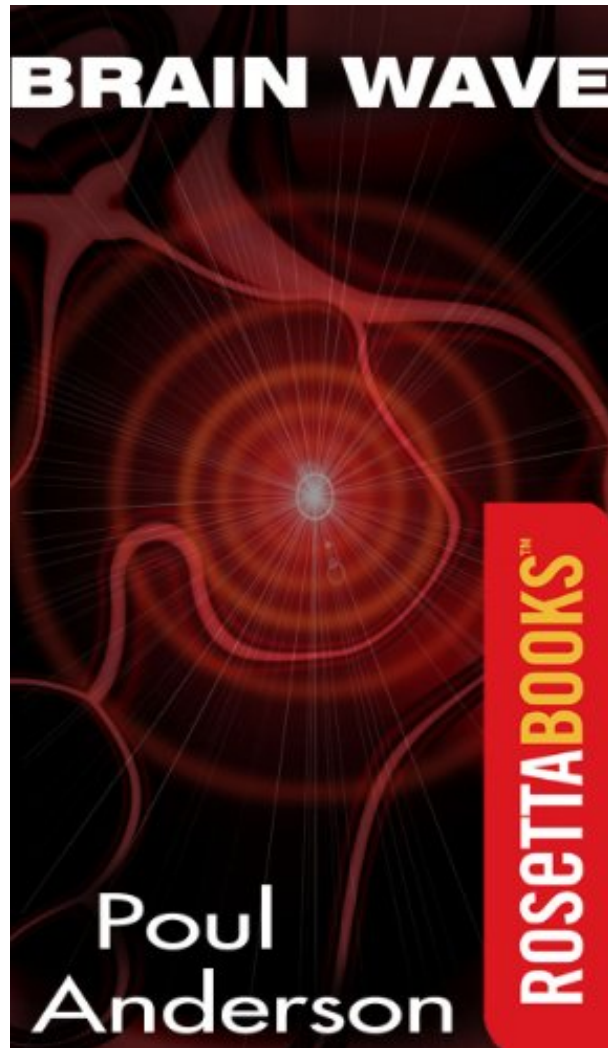


BRAIN WAVE BY POUL ANDERSON



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Review

"A masterpiece." --Larry Niven author of the Ringworld series and Fleet of Worldsseries

About the Author

POUL ANDERSON (1926-2001) was one of the most prolific and popular writers in science fiction. He won the Hugo Award seven times and the Nebula Award three times, as well as many other awards, including the Grand Master Award of the Science Fiction Writers of America for a lifetime of distinguished achievement.

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BRAIN WAVE BY POUL ANDERSON PDF

What if we were all designed to be smarter than we actually are? That is the premise of master science fiction novelist Poul Anderson's 1954 debut work, *Brain Wave*. Unbeknown to its inhabitants, the solar system has for millions of years been caught in a force field that has had the effect of suppressing intelligence. When in the course of normal galactic movement the solar system breaks free of the force field that has held it in its sway for so long, gone are the inhibiting effects and a remarkable change begins to sweep across the earth.

In fact, the entire world is turned upside-down and Anderson's novel is devoted to detailing the sometimes surprising, sometimes chilling aftereffects of this watershed event. In one of the novel's opening scenes, Archie Brock, a mentally disabled man, finds himself suddenly awash in new kinds of thought as he ponders the night sky. In another scene, a young boy on a summer break works out the basic fundamental foundations of calculus before breakfast. Human life is dramatically transformed, as people with IQs of 400 find themselves living within social structures and institutions designed for people of considerably lower intelligence. There are others who refuse to accept what has happened and instead band together in a rebellion against the new order.

In another interesting twist, human relationships with other creatures on the planet are likewise thrown into upheaval, as animals likewise rediscover their native intelligence. Archie Brock, for instance, finds working on a farm with intelligent animals a frustrating, comic and confounding experience, as some animals band together and escape while others befriend their former masters.

Brain Wave is a fascinating "what if" novel and an exploration into the ways in which human society is organized and the assumptions that are made about how we value life. It is also a novel about equality and what happens when the hierarchical structures that we know and arrange our lives by finally disappear.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Acclaimed science fiction writer Poul Anderson (1926-2001) was born in Bristol, Pennsylvania. After earning a degree in physics from the University of Minnesota, he moved to San Francisco where he lived with his wife and writing partner, Karen.

Anderson was a prolific writer with more than one hundred titles to his name. He wrote from a unique position and point of view having a deep understanding of science as well as a keen interest in Norse mythology. While Anderson had written some fantasy novels, including *The Broken Sword* (1954), *Three Hearts and Three Lions* (1961), and *A Midsummer Tempest* (1974), his reputation rests primarily on the strength of his science fiction.

Anderson's first science fiction novel was the 1954 *Brain Wave*, and it is considered by most to be a classic in the genre. Anderson liked to write series of novels, including his popular *Time Patrol* works beginning with 1981's *Guardians of Time*. He also wrote novellas and many short stories.

To his credit, Anderson has numerous science fiction awards including three Nebula awards, seven Hugo awards and the SFWA Grand Master Award (1997). But it is perhaps for the 1970 novel *Tau Zero* that Anderson will be best remembered. Anderson's last novel, *Genesis* (2000), won the John W. Campbell Memorial Award (2001) for best science fiction novel of the year.

- Sales Rank: #184634 in eBooks
- Published on: 2010-06-29
- Released on: 2010-06-29
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Most helpful customer reviews

15 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

An IQ of 400+ for everybody in the world

By mathilde de gardin

What if - - - . What if earth, after millennia, leaves a part of space in which an unknown phenomena has (up until then) dampened the IQ of the earthlings? What if everyone's IQ suddenly jumps up with 400%?

Morons become "normal", pigs get smart and the great masses of normal people become geniuses over night, all bilions of them. Are they glad, can they cope with it, and what does it do to society? Poul Anderson explored these questions in 1954, in a book that is still fresh today. He succeeds very well in describing the changes in thinking and feeling patterns in people that evolve from normal to incredible high IQ. A good and interesting read, that is highly probable, once you have accepted the premisses. It'll set your mind in motion.

22 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

Intelligence enhancement: gift & curse.

By Maximiliano F Yofre

I've read this novel when I was a teenager in the mythical Argentinean sci-fi magazine "*Más Allá*". It was published in the last two volumes edited. I've treasured my collection for more than 40 years. Time and again I reread the most outstanding novels and short stories kept there as in a time shell.

"Brain Wave" is one of the best novels written by Poul Anderson.

The argument is great: suddenly all sentient beings start to change. Everybody is more intelligent each day. Cattle start to avoid slaughter. Horses refuse to be saddled. Brock, a moron peasant, start to have lucid insights and want to read.

The rest of humankind tries to cope with emotional disturbance, weird dreams, creativity shocks, religious surges and many more strange "symptoms".

Anderson analyzes this impossible situation and shows the reader a kaleidoscopic maddening universe. Little by little things began to fall in place and a new civilization emerges from chaos.

The follow up of the story is done by some key characters ranging from the retarded Brock, thru the ordinary housewife distressed by the new unsolicited abilities till her scientific husband and his neighbors.

The novel has an optimistic conclusion as was styled in the blessed `50s sci-fi.

Take a romp thru it, you won't be disappointed!

Reviewed by Max Yofre.

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Optimistic, old-school hard SF

By ensiform

The Earth moves out of some kind of force field, and suddenly, all electromagnetic and -chemical processes; not only do instruments go out of wack, everyone and everything with a brain triples in intelligence. For some individuals, this is liberating, albeit terrifying; some crack under the strain of such a jump. The human race as a whole, indeed, finds itself wondering what to do with itself. This is a pretty good piece of speculative fiction, the idea taken to the limit. There are great bits, like intelligent chimps rising elephants and taming with African tribes; the story of Brock, the one-time moron, is particularly resonant. Overall, it's certainly a supremely optimistic view. As one character in the book notes, just because people are smart doesn't stop them from doing stupid things like speeding or smoking; nor does intelligence always erase prejudice. Yet Anderson envisions a human race that, due solely to higher intelligence, (after a lengthy period of great strife) transcends war, patriotism, and borders - indeed, seems at the end to have formed into some unified collective mind. I'm not so sure that all this necessarily follows from increased intelligence, even such an exponential leap in brain activity; but I see that Anderson is actually painting humans as the wise celestial visitors that most SF authors depict alien beings as. It's sort of a nice touch. Recommended.

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