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EWD487 - 0

Letter to the Burroughs Recipients of the EWD-series.

My dear Reader,

the other day I heard that by casting some doubts on the central role of recursion, I had caused commotion at some places within the Corporation. Although such was not my intention, I think that is great! Ours is such a young discipline that the separation between folklore and science still requires our conscious, continuous attention. Articles of faith are both a blessing and a curse: they are a blessing in so far as they embody a continuity of intellectual style --without which no company of products with a high technology content can survive-- , they are a curse in so far as they may escape being challenged when their time has come. The mere fact that on the whole our competitors' products are so extremely poor at implementing recursive algorithms engenders, of course, the danger that inside our Corporation recursion, indeed, becomes an article of faith. But --periodically and at not too high a frequency-- articles of faith have to be challenged: if they survive, fine, for then we know better why we have chosen them, if they don't, also fine, because then we have freed ourselves of what in the mean time should have been unmasked as a superstition. Challenging (consciously or not) now and then an article of faith within the Corporation seems one of the more valuable ways in which I can contribute and, therefore, I am glad to discover that I have done so. But that is not, why this letter is written to you.

This letter is written to you, because I heard of this commotion by pure accident, and that did not seem right to me, when I started to think about it.

When addressing an audience orally, I have learned how to avoid keeping a monologue ("I am quite used to the processing of interrupts." is the standard joke that some of you may remember.). But now I am addressing an audience by mail-and-Xerox, and it was something of a shock for me to realize that from all my reports that have been distributed inside Burroughs Corporation, hardly any reaction has reached me. This letter, therefore, is a plea not to hesitate and to react, to drop me a line when you feel like it.

Of course I do not expect everybody of you to study (and to react to) everything I write: the spectrum is broad enough that, quite naturally, parts of it fall outside your interests. But some of it should fall within your interests (otherwise you should not receive them!). And with respect to the documents within your interests, it would indeed be nice if you dropped me a line now and then.

If you like them, or if they are helpful, I would like to hear so: even I can do with occasional encouragement. If you don't understand them, and would like to do so, don't hesitate to ask for clarifications, for such requests are most essential for me: they are the feedback that is indispensable for anyone who would like to continue to reach his audience effectively. If you don't agree with my conclusions or feel that I am committing a glorious oversight, please say so, for you may be right and your correction will be most welcome. To a certain extent I am dependent on and, therefore, eager to learn from your combined, extensive experience.

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