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The eighteenth century in the western world was a time of much optimism. They call it the Age of Reason, the Golden Age. It was a great area, which saw such men as Franklin, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot, and a host of others whose names adorn world history books. It was a time of the famous French and American revolutions and the first venture in large-scale imperialism. New words made their appearance: "Deism," "induction," "The Spirit of the Laws," the "Social Contract," and "Letters to the English Nation." Yes, the eighteenth century was one of the outstanding periods in world history. Goldwin Smith of Wayne State University writes: "The ideas they found and spread had deep and far-reaching consequences for all the Western World." And Voltaire wrote, "Society will succeed in time in rectifying its ideas; men will learn to think." In short, the eighteenth century was a time dedicated to the human mind. Now, two centuries later, modern man never hesitates to call himself the reasoning animal. It would appear from the attitude of men today that since the great Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, man's faculty of rational thought has reached its zenith.

Yet, there are some skeptics. Less than a century after the Age of Reason came to a close, the great Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Beware when the great God let loose a thinker on this planet." And just recently Franz Alexander, a clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Illinois stated, "Human relationships are not governed primarily by reason but by essentially irrational emotional forces." Perhaps it is time to ask ourselves the same question asked by the eighteenth century philosophers. Are we really rational animals? Have we reached the zenith of thought

But, of course, it seems almost incredible that man may not be using his mind as logically as is possible. For a moment think about the human brain. There isn't anything known to man quite so complex. The British physicist Dr. W. Gray Walter estimates that it would take four billion dollars and many years to build a computer that would even begin to approach the complexity of the human mind, a mind capable of recording 120 memories a second, every second for seventy-five years. Yet we all know that each individual uses only a fraction of this capacity. Thoreau put it poetically when he wrote:

Direct your eye right inward, and you'll find  
A thousand regions of your mind  
Yet undiscovered. Travel then, and be  
An expert in home cosmography.

And so the human mind has a capability almost unlimited. And indeed, if there is any limit to the capability of the mind, it is unknown to us now. But a good look at our modern world shows us that in many activities of human life -- activities which should demand rational thinking -- here our four billion dollar computers have never even warmed up. For instance, we all know how gullible men are when confronted with the modern battery of advertisements. They'll buy pipe tobacco because Zaza Gabor endorses it; they like Volkswagen because it never changes; insurance policies are bought because they are founded on the Rock of Gibraltar, and tires are considered best if they grip the road. Surely man doesn't need a four billion dollar computer to make decisions such as these. Even our so-called intelligencia often show tremendous failures in the use of the mind. A Dupont executive reported, for instance, that out of 100 Ph.D.'s in a particular department, ninety-eight were unable to write a logical report of what they had been doing. Of course, there are a few who do work their computers, and as a result accomplish a great deal for their generation. Just like the laboratories and workshops of our nation utilize up-to-date tools and equipment, these people are using the mechanization of their God-given brains in a logical way to reach a valuable end. But far too many people let their computers rust and fall apart from lack of use, just as the old tools and equipment rust away in the junkyards of our nation. Look around you. Junkyards of the mind are easy to find; they constitute our mental hospitals, narcotic centers, and hundreds of skid rows. And a visit to the county jail is really a visit to the county dump for human computers which have failed to function properly. Such examples are numerous and tragic. But less dramatic failures are numerous too.

Psychologist, C.H. Marble, has found that as high as 2/3 of certain experimental groups change their opinions on value judgements after they learn that the majority opinion is against them. Another researcher tells us that people often will not judge statements on their logical validity, but on the persons associated with those statements. Thoreau put it somewhat humorously when he wrote: "The commonest sense is the sense of men asleep, which they express by snoring."

Well, you might be just a little amused by Thoreau's description, as I am, but I think the subject is really a serious one. Think of all of the activities



of the modern democrat which demand his use of logical thinking. In politics he has to elect the leaders of his governments. In running a household, the decisions should be logical. He needs rational considerations in business, social life, in dealing with other people, in planning for the future -- the list could go on and on. The important thing is that the need for rational thinking is extremely important.

Let me remind you, however, that I am not advocating that all of man's activities should be predicted upon strict logical thinking. My proposition does not eliminate feeling and dreaming, for without these there would be no beauty, no love, no worship. It is Thoreau who states my position so beautifully: "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them." There are so many mundane aspects of life that must be approached logically in order to build the kind of world in which man can feel and dream.

And so, what can a person do to activate his computer? First, he should have faith in his mind as capable of doing anything. He must remind himself often of the statement of one of America's greatest statesmen and thinkers, Daniel Webster: "Mind is the great lever of all things; human thought is the process by which human ends are answered." Second, a man should attempt to learn a little more about the validity of evidence and the ways in which one should rationally form his conclusions. This can be done by watching others reason and argue and learn from their successes and failures, by consciously practicing good reasoning, and by attempting to learn whatever one can about the field of logic and argumentation. And the last most important step which a person should take in developing his mind is to put that elaborate computer into operation whenever it is called for. He should consider the evidence, ask himself why others might disagree with his, and see if he can reason just a little better.

One day while officiating at the Royal Academy of Sciences, Queen Victoria turned to her Prime Minister, John Bright, and asked: "Where did all of these intelligent men come from?" John Bright replied, "From babies, your majesty." Indeed all men do come from babies, but what becomes of them from then on depends upon the direction in which they guide themselves. It is my hope that all of mankind will direct itself so that logical thinking does not become a thing limited to scientists. Indeed, the eighteenth century was a great era in history. Men study it with fervor. But remember that this era did not succeed in building man's mental power to its zenith, nor have we in our time. Perhaps it is time for a new Age of Reason, an enlightened twentieth century.