Science & Technology

THE ORIGINS OF KNOWLEDGE AND IMAGINATION
by Jacob Bronowski
Yale, 1978, 146 pp. $7.95
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Uncertainty pervades all the efforts of men to know the external world and themselves. Such is the basic view stated by philosopher-mathematician Bronowski (1908–74), of BBC-TV *Ascent of Man* fame, in this eloquent little book of lectures. One of the least coarse instruments with which men seek to understand immensely complex and refined data, he believed, is science, which provides a dictionary for the testing and confirmation of perceptions of the real world. But, because everything in the universe is interconnected, each scientific explanation must be partial, relative, and mistaken. To Bronowski, although the delineation of a closed world system remains forever impossible, progress in knowledge takes place through the eradication of error.

COMPUTER CAPERS:
Tales of Electronic Thievery, Embezzlement, and Fraud
by Thomas Whiteside
Crowell, 1978
164 pp. $7.95
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We have no evidence of an electronic homicide (yet). But computer crimes perpetrated by ingenious or merely opportunistic humans range from those as serious as the 1973 Equity Funding case, which cost shareholders millions of dollars and was a swindle masterminded by company management, to the destruction of Girl Scout records by a disgruntled employee who ran a magnet over reeled tape at the Scouts' national headquarters. A high quotient of amusing anecdotes makes this collection of articles good reading. But Whiteside's serious purpose is to offer the public a view of the scope and magnitude of computer-assisted theft and fraud in a period when many important changes in computer use are taking place; his treatment of the vulnerability of Electronic Funds Transfer Systems (EFTS) is particularly timely. "Crime by computer is relatively new," he says. "But when it strikes it is not shy." Understand the electronic tools on which we depend, he cautions; don't bend, fold, spindle, or mutilate; and above all don't always believe neatly printed numbers.