

THE NEXT LEVEL

BY DAN ARMSTRONG

Take a look
At every book
Each life
In our historic tract
Understand each sign
Of the scientific mind
Each geometric fact
Grasp it all
For it is our call
To extend
The somatic soul.

It is difficult because of the stretch of time to completely absorb what it means that we represent the crown of human creation. Some ten thousand years ago humans began a steady conversion from nomadic hunter/gatherers to planted agrarians. The evolution of these seed communities into cities then city-states, then industrial nations and the alliance of these nations is the process of human civilization. The sum of this process — all cultures, all literature, all architecture, all science throughout recorded history — is presently coming to life in the cyberspace of the global community. Three thousand human generations stand stacked one upon the next and the grand perspective is finally showing us the outline of our own human horizon. What can be seen is both stunning and frightening.

The sophistication of the electronic sciences in the last 50 years has opened these vistas. From global media to nuclear reactors to Jovian probes, at bottom is electricity. For the time being regardless of what source the energy — steam, solar atomic; whatever — it is the most use to us as electricity. It is the defining element of the modern age, and with it we are about to discover, *enmasse*, that we have been laboring under a drastically limited understanding of what it means to be human. Whether we want it or not, the technical awakening of the 20th century offers a reciprocal and equally necessary awakening of human consciousness in the 21st....

The Information Age

We live enmeshed in information. From genetic code to lasered discs, our consciousness knows more than we cognate. The invisible fabric of our imagination is woven upon an iconoscape of media image and threaded through with an encyclopedia of facts. We have televisions, newspapers, magazines, radio, and the Internet integrating information sources from all over the globe. We have electron microscopes and the rudimentaries of genetic engineering, drawing us closer and closer to the workings of the atom and the very spark of life. We have launched a series of sophisticated space probes aimed at the outer reaches of our solar system and armed with remote cameras and electronic sensors to scan the planets and their moons for traces of life — and it is there! We have a powerful telescope orbiting the earth beyond the atmospheric veil, peering galaxy beyond galaxy into before untold temporal depths, actually anticipating the origins of the universe and time itself. These are miraculous achievements. No, more than that! — Humans verge upon a nominative godhood. It is true. We are the off-spring of Deity.

All that remains to crown our deification is the wreath of impassioned wisdom. Humans must grasp the significance of their libraries of knowledge. We must grow into the implicate meaning of the human potential. The clear evidence of our genius demands that we step to the next level.

The present vanguard of civilization shares a dynamic information pool. In it is the imperfect sum of our somatic knowledge, the collected works of humankind. It is a multi-cultural collection of histories, astronomies and religions. It contains a scheme of numbers, a geometry, a physics, a science of medicine, hundreds of languages, and is sustained in an electronic global mirror of the present. It is our shared knowledge. Our global dictionary. The language within the languages. And it operates as a mutual objective consciousness. It is something that nearly all the people in the world partially know. It is our collective conscious: the somatic oversoul.

The world-wide web is the perfect analog. Nested in the memory banks of the Internet is a growing fund of information. Encircling the globe is a pulsating electromagnetic net, and accessed by phone it is available all the time. Turn on the computer. Punch in the digital codes. And suddenly the individual in on-line with an instantaneous global network. With links to computers in libraries, museums, archives and offices all over the world, nearly all that humankind has recorded — music, art, science, literature — is but the touch of a finger away. This transpersonal collected conscious, this interactive media-mind, if you will, has become the new social contract: the individual's responsibility to conceive of an objective global reality from the sum of modern society's multi-media output. It is, without our hardly acknowledging it, an habitual stretching exercise in intellection,



FRANS MASEREEL

synthesis and abstraction. It is the expansion of consciousness through the brute facilitation of the electronic oversoul.

Yet this age of information is happening so rapidly we have yet to fully grasp what it is and what it offers and what it suggests. Our base of knowledge and empirical facts increases as quickly as the capacities of computer chips. With each day we further detail every branch of scientific study, each field of literature, every realm of history. So much so, and with such a timely collapse upon the present, that for the first time humankind has the perspective to clearly evaluate the imprint of civilization on the planet Earth and to truly judge "what man hath wrought."

And what *hath* man wrought? The stunning and the frightening for sure! We transplant human organs. We mimic natural hormones. We clone sheep and monkeys. We drop tinkler toys on the moons of Jupiter. We imprint entire lexicons on a silicon chip the size of a mustard seed. We tap the energy of the invisible atom.

But all at an egocentric cost.

We have stockpiled enough nuclear warheads to blow this third rock from the sun to Kingdom Come — 10 times over. Our creative forces have so overrun the land masses we have all but deforested Paradise. The waters of the oceans and rivers run toxic. The air burns our lungs. We have color TV to bake our faces when the sun has gone down. We have so senselessly procreated our number is coming up. The animals are dying. The lands lie scorched and desertified. We watch all this as it occurs and do nothing but continue to consume. Ten thousand years of civilization and we still seem no more than hungry puppies wolfing down our kennel ration. Stunning and frightening *indeed!*

There are few optimistic scenarios for the future. It is difficult to imagine a world without major catastrophe in the next 50 years. Something must change. We have ignored the rhythms of the planet. We have partied on our neighbor's lawn. We have asphalted-over the lungs of the earth. The entire globe, flora and fauna, wheeze with every polluted inbreath. Who are we? What are we? What are we doing here?

Primarily diminishing species — including our own!

This cannot be right. It is time for the human race to do some soul searching. We are the only visibly conscious being on the planet, and we persistently stumble over that conscious "self." We must somehow acknowledge and/or re-define our purpose as humans — if only to acquiesce and seek harmony with the other living things. Should our goals be more than that, we must name them. The talent and creativity of the human demands it. We are limited only by our imaginations. There is no end to what we can do. We are not just happenstance in a universe of randomness. The moral of human existence on this planet screams of meaningful allegory and unanswered potentials. Either the empire will blindly bring about its own end or humans must awaken to their greater being. The Age is changing. It is unavoidably so.

Pollution of the Oversoul:

We have great faith in technology. If we put a man on the moon, surely we'll find a way to purify the waters. Adjust the ozone densities. Find a clean, efficient energy source. Solve every virus. Antibiotic every bacteria. These feats are not outside our abilities. Yet if we must continually use science to solve the problems of the way we live, maybe the point is being missed. In the case of humans on earth, having fully realized we are conscious, as a group, the question is primarily one of balance. Our own fully conscious being cannot be realized until we recognize our place in the entire spectrum of living things. We are not apart but implicate in the design. Our society tends to separate and isolate; when times dictate we should conjoin and commune.

There is an organic mind that persists in all life, animal and vegetable. Minimally an Innate Will, it serves impetus to the involuntary operations of the mind and body. Within this life motive is a common fund of evolving racial memory, an ancient imprint echoing up through the chromosomal chains, seeding our dreams and guiding our intuitions. A collective unconscious to match our collected conscious, this subtle transpersonal sub-conscious connects us all. If the body of human knowledge is our somatic oversoul, then the complement is this clear spring of life: the subliminal racial under-soul.

The spirit of humanity flows from these twin wells of inspiration. When we disregard the sanctity of our own planet, when we concentrate too much on the gew-gaws of modern life, we disrupt the planet beyond the limits of its natural balance, we create stresses and strains on our psychological being as well as the organic whole of the earth. We take on a silent grief. Because we are so intimately interconnected with the body of life, when the water, the air and the soil are toxified, so are our minds.

Stripped of social pretense the human is as proud and dignified as an eagle, as energetic and playful as a porpoise. The embodied apex of life on Earth, more than animal, a thing of body and creative consciousness, this is the noble calling of human being. But packed and stacked in cities for acre upon acre of urban sprawl, our minds become like our populace — cramped, stressed and paranoid. And this is proportionately reflected in the direction and production of our culture. Deep innate survival drives are turned inward and perverted. Streaks of violence and sexual exaggeration color the oversoul. The electronic iconoscape warps with narcissism and vain distract-ion. The global conscience becomes convoluted by a propaganda of spins and counterspins. The moebial container of our somatic knowledge becomes a disturbing funhouse mirror instead of a tool for conscious human evolution. The oversoul, like the atmosphere and the waters, darkens with psychic pollution. And we struggle under its choking screen of smoke.

The Next Level:

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not the darkness that frightens us."
—NELSON MANDELA

We must find a way to match the vast genius of our intellectual mind with commensurate humanity and a profound respect for the living thing. We must match our achievements in science and technology with a grace for what we are. There exist a wide variety of religions in the culture of humankind. Though the clear sense of the sacred is evident in every one, for the most part they are provincial. The global society enters the 21st century a collection of folk people whose consciousnesses have been unified in an electronic hyper-space. Because of the unknown potential of unified consciousness, this offers humankind a stranger and more powerful challenge than atomic energy. Still we open the godhead hastily.

It is evident that something more exists. We can be certain life pervades the cosmos. We are not just a planet of multi-various peoples. We are the physical personification of a consciousness that permeates all reality. And that is not fanciful transcendentalism. Revealed in the limitless application of our science is the clear beauty of the symmetries of the human mind. And we are special because we know this. *We think therefore we are!*

What does this mean? It means there is mystic meaning in life. There is something immortal in us. That the story of humankind is linked to the larger story of the universe and that the interconnective tissue is mind. That the balance of our consciousness is sacred and that the organic and somatic mind are equal parts of a larger thing. That we have the potential to surmount ourselves. To be dimensionally-larger beings. To understand that we are deeply enmeshed in and part of a living consciousness. To step to the next level, we must realize that we are children of the universe. We have been entrusted with one of the jewels of our galaxy. There is a way to live here. It is our duty as well as the human path to seek it. It is only in our best interests to achieve it.

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