

Wed. 2 June 1971

John H. Chalmers, 345 Mulford Hall Genetics Dept. Berkeley 94720

Greetings from uphill-----

Still trying to clear the bathtub drain, and since the upstairs people are co-operating with me by putting lye down, I get scared every time I take a shower lest my feet be burned by their lye backing up--so I have to wait until they are gone for the day.

I am writing now instead of later because Ervin called me about an inquiry from Lou Harrison, so I have supplied him with info on the 19-tone system and how it could be tuned, and with Mandelbaum's 19-piano layout of the 19 tones.

Later on I can send a tape with Tillman's 19 metal wires which ought to be as accurate a standard as anything available.

Received your letter this morning along with an inquiry from the S.F. Bay Area--Vic Paulsen, radio announcer and author of a new English alphabet, who can be reached at Station KQED. He is one of the extremely few people who realize that adding new letters to the alphabet would require aesthetic considerations--of typography and design, investigation of Anglo-Saxon and other scripts for their letter-forms, etc.

He has sent one of the copies of the Muraudo book and got it into the Science Library of UC Berkeley--perhaps you could check up on this to see if it is still there.

While I don't believe that way, there is an answer to your question about 50% and human evolution and progress and I am morally obligated to call to your attention even though it is not too plausible to me--but if I suppress it, that would be unethical at least. The argument goes that something on the order of 50% of the species with colonies of primitive organisms to keep them together, and this reaches a height in ant, termite, and bee colonies, and then the need for it in more highly evolved forms of life, as mammals and primates, declines, so that by the time we get to humans, it is a vestigial survival trait, a tracer of warts and tails and things like that. Those who believe this way often try to explain instinct through such means. As you know, the Soviets have tried to do this sort of thing by explaining homing pigeons in relation to the earth's magnetic field and kindred phenomena.

Intellectuals will bring up Occam's Razor and alibi nimis probat nihil probat, in cases of this kind.

I agree that Eastern (Hindu, Buddhist, etc.) superstitions are no more apt to be right than Christian ones, or indeed witchcraft or Druidism (as you know, I am of Irish descent, so have encountered a lot of Irish superstitions and the curious attempts to blend them with Catholicism). For instance, I saw Ravi Shankar's book on the music of India. He even says that some musicians in India spend their entire life on raga, never reaching anything. From his description of the music, there is almost a perfect stasis, no progress possible because it would

violate all those beautiful traditions. Even a photo where one of the angry old teachers is caning a performer for playing wrong notes or the right notes at the wrong instants.

After looking through this book I don't see any room to maneuver around in---he is hawgtied and stymied. So I won't go in for slavishly copying the music of India.

Note that many of the occultists who adopt Hindu and Buddhist ideas are "refined materialists"--monists who believe that spirit is refined matter--attenuated in some way. So for the Theosophists.

Superstition is not the only problem. There is "fuzzy thinking" of many kinds. This is further complicated by the fact that nearly all words of ordinary language are dead metaphors. Usually metaphors to the sixth or tenth order--i.e. the process has been repeated through the millennia of the Indo-European language-family's existence. Therefore "ordinary-language philosophy" is mainly an exasperating exercise in futility.

I suspect that this accounts for some of the resistance to Numade--that Translo acts as a buffer or smokescreen--it prevents conversation IN symbolic logic and therefore facilitates-up all mathematics and symbolic logic as soon as one starts talking instead of writing symbols. This prevents being challenged, and permits interposing fuzzy diffusing screens of ordinary language metaphor between the written symbols and their conversational expressions. I have also noted many, many times, that many people resort to making puns because it shows that their mother-tongue is imperfect and not a precision instrument, but on the contrary, extremely ambiguous and misleading. They blame this on me, not on the English language.

This book of progress in Hindu music just mentions, and the reactionaries who worship 19th-century music, and the religious zealots who refuse to see what's happening around them, are paralleled by the cruelty of custom--uncomfortable clothing, fashions, for instance, and the way my sister used to use etiquette on me as a weapon. It is also reflected in the way some people rejected me because I have no teeth and can't wear dentures because they hurt too much--I feel no moral obligation to torture myself for the sake of people who hate me anyway. As a result, I was not permitted to join the uptight establishment 9-to-5 world, and therefore I have no ulcers and my blood-pressure is coming down now that I don't have to be a full-time nursemaid any more. While I have made no money such as I might have, I can live very cheaply because I am not spending anything to please people who do not love me. It sort of cancels out, I guess. Fortunately there are enough people around who do not demand that I live beyond my means to pretend to a "suburbia" or "status" pose.

There are much worse things than being a hard-core unemployable and wasted human resource. I might have been a priest if my father had had his way, or a diplomat if my mother had had hers, or an aircraft-plant technician making war weapons if the GS people had had their way.

Not having seen Rothenberg's book, I can't comment on his theories. Meanwhile, I put the newly-refretted guitar in 34, and will make a tape some time this Summer comparing 34 and 31 on this one instrument.

yours,