With respect to the nature versus nurture debate, compare and contrast the roles of intrinsic and environmental factors in human development

The human mind is an incredibly complex machine which controls everything about who we are and the way we live our lives. The programming of this machine is achieved both by inborn nature and the experiences throughout an individual’s life. Often which plays the more crucial role is dictated by the conditions in which a person is born, but most commonly the sociological influences are most prevalent as human consciousness has grown past the natural in born instincts to survive. The basic survivalist tendencies inherent in natural responses like fight or flight are no longer as necessary and are far from commonly relied upon.

While the intrinsic behaviors found in all mammals comes from the early reptilian brain still found in crocodiles and alligators, the human lifestyle and the presence of the higher learning afforded to us by our neo-cortex makes these conditions essentially useless in day to day life. Human interaction, from language to volume and pitch in speech, to hand gestures are all the result of human nurture rather than human nature and as a rule language is more functional on a daily basis then an instinct to run away from a loud noise.

The intrinsic parts of our mind do tend to take over in high stress situations, and this is their role. When a human mind lacks the cognitive ability to process a situation it shuts down and gives full control to an ancient and necessary part of the mind which has instincts of protection of children, to hold ones breath underwater (which can be seen even in newborns) to avoid loud noises or danger. These are all important functions and the animalistic side of humans can be seen clearly under these extreme stresses.

The higher learning and interaction allowed by our ability to essentially switch from a barbaric to philosophic mindset has been crucial to our development as a species and a society, by eliminating the daily need for survival instincts, the human brain lent itself to and incredible number of learned behaviors and skills without which modern civilization would never have been born. The ability to paint, honed and handed down over years has gone from simple stick figures to complete and accurate renderings of life in 3D format. Each of these behaviors or skills exist because of the ability of the human race to recall and teach the next generation, starting with “the trees by the watering hole have fruit every fall” and progressing to a modern “it’s easier to land humans on the moon when it’s orbit brings it closer”. Essentially just learning and retaining useful information but over time resulting in a plethora of ideas and possibilities as the needs of daily life are no longer the focus of our attention.

The role of both the natural genetic behaviors and the social interactions that form higher functions in a human mind are clearly necessary and balanced in such a way as to allow for optimal survival when needed, but also the ability to devote mental energy into the development of complex social codes of conduct that are passed through the generations as readily as genetic material, both of which have and will continue to evolve to fit our needs.