that has stopped changing has stopped living. Got it?

You are alive. Your family and your town and the county and state and nation are, each in its way, living things. All living things want to feel secure. Human beings are accursed with something that makes most of them, at one time or another in his life, seek security by *stopping*. He wants things stable and permanent and unchanging, like a pyramid. But there is another kind of stability – dynamic stability – the steadiness of a gull's flight. It's something that cannot happen unless the bird is in motion.

And by and large, friend, gulls outlast pyramids.

This is the kind of conclusion that the Q process leads you to, and armed with it you can look about you with a kind of Man from Mars astonishment. Living things (nations, cities, towns, families, people) trying to be dead. Trying to *stop* – stop time, stop change, stop thought, when they could spread their wings and ride it . . . Listen:

Laws are always late. Usually in the past, and certainly in a faster-and-ever-faster moving future, by the time a law is passed the circumstances which brought it about have already begun to change, which is why so many of them rule us by "the dead hand." As far as I know, no human group has ever tried to establish a whole body of laws with tenure – laws which would expire on a certain date *unless the community voted to continue them!* How much public apathy do you think you'd find in a democracy like that? Listen:

Q: What is the function of the incest taboo? No – wait – don't give me those answers that "everybody knows," because nobody knows. If you start out on that recessive defective gene bit, with the idiot children of first cousins and all that, I'll only refer you to animal breeders the world over, and hope you enjoyed those idiot pork chops last night, and have fun with the loot you picked up at the $2 window, courtesy of the dark horse who paid 83 to 1 and who is the result of a dozen generations of inbreeding. Men are different from hogs and horses – but biologically they are not all that different. Listen:

Olaf Stapledon, bless his memory, wrote a book called *Last and First Men* which traces the history of Man through the next couple of hundred *billion* years. He speaks of something similar to what I call the Q process, and calls it "the precious insight." Through the generations, he says, it appears repeatedly and is repeatedly struck down by accidents large or small (well, we can't do much about that) "or," he says, "by an access of racial imbecility, or by the mere cowardice and vertigo that dares not look down the precipice of the fact."

I think we are in such a period of "racial imbecility" as he describes. I think that there are a few people around – you, for example – who can cure it because they are not afraid to look down the precipice of the fact, no matter how deep the pit, no matter how different.

All I ask of you is that you look at what is there, and ask that next question. In exchange I offer more than those who claim that this act or idea, or that, will save this species from extinction. I offer this species its maturity and triumph.

I just heard a voice from one of you:

Q: Just who the hell do you think you are?

A: That's it. Don't stop there. □

2.

The Ideal of the Non-Ideal

by Isaac Asimov

The science-oriented society which I believe to be the only possible route to world government is viewed with horror by many, and I must admit that I occasionally get a queasy feeling about it myself. Indeed, I don't enjoy the thought of being part of a "computerized" society (or having my grandchildren part of one)—at least in its early stages. My only consolation is that it would be a vast improvement on the "non-computerized" society in which we live.

A society run along what we might call "scientific principles" would very likely be a "planned" one. That is anathema to many Americans, largely because of the association of "planning" with Communism and because of the idealized memory of our own "unplanned" nineteenth-century growth.

And yet as I look about the world these days I see that "planning" is by no means a monopoly of the Communist bloc, but is more and more pre-occupying all governments. Maybe "planning" doesn't work very well, but in the minds of the governmental leaders of the world, "non-planning" is apparently considered catastrophic.

Even within the United States, the greatest and strongest center of governmental "non-planning" in the world, the worship of "non-planning" is more and more a matter of lip-service only, a matter of disregarded sanctimoniousness. Our giant industries "plan" like mad, and always have, and more and more these plans have to be synchronized by—who else?—the government. Such synchronization may not be carried through with deliberate purposefulness, but the importance of government orders and government taxation is so overwhelming that the big industrial complexes are gradually becoming arms of the government, anyway. The national budget each year becomes more and more a device for organizing the economic life of the whole nation.

So let's not argue "planning" versus "non-planning"; that is a dead issue and "planning" has won. The only practical concern is to make planning as efficient and reasonable as possible, and as non-destructive as possible to individual liberty and human decency.

And for that, our society must be computerized. It has become far too complicated to be guided by accountants twiddling with abacuses.

There isn't even any use in arguing the pros and cons of that, for it is *being* computerized and will *continue* to be computerized, and nothing short of a full-scale