



M. C. ESCHER, "TOWER OF BABEL" (1928)

TYRANNY OF THE MIND

by Carl Lyle Jenkins

STICKS AND STONES CAN BREAK YOUR BONES
BUT WORDS CAN HURT YOU MORE
THEY ARE THE CAUSE OF IGNORANCE
OF HATRED AND OF WAR

THAT THIS SOUNDS VERY STRANGE
I KNOW
AND THE TRUTH OF THIS
I CANNOT SHOW

'CAUSE IT'S ALL INSIDE YOUR HEAD
EVERYTHING FROM A TO Z
AND YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE
WHO CAN SET YOU FREE

FROM ALL THOSE HURTFUL STORIES
ABOUT THEM AND YOU AND ME
AND ALL THOSE STRANGE IDEAS
ABOUT HOW IT ALL SHOULD BE

— CARL LYLE JENKINS, FROM "BATTLE LINES"

Humanity stands at a crossroads of evolution. We can destroy ourselves in a nuclear holocaust or we can make the leap in consciousness necessary to avert the unthinkable. We have the means available to create either reality. The only real question is: How might we avert the unthinkable?

Can you stop the voices in your head? You know the voices I mean. The voices that keep you awake all night worrying about anything and everything. The voices that consistently destroy your happiness and peace of mind. The voices that tell you all sorts of things about yourself, other people, and the world around you that have absolutely no relationship with reality. To speak of human freedom or of evolutionary leaps in consciousness prior to understanding and gaining control over the voices in our heads is sheer vanity. The unflattering truth is that until we have mastered our mental processes, the ongoing verbal, visual, emotional, and symbolic images that pass through our consciousness, we are merely robots, responding to other people and events as mechanically as the computers we program. We are simply talking dolls, wind-up toys with no will of our own, incapable of saying, doing or thinking anything original. And there is virtually no possibility of any of us manifesting the real creativity necessary to solve the world's most crucial problems until we have freed ourselves from the nightmare of our mechanicalness.

The problem is that the tail is wagging the dog. We have lost our minds, and like all lunatics, we don't even know it. Human beings should have control over the contents and activities

that take place within their own brains. Instead quite the opposite is the case. It is as if our brains are afflicted with cerebral palsy and refuse to respond to repeated commands. The reason for this peculiar malady is actually very simple. We have been hypnotized and enslaved by language, by the products of our own imaginations, by words and concepts and ideologies. We have forgotten that language consists of humanmade artifacts and that all concepts are works of art. We have lost sight of how we came to learn what we think we know. And we have lost control of the thinking process itself. The creative, internal processes of language are largely invisible and, as a result, our ideologies, the various political, religious and economic systems over which we incessantly fight, have become mythologized and given a power over us that must be broken if we are ever to have any hope at all of living together in peace.

From the moment we are born we are all immersed in language, in the prevailing ideas, concepts and beliefs which shape our cultures. To a greater or lesser extent we are all brainwashed, programmed, conditioned and indoctrinated by our families, our friends, our teachers and our preachers. This is a universal phenomena which influences every human being's interactions with the world. No one escapes it. We call the formalized part of this dubious process "education." But in reality, no civilization in recorded history has ever dared to educate its citizens nor taught them how to think or given them the analytical tools of logic and self-

reflective critical thought, which are the keys to real knowledge.

Do you remember your U. S. History classes in grade school. Why do you suppose you were required by law to sit through twelve years of boring repetitions of our nation's glorious history? Why do you suppose that everything embarrassing in our country's past was either falsely portrayed or deliberately deleted from the textbooks which were used during the formative years of your education? It is simply because, even in our relatively free society, the process of education is primarily that of indoctrination, of teaching our children to become totally and blindly identified with the purposes, goals and values of our society. In primary and secondary education, creative thinking and questioning are actively discouraged and controversial topics are not discussed openly because intellectual stimulation, especially at an early age, interferes with the indoctrination process. Most students thus educated form an unquestioning loyalty to traditional authority and come to regard creative thinking as both subversive and dangerous except within carefully arranged patterns that society deems acceptable. The sorry affair of brainwashing supplanting education has not come about as a result of any active conspiracy. It is much worse than that, for the leaders who create and implement educational policies are just as hopelessly brainwashed as the rest of us. Our teachers believe that they are educating and not indoctrinating their students; and their