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TIPS

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Just a reminder that in Summer 2000, our office moved (see masthead above for new address), and since then has had new phone and fax numbers, too: phone 315/473-2978, fax 315/473-2963.

Because we have fallen so far behind, we are making this a quadruple issue. You may also recall that we shifted our usual December topics to the previous issue that came out around December though it was not a December issue. Except in the case of the December issues, we often try to specialize on a theme that relates to one of our workshops, so that the TIPS issue can serve as background reading for the participants of that workshop. After many years, we have begun to give our 1-day workshop on the "Signs of the Times" again, and so we decided to devote this issue to that theme. People who have heard an earlier version of the "Signs of the Times" workshop or modules are advised that there have been major revisions and updates. After all, the signs of the times do not stand still.

The signs of the times material in this issue is not organized in a rigorous parallelism to our presentations. Also, our usual December issue covers many signs of the times.

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Reading the Signs of the Times

We are constantly alert to reading the signs of the times, and to spot phenomena which are new and shed light on what is going on. Sometimes, what we think might be a sign of the times turns out to be a fluke--a coming-together of observations merely by chance that later dissolve into insignificance. At other times, we are able to identify a new phenomenon relatively early on before there is any commentary on it in the larger society or its professional literature.

Amazing and portentous developments may be occurring right under one's nose, and yet "the masses" may be oblivious to them, or at least become oblivious to them (via a process of desensitization) as soon as the novelty of a phenomenon wears off.

We have commented before on the fact that if things get worse and worse in society, people keep denying that things are bad, and consider as acceptable, okay, or even good, those things which only a few years earlier they would have interpreted as horrible. We suddenly realized that the psychological principle elucidated in the 1950s by a psychologist named Helson helps explain this phenomenon. The principle is known as Helson's adaptation level, which posits that human perception of certain dimensions of all sorts of characteristics is not absolute, but adjusts itself to accommodate the nature of the range of intensities within such a continuum. For instance, a person who lives in a very silent environment will report even low noises to be very loud. Or to a person who lives in pain all the time, the pain level that would be intolerable to other people may be a low pain level. In other words, the human being adjusts itself to roughly the mid-range of whatever continuum of input one experiences. This is an adaptive mechanism, which is why Helson has called it the adaptation level.

It now becomes obvious why things that were considered to be horrors some years earlier are no longer considered horrors by the same person at a later date, because things infinitely worse than yesterday's horror have become today's horrors. This puts yesterday's "high horrors" toward the middle, or even low, point of one's horror adaptation range of today.

Examples of new phenomena that people quickly become inured to are more people talking to themselves, or the sale of nonmilitary armored cars skyrocketing (Time, 29/11/99).

If you close your eyes to the unpleasant realities of today, then tomorrow, you will say "I didn't know about it," and the day after you will say "I never wanted anything like this to happen."

Readers who have joined more recently are reminded that the major theme of an entire double issue (April & June 1990) of TIPS was devoted to the Signs of the Times, and provided a substantial background analysis and documentation of some of the points made here.

The Culture of Modernism as a "Great Disruption"

Historian Francis Fukuyama (1999) has referred to what we call the culture of modernism as "the great disruption." He said that while one can speak of many glues of society, there are also so-called sources of social order which overlap with the glues but are not necessarily identical to them. Order can either be imposed upon people from without, or can derive from within people. The two largest potential sources of external order are of course government, and customs and mores if they are strong enough and have many consequences attached to them. Social order can only come from within people if they are internally ordered to begin with. One of the biggest sources of internal order is people's higher-order belief systems, provided that these are pro-social. Some such belief systems, such as perhaps a socio-political or ethical ideal, may not be recognized as religions, but actually do function as such. Internal sources of order can have a great deal of moral authority behind them in the eyes of observers, which a government, even if it does maintain order, may not have. In recent centuries, the tendency has been for people on the political left to look to the state for order, and those on the right to look to formal religion.

Some thinkers such as Fukuyama have used the term "social capital" to refer to the norms or values that are shared by a people that allow them to function cooperatively with one another. Some societies have more social capital than others, some are building it up, and others are losing social capital, perhaps even throwing it away. Ultimately, things pretty much boil down to values, because if one does not share values with others, one is not likely to function habitually in a cooperative fashion with them, and this is as true within a small social system, such as a family, as it would be in a neighborhood, and even in casual social systems such as stores and restaurants, and certainly in nation-states.

A value system which emphasizes that individuals should make contributions to the community as a matter of duty is apt to build up social capital, while over time, an orientation toward radical individual rights unrestrained by community duties dissipates social capital. One way to describe the mentality of modernists is that generally, they crave that community be given to them, but they demand to be able to take radical rights away from it. This is of course an irrational and self-contradictory position because one expects from others what one is not willing to give them oneself. (Fukuyama, F. (1999). The great disruption: Human nature and the reconstruction of social order. New York: Free Press.)

The Materialism of Mammon

*When the TIPS editor was a graduate student, there was one TV set and one telephone for the entire 3-floor student dormitory. While most students had radios, they tended to be very small AM radios, and record players were relatively few. Amazingly, students somehow survived all this, and even functioned.

Nearly 60% of today's undergraduate students have a major credit card in their own name, and they "really like stuff" (SHJ, 10 Aug. 00). To them, basic essentials in their room at college include a micro fridge, microwave, TV, stereo system, computer, cordless phone and digital answering machine, and furniture and accessories that permit them to stack and store the stuff in their still somewhat small dorm rooms. They also spend \$23 a month on toiletries.

*US high schools are swept by a "tidal wave of materialism." Even though adults have lost purchasing power over recent years, teen earning power increased enormously, and teens tend to spend their wealth on lavish luxury items rather than basics, and often repeat purchases on the same theme, such as twenty pairs of shoes. Also, even as their parents have been apt to lose their jobs, US high school teens on the average work increasing numbers of hours for pay, many to the point where they not only have no time for homework, but are too sleepy in school to do well there.

*Amazingly, according to one survey, American women are much more materialistic than American men, in that 57% of women said that their dream in life was to be rich, whereas 94% of men said that their dream was to help humanity (Time, 11 Dec. 00).

*Gambling is fueled in large part by a desire for material gain, and for getting "something for nothing." Legalized gambling in the US has increased from \$17.3 billion in 1974 to \$586.5 billion in 1996 and a lot of it is due to two factors: state lotteries, and casinos on Indian reservations in 26 states. "Out of control" gambling alone has increased about 50% between 1994-97 (Science, 23/1/98). It is rather curious that compulsive gambling is being analogized to a drug addiction.

*Playing the markets is in part a form of gambling. The good news is that when people are greedy enough to become day traders, 70% lose money, and only 11% make money (Time, 23/8/99).

*The entitlement yuppies were hard hit by the recent slump in tech stocks. One said that he had not planned to work past 30, but now has to, having been "beaten like a redheaded stepchild" (Newsweek, 24/4/00). A financial guru called people like the man above addicted to "financial cocaine" (Time, 15/5/00).

*Of US girl teens, 60% say they go shopping once a week. Obviously, they need more homework (SHJ, 6 April 99).

*We were astonished to learn that even women with graduate degrees spent more time shopping than individuals in any other category. Some people have called this "positional consumption," tied to the compulsion to keep up with the class to which one aspires to belong (B&C, 9/98). Some critics have begun to talk about people creating their identity via the acquisition of highly visible products, encapsulated by the phrase "when spending becomes you." Furthermore, one study found that the more television one watches, the less money one saves, which could be the result of giving in to unrelenting TV advertisement to purchase and consume. The good news is that between 1990-96, nearly a fifth of adult Americans made a voluntary lifestyle shift downward to earning, consuming and spending less.

*Shopping centers, including malls, have become the third-most-respected "institutions" in the US. The Mall of America in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area is as big as ninety city blocks (11/92 source information from Susan Ruff).

*Many people these days get married in shopping malls. To them, it has succeeded--or become--the church.

*The fact that the incredibly mindless and repetitive TV game show "The Price is Right" has so long been the most watched program in the US attests to the strength of the materialism (in the sense of greed for possessions) in US culture.

*The TV quiz show, "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," was watched by 115 million people, which testifies to our contemporary greed and materialism (Time, 15/11/99). One academic called it "the programming equivalent of cocaine" (Newsweek, 29/11/99). The show has spawned imitations around the world. The version in India is believed to be watched by more than 100 million people every night, and up to 93% of viewers in some cities--and all of this despite the fact that only about one-third of the households have TV sets. Contestants sometimes kiss the feet of the host, and fan letters sometimes come written in blood (3 Sept. 00 news).

*For a Christmas party at an elementary school located in a Chicago housing project, parents volunteered to help distribute the gifts. Suddenly, the parents went wild, and began to steal for themselves about 200 gifts and tear open the wrappers like a bunch of animals. The children began crying, and there was complete chaos.

*A sign of affluence which creates a mentality of disdain for the preciousness of foodstuffs is very much a hallmark of our affluent society. Manifestations thereof are the use of foodstuffs for decorative purposes, which render the foodstuff inedible. Butter sculptures often fall into this

category, as does filling swimming pools with Jello. In the Syracuse area, a landscape architecture student created an edible forest that included smearing trees with sugar frosting that consumed, so to speak, 50 dozen eggs, among other things. The rather effete explanation given by the student was to bring fun back to landscape architecture (SHJ, 20/4/00).

*Pennies have become so meaningless to the majority of Americans that about 25% of them end up in the garbage, which is one reason some banks pay customers a 10% premium for them (Time, 9 Aug. 99).

Individualism

*Someone referred to the baby boom generation as the most self-centered and arrogant one ever.

*Several hundred years ago, the term "masterless men" was used to describe male pauper vagabonds in England who, despite their poverty, were not anybody's servant, employee, apprentice or journeyman. More recently, the term "the masterless" has been applied (e.g., in a 1995 book by that title) to modernistic people who have emancipated themselves from any kind of spiritual, intellectual or social authority, and who try to go through life as so-called "solo rights bearers."

*In 1999, we had a memory flashback to the 1950s and recalled how people would often remark on how bright a particular person was. For instance, in a chemical lab where the TIPS editor worked, people would speak in admiration about the "smartness" of a particular chemist, and in many other contexts, people took a certain kind of pleasure in seeing brilliance displayed when it was not tied to arrogance or evil. One thing that has struck us is that it has been quite a long time since we heard people rejoicing in other people's intellectuality. In large part we attribute this to the ideology that has evolved in recent decades that there either is not, or should not be, any such thing as an intellectual standing apart, and people's resentment toward authority coupled with their suspicion that a very bright person either might be an authority figure, or might become such.

*Yet another woman--in this case TV star Queen Latifah--has "married herself," and is now wearing a wedding ring. She has vowed to take care of herself and pamper herself. However, if she meets the right man, provided he treats her as well as she treats herself, she is prepared to divorce herself from herself, and marry him (SPS, 5 Nov. 96).

*In 1971, the Boston Women's Health Book Collective published a book entitled Our Bodies, Ourselves, which became one of the charter documents of modern feminism and of much of the feminist support for abortion on demand. The title of the book very well reflected modernistic values of unbridled individualism and sensualism, by managing, in three short words, to reflect not only modernism's materialistic emphasis on the human body, but also its unbridled individualism and selfishness (in the emphasis on the self). One consequence has been that the term "ourselves" has become a euphemism for "women," as exemplified in the 1987 book by Doress and Siegal entitled Ourselves Growing Older. Similarly, a special 1988 issue of Psychology of Women Quarterly had the title theme Our Minds, Our Bodies, which was at least a step forward in acknowledging that women have minds as well as bodies, and therefore presumably, men do as well.

*What was once considered to be self-centered behavior is now deemed to be evidence of healthy self-esteem. In the past, it was considered good manners in conversation to shift the spotlight away from oneself and onto one's conversation partner; now, people want to talk incessantly about themselves. Apparently, the language of young people in America these days (and probably elsewhere too) contains much higher percentages of content about oneself and one's feelings, references to one's bodily functions, and to sex, than the language of preceding generations.

*Several books on the self-image of young women have brought out that there has been a radical change since the late 1800s in how American girls view themselves and life. For the latter, a typical diary entry was the following: "Resolved, not to talk about myself or feelings. To work seriously. To be dignified. Interest myself more in others." In contrast, girls today have been brainwashed to believe that their physical body is the ultimate expression of the self, exemplified in

the following diary excerpt. "I will lose weight, get new lenses, already got new haircut, good makeup, new clothes and accessories" (Newsweek, 22/9/97). This illustrates our interpretations of modernistic materialism, externalism, and to some degree also sensualism.

*A striking example of where modernistic individualism, combined with sensualism and a self-deterministic "choice" mentality, has taken us was brought out in an article about a Syracuse University sorority house with 35 girls from mostly privileged backgrounds. The cook and one of the girls mused about the fact that none of the 35 "eat alike," each having her own peculiar dietary and culinary predilections, which makes it almost impossible to be a cook in that house. The TIPS editor reflected on his childhood when in large homesteads, whether they liked it or not, everybody ate exactly the same things at a given meal (often out of the same pot), and where there was very little variety over time, but where it would not have as much as occurred to members that they should have a "choice" to abstain from a dish, and even less that they should be entitled to a dish that others did not get (SHJ, 29/1/98).

*One of the paradoxes of modernistic individualism is that so many young people dress the same--but all want to be seen as separate individuals.

*A peculiar sign of our times is that in the last 20 years or so, there has been an explosion of "honorings," i.e., occasions at which a person is publicly recognized, honored, congratulated, commemorated, proclaimed, or given an award, which usually consists of a piece of paper and/or a plaque. All this has gone so far that the legislative council for the City of Syracuse hardly ever meets without somebody being publicly congratulated, commemorated or proclaimed, even though this self-same body, together with innumerable other governmental ones, is less and less able to govern. A tremendous amount of time and effort by innumerable people goes into the administration of this process, which of course thereby subtracts efforts from productive engagements.

*In 6/97, our ear got somewhat scratchy when we heard an artist tell that he "became a father of a daughter in 19xx and the father of a son in 19xy," rather than saying that he had two children, or that a son or daughter or child was born to him in this or that year. This phrasing is a peculiarly modernistically self-centered one, in that it focuses on the parent speaking instead of on the child.

*In 2001, the US Army changed its long-standing recruiting slogan, "Be All You Can Be," to "An Army of One." The idea was to appeal to the individualism of today's youth, and thus capitalize upon one of the five components of modernism that is bringing our society to a crash.

Sensualism/Hedonism

*A 1983 book by George Leonard, called The End of Sex, proposed that mental health is "directly proportionate to the number of perceived options available to any individual." In other words, it appears that undisciplined license, which obviously contains vast numbers of options, was equated with mental health. The author also saw increased diversity in sexual preferences and practices as a "sign of social health." For years, the TIPS editor has taught that one of the world's great universal truths is that whatever a society has decided to be or do, its moral authorities (in our age, especially scientists, intellectuals, and academicians) will rise up to rationalize as being true, good, and scientific. We can see very strikingly that in our age, the intellectual and scientific legitimizers follow the popular trend, i.e., they pronounce developments as good when they become virtually inevitable, rather than being the thinkers and inventors who invent these things and then promote them, with the people following them.

*The spoiled people from developed societies no longer want to engage in demanding labor. German farmers cannot get domestic harvest helpers even when they pay \$5 an hour on top of free lodging and free meals, even at the same time as there is almost 10% unemployment in the country. This is why they have to import workers from poor countries.

*Another sign of the times is the development of an entire cooking culture that aims to produce gourmet meals for people who are supposedly roughing it, e.g., hiking, or on outdoor adventure trips. As one writer put it, "why limit yourself to trail mix and beans cooked in the can

over an open fire when you can have cowboy steak with Jack Daniel sauce and potato packets, or five-spice salmon salad with mango peanut dressing?" (SHJ, 16/8/00).

*For several decades, it has been customary in many kinds of advertising pictures, and above all in advertisements for liquor, to embed in the images (particularly the liquor glasses or bottles) human sexual organs, and most often female breasts and male genitals. We have quite a collection of such images, because they illustrate strikingly how one party can quite deliberately and consciously try to use imagery that is meant to be, and will be, received unconsciously by an observer, but that will nonetheless influence that observer's behavior. Starting in the late 1980s, a disturbing new development took place when liquor ads began to show dismembered female body parts, often the hips with the legs and the torso cut off. This of course coincided with the rise of analogous violence in society, and with the advent of films featuring themes of dismemberment. More recently, demonic mask-like faces have become common, though with all the previous motifs still continuing. The ad designers are obviously telling us something about what is going on that people are reluctant to explicate. In regard to women's mutilated torsos, one can only conclude that the designers of these ads have been attempting to make a linkage in the minds of drinking men with their mounting unconscious resentment of women.

*Apparently a subculture has developed of people who go to Iceland for their vacation. Many of them are young men because, as one of them put it, "Icelandic girls are just gorgeous, they enjoy sex, and don't believe in marriage." However, this seems to be going hand in hand with the culture of decadence in Iceland itself, with the streets of its small towns being filled with drunken youths every weekend (Time, 26/3/01).

*In 3/92 (CP), we first ran across the term "sexual literacy," which referred to knowing a vast amount of facts and data of the type collected by the Kinsey institute.

*There is a relatively new "special interest group on sexuality and social skills" of the American Association on Mental Retardation. We find this a most peculiar group. Why not "sexuality and astronomy," or "sexuality and banquet dining etiquette"?

*Undoubtedly influenced by recent movies about tornadoes, there are outfits that now offer tornado-chasing tourism in America's mid-West as a thrill. For about \$2,000, and up to two weeks, tourists are driven around the countryside (mostly between Texas and South Dakota) chasing potential tornadoes, hoping to get as close as possible to one without getting hurt (USN&WR, 8 June 98).

*A lot of Mexican pop songs on both sides of the border glorify the use of illegal drugs. Typical lyrics are "we do what we want do do" (Newsweek, 23/4/01).

*While risk-taking behaviors and extreme sports are skyrocketing, apparently because people are bored with their lives, so are injuries and deaths related to these activities. In earlier generations, life brought natural challenges and risks (wars, epidemics, basic training for the universal draft, etc.) which people nowadays apparently are missing. Once again the bio-shrinks attribute all this to a "thrill-seeking gene" (they have even given it the name D4DR, though other scientists have claimed to have found other thrill genes). One college graduate started using heroin because "I am seeking the widest possible range of human experience." Allegedly, homosexual "bare-backing" (having "unprotected" homosexual relations with multiple partners) has also been attributed to the thrill gene. The prevalence of bare-backing has reportedly gone up, but at least in part because some of its practitioners foolishly assume that drugs will save them when they become HIV-infected, or that the cure is right around the corner (Time, 6 Sept. 99).

*The hedonism of our day demands that bad events be interpreted in feel-good terms. E.g., when after 149 years, the oldest Catholic school in Syracuse closed in 2001, a graduate said, "We are extremely proud to be the last graduating class" (SPS, 18/6/01). By analogy, one might say, "we are extremely proud to have been on the Titanic when it sank."

*The end must be near, because drunkenness is spreading among the Amish. Like everybody else who gets drunk, they go out and drive--except that they drive horse-drawn buggies, and police have had to learn to get used to arresting their drunken buggy drivers (Newsweek, 28/10/85).

*As someone said, the sovereignty of wants becomes the imperialism of whims.

*One way to combine the features of modernism--materialism, sensualism, externalism, the greed for travel, the thrill of speed, and the indulgence of lust--as so many people today do, would be by having multiple sex in the first class cabin of a supersonic jet plane (such as the Concorde), drunk on expensive liquor and while someone injects the participants with a high dose of cocaine, with the female participants wearing Victoria's Secret's \$5 million bra (yes, there really is such a thing) as the plane is going down nose-first, and while all this is being broadcast live to anyone who wants to watch it on the computer Internet or pay-per-view TV.

The Youth Cult as a Form of Hedonism

One of the signs of our times is the idolatry of youth and youthfulness. Also, people no longer look to adult or elderly persons for time-proven wisdom, modelling and advice on how to live, but to children. All this can probably be understood at least in part as a form of hedonism.

*We are struck by the many reports of children attaining cult, guru or celebrity status around the world. Here are some examples.

Two tiny 12-year-old twin boys who looked 10 in 1999 and 2000 had been leading an army of older youths and adults in warfare along the Burma-Thailand border that required army units and artillery from two countries to subdue. The boys had been attributed with mystical powers. Many of their child followers were slaughtered by the Thai army.

Two 14-year-olds started a lifestyle magazine in 2001 with a print run of a quarter-million copies.

A British couple in their mid-20s and their son were called by the British press the "Jesus, Mary and Joseph of 21st century Britain." He is a soccer star and she is a Spice Girl with a reputation for skinniness. His autobiography came out when he was 25, and his wife is thinking of writing one as well.

A 17-year-old in Ireland achieved pop queen status and stardom in much of Europe. Time characterized her songs as "youthful but never...childish" (6 Nov. 00).

A teenage pop star got a Grammy Award in 2000.

14-year-old pop music singers are being hailed as stars by an adult entertainment context, which is particularly ironic when a 14-year-old is a blues singer which one would think requires some adult experiences with hard times and disappointments.

21-year-old pop entertainers are writing their autobiographies and selling vast quantities thereof.

A 14-year-old girl was declared "Supermodel of the World," and got a \$250,000 contract, a \$10,000 diamond pendant, and a \$6500 fur. Her sister wisely said, "I could never see what everybody saw (in her)."

A museum was opened for the memorabilia of 17-year-old singer Britney Spears, whose albums had sold 31 million in one year, and who came out in 9/00 in favor of promiscuous sex (at least for others), punctuated by salty ejaculations of the F-word.

There is not just one Shirley Temple-like child star, but small armies of them in all sorts of TV shows, some since infancy.

A 15-year-old girl singer "climbed" to the top of the Christian music charts, was featured on the Jay Leno talk show, and interviewed at length for Christian magazines.

*We have known of many famous female singers, but in 6/01, we learned that a young woman we had never heard of was the top-selling female singer of all of world history (Time, 18/6/01).

*A very recent phenomenon has been children/teenagers becoming country music singing stars. This is particularly ironic because country music has had a long tradition of songs about the

hard life (drinking, gambling, broken relationships, doing jail time, etc.) that would sound phony coming from youngsters.

*It is virtually inconceivable for some of us ordinary people leading ordinary lives that a 22-year-old woman (who does not even look extraordinary, as if that should count, and who in reality is rather skinny) could already have been on covers of 300 magazines (Time, 14/12/87).

*Perhaps we should not be surprised that children as young as 8-10 have been setting up trash rock bands, and even succeeded in making and selling record albums with songs such as "Get Outta School/The Principal is a Fool/4th Graders Rule" (Newsweek, 31/7/89).

*Observers of the modern scene have commented on the fact that on the one hand, children are being dressed up in outfits that mimic adult clothing, and that in the case of little girls sexualizes them at an extremely early age, while on the other hand, adults have increasingly begun to dress in what were formerly child-like or youth outfits such as T-shirts, sneakers, and Mickey Mouse watches, all of which someone called the grown-up version of play clothes.

*The most recent trend is people wanting to "look younger at a younger age," and already by 1998, 35% of people getting face lifts in the US were 50 or younger (Newsweek, 15/6/98). Apparently, some of the people who start having facial cosmetic surgery become addicted to it and compulsively go back for more again and again--even every few months, and will find a new surgeon who will do it when the old one refuses. One thing it takes to do all of this is a lot of time and a lot of money, and going into hiding each time until the wounds heal, sometimes for weeks. Women in their late 30s and early 40s--often widowed and divorced--are the best customers. According to some authorities, people who fall into this technology--sometimes called "scalpel slaves"--are really looking for solutions to the problems in their lives, and think that different looks will bring these about. Many women consider wrinkles a more serious threat to their identity than cancer or heart disease. Accordingly, some people classify this compulsion with other body image disorders, such as anorexia or bulimia. One result for many women is that they end up severely scarred, and/or almost cartoonishly artificial. In 1987, a Center for Human Appearance was established at the University of Pennsylvania that is staffed by plastic surgeons, dermatologists, dental experts, ophthalmologists and psychiatrists.

*There is now a periodical entitled Life Forum which started publishing in 1986, devoted to nothing but how to stay young, look and act young if one isn't young anymore, and even how to become immortal (source material from Peter King).

Here-and-Now-ism & Time Illiteracy

In teaching about the values and culture of modernism, we point to what we call "here-and-now-ism" as one of its five pillars. Time captured it this way: "The national memory bank seems to be shrinking further under the onslaught of instant electronic gratification." Or as someone put it, people of this age are "craving immediacy."

*Our modernistic here-and-now-ism is both promoted, as well as reflected, by all sorts of cultural appeals. We are all familiar with slogans such as instant coffee (literally in seconds), "meal in a minute," photos developed in an hour, lose weight effortlessly while sleeping, pizza within 30 minutes or it's free, spectacles in less than an hour, pick up your meal at the drive-in, "find it fast in the Yellow Pages," time-saving home appliances, speed reading courses, and so on. Women can get a test so that they can know immediately whether they are pregnant. One can now send mail instantly by telephone. And if one has just a little more patience, there is overnight delivery of mail and packages. Money can be instantly withdrawn from the bank. Cosmetics promise to erase lines and wrinkles practically overnight. Elections are decided before all the voters have voted. Microwaves cook in minutes meals that used to take hours. And any mode of transportation that can promise to "get you there faster" is apt to become popular.

One obvious question in response to all of this is just what people are doing with all the time that they thereby "save."

*In Las Vegas, there is a drive-in chapel for weddings; in Oregon, there is a drive-by window where one can get and sign petitions for divorce; and in Virginia, there is a drive-by mortuary window where one can say a quick farewell to a loved one laid out behind it. (Source clipping from Guy Caruso.)

*Already during the 1970s, the US presidential candidate, Eugene McCarthy, said that the attention span of the American people was about 75 seconds (SHJ, 6/7/90).

*In 1968, politicians were given on the average 43 seconds during the evening news to make a statement while running for office. This has become ever shorter, with 25 seconds in 1972, 12 seconds in 1980, and 9 seconds in 1988. This also tells us much about people's epistemology and perceptual systems.

*TV commercials used to be a minute long, but with people having ever-shorter attention spans (almost entirely due to TV in the first place), ads have been getting shorter and shorter, being cut first to 30 seconds, then to 15, and now sometimes to one single second (Time, 3 Aug. 98).

*Time (18/12/00) carried an ad for a "personal digital player" showing a beautiful girl with her ears covered by a headphone saying, "by the time a song debuts on the radio, you're so over it."

*Two leading figures on the Japanese public scene, a politician and an industrialist, have written a book entitled, The Japan That Can Say No (1989), that has become a best-seller in Japan. It says that one reason for the Japanese economic success (considering it has hardly any natural resources) vis-à-vis the US is that America is declining because it "can only see 10 minutes ahead," whereas the normative time horizon in Japan is estimated to be 10 years.

*The US government has been systematically reducing the number of statistical reports which it has published which provide one with a permanent record of very revealing indicators and trends. Instead, people increasingly have to look to computer sources for information, which is harder to do, takes longer, and is not likely to result in a permanent record (Newsweek, 11 Sept. 95). In this fashion, we have another assault on memory, and a Nineteen Eighty Four-type scenario where the news of yesterday can always be changed in light of current ideology, much as the PC culture is already doing anyway.

*A peculiar thing is that the periodic news features on the observance of "Black History Month," and "Women's History Month" in the Syracuse newspapers revolved around the accomplishments of living people, some of them quite young. Apparently, to the time-alienated people of modernism, today and yesterday are "history," and anything earlier is in a white hole.

*US football player Dexter Manley was suspended "for life" when caught in drug abuse--but was reinstated one year later (Time, 3 Dec. 90). This just is one more illustration of the loss of memory and time perspective in our culture that we prefer to see called time illiteracy. A year is "forever," and "forever" is a year.

*An interesting phenomenon of our time is that the news media can only deal with one big story at a time, such as O. J. Simpson, JonBenet Ramsey, Monica Lewinsky, Kosovo, Littleton, etc. Some big stories run forever, until another one comes along. When there is no such big story, it almost seems as if the news media go into a form of depression.

*Even at top US colleges and universities, 80% of seniors scored at a D or F level on American history questions that at one time high school students could pass. The same students were highly knowledgeable on pop culture, such as who Beavis and Butthead were (i.e., television cartoon characters). One of the authors of this research study said that students are allowed to graduate without knowing that the past existed (AP, in Syracuse Herald Journal, 28/6/2000, p. A6).

*The so-called boomer generation born after World War II became a very affluent one, but so much oriented to the here and now that they have done remarkably little saving toward retirement which for many is just over the horizon. Forty percent of them have less than \$10,000 in savings.

*One of the paradoxes of the economic boom of the late 90s and the year 2000 was that the more money people made, the less they saved, and the more debt they accumulated. This led to an almost doubling of bankruptcies in the midst of affluence. Of course, on the boom's downside, people lose their high income and they are left with their debts, and no savings.

*It is ironic that there is a big push on to develop memory-enhancing drugs at the very time people are no longer very interested in the past and educators are telling the world that memorizing is bad pedagogy.

*Closely related to here-and-now-ism is another kind of alienation from time called "time illiteracy." For instance, more and more in recent years, we have observed the phenomenon that what used to be specific feasts lasting one or a few days turn into lengthy seasons which not only encompass the days or weeks after a feast, but increasingly the weeks and even months preceding it. E.g., the "Halloween season" can be seen to start in late September, and to eventually overlap with the "Thanksgiving season," which in turn overlaps with the Christmas season (that for some people starts in mid-November, if not earlier), etc. Independence Day used to be on the 4th of July, not on the third or the fifth, but many people now are starting to set off firecrackers in mid-June, so that Independence Day also ends up becoming an "Independence Day season." Actually, for many modernistic people, the pulling forward of a feast date is much more striking than the lingering of it after the feast day has actually passed.

One thing that contributes to people's confusion about feast days is that so many American feast days are no longer celebrated on their traditional dates if they fall in the middle of the week, but instead are "observed" on the week day adjacent to the weekend. Thus, there is a real Memorial Day and a date designated as "Memorial Day observed," with some people then getting an extra day off, but some of them also observing the real day as well.

*No wonder people get time-disoriented and crazified. St. Patrick's Day was celebrated in May this year in Ireland, because of the foot-and-mouth disease, instead of being observed quietly on March 17, or skipped entirely for a year.

*When the German choral society of Syracuse announced in 1997 that it would hold its Christmas party on the 30th of November, we knew that the end must be near. Christmas has always been a very special event in German culture, and until recently, it was well-known in that culture that Christmas comes on the evening of December 24, and no sooner.

*When young people pick up newspapers, or watch the TV news, they are very likely to learn that there is such a thing as a "nursing home crisis." Having been around a bit longer, we recall that there was a nursing home crisis in the early 1970s, and that there has been one ever since. Failure to notice this is yet one more example of the time illiteracy of our culture.

*A peculiarly modernistic new practice is for people (we mean a man and a woman) who get married to both abandon their family names, and sometimes their first names as well, and to coin a new family name, to be handed on to their children if they have any. Some modernists interpret this as a way to give children names that are "free from hyphens and the baggage of ancestry," implying that the latter is both possible and desirable. In fact, we would interpret this practice as another manifestation of the modernist alienation from time--in this case from the past. It will also make it harder for their offspring in future generations to track their ancestry.

*Traditional cemeteries used to have upright grave stones that could be seen from some distance. Many modern cemeteries, including entire cemetery chains, require that gravestones be flush with the ground. It is these cemeteries particularly that are apt to go by names such as "Gardens," as in Memorial Gardens (which is the name of one such entire cemetery chain), or "Lawns" (as in Memorial Lawns). One result has been that there has been a dramatic decline in the number of firms making or distributing gravestones, because flush ones are so much simpler and faster to make than upright ones (*Interim*, 9/88). We suspect that all of this is at least in part yet another manifestation of the time alienation of people in our society. The dead are treated in a way which makes them less memorable, not to mention that people probably quite naturally are less inclined to remember them.

*In 2001 (CS, 13/6) we learned for the first time that Germans no longer like to publish death notices of their family members in newspapers, or put names and dates on gravestones. Here yesterday, today forgotten.

*Here is a very typical modernism that may strike contemporary people as not peculiar at all. A guest essayist in Newsweek (15/1/96) noted that one of the books that had made one of the biggest impressions upon her in her youth was one of which she could remember neither the author nor the title. This reminds us of people who say that attending one of "Dr. Wolfenstein's" workshops changed their lives, but they cannot remember what the workshop was about or where or when it took place.

Externalism

We will now divide the externalism component of modernism into several subthemes.

Externalism: General

Externalism means that, as a result of growing up empty and without internal substance and strength, people fall victims to superficial external influences. Typically, they like noise, eschew silence and solitude, and often seek out gurus and drugs.

*Again and again we have been running across instances in recent years where some biographer of a very public figure admitted that he or she was not able to understand very well the person they were biographizing, sometimes despite years of research. This has been said about President Reagan and a number of other people (e.g., Newsweek, 9 Jan. 95). We think the answer is very simple: they are trying to biographize externalistic people who are relatively empty inside. This makes them difficult to understand unless one understands externalism itself.

*For a complete externalist, one can now buy TV sets to hang around one's neck, as well as a speaker that carries the audio portion of a TV program into one's shower, just so that not a minute of one's life is spent without being exposed or even wired to the media.

*Now that as a matter of unexplicated policy, modernism creates noisy environments wherever it can, particularly in public places, the intellectuals of modernism are beginning to come up with research that "proves" that noisy environments are good for people, as by helping the brain to transmit information, and helping people to concentrate (e.g., SHJ, 20/11/92). Even if the results were true, we would interpret them quite differently, namely as showing that people who have grown up in noise can simply not function anymore without it.

*Somebody--we cannot remember who, and it may even have been us--said that people who walk around the street with earphones plugged in to some noise-making machine can be likened to getting an auditory IV of/into their minds.

*In recent years, some people in the US have installed sound equipment in their cars that is worth more (e.g., perhaps \$10,000) than their car is (e.g., SHJ, 2 March 93).

*In 10/98, we first encountered advertisements for automobiles that showed TV screens built into, or above, the dashboard so that even the driver could watch TV while driving, which we thought was illegal. In one such ad, there were even 2 TV screens in the front, and one each behind the two front seats for the rear passengers to watch.

*Since the mid-1980s, we have noticed that in commercials for various types of products, adults are often shown wearing music earphones while engaged in child care. We find that the most bizarre practice if it is going on in real life, and even more bizarre to de facto promote it even while one is promoting totally unrelated products.

*An interesting question arises how to enable children with diabetes to enjoy Halloween, and other holidays in which there is much candy, in a social role-valorizing fashion. A newspaper article (SHJ, 26 Oct. 98, p. C3) made the good suggestion to make dietary allowances that exchange the

carbohydrates of some pieces of candy for other carbohydrates in a child's daily diet, and/or that parents let children trade in candy they collect for other benefits. Unfortunately, the three benefits suggested were staying up late to watch TV, attending movies, or watching computer games--all media externalisms!

*Very amusing is the court testimony of a psychiatrist in Toronto to the effect that when teenagers listen to violent rock music, that they "are not necessarily driven to emulate the violence" (Toronto Star, 8 Nov. 90).

*In 1995, a new electronic rock and roll magazine was launched entitled Addicted to Noise, quite appropriately showing two crossed injection needles on the cover.

*In Britain, there is now so much noise across the countryside that songbirds no longer are learning to sing because they cannot hear themselves anymore. Even as far away from a road as 3 kilometers, birds' hearing is affected. Some birds are reduced to a pitiful residual peeping, others try to imitate city noises, including auto alarms. One consequence is that bird males and females can no longer find each other through their song, and therefore are at risk of drastic population reductions (AW, 16/1/99).

*TV news has become celebrity-watching, from the reporter and anchor on down (Newsweek, 15/1/01). Also, news is now largely entertainment and diversion, and vice versa.

*Newsweek (8 Jan. 01) ran a cover story on TV talk show host Oprah Winfrey. It turns out that there are large numbers of Americans (maybe others too) who are literally addicted to the Oprah show and what goes with it. Some people watch her daily, and claim that they wouldn't know how to live if it weren't for her and that show. The same is true for the Oprah website. As one woman put it, "she has given me the tools to find myself." Also, whenever Oprah promotes something on her show, it immediately becomes a best-seller, regardless whether it is a book, a film, a piece of clothing, or whatever. The Oprah cult has spawned imitators, and one that we have never even heard of, Iyanla Vanzant, has more than 6 million books in print. What these gurus have in common is some combination of psycho-babble, common sense advice, and New Age flavor. Also, a virtual sine qua non for at least the women gurus along these lines is to claim having been sexually abused as a child.

*After José Saramago won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1998, 45,000 copies of his novel, Blindness, sold. When Oprah recommended Janet Fitch's White Oleander on her show, 994,000 copies sold (Time, 11 Oct. 99).

*The Oprah show spawned the "O" magazine, and then the Rosie show spawned the "Rosie" magazine, so that people can have more of the same when they turn off the TV (if ever), or the station goes off for the night.

*Decadent pop singer Boy George had, by age 31, dabbled in Buddhism, Hinduism, the Hare Krishnas, vegetarianism, chanting, drug addiction, and a group therapy that combined Nietzsche with est, not to mention bisexuality and homosexuality, and yet he experienced a second popularity boom (Time, 29/3/1993).

*More and more shrinks are starting to provide online shrinking, and more and more pitiful modernistic people take disadvantage of it, among other things enjoying the anonymity of it. A typical e-shrink charges anywhere from \$1 a minute to \$150 or more for a month. Some people log on wherever they are, the moment they feel a little bit unhappy. Some people go the extra mile and have both office sessions with a shrink as well as e-shrinkery. It is a bit like the people who write to the advice columns of newspapers, in that every smallest little adversity sends them to professionals. Then there is also the question of just what credentials anonymous shrinks have. One rube had a breakthrough insight: as she was typing her sob story to her e-shrink, she realized what the shrink would reply, and that she therefore really did not have to send her message off at all (Newsweek, 22/1/01).

*It used to be that a newspaper might have one bleeding heart or advice column. Now, our major Syracuse newspapers have pages and pages of advice columns every week. Some are old-fashioned general-purpose ones, such as Dear Abby and Ann Landers. Others are specialized to teenagers, on child-rearing, on relationships between lovers or spouses, on health, on mental problems.

One pathetic phenomenon in these columns is that people who obviously have nothing much going for them in the way of depth, internal strength or morality turn to sometimes equally vacuous advice columnists for advice. Some letters go roughly like this: "I am in my 7th marriage, and my husband has been married 3 times before. He snores at night and leaves the toilet lid up even though I have begged him a thousand times to flip it down again when he is done. I am at my wits' end. Please help me and tell me what to do." The triviality of the questions and issues that writers bring to advice columnists is staggering. For instance, a wife had asked her husband what he thought about an outfit she was wearing, and when his answer was less than enthusiastic, she wrote to "Dear Abby" about it. Obviously, people like this simply do not have enough important things to worry about, and have too much idle time on their hands. Another further sign of the bankruptcy of the advice business is that the advice columnists consistently fail to advise writers to quit writing letters about their petty and unimportant little problems, and to get on with their lives.

*One woman wrote to Ann Landers that she had a "nutty husband," and that all her friends and her therapist had said she should get a divorce, but all this was not enough; she had to write to Ann Landers who, in turn, said she should listen to her therapist, and that she should put herself first (AP in SHJ, 30/8/00).

*A newly-married young woman was told by her husband that he loved her so much that he wanted two of his good buddies to share her, with him beside her the whole time. Confused and bewildered, what did she do? She wrote to advice psychologist-columnist Joyce Brothers and asked, "is this right?" The psychologist never told her it was wrong, merely that her husband had "some sexual hang-ups" for which he needed--a therapist (SHJ, 8 Sept. 00).

*A woman who looks like a boy and has thumb-sucker teeth gives "life-changing" "how to succeed" seminars, some attended by as many as 8000 pathetic externalists.

*One of these "how to live" gurus tells people to put a finger to each temple and say "I have a good self image," and "everyone is born a genius," and tens of thousands of pitiful modernists with more money than sense actually do it! (SHJ, 29/9/00).

*Many of the ego boost gurus are feeders for the shrinks, constantly advising millions of people to go to shrinks and talk, talk, talk. One such guru gives "self-hope" seminars (Newsweek, 5 Feb. 01).

*A public television "Nova" program broadcast 19 Dec. 2000 was on eating disorders, mostly among young women. Not surprisingly, the program kept interpreting such disorders as "illnesses," even talking about genetic predispositions, while also strongly emphasizing how much such disorders derive from girls'/young women's slavish obsession with media figures such as fashion models and other celebrities who are unnaturally thin. Drugs such as Prozac are inevitably part of the "treatment," along with teaching new behaviors and mindsets towards food and eating, and of course, psychotherapy to raise their "self-esteem." Many young women start becoming anorectic or bulimic after some family disaster, such as a divorce, or in response to some other great difficulty that they feel they cannot control, and about which they are not "permitted" to be angry. One woman, who was once a very promising ballerina but who now, because of anorexia, needs a walker to walk, and will walk with a limp for the rest of her life, said, "The scale is the altar at which you worship every morning." She even noted the betrayal by idols such as this, saying "my legs were my life and now I hardly have use of them."

*Externalistic people who became adults at a time when skinniness began to be upheld as the beauty ideal are now becoming elderly, and a significant percentage of them fail to eat well for the simple reason that they have almost delusional ideas carried over from their earlier years that they are overweight, even though they may in fact be undernourished (SHA, 19/5/91).

*Programs trying to combat anorexia in girls (starting at age 8)--and there are many--are merely exchanging one media-induced body obsession with another (e.g., SHA, 13/8/00).

*One TV series ("Ally McBeal") featuring an anorexic star soon had anorexia run rampant among the cast (Newsweek, 22/1/01).

*A new trend among older adolescents is to become vegetarians, the stated reason being concern for animals, but a broader reason probably being externalistic trendiness. At any rate, a lot of adolescent girls graduate from being vegetarians to embracing anorexia (Newsweek, 28/8/95). This itself should inform us that this particular vegetarianism craze does not have healthy origins.

*Modernistic women are caught in a vise: they are getting fatter while liking it less. They gain weight while being inspired by anorexic models, and while jumping from one diet, drug or "treatment" to another (SHA, 29/10/00). In regard to the weight-gainers, we have seen much more publicity in recent years about the Prader-Willi syndrome, though it seems to us that often, this diagnosis is being slapped on a child (quite commonly a female one) who comes from a marginal background and who may merely have been socialized to overeat. This would be comparable to children who have been badly socialized by their parents being medicalized with the "attention deficit/hyperactivity syndrome" diagnosis.

*Drug cravings and addictions are a form of externalism. It is very ironic that at some world-class rave parties, as many as 350,000 people come together from all over the world under the motto "One World, One Future"--and promptly begin to space themselves out on drugs, fornicate en masse, create mountains of garbage, and trash the environment, as they did at the 10th Annual Love Parade in Berlin in 1998.

*Increasingly, when driving, the TIPS editor finds himself literally surrounded by drivers talking on the phone. Also, the TIPS editor has been several times in close danger of being hit by drivers who were talking on the telephone, and firmly believes that this practice should be outlawed. However, one woman near Syracuse was not merely talking on the phone with one hand, but also sipping coffee with the other when she had an accident, and it turned out she was steering the car with her knees. On the other hand, we heartily approve of dictating sage commentaries for TIPS while driving.

*Some people seem unable to make a telephone call from their homes without the TV playing in front of them, either on mute or even loudly.

*Mimicking what others do so that one's behavior passively and without full explication changes to match that of others in one's environment has been called by some people the "chameleon effect."

*An actress in the decadent TV series, "Sex and the City," put on a necklace with her name on it--and immediately, women of all ages all over the US began to do the same, for up to \$1,500 each, recapitulating a high school girl craze of the late 1980s rap culture (Time, 27/11/00).

*On some TV shows, such as the "Ally McBeal" show, the stars are shown walking around with little or nothing on their feet in cities that pretend to be cold ones, such as Boston. As a result, many young people have started wearing sandals without socks even in the snow, stupidly unaware how they have been fooled because these TV shows are actually shot in California. We are eagerly looking forward to a TV show where all the stars hang themselves, which would effect a dramatic reduction of externalistic people in its wake.

*The externalism of modernistic culture is underlined by the fact that no sooner did it become public knowledge that Clinton played the saxophone than saxophone sales and lessons began to skyrocket, though most people thusly taking to the saxophone deny that Clinton had anything to do with their behavior (Newsweek, 22/2/93).

*Nothing protects young people these days any more from externalism. Even Prince William, the British crown prince, is said to change his taste for music frequently according to what is at the top of the pop charts at the moment (Newsweek, 26/6/00).

*It is amazing what can happen in this externalistic media-dominated culture of empty people. Virtually from one day to the next in November '96, we began to see people in public in Syracuse who were wearing fool hats. Only days thereafter, we discovered that L. L. Bean had begun to feature fool hats in their famous mail order catalog ("one size fits all"). Considering that these hats are very expensive, we can only reiterate what sages have always known: "a fool and his/her money are soon parted."

*Someone said that baby-boomers "have no loyalties," and have the "worst follow-through of any generation," as one population pollster put it (Newsweek, 19/12/94). This sounds to us no more than ye old externalism again.

Externalism: The "Please, Please, Please Look at Me" Phenomenon

One phenomenon of modernism is that on the one hand, it leaves people terribly empty, and on the other hand, individualism pushes them forward in a quest to be noted and acknowledged. One result has been a mass epidemic of behaviors that can hardly be described in terms other than desperate pleas of "look at me, please, please, please, please look at me!" Everybody wants to be up on a stage either exhibiting their near-naked bodies, or wants to dance before crowds, sing before people or on recorded media. Zillions of women want to be models, which by definition means one displays one's body to be looked at. People also do such out-of-the-way things as living in glass houses where their every function (even intimate ones) can be observed by strangers, or videotaping themselves in every life function and letting people watch these tapes on the Internet. Women seem even more (vastly more) avid for "look at me" attention than men, probably due to sex differences that evolved with the human, contrary to what the PC people would have us believe. Some of the early film stars apparently started this trend. For instance, Judy Garland grew up with a pathologic famine for "being seen," and approved of (Newsweek, 23/3/00).

*A writer observed (FT, 5/00) that increasingly, so-called public life consists of the publication of people's private lives. In part, we see this expressed in the media's obsessive publication of the private lives of "celebrities," and in the dramatization of so-called "human interest stories" of ordinary people in an attempt to thereby get people hooked on the media. On the other hand, we also have the pitiful and compulsive exhibition of one's private life by so many of the people of modernism in a pathetic attempt to draw attention.

Part of the "please look at me" phenomenon is that a lot of people are caught in an addictive feedback-loop, such as those who are already in the spotlights, where they feel driven to generate "look at me" occasions in order to generate yet more such occasions. For instance, movie stars will do outrageous things so that they will get on the media, thereby stay in the public eye, and thereby increase their chances of being asked to perform again. Altogether, "celebrities" seem incapable of acting like ordinary people in public, and feel compelled to display themselves at all times. Princess Diana and her companion went to dine in the public restaurant of the Ritz the night they died--complaining of the publicity this created, even though the companion's father owned the hotel, and they could have dined in total privacy. Some world-famous rock singer (Stevie Wonder) we had never heard of was unable to simply attend his son's high school graduation like everyone else, but felt compelled to grab the stage, sing a song, and give a speech (SPS, 18/6/01). Some people propose marriage or become engaged to each other only while on TV, but some of these already were celebrities when they did. For instance, in 2001, Miss America accepted a televised proposal of marriage from a band musician on stage during the Miss Hawaii Pageant, virtually stealing the limelight from Miss Hawaii (SPS, 19/6/01). One TV personality everybody except us seems to know and was featured on the cover of Time (13/3/00) had a video of her intestine (made during a colon examination) put on TV.

*Somebody has called this the age of mass loquacity. One expression is everybody trying to publish their life's story, telling the rest of the world what a hard time they have had. Since 1995, there have been web diaries, which is part of this trend. Another expression is to publish a personal

home page on the Internet where the author announces "here I am, here is my pierced nipple, this is how much I weigh, here is my dog or cat, and here is my life's story," and of course now, some people are video broadcasting their lives non-stop around the clock, right down to the toilet and other intimate things. When people are not broadcasting themselves, they are watching other people broadcasting themselves (Time, 26/6/2000). One couple agreed to have the birth of their child shown on TV (AP in SHJ, 20/3/00). Now that is reality. Couples have net-broadcast their break-ups--and 2 million people tuned in (Newsweek, 9 April 01). It all makes one wonder whether one knows any of these people who exhibit themselves, or whether one knows any of the people who waste precious time tuning in.

Literally millions of people are filming themselves and putting themselves on the Internet, hoping that somebody will watch them. In order to get that opportunity, some of them will do the most outlandish things. One such site shows a woman having sex on a plane with a naked one-toothed 80-year-old dancing man. Some of the women who put their whole lives on the Internet first went out and bought new and classy underwear (Newsweek, 12 March 01).

People who don't actually display themselves produce some kind of visual product to be shown, and hope people will watch it. One of these consists of a cartoon of a man defecating. Somebody has said that everybody will be so busy making movies there will not be any audience left to watch them.

Apparently, there are hundreds of thousands of people out there who show themselves playing a song, or who produce a song without showing themselves, hoping to thereby break into the big time, and one can download at least a million songs from the web. Some sites offer nothing but filthy talk, and apparently extremely filthy talk. This might be called the "if you won't look at me, at least look at my entertainment" (Time, 27/3/00; Newsweek, 7 Aug. 00).

*An extremely popular TV series has been "Real World"(!) in which strangers agree to move in together and have their lives taped and broadcast.

*One new self-display genre is for celebrities to give video broadcast tours of their expensive homes, which sometimes have super-expensive kitchens in which nothing has ever been cooked (Time, 7 May 01). This combines Mammon and "please look at me."

*There are few public acts more symbolic of "please look at me" externalism than karaoke (a Japanese invention and word), in which individuals (usually at a nightclub or bar) sing lyrics to songs, using a microphone and on a stage, while a recording of the song is being played in the background. The challenge is to sing all the words correctly, and to give an emotional performance. The practice both plays and preys upon externalistic culture's fascination with pop and rock singers as entertainers, the desire of so many externalistic people to be "show business personalities," to "break into show business," and to be seen performing (usually on a stage), and on people's willingness to embarrass themselves mightily if it will gain them even short-lived attention (usually less than the proverbial 15 minutes) from others. Some people now spend a good part of their time going to "karaoke night" at various bars, and have even created a role of karaoke singer for themselves.

*Some people show themselves off through autobiographic books, though these days, people often "construct" their pasts. One such woman "told all," curious how her ex-lover, ex-husband, and current husband would react (Time, 30/4/01). One writer asked all the many women he had had sex with to pose naked for an annotated book about them--and 90% of them agreed. His current wife had no qualms about the project (Time, 17/4/00).

*Yet others write diaries that they post on the net for the world to see. At one time, this was a very private thing to do, and one would never want one's mother to find the key to the (formerly often locked) diary, and read it. Now, many people "tell all" in their net diaries, begging the billions to read them. One website is called diaryland, and has 150,000 regular users (SPS, 3 May 01). Who has time to read all these diaries?

*Keeping abreast of progress. Body exhibitionism has certainly been increasing in our society, and one would have thought that individual factors would contribute much as to who will exhibit their ordinarily more private parts. What is amazing these days is that entire collectivities of people who

have gotten together for motives and purposes other than body exhibition are beginning to exhibit themselves. For instance, an entire women's rugby team from Ohio State University posed topless in front of the Lincoln Memorial in DC, the Australian Olympic soccer team posed in full frontal nudity for a calendar, and an entire club of middle-aged British matrons similarly posed in the nude for a calendar to raise money for charity, though somewhat more coyly than the soccer players, and they were promptly imitated by other groups of both sexes around England: hunters, chefs, farmers, firefighters, etc. Watching the Western media has not been all that uplifting to the Russians, where there are now nude female weather reporters and news anchors on TV. No wonder colds and flus are becoming epidemic (SHA, 11 June 00).

*It is ironic that voyeuristic TV shows of unrealistic staged events are called "reality programming."

*One reason people clamor to get on voyeur-type of shows is that in some cases, especially in Europe, they have become stepping stones to becoming pop and pin-up stars, in addition of course to being seen on the voyeur show itself.

*According to a 6/2000 poll, a surprisingly large number of people are willing to show almost anything on television, including being drunk (16%), eating an insect or a rat (20%), being naked (8%), and having sex (5%). Also, 59% of respondents thought that this was a very harmless trend. Many of the stunts pulled off in order to set a Guinness Record, such as playing pinball machines 17 straight days in a row, are really also of the "please look at me" type.

*One show leads to another. The "Survivor" survivor promptly made a nude appearance on the "Letterman" show (Newsweek, 4 Sept. 00).

*The "Survivor" TV finale was watched by 50 million viewers (SHJ, 25/8/00).

*While only 10,000 Americans applied to the Peace Corps in a recent 12-month period, almost 50,000 applied for the "Survivor II" externalistic voyeurist TV series (Time, 4 Sept. 00).

*People are so avid for visibility and recognition that they carry out a courtship on TV where 6 million viewers tell them what to do, including planning their \$45,000 wedding and where they will be going for their honeymoon (SHJ, 6 Sept. 00). We predict a short marriage.

*Nudists in Europe prefer to be called naturists, claiming it is a movement back to nature, and the movement is certainly expanding. We suspect it has at least something to do with the "please look at me, please, please, please look at me" culture. In fact, one of the slogans for one of these resorts is "See and Be Seen." There are now dozens of naturist beaches and entire resorts on the Mediterranean alone. At just one of these, 40,000 naturists will be found during the summer months. The French government has been promoting naturist resorts as a means of stimulating the economy. In one such place, there are no fewer than 50 bars and restaurants, where it is however polite to put a towel on one's chair before one sits on it. (If they didn't, we would not sit there.) While many naturists claim to be above sex, this is patently not true, as many other naturists will also admit. In fact, some naturist bakeries will sell bread shaped in the form of various private anatomical parts (Time, 24/7/00).

*In the Austrian alps, there are now ski runs just for naked skiers.

*A fashion writer said that the divide between fashion and taboo has blurred. E.g., celebrities will go into public virtually naked. Grandmothers and great-grandmothers will dress up like tarts. We say that many of these people do not know what they look like from behind.

*First, our fashion industry began to feature unfeminine skeletal women as fashion models, then virtually naked ones, and then it added themes of homosexuality, female heroin addiction and kiddie porn. The bottom of this slippery slope seems to be yet far off insofar as now, several leading fashion magazines have begun to show ads featuring themes of bestiality, i.e., women in poses

suggesting that they are having sex with dogs--large dogs, that is. More and more people will stop at nothing to get to be looked at.

*One of the few times the public seemed to actually get repulsed by a "please look at me" event was the "Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire" contest and wedding in early 2000.

*Many people see being accidentally in the midst of a public disaster as a PR opportunity. A young woman without a husband who lost her baby in the day care center of the Oklahoma City federal building when it was blown up promptly did two things: she sought shrinkery, and asked 30 (!) different physicians to artificially inseminate her which, to their credit, they refused to do. She then also wrote an article about herself in Newsweek (14/4/97).

*Within 24 hours after a huge terrorist bomb exploded in the basement of the World Trade Center in New York City, 19 different parties claimed the credit for it--all of them falsely. It sounds to us as if they all wanted to be "looked at."

*On the last VT they made of themselves, the 2 boy mass killers of the Littleton, CO, high school speculated excitedly about who would make a Hollywood film about them.

*One of the things people have begun to do in order to be "looked at" more is present false personae of themselves, including telling all sorts of lies about themselves in order to draw attention. For instance, it is believed that about 75% of veterans these days fabricate at least some of their military experiences, almost always in the direction of aggrandizement (SPS, 2 July 01).

*The cheese phenomenon. The futuristic TV series "Max Headroom" of the early 1980s depicted a media-controlled society deeply divided into two subcultures: one of affluence in the highly-guarded sectors and buildings of the privileged class, and an underworld in the slums and on the streets. One feature of the show was that news about the most horrible developments were being told on TV by smiling news announcers, mostly women. This was, of course, meant as a parody of the media culture and its unreality--but around 1996, we began to notice that this futuristic spoof was beginning to become reality. We began to see more and more news announcers (mostly local ones) who smiled either while they told of news about terrible atrocities, or who broke into a smile the moment they came to the end of such a news item. Strangely enough, it seems to be mostly women announcers who have been doing this. It also struck us during the news coverage of the Littleton school massacre how this was happening a great deal on national TV networks. Almost all the men announcers were serious, while several of the women announcers smiled. Furthermore, one of the female students who was being interviewed immediately after the massacre was smirking when she told what had happened, including people dropping dead by her side. We wonder what is happening here. We see this phenomenon both among males and females, and teenagers and adults, but we seem to see it more in women and vastly less in older people. Older people have probably been less encaptured by the media culture while younger ones are growing up with an encaptured mind. Since men have a tendency to display their assets while women have a tendency to display themselves, this would probably help explain the apparently greater prevalence of this phenomenon among females. Perhaps there is a gender difference that is developing about how one responds to being in the TV limelight. Perhaps more women than men see this as analogous to some kind of pop singer being videotaped, and unconsciously see this as an opportunity to display themselves rather than to keep the subject matter in primary focus, and to bring their demeanor into coherence with it. There may be additional explanations, but first we encourage readers to look discerningly at what they see on TV, and not to dismiss lightly the Max Headroom prediction of the media future.

A few specific documentations follow.

*On the news, a psychiatrist told that "this morning, I have treated a child who held a gun to five children in a school"--all the time while she was smiling from ear to ear (NBC Evening News, 28/4/98).

*On the 27/8/00 Syracuse CBS TV station, the local woman announcer reported a murder-suicide--and then broke into a very pleasant smile as she swiftly blended into the next news item.

*On 2 Nov. 00, we saw a bright and big-eyed news woman smiling from ear to ear, announcing an episode of local water supply pollution.

*In 5/99, Israel's prime minister also told with a smile on his face how one of his predecessors got assassinated.

*As the Balkan War dragged on, we noticed more and more that news announcers kept smirking regardless of the seriousness of the news that they reported. If they did not smirk during an announcement, they often broke into one at the end of it.

*In mid-May, a refugee from Kosovo was interviewed on TV, and as he told of terrible horrors that he had experienced, there was a slight smile even on his face. Not even the juxtaposition of news items about the Balkan War and a horrible tunnel fire in Austria deterred a woman newscaster from smiling heroically.

*After we had had a drought, farmers were in despair, and water use in some nearby areas was being restricted, we saw a weatherman on TV in mid-August telling us--smiling from ear to ear--that the long-awaited rain had not materialized.

*When Oklahoma and adjacent states were devastated by 76 tornadoes in 5/99, with winds of almost 300 mph and inflicting 100s of millions of dollars in damage, destroying thousands of homes and causing scores of deaths, again some of the eyewitnesses interviewed would tell terrible horror stories--while smiling. One of the women announcers on the 4 May 99 evening news, which devoted much coverage to this storm, also smiled broadly.

*We saw a documentary of the 1998 ice storm that first devastated Quebec and then New York State, leaving some places without power for weeks. At one point, the utility companies had as many as 1,300 repair crews out working, from all over the country. Amazingly, several distressed citizens, perceiving that they were being filmed or interviewed by TV crews, broke into smiles. Perhaps when the end of the world comes, and the devil comes to pick up his share of souls, he will make them all smile by videotaping them as they are being herded up.

*Many news media have run a picture of the inventor of the abortion drug RU-486, almost always displaying some of the pills in his hands while smiling broadly. We saw the most recent version of this picture in 12/99.

*When pro-abortion groups hold a public event, one should not be surprised that they are smiling, but what is bizarre is when anti-abortion groups march, they are typically shown (at least while they are looking into the cameras) as exuberant and smiling, rather than solemn, even while they are carrying gruesome pictures of mutilated babies. It is hardly conceivable that Jews marching in front of an old concentration camp showing concentration camp pictures would be laughing and smiling while demanding that there never again be a Holocaust.

*In 7/99, we received an advertisement for a periodical that said "Wolf Wolfensberger, we have some shocking news about America's moral decay," and next to this alarming message were the pictures of the two editors of the periodical, smiling from ear to ear.

*The incongruously grotesque smiles on people's faces as they recite unspeakable horrors may very well also be related to a "tell all" mentality that the media have cultivated, in which merit is bestowed on people being filmed in proportion to the outlandishness of the stories that they tell.

*There are many plausible reasons for the rise of "please look at me" behaviors. One may be that increasingly, modernistic parents have little time for their children. Instead, they devote their time to their careers and their own externalisms, and they occupy their children by giving them externalisms (their own computers, TVs, etc.). Children may very well thus be ending up deprived of human attention and affection, and it is well-known that this tends to make people do things to attract the attention of others, especially others who are important to them. Thus, contemporary child-rearing practices may be creating more people who desire, and even "need," lavish attention

from others, even from strangers. Another possibility is that when people come before a TV camera, they get it in their minds that they are entertaining. A third possibility is that they are so inflated by the idea of getting broadcast that they become overjoyed, regardless of the occasion. One other thing that also seems to contribute to the "say cheese" phenomenon is the abrupt shifts on TV among very different contents and programs, and the incongruousness of the ads between other content. For example, immediately after a news coverage of the Littleton massacre, the program broke into another item that was accompanied by very pretty music. This sort of thing is bound to desensitize the population and totally disorient their sense of reality. How about, "World's Worst Disaster; 50 million burn slowly to death. Be sure to enjoy Hershey Chocolate Kisses for the holidays. La la la la la."

Whatever the dynamics of the "say cheese" phenomenon may be, none of them are good.

*If you haven't noticed the "say cheese" phenomenon before, you should now. And remember: never smile into a camera, not even a still camera!

Externalism: Celebrititis

Celebrititis is closely related to the externalism and "please look at me" phenomena.

*In our media culture, people are no longer expected to be accomplished or responsible, merely to be glamorous and visible, and being glamorously visible in a decadent way attracts just as much admiration and imitation as in a positive way. Somebody said, "we don't recognize ourselves unless we are recognized on the news." One consequence has been that the lines between fame, celebrity, notoriety and even criminality have begun to crumble, which augurs very ill for the future and for crime trends.

*People's confusion of notoriety with fame is also expressed in the peculiar fact that so many people these days certainly give themselves an appearance that will be noted by others, but not necessarily positively valued. Scrounge attire or hair dyed purple are good examples. It also illustrates that being noticed is more important to people than being esteemed, which certainly deals a serious blow to the self-esteem craze. Maybe what is needed is a new "being-noticed" craze.

*An analysis of the modernistic "celebrity" phenomenon pointed out that most celebrities are people who do things that are very public, the exception being a few writers or spectacular criminals like the Unabomber. Some people without any discernible talent can become celebrities merely by getting enough media exposure. Once somebody attains a celebrity status, people want to know everything about them! What their homes look like, what they eat, what their hobbies are, etc. However, people who have absolutely no interest in such celebrities get ceaselessly exposed to them against their will, either when they turn on their radios or TVs, or go out into public where they are exposed to popular culture. Many people are dying to become celebrities, and then start complaining about the hardship of being one, such as not being able to go to a grocery store without getting mobbed or throwing away garbage without someone sifting through it (MM, 9/00).

*It is utterly amazing what qualifies one to become a regular on the celebrity circuit. All Monica Lewinsky had to do was crudely seduce the president, and now she is everywhere where celebrities get displayed. Patty Hearst had to have herself kidnapped and raped, and then voluntarily participated in an armed robbery, which lent her an apparently life-long status as a celebrity (Time, 29/1/01).

The utter confusion by pitiful modernists between reasonably legitimate fame and infamous notoriety was underlined by the fact that once it became known what kind of lipstick Monica Lewinsky had been using, it was immediately sold out, at least in places such as New York City (Newsweek, 15/3/99). One would have thought that the last thing a woman would want to be these days is another Monica Lewinsky.

*There are some people who believe that our society is losing its sense of shame. As evidence, they cite hoods and crooks being treated as heroes, people who get caught in a malfeasance (e.g., in public life) never showing a sense of shame, and people bearing all in front of talk shows, and thereby often the whole world.

*One thing that the O. J. Simpson trial has brought out more clearly than any other event so far is that it is extremely difficult in the US for a celebrity figure to receive a fair trial even if he/she is guilty, i.e., to be convicted if guilty.

*Generally, the "heroes" of US teenagers are almost entirely sports stars, rock musicians and movie actors. One exception in one poll was that the Pope ranked as No. 1, but No. 2 was Dennis Rodman, a satanic ball player entertainer of ambiguous sexual identity. In other polls, the Pope ranked very low.

People used to become famous because of greatness, but nowadays, people assume that someone who is famous for being a celebrity must possess greatness.

*The US postal service spent \$1 million to design a stamp commemorating the decadent, vulgar, drug-addicted pop singer Elvis Presley--and by late 1993, this had become the most profitable US postage stamp ever issued (SHJ, 15/11/93).

*In 1993, the most admired man by college-bound US high school students was a basketball player (Michael Jordan), and the most admired woman was a TV news journalist (Connie Chung) (Parade, 2 May 93). How sadly revealing of the junking of young people's minds by the media.

*A large proportion of Americans (especially less educated ones) name their children after TV personalities--either real or fictitious, once again demonstrating how much the media own the minds of modernistic people (DT, 6/97). The names of "black" boys have increasingly been those of basketball stars. The names of political figures are on their way out.

*Ever more public facilities (including airports) are being named after entertainment figures.

*Newsweek (23/8/99) described Princess Diana as a "deeply troubled dimwit" who spent vast amounts of time in superstitious pursuits (as with astrologers, energy healers, colonic irrigators), and who sought out people who would flatter her. And imagine that she is the idol or model for millions and millions of people around the world. There were even people who had psychotic breaks which they attributed to the death of Princess Diana (SHJ, 14/6/98). In 1997, Time got more letters about lesbian actress Ellen DeGeneres and the dippy Princess Diana than about any other issue.

*Surely one of the signs of our times is the emergence not only of a multi-billion dollar entertainment industry, but of a multi-billion dollar entertainment industry about the entertainment industry--i.e., magazines and syndicated television programs about so-called "media personalities," TV, film and music stars, and other celebrities. More than 16½ million viewers (almost 10% of the US population) have watched "Entertainment Tonight," a syndicated nightly TV program of news about entertainment. These programs and magazines cover everything from news about the entertainment business, to biographies of stars, to stories of lavish wealth and decadent lifestyles of many of these celebrities. Indeed, one such program was entitled "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous."

*A peculiar recent modernistic development is the explosion of "websites"--i.e., places on the international computer network--that are devoted to every externalistic pop and guru figure imaginable. For instance, when a lithe 17-year-old youngster becomes a tennis champion, not only will tens of thousands of people the world over become fans of the person, but a good proportion of these fans will each devote the time, money, and other resources to establish a website on that champion (Time, 17 Sept. 98).

*It is amazing and revealing that there are untold thousands of websites on Elvis Presley in cyberspace. However, only two kinds are permitted: worshipful ones, or savage spoofs. Anything in-between is considered as presenting an "inappropriate" image of Elvis and risks legal action by his estate. The spoofs, on the other hand, are constitutionally protected (SHJ, 15/8/97).

*Yet another phenomenon closely related to the "please look at me" compulsion is becoming a so-called celebrity junkie, which a lot of people do. They try virtually everything to somehow

become associated with, or even only be seen with or photographed with, some kind of celebrity, even if it is a person whose celebrity is constituted of notoriety.

*Empty modernistic people's externalistic reliance on the media and media figures is going so far that people write to such media figures and tell them things like they are father or mother figures to them even though they have never met. Apparently, a huge proportion of youth assume that the persona presented on a TV screen is the real person. Females are vastly more susceptible to this sort of thing, insofar as they make up the vast majority of many audiences of media figures. When one considers how many popular media figures there are at a given moment, and how many people try to contact each such person in a given day, it is absolutely staggering. For instance, James Dobson, Christian radio host, receives up to 12,000 letters, phone calls and e-mails every day by people who want him to tell them how to live, or how to resolve their problems (USN&WR, 4 May 1998).

*When John-John Kennedy and Carolyn Bessette got married in a tiny isolated island church that could hold about 20 people, everybody started to want to be married there (Time, 7 Oct. 96). When the couple died in an air crash in 1999, many people who never knew them mourned more than if one of their relatives had died (Time, 2 Aug. 99).

*Newsweek (28/8/00) both showed and enumerated a whole series of "celebrities" juxtaposed to either Gore or Bush, and we are proud to be able to say that we could not identify a single one of them. But apparently, and probably even obviously, everybody seems to assume that a candidate's chances are improved by being juxtaposed to a celebrity, almost totally regardless as to why that celebrity is celebritous. We are confident that nobody intelligent enough to read TIPS would fall for such primitive thinking or image manipulations.

*All one has to do in order to get thousands of marriage proposals is to gain media visibility, and not even much of that is necessary. Even the openly homosexual "Survivor" show winner got lots of marriage offers from both men and women (AP in SHJ, 31/8/00).

*It is depressing to contemplate that one of history's largest TV audiences (90 million) was drawn by an Oprah Winfrey interview of Michael Jackson in 2/93. Surely, TIPS readers would not be part of this scene. A few years from now, people will say, "an interview of whom by whom? And why?"

*The news magazines Time and Newsweek now not only devote a large portion of their space to entertainment, but incessantly drop names of celebrities, without explaining who they are or why one should be interested in them, as if readers already know all this. Surely, we cannot be the only ones who turn page after page in bemused and consternated mystification as to who these--mostly decadent and unproductive--people are.

*Universities around the world have become so dishonest as to give honorary degrees or other honors to celebrities for nothing but having attained celebrity status. For instance, it is hard to believe that gloved pop singer Michael Jackson would be invited by one of the most august academic institutions of the world--Oxford University--to give a lecture on child welfare, but then Oxford had previously invited lecturers of a similar class, such as O. J. Simpson (Time, 18/9/00). Surely, this is yet another sign of our times.

Not infrequently, the public figures to whom universities give honorary degrees are soon caught in some scandal or even crime. But sometimes, people get given academic hoods even after they had been revealed to be hoods, as when Syracuse University gave an honorary degree to the disgraced US Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Henry Cisneros, who had the nerve to tell the students to "be careful" if they entered public life (SHJ, 7 Oct. 94).

*A peculiar thing on the education scene is that a software billionaire has shelled out \$100 million to create a free online university where the professors are not merely "average professors" but all "stars," which turns out to mean that they are "celebrities." Apparently, the assumption is that if one is a celebrity, one will automatically either know more than other people, be a better

teacher than other teachers, or at least engage learners better than other people, which is certainly a most peculiar sign of our externalistic and media-obsessed age (Time, 27/3/00).

*Some people try to garner celebrity status by falsely claiming to have some kind of relationship to some celebrity.

*Very revealing of our culture is that people often dream of entertainment celebrities.

*Apparently, the identification of the empty people of modernism with entertainment characters is ever on the increase, and many people are becoming outright "dangerously obsessed" with ("possessed by?") such stars (SHJ, 9 Nov. 90).

There now exists a national association of fan clubs, of which there are apparently as many as 1500, some of them, in turn, having hundreds of local chapters. For instance, there are 300 Elvis Presley fan clubs around the world, and the New Kids on the Block fan clubs have 140,000 members.

*The existence of innumerable impersonators of entertainment figures is also a combination of externalism (I am someone other than myself) and the "please look at me" pathetic ("I pretend to be someone else who is well-known"). For instance, there are many thousands of Elvis Presley impersonators all over the world, and entire Presley impersonators conventions and contests. At least Elvis was not mean-hearted, only decadent.

*In numbers too large to imagine, there are people in the media-controlled world these days who identify themselves with a media figure to such an extent that they take on the appearance, attire, mannerisms, voice, and other characteristics of their respective media model. In 1996, 2000 women and a few men competed in a Rosie O'Donnell look-alike contest, and 180 finalists paid their own way to be on her TV talk show, not to mention what they spent on identical clothes, hair-dos, etc. Apparently, it has never occurred to these empty people that they should develop an identity of their own that would be worth imitating by Rosie, who badly needs a better identity. There are innumerable other media figure look-alike contests, including contests for Chicano singer Selena who has been dead for years but has since been celebrated in a movie (Newsweek, 25/9/96).

*A cartoon character lamented that despite feeling ill, he had to go to a party because "being a celebrity isn't easy...life's a constant sacrifice" (Rex Morgan, SPS, 7/7/01).

*Until recently there was a theme park in Anaheim, California, where for a fee, a person could pretend to be a celebrity and get treated like one. For instance, when a guest arrived, suddenly a crowd would gather around the guest and shout "I can't believe it's really you, I love your work," and things like this. Fake reporters staged fake interviews that permitted the phony celebrity to live out a fantasy, and lots of people snapped pictures of the visitor. When one ate at the restaurant, and people started running in to take one's picture, they were intercepted by bouncers who threw them out, etc.

*Celebrity status is obviously very corrupting. The wisdom traditions were right that the path upwards calls for self-denial, self-negation, humility, anonymity, etc.

*We have to be clear that the imperial powers of the world love, and fuel, people's celebrity obsessions, because it takes their attention away from what is really important.

More material on externalism will follow in the module on "Entertainment Media & Communication, Their Mind Control, & Addiction to Them."

Segmentation & Divisioning

Segmentation of the unity of reality is one of the hallmarks of the minds of modernity. In other words, things that are related are treated as if they were unrelated. Even worse, almost everything is treated as if it had no relationship to anything else. There are many contributors to divisioning of reality: radical individualism, a materialized conceptualization of entities (including people) as machines made up of separable parts, being overloaded so as to no longer take time to think, and being crazified.

*One of the hallmarks of modern mentality is a divisioning of people from each other, including a denial of universal, shared experiences. This separates people from each other, and from adaptive polity. Each party with some conceivable identity or difference identifies itself as separate from others, with concerns that could not possibly be understood or shared by anyone else. We have cited the formation of numerous particularistic special interest groups as one example of this, our favorite example being "Mothers of Murdered Teenagers," which is only for mothers (not fathers, brothers or sisters, or anyone else), only for those whose children have been murdered (not been killed by disease or automobile or sports accident or anything else), and only when the children have been murdered in their adolescence (not in infancy, early childhood or adulthood). In 3/1989, we discovered, in just one city (Syracuse) and in just one religious denomination in that city (Catholicism), nine separate types of support groups for people who have had someone close to them die. One is for widows and widowers--but there is also a separate one for younger widows and widowers. One is for those who have had a loved one murdered, one is for those who have had a loved one die, and then there is one for "general bereavement." In addition to these groups, there is also a hotline for the bereaved. And there are oodles of other such, and similar, groups in the area not affiliated with Catholicism.

Again, we note that if people had any sanity or common sense left, or if at least they were well-embedded in adaptive, functioning natural communalities and support groups, there would be much less perceived need for such groups, and people ought to be able to share each other's sorrow and grief, and help each other relevantly, even if they have not all experienced the same particulars. For instance, if all the above Catholics were part of truly Catholic "base communities," they would not all need highly specialized quasi-therapy groups.

*In England, there are support groups of people who have arachnoiditis, an inflammation of a spinal membrane that results in backache. Sufferers from other kinds of backaches need not apply (source clipping from Craig Newnes).

*The "mothers of murdered teenagers" silliness of ever greater segmentation is underlined by the formation of a United States Chess Association for the Deaf. It makes a lot of sense to have a special chess association for the blind because blind chess playing requires all sorts of adaptations and accommodations in the rules, none of which is the case for deaf chess players.

*Another example to what absurd extremes segmentation will take us is a book, Accepting Ourselves, on "the unique concerns of gay/lesbian alcoholics." Expect next a book on the unique concerns of gay/lesbian purple Macedonian alcoholic seniors.

*Indeed, in San Francisco, there is already an organization of Transgender Meter Maids (Time, 14/5/01).

*Unfortunately, a whole new organization has just sprung up entitled The Association for Persons in Supported Employment. No wonder we, and everyone we know, is absolutely exhausted. Organizations and fields keep segmentizing and sub-sub-subsegmentizing. We belong to too many organizations and have to read too many periodicals and newsletters.

*Elderly people in Australia have gone much further than forming voluntary associations, and have actually launched a political party, called Gray Power, which has begun to field candidates for office. This is a very mixed blessing. On the one hand, it will give older people a much more visible political presence, but it is rather sad to see such divisioning of society (Source clipping from Mike Rungie).

*In recent decades, the successes of the various civil rights movements have resulted, among other things, in the invention of new fields of study and new study emphases, particularly on the college level. For instance, many colleges now have "Afro-American Studies" and "Women's Studies" programs. However, we think all this has gone a bit too far when a course on "Feminist Research Methods" comes along. Does this mean that standard procedures for controlled collection of data, for objective observation and measurement, for applying and interpreting various statistical analyses, etc., are invalid? We wonder what in the world such "feminist research methods" might be, but even though we are curious, we have declined to enroll in the course.

*Trying to capitalize on modernistic people's segmentizing mentality, food companies have begun to sell "food for women" (e.g., breakfast cereals) even though there is no evidence for its unique benefits (Time, 25/6/01).

*There now is a Disabled Womens International Newsletter. This strikes us as yet another example of segmentation, implying that its more important for one handicapped woman to be in touch with another handicapped woman in Timbuktu than to be in touch with a handicapped man next door.

*A peculiar relatively recent development is to have people identify themselves with as many relevant adjectives as they can think of whenever they make a statement or voice an opinion. For instance, virtually every letter to the editor of major news magazines such as Time and Newsweek now begins with the phrase, "As a...", as in "As a middle-aged Italian-American divorced single father of two girls...", or the equivalent. One of the best (worst?) examples was someone identifying herself as the personal care attendant of an African-American, blind, quadriplegic, homosexual man. Whatever is the intent of the writers/speakers, it surely reflects the particularistic mindset of our age, that one cannot relate to or understand another's experience unless one has the exact same characteristics or experiences, and that one needs certain "credentials" to be able to speak to an issue.

*There is now a new cookbook specifically for families of murder victims, entitled "A Survivor's Cookbook: Food for Our Soul." It is a collection of the favorite recipes of murder victims, and the author says "there may be people sitting down in the spirit of their lost loved one" (Newsweek, 30 April 2001). If the recipes are so good, why can't they be enjoyed by people who have not lost a family member to murder? Or people who have lost a family member to cancer? Or to an automobile accident? Or a train wreck?

*Even some of the citizens of modernity occasionally have flashes of insight on the segmentation absurdity. One radio station manager said that any day now, he expects to see "an all-gay, all-weather (radio) station for black males" (Newsweek, 19/12/88).

Mundality

One of the signs of our time is that the world is becoming the same everywhere, as all societies are embracing modernism, much of it transmitted by the media.

*American soap operas, cartoon shows such as "The Simpsons," and other TV shows, are being watched all over the world.

*Newsweek (26/2/96) astutely referred to a "global ghetto culture," meaning that in big cities all over the world, a surprisingly homogeneous culture is developing that shares features such as disfunctional and alienated youth, rap music, break dancing, graffiti everywhere, violence, etc.

*In France, police can search somebody's home without a warrant, and their judges are addressed as "Mr./Madame President." However, so many French have watched so much American TV that they now routinely demand that police show a warrant when they come to search their homes, and address their judges as "Your Honor" (Reader's Digest, 8/97).

*Kevin Muckermeyermann. In Germany, traditional German names for boys are going out of style, and more and more boys are being given English, American and Celtic names that sound very incongruous, such as Kevin (AP in SHJ, 15/2/92).

*A traditional compliment in Fiji used to be, "you have gained weight," but shortly after television became more widely available on Fiji's main island in 1995, eating disorders that once were unheard of began to explode--so to speak--among girls. Within three years, 15% of female high school students had begun to vomit in order to control their weights, and the more girls watched TV, the more weight insanity they developed. Also, the girls began to change their hairstyles and projected mood so as to match those of Western popular TV entertainment programs (SPS, 22/5/99).

*The homogenization of modernistic values and practices across the world is sometimes astounding. In 1996, Belgium was rocked by a scandal of sex-related child abductions and killings, at about the same time as the same happened in Ecuador on the other side of the world (NC Register, 10 Nov. 96).

*Modernism is so homogeneous throughout the world that the same dysfunctional phenomena pop up in different countries, independent of each other except for the common shared dynamics that give rise to them. An example is that in certain German human services, an increasing number of security personnel have to be employed because clients are increasingly belligerent. Some of them even show up at welfare, unemployment and similar offices accompanied by dogs trained to fight (6 May 99 clipping from Susanne Hartfiel).

*Newsweek (13/12/93) carried an item describing the internationalization of crime, and the development of the equivalent of global Mafias. Actually, this is merely the mirror side of the new kinds of international corporations.

Combinations of Elements of Modernism

*The intellectual, academicized, and researchized expression of contemporary hedonistic radical individualism is radical constructionism which has been enthusiastically embraced in recent years among the intelligentsia and academia. This worldview implies a radical subjectivism which is in perfect harmony with radical individualism, and particularly a hedonistic radical individualism, and is also very consistent with the modernistic segmentizing mentality in that it is deeply inimical to an acknowledgement of universals, and derivatively to such things as generalizable learning and teaching strategies. After all, this worldview implies that every person is so totally different from every other person as to have unique learning processes, and therefore also require unique teaching processes.

*Here are a few thoughts about the bombing of the federal building and courthouse in Oklahoma City.

1. The Oklahoma City disaster has to be understood as one of the more dramatic and visible ways of Vietnam coming home to roost. The never fully confessed or repented mass slaughter of women, children and other civilians in Vietnam by US troops or their allies is recapitulated in the carnage of babies, women and other civilians in Oklahoma.

2. How little moral judgment and discernment normative people normatively have was underlined by a neighbor of James Nichols and his brother Terry who were accomplices of the bomber: "I'll bet my life that Jim and Terry aren't involved" (Newsweek, 1 May 95).

3. The bombing will prove to be a gigantic and unexpected boon to the post-primary production economy. For decades to come, there will be vast increases in the sale of security devices, and the construction methods and layout of all public buildings from now on will be reviewed with an eye to bomb resistance. Such buildings will become vastly more expensive to construct as a result (Newsweek, 1 May 95).

4. The shrink people can also rub their hands. As a psychiatry department chief said in Oklahoma, "therapy is going to have to be available for years" (Newsweek, 1 May 95).

5. On the positive side, the disaster mobilized old-fashioned American virtues of initiative and spontaneous organization. Within minutes, people who had been trained to be nurses converged spontaneously to the site so that within about 30 minutes, every wounded person had at least one nurse in assistance. It is a good question if that could have happened in many other countries.

*What is always noteworthy is when several bad trends or phenomena converge. One such convergence was a 13-year-old (youth cult) girl ("please look at me") with the first name Brittney writing a song in 2001, entitled "I. M. Me" (individualism), about instant messaging on the net, and getting a rave reception in the youth culture.

*A survey of young people between ages 14-24 in Austria has found that they are increasingly withdrawing from societal life, and concentrating on their own ego, insisting on an individualization in combination with a pronounced hedonism. Hygiene, body care and fitness rank very high in their priorities. Just about the most important activity in their free time is listening to music. For two-

thirds, shopping is very high on the list, though hardly any are involved in cultural activities. One expert called all this a "withdrawal upon the own self with a concentration on one's body" (AW, 27/2/99). We believe that there is nothing uniquely Austrian about this, but that we are merely seeing a local version of the world-wide culture of modernism.

*Externalism and sensualism are part of the culture of modernism. It is, therefore, very characteristic of this culture to advertise diet pills with the slogan, "No need for will power" (Newsweek, 13/3/95).

*Western modernistic materialism and self-centeredness is turning out to be undermining Communism. Historically, many people have been inspired by socialistic ideals of public-spirited altruism, but as in the West, this is now also fading away in socialist countries, including China. The self-centered individualism that is emerging instead is seeking quick gain at any cost, and is fostering an atmosphere of corruption.

*It used to be that we heard a boom box car drive through our neighborhood once in awhile, but starting in 1999, we now hear such practically several times a day. Of course, that is yet another living out of unbridled sensualistic externalistic individualism combined with an entitlement attitude.

*In the 1980s, gambling became very big in the US, facilitated by an explosion of state lotteries and casinos, as noted before. By itself, that would be a major expression of greed, but often, it is accompanied by excessive use of alcohol and drugs, which points to externalism. Many youths have become addicted to gambling, and then have turned to crime to cover their losses.

*Someone has referred to our culture as a computerized, consumerized, celebritized one.

*If one condensed modernistic people's "philosophy of life" down into slogans or phrase capsules, one might get a list such as this one:

No one tells me what to do.

Nobody is going to tell me what to do.

I want "choice."

Live fast, die young, and leave a beautiful corpse.

Better dead than old, ugly, handicapped, or otherwise with "low quality of life."

It's quality of life that counts.

Everyone should do what they feel is right for them.

Everybody should be empowered to be fully autonomous and self-determining.

Having "choices" is the most important thing.

The materialistic life is the good life.

Whoever dies with the most toys wins.

Miscellaneous Other Peculiar Events & Developments of Our Time

*Our long-time friend Dr. Bill Bronston (of Willowbrook-busting fame) recently made an interesting observation. Together with many other people, he noted that currently, there widely prevails a peculiar lethargy and loss of passion about what is right and should be done on the social scene, and believes it has something to do with the "enemy being invisible" these days. In the 1970s, the devil was highly visible, so to speak. There were unequivocal snake pits, and people unequivocally defending them. Now, bosses are saying all the right words, and even if they mean them, the right thing does not get done.

*In retrospect, it is a rather frightening thought that Darwin, Marx and Freud have been widely considered to have dominated much of the intellectual life of the 20th century. Perhaps it is the fall of Marx and Freud that has caused a resurgence in Darwin's popularity in the last 10 years or so. We might also keep in mind here that it was particularly in literature that Freud achieved great dominance among the very people who--at least within academia--have turned to constructivism and political correctness in the last few years. It would appear that despite the fact that they have a wealth of world wisdom to draw on, they seem to be a very gullible lot.

*When we talked about modernism in a 1999 workshop, a participant told us brightly that she also rejected the values of modernism. Naively, we were at first impressed to hear this--until she spilled the beans that she was a post-modernist with a strong feminist agenda.

*Isn't it revealing of the shams of this world when almost all children are getting high school diplomas, and almost half go on to get college degrees, that the literacy rate is lower than it was several decades ago?

*Because contemporary people have been very badly schooled in literacy, and because constructionism has been undermining an orientation to facts, American publishers are publishing more and more materials that are riddled with errors of fact (which could have been checked) and grammatical and spelling errors (Indianapolis Star, 4/17/96; source item from Joe Osburn).

*Soviet guide books for Soviet visitors to the US told them not to be ashamed of their poor English because many Americans cannot speak it well either (Time, 22/5/91).

*Another thing we noted was that stupidity has become popular and celebrated. For instance, social critics have raised the question what it means that there has been a small avalanche of films about "dumb people." Some have called it a virtual "dumb-a-thon." Aside from "Forrest Gump," there was "Dumb and Dumber," "The Jerky Boys," and "Billy Madison." Also, a children's science program on ABC-TV was slated to be exchanged for a cartoon series that was also entitled "Dumb and Dumber," featuring two moronic louts. There has also been an avalanche of how-to books entitled So-and-So for Dummies, or An Idiot's Guide to So-and-So (e.g., etiquette).

*According to some authorities, the Peter Principle has been replaced by the Dilbert Principle, which asserts that it is no longer true that people are promoted until they reach the level of their incompetence, but that these days, they are appointed immediately to a high level without ever passing through the competent phase, and being guaranteed to fail at everything is precisely the reason why they are thusly appointed (Time, 18/3/96).

*The attribution of various anti-social and racist behaviors to a resurgence of Nazism sometimes crosses the threshold to ludicrousness. For instance, there was a huge outcry when a Jewish synagogue in Germany was burned by arsonists, but it turned out that the three malefactors were pitiful youths from broken homes who had been alcoholic for years, who had been in special schools and flunked even these, had not been able to find jobs, and eventually joined skinhead circles out of anomie. Mentally, they were so impaired that they could not discourse coherently about their mental attitudes and motives, and were not able to follow the court proceedings (AW, 22/4/95).

*See time; see time run; see time running out. We have observed a remarkable phenomenon of our time. In an era that has more time-saving gadgetry and instant-everythings than any other, virtually everybody we know complains of having less time available. People who look forward to using their summers to catch up on various things are complaining that even the summers are slipping away from them. Professors who have gone on sabbaticals complain how their sabbaticals got away from them without them being able to use their free time to do what they had meant to do. What is going on? Has a time warp set in? A California psychology professor has begun to speak of people suffering from "time famine," much like an earlier generation had to worry about having enough money. Debi Reidy suggests that perhaps one reason for this is lack of discernment in one's life as to what one's calling really is. This would reveal what is necessary and important, but failing to do so, we throw ourselves into a plethora of fragmented activities. This may be a personal version of our cultural incoherency. Do readers have any answers?

*One of the signs of the times is that major trends that once took a long time to develop can now develop almost overnight. For instance, demographic-related population trends used to change very, very slowly. Now, a 20% shift may take only 2-3 decades.

*By 1987, home meal preparation in the US had declined to the point where only 43% of all such meals included at least one item made from scratch, but by 1997, that figure had dropped further to 38% (Time, 1 June 98). All this has given rise to a "home-meal replacement" market,

which by 1996 accounted for 46% of what Americans ate, half of which was take-out food. People can now serve entire meals from the icebox or freezer in 15 minutes. Cooking will probably soon be no more than a hobby, or an archaic habit studied by anthropologists and historians.

*A poll of the American public revealed that they voted microwaveable foods, air bags and biodegradable trash bags the most important new products of the 1980s (USN&WR, 9 July 90).

*An amazing bit of statistic is that the Campbell brand of canned soup is the fourth-most widely used ingredient for preparing dinner in the US every night, behind meat, seasoning, and pasta or rice (Newsweek, 25/9/96).

*Around 1992, everybody began buying white cars, and by 1993, armies of women began to dye their hair blonde. We knew then that minority, affirmative action, and similar programs would be in trouble, and predicted a conservative backlash. This phenomena may also have been related to the fact that the wearing of white clothes, and particularly white trousers, became very popular between 1990 and 1991, particularly among young people. However, it was not until 11/94 that many other people noted that the backlash had actually occurred. For pickup trucks and sports vehicles, white remained the leading color for several years, green then moved into the No. 1 spot. We were not as certain what this meant as we were about white, but DuPont claimed it reflects people's increasing interest in nature, of which we are a bit dubious (SHJ, 12 Jan. 95).

*Prior to World War II, there was no such thing as teenagers, only youths (FI, 7/96). Even the term teenager did not appear until the third edition of Webster's Dictionary came out. The teenage construct, some people believe, was created by three things: the immature inclinations of children, the modernistic negligence of their parents who failed to channelize these inclinations, and the rapacious attention of the merchants.

*A peculiar phenomenon is the appearance of juvenile punk rock gangs called Straight Edge who do not drink alcohol or do drugs, forego promiscuous sex, believe in saving the earth, and some of whom are even vegetarians--but who enjoy violence and fighting (Time, 30/8/99).

*The world is filling up with so many signs directing one to this or that, or forbidding this or that, that people are becoming desensitized to them, and quit reading them. In one German city, an anti-modernist terrorist struck by producing and posting traffic signs everywhere that look like the real thing but that have nonsensical messages, such as "exit only for cars with and without tires." Because there are so many signs already and these signs look so real, they went undiscovered for some time, showing how little people pay attention to them anyway when there are too many of them or they make no sense.

*In the olden days, city people usually went to spend their vacation in a non-city environment, such as the mountains, the seaside, or the countryside. But with city people increasingly alienated from nature and reality, we now see a rapid spread of "city tourism" where people spend their vacations visiting each others' cities, both at home and abroad. This also accounts for a drop-off of tourism in more rural countries, such as Austria, that formerly were favorite vacation lands.

*A new development is that people are interpreting friendship more and more in terms of talking about one's problems in something resembling group psychotherapy. In the past, friendship had much to do with spending much time together while doing things together, and not psychobabbling (e.g., Tune, 17/1/00).

*In US children's fiction and picture storybooks, grandparents are increasingly depicted as modernistically decadent. Grandmothers can no longer cook or knit, and they buy rather than bake pies; if grandparents had once been farmers, they sold out and moved to Florida, go to aerobics classes and ask their grandchildren to address them by their first name. The little children in the stories know more than their grandparents, and teach them things such as to read (Newsweek, 28/12/92).

*Universities are becoming ever more specialized. At Syracuse University there is an "assistant professor of fibers."

*First Things editor Richard Neuhaus made the interesting observation (8/96) that in the past, the ruling classes had various well-reasoned rationales why they ruled. For instance, feudalism was based on the divine right of kings; the enlightenment provided the argument that rationalist access to truth legitimized rulership; the Marxists claimed access to a peculiar materialist gnosis about class struggles, the dialectic of history, and the scientific management of social processes; and Social Darwinism invoked the fitness of the fittest as a rulership qualification. However, the current over-class no longer has any rationale for its rulership, in good part because it has deconstructed all the prevailing rationales, including of rulership of the divinity, without coming up with a new one.

*One phenomenon of modernism that struck us recently was that people who have embraced an utterly decadent lifestyle concordant with the values of modernism then, when things do not go well in their lives, start writing letters to advice columnists, and expect some kind of a fix from them. In return, the advice columnists (who usually are also modernists) are unfortunately eager to oblige, and take it upon themselves to give these people advice on what to do about the end points of their courses of decadence rather than addressing the underlying and preceding personal and societal decisions, and/or telling them that they simply are the kind of people who get themselves into unfixable messes. For instance, a man with three children from his first marriage married a second woman, and only months later met a third one whom he declared he loved--and expected an advice columnist to solve his problem. Another woman who had been married twice before married a man who had been married four times before--and then complained that her husband was still under his parents' influence.

This also reminds us of certain people who engage in some form of decadence--and then complain when the decadence gets out of hand. Thus, two women (one of them a psychologist!) answered an ad from a man who was openly and explicitly soliciting sadomasochistic sex over the Internet under the name "slave master"--and then, after travelling from many states away to meet with him, complained that he "brutalized them in a way that went beyond what they had intended" (AP in SHJ, 7 June 2000).

In our workshops, we talk about these sorts of things as futile end-point forms of address, which is another way of saying that there is too little too late to be done about such situations.

*This is an all-time first, but definitely a sign of our times: After an introductory Social Role Valorization workshop, the trainers received a complaint that the speakers had used the words "spouses," "husbands" and "wives," but never the word "partners," and that the complainant party had to reassess its involvement in future SRV training. Next, people will be put to death for referring to "husbands" or "wives."

*One observer noted that unlike in former days, satire (as exemplified by Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal") is an impossible and futile literary form today because reality almost always is far more outrageous than even the most imaginative satirist would dare portray.

Computerization

The advent of computers, and especially their ubiquitous presence, is a big sign of our times about which we have many subheadings. The reason why it is important to point out the problems of computerization is that the world these days focuses almost exclusively on the benefits thereof, and that to an idolatrous degree.

Miscellaneous Noteworthy, Strange or Bizarre Computer or Net Phenomena

*In 8/99, it first hit our awareness that there were such things in the job market as "keyboard specialists," sometimes classified as keyboard specialist I, II, etc.

*Computers enable one to make more mistakes faster than ever before in history (Reader's Digest, 11/00).

*A person put some raw meat into his backyard and displayed its decomposition on his Internet site. Amazingly, the net site had 3 million hits a day, with people apparently having nothing better to do than watching the progression of the decomposition. However, his neighbors did not know this was going on for 19 days, until they caught onto it, probably via their noses (Time, 18/9/00).

Computer Ubiquitization

We are experiencing a phenomenon that we might call "computer ubiquitization," i.e., the introduction of computers of some kind into every nook and cranny of life.

*The First World is trying to make sure that every remote corner of the Third World is connected to the computer Internet, in good part because this is good for PPP economies of the developed world. For instance, even some remote mountaintop villages in Central America and Mongolia are being "wired" (whether they wanted it or not), and while the First World may subsidize the initial hook-up, the costs of the equipment and the operation of the systems can still run several thousand dollars a year--a very high price for poor countries and their poor inhabitants (Science, 9 April 1999, p. 219). In fact, in underdeveloped countries, computer websites are being installed at a vastly greater rate than sanitary toilets. Even worse, in many Asian and Latin American countries, sanitary facilities are declining in numbers, or in degree of sanitation, even as web use is growing geometrically. By the year 2000, twice as many Chinese are expected to have websites than have toilets (Time, 25/5/98). Everyone seems to tout these developments as progress, and no one seems to speak to their perversity.

*As Newsweek put it (3 July 2000), there is no longer such a thing as "remote." Even tiny villages in Vietnam get American television programs beamed down from space.

*Some people are euphoric over the fact that members of almost stone age tribes in some of the most remotest parts of the world are being taught to use computers and to access the Internet. Some of these tribespeople have no paved roads, no telephones and no reliable electricity (AP in SHJ, 28/2/01).

*Customer services of many firms have their phone answerers located in India, because of cheap labor. These workers get lessons in American language and culture, and pretend to be located in the US. If need be, they will pretend entire false family histories. This is promising to provide a major economic boom to India.

*On the average, the 45% of US households who are tied to the Internet have an average of 1.5 computers (Consumer Reports, 1/01). Of American households with children, 70% have computers, and 52% are net-connected; 20% of children age 8-16 have computers in their bedrooms, half of these net-connected! (NYT, 22/1/01).

*Some people now walk around with at least 3 communication devices on their bodies: cell phone, pager (probably with e-mail capacity) and "personal digital assistant." They also carry a laptop if they go any distance, and have desktop computers at home and at the office (SPS, 7/7/01).

*Remember "Rock Around the Clock"? Now it is "Compute Compute Compute Compute Compute Compute Around the Clock." The computer worshippers are now promising us a future of "ubiquitous computing" and "network connectivity" where computers are so worked into our surroundings that we don't even notice them anymore: "your whole physical environment would become the computer" (Science, 17/9/93). For instance, a cover story of Newsweek (31/5/99) predicted a world in which virtually everything and everyone is computer-interconnected with everything and everyone else, including the dishwasher, the toilet, one's door locks and sprinklers, the coffee maker, the alarm clock--in fact, every appliance in one's home, and so on. This also means that everywhere one turns, one will stare into computer screens. These would even be attached to one's breakfast tray and, of course, there would be a computer screen and control panel in front of one's toilet seat. No more leisurely reading of TIPS on the john! The amazing thing is

that this is all euphorically exalted rather than interpreted with dread as a form of hell even before one dies.

*In the US, there are about 14,000 commercial health clubs and gyms where people can exercise. Increasingly, these are installing computer displays in front of the equipment pieces in order to keep people's attention on their work-outs. Also, more such places are installing web stations so that customers can do, while exercising, what they otherwise do in front of their computer at home or at work (Newsweek, 5 July 99).

*Computer bars and cafés are springing up all over the world, so that even while on a break, out for fun, or on a date, one can do the same as one does with computers at home or at the office. No one must ever be out of reach of computers!

*In 2001, the typical US family will spend \$600 on communication services, on top of hardware, software, and phone bills (SPS, 7/7/01).

*According to a minority of educators, one reason computers are everywhere in schools is not because it helps children learn better or more, but because computer companies give schools free computers, or sell them computers at very low prices, in order to create a market for the future (SHJ, 1 July 01).

*Out of 17 staff development courses offered at Syracuse University in the summer of 1991, fully 9 had something to do with computers and computer operation. This is all the more remarkable when one considers the vast range and wealth of personnel, departments, ideas, and other resources that a university has to draw upon to offer "development" to its staff.

*There are certain religious orders that greatly seclude themselves from the world, in order to be more contemplative and prayerful. The Carmelite order is one such--but now, several such orders are establishing websites on the Internet, so that people may more easily contact them, and so that they may publicize themselves. While this may not technically be a violation of the rules of the order, it sounds as if the spirit behind the rules is being trespassed (source material from Joe Osburn).

Replacement of "Real Reality" With "Virtual Reality"

*Modernistic people have been forsaking real relationships and been trying to seek artificial ones through the Internet, sometimes spending all available hours on it and ignoring the real people already in their lives. Then a study came along in late 1998 that said that doing this makes one more lonely and depressed, perhaps because they had less time for real relationships (various Fall 98 reports). A lot of people seem to be very surprised at this. The only thing that amazes us is that so many intelligent and even highly qualified people thought that Internet relationships could actually replace real ones. The Renaissance mentality would have called these people "fools."

*In 10/99, we ran across a message that "the best way to know so-and-so is to meet him on the Internet on his website," which amused us very much since it implied that a virtual acquaintance was better than a real live one. Next we know, we will be told that virtual food, virtual sex, and virtually anything will be better than the real thing.

*We find it absolutely hilarious that a man who started a computer software firm in Japan said, "by meeting other people on the Internet, you find out who you really are" (Time, 6 March 95).

*It has been estimated that 80% of people who troll the Internet are not there for information or education, but for socializing and companionship, and many even in search of "community" (Time, Spring 95). People who relate "virtually" tend to project grossly distorted (inflated) images of themselves to their communicatees.

*How much the media have become reality to Americans was underlined by the fact that for advice on how to spend medical research money, elected representatives are turning to actors who

depict medical personnel in their plays (including a woman portraying a physician on TV who was called upon to advise the US House of Representatives) (Science, 26/3/99). This underlines how Americans are confused between reality and virtual reality, and probably consider the latter more real than the former.

*With the increasing pervasiveness of computers, and the socialization of children to be computer-minded, all sorts of computer games are being designed in which children do with and via the computer what they might have once done in real life and with and via real people. Merely one example are game-hunting games in which the player "stalks" and attempts to bring down deer. The games are praised for their "realism" in evoking the sound of boots crunching in snow, etc. However, there is very little bloodshed, so they are not realistic in that sense. Amazingly, one psychologist commends these games, arguing that they help children to distinguish between real experiences and so-called virtual ones (i.e., computer-simulated ones) (Time, 7 Dec. 1998). We can't see how that can be anything more than wishful thinking, as increasingly, neither children nor adults seem able to distinguish a computer- or media-generated world from the real one.

*One of the most enthusiastic early supporters of virtual reality was drug Pied Piper Timothy Leary who is now dead, or at least virtually so.

*Some people have begun to refer to so-called "virtual reality" as being "electronic LSD."

Computer Technology Aggrandizement, & Even Idolatry

One way materialism expresses itself is that many people's minds become "materialized." Even if they express beliefs in a spiritual reality, and do not worship Mammon, they may relate to the world in a thoroughly materialized way. One such way is to elevate technology into a form of religion, and the way a great many people do this today is by bowing down before computerized technology, and inviting it not only into every aspect of their lives, but into their very hearts and souls--to say nothing of computerizing their relationships.

In a film, an Amish man tells his grandson not to touch a gun he found, because "what one takes into one's hands, one takes into one's heart." Once people start "touching" computers, their hearts so often get turned, the computer enters it, and they get taken over by a form of materialism of the world-materializing kind.

We have to be clear that to a large proportion of people, the computer, or something connected to, or enabled by, computers, has become an idol, in the sense that it becomes central in their lives, and/or that they expect a form of "salvation" from it.

*The temperance movement in the 19th century was one of many that was utopian in its promises. Virtually every social benefit, virtue, and state of mental well-being, as well as material progress, was promised if only people would abjure alcohol. This reminds one of the promises of computerization.

*John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene are two false prophets of technological salvation of the world. One of their works was Megatrends in 1982, which sold 8 million copies in 28 languages, and was a US best seller from 1982 to 1984, followed in 1989 by Megatrends 2000. The couple were giving 80 presentations or workshops a year, sometimes speaking an hour for \$20,000. All this sold well because it was hype blarney of false optimistic promises in a world falling apart.

*Some workers on the edge of computer research said in 1990 (Time, 6 Aug.) that certain computer programs, or entities made that are computer-programmed for adaptation that are currently called "artificial life," should really be defined as alive. As one such leader said, "artificial life will be genuine life. It will simply be made of different stuff." Critics have claimed that these researchers are acting like God, and that they function as if they were dealing with a religion.

*Mechanical calculators--both electrified and non-electrified--were once very common, and people used them entirely for utilitarian purposes without developing any particular attachments to

them. However, from the first, humans have stood in awe of computers, and have had an entirely different relationship to them than they previously had to calculators. Now, to a great many people, computers are no longer tools of which they are masters, but are masters of which they have become tools. This is, of course, one of the cardinal indicators of the presence of an idol.

*A woman who has many computer and communications gadgets was asked which ones she "couldn't live without." On top of her list was cable TV, because "I love my 120 channels" (SPS, 7/7/01).

*In 8/99, we heard, for the first time, somebody say, "I wouldn't want to live without the Internet." Isn't that idolatry?

*According to Discover (6/01), computerization guru James Martin believes that "computers will save us."

*One of the outstanding high school students in Syracuse was asked who he admired most, and his reply was "everyone who managed to live before the age of computers" (SHJ, 10 Dec. 90).

*Some computer religionists are saying that computers will enable women in poor countries to "take charge of their lives" (AP in SPS, 16/11/00).

*It is relatively easy to see why some people would relate to the Internet as if it were God. After all, it has a certain immaterial and ubiquitous quality, it appears to have intelligence, it seems to be omniscient, and it certainly is deeply mysterious. If one prays to it, one usually receives some version of what one asks, even if one later discovers that one's expectations were betrayed (which is a characteristic of an idol).

*In Spring 2000, a firm that makes Internet routers emerged only 10 years after its initiation as the most valuable company in the world, with a "market capitalization" of \$555 billion (Time, 10 April 00).

*One of the great ironies of the age of technology, which in turn is based on a rationalistic science, is that it has managed to wean many people from God, but not from the occult or from superstition. For instance, Kurt Gödel is considered by many people to have been the greatest mathematician and logician of the 20th century--but he was also a believer in the occult (Gödel: A Life of Logic). Or take Iceland that has 100% literacy, 0% poverty, and high technologies everywhere, but a large majority of Icelanders believe that there are elves, gnomes, trolls, fairies, and similar creatures (SPS, 18/12/99). Authorities will even reroute roads and other construction projects so as not to infringe on the territory of these creatures. Researchers of the occult have been astonished at how many of their subjects work in computer-related occupations.

*Computer gurus are speaking of "making the world programmable" (Newsweek, 1 Jan. 00). One could argue that God "programmed" the world already, and these people want to reprogram it.

*Someone used the Internet (!) to auction off his soul, but got only a paltry \$41 for it, which the devil probably thought was the deal of a lifetime (Time, 2 Oct. 00). However, eBay has decided not to allow the auctioning-off of human souls, because if the soul does not exist, then the auction would be fraudulent; and if the soul did exist, then it would fall under eBay's policy of not auctioning human parts and remains (NC Register, 12 March 2000).

*It has been drawn to our attention that at service evaluation training events, such as PASSING workshops, an increasing number of participants list one of the needs of the recipients of the service being evaluated as "having computers."

*We were a bit taken aback to learn that a man in Syracuse had been appointed "Director of Technology" for the Catholic Diocese in 8/2000. Could there be a "director of low-tech?" We wonder who will be in charge of technology in heaven.

*One characteristic of idols is that they make false promises. For instance, teenagers (at least in the US) have been so brainwashed into a media mentality that about 90% believe that technology will create better jobs for them in the future, and help humans to live longer and healthier lives. The more they use computers, the more optimistic they were in these respects. Yet amazingly, what teenagers most wanted from computers were movies on demand (69%), 500-channel TV (58%), and computerized road maps in cars (51%). The younger teens were particularly eager to have computer-enhanced TV watching (Newsweek, 28/4/97).

*Several decades ago, it was predicted that our homes today would be run by robots (American Scientist, 7/01), yet this has not happened.

*Another characteristic of idols is that eventually, they betray their worshippers. For instance, an entire class of firms that were going to wire the world either went bankrupt overnight, or lost almost all their value. Losses to stock- and bondholders are estimated to approach \$150 billion, almost comparable to the savings-and-loan losses scandal of the 1980s (Newsweek, 18/6/01).

*Cocky young computer-giant Michael Saylor was going to wire the world, and until quite recently was worth \$10 billion. The media compared him with Caesar and Einstein. A few weeks later, his stock plunged 60% in a single day, and then continued sinking, losing almost 99% of its value (Newsweek, 18/6/01).

*Extravagant claims have been made as to what computers in education and schools can accomplish, and American families spent \$424 million on education CD-ROMs for their children just in 1999. The federal government wants to spend \$8 billion just to computerize elementary schools. But despite all this computerization of education, the schools keep putting out ill-educated and ignorant children. One recent book by the Maryland-based child advocacy group Alliance For Childhood was aptly entitled, Fool's Gold: A Critical Look at Computers in Childhood, especially in elementary schools. The author called the computer the most sacred of 21st century sacred cows. Also, while everybody trumpets the alleged benefits of computers in the schools, no one points out their drawbacks. For instance, some critics have said that computers in the schools create health hazards to children (obesity, eye strain, repetitive stress injuries, etc.), and undermine personal bonds with teachers.

*College students too have been shown to suffer from efforts to do their studying via the Internet (AP in SPS, 25/5/01).

*Former US Secretary of Education William Bennett said in 2000 that there is no evidence that most computer uses improve learning, but by 2001 had a conversion, and now thinks that computer technology is the "only way to reach everyone," which he apparently now thinks is essential.

*Yet another false hope and promise is the recent claim that if only tottering city governments adopted new and better computer systems, then they would gain control over all sorts of things that beset cities these days (e.g., editorial in SPS, 14/6/01).

*The computer culture once taught that digital data would last forever, but Newsweek (12 July 99) headlined bluntly: "they lied." More specifically, magnetic tapes may only last about a decade, depending on storage conditions, and the same seems to be true of hard drives, floppy disks, and video tapes. Even the CD-ROM, once trumpeted as indestructible, has been found to be vulnerable to magnetic fields, oxidation, material decay and even simple humidity. This is all the more amazing considering that an ever-increasing percentage of data is being computerized. For instance, by the year 2000, 75% of federal records will be in electronic form, and may not be readable in as few as ten years. Many archives, including parts of the national archives, were stupid enough to transfer their materials onto magnetic and optical records which are rapidly becoming undecipherable. One information specialist said that "the more technologically advanced they (information systems) get, the more fragile they become." When efforts are made to convert data storage from one system to another, errors occur routinely, and these can either wreak havoc, or later readers may have no idea that they are being given erroneous data because there is no way to compare them with their original

source. No one has any answers to these problems, nor does anyone seem to learn anything from them about the evils of automation, the computer culture, etc. (Newsweek, 12 July 99). This is Y2K all over again, insofar as this was all totally foreseeable and yet simply ignored.

*Several of the subheadings following this one also speak to aggrandizement or idolization of computerization.

Doing Low-Tech Things Hi-Tech

Doing low-tech things in a high-tech way that is more expensive, more complex, more complicated, more time-consuming, and possibly less do-able, is a sign that the high-tech way has become an idol.

*A series of 1992 TV ads showed somebody using a screwdriver, with a voice telling us that "this is regular," followed by someone using an electric screwdriver, with the voice proclaiming, "this is better." This is an illustration of how anything that is higher-tech is virtually automatically perceived or interpreted as being superior or preferable.

*Caesarean births reached an all-time high of 25% in 1988, declining thereafter in the face of a backlash against high-tech and expensive birthing. After a 7-year decline, Caesareans started increasing again, and reached 22%, with a lot of propaganda behind it (Newsweek, 4 Dec. 2000).

*A lot of people may spend hours on the Internet to get a bit of information that they could get in a matter of minutes with one or two telephone calls. Isn't that idolatry?

*In some restaurants, waiters convey the orders of diners to the kitchen by computer. So when the computer crashes, no orders can be placed or processed! As is usual in imperial space, the customers are never told, and may sit around for hours waiting for their dinners.

*There is now a machine that is in essence a computerized blackboard. On it, one can write, draw, etc., and then one can print out a letter-sized paper copy of whatever is on the board. Supposedly, this is to enable people to keep a record of notes and plans they come up with during meetings--but of course, this could just as easily be done by one or more persons who copy down whatever is on the board, especially in light of the fact that this machine costs more than \$10,000!

*Around 1997, the Syracuse University Library installed a new computer system, displacing its previous system, i.e., there are no computers left in the library that still use the former system. The former system gave users explicit step-by-step instructions as a user went along, and if a user committed an error, or did not know what to do next, it was possible to find instructions on what to do from the computer screen itself. With the new system--which, library personnel said, had been implemented because it is "better"--novice users are almost totally dependent on the assistance of library personnel to find different options that are available, to "escape" if one wants to try something new, to correct an error, etc. There are no instructions on the computer, or the computer screen, other than to "ask personnel for assistance." Also, the former program had more options for accessing library possessions, and as long as a user could type, one could use the system. But with the current system, one has to use a "mouse," which requires much finger and hand coordination, making it much harder to use for many people.

Again, the problem seems to be that newer options are embraced and adopted simply because they are newer, without asking what advantages would one lose by giving up the old method, how much more complex does this new option make things, how many more people are relegated to marginality and reduced competence by the new development, etc. If some of these questions were asked, and if people were willing to make their decisions rationally rather than based on their idolatry of technology, then we might see more prudent use of, and introduction of, technologies.

*Thank goodness, the Vatican ruled out online confessions. You can sin high-tech online, but forgiveness is low-tech offline (6/01).

Net Addiction

One computer-related idolatry is net addiction. Idols always betray their worshippers, and many phenomena these days are betrayals by the computer idols of their worshippers. What happens to net addicts is among these betrayals.

*People becoming addicted to web surfing is an interesting and unpredicted phenomenon. There are people by the millions who--quite aside from whatever computer use they make at work--have been getting on the Internet every single day for years on end. Exactly what kind of mentality would one predict that this either requires or will develop? And what is it about the human mind and the nature of the web to make it so irresistibly addictive to so many people? Perhaps it is the interaction between the divine element of the human mind and the near-infinity of options and "choices" available on the Internet. Perhaps the vast capacity of the net, and the ease of accessing it, evokes the age-old human urge to be "like God" and to control (and hence access) all of it.

*"Experts" have begun to publish lists of "indicators" that someone may be net-addicted, much like the lists that are meant to alert people to alcoholism or drug addiction. Net addiction is also turning into another gold mine for shrinks.

*One study reported that 6% of Internet users are actually addicted to the Internet, which is the bad news; but the allegedly good news is that this figure is lower than some experts had estimated earlier (AP in SHJ, 23/8/99).

*There has been speculation that the Internet may become the principle homewrecker of the next century, because so many people are becoming addicted to it that they forego everything else.

*Amazingly, some people feel that their lives are so out of control that they are turning to so-called website calendars to bring order, for which they must pay a fee, but which requires that they spend endless hours before their computer, which apparently is considered a more orderly way of living. Among other things, these high-tech devices tell people what their horoscope is as part of their daily routine (Time, 10 May 99). Apparently, few people see the irony of turning to the fruits of rational science to feed the universal human tendency towards superstition.

*While on the one hand, a growing number of people have been reported to become addicted to the computer Internet, others have been characterized as disillusioned refugees from cyberspace, telling tales of electronic mirages, unmet expectations, too much information, not enough substance, endless communication with little worthwhile content, suffering from "toxic data syndrome" and having been seduced by "silicon snake oil." Some of them have described cyberspace as "a non-existent universe...a soluble tissue of nothing." Some of these refugees reported that it took them several days of cold turkey before they could "think again" (Time, 17/4/95).

The Human Becoming Part of, or Utterly Dependent on, the Computerized Communications Net

Many phenomena of computer dependence or net addiction are also tied in with externalism.

*We were surprised to learn that there are already 12,000 high schools in Mexico that are utterly dependent on satellite TV for their instruction. When a satellite in space died in 2000, some schools were left without classes for weeks, because apparently there simply were no teachers capable of teaching high school subjects, or the teachers had so much relied on TV that they had unlearned teaching (AP in SHJ, 29/8/00).

*Practically overnight, South Korea has become the world's most computer-connected and computer-obsessed country in the world, with almost the whole population having been absorbed into cyberspace. And what do they do there? Mostly, bad things, such as day trading, prowling for sex, "networking" and playing games; 10% of children in elementary schools are into Internet porn, and innumerable teenage girls are offering themselves for sex at chat sites. All this has brought about a profound alienation of the younger generation from its traditional culture. There are PC rooms on every street corner, and computers in almost every child's bedroom. One Korean net site has created

a fantasy world for the bereaved. The image of the departed person is recreated, and a mourner can visit the site and interact with a departed one as if that person were still alive. Some people have actually come to believe that instead of being in the afterlife, their loved ones are alive in cyberspace. Shrinkery has benefited greatly from all of that by having much "net addiction" to treat (Time, 22/1/01).

*Externalism has been afforded a new form of expression with the advent of mobile phones. Some people have the urge to be constantly in touch with somebody no matter where they are, and some such people--such as Princess Diana--would carry around as many as four mobile phones wherever she went. There now are people who are outright addicted to making phone calls, particularly since now they can do it cheaply, or anywhere, on their portable cell phones. Even in poverty ghettos, one sees people everywhere talking on cell phones. When driving to and from work, the TIPS editor finds himself more and more frequently virtually surrounded by other drivers who are talking on cell phones, and has been nearly run into several times by prattling drivers. It has also become rare to be able to sit through a church service without hearing somebody's portable telephone ring. On occasion, several different people's phones may be ringing at the same church service. This goes to show, among others, that things created for human convenience so often end up controlling their masters and creators. Even when 155 cardinals met with the Pope for a prayer session in 5/01, the cell phone that one cardinal was carrying rang loudly (AP in SPS, 22/5/01). Some restaurants have begun to require that patrons check their cell phones at the door, much like in the Wild West, patrons were sometimes asked to check their revolvers at the door (NC Register, 21/11/99).

An editorial in the Winnipeg Free Press (2/2/99; source item from Zana Lutfiyya) wistfully expressed the hope that cell phones will be shown to cause awful diseases so that we may all be delivered from this plague.

*Some families with children these days have ten telephone numbers, about half of them land lines and the rest cellular (Newsweek, 7 Aug. 00).

*Fashion firms are putting out clothes that have special storage places for one's electronic devices that one "cannot be without" (Time, 28/8/00).

*Very good news is that in the Netherlands, innkeepers and store owners install little radio stations that send out signals that make mobile phones useless so as to protect their premises from ringing mobile phones and people walking around engaging in loud conversations. They do this despite the threat of extremely high fees if they get caught. Even some churches have begun to do this. One drawback is that these radio signals also jam the communication equipment of fire engines and emergency vehicles.

Cyberromance

*One apparently new--and yet very common--phenomenon is for people to totally misrepresent themselves on their personal website or in their social communication on the Internet, as when they are flirting with members of the opposite sex, or for that matter on computer dating lines (Time, 15/2/99). Some people have called this "presenting a false persona."

*There has been a rather sudden explosion of reported cases of families being broken up because one of the spouses became infatuated with somebody that they had begun to communicate with on the Internet, but whom they had never met. One might call this a virtual romance without virtue. In some instances, one of the communicators exploited the other one, and even committed murder when they first met in real life (e.g., Time, 18/11/96).

*First spouses run off with a virtual lover on the net--and when bitter reality returns, they often show that they have learned nothing by turning to shrinks.

*Someone has referred to women who compulsively flirt on the Internet as "cyberhussies" (Newsweek, 19/21/01).

*It is a bit difficult to feel sorry for all the rebellious teenagers who embark on computer romances with strangers, then agree to meet the strangers for sex, and find out that the strangers are adult predators, often heterosexual or homosexual pedophiles. The concept of "natural consequences" seems to be relevant here.

*A number of young women got on sadomasochistic chat lines on the Internet, then went to meet the man they met on there--and got themselves murdered (Time, 19/6/00). We wonder why anybody is surprised about this. Isn't this an even clearer instance of "natural consequences"?

Cyberporn

*The cover story of the 3 July 1995 issue of Time was on "cyberporn," i.e., pornography on the computer Internet. Based on what the story described as "an exhaustive study," its gist was that there was "an awful lot of porn online." It said that trading in sexually explicit imagery had become the largest, or one of the largest, recreational applications of computer networks, and that computer porn revolves largely around things that go beyond what people would ordinarily find in the run-of-the-mill sex store, namely, mostly in the areas of sadistic and violent sex, sex connected with excretion, pedophilia, and sex with animals. One convicted computer sex czar who is now in prison had scouts out all over the world searching for, or recruiting, "fresh material." However, the once very conservative but now flamingly liberal editorship of Time apparently quickly regretted that it had done this cover story, and did something that to our knowledge is unprecedented in the history of this weekly news magazine: it very quickly published a virtual retraction of the article, namely, in its 24 July 1995 issue!

At any rate, it is network porn that has become near-ubiquitous. As of 1999, there were an estimated quarter-million pornographic websites on the Internet (NC Register, 3 Oct. 99). That's real "choice"! Furthermore, there is hardly a sexual interest or perversion that does not have its specialized site, including some peculiar ones, such as "plushies," "sleepy," "nasal hair," and "necrophilia." In fact, porn access seems to be a top net activity. One sex site alone had 1.4 billion contacts ("hits") in 1997 (Time, 29/12/97). We predict an enormous expansion of the pornographic market, especially via computer networks and TV. And: people who do not partake of it will be greatly affected by people who do!

*According to mid-2000 information, there are 280,000 "adult content" web masters, and 60,000 such pay sites. Some of the websites are run by de facto sex firms and employ hundreds of women for interaction with their website callers. A staggering one-third of all US web surfers visit a sex site at least once a month. In May 2000, an estimated 25 million did. Sex sites on the Internet are among the very few to have made any money. They even hold national conventions. For some reason an estimated half of all the recent Internet sex sites are operated by women out of their homes in Florida. One wonders whether this has anything to do with the wet heat there. Apparently, many of these women are former ecdysiasts and lap dancers who discovered that web sex is cleaner and easier. Some of the sites are--pardon the expression--Mickey Mouse operations, while other operators are said to take in about \$30 million or more a year. Interestingly, some of the "amateurs" offering sex sites are said to be more "authentic," meaning that they do not act but actually do what they say they do, such as going through various procedures requested by a customer (SHJ, 23/8/00).

*An amazing development is established, old, and respected mainline firms, even of the Dow Jones type, getting into the pornography business, merely because it is lucrative.

*Public libraries have been put into an awkward position by having many computers with Internet access, many children visiting, and more and more pornography on the Internet. In some libraries, there are now undercover cops patrolling the computer terminals to see what patrons are watching. Some people have filed suits trying to prevent children's access to pornography in public libraries, and other people have filed suits to facilitate such access. Not surprisingly, though the liberals would deny it, watching a lot of porn makes people horny and tempts them into sexual acts. Thus, a new role of beleaguered librarians is to thwart sex acts on the premises (Newsweek, 17/7/00). Despite all this, the American Library Association is opposed to Internet porn filters (NCR, 15/4/01).

*Planned Parenthood further revealed its death alliance, and the link between pornography and death, by opposing Internet porn filters. Apparently, one reason is that PP itself has sex scenes (including deviant ones) on its own websites, and this would be screened out by the porn filters (NCR, 15/4/01).

*Engaging in a little child pornography here and there is one thing, but how in the world can one manage to acquire 9,000 child pornography pictures, as one person offered to swap on the Internet (AW, 23/1/99).

*An amazingly high percentage of children who regularly use the Internet, namely 19%, get approached by strangers who want to talk sex to them, or even have sexual relations, despite the illegality of child solicitation. Further, neither filters nor parental monitoring seem to diminish the solicitations (SPS, 22/6/01).

*Continuing the mechanistic analogue of the human as a machine, and of computers as humans, one writer commented on the controversy over regulating the Internet and attempts to keep pornography out of "cyberspace" as follows: "...People...don't want to be told what data two consenting computers can exchange in the privacy of their own hard drives" (Time, 9 Dec. 96). We couldn't have said it better about hedonistic individualists ourselves!

Other Documented or Asserted Negative Effects or Drawbacks of Computerization

*A thoughtful 1990 article in the American Scientist pointed out that our western scientific paradigm has been on a collision course with the data explosion. This scientific paradigm requires that scientists retain the raw data of the research that they publish or otherwise share with others, and yet raw data is coming in in such quantity as even to exceed storage capabilities, not to mention processing and utilization capabilities.

*Altogether, media-embedded people report being overwhelmed both by info input and demands to respond to it. For instance, by 1997, the average worker in a large corporation sent and received 177 messages a day, many via computer media. According to a Gallup poll, a third of executives of these companies say that they feel "almost always or usually overwhelmed" by information (Newsweek, 28/4/97). At Microsoft, the 28,000 employees exchange 2 million e-mails a day. "It's the only way we communicate with one another" said the chief operating officer (Newsweek, 23/11/98). One employee of the city of Eugene, Oregon, was found to be 180 megabytes of e-mail behind--the equivalent of about 180,000 typed sheets (Newsweek, 23/11/98). Similarly, we are euphoric to learn that members of the US Congress are getting so many e-mail messages that they cannot possibly read them all. In just 1998-2000, the House of Representatives alone went from receiving about 2 million e-mail messages to 50 million. At a fraction the number of members, the Senate absorbed 27 million messages in 2000, 15 times what it was in 1996. Some Congress members get 8,000 e-mails a day. House speaker Hastert has decided to reply to none of his e-mail, which sounds very sensible to us, in contrast to some advocacy organizations that mindlessly say that the e-mail avalanche should be "celebrated" (SPS, 9 April 01).

*Among the bizarre practices in the workplace these days is that the first inkling that an employee may get that he or she has gotten fired is when the employee's computer access code gets rejected by the computer. There have been cases where puzzled employees tried to find out what had happened, and were told not to worry and that the problem would be cleared up--only to learn a few days later that they were being fired.

*The average American business manager spends about 1.5 days a week in meetings, and judges about half of it as wasted time. Ironically, the advent of computers, as well as so-called outsourcing of work, and the rise in joint ventures and mergers, have contributed to the apparent need for more meetings, because more frequent collective updates and collaboration is required on projects. Also, online scheduling software lets members of certain organizations automatically print meetings on each other's calendars. All of this has been called "meeting-centrism." Further, the advent of so-called power point presentations has seduced presenters into producing lengthy technologically fancy presentations far beyond what is needed to communicate the needed information. Some

workers spend more time in meetings than on any other activity. As a remedy, one researcher found that meeting times could be reduced dramatically by requiring all participants to remain standing (Newsweek, 16/10/00).

*We were recently told by a middle-aged scientist that the young scientists who have been educated by means of electronic calculators and computers no longer have the capacity to make quick approximate judgments of a quantitative nature relevant to their work. This seems to be the result of virtually never having to compute things quantitatively in a way that is close to the actual realities, since the processes of calculators and computers are not visible to the human mind. Thus, where older scientists have rough mental ideas of the quantitative relationships and products at issue, the younger ones have no idea at all and have to enter specific numbers into specific equations or calculations that will grind out for them a quite specific outcome, without which they are helpless.

*The schools have been so swallowed up by the computer culture that children are no longer learning to write in cursive style. In fact, this has been going on so long that by the mid-1990s, only 15% of all handwritten addresses on pieces of mail received by the post office are still in cursive (Newsweek, 18/3/96).

*Among the many deleterious impacts of growing up media mind-drenched and computerized, children are actually acquiring less vocabulary than they used to; and having gotten used to the informality of communicating by computer, they have difficulty learning a more formal academic style of writing, not to mention that their spelling and grammar declines because the computer programs correct these (SHJ, 24/8/00).

*In Hartford, Conn., a computer forced the last letter of the city's name, the letter d, into another data field pertaining to the pool of citizens from which federal jurors could be drawn. Unfortunately, in that data field, d meant dead, and as a result, 5,500 Hartford citizens had not been called upon for years. The only reason this was discovered was that someone in the federal court noticed that minority members were disproportionately underrepresented in the juror pool, and that was apparently because more of them resided within the city limits than outside (Time, 12 Oct. 92).

*Of city-living Americans, 87% are exposed to noise levels that over time can be expected to degrade hearing. It is shown that noise, aside from being a major cause of hearing loss, is also a major source of mental stress, and that noise levels in developed nations are actually continuing to increase. In cities, many buildings have installed computer rooms that require big cooling units that blow exhaust out the windows onto the streets at a decibel-level of about 70, around the clock (Smithsonian, 3/01). Even a kitchen garbage disposal makes noise close enough to the level where one should protect one's hearing against it.

*While many technologies are enabling for people with handicaps, many others have the opposite effect. For instance, ATMs used to have lots of buttons that blind users could feel and activate; "improved" newer models have touch screens that require eyesight. Other gadgets that had feelable controls have been replaced with graphic displays that the blind cannot operate. The Microsoft computer system is also very visual because one has to point and click on the screen. However, these changes may be facilitative to people with other kinds of impairments, such as the cerebrally palsied who can see.

*With the advent of computer gadgetry, braille is dying out. In the late 1960s, about 40% of blind students in the US knew braille; this is now down to less than 10%. Experts on blindness say that without braille, blind students have difficulty learning spelling, grammar and punctuation. We thus have yet another irony of computer-based "progress": the dumbing down of blind people, in the area of linguistic skills that is so crucial to them! One response in New York State has been to legally mandate the teaching of braille to every visually impaired student in the public schools (AP in SPS, 25/8/00). It is a terrible perversion of the law to have to use it this way.

*The increase in technologization has been rendering many marginal people less competent, less able to solve certain problems on their own, and less participative in society. People may now spend 30 minutes--even more--on a single phone call trying to obtain information or solve a simple

problem, almost all this time spent being connected to various recordings and machines, rather than talking to real people. This is difficult enough for strong, competent people to cope with, some of whom are being driven to insanity by it, or to simply giving up on things like billing errors, let alone for already very marginal ones.

*The computer culture seems to attract more people without scruples. Of Internet CEOs, 23% said that if they were trapped on a deserted island, they would eat another human to survive, while only 6% of bricks-and-mortar CEOs said that they would (Time, 14/8/00).

*We hardly ever meet anyone who recognizes the deep-seated problems and dangers of the Internet, so it came as a surprise to us to learn from a survey that approximately 25% of American adults supposedly consider the Internet dangerous. They certainly must live in social circles and in parts of the country other than ours (SPS, 23/9/00).

*All sorts of crimes are only possible because of "cyberness." However, many of these we treat in our crime reportage in our usual December issues.

*We are bitterly disappointed that Y2K did not return us to the 1950s.

*Enthralled with computers, some libraries have begun to give and throw many of their books away (200,000 by the San Francisco Public Library), and install computer-rooms instead (Newsweek, 21/10/96). "Guerrilla librarians" have begun to hide books to protect them from destruction. Similarly, almost all archives of old newspapers, including very rare ones, have been discarded in the US, but the films they got put on are often unreadable, and perishable.

*One thing that has struck us very powerfully is that adopters, promoters and defenders of computerization invariably couch their arguments in utilitarian terms, and almost always in extremely naive, shortsighted and segmented utilitarian terms. To us, this merely underlines how materialized their minds have become.

*Marshall McLuhan once said that artificial information environments are the mystical body of anti-Christ, alluding of course to the Christian concept of the body of believers as the mystical body of Christ.

*Donald DeMarco has interpreted the Internet as a form of discarnation (in contrast to incarnation) of the human. Decades earlier, Lewis Mumford had already said that "handcuffed together, the Automaton and the Id march to their common doom" (NCR, 11/99).

*One thing is certain: "if Christ had come today," he would not have had a website or e-mail address.

Hackery, Viruser, & Other Net Sabotage

We don't hack (except when we are sick from viruses), but take vicarious pleasure from it, and especially from 16-year-old pimple-faced children disabling the imperial powers. One thing this demonstrates that we teach in systems theory is that the more complex a system becomes, the more vulnerable it becomes to environmental changes, and the less it takes to disable it.

*Computer software can be written in such a fashion that with only a few lines of information among millions of code, virtually undetectable sabotage can be installed into the computer workings. Three such sabotages are called logic bombs, worms, and viruses. Hackers are deriving great fun from inserting these into other people's programs and thereby disabling them, as a kind of intellectual game--that can be exceedingly costly to its victims and the public. Already in 1985, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power was disabled by such a logic bomb. The culprit was never found.

*We regret that hacking can cause deaths, as when hackers get into medical records, hospital computers, nuclear power plants and battlefield computers. But heck, you can't wage war without expecting some collateral damage.

*Some authorities have characterized hacking as "digital class struggle," a "high-tech work ethic that...celebrates creative work energy and...endurance," and a challenge to "official definitions of knowledge ownership." Others who are naive have likened hackers to kids who pick up baseball bats to break car windows instead of playing ball.

*"Doorknob-rattling" is what the computer world calls a hacker's attempt to break into a computer system. Some US universities record several such rattlings every day (Science, 3 Feb. 95).

*The main headline of a campus-wide computer newsletter at Syracuse University in 3/90 was "Viruses Rampant on Campus"--which greatly amused us.

*Law agencies have been unsuccessfully trying to track down a computer hacker who has been at it for about a dozen years, ever since he was a teenager. Among other things he has broken into defense command computers, gained control of telephone company switching centers, cracked the security codes of communications companies, and eavesdropped on FBI agents who were looking for him (SHJ, 11 July 94). Long may he live!

*A 16-year-old hacker in England crashed "some 100 US defense systems" in 1994.

*Hackers took over the NY Times website for 9 hours in 9/98, giving callers propaganda in support of jailed hackers, pictures of nudes, and "flame" messages about hacking critics.

*In late 2000, it became known that even Microsoft had been hacked and proprietary source codes "viewed."

*We were amused to learn that a bunch of hackers in the recent Balkan war managed to break into the White House website.

*Computer hackers have begun to hold their own international conferences. The 1993 such conference in the Netherlands included a "Hacking at the End of the Universe" feast, which we think was very well named (Newsweek, 26/7/93). It reminds us of Karl Williams' satirical and deliriously happy song entitled "Living, Living, Living at the End of Times."

*In 4/92, it came to light that there was a nation-wide ring of about 1,000 hackers, some as young as 14, who were able to get any information on virtually anybody in the US by breaking into confidential files. A policeman said that until one of the hackers demonstrated how it was done, he would not have believed it. They also have had the capabilities for cracking security codes on automatic teller cards and long-distance calling cards, and many made fraudulent purchases or phone calls on the basis of these skills. Also amazing is that these little hackers had been sharing information with each other for at least 4 years without getting caught (AP in SHJ, 18/4/92).

*A 19-year-old near-child in Britain successfully hacked into complex computer systems all over the world out of his own home, including the European community headquarters, the London Financial Times, and the US White House. He accomplished all this with a two-bit home computer--and by two-bit, we are not here referring to memory but to money and sophistication (Speak Out, 4/93).

*The Melissa virus that denuded and shut down tens of thousands (!) of government and business computers around the world in 1999 had been named by its creator after a topless dancer (NCR, 11/99).

*The "love bug" virus of early 2000 was said to have done up to \$10 billion damage. Again, it turned out to have been unleashed by a pimple-faced student of a minor Philippine college whose English was marginal. However, when we are told of "virus damage," this often refers to the cost of the time programmers have to invest to protect or mend their programs.

*A 14-year-old hacker in New York City specializes in taking over the operations of remote computer systems and turning them into bulletin boards for his friends to play on. Apparently, even

the Pentagon computer of the US Secretary of the Air Force was not beyond his grasp (Time, 8 April 91).

*The maximum penalty that can be imposed upon a pimple-faced 16-year-old who did close to \$2 billion (!) damage by hacking into the computers of Internet sales companies is a fine of about \$600 (Time, 29/1/01).

*Every time some child hacker performs an electronic feat, we are told that measures are being taken to nip such things in the bud and that it is unlikely to happen again.

*With gratified maliciousness, we report that so-called "malicious hacking" is on the rise, up 400% since 1998 (AP in SPS, 10 July 01).

*What we are rarely openly told is that very few "creators" of viruses are ever identified.

*We have commented gleefully before on computer bugs, viruses and worms. Of 63 viruses disseminated through personal computers, only one has ever been traced to its origins.

*Efforts to catch hackers have been characterized as comparable to using Patriot missiles to kill gnats.

*A computer program designed to find security holes in one's computer is called Security Administrators Tool for Analyzing Networks, or SATAN. Another instance of trying to drive Beelzebul out through Satan.

*Palm-size computers were thought to be safe from viruses, but we are happy to report that the first palm virus appeared in 9/00 and was capable of erasing all palm programs, and better is expected soon, including viruses disabling cell phones, allelujah.

*Seek no further. The most common secret password to computers is "password"--and you learned it from TIPS!

*Somewhat related to hacking is another increasing practice, i.e., people trying to break into air traffic control radio exchanges, and giving pilots phony instructions that are of course extremely dangerous not only to the planes flown by these pilots but also to other planes in the vicinity. The phenomenon was launched in the early 1990s by someone near Roanoke, Virginia, and it took six weeks to track him down. As always happens these days, this launched an epidemic of copy-cat imitations world-wide, Britain being the hardest hit. Many of the impostors go uncaught. This kind of trouble-making has proven to be relatively cheap. One such malefactor turned out to have been an unemployed janitor who used a \$500 mail-order radio (Newsweek, 11 Nov. 00).

*We admit to deriving endless amusement from anything that vexes or disables the Internet and its culture. For instance, while we could not understand the Napster scheme, it seemed to be a form of sabotage, though unfortunately in service to decadence and externalism. No wonder the courts promptly squashed it.

Problems of Technologization & Scientific Arrogance Not Directly Related to Computers

*Prior to the advent of unbridled modernistic individualism that sets each human up as a distinct divinity, scientists used to speak about "discovering" the laws of nature, new species, new chemical compounds etc. Beginning circa 1970 or even more recently, scientists began to announce that they had "invented" new compounds, new genetic strains, etc. This is indeed a language akin to the one divinity might use, and we should not be surprised if scientists will also soon tell us that they are "creating" new creatures and new kinds of humans.

*The TIPS editor had read Science on a regular basis for over 40 years, but suddenly discovered in 3/97 that the advertisements listing job openings kept announcing openings for "engineers" in work areas that apparently did not involve engineering and that, surprisingly, required

no engineering training or experience, namely, in work that previously would have been called biochemistry or genetics. Thus, one can now read advertisements for "protein engineering," "receptor protein engineers," engineers in the area of immunity work, "antibody-toxin engineering," and "biomedical engineering." There are instances where ads call for people to design or improve equipment, in which case the term "engineering" would appear to be appropriate, but in most other instances the advertisements only call for work in biochemistry and genetics, so that we have to infer that the term "engineering" here is used as a metaphor that has its roots in a materialistic worldview that views work on the biological substratum of life as a material technology comparable to what one does with "engines."

*For several years, scientists have tried to extract gene sequences from bacteria and make them independently viable as long as they have a host, which they need because they do not have cell walls. These creatures do not exist anywhere in nature, and nobody knows what will happen if they get loose (Discover, 4/01).

*Six current phenomena are said to be contributing enormously to the likelihood that deadly new germs will arise: changes in how food is grown and handled, populations getting congregated ever closer together as in megalopolises, increased international travel and shipment of food, increased and reckless use of antibiotics in both people and livestock, more people living with depressed immune systems that spread germs to others, and finally a decaying public health infrastructure in many areas (AP in SPS, 28/4/00).

*The arrogance of the genetic manipulators of plant life, especially eatable ones, was documented in Discover (3/01) which told the story of how genetically modified corn, which was not supposed to get into the human food supply, ended up there. Fortunately, the companies that were at fault suffered about \$1 billion in losses because of strong public indignation. However, what the public generally does not know is that other forms of genetically manipulated plant foods have been quietly permitted by the US government, and the amount of genetically engineered crops has gone from virtually zero to 70 million acres in just five years.

One problem with all this is that when any food crop is made resistant to an herbicide, then farmers start flooding their fields with that herbicide, killing everything else, and indeed overkilling it. This is particularly the case among those farmers--of which there have always been many--who think that if a certain prescribed amount of something is good, more of it must be better.

*Between 65-75% of Americans want genetically engineered foods to be so labelled, but vested interest has managed to override the popular will (Time, 31/7/00), despite the fact that there have already been documented cases of unintended genetic contaminants in such food crops. Furthermore, no one knows to what degree domesticated food crops and their wild relatives will interchange genes.

*The hoof-and-mouth disease that swept the world in 2001, and the mad cow disease threat, certainly were among the contemporary wake-up calls as regards animal diseases, though the same thing could be happening any time to some very vital crops. These diseases spread because of the increasing interconnectedness of everything in the whole world.

*An Australian humorist has proposed that mad cow disease be renamed mad scientist disease, insofar as the problem was really created by the hubris of science and technology. The humorist further suggested that perhaps putting lion genes into cows would solve the problem, since it was putting ground-up meat into cow feed that created the problem in the first place.

*It was not widely reported that Australian scientists produced embryos that are a hybrid of pig and human, and that might have gestated if implanted into either a human or pig female (NCR, 22/10/00).

*A birth by Caesarean of the first genetically designed primate in 1/2001 means that the same fate is soon in store for humans, and chances are very high that some scientists will actually design a human illegally and secretly before it will be announced or legitimized. As always happens in these

cases, arrogant scientists invoke the few medical benefits of such a measure as if these could justify these kinds of undertakings.

*Scientists are constantly doing forbidden experiments, only revealing later on that they had been doing it all along while previously having denied it. For instance, in 10/00, US scientists admitted for the first time publicly that they had been creating human embryos knowingly entirely for the purpose of experimenting on the development of stem cell lines, previously having claimed to have used such embryos only if they were "left-overs" from fertility treatments (NC Register, 12 Nov. 00). This research had been forbidden by the US government.

*A patent issued to a US bio-tech firm permits the company to own as its intellectual property any cloned human embryos during their early stages of development. In effect, if a human were actually cloned, this would be considered to be an "invention" that can be owned by others.

*Cloning has been called a "right of the unborn" (SPS, 29/3/01).

*One new argument for aborting your child is that soon, you will be able to "resurrect" the child by cloning (SPS, 29/3/01).

*Someone said that the trend to clone endangered species is a typical high-tech quick-fix solution to a problem that should have other solutions.

*An article in the American Scientist (1/01) called the 1990s the decade of "genohype" about genetics and genomics. Among other things, the White House announcement that the human genome had been decoded was staged theater to assure that neither of the competitors in the decoding race would be able to claim primacy; and the quest for Nobel gold is an unspoken theme behind the competitions and their respective hypes.

Even as everybody claims to have found the gene for this or for that, scientists at the frontiers of genetics have begun to raise doubts about the very construct of the gene, which was crafted in 1909. In other words, at the very peak of the popularity of the gene construct as the atom of the biologists, the construct is on the verge of foundering as a meaningful and operational concept in the laboratory. In fact, the very term "gene" may have become a hindrance to the thinking and understanding of biologists, to say nothing of others (American Scientist, 20/1/01).

It has been said that scientists in general do not welcome the philosophy of science, any more than physicians welcome the sociology of medicine.

*We are struck by the fact that scientists persistently refer to the legal constraints upon their research that derive from moral considerations as being "political" in nature. For instance, scientists have been chafing under the restriction that they cannot use tissues from aborted babies in certain utilitarian ways, and have called this a political decision rather than a moral one. Why not call murder a political decision?

*Young physicians have gotten so used to electrical equipment doing all the diagnostic tasks that they are losing their low-tech hands-on skills, such as even listening with stethoscopes (Time, 15/9/97).

*Zuni Indians call space flights and space satellites "white men's witchcraft," and some have felt that it was an omen of the coming death of the world where man-made things will rise up against the human, and a hot rain will fall. Ever since Sputnik in 1957, Zuni clowns began to make fun of space feats in their hilarious skits.

*Some interpreters of psychology believe that dictatorial tyranny is incompatible with societal functioning on a highly complex level of technology, and that this can explain at least in part the decline of the old-fashioned dictatorship in Russia, and a movement toward a technocratic and more collective leadership there. As far as this observation goes, it may very well have validity, but the argument is commonly taken to an erroneous conclusion, namely, that "human progress" (which scientific and technological development is almost universally considered to be) will produce a larger number of developed societies that are less apt to be tyrannies. The TIPS editor offers an alternative

hypothesis: personal tyranny may very well be incompatible with a complex technology, but the tendency toward social stratification is a much more universal and enduring dynamic than a movement toward technological complexity. Complexities can always be destroyed, but the lust for tyranny exists everywhere at all times. Thus, we would make the prediction that if the world exists long enough, a more likely phenomenon is that we will see tyrants arising who will, if need be, strike down technological complexity in order to make their tyranny possible, and who will stop at nothing to pursue this end. I believe that a first modern historical instance of this took place in Cambodia where the Marxist tyrants tried to kill everybody who was an intellectual, a learned person, or had advanced technical skills. At least in part, the revolution in Iran may have reflected a similar dynamic. Societies at a low level of technology will probably not be able to build their own atomic weapons, but they might be able to buy or steal them. The interesting question thus arises whether the world will first destroy itself in nuclear or biological warfare, or whether we let enough time go by for tyrannies to arise that destroy the nuclear and other technologies. We wonder what odds the bookies would give.

*Some people see a parallel between the biblical story of the Tower of Babel and the corruption of technology when humans use their ingenuity and tools "to make a name for themselves," accept no limits to their aspirations, and try to seize God's place in creation.

The "Media" in Modernistic Society, & Their Mind Controlling Impact

This module presents a series of submodules that all document and interpret the mostly deleterious impacts of the "media," meaning entertainment, TV, videos, radio, the pop music scene, the newspapers, advertisement and related domains. Much of the media is "diversional" in nature.

Ubiquitization of Western Media & Media Images

Western media and media images are becoming ubiquitous in America and--indeed--the world, "more ubiquitous" (if that were possible) than computers.

*Professor (of humanities and communication) Marshall Fishwick of Virginia Tech said that "Entertainment has become the bread and butter of the American psyche, now driving the nightly news, politics, education. My father had no time for TV because he was creating a business, but my kids have lots of time because they work at less-demanding jobs. Diminishing expectations lead to rising entertainment."

*Mission packages sent to the poor hinterland of Third World countries may contain TV action figures for children to play with, even though the children had never seen the shows on which the figures are based. However, Third World hospitals in the back country may have hardly any resources, and only one big ward room, but they are apt to have a TV set. Arab nomads also carry TV sets around with them in the desert, powered by generators or batteries.

*The 1980s were the years when the sale of video cassettes exploded, from a trickle to 340 million blank and 200 million prerecorded ones.

*How can we explain that beer brands are beginning to be named the same way as rock bands (e.g., "Olde Lobotomy"), or have labels similar to publicity pictures of rock bands?

People's Environments Filling Up With Media Gadgets

Part of the ubiquitousness of the media is the filling-up of the environment with the gadgets of the media: TVs, radios, telephones, etc.

*In 9/2000, we witnessed for the first time a woman taking a cell phone call while being examined by her doctor, and the doctor was apparently so nonplussed or put out by it that she excused herself for the duration of the phone call.

*The average US household has four remote controls for electronic entertainment devices. People report becoming confused with their houses being swamped with remotes for different devices (SN, 1 Nov. 00).

*Many birthing rooms in the US have TVs in them so that children are born with some TV program or commercial running (APA Monitor, 3/97).

*Increasingly, one is bombarded with radio broadcasts and advertisements even at gas stations, and to make sure that customers do not escape, the loudspeakers are put right on the gas nozzle itself (CP, 10/00).

*A restaurant in New York has installed a TV set above each of its men's urinals. There will be no place to get away from the media, its noises and its mind control.

*Even in Third World countries, buses negotiating the back roads will have speakers blasting the passengers with ear-splitting disco music (Newsweek, 3 July 2000).

People Imitating Unworthy Things Glimpsed From the Entertainment Media

The whole world today is dominated by the media, and people are becoming internally ever emptier and weaker, so that they let themselves become controlled by the media. One form this control takes is that people imitate what they see and hear in the media. Often, what they see and hear is fictional, but it becomes real once people start imitating it in/via their lives.

As far as is known, all cultures from times immemorial have tried to educate their members by setting before them the examples of others who, by the standards of that culture, had performed outstandingly or heroically. One can call this the tradition of "education by exemplary lives." Almost worldwide, this tradition has largely come to an end since circa the 1960s. In fact, what is even worse is that the lives that are now set before young people as admirable are those that incorporate the worst kind of decadence, nonproductivity, alienation, drug addiction, criminality, etc.

*Awful events in our decadent society are commonly featured on the media. This then in turn triggers copy-cat imitations by others--mostly weak externalistic people. Thusly, a very destructive feedback loop gets established whereby certain kinds of pathological or even criminal behavior become vastly more common than they would have been if they had not been prominently featured in the media. A very good example is a crime wave in New York in which hoodlums would hold up subway clerks in their booths by threatening them with lighter fluid and fire bombs, and in a few instances actually did set fare-collectors' booths afire. Then, this kind of behavior was prominently featured in the film "Money Train," and strangely enough, only three days after "Money Train" was shown in late 1995, the crime was reenacted in real life in a fashion that killed a fare-collector. Examples of other crazy or criminal behaviors that got magnified in such feedback loops are burning people in their beds, making a torch of an aerosol can and burning people and things with it, and laying down in the middle of a highway at night in a game of chicken, to mention only a few.

*Studies have shown that fans of serial TV shows--such as soap operas--actually identify personally with the characters they watch, and often even begin to imitate them. In turn, because they are so vulnerable to imagery, they also begin to identify with the products that are advertised on such shows (Newsweek, 26/9/94, p. 49).

*The 1999 movie "Fight Club" was widely reviewed even before its release to the public, and merely learning about its theme, real fight clubs (mostly for male teenagers and young adults) reportedly sprang up even before the release date.

*Uncountable millions of people model their clothing, appearance, movements, and even lives on those of entertainers. One of many examples are the so-and-so (e.g., Elvis Presley or Kenny Rogers) look-alike websites and contests, and impersonators.

*In the US, the biggest men's fashion trend in years was triggered in early 2000 by the attire of the host of the "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" TV game show. Vast numbers of men started

wearing what he wore, and clothes makers began putting out fashion lines accordingly (Newsweek, 15/5/2000, p. 49). Furthermore, a poll found that 66% of the public was able to identify who the game show host was, but only 6% knew who the speaker of the House of Representatives was (Time, 14/2/00).

*A senior admissions officer at Harvard has pointed out that among young "black" men, television's influence has become so pervasive that one meets few of them who are not wearing some kind of paraphernalia that are normally worn by athletes and entertainers (Newsweek, 1 Mar. 93).

*According to some child experts and people who work with children, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle cult has begun to make a major contribution to violent and bizarre behaviors in very young children, including a 6-year-old stabbing an age peer for a minor offense, and 4-year-old girls trying to climb down manholes (womanholes? personholes?) into the sewers. Educational personnel across Canada have begun to make war against this cult (SHJ, 20/5/91).

*A great youth sport in Australia these days is youth gangs skateboarding through the sewers of Melbourne, imitating those awful Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. The youths got maps of the sewer systems and "know where they are going in the dark," as police put it. At one point, 18 officers were chasing a group of children for four hours before losing track of them.

*Inspired by staged wrestling matches on television (which we first saw in the 1950s and thought people would quickly get tired of, but which had a big-time revival in the 1990s), television-type of "extreme" wrestling has broken out (mostly among teenagers) as a craze all over the US. Much of this wrestling takes place in backyards. There are now more than 400 leagues with websites, and who knows how many more without websites. Some of these have names such as Alliance of Violence, and one such wrestling federation calls itself Insane Violent Hardcore Extreme Wrestling. One consequence has been a dramatic increase in medical emergency room visits due to wrestling injuries, and another one is that the violence is trickling down to tots, including an occasional death, as from applying choke holds (Time, 26/6/00). All this strikes us a bit like playing cowboy--but with real guns.

*Some authorities claim that the dramatic increase in cigar smoking a few years back was due to people imitating the actress Demi Moore, whoever she is. We can only assume that if people of great prominence decided to jump off the Empire State Building, hundreds of thousands of modern externalistic modernists would either do the same, or at the very least find some other tall and famous structure to jump off from.

*In Thailand, a detailed TV coverage of a woman jumping to her death from a rooftop was actually immediately followed by a small avalanche of similar suicide attempts the very next day, illustrating the power of modelling and the empty externalistic suggestibility of people of our day (AP in SHJ, 2 Dec. 98).

*According to at least one study, there has been a dramatic increase in oral sex among teenagers, and some people believe that this was fueled by the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal (Time, 5 March 01). Amazing!

*Once the Bobbit penis-cutting case was covered on TV, which apparently happened worldwide, there was also a worldwide outbreak of penis-cutting by females. In one case in Spain, within mere hours after watching coverage of the Bobbit case on TV, a 4-year-old girl asked a boy of the same age to show her his penis, and when he proudly did, she whipped out a pair of scissors that she had put in preparedness and started cutting him. However, the scissors were dull and inflicted only a modest injury that could be mended with stitches (AW, 12 March 94).

*A heavy metal band called "Slayer" sang some songs that included lines about raping a murdered woman "in demonic lust," which inspired three boys to stab a 15-year-old girl to death and commit necrophilia on her. There promptly was a lawsuit against the band for allegedly inciting and inspiring the boys, but the defense argued that while the songs may have been "repugnant and even

repulsive," they were not "obscene," and at any rate, had nothing to do with the crime (Newsweek, 4 Dec. 00).

*The latest craze among teenagers (particularly among girls) in Australia is using witchcraft, with a surge in the sale of books of spells. A number of TV programs that feature witchcraft have contributed to this development (11 July 00 clipping from John Armstrong), showing once again how media-controlled the minds of people are.

*The way the world has reacted to the film "Titanic" is an utterly sad commentary on its emptiness, its subservience to the media, and on its spiritual hunger that comes from its emptiness. As we learned from massive news coverage, a Titanic cult of religious forms and proportions erupted. Music from the movie almost overnight became a favorite funeral hymn, and people kept going back to see the movie the way Catholics keep going back to Mass. A whole slew of books on the movie and its actors became overnight best-sellers. No one is paying attention to the fact that in real life, the actors are not very nice people, and are very much part of the culture of decadence. In 1998, "DiCaprio" (the name of the male lead) became the most searched for word on the Pathfinder website (of Time, Inc.), well above "sex." A man who acquired the website domain name "dicaprio" before "Titanic" came out ended up with 30,000 home page visits a day (Time, 4 May 98).

The movie also launched a small avalanche of copycat behaviors, including suicide attempts by women jumping off ships (AP in SHA, 13/6/98). Furthermore, scores of copycats have been going up to the bows of the ships on which they were journeying, so that these bows had to be roped off (e.g., on cruise ships) because of fear of injury and liability. Also, scores of people have offered to pay \$32,000 apiece to dive to the wreck of the Titanic in small submersibles (AP in SHJ, 24/6/98).

*After "Beavis & Butt-head" started fires in one of their cartoon episodes, a 5-year-old boy who watched the program promptly began playing with fire and started one that killed his 2-year-old sister (AP in SHJ, 14/10/93). Somebody has referred to the show as "the animated equivalent of xeroxing one's butt," but it became enormously popular. Some people have wondered who would watch this program and why, but in a culture where people are becoming awful, awful role models can be expected to become cultural heroes, much as has been the case in the domains of music and sports.

People's Minds Becoming Dominated, Controlled or Possessed by the Media

*Major modern media mass mind manipulation & control ("MMMMMM"). At all times and in all places, the empires of the world attempt to control the consciousness of their subjects, and thus shape their behavior. One element of this control is to try to insert the "imperial consciousness" into their subjects. If people can be brought to accept the imperial consciousness, then the imperial powers find them easy to manage, since they will no longer recognize the true condition, realities and needs of their society and the world around them, because the empire hides these truths, finding them challenging to the status quo.

Unfortunately, no matter what they may think or say, every person, every family and household, and every societal class is controlled to at least some degree by the imperial forces, but the more so to the degree that these parties are unaware that they are being controlled.

The mechanisms of imperial control over people are varied and, in a sense, unlimited. Some of them are universal, such as investing imperial entities, functionaries, rulers, and messages with images of pomp and circumstance, of authority and power, and even of godliness and divinity. These images manage to persuade people that whatever the empire does and is must be good and right.

However, in the modernistic era of very sophisticated and pervasive communication, the methods of managing the minds and the consciousness of people have been taking on new and subtle forms, in addition to the age-old universal mechanisms. In our society, and others like it, the following are probably the most mind-controlling mechanisms used by the imperial powers.

1. Electric and electronic information technology and transmission over airwaves and through computerization. This is now a primary mode of domination and control over minds, and underlies much of the next two control mechanisms. Particularly since this transmission is literally constant--24 hours a day, 365 days a year, year after year, and overarches all types of media--it is a very powerful shaper of people's minds and consciences.

2. Language, image and information manipulation, as evidenced in news management, advertising, propaganda, public relations, double-speak, all sorts of deceptions, the withholding of important truths, outright lying, and the making of false promises. Among the most prominent perpetrators of such manipulation and deception are advertising and government, the latter especially on the national level.

3. Entertainment and diversions, e.g., audio, video, and film entertainment, mass live entertainment, and mass spectator sports, whether witnessed directly in person or over the media, especially the electronic ones. We might contemplate the fact that it is now possible for people to spend literally all of their leisure time, and in fact, all their waking hours, being entertained via these means. Many people even sleep with the TV on.

4. Law, in that people have been conditioned to equate law with goodness. A most striking example can be found in the opinion of the American people on the morality of abortion. Prior to the 1973 US Supreme Court decision which legalized abortion on demand, about two-thirds of the population was opposed to abortion. Shortly subsequent to that decision, about two-thirds of the population was found to approve of abortion in at least many instances, largely because the supreme judiciary of the land had declared it legal.

5. Drugs, both legal (including prescription mind-altering drugs, such as tranquilizers) and illegal ones (e.g., "street" drugs).

*On a typical day, the average US family spends at least 7 hours in front of TV, revealing the immense influence of this technology over the contemporary mind, which is particularly scandalous considering the passivity of the activity and how the manipulation of people's imagery has become the controlling element in public life as the imagesmiths determine the entire economic activity of a culture and its political choices. One particularly bizarre impact of TV on viewers is the destruction of their attention spans by the ever shortening "frames" of action or advertisement. One expression of this is that over 50% of TV viewers in the 18-34 age group no longer even watch out a single program on a channel, but rapidly switch among 2 or even 3 channels, scanning them all at the same time. This is called "grazing," and has many parallels to the modernistic quest for "crazing," i.e., a breathless pursuit for something better right away which, however, has no permanency itself since nothing ever satisfies, with one craze rapidly succeeding another, and life itself being not much more than participation in hundreds of concurrent crazes--a situation paralleled in human service practice itself.

TV addiction is predicted to get even worse, with Americans in the late 1990s absorbing at least 75 hours of some form of television each week, an increase of about 50%. Since this is only the average, a good proportion of Americans spend much more time than that before the TV. Particularly in the households of people of the lower socio-economic classes, TV is on either 24 hours, or at least during much of one's waking hours, even while one is doing other things. Many people eat in front of the TV, and many can no longer fall asleep unless they have their TV on. In the mid-1980s, a woman in Pietersburg, South Africa, died while watching TV. Her husband, also a TV addict, did not become aware of her death until 3 days later (National Geographic, 10/88, p. 575).

*Between the early 1970s and the late 1980s, the average amount of time Americans spent in front of a running TV set rose from 5.5 to 7.5 hours.

*More and more children are being given their own TV sets in their own rooms which, in our opinion, is a bit like giving a child a gun or access to a medicine chest full of drugs. Some children get their first TV at age 2, and a VCR by age 3 (SHJ, 5 Feb. 98).

*It is hard to believe that children, saturated from watching TV at home, would come to school and be exposed to yet more TV, and that this would be considered wonderful and progressive. Not only are educational videotapes used in all sorts of classes, but by 1993, one-third of all US primary and secondary public schools were exposing their students to a 12-minute TV program consisting of 10 minutes of news and 2 minutes of ads. Interestingly, while textbooks are intensively scrutinized by all parties, absolutely nobody scrutinizes what TV and video material gets shown in the schools (CBS "60 Minutes," 10/10/93). Not only are children in school made to watch TV as part of their education, but they are also made to watch advertisements aimed at children that come

with the educational material (AP in SHJ, 11 Dec. 98). One commercial TV channel for schools was being watched in 12,000 US schools in 1998, not to mention other channels.

*A woman wrote that her family had long lived without TV, but once they brought it into the house, they found that their lives began to revolve around it, and she even had to spend time in front of it when she did not want to, in order to watch over what her children were watching.

*To a large degree, the rise of obesity among children, and the concomitant maladies such as diabetes and asthma, are actually the consequence of externalism, insofar as a lot of it is due to children becoming enchained to a sedentary lifestyle in front of the TV (Science, 7 Nov. 97).

*Someone said that the younger generation is absolutely "mesmerized" by the entertainment media and culture (Newsweek, 17/7/00).

*Some people have called TV the "plug-in drug."

*It used to be: In bed we laugh,
In bed we cry;
And born in bed,
In bed we die.

Now we can substitute the phrase "in front of a videoscreen" for "in bed."

*A performer we had never heard of (Staind) encountered a youth with a large tattoo of him on his arm. This shook even said Staind up, who said he finds it difficult to talk to his fans because "they're teetering on every word I say" (SPS, 7/7/01).

*In 2001, a movie ("The Fast and the Furious") came out about teenagers racing each other in cars on city streets. Immediately, kids imitated this, and predictably, there were many accidents, injuries, and some deaths. Most of these races take place after midnight on weekends. Sometimes, 400 cars gather for such races (9 July 01, NBC TV). Obviously, the parents of these kids are nonexistent for any "practical purposes."

*In order to exploit the phenomenally lucrative children's demand market, products appealing to children (toys, food, etc.) are now not only modelled on such things as characters in the media, but now, cartoons and similar media are being made based on toys that earlier appeared on the market. Similarly, once a toy becomes popular, the media develop cartoons based on the toy figures. This is creating a powerful alliance between television entertainment for children and TV ads for products. Thus, children's minds are drenched almost entirely in media images as they grow up, to the exclusion of other mind content. However, we have found it futile to try to alert even educated parents to this menace. Parents are swallowing it enthusiastically.

*As recently as 1999, the minds of hundreds of millions of children around the world were possessed by the Pokémon interrelated set of VT games, movies, trade cards, comic books, toys, toothbrushes, keys, and even candies. Children stabbed each other over the cards, and skipped meals to do Pokémon things.

*Several top scientific religious authorities in Saudi Arabia agreed to ban Pokémon because it "possessed the minds" of children, and made parenting difficult (SPS, 27/3/01).

*In 1999, elementary students were shown a list of 10 items, and asked which they wanted most for Christmas. The results were: Pokémon things, 26%; money, 18%; computers, 15%; electronics, 14%; CDs, 9%; sports equipment, 7%; clothes, 3%; jewelry and accessories, 3%; books, 2%; small toys, 2%. Thus, note the 5 top items were media-connected, and 3 of the top 4 were far above the rest (Boston Sunday Globe, 20/12/99; source item from Jack Yates).

*Just how controlling the media are of people's mind content has become apparent from the rather violent opinion swings that surveys have recorded in the population, undoubtedly in response to whatever is emphasized in the media at the moment. For instance, some data from Australia show

that in less than 2 years, people underwent dramatic changes in what they considered to be their "major worries." One moment, it was the economy, and the next moment it was violent crime. Concerns over the environment, AIDS and the aging of the population experienced declines of almost 50%, while concern over violent crime increased by about 50%. (Source clipping of 3/91 from Peter Millier.)

*Already in 1990 (26/3/90), Time ran an article on the extent of manipulation of the news by the (first) Bush administration, which of course is merely one instance of the way news in general is manipulated these days. Even during its short tenure, that Bush administration was said to have engineered about 100 phony news events and disinformation releases.

*A 1990 Gallup poll asked Americans what was the "most believable authority in matters of truth" in their lives: 43% said personal experience, 31% gave religious writings, 16% cited parents or other authorities, 7% said science, 6% the media, and 3% religious leaders. On the one hand, this illustrates the extreme individualism of current modernism in emphasizing personal experience as by far the highest authority. On the other hand, it is ironic in that people are grossly naive in underestimating how their minds are shaped and controlled by the media and by science.

*The TIPS editor had never heard of basketball star Magic Johnson until the night he announced to the world that he was HIV-positive, and radio stations interrupted their other broadcasting to breathlessly break the news. The TIPS editor had also never heard of basketball star Wilt Chamberlain until not long later, he claimed he had had sex with 20,000 women. (We bet it wasn't more than 10,000.) Nor had the TIPS editor ever heard of athlete O. J. Simpson until he was chased (on TV) and arrested on suspicion of having killed his wife. And, the TIPS editor had never heard of drug-addicted punk singer Kurt Cobain until he committed suicide, followed by an endless and sickening coverage and glorification of this pitifully decadent man and his surviving and apparently equally decadent wife. Either the TIPS editor is out of touch with reality, or the world is, and the TIPS editor knows which is which. The people who knew all these people and had been preoccupied by them are obviously in deep trouble. Among other things, their minds are extensively under media control.

*The number of crimes that get committed in imitation of a crime plot first seen in the movies or on TV is endless. Youths are particularly susceptible to such copy-cattng. Expect more, rather than less, of this as the media become ever more dominant.

*Experts are saying that so many Americans have been watching talk shows so long that the ideas prevalent in shrinkery, therapy and recovery, and the playing out of tear-jerking sympathy dramas on behalf of perpetrators of offenses, have begun to deeply influence the US jury system, making it increasingly harder to convict perpetrators as these are increasingly being perceived as being victims themselves. People have begun to call this the Oprah (Winfrey) defense or the Oprahization of the jury system (Time, 6/6/94).

*Another sign of the power of the media over the public mind is that formerly, when people confessed to having committed offenses, they did so to either their pastors or to the police or lawyers, but nowadays they are apt to do it either on TV or at TV stations. For instance, one Texas man went to the offices of his local TV station to confess to a murder that he had committed. Partly this is a "please look at me" phenomenon, and partly a reflection of people's mentality that "if it is not on TV, it isn't real."

*Roseanne, her talk show, the Rosie talk show of Rosie O'Donnell, and her Rosie magazine can apparently all be considered imitators of Oprah, her TV show, and her magazine. In 6/01, Roseanne (the woman) made public that she has 7 personalities. Unfortunately, this augurs a huge rise in the number of women who will "discover" their multiple personalities (imitating the imitator), and a big boost to the shrink business (SPS, 3 July 01).

*Time (9 July 01) commented on the fact that there is hardly a place left where one can escape advertising. Even the sand on popular beaches is being imprinted with ads by special vehicles once a day, and the conveyer belts at airports carry ads.

*The bad news is that in a single year, the average American adult almost tripled the amount of time they spent on the Internet, but the good news is that they decreased TV watching because of this by 41% (Time, 2 Aug. 99).

*According to some reports, people are finding their jobs and lives so stressful, and the electronic media so easily accessible, that they begin to engage in something that has been called cocooning, which means they curl themselves around their electronic entertainment equipment at home and tune everything else out (SHJ, 24/5/94).

*Some of the phenomena of our age could be likened to mass possession of a demonic kind. A very significant proportion of the public is certainly possessed by Demon Media. Their entire minds are filled with content conveyed by the media, and their lives are controlled by what the media show or promote. Many people, and particularly younger ones, are very obviously possessed by Demon Pop Music. This strikes one powerfully when one watches tens of thousands of people at a rock concert moving in unison, and quite often with their arms up in the air the same way people often put their arms up at religious revival-type events. Someone has called this "putting up one's spiritual antennae," except that at rock-type concerts, what one receives from these antennae are the messages from Demon Rock. And of course, innumerable people these days are possessed by Demon Computer. In fact, considering how many people's minds these days are being owned by ephemeral external powers, one could almost say that such possession is a hallmark of our age.

*Newsweek (6 Sept. 99) gave a very positive review ("a sweet, funny little movie") to a film ("Outside Providence") which, it said, would have been incomplete without masturbation, vomiting, and wheelchair gags.

*The youth of the US of the 1990s had been described as the "indifferent generation" because they did not read or watch the news, care about it, get involved in civic efforts, go to church, save any money, or vote--and if they did vote, they knew less about candidates than earlier generations. All this despite watching TV for 5-7 hours a day. Apparently, the "age of information" begets indifference.

*Under the Nazis, a Dr. Fritz Hippler made a film ("The Eternal Jew") which contributed significantly to the anti-Jewish developments in Germany. After the war, Hippler said he had had no idea what kinds of consequences his film would stir up.

*The more our world becomes one of media and image, the more will methods of control focus on thought control, and the more intense we must expect battles around words, ideas and images to become.

*In 1998, we saw portions of a film version of Brave New World. In this dystopia, the public was inundated with slogans such as "promiscuity is a citizen's duty," "ending is better than mending," "if it is broke don't fix it," "I hate old things," "I want all new things," "increased consumption prevents dissatisfaction" (the above in support of consumptionism for the sake of the economy), "take a holiday from reality," "it is important to feel good," "6,400 repetitions make one truth." The program was a startling reminder of our own societal situations. Interestingly, in this society, one could not tell the ads apart from the propaganda, much as is the case today. People were said to be suffering from a "Soma deficiency," Soma of course being a Prozac-like drug to keep the masses complacent, much like people nowadays have been said to suffer from lithium or other mind-drug deficiencies.

*This concluding item deals with who the media mind controllers are. First of all, the number of media giants in the US has shrunk from 29 in 1987 to 10 in 1997, meaning that mind control is being concentrated into ever few hands. Furthermore, the media, and particularly the entertainment ones, are controlled to a phenomenal extent by very young people, often not even 25. In turn, this means that these brash superficial and inexperienced people control the minds of the population.

As of 1991, a mere 150 or so people, virtually unknown to the public, controlled much of the culture of modernism by writing and producing the lion's share of successful prime-time TV programs. Almost all are liberal democrats, and 90% are males (Time, 18/11/91). Most of them

are divorced, and this is reflected in the vanishing of the traditional family on TV. Among other things, they are also responsible for making traditional child-rearing virtually disappear from the media. Instead, children are either born out of wedlock, conceived by sperm bank impregnations, generated by extra-terrestrials, etc. They are also responsible for virtually abolishing religious content on prime-time, while generating plenty of sacrilege and, of course, exalting sexual indulgences of all kinds.

Image Replacing Substance & Even Reality On, or Because of, the Media

One thing the mass media are doing is to alienate people from reality. Image, pretense, make-believe, fantasy, etc., are replacing facts, truth, substance, and reality itself. Modernistic societies are becoming de facto audiences watching a show, which much of the time is real life that is treated as if it were a show, where some of the viewers might get an opportunity to step up on the stage, perform, and/or be "looked at." Again, all this serves the imperial powers in some way.

*Someone has analyzed the history of the concept of "success in life" in the US. Benjamin Franklin was said to be the first writer (at least in North America) of "success literature," emphasizing personal character as the source of success: industry, honesty, perseverance, reliability, sobriety, frugality, and loyalty. Many other writers echoed this motif for almost 150 years. A dramatic change took place during the first half of the 20th century, probably precipitated by the weakening of the Puritan ethic, and epitomized in Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People." This genre emphasized the winning personality, also expressed in such books as Norman Vincent Peale's "The Power of Positive Thinking." More recently, we have arrived at a third phase which emphasizes cynical gamesmanship and manipulation through image control. This is exemplified by Michael Korda's book Power, How to Get It, How to Use It, and by autobiographies of "successful" business people such as Lee Iacocca's (USN&WR, 10 Sept. 90). Of course, all of this is a reflection of the evolution of what we call modernism.

*Some pundits believe that it was in the 1980s that style finally triumphed over substance. One such pundit dated the beginning of the lite age to the advent of cigarettes advertised to have less tar and nicotine, which persuaded people it was okay to smoke. This was followed by lite beer which convinced people that they could drink at least as much beer as before. Then came lite wine, lite cheese, lite soda, lean cuisine, low salt, low sugar and low cholesterol food. To this was then added entertainment without theme, plot or character, rock music without lyrics that can be understood, and news programs that compete with entertainment programs. Even the weather forecast had to be presented as a form of vaudeville in order to attract and/or keep attention. And finally, an actor became President. Thus, he said, the medium indeed became the message, and "litening has struck."

*One commentator on the contemporary scene noted that we now "live in a floating, borderless mass of impressions and images which come at us." This is certainly true, as we are being bombarded by imagery from all sides that is trying to bypass our conscious, rational and moral analysis. And of course, people who do not make an effort to detach themselves from the media are many more times the victims of this onslaught than those who do.

*Already by 1990, there were 150,000 public relations (PR) specialists in the US, versus 130,000 journalists, and the PR people generated at least 40% of the "news" (Time, 26/3/90).

*Time magazine admitted in 8 Oct. 90 that Bush Sr. got elected US president in 1988 by pretending to be someone other than himself, while Dukakis lost because he refused to pretend. It added, "How odd: a process designed to unmask the candidates wound up electing a masked man."

*According to Time, the minds of American TV viewers are getting scrambled by a mix of real live news, the re-enactment of current news events, such as war scenes, that are not acknowledged as such and broadcast as real footage of news events, re-enactment of so-called "dramatized re-creations" of real-life events, and fictionalized historical dramas. The outcome is that ordinary people, and especially children, soon no longer know the difference between fact and fiction, historical and fictionalized reality, and are yet further alienated from time, which we consider to be one of the signs of our times.