

What If?

What if for a reckless hour
we smothered our consuming passion
to invade every nook and corner
of the world, weigh, measure, add it up;
what if, for once, we ceased
to arrange and organize and regulate
and turn all to practical account;
what if we gave up our stored up
and sorted-out intelligence,
shut down the computers
that measure the GNP, ended mass
production, forgot about sending men
to the moon, and gave up our grasping,
manipulative spirit, our calculative reason;
if, even for a moment,
we no longer approached the world
as something to be attacked and conquered,
escaped our stupor of knowledge,
but accepted instead
the simple enchantment of say
the windiness of the wind,
the treeness of trees,
acquiesced to what they have to say,
abandoned ourselves and opened ourselves
to mystery--
would the world which now seems to be only
an inert and vast collocation of facts,
a cold vacuity, speechless,
touch us with insight,
enthrall our alienated heart
and sing jubilant alleluias
to the mystery of being
with the simplicity of its sheer presence?

Curriculum Planning or Some Other Ways of Looking at Things

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Approximately 3300 years ago, a poet-prophet-priest named (perhaps) Moses, wrote: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Late in the 18th century the German speculator Herder wrote: "We live in a world we ourselves create." In 1893, Anton Chekov, the physician-story teller-playwright, wrote in a personal letter to a friend: "I'll begin by saying I'm ill. It's a vile, disgusting illness, not syphilis, something worse--hemorrhoids--pain, itching, and nervous tension; I can't sit or walk, and my whole body is so irritated it makes me want to slip a noose around my neck. I feel that no one wants to understand me and that everyone is stupid and unfair." Herbert Dingle, in his last address as president of the Royal Astronomical Society, said: "The universe . . . is a hypothetical entity of which what we observe is an almost negligible part. . . In cosmology we are again, like the philosophers of the Middle Ages, facing a world almost entirely unknown." The keen observer of bees, Karl von Frisch, wrote: "The evolution of living nature has been going on on this earth for millions of years, and there is no reason why it should stop now. Man too, as a member of living nature is bound by its laws. Like the animals, Man has to adapt himself daily to the demanding tasks of life. . . ."

These five assertions could have been taken, with slightly different wordings, from five--or 5000--other sources. Each of them declares a vision, a way of seeing ourselves, others, and our environment. A curriculum is a vision. The curriculum I announce here is an eclectic vision; from each of the five asserted worlds, I take what suits me.

1. From the God created world, where teachers are priests, I take the vision of hell at the bottom of Dante's Inferno, where Satan stands locked in ice, chewing forever on Judas