

11-1-1997

## From the Editor, Issue 16, 1997

Alvin White  
*Harvey Mudd College*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.claremont.edu/hmnj>

---

### Recommended Citation

White, Alvin (1997) "From the Editor, Issue 16, 1997," *Humanistic Mathematics Network Journal*: Iss. 16, Article 2.  
Available at: <http://scholarship.claremont.edu/hmnj/vol1/iss16/2>

This Editorial is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Claremont at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Humanistic Mathematics Network Journal by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact [scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu](mailto:scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu).

## From the Editor

In the statement attributed to George Polya on page 51 of issue #15, two words were transposed. The statement should have read: **“George Polya, when asked why he became a mathematician, said that he was too good to be a philosopher, and not good enough to be a physicist.”** Thanks to those readers who pointed out the error.

---

In the July '97 issue of FOCUS, Peter Renz ends his editorial with the words of Roger Godement in the preface of his book *Algebra* which is worth repeating again:

[I disagree] with the large number of public personalities at the present time who demand of scientists in general, and mathematicians in particular, that they should devote their energies to producing the legions of technologists whose existence, it appears, is urgently indispensable for our survival. Things being as they are, it seems to us that in the scientifically and technologically over-developed “great” nations in which we live, the first duty of a mathematician—and of many others—is to produce what is *not* demanded of him, namely men who are capable of thinking for themselves, of unmasking false arguments and ambiguous phrases, and to whom the dissemination of truth is infinitely more important than, for example, world-wide three-dimensional T.V.: free men, and not robots ruled by technocrats. It is sad but true that the best way of producing such men does not consist in teaching them mathematics and physical science; for these are the branches of knowledge which ignore the very existence of human problems, and it is a disturbing thought that our most civilized societies award them the first place. But even in the teaching of mathematics it is possible to attempt to impart a taste for freedom and reason, and to accustom the young to being treated as human beings endowed with the faculty of reason.

---

The (US) National Science Foundation report NSF96-139 “Shaping the Future” quotes Eli Noam from *Science*, 10/13/95, pages 247-249:

“The scenario suggests a change of emphasis for universities. True teaching and learning are about more than information and its transmission...(are) based on mentoring, internalization, identification, role modeling, guidance, socialization, interaction, and group activity. In these processes, physical proximity plays an important role. Thus, the strength of the future physical university lies less in pure information and more in college as community; less in wholesale lecture, and more in individual tutorial; less in Cyber-U, and more in Goodbye-Mr.-Chips College. Technology would augment, not substitute.”

Copies of that report are available from [pubs@nsf.gov](mailto:pubs@nsf.gov) or (703) 306-1130.

---

At the January '98 meeting in Baltimore, the Humanistic Mathematics Network is sponsoring AN EVENING OF POETRY, Thursday, Jan. 8, 7-9 pm.