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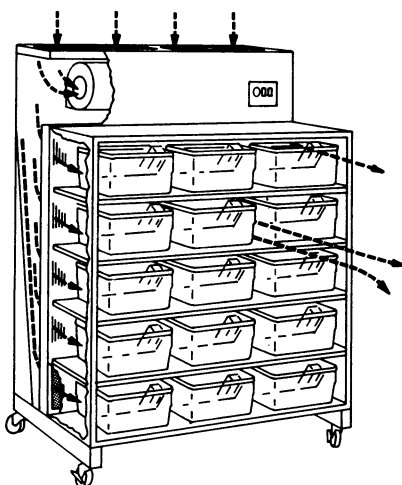


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Roszak and Rationality

Paraphrasing Clemenceau, it appears that "science is too important to leave to scientists." I have followed with amazement the sad chronicle of Theodore Roszak's challenge to science and the ineffectual response of the scientific community to it (see N. Wade, *News and Comment*, 12 Sept., p. 925).

I am not a scientist, but I have the same stake in science that every literate human being has—whether he knows it or not. Science, aside from technology, is one of the crucial modes of knowledge in our milieu.

It should be pointed out that Roszak's "challenge" is bogus, and only the general ignorance of scientists concerning matters outside their areas of expertise allows it to stand. "Gnosis" is not only a discarded and discredited piece of antiquity, it is also at the root of the modern mass movements which have rent our society asunder. In certain cases, gnosticism has even invaded science—or, more accurately, pseudo-science—with disastrous results.

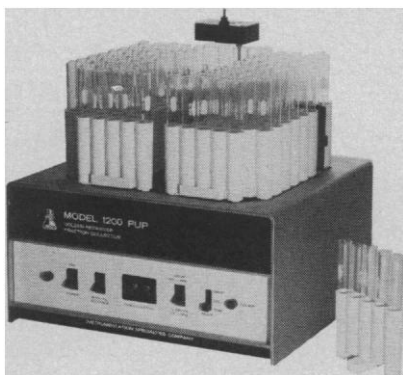
I wonder how many of those who wish to answer Roszak are familiar with Voegelin's *The New Science of Politics* (1), or his *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism* (2). How many have read Jonas' *The Gnostic Religion* (3), Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (4), and de Lubac's *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* (5)? Further, a definitive answer to Roszak's contentions can be found in Charon's brilliant work, *Man in Search of Himself* (6). Charon, a noted physicist and member of the French Atomic Energy Commission, has used the insights of general relativity to open new vistas for those who seek knowledge, rather than "gnosis."

If attacks on science such as Roszak's should begin to corrode the morale of those scientists who read him, then the search for truth may end, and we will all be doomed to another dark age such as that predicted by Brown (7).

In his response to Roszak, Steven Weinberg says:

We didn't want it to come out this way, but it did . . . the search for these laws [of nature] forces us to turn away from

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the ordinary world of human perception . . . it is nature that dictates the direction of our search.

If one were to substitute "God" for "nature," the same words could have been spoken by St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Paul, or Isaiah. The search for truth carries us where it will, not where we will. Roszak's assault on science seems to me to be no less than an assault upon the traditional Judeo-Christian search for a truth beyond human perception, be it theological or scientific.

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It is simply not true that rational Western science has severed its ties with the spiritual and mystical side of human nature. If Roszak and his colleagues feel that a scientific view deprives the world of mystery and wonder, they are mistaking technology, the manipulative offspring of science, for science itself. Scientific research begins with a wondering mind and concludes (insofar as the study of nature ever concludes) with even greater wonder. Thus, few practicing scientists feel the same bloodless certainty of knowledge that the layman often attributes to them.

Biochemist R. G. H. Siu (1) has pointed out that Taoist "no-knowledge" may actually provide a very useful mental set within which to approach scientific problems; I have enumerated some of the remarkable parallels between the vigorous modern science of ecology and the ancient Eastern teachings of Zen Buddhism (2).

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