even societies without notable fondling of infants develop nonviolent adults, provided sexual activity in adolescents is not repressed. Prescott believes that cultures with a predisposition for violence are composed of individuals who have been deprived—during at least one of two critical stages in life, infancy and adolescence—of the pleasures of the body. Where physical affection is encouraged, theft, organized religion and invidious displays of wealth are inconspicuous; where infants are physically punished, there tends to be slavery, frequent killing, torturing and mutilation of enemies, a devotion to the inferiority of women, and a belief in one or more supernatural beings who intervene in daily life.

We do not understand human behavior well enough to be sure of the mechanisms underlying these relationships, although we can conjecture. But the correlations are significant. Prescott writes: “The percent likelihood of a society becoming physically violent if it is physically affectionate toward its infants *and* tolerant of premarital sexual behavior is 2 percent. The probability of this relationship occurring by chance is 125,000 to one. I am not aware of any other developmental variable that has such a high degree of predictive validity.” Infants hunger for physical affection; adolescents are strongly driven to sexual activity. If young-