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is a cybernetic anthropologist examining the relation between energy, ritual, ecology and religion in traditional and modern cultures. In the first half-dozen issues of *CQ*, Roy had three deep, rich papers.

My concerns have been virtually inverted since my articles appeared in the first two issues of *CoEvolution Quarterly*. I was concerned then with humanity as a species among other species, one that participates in ecosystems in ways which are fundamentally similar to the ways other animals participate. That is, I took cultures (American, Bushman, Eskimo, etc.) to be adaptations of particular groups to particular ecosystems.

By culture I mean events and processes either constructed out of symbols or contingent upon their use. Words are the fundamental symbols, and language the fundamental symbol system. Culture, which emerges with and is contingent upon language (a possession exclusive to humanity), includes not only discourse — myths, beliefs, laws and other aspects of ideology — but institutions, social organization and technology as well.

The emergence of the symbol was not only a momentous development in the evolution of our own species but perhaps the most important and novel development in the evolution of evolution itself. With life, information first emerges, largely encoded genetically. With language, three billion years later, information is encoded symbolically.

The symbol, however, is not simply a new way to encode what genetics or simple non-symbolic learning could encode. With the symbol the world comes to be furnished with qualities that previously could not have been conceived of — like truth, honor, democracy, kings, gods. There could be no conception of god, for instance, until there was a symbol to signify it because god is not material. So culture furnishes the world with concepts that are deeply meaningful but not concrete. The human world, as a consequence, is radically different from, and immeasurably richer than, the worlds inhabited by other creatures.

In a world devoid of intrinsic meaning but subject to physical law, humans can only live in terms of meanings they themselves construct. There is nothing to prevent them from constructing self-destructive or even world-destroying follies. Culture poses dangers, both novel and immense, to the species in its possession. I say "in its possession." We all know that people will sacrifice their lives to serve God or to preserve democracy or communism, or to save their honor. If people act in terms of meanings they or their ancestors have constructed, then they are as much in the service of those conceptions as those conceptions are parts of their adaptations. There is, then, an inversion of the relationship of the adaptive apparatus to the adapting species. The symbolic capacity that is central to human adaptation produces concepts that come to possess those who thought them into being. It is therefore too simple to say that culture is merely the human mode of adaptation.

When the world is constructed, in part, out of symbols, enormous variation becomes possible. This makes for adaptive flexibility, but at the same time multiplies possibilities for disorder. It becomes necessary for every society, there-



fore, to canonize or sanctify certain versions of order, and to deny, reject, forbid, or anathematize conceivable alternatives. I use words like "canonize," "sanctify," and "anathematize" advisedly. In *all societies* such arbitrary orders have become sacred. They become unquestionable by being established on religious grounds although they're neither verifiable nor falsifiable. Ultimate sacred postulates, postulates about gods and the like, are the ground upon which human social and cultural orders have always been built.

In the last few hundred years a new problem, a profound contradiction, has manifested itself. Science has liberated itself, as it had to, from the constraints of religion and has, since its liberation, been enormously successful in its efforts to discover the principles with which the world's physical processes proceed. Science is grounded in the assumption that not only is nothing unquestionable but that all things must be questioned. Therefore, the epistemologies through which modern science *discovers* physical law are inimical to the symbolic processes through which humanity *constructs* its guiding meanings. The concept of the sacred is, as a consequence, in deep trouble and we as yet have nothing adequate with which to replace it as a ground for social life.

In contrast to modern science, a *post-modern science* must accommodate a contemporary version of what Newton and others saw as "natural theology" in an effort to reconcile law and meaning, discovery and construction. Of course, we may not live long enough to do it. ■

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