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CULTURAL ACTIVITY IN AFRICA

ALTHOUGH Africans, both south and north of the Sahara, have common political aspirations arising from a common colonial experience, they express themselves in divers modes and on divers themes in their cultural pursuits. This is only natural, as the creative impulse is such a personal thing and is conditioned by one's environment, by both one's experience and that of one's forebears.

The village or folk arts and crafts are dying with the change of village life and its social constitution. Chiefs used to be able to patronize the wood-carver; such artists do not exist any more, because the chiefs are poor or dead, or bereft of their traditional authority. The crafts, like mat and basket weaving, pottery, broom-making and so on, are still doing well, because they have never depended on transitory patronage: they are utility occupations. Village ceremonies continue both as religious and entertainment activities. Urban cultures are on the increase now. Here is uprooted humanity consisting of people whose allegiance to ethnic chiefs is no longer a necessary part of their lives. They are thrown together, and a common meeting point is sought. What will it be? The most convenient will be the kind that lends itself to stage performance and pavilion conditions. It will be a *staged* thing, unlike the village communal activities where performers and audience merged. In urban cultures there is a clear line of division between audience and performers, amateur and professional performances. The most important vehicles of such cultures—literature, a common language, performance techniques, art exhibitions, literary and art workshops, seminars, journals, night clubs, jazz bands and so many others—are becoming more and more accessible to a larger number of people.

These are conditions at the time when the Congress [for Cultural Freedom] is entering the field of cultural activity in Africa. Whatever disadvantages the absence of a long line of tradition in any of the cultural media and their idioms may have, there is some consolation to be drawn from the fact that in Africa one can begin almost anywhere and still contribute a considerable measure of cheer and inspiration and infuse a sense of purpose. There is no long line of continuity in, say, modern theatre, creative writing, or reading tastes. One can set standards of magazine production, and either get away with murder or exert an elevating influence. This has nothing to do with any lack of basic sense of critical judgment among Africans: it has something to do with the social conditions in which urban cultures and their media operate. As it happens, it is through these urban cultures that the African begins to understand himself in relation to his past and to realize that an urban culture is not necessarily un-African. And by continuous intercourse between urban and rural idioms, they nourish each other.

I EXISTING CULTURAL CENTERS

There are three creative centres in Nigeria and one in Kenya which began with the initiative and financial sponsorship of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Paris. These are Mbari Writers' and Artists' Club in Ibadan; Mbari in Oshogbo, Western Nigeria, and Mbari in Enugu, Eastern Nigeria. ("Mbari" is a shrine in Iboland, Eastern Nigeria, which is constructed yearly in dedication to a god. Each time a new one is built, and the previous one is left to decay.) Then there is Chemchemi Cultural Centre in Nairobi. ("Chemchemi" is Swahili for "fountain.") All these emerged during the period from January, 1961 to September, 1963. The Congress has since early this year handed over the direct financial responsibility for these centres to Farfield Foundation in New York.

As part of the African Programme, Farfield Foundation also maintains journals like *Transition*, a journal of cultural, political and social comment, edited by Rajat Neogy in Kampala, Uganda; *The Classic*, a literary journal edited by Nathaniel Nakasa in Johannesburg. In the same family is the Transcription Centre in London, directed by Dennis

Duerden. Here Africans abroad record cultural programmes which are distributed in Africa.

The creative centres mentioned above seek to involve at various levels the communities in which they are situated in creative and entertainment activities: music, theatre, writing and art. For if we, Africans, are going to search for a personality that expresses *us*; if we are ever going to come to grips with modern technology and harness it as a vehicle of culture; if we are going to experiment with styles and idioms and retain our African essence even while we express contemporary ideas,—if we are ever going to do all these, we require *institutions.* We must organize cultural activities and attract people at different levels to a centre of such activities. Then culture will become a part of life rather than something abstract, something to theorize upon.

Chemchemi Cultural Centre, Nairobi

(*a*) Here we have an art gallery where we have, since the centre was opened in 1963 by the Minister of Education, exhibited six African artists drawn from the three territories. We have an art studio where we hope to attract young people to come and paint and sculpt, and possibly do handweaving. We do not run the gallery on a commercial basis, and only deduct from the artist's sales the cost of picture-framing. As we intend to do our own framing, the artist will benefit even more.

(*b*) We have a permanent writers' workshop, which has been attended by an average of fourteen persons who are learning such elements of short-story writing as can be acquired, using African writing for illustration. For sixteen weeks they turned out scripts which were discussed and corrected. We have conducted correspondence with external members of the workshop (*i.e.,* outside Nairobi) about their scripts which we have read and criticised. One such external member has had four of his short stories which we handled accepted by two East African journals mentioned earlier. We offer such manuscripts as merit it to the journals mentioned earlier, including *Black Orpheus* which is published by Ibadan's Mbari. We are now conducting for the workshop a series of lectures relevant to creative writing in general. Our plans include a course on writing for radio. It may be mentioned also that we visit secondary schools and teacher training institutions that invite us to give intensive courses in writing and art, wherever there are such clubs engaging in such activities. Our aim is to encourage the establishment in schools of as many literary and art clubs as possible, for we are convinced that our young people do not have to wait till they are in university before they write fiction, or plays or poems, or before they paint or sculpt.

(*c*) In February, 1964, we formed the African Theatre Company, under Chemchemi, and after four and a half months' work, we produced three plays—two of them adaptations of African folk tales, and the third a one-act play by a Kenyan lady teacher. We are now working on a new play. Our aim at Chemchemi is to create indigenous theatre with which the African can identify himself. Our immediate plans include the formation of a dance troupe that will build up a repertoire of tribal dances, so that we can present such a troupe to audiences as a national unit.

(*d*) In the music section of our work, we are beginning with the entertainment aspect, because we have the human material in abundance. There are several school choirs which present African songs at an annual music festival. We intend to bring these choirs to a larger audience. At the same time we have formed a quartet with three guitars and African drums. Our purpose is to exploit the guitar, which has become a most popular instrument in East Africa, as in the Congo. We want to experiment with folk tunes—which we want to adapt to guitar and drums. This quartet will be one way in which Chemchemi can help make African music a living culture and not something fossilized for the benefit of the ethno-musicologist. With funds, we can employ an African trained in Western techniques to record African music and work on it to mould it and make it relevant to contemporary music composition.

II EAST AFRICAN CULTURAL PROJECTS

I focus attention on East Africa because I want to assert that a years experience at Chemchemi has vindicated its existence. It has 150 members who

participate in its activities, and more people are enrolling, even from outside Kenya. We are in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education who are always willing to help us circulate schools. There are members of Government who, as individuals, encourage us. I draw attention to this region also because West Africa, especially Ghana and Nigeria, are well sponsored for cultural projects. The Government of Ghana is the first in Africa to have assumed direct responsibility for cultural work. It regards this system as part of socialist planning. Through that country's Institute of African Culture (directed by Nana Nketsia) the Government administers funds for cultural projects for which a regional organizer is employed. In Accra itself, there is much activity in adult dramatic entertainment and puppet theatre and traditional music and dancing. Rockefeller Foundation helped the Ghanaian Government to set up the Drama Studio, which is now part of the School of Music and Drama, which in turn comes under the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana. The school is directed by Professor J. H. Nketia, a very able person. Another American Foundation has given the University a grant to enable it to develop its theatre arts. Much research into African music is being done here.

At the University of Ibadan in Nigeria there now exists a school of Dramatic Art. Rockefeller Foundation has made this possible. The school is well-staffed and teaches theatre arts while at the same time it manages a traveling theatre consisting of students. Shell Company has made available for them a lorry fitted with a stage. Money was also made available for the school to house a Yoruba opera company that had already been in existence. In this way the company can now work consistently at its operas with constant technical assistance. The school has also a full-time African artist who does the scenic design and also directs while doing further research into traditional dramatic forms.

Now the university colleges in East Africa do not have anything like these music and theatre institutions. Makerere in Kampala has a 28-year-old art school and the University College, Nairobi, has a ten-year-old one. They conduct courses lasting four years after secondary school, and most of the graduates become teachers of art in secondary schools while teaching other subjects.

I personally do not favour a system whereby the only music, theatre and art institutions in a country are attached to university. This gives such disciplines a forbidding appearance, and because of the high entrance qualifications required, the largest number of average folks are shut out—people who have neither the inclination nor the capacity for the academic drill demanded of anyone who has to enter a university. We are also certain that it does not need four years of art academics to make a person a painter or a teacher of art. Especially is it important in Africa, where we are faced with the enormous task of having to educate the largest number of people possible at a time, to make these cultural activities accessible without the tough British-oriented entrance qualifications now necessary. Still, now that in West Africa these branches of learning *are* attached to university, let them continue, as long as they do not develop for themselves elite audiences which exclude the majority—the average. Tanganyika, whose Ministry of Community Development embraces culture as well, seems to be adopting a pattern similar to Ghana's. Also, there is going to be a department of theatre arts in the University College, Dar es Salaam.

What we plead for at this stage is that Foundations and other organizations that are showing greater and greater practical interest in helping us to invest in human material to appreciate the national function of centres like the Mbari centres in Nigeria and Chemchemi in Kenya. These centres want to stir creative talents in the most formative years of a person. We want to catch the individual before he is committed to a university career. We want to make young people realize how much they are capable of doing even while still in secondary school. We want to offer the thousands of young people who left school after beginning high school or in the middle of it or just after it and are working but are fully literate, the opportunity to realize their cultural identity and creative gifts.

Urgent Needs

Before I list our needs, may I say that in Kenya, where the potential horizontal area of cultural cross-impact is the largest in East Africa, we are fortunate to have other institutions that interest themselves in cultural work. There is the vital East African Institute of Social and Cultural Affairs; there are also the Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at the local university college. Chemchemi has an amicable arrangement with the Institute of Social and Cultural Affairs for us to concentrate on culture in its restricted sense,—music, theatre, art, writing—and for them to organize seminars.

Again I use Chemchemi as the point from which much can radiate to the benefit of the rest of Kenya and of East Africa; for as an extra-mural institution, Chemchemi is not subject to the kind of bureaucracy that is peculiar to universities. This in turn makes it possible for the largest number of people—Africans, Europeans and Indians—to use its facilities, to nourish it with ideas for development.

It should also be emphasized that none of the "Mbari" centres, including Chemchemi, intends to, or can ever, compete with local universities, even although we may seem to duplicate functions: in reality we do not do this, by virtue of the level of sophistication and education we deal with in our communities. Also, through the departments of extra-mural studies in these universities, we are able to find common ground, and do in fact attract students and lecturers in our various activities such as lectures and workshops.

Music

(1) *We need funds to enable a man who has had a five-year musical training in London to do research in African tribal music. We do not want him to conduct this project merely for purpose of accumulating knowledge to fill the dusty shelves of archives: we want him to experiment with these tribal idioms by arranging them for instrumental and vocal performance.* He can exploit traditional African instruments, too. The main aim will be to lift African music out of the museum cage so as to make it a live form that is relevant to a contemporary audience. In this way it can be brought to a world audience. The musician should use Chemchemi as a "laboratory" in order to move with the audience.

(2) The above observation leads me to the vital question of trained African composers. We have too few of these. There are Professor Nketia of Ghana; Mr. Fela Sowande of Nigeria; Todd Matshikiza, a South African who is working for Zambia Radio; and there is a growing number of jazz composers in South Africa itself in addition to the five or so who have written an impressive body of four-part choral music that is being performed. There are one or two in Senegal. A few Africans are studying music abroad, but they are swallowed up by the teaching profession or radio (in a capacity that does not exploit their training and talent fruitfully at all).

There is no department of music at the University College, Nairobi, but there exists in Nairobi the 21-year-old Conservatoire of music. This institution is a victim of its own tradition, having originated as a settler institution. Recently, a handful of Africans have passed through its hands, but they have not had any impact except for George Zake who supervises music in schools. We can discuss with the Conservatoire the possibilities of accepting a batch of African students who can keep in close touch with the man in the field as proposed in (1) above, and who can surround themselves with the African music, so that they may seek the points of concord and discord between this and Western music. This way they can be of much use to their people. *The students will require a scholarship to get them through their training.*

Art

As we have intimated, entrance conditions in the art schools of the university colleges are rigorous. Again, we want to encourage boys and girls to paint or sculpt without having to satisfy such difficult requirements. The intake of students in these art schools will continue to be low for a long time to come. During an art workshop Chemchemi organized for fresh graduates of Makerere in April, 1964, the participants affirmed that all the former graduates of the 28-year-old art school had gone into teaching and that only two had later produced a

sizeable volume of paintings, two of sculptures. They also pointed out that there was a real artistic problem in relating European art history and techniques to one's surroundings as an African, once out of the protective walls of art school where one had spent four years. Makerere art school should continue to produce the teachers, however small the number may be; the University College, Nairobi, which has a bias for graphic arts, can, in its ideal setting, meet as soon as it cares to the needs for industrial designers.

A young South African painter and art teacher, Selby Mvusi, is most interested in industrial design and can, according to an arrangement with the art school at University College Nairobi be attached to it, *if he can be financed.*

How does Chemchemi fit into this context? *We certainly need art classes for the young folk who are most eager to paint or sculpt.* We must necessarily limit the age at which we can accept candidates, as we do not want to encourage bored middle-aged housewives to come and find diversion in painting and take the place of a young boy or girl who has real talent. Our studio can take fifteen persons comfortably at a time. We have an art teacher available who can give two lessons a week of two hours each. He is a fresh product of Makerere and is one of three or four who are painting consistently. *We need funds to pay him for the work and to buy materials—paint and brushes and clay.*

There is a lady who can teach hand-weaving, and one of the ways in which we can attract more African ladies to Chemchemi is to introduce hand-weaving. There is space enough in our studio. *We need funds to pay for her services.*

Theatre

We need at Chemchemi a full-time theatre director. Our theatre group consists of twenty members. Such a director can, apart from routine rehearsals, do research into the dramatic possibilities of African music and dance, which we exploited successfully in two of our first productions last July. He can also stimulate the writing of plays with local themes and acting. Such a man would thus be fully employed. There are at least two organizations which are willing to send a person overseas to study directing and other aspects of theatre arts for a few months.

Library

Any donation of books on Africa, books on music, dramatic art, visual arts, books of reproductions of paintings and sculptures, will be most welcome. We are also trying to build up a library of books about Africa—political, social, and economic studies and creative writing; American Negro, West Indian and Indian literature (the last named, in English).

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REVIEW
RETURN TO METAPHYSICS?

WHAT are the prospects for a rebirth of metaphysics in our time? This question is considered seriously by Huston Smith of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in a contribution on "The Death and Rebirth of Metaphysics" to a *Festchrift* for Charles Hartshorne—*Process and Divinity* (Open Court, Chicago, Illinois, 1964, $7.50).

Prof. Smith begins with two rather different definitions of metaphysics—one by A. N. Whitehead, the other by C. I. Lewis. Whitehead characterized metaphysics as "the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted." This is metaphysics in its grandest sense, with stress on its all-inclusive and comprehensive scope. Lewis is more methodological but less ambitious: "Metaphysics is concerned to reveal just that set of major classifications of phenomena, and just those precise criteria of valid understanding, by which the whole array of given experience may be set in order and each item (ideally) assigned its intelligible and unambiguous place." Commenting, Prof. Smith remarks that currently this discipline is virtually dead:

> British philosophy has foregone metaphysics generally, continental philosophy the objectivity which traditionally has been so much a part of metaphysics that definitions don't even trouble to mention it. America's contribution to the demise has been her metaphysically-suspicious pragmatism. . . . More recently Iris Murdoch has written: "Modern philosophy is profoundly anti-metaphysical in spirit. Its anti-metaphysical character may be summed up in the caveat: There may be no deep structure. This is the lesson of Wittgenstein."
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> The roots of this suspicion run back—to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Pascal on the Continent, and across the Channel to Hume. But these were men before their time. It has remained for our generation to see *as a generation* the import of their prophecies. A-cosmism at large, lapping at the shores of thought's entire empire, streaming into the inlets of every specialized discipline, breaking into spray which salts the eyes of even the man on the boardwalk—a-cosmism in these proportions is a twentieth-century discovery.

Whereas the anti-metaphysical logical positivist at least assumed that the world does have a structure which an appropriate language might describe without distortion, the subsequent "ordinary language" movement at Oxford deemed philosophically unprofitable any inquiry into the structure of "reality," and doubted even the possibility of a language governed by a single set of rules which could do justice to the full gamut of human experience. The Continental existentialists emphasize that as the "life-situations" men occupy differ markedly, the traditional metaphysician's dream of a single world-outlook for all is misguided in principle. But whereas British philosophy has in recent decades inclined to see metaphysics as rationally deficient, continental philosophy finds it too rational. The phenomenologists and some existentialists seem to be contending, like classical Indian philosophers, that "to the extent that being can be known at all, our knowledge of it must be a special sort in which experience, with which thought must always be meshed to some degree, deepens to the point where the dichotomy between subject and object is transcended."

The dissatisfaction with traditional European metaphysics is partly a welcome departure from a long-standing ethnocentric provincialism. The complete ethnocentric is, by definition, not even aware that he is one. A crudely egoistic and illusory sense of self-sufficiency conditioned the mentality of the medieval theologian as well as many a modern rationalist. Now we are becoming aware, often painfully, of how variously the world can be and has, in fact, been conceived. There can be no atavistic return to the false security, the comfortably narrow vision of the past, unless we enjoy preaching to the already converted.

The deeper source of dissatisfaction with traditional metaphysics, as with medieval theology in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is a nagging and persistent methodological doubt. As Prof. Smith reminds us—

> Deductive metaphysics founders on the fact that there are no indubitable starting points: *cogitos*,

> matter/form dichotomies, sense data, all have been found to be open to intelligent questionings. This discovery unmasks deductive metaphysics' conclusions of their presumed certainty and throws them into camp with those of the economic analyst who takes a rough hunch and refines it to the seventh decimal place. Meanwhile the findings of inductive metaphysics command equally little conviction. The difficulty here arises not only from the deluge of information which, as a consequence of the systematization and subsidy of research has poured in upon us faster than we have been able to order it. The problem is occasioned as much by the puzzling *character* of the new facts as by their number: particles that behave anti-intuitively, ostensibly objective experiments that are affected by the experimenter's expectations; thoughts that appear to transmit themselves without physical media, and so on. In the absence of convincing syntheses to order the facts within departments of knowledge individually, how can we hope for a purview that will order them all?
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> These thoughts weigh heavily; so heavily that we might be tempted to abandon metaphysics forever, or at least for the time being, were it not for one fact. This fact is the nature of man. Man's knowing seems to reach out for something in the direction of metaphysics, and his life, which includes more than knowing, seems to as well.

In the face of all these difficulties, it is possible to regard the need for metaphysics as more apparent than real, or even as pathological. However, metaphysics continues, like an unexorcisable ghost, to creep in disguised but recognisable forms into every serious contemporary inquiry and even into the most innocent-looking words. So Prof. Smith concludes that "philosophers cannot ignore metaphysics even if they abandon existential questions to psychologists and theologians forthwith." Moreover: "As long as they retain their interest in epistemology, questions of unrestricted scope (i.e., metaphysical questions) will inevitably intrude. For no man looks at the world with pristine eyes; he sees it edited, and editorial policy is always forged in the widest field of vision at command." Many of what seem to be neutral descriptions are full of moral and philosophical presuppositions, a fact especially overlooked when *ex cathedra* statements are made in the name of science.

Prof. Smith records his undogmatic conviction regarding the challenging prospect that "as our century draws toward its close metaphysical interest will quicken to such an extent that rebirth will appear a not inapposite metaphor." Not only do men have a psychological need to ask over-arching questions; there are logical reasons as well:

> It is one of the ironies of our time—completely understandable, but ironical nonetheless—that rising standards of scholarship and the explosion of knowledge have fragmented research in every field at precisely the moment that we see most clearly that knowing always involves a convergence between elements and the contexts that endow them with meaning. We are doing well with the elements. In the decades ahead philosophical endeavor will reflect a growing realization of the limited usefulness of advancing on this front while marking time on the other.

The revival of interest in metaphysics need not be incompatible with our new awareness of the errors and excesses of traditional metaphysics. We should not expect our systems to mirror the noumenal world in its fullness. There may be some generic features which all world-views possess by virtue of the fact that they are framed by human beings, while other elements in our outlooks will derive not from universal experience or basic humanity but from a particular cultural heritage and "its criteria of credibility, its prevailing assumptions and dominant expectations." Then there are also features of our outlooks which are legitimately idiosyncratic. "A phrase, a metaphor, a *mantram*, each for reasons that are entirely personal might organize the world meaningfully for some individual without the slightest claim to do so for others." We should not, furthermore, assume that the problems of metaphysics are entirely coterminal with those of language or that knowledge necessarily proceeds uni-directionally from part to whole, or that objectivity is incompatible with commitment.

Prof. Smith's essay concludes with this statement:

> As to the mode by which a new metaphysics might emerge, one thinks of two possibilities. If a dramatic new truth about the world were to come into view; if, in the succession of the copernican

> revolution, darwinian evolution, freudianism, or quantum mechanics, we were tomorrow to become completely convinced that extra-sensory perception, say, is a reality, or if we were to discover life on other planets so radically different that it threw the question of what life is into an entirely new perspective—if revolutionary discoveries of proportions such as these were to come into view I suspect that interest would swing rapidly from many of our present minute concerns toward working out the implications of new discoveries for our view of life and reality in general. Short of this, the best prospect would seem to be to keep a careful eye on the basic concepts and theories of the various major fields of knowledge and try to formulate a general scheme of categories which will provide a perspective in which to view them all.

Huston Smith's hope relates to the contemporary need of thinking men everywhere for a general scheme of categories integrating the concepts of various fields of knowledge. He also envisions the possible emergence of a radically new metaphysic to undergird comprehension of a dramatic new truth. Clearly, the capacity to meet this general need for a specific shared metaphysic will be found only in a very few bold and pioneering minds. We would still have to distinguish the general need from the requirement of every thinking individual for his own frame of reference, uniquely relevant to himself, while possessing some universal features. And since the capacity to meet this need varies with individuals, the gap between need and capacity will present a problem that is common to all. If a person's need for a frame of reference is greater than his capacity to find it, his insecurity may lead him to be dogmatic about the metaphysic he contrives, and also make him egoistic about its importance. If his capacity is greater than his concrete need, he may bring a cavalier carelessness to his particular metaphysic, even if he makes tall claims for its virtues. And if a man's need and his capacity should magically coincide at any particular time, at one level of experience, he may fail to see the need for an *evolving* metaphysic adapted to his personal change and growth. This is a problem that may be intrinsic to human nature as we know it—to all finite and evolving minds that are self-conscious to differing degrees and in different contexts. Recognizing the requirements of this growth-factor may well be more important than finding a ready-made "system" for all men.

The common need for a shared metaphysic—especially for a radically new one—may become an unavoidable necessity before the close of this century. No less important or urgent is the need for the spread of a climate of thought, an intellectual temper (possibly not unlike that which prevailed in classical Greece or India) which tolerates the coexistence of a variety of metaphysical frameworks. We may need, more than this, a new formulation of a theory of truth which satisfactorily distinguishes between absolute (and necessarily unattainable) truth and the relative truths of all men. We might say that we need to explore a metaphysic that gives a firm philosophical underpinning for the compatibility of an indefinite number and range of metaphysical outlooks that are related to an infinite scale of possible human experiences. We could reconsider several of the traditional dichotomies—between the noumenal and the phenomenal, between the transcendent and the sensory, the subjective and the objective, the rational and the empirical. We have yet to rediscover in a fresh form the irrefutable if much-abused "intuitionist" theory of truth and the subtle "dialectic" that were propounded in a variety of suggestive ways by Plato and subsequently obscured by Aristotle's obsessive concern with classification.

Clearly, we have still much work to do in the coming decades. It is exciting to contemplate the possibility of a radically new metaphysic deserving of world-wide attention. It is no less exciting for individuals now and here to engage in formulating tentatively the frames of reference that are most relevant to their own experiences as growing individuals. The coming epoch may be exciting to live in for modern man, but life is already exciting for those few men who are ever engaged in the painful and protracted search for greater congruence between their concepts and their concrete experiences.

COMMENTARY
REGENERATING INSTITUTIONS

THIS week's lead article, "Cultural Activity in Africa," is condensed from a report made by Ezekiel Mphahlele, director of the Chemchemi Cultural Center, Nairobi, Kenya, to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, after a four months' tour of parts of Africa. The Congress, as Mr. Mphahlele points out, was responsible for the initial formation of several cultural centers in Africa, and this report informs as to the resulting progress, providing also a summary of the material needs of the Chemchemi Center.

While it would be wholly legitimate, from the viewpoint of MANAS editorial policy, to print this paper simply as an appeal for financial aid, this is not the reason it is presented. Nowhere in such brief compass have we come across so vivid an account of the cultural awakening and self-consciousness of African peoples. Mr. Mphahlele is not only a reporter of this awakening—he is also one of its prime movers. (Readers are invited to refer to the MANAS review [Oct. 28, 1964] of his book, *The African Image* (Faber & Faber in England, Praeger in the United States], and to his *Foreign Affairs* article [July, 1964] for perceptive insights into African literature and character, and for a wide range of vision concerning Africa's future.) Best of all is the practical sense of values and fitness displayed in relation to education and the shaping of cultural influences for the African people. These are of course the same values which must be fostered anywhere in the world, making Mr. Mphahlele's review and discussion of universal interest. Inquiries concerning the needs of the Chemchemi Cultural Center may be addressed to him.

We take this space to make a correction in a Frontiers article which appeared in MANAS for June 2, on the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, in Santa Barbara. The offense was the omission of a decimal point in reporting the total sum pledged to support the Center, as announced last February during a dinner given in New York in honor of Robert M. Hutchins, its founder and president. The correct amount was $1.25 million, and leaving out the decimal in the figure quoted from the Los Angeles *Times* gave the impression that the Center is rolling in wealth. This impression is, of course, completely false. Admirers and potential supporters of the work of the Center, so frequently cited and spoken of in these pages, are invited to write for further information to the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Box 4068, Santa Barbara, California.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
ONE KIND OF HIGHER LEARNING

IN reporting on such "experimental" colleges as Emerson, Goddard, Franconia, etc., we have sometimes called them "pilot projects." While it is true enough that small, intense groups help the larger society to free itself of conventional attitudes and approaches, the use of words like "experimental" or "pilot" has limitations. The small group which endeavors to provide opportunity for self-actualization is not of value merely because of its possible "contributions" to society; its value is existential in the sense that its participants may have achieved, here and now, what others will have to achieve later.

The title of Paul Goodman's volume, *Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals*, makes a suggestive frame for the approach to learning formulated by psychoanalyst-educator Mason Rose in Southern California, which is undoubtedly "experimental." Mr. Goodman is all for utopian projects in the educational field, but against any sort of in-group isolation. Similarly, while the Communities of Work in Europe produced a new social environment for autonomous economic groups, these adventurous social undertakings were born within the matrix of the post-war capitalism of France. The French "communitarians" discovered how to make a system which had grave limitations for the rest of their country, work for *them.* Dr. Rose's offering of a new approach to university teaching and learning has particular regard for men and women who have long passed "college age" or dropped out of conventional institutions because of marital responsibilities, economic necessity or merely lack of interest. Each student is expected to combine work in some productive vocation with the seminars and tutorials which comprise the foundation of the study program.

This undertaking naturally interpenetrates with other areas of concern—religious-philosophical, societal-responsible, marriage-familial, aesthetic-creative, and recreationally-social, and a truly creative education, in Dr. Rose's opinion, requires that these relationships be studied and that the goal of self-actualization be pursued, with shifting emphasis, in all areas at once. A pamphlet explaining the psychology involved in what might be called plans for a humanist-existentialist university has these paragraphs:

> Human experience proves that life's meanings and satisfactions are derived from the ways and means by which a person conducts his life, not from setting and achieving goals. An achievement should be a stimulus to open one's vision to more and better ways and means of existential experience. If goals and achievements are sought as ends, the seeker becomes focused on them. Life becomes narrowly rutted, and the vision of the self and its existential actualization becomes blunted. Such a person can be termed a goal-oriented failure.
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> The life-oriented person is not besieged with the status symbols which are the preoccupations of the goal-oriented person. Wealth, power, and/or prestige are of secondary importance. Life is spent by living richly and fully in the existential now. It is not wasted in yearning and waiting for distant goals and achievements. As a result, the self-actualizing person experiences a much broader and deeper life than the goal-oriented person.

Whatever the terminology used, it seems clear that education should lead *away* from what Dr. Rose calls "goal-orientation." The trouble with specific goals as definitions of fulfillment is that both circumstances and other persons can become hated obstacles. Whether the happy terminus of one's ambition is regarded as release from life-experience in heaven or nirvana, whether it is acquiring a million dollars or gaining preferred academic or political status, the tendency is to become a combatant in a struggle against all forces which seem to delay or obstruct. The educational purpose which has no such end, but seeks instead an increase of value and meaning, a broadening and enriching of perspectives, turns all troublesome circumstances into grist for its mill.

Dr. Rose's aim, then, is to help the individual avoid becoming a "goal-oriented failure." This educational philosophy "emphasizes the whole man—his body, mind and spirit—being focused in elevated personal and societal living; it is American in its structure because it parallels the education of our Founding Fathers, that is to say, broad learning coupled with communication skills balanced by variegated personal and social activities involving the use of the hands as well as the brain." The function of the teacher, on this view, is essentially Socratic, answering, also, to the most elevated conception of the role of psychoanalyst. To elicit the maximum creative response from a student, the teacher intuitively assumes a role of "the enlightened agonist." As Dr. Rose points out, there is a consensus among many teachers that we need to "develop the science of selecting and arranging the elements of environment to create experiential opportunities which are conducive to the optimum actualization of one's potentials." But such a "science" must grow out of empathy between instructor and student, be apprehended by the student as belonging *to* his own situation, rather than being applied to his situation. In Dr. Rose's words, the tutorial must be "non-directive":

> Besides by-passing any defenses the student might throw up to a more directive approach, the asking of Socratic questions prods the student to evoke the right questions and answers *from himself*. Time and again, experience has proved that when answers to a student's problems emerge from the student, rather than from the professor, the corrective impact is always greater and more immediate.
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> An aside but important bonus in the use of the Socratic technique is that, once the student realizes the professor's effectiveness in triggering insights, his confidence in the whole Non-Directive Tutorial goes up. The student also becomes more willing to assume at least equal responsibility for what goes on in each tutorial, instead of passively or sullenly expecting the professor to direct the entire session.
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> It is appropriate at this point to mention that, aside from the great sage from whom we derive the term, the Socratic technique of insight-and-answer "midwife-in"" is one of the most solid cornerstones of all psychoanalytic disciplines. And although the best educational method is certainly not a therapy in the classical or medical sense, it has been found that the Socratic technique lends itself best to its own non-directive approaches in evoking the Whole Man.

So far, twenty students have completed a year of Dr. Rose's Humanist-Existentialist program, while working on jobs, earning credit toward degrees.

FRONTIERS

Existentialist Perspective on Marxism

READERS of Colin Wilson's *Beyond the Outsider,* a venture combining psychology and political philosophy, will remember that it ends with a note on Sartre:

> In his most recent book, the *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* Sartre has attempted to persuade Marxian philosophy to abandon its old-fashioned, nineteenth-century materialism, and accept a more realistic existential psychology as the basis of its social optimism. This, as I have pointed out, is not as revolutionary as it sounds; it was already foreshadowed in the rejection of biological determinism as the official "Party Line." If Sartre is successful, and Russia combines existential premises and belief in the future of man, I think there can hardly be any doubt of the outcome of the "cultural race" of our time. And yet even so, it would be impossible to predict that such an outcome would be final. My own observation of America, with its tremendous intellectual vitality (held in check only by a strange "insignificance" neurosis) convinces me that existential realism could also channel these energies to produce a new "world culture."

This may sound like little more than careless optimism concerning Soviet development, but Sartre's *Critique* is none the less occasioning a great deal of discussion among psychologists and religionists, as well as by sociologists and Marxists. Raymond Aron, in *Encounter* for June, reviews Sartre's *Critique* and, while Mr. Aron is not as "optimistic" as Colin Wilson, he remarks that "Sartre hopes to provide Marx's Marxism with a philosophical foundation in Existentialism rather than in materialism, or at least in a materialism compatible with Existentialism." Sartre's aim, as he explains, "is to reintroduce man into Marxist knowledge." But in doing so, says Mr. Aron, Sartre "does not, like Kierkegaard reacting against Hegel, contrast the irrational peculiarity of the individual with universal knowledge, but seeks to reintroduce the unsurpassable peculiarity of human existence into knowledge itself and into the universality of concepts." Aron continues:

> The aim is to renew Marxism by re-introducing existence into it, and taking the individual consciousness as the starting-point. Sartrian criticism is intended to stand in the same relationship to Marxism as Kantian criticism (according to what we were taught at school) stood in relationship to Newtonian physics. Sartre is endeavoring to demonstrate the possibility of a *single* history which will be the progressive working out of the truth.
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> The Sartrian dialectic does not begin from the dialogue, that is, from the encounter of the *I* and the *Thou.* It is the encounter with the *Other* which creates a threat to the liberty of each individual. This is not to say that the *Other* treats me spontaneously as the object of his action and thereby submits me to his will. But since consciousness as *praxis* [a throwing forward; a projection] is an operative consciousness, the relationship of the individual man with nature and other men through the mediation of fashioned matter (the tool), the risk of alienation is inherent in the relationships between individuals. . . . The individual *praxis*, like consciousness, is at once a retention of the past and a self-translucid transcending of it in the direction of the future, a total apprehension both of the situation and the aim. To be authentically human these relationships must be founded on reciprocity or equality. A philosophy which denies the existence of such a thing as human nature must find some substitute criterion by which to determine what is to be judged as inhuman. This criterion is reciprocity.

The relationship between "reciprocity" and existential "authenticity" helps to explain Mr. Wilson's optimism respecting the revision of orthodox Marxism in Russia. Commenting on "Culture in the Soviet Union," Wilson writes:

> The old conceptions of America and Russia no longer fit the facts; neither does their view of one another; America is no longer the commercial jungle that Mayakovsky wrote about, any more than Russia is the totalitarian jungle of *Nineteen Eighty Four.* It seems possible that the country that wins the tug-of-war will be the one that is sensible enough to let go of the rope, and willingly incorporates into itself some of the best features of its "rival."
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> In *The Colours of the Day,* Romain Gary expressed the hope that the present conflict of East and West would prove to be like Hegelian dialectic, a means to a new synthesis, with both the right and the left drawn closer to the centre. The writer's

allegiance is to that synthesis of the future, not to any present *status quo*.

In 1958, in the preface to *The Age of Defeat,* I expressed my feeling that Soviet culture places far too great an emphasis on the duty of the artist to the state. Since then, I have had a chance to read many Soviet novels and hear a great deal of Soviet music, as well as to form my own personal impressions of Russian life on a visit to Leningrad. It now seems to me that I was guilty of a considerable over-simplification, and of drawing some false conclusions. For it seems to be undeniable that the general "tune" of modern Soviet writing and music is a great deal healthier than its Western counterpart, there is a sense of optimism and idealism, and a lack of the "fallacy of insignificance."

Glenn Gray recently observed that "authenticity is the element of Existentialism that strikes the deepest note; the desire for self-definition often goes hand in hand with an inner need to make freedom meaningful." And in this perspective, another of Prof. Mayer's discussion of existentialism directly applies:

Existentialism in a sense is an extremely moral philosophy. It calls for commitment, for a way of life.

Marcel uses the term testimony to indicate man's need for commitment. When we give testimony we reveal the innermost foundations of our subjectivity and, at the same time, are conscious of an order which exists beyond us. Testimony means that we live by the realities in which we believe, it implies that knowledge has become an urgent necessity to us and has been appropriated by us and that the truth is a sacred profession rather than an abstraction to be dissected.

Apparently both Sartre (new version) and Wilson now believe that neither the dogmatists of Russia nor those of America can withstand the impact of a deeper readiness for "reciprocity" and the ideal of a universal human brotherhood.