Noesis

The Journal of the Mega Society
Number 73
September 1992

EDITORIAL
Rick Rosner
5139 Balboa Blvd #303
Encino CA 91316-3430
(818) 986-9177

ALL THE ANSWERS
& A FEW MORE QUESTIONS ISSUE

I have a vague memory of problems, here and there in previous issues, for which I promised the solutions but never delivered. I'm sitting cross-legged, aggravating my hemorrhoids, in the middle of a nest of papers. Let me shuffle through them and unearth the missing answers:

from the Jan/Feb issue, the third & fourth problems on the Short Form Test, supplied by Eric Erlandson:
0, 1, 7, 2, 5, 8, 16, 3, 19, 6, 14, 9, 9, 17, 17, 4, 12, 20, 20, 7, 7, 15, 15, 10, 23, 10, ?

Answer: 111 [not 15, as we published in July] F(n)= the number of operations of the famous "3x+1" function to work from n to 1. n= the first x of course.

f(x)= 3x+1 if x is odd, x/2 if x is even.

For example: 3 becomes 10, which becomes 5, which becomes 16, which becomes 8, then 4, then 2, then 1. Seven steps.

10, 10, 171, 186, 2748, 3258, 43981, 56506, 703710, 974010, 11259375, ?

Answer: 16702650 [We published the answer but never explained it.] Convert the decimal numbers above to the hexadecimal base, and you have the following:

A, A, AB, BA, ABC, CBA, ABCD, DCBA, ABCDE, EDCBA, ABCDEF, ?
FEDCBA is 16702650.

We also published the wrong answer to problem 7. The correct answer is:

$$f(x)=\sqrt{\frac{1}{1+i}+ix^2}$$

from the May issue, some periodic table puzzles supplied by Hughes Gervais, plus one of mine:
H, B, C, N, O, F, P, S, K, V, Y, I, W, ?
answer is U (uranium) which is the last element from periodic table with a one-letter symbol.

With the preceding symbols replaced by their atomic numbers, we have:
1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 19, 23, 39, 53, 74, 92

7, 10, 11, 28, 41, 60, 93, ? answer is 103--all are elements whose letter symbols begin with N

89, 13, 95, 51, 18, 33, 85, 56, 97, 4, 83, 5, 35, 48, 20, ? answer is 98--elements arranged in alphabetical order--may not be up to date--I'm using a physics textbook from 1961 It sold for $5.10; try to find a physics text for ten times that amount today!

from the June issue, three more short form problems:
8. was a lousy find-the-next-figure problem of mine--plus, it didn't reproduce correctly. The answer should be a heptagon with concave sides and minus its middle. Call it a failed problem. I don't want to mess with the graphics unless you insist.

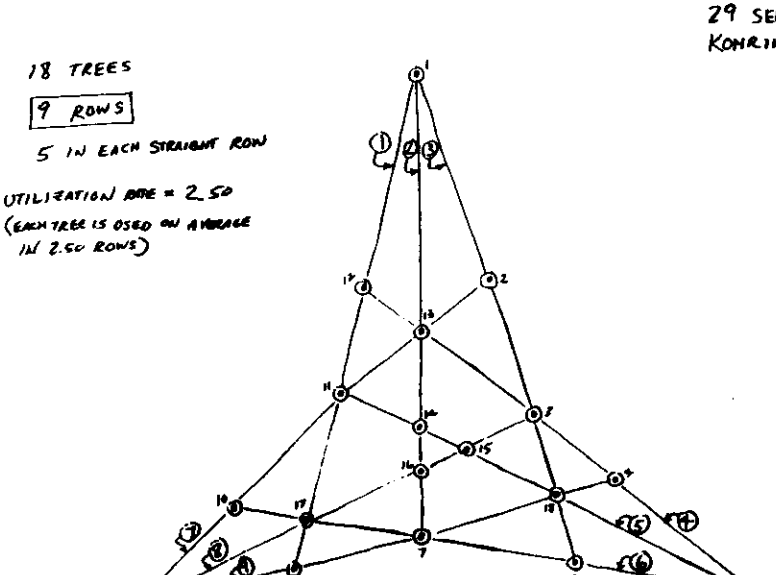
9. is from Jeffrey Wright: 0, 20, 6, 2, 5, 4, 2, 6, 0, ? answer: one quadrillion--I don't know why--Jeff, send an explanation!

10. is from Marshall Fox. I notice that I added a few misprints of my own. It asks for the volume of an infinite-dimensional sphere of radius r. I used to know this--lemme dig it up. How about

$$\Pi^{n/2}r^n/[(n/2)!]$$

where n = infinity? Actually, for any finite r, an infinite-dimensional sphere has zero volume.

from the July issue, the answer to a tree planting problem from C. Kohring:



In the August issue, the are a few more Short Form Probs--I'll run their answers in the next mailing.

Finally, I've devised what might be a nasty problem but am too lazy to solve it. Call it Short Form Problem #15:
At each point in the Cartesian plane whose coordinates are both integers, an equilateral triangle is centered. Each triangle is free to pivot around its center, all triangles are the same size, and no triangles overlap. What is the maximum length of the triangles' sides (and what is the maximum percentage of the plane's area they can cover)?

A LETTER FROM GLENN MORRISON

Glenn Arthur Morrison
706 Brown Av
Evanston, IL 60202

Dear Rick:

Would like to see back issues of the journal. Are they being sent, or did I somehow get on the list of "subscribers" instead of "members" by mistake?

On the Hoeflin tests: impression here is that most of the problems do require the kind of thinking that Ron mentions as his main criterion of intelligence; that involving creativity, insight in devising methods of solution. Some seem tests of persistence. I wonder, for example, if there exists an "aha!" solution for the "mouse" problem on the Mega test that isn't esoteric. I had thought before that my disparate test scores were unusual. The variations, at least in my case, appear related to the test type, how "interesting" it is, whether open or closed book, timed or untimed, spatial, numerical or verbal, etc, with test burnout and regression to the mean not major factors. In short, I think the score on a test depends in part on a particular test being matched to the test taker's abilities, so I don't get too depressed if I "...e a cropper" on a given test.

Rick: My problem is similar to yours, the "culturally advantaged underachiever". I concluded that money-making requires the ability not to become bored and disgusted by such inevitable mundane activities as paper-shuffling management of minutiae, office politics, salesmanship, and so on. Two basic choices: either join an organization and put up with the neanderthals that gravitate (levitate?) to the top by some mysterious natural law, or run my own show and realize the necessity of wearing a large number of hats that may not fit me very well. My solution, if it can be called that, is to combine minimal time spent on economic activities with extreme frugality, leaving time for more creative pursuits. I find that browsing the local public and university libraries stimulates a lot of ideas and interests.

An optics puzzle. I'm not sure I know the answer to this one. Maybe somebody does.

In a recent Scientific American article, Roland Winston states that no imaging device can give a image more than 1/4 the brightness of the object that produces it, such as the Sun. He gives the example of a fast parabolic mirror. This does not satisfy the Abbe sine condition, and suffers from severe coma, so what he says about its brightness limit does not surprise me. However, consider an oil-immersion microscope objective, certainly an imaging device, corrected for infinite tube length, with the sun's image at the specimen point. Since the sun subtends 1/107 of a radian, then for a 1.8 mm focal length the image diameter is f/107 = .0168 mm. The diameter of the entrance pencil is 2(n.a.) f = 2 * 1.25 * 1.8mm = 4.5 mm. (n.a. = numerical aperture). The resulting concentration = (4.5mm/.0168mm)^2 = 71000, more than the thermodynamic limit of 46000. Thus it appears that an imaging device can concentrate sunlight beyond the thermodynamic limit. Comments?

G. A. Morrison

[All I know is how to make ants crispy with a magnifying glass. Ed.]

SOME INTERESTING STUFF FROM IN-GENIUS

by Kevin Langdon and Ron Hoeflin

[The debate reprinted here touches on issues about which I like to think on those rare occasions I do think. Hope you find it interesting and that it prompts your responses. Ed.]

REPLY TO JERRY BAILS ON UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES

Kevin Langdon
P.O. Box 795
Berkeley, CA 94701

In-Genius #35 contains a long essay by Jerry Bails, entitled "Understanding Ourselves: The Pursuit of a New Kind of Freedom." Near the beginning of this essay, Bails said:

> At the very heart of the American view of human nature is the concept of volition. Despite the many different religious sects that have found a home in the United States, one tenet appears almost universal in all Judeo-Christian denominations. This is the notion that each human being is a moral agent, with free will.

This view is fundamental not just to the American but to the modern Western worldview. It is also a falsification of the actual state of affairs in the inner life of human beings.

Man is a machine, moved by stimuli beyond his control, known and unknown to him. The "free will" he thinks he has is an illusion. The assumption that man is a free agent, and that *I* in particular possess free will, is seldom questioned in more than an abstract, philosophical way; people who happen to notice this question continue nonetheless to live their lives representing to themselves that they are in control and believing in this representation.

This is not to say that there is no *possibility* of human beings *becoming* conscious agents, but this is quite impossible until one has become aware of one's fragmentation, ignorance, and unconsciousness.

Prolonged work to develop conscious control of one's attention is required for progress toward self-knowledge, detachment, and consciousness of the whole of oneself. An important part of this work involves observation of one's pattern of lying to oneself to preserve the illusion of agency.

In man as he is, the part of himself which is active perceives and reacts; the line of force does not pass through his center and is out of balance with the forces in motion in his other parts. A fully conscious man would act from the whole of himself all the time.

For some people, development in this direction is clearly and self-evidently the most important thing in the world. The question that remains is: how can this be accomplished? For those who realize that genuine wisdom traditions exist and that they themselves know nothing on the scale of the questions that matter most (regarding life, death, truth, purpose, etc.), it is clear that others have preceded them and have gone further in the direction of understanding.

One's chances are better with the help of a teacher. But how does one recognize a true teacher or a false one? First of all, by what the "teacher" is interested in. Some soon reveal their lust for money, power over others, women, or some other lower value. There is nothing wrong with any of the lower values as long as they are kept in proportion, but a guru who does not treat some form of work with attention as the paramount necessity is a fraud.

If one does not recognize anyone as a suitable teacher, one must try to find one's way without a teacher, at least temporarily.

In another passage, Bails wrote:

> Most of our behavior is on automatic, guided by unconscious modules of the brain. Voluntary thought and action, involving the conscious mind, are engaged but briefly from time to time and then only under very special conditions. As studies with split-brain patients reveal, the conscious mind rationalizes the behaviors of the body that are under the control of unconscious modules of the brain. [See "Brain Mechanisms and Belief Formation," Chapter 5 of *The Social Brain*, Michael S. Gazzaniga, 1985. (Bails' note.)] The conscious mind fools itself into thinking it has "decided" to take actions its body is engaged in. Voluntary behavior is but a small subset of the total behavior of any human being. The higher-level thought processes we associate with "choice" are not in continuous charge of our behavior, no matter how much we would like to believe it.

Gazzaniga is one of a number of brain researchers and cognitive scientists who have begun to question the notions of free will and unity of the parts of the mind under a single consciousness which have been accepted without question in Western psychology until recently, because they are assumed in the underlying "common sense" view of what a human being is that permeates Western culture.

In an article in *Image*, the Sunday magazine of the *San Francisco Examiner*, dated February 2, 1992, science writer Timothy Ferris wrote:

> Gazzaniga . . . worked with split-brain patients whose right hemispheres had sufficient linguistic facility to understand simple commands. (Some people, especially the left-handed, distribute part of their language processing to the right hemisphere.) When a command--"Walk!"--was flashed to such a patient's right brain, he got up and began to walk out of the room. The remarkable thing is that when asked, the patient invariably came up with a rational though bogus explanation for his actions. Asked, "Where are you going?" a typical response was something like, "Uh, I'm going to get a Coke."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The implication seems clear that there is a program in the brain responsible for presenting the mind with plausible explanations for actions, and that it acts, so to speak, unscrupulously, blithely explaining matters about which it is uninformed. Gazzaniga calls this program "the interpreter," and he notes that its functioning accounts for the embarrassing fact that we all from time to time hear ourselves saying some-

thing patently false. "The realization that the mind is a modular organization suggests that some of our behavior might have no origins in our conscious thought processes," Gazzaniga writes.

. . . . . .

Gazzaniga's results indicate that the interpreter is located in the left cerebral hemisphere, near the speech center. This makes sense, in that language is the great explainer--and counterfeiter--of human motives and actions.

A similar point of view is expressed by artificial intelligence pioneer Marvin Minsky. In his *Society of Mind*, Minsky wrote of many independent chunks of volition ("agents"), with "minds" of their own, at loose this way and that inside the mind-space of an individual human organism. This is a picture that anyone who looks hard and honestly at his own inner process can verify for himself, though it rarely occurs to the majority of those engaged in the scientific study of these matters to take their conclusions to heart with regard to how they look at their own lives.

But the idea of man's lack of will and his denial of this lack through a web of illusions about his role in how things happen in life was eloquently stated by the Greek-Armenian spiritual teacher George Ivanovich Gurdjieff in 1915, as recorded in P.D. Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*:

> [M]an's chief delusion is his conviction that he can *do*. All people think that they can do, all people want to do, and the first question all people ask is what they are to do. But actually nobody does anything and nobody can do anything. This is the first thing that must be understood. *Everything happens*. All that befalls a man, all that is done by him, all that comes from him--*all this happens*. And it happens in exactly the same way as rain falls as a result of change in the temperature in the higher regions of the atmosphere or the surrounding clouds, as snow melts under the rays of the sun, as dust rises with the wind.
>
> Man is a machine. All his deeds, actions, words, thoughts, feelings, convictions, opinions, and habits are the results of external influences, external impressions. Out of himself a man cannot produce a single thought, a single action. Everything he says, does, thinks, feels--all this happens. Man cannot discover anything, invent anything. It all happens.
>
> To establish this fact for oneself, to understand it, to be convinced of its truth, means getting rid of a thousand illusions about man, about his being creative and consciously organizing his own life, and so on. There is nothing of this kind. Everything happens--popular movements, wars, revolutions, changes of government, all this happens. And it happens in exactly the same way as everything happens in the life of individual man. Man is born, lives, dies, builds houses, writes books, not as he wants to, but as it happens. Everything happens. Man does not love, hate, desire--all this happens.
>
> But no one will ever believe you if you tell him he can do nothing. This is the most offensive and the most unpleasant thing you can tell people. It is particularly unpleasant and offensive because it is the truth, and nobody wants to know the truth.
>
> When you understand this is will be easier for us to talk. But it is one thing to understand with the mind and another thing to feel it with one's "whole mass," to be really convinced that it is so and never forget it.

Bails had something interesting to say about the difference between our reactions to ideals and to the real world:

> Curiously, our behavior toward real heroes betrays our pusillanimity. When someone among us exhibits the courage to defy authority by refusing conscription or by blowing the whistle on the corruption of those in authority, we quickly take a position that distances ourselves from the outcast hero. . . . Why do we cheer the "take-charge" characters of fiction, and punish the same behavior when it is exhibited by our coworkers and neighbors?

A similar discrepancy exists in the depiction of romance in fiction and the way it works in real life. People who wear their hearts on their sleeves, naively confess passion before they've established trust, or doggedly pursue others who have expressed disinterest in them get chewed up in the real world but are depicted as "winners" in what passes for literature in print and on TV and movie screens.

Toward the end of his essay, Bails said:

> . . . the problem, from a psychological point of view, is to manage our own guilt and self-hatred, for our repeated failure to be the "take-charge" heroes of our fiction. We know that we simply do not take the heroic risks required even when confronted with clear-cut ethical choices. We go with the crowd. How do we manage this failure to follow our ideals, this pusillanimous behavior that, if acknowledged, would be a blow to our self-esteem?

I suspect that many readers of Bails' words did not feel that this criticism applied to them personally, and with some justice. While no one raised in the Western world can be entirely free of guilt and other negative feelings toward the person he takes himself to be, some people do have moral courage; they will do the right thing, as they understand it, even under extremely trying circumstances. (This does not imply that these people have free will. They have simply been shaped by certain forces to be courageous.)

What applies to all without exception is the existence of a self-image, including the representation to oneself of one's independent moral agency, and the tendency for the ego to defend this image against any perception which might bring it into question. This condition applies to anyone who has not yet achieved liberation from attachment. This liberation requires a great hunger, discerning attention, and arduous discipline, over a period of many years; the vast majority of those following any spiritual path do not become liberated before their death. Very few people, particularly in the pampered conditions of life in the West in our times, are capable of undertaking an enterprise on this scale, or even of understanding its possibility.

In Bails' next-to-last paragraph, he wrote:

> What would most likely happen if we did challenge the paradigm of free will? What if we acknowledged that it only makes sense some of the time to treat humans as if they have free choice--that volition operates only under very special conditions?

This paradigm must be challenged by anyone who embarks on a serious study of the actual state of affairs in himself according to one of the traditional ways of knowledge, which all deny the reality of the external, social self in which people believe who have not yet experienced the utter futility of attempting to come to anything real through the distorting lens of the defensive structures of the ego.

But the challenge must go farther than Bails implies in the passage above. It is certainly an unproven proposition that the existence of decision-making mechanisms in man implies that he has an independent will.

In fact, man does not have will over his sensations, actions, emotions, or even his thoughts. He is simply a stimulus-response engine moved by external influences and chance combinations of associations. The only thing that is directly under conscious control (in the brief flashes in which consciousness appears in a man) is his attention. He is free to accept or decline the invitation of each seductive dream offered up by his ego; if he declines, it is possible to make use of the attention saved for the purpose of that work of self-study which can lead to the complete tranformation of a man's inner life.

> The unexamined life is not worth living.
>
> --Socrates

Editor's comment: Attention cannot be the whole story regarding the nature of the person and his mind. If it were, then we would have been born with just sensory organs such as eyes and ears and no manipulative appendages such as hands and feet, with which we do indeed do things. Oddly enough, the pragmatists reverse this whole conception and regard our essential nature as willing, acting, doing organisms. Even aesthetics is given this twist by pragmatists. Here, for example, are a couple of typical passages from John Dewey's Art As Experience:

> The senses are the organs through which the live creature participates directly in the ongoings of the world about him. In this participation the varied wonder and splendor of this world are made actual for him in the qualities he experiences. This material cannot be opposed to action, for motor aparatus and "will" itself are the means by which this participation is carried on and directed. . . . Since sense-organs with their connected motor apparatus are the means of this participation, any and every derogation of them, whether practical or theoretical, is at once effect and cause of a narrowed and dulled life-experience. Opposition of mind and body, soul and matter, spirit and flesh all have their origin, fundamentally, in fear of what life may bring forth. They are marks of contraction and withdrawal. (p. 22)

> The urge to express through painting the perceived qualities of a landscape is continuous with demand for pencil or brush. Without external embodiment, an experience remains incomplete; physiologically and functionally, sense organs are motor organs and are connected, by means of distribution of energies in the human body and not merely anatomically, with other motor organs. (p. 51)

A balanced view, I believe, gives more or less equal weight to the aesthetic or sensory domain and the ethical or manipulative domain. As Dewey says, they are intimately interconnected, although one can see his bias towards the latter when he makes the somewhat strained and absurd claim that "sense organs are motor organs."

Kevin Langdon seems to be taking a similarly strained and absurd view when he says in his last paragraph above that "man does not have will over his sensations, actions, emotions, or even his thoughts." We clearly do have will of some sort. To claim that will does not exist because we are part of causal chains leaves unexplained why we are endowed with thick crania to protect our brains. It seems to me that a photon would be a better model of a messenger than a cranium-protected brain. It seems clear to me that the brain's business is to receive messages, do something with them (i.e., process them in some way), and then respond to the environment in some way. "Stimulus-response" ignores the important intermediate processing that goes on between stimulus and response, a processing that is protected by a thick cranium. If Kevin wants to call this processing stage "attention," then fine, but that word seems to me to underplay the outcome of attention, which for most normal, healthy organisms is action of some kind. If the universe somehow controls all our internal processing, then the universe itself takes on the function of willing things, and hence we do not succeed in getting rid of will. Perhaps one solution would be to say that the universe began with an act of will, which we might construe as a decision to do or become a universe. But fragments of this initial act of will may continue to arise, just as colliding beams of energy can create matter or a radioactive nucleus

can spontaneously decay. The brain may contain such spontaneous processes as these, which initially are random, but which the brain organizes into patterns, as when we dream. So the brain integrates random processes with patterns handed down genetically from previous organisms or learned in one's culture, such as linguistic patterns. This is like playing a game of poker or backgammon, which involves a mixture of randomness with skill. The result is a unique creation. It is not a pattern entirely ordained by the cause-and-effect chains in the universe, I surmise, since there do seem to be truly random processes in nature such as radioactive decay. Of course, even random processes exhibit order, but it is not as tight an order as to totally eliminate any semblance of creativity. Our desire for food, for example, may be satisfied by our creating new weapons for killing prey, and we might have thought of these weapons in a dream, and our dream may have arisen from the interaction of causal chains over which we have no control with random atomic processes over which we likewise have no control. Yet the combination of these two streams is something that is distinctively "ours," in that it takes place within our well-fortified brains. If our role were to be merely passive, then lack of a cranium would be preferable, since then we would be more "open" to the universe's inputs. The cranium clearly helps us to channel our perceptions and thoughts in a safe haven from outside influence. But this safe haven is not a cul de sac, a dead end, which the word "attention" seems to me to suggest. Our role is to have an output as well as an input, with a nondeterministic program controlling the intermediate processing stage. Of course, if the universe itself is part of an ongoing process that arose out of some prior universe, then one might argue that, aha, the Big Bang would then not have been an act of will but would have been just another link in an even larger-scale causal chain leading to prior and perhaps to successor universes. We have to accept the fact that we can never get entirely to the bottom of things. We have to start with what is familiar and work outward to what is less familiar, using models and metaphors drawn from our more ordinary experiences to try to grasp less ordinary experiences. The best model will be sufficiently complex to give us a handle on many different aspects of experience, yet sufficiently simple for us to make use of it without getting confused. My feeling is that the concept of "attention" is too simple to do a good job, at least for me. I feel that it arbitrarily cuts off and truncates a very important facet of my own experiences, namely, the fact that I do things and that I have to make decisions before doing them. I can't just wait and let the universe act through my being, for that would be to act like an animal does, purely on instinct. To pause and reflect is to be attentive, but the pause and reflection has an outcome, namely an action. When I say that we have a "will," all I mean is that our acts of attention or reflection have an outcome in action. To say that we lack such will but are mere automatons strikes me as a bizarre and unacceptably passive attitude toward our ongoing experiences, an overemphasis on the aesthetic as opposed to the ethical aspect of our natures. As I argued in my essay on "American Philosophy and the Problem of Induction" in In-Genius #56, I believe that purposive actions can be analyzed into five components: the ethical, inductive, epistemological, deductive, and aesthetic. Emphasis on each of these factors leads to a different metaphysical orientation. An ethical preoccupation leads to pragmatism and kindred philosophies, while an aesthetic overemphasis leads to Platonic formism and kindred philosophies. An inductive preoccupation leads to what is known as empiricism, an overemphasis on deduction leads to what is known as rationalism, and an overemphasis on epistemology leads to Cartesian dualism and kindred

philosophies. Close to complete integration of all of these factors occurs in such metaphysical systems as Aristotle's theory of the four "causes" and in Kant's system of categories. I suspect that words like "will" or "free will" are like straw men that proponents of certain extreme positions define in such extravagant ways that they have no chance of making sense. We have to constantly go back to our ordinary experiences in order to get clear what we mean by such terms. We won't throw out such terminology unless we can replace it with a new system of markedly superior terminology. But I do not think that Kevin Langdon has revealed to us such a superior system of thought. The concepts that he asks us to regard as adequate substitutes for "will"--"stimulus" and "response"--are reminiscent of the more general concepts of "cause" and "effect." The great British empiricist philosopher, David Hume, argued that the notion of cause-and-effect is vacuous. He pointed out, for example, that we can in our imaginations conjoin just about any cause with any effect without noticing a third something, a cause-and-effect linkage, binding them together. For example, he argued that we can envisage the universe as nonexistent one moment and existent the next without needing to suppose that there had to be a third something, a causal linkage, that brought the universe into existence. (A Creator, in other words, could be dispensed with, at least in our imaginations.) He concluded that the alleged cause-and-effect linkage was simply in our minds, the result of "habit," of habitually observing a certain sort of effect following a certain sort of cause. In Concept and Quality, however, the American philosopher Stephen C. Pepper suggested that we think of cause-and-effect connections in terms of our own body's actions. When we climb a flight of stairs, for example, we do in fact experience the causal connection as the muscular strain in our legs as we lift them one after the other. Hume may have missed this direct experience of a causal connection because he may have been thinking of billiard balls striking one another, which is a causal connection in which we are less intimately involved. Perhaps Kevin would argue that muscular strain is simply something that we pay "attention" to, but I think it would be more normal to say that muscular strain is something we actively do, not merely passively experience as if we were passengers in someone else's body--someone who is making all the choices for us. An Indian child who was carried too long in its mother's papoose or any child forced into passive circumstances by, say, a physical disability, might go through life with such an exaggeratedly passive attitude. Kevin himself has such a physical disability, and it seems likely to me that this indeed accounts for his overly aesthetic and passive metaphysical perspective. I have, in fact, developed a comprehensive theory linking personality orientations with specific metaphysical orientations, which I published in a recent issue of the Mega Society journal Noesis and may reproduce in a later issue of this journal.

A LETTER FROM ERIC ERLANDSON

Rick,

Should we be sending in our answers to the test questions as they occur to us, so that questions can be thrown out sooner?

Incidentally, I am a hard-nosed conservative through whose philosophy run wide streaks of libertarianism and authoritarianism--the former applying to me; the latter, to everyone else. I would also be categorized as "pro-life" by employers of today's lazily-defined labels.

I sincerely appreciate the great deal of work you've been putting into **Noesis**.

Eric

[Editor's comments: yes, please send your answers to me or Chris as fast as is reasonably possible. Also, send in your opinions about the appeal, difficulty, etc., of specific problems.

Eric isn't spontaneously offering his political opinions--several issues ago , I encouraged everyone to send in their thoughts on volatile issues. Among those who have, I think conservative, pro-life enjoys a slight lead, though it's a sample of only about five people. Since I solicited your opinions, the presidential candidates, their wives, and their platforms have become much more obnoxious. I'm especially offended by all the family values rhetoric.]

A LETTER AND AN ARTICLE FROM DARYL INMAN

Dear Rick,

Enclosed is an excerpt taken from the book **Maximum Brain Power**--Rodale Press, Emmaus, Pennsylvania. It has info on Romero Anton XIV Montalban Anderson. You may want to let the **Noesis** readership know about him.

Sincerely,

Daryl

INTELLIGENCE

Take an informal poll. Go out and ask the next 477,218,588 people you meet what their IQ's are. What you'll find is that, among all those people, *1*—just 1—will have an IQ of 194. So what do you think your odds are of finding that person by, say, next Tuesday?

Well, we can make your search a little easier. Romero Anton XIV Montalban-Anderssen is your one-in-four-hundred-and-seventy-seven-million man.

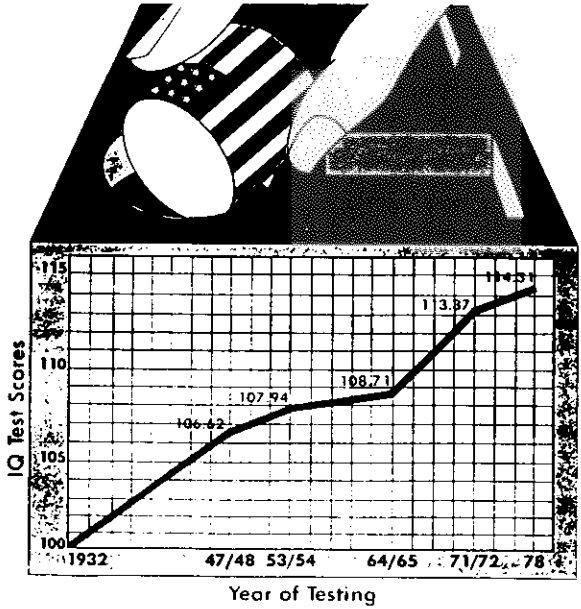
Anton Anderssen, as he sometimes calls himself, knew at a very early age that something was up when it came to his IQ. "I've been tested many times and in many ways, beginning when I was in kindergarten," he says. The tests Anton took showed he had an IQ of 194. (To put that in perspective, consider that those who score over 132 are classified by some as "gifted," while scores of 140 or more denote "genius.")

Sometime after high school, Anton took a test measuring right-brain intelligence and achieved a perfect score. Then in college, from his freshman year until receiving his doctorate, he earned straight A's in every class.

While Anton speaks 27 languages, he prefers to describe in plain English what his high IQ means to him: "It's a passport to growing. It's been a motivation for me to not put limits on myself as far as what I could learn and what I felt I could accomplish."

What about your own IQ? Before you can tell how you stack up against Anton, or anyone else, you'll have to take an IQ test.

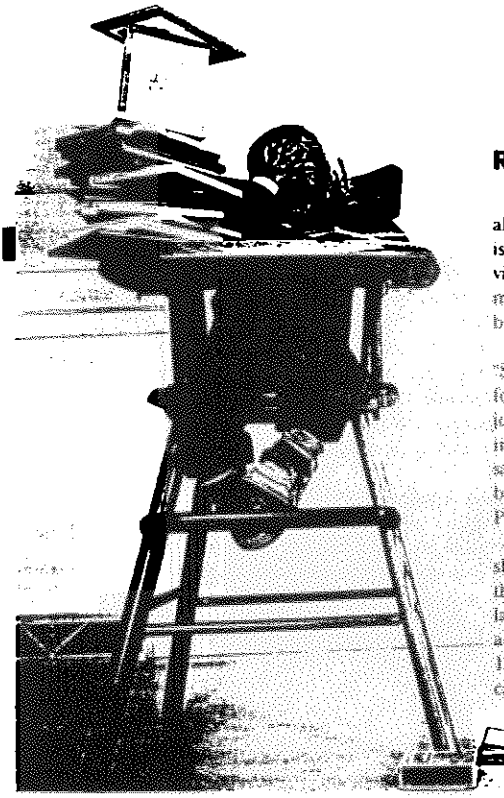
"Standard IQ tests focus on basic levels of thinking, like retention of information," says Robert Swartz, Ph.D., founder of the Critical and Creative Thinking Program at the University of Massachusetts-Boston



IQ IS INFLATING

In just one generation, penny candy now costs a dime, and a ten-cent phone call takes a quarter to make. It seems that everything is going up, including America's IQ scores. "Americans gain about 9/10 of an IQ point a year," says James Flynn, Ph.D., a researcher at the University of Otago in New Zealand, who conducted a study of IQ levels in 14 countries. "From 1932 to 1978, the American IQ rose 15 points."

While Dr. Flynn still can't draw any firm conclusions based on the data from 1978 on, he says, "The assumption is the gains have kept going. Test performance in the United States still seems to be improving."



RAISING A SUPERKID

Jimmy's not quite out of diapers yet, but he's already reading *Hamlet*. Three-year-old Debbie is dwarfed by her violin, but she plays like a virtuoso all the same. And then there's 1-year-old math whiz, Mark, who prefers square roots to building blocks.

These advanced toddlers have been dubbed "Superkids," but the person most responsible for their development says that any child could join their club. "Every child born has at the instant of birth the potential to be a genius," says Glenn Doman, founder of the Philadelphia-based Institutes for the Achievement of Human Potential.

During a week-long intensive course, Doman shows mothers special techniques for teaching their babies subjects like reading, math, foreign languages, music, and gymnastics. Much of the action centers on learning drills using 11-inch-square poster boards as giant flash cards.

"All kids are capable of all things," says Doman. You can teach a tiny child anything."

and an expert on IQ. "By and large the tests measure what we know in terms of facts and routine thinking abilities."

HOW SMART ARE YOU?

Okay, you've taken a test, and you have the magic number, so what does it mean? "IQ stands for intelligence quotient," says Jonathon Baron, Ph.D., professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. "It's your mental age divided by your chronological [actual] age and then multiplied by 100."

Unlike your Social Security number, your IQ number doesn't have to be cast in stone. There are ways to *increase* your intelligence.

You might think that the only way you could increase your IQ score is to have Anton use *your* name on his next IQ test. But there are other, more creative ways to boost your intelligence.

"You have to think creatively. Everybody has the capacity to do that, but often we allow lots of things to get in the way of creative thinking," says Dr. Swartz.

"Don't be afraid to take risks. Don't be afraid of what people will think about you. When you overcome those attitudes, you will be available to use the information you have more effectively and in a sense become more intelligent."

You also need to have a mind that is open to the intelligence locked within. "Most people don't think enough about things that are important," says Dr. Baron, "and when they do they tend to favor things they already believe. "But to be truly intelligent, you need to look for reasons why you might be wrong. Always consider the other point of view."

For another point of view, you might want to listen to Anton explain why, with an IQ of 194, he still seeks to expand his intelligence.

"The universe is constantly expanding," he says, "so it seems to me that we should constantly expand *our* horizons, whether that means spiritually or intellectually."

When asked how he does that, Anton replies modestly, "I read a lot."

TWO LETTERS FROM RON HOEFLIN

Dear Rick,

Regarding C. M. Langan's long essay in Noesis 71, I've so far read only the first 3 or 4 pages of that issue. My impression is that Mr. Langan has an extreme and self-deluding propensity to claim certitude for his theories. I think one thing we learn from the history of ideas is that no one has ever advanced a perfect theory on any subject whatever, so that dogmatism seems to be a sign of intellectual weakness and shortsightedness. In a letter my mother sent me that I received just today she quotes the French AIDS researcher, Luc Montagnier, as having said, "Dogmatism is a deadly sin in science." And the philosopher who has influenced me most, Stephen C. Pepper, says on page 11 of **World Hypotheses:** "The dogmatist is a more serious character than the utter skeptic. He is the dictator of cognition. He will put you down by main force. And he is no myth." Pepper defines a dogmatist as "one whose belief exceeds his cognitive grounds for belief." Pepper says that any claim to certainty is dogmatic. For example, he says (p. 38): "The 'certainty" in 'I **certainly** perceive a red tomato' or in 'I **certainly** think I see a red tomato,' has only one effect, and that is to forbid us to question the assertion or to seek other evidence for its truth. And this prohibition is unavailing to a man who has had considerable cognitive experience, for he will question it anyway, if much depends upon it. What is the use, then, of adding it?" One can easily discern Langan's pompously dictatorial attitude toward Chris Cole and me in the opening pages of issue 71.

Regarding self-reported SAT scores, of 222 such scores reported to me by Mega Test participants, not a single person claimed a perfect score of 1600, and I do not see a large clump of suspiciously high SAT scores, the distribution of which seems to taper off rather plausibly. So if a few people concocted false SAT scores, it does not appear to be a sufficient number to affect my results much.

I pronounce my last name "hoe-flin." This was the anglicized pronunciation chosen by my father's parents when they moved to the U.S. from Germany and Switzerland in the 1890's.

Ron Hoeflin

[Editor's comments: With characteristic wishy-washyness, I tend to agree with Chris Langan's critics, and to agree and empathize with Langan himself. I share Langan's "me against the world" attitude, as do my siblings, though we each express our antagonism in different ways. When Langan sticks out his rhetorical chest, I can relate. I suspect that his certitude rests upon his possession of a tautological framework with which to dissect the universe. He probably has a unique and reflexively true theoretical point of view whose self-consistency makes it highly resistant to outside contradiction. However, most tautological frameworks aren't efficient generators of insight. (It's my misunderstanding of Godel that systems which generate interesting results can't be tautological.)

Chris Cole and I had a long phone conversation which touched upon certainty as it relates to mental events. I believe that mental certitude rests upon receiving and processing huge numbers of quantum units of information about a perceived event. The redundancy of massive parallel input serves to lower the probability of errors of perception and give constancy to the perceived world in the mind of the perceiver. Just as it takes quadrillions of molecules to make a perceptible dust mote, it takes the constant reception and processing of X zillion photons to give consistency and stability to our mental versions of the outside world. If we based our perceptions on the reception of just a few quantums of information, we would make frequent errors and live in a shimmering, inconstant world. Massive corroboration of input lowers error to a somewhat manageable level. We still experience errors of perception--corner-of-our-eye ghost dudes peeking around door frames who disappear in a flash, misattributions of memory, etc., but most such errors don't threaten our safety or sanity.

But people who say we use only 10% of our brains are full of crap (except Albert Brooks in **Defending Your Life**, who makes an extended joke out of it). Redundant brain structure is there for our protection (Yes, just like toilet seat covers!), and ten percenters should be taken on a field trip to Manhattan to see the thousands of deranged people who are part of the cityscape. (I think of our east coast members as islands of battered but brave competence in a sea of metropolitan nastiness.) The urban insane are people for whom 100% of their brains weren't sufficient to hold onto the world.

--Rereading the previous paragraphs a week after writing them, I realize that they have almost nothing to do with the letter that prompted them. Oh well--

I sure like having y'all to communicate with. If it wasn't for you, I'd spend all my time talking with other bouncers about which customers have perky breasts.]

Editor--

In answer to Chris Cole's question as to whether the SAT differentiates well above an IQ of about 150 or the 99.9 percentile, the advantage of the SAT is that it is taken by about a million people a year. So even if the test does not differentiate well for individual participants above the 99.9 percentile (which is about 1450 on the SAT), it does give us a distribution pattern that enables us to get a rough idea how the frequency of participants at various percentile levels differs from a distribution pattern drawn strictly at random from the general population. In other words, theoretically only the top 10% of those who score above the 99.9 percentile will score above the 99.99 percentile, but since Mega Test participants are self-selected rather than randomly selected, it turns out that 28% of those who score above the 99.9 percentile score above the 99.99 percentile. The SAT data tells us this. So even if the SAT is itself not an especially good discriminator in individual cases above the 99.9 percentile, its aggregate distribution pattern tells us that we should award percentiles of 99.99 or above about 2.8 times more frequently than if we had a truly random sampling of the general population. The SAT reaches the 99.99 percentile at about 1521, the 99.999 percentile at about 1570, and the 99.9999 percentile (one in a million) at about 1600. This is a fairly tight score range, but when you have a million people taking a test you do get somewhat more reliable results for the frequency distribution as a whole than you would want to rely on for any given individual. I have SAT data for 5 million people over a span of 5 years, which makes the frequency distribution even more reliable, overall. Relying on extrapolation, people at the one-in-a-million level are about 2.2 times more likely to take the Mega Test than people at the one-in--100,000 level. Once you have used the SAT as a guide for establishing these different percentiles on the Mega Test, the advantage is that certain key problems from the Mega Test such as the 3-cubes problem could be incorporated into any new test as a guide to pinpointing different percentile levels on the new test. This is in fact how the SAT scores are kept uniform from year to year: problems from old SAT's are included in new SAT's to help scale them.

For example, the 3-cubes problem is solved by about 60% of those with mega-level scores of 43 or above. So on the new test one could set the mega level at whatever level participants can solve the 3-cubes problem with a frequency of 60% or better. (One need not use this particular problem, which I use just for illustrative purposes.)

Ron Hoeflin

P.S. Regarding the nature of metaphysics, I believe we choose a metaphysical system as a way of structuring our idea about reality just as a geometrical coordinate system is chosen as a way of structuring our ideas about space or spatial relations. To claim that a particular metaphysical system is the final one would be like saying that a particular geometrical coordinate system is the final one. This would deny the possibility of any further advances in metaphysics or in geometry. I would never do that. All I claim for my own theory is that it does seem to successfully organize certain common patterns of thought both in

philosophy (such as Max Black's five types of theory of induction in his **Encyclopedia of Philosophy** article on induction) as well as in psychology (such as Freud's and Jung's personality theories). It's not a **terminus ad quem** or final solution to every problem.

Regarding the concept of purpose, Pepper says that he does not regard his choice of purpose as a root metaphor as the claim that the entire universe is purposeful (or is intelligent). As an analogy, notice that astronomers employ spherical coordinate systems without thereby committing themselves to the view that the universe itself is ultimately spherical. Purpose as a metaphysical root metaphor and the sphere as a geometrical root metaphor are simply temporary scaffoldings by means of which we attempt to explore the abyss. The idea that only one "ultimate" root metaphor will do, like Langan's CTMU, is like claiming that there is only one ultimate algorithm for calculating pi, whereas in fact there are an infinite number of such algorithms, probably, with no reason to believe there is some one algorithm that is more efficient than all others in calculations of pi.

Ron

P.P.S. I finally waded through nearly all of Langan's essay in issue 71. I have thought about the problem of how far into the realm of inanimate matter purposive structures might extend. Pepper himself expressed a lot of doubt on this issue but reasoned that since purposive behavior (or intelligence) is the most complex thing in nature, so far as we know, other facets of reality would probably turn out to be understandable as simpler aspects of this complex entity. My own feeling is that such processes as the Big Bang and the sudden decay of a particle into other particles (as when uranium fissions in the natural environment or in bombs) exhibit virtually the same five-phase structure as purposive acts. Compare a boy throwing a snowball toward a board with two holes in it with a photon emerging from an atom and going through either of two slits in a board and impacting either as light and dark patterns on a screen or as scintillations on a screen, depending on whether we view the photon in its wave or its particle aspect. Then we have the following analogous structures:

(1) Ethical (decision) phase:
    (A) Boy decides to throw snowball.
    (B) Particle "decides" to emit photon.
(2) Inductive (uncertainty) phase:
    (A) Snowball heads towards two holes.
    (B) Photon heads towards two slits.
(3) Epistemological phase (moment of truth):
    (A) Snowball passes through either hole (or fails to).
    (B) Photon passes through either slit (or both slits, as some would argue)
(4) Deductive phase (consequences of the moment of truth):
    (A) Snowball proceeds to target after passing holes (if it got through one of them).
    (B) Photon proceeds to target after passing slits.
(5) Aesthetic phase (the result of the whole process comes to light):
    (A) Snowball hits target.
    (B) Photon hits target.

So I don't think that purpose as a root metaphor is totally out of synch with quantum mechanics. The latter may indeed throw light on the former, at least by analogy.

Ron

P.P.S. Regarding William Sharp's comment on page 3 of issue 72, ". . . David Garvey was editor of Megarian before Jeff Ward. Since then, rumor has it he disappeared." Dave Garvey, whom I met once in New York City, suffered from some sort of ailment that repeatedly put him in the hospital. He said it was an autoimmune disorder of some sort. It affected his digestive system, and he had had a colostomy, which

he discussed while we were eating lunch together at a Chinese restaurant. I suspect that he finally simply died from this disorder. I suppose someone could write to the bureau of vital statistics in Michigan's state capital to find out if they have a death certificate for Garvey. But I don't recall the precise year in which he "disappeared." Probably within a year after I left the Mega Society, which would make it around 1986 or 1987, perhaps.

Ron

P.P.S. Regarding the proposed "Short Form" test, it's been mentioned by Kevin Langdon and others that a test of fewer than 40 problems is considered too short by professional psychometricians. However, this may be true only if the test is intended to cover a full range of IQ's. A test specifically aimed at one IQ level such as the mega level can probably be shorter without harm. For example, computerized versions of the GRE can be completed more quickly because the test participant is allowed to zero in on problems at his or her particular level of ability without having to wade through a lot of problems at a much harder or much easier level of difficulty. My own goal, however, is to create something like a "long form" test of, say, 100 problems. I would publish my 48-problem Mega, Titan, and Ultra tests in a booklet and then mark those 44 problems the testee can skip. Ideally, the mega level would occur at a raw score of 90 right out of 100. All the more ambiguous problems would be excluded, placed among the 44 "irrelevant" problems in this 100-problem Hyper Test.

Ron

[Editor's comments: ETS, the company which publishes the SAT, inspires my paranoia. I think they know all sorts of stuff about the SAT and the people who take it which they don't tell the general public. If I was a computer hacker (which I am the opposite of--I can't even get into my own files), ETS would be a tempting target. On the other hand, maybe ETS is too rich and lazy to do anything interesting with their data (except sell the names of high scorers to the FBI).

One reason I scuttled my life at the age of 17 was the score of 1550 I got on my first SAT. Using ETS's mean and standard deviation for the SAT, I concluded that my score corresponded to an IQ of 151. This made me a dumbshit in my own mind, and I intentionally and comprehensively downgraded my behavior accordingly. According to Hoeflin, a 1550 corresponds to an IQ in the mid-160's. Had I known this, maybe I'd have gone to Harvard, instead of remaining in high school for the next nine years.

I'm leery of assigning purpose to the universe. However, for nearly a dozen years, I've been dawdling over my Bland Universe Theory, which does without some of the more spectacular aspects of the standard big bang model. I reject all-encompassing cosmic fireworks because they seem to me to be inconsistent with the everydayness with which we live our lives and with the vast regularity of the universe as we observe it. (In rejecting some spectacular stuff, I have, of course, devised cosmic structures which are even more flamboyant and ridiculous.) There must be some parallels between the way we experience our lives and the way the universe experiences itself.

In a phone conversation, Chris Cole seemed disappointed in the lack of magical phenomena in our universe. I think magic would work only in a smaller, cheaper version of the universe. Instead of magic, we have what is more impressive--tremendous scale and uniformity.]

A LETTER, BIO & CRITIQUE FROM A. PALMER

Mr. Rosner--

The third page lambasting got carried away, absolutely no malice intended. It's just that sometimes I crave a little more staid "dignity" cover-to-cover to show friends that Noesis appears as prestigious as what I've conjured up, say, the **New England Journal of Medicine** might be.

I care not to be pretentious. Que sera, sera, & to each his /her own.

INTRODUCTION, PASSACAGLIA, and FUGUE

INTRODUCTION (Brief Bio)

As a relatively new member, I feel duty-bound to start contributing occasionally. I'm a playwright and concert pianist, currently not particularly successful at either. I studied from age six with Leginska (pupil of Leschtitzky), Ignace Hilsberg (pupil of Essipova and von Sauer), Sergei Tarnowsky (taught V. Horowitz), Jacob Gimpel, and Castelnuovo-Tedesco. I have no degree but accumulated probably three years worth of units over a long period merely for the enjoyment: Mandarin, chamber music, hatha yoga asanas, dowsing, and a smattering of academe.

My preoccupations include or have included Eastern sadhana; Taoist cultivation of the inner 'golden elixir'; Ayurveda and acupuncture theory; contemplation of the I-Ching hexagrams and other esoteric cosmological speculation (unfortunately I have not the higher math to indulge in the fecund manner I wish); National Park camping and hiking; internal boxing; daydream pining over the fact that I'm too introverted to do 'stand-up'; 'adventuring' - diving for diamonds deep in the interior of Guyana, living on a Chinese junk, searching tolas or burial mounds in the jungles of Ecuador, beachcombing through the South Pacific, canoe-harvesting wild rice in Northern Minnesota, inner city taxi driving, skin diving, extended sailing on a primitive rice schooner in the Caribbean, planting douglas fir seedlings in the Pacific North-West, and working on a shrimp boat out of Tampa, Florida.

An offering of my taste in 20th Century people whose works (books, film, records) I hold in high esteem might add clarification to my perspective. For such a partial list I would enumerate Kathleen Ferrier, Ananda Moyi Ma, Meryl Streep, Mother Teresa, Gary Larson, Sibelius, Evans-Wentz, Akhmatova, Maria Callas, Rudolf Steiner, Jonathan Winters, Josef Hofmann, Kaikhosru Sorabji, Max Ophuls, Rachmaninoff, Pavlova, and the French actress Patricia Gozzi (recipient of my only fan letter....never heard boo). Oh, and possibly Matt Groening for his B.S. (and H.S., M.S., L.S. etc.).Is there a unity in such diversity?

Pertaining to the speculation mentioned above, the same 'Thread of Life' Schumann half hid, but for the cognoscenti keynoted to the 'music of the spheres', throughout his monumental C major Fantasie opus 17 can be analogously felt threading collectively the mystic homogeneity found within the world's great religions, as like-beads on a string.

Residing much of the time in the right duplex of my mind, I gravitate frequently to immersion in the 'distilled essence' (no, not alcohol), perhaps à la Isadora Duncan or Vincent Van-(not to equate achievements, rather life's fervor), be it savoring tear-jerker movies from the video rental, or instances such as that recounted in the following.

I'd just finished a screenplay (still collecting dust) that took place on the Olympic Peninsula. Rushing to the Olympic Rain Forest, I placed a cheap walkman on my head with some poignant classical music punched in and headed up a loamy, fern-lined trail to be overwhelmed. No overwhelming effect 'forthcame'. Forest Presence was blotted out by the music which began to stutter from weak batteries and eventually sounded more like the popular ditty some songwriter 'borrowed' from the symphony. Experiencing the Thread was by then an impossibility. To top off, I stumbled over a rotten nurse log which sent me sprawling and parted from my headset.

The much-needed jarring helped to change residency back to the left duplex, and with it a semblance of reality returned.

PASSACAGLIA (Reiterative Query, Embellished)

If any of you have leftover, unfulfilled hankering for emprise from early youthful impetus inspired by the likes of Indiana Jones, Frank Buck, Osa Johnson, Sabu, or the Captain from Castile, maybe reading on could eventuate your satisfaction.

The Valverde Treasure exists and is for the taking. No, there has not been an on-sight find. Conjoined participatory and financial involvement with compatible partners could solve this four hundred plus year old enigma.

According to my one-of-a-kind information, the bulk of the gold is near the edge of an approximately 80' deep lake under a few feet of silt at 11,500 feet elevation in the Andes' Cordillera de los Llanganates. Of course the range is common knowledge from the old Spanish word guide, or 'Derrotero'. Approach to lakeside, which lies in a valley with nearby peaks topping 17,000 feet (Mt. Tungarahua), is perilously marshy. There should be little concern about invasive fauna. Generally too high for reptiles, I did see a shed snakeskin and numerous small red amphibians that later I was told were poisonous. Bandidos or gorilla insurrectionists might pose some problem, I don't know. There were none when I made a preliminary trip quite some time ago.

Prospective partners preferably should add to the whole other than their equal financial share and good health. Proficiency in Spanish? Quechua? High altitude diving experience? Photography expertise and equipment?

My edge is a 'psychic' map that no one else has. I won't go into the mysterious details at this point. For the (dilettantish) physicists of narrow bent and dubiety who recognize and worship naught but the known, who don't mind adding new garments to their wardrobe but can't divest their favorite old fabrics of stability (and send to the providential Good Will), or as Krishnamurti succinctly put it, "Fear is not of the unknown, but of loss of the known", let me say examples prevail over the planet, contradicting the current status of physical law. I know an elderly lady who knocks over several men from a distance (<u>not</u> an exemplification of John F. Gilbey's, alias Robert W. Smith, <u>Halitotic Attack</u> described in his 'Secret Fighting Arts of the World'). She's an absolute treasure. Telekinetic adept (really chi-gung practitioner).

Exiting the country (and continent) east through a maze of tributaries after descending into the bush will present many difficulties. Certain Amerind tribes, fever, insects, pirai, caymen, anacondas, and varieties of venomous snakes exist. I usually carry injectables for the latter. However, there's a bottled antidotal 'specific' purported to consist of stewed reptile heads (that was how the Portuguese label read) the 'pork-knockers' - transient mining divers who knock about in Guyana carrying pork staple - swore by. Turned blue and writhing, two hours later they'd be back working in the simple transportable dredging operations. My East Coast S.A. expedition carried, but never had to use, the 'specific' while near the Brazilian border, an area particularly infested.

FUGUE (Point Against Point)

Due to consideration of length, this movement will be limited to 3 points.

PUNCTUS The inanition of constituent elements sopping Rick Rosner's editorial comments dictates its form be fatuus.

CONTRA PUNCTUM R.R. patronizes his readers and himself.

To His Readers: By pertly playing up his shortcomings, R.R. caters to our chummily responding into acceptance of his glib, off-cuff disclosures. While throning his intellectual supremacy interspersed with vainly indulged self-denials of excellence - by this imperfectional fly in his personal ointment, we are to realize our own nearly as exalted heads fortunately can relate to his Zen freedom of spontaneous expression.

To Himself: Assured as special title-holder to a license which allows bullhorning of haphazard, spurious thinking seems indicative of a subconscious egoic swagger, smug delusion, and probably mental laziness (not always willing to think through more completely).

OBBLIGATO ACCOMPANIMENT R.R. obviously tries to appear an outre hail-fellow-well-met which most likely endears him to many readers including this one.

PUNCTUS Tendency to discriminate the true focus for one who has extremely high intelligence effects a desirable positivity in all respects.

CONTRA PUNCTUM The plethoric panorama of 'Mega' minds (starting to sound alliterative), inputted by critical 'feelers' of senses 1 to 5 only, percolates vast amounts of minutiae, engram splashed over our sophisticated cerebral peg boards. While outcome appears very intuitive to more average intellects, in actuality it is often stenotic toward the true focus of full wisdom, "Can't see the forest for the trees".

PUNCTUS Overly stilted lingo is, in itself, vernacular.

CONTRA PUNCTUM Many of Noesis' artist-writers exhibit an extensive verbal palette, almost as a prime objective, bogging rhythmic flow from cumbersomely overstated sapience. The real exhibition becomes p.r.'d self-importance which, while wading through scant food for thought, is pathetically laughable.

Turn down the music, else thin out the bombast.

A. PALMER.