

EXISTENTIALISM: PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

[This article is a condensation of a talk given by Peter Koestenbaum to the teachers of a California School District. Dr. Koestenbaum is professor of philosophy at San Jose State College, San Jose, Calif. The article first appeared in the periodical, *Explorations* (P.O. Box 1254, Berkeley, Calif.), and is reprinted here by permission.]

THE frontiers of knowledge in philosophy, psychiatry, and theology converge on one and the same image of man. Existential philosophy, associated with Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger, and Jaspers, agrees with the insights of depth psychology, such as those of Freud and C. G. Jung, and further leads to the kind of demythologized theology that has found acceptance with Bultmann, Tillich, and Buber and is at the heart of the contemporary intellectual revival and revitalization of religion.

Fundamental to the existentialist theory of man is the view that the world as it appears to me is my creation, and for it I must assume responsibility. Given, as the bricks out of which I can build a universe, is a chaotic kaleidoscope of colors, shapes, sounds, moods, hopes, fears, joys, pains, ideas, movements; there is no up and down, here and there, no inside and outside, no I and no other. Out of this anarchy I organize a world for myself. I subdue the disordered shapelessness into a world by choosing one out of an infinity of possible structures. That act is called constitution. Imagine that you gaze reflectively for a long time on a stream of water rushing out of a faucet. Under these conditions, what would be your preconceptual, uninterpreted, and raw presentations? In other words, what do you *really* see as opposed to what you *think* you see? You are confronted not only with a conglomerate of sounds, colors, shapes, and motions, but also with associations, feelings, fantasies, and moods. The sound may become a color, a color may translate itself into a sound. You may associate

with it sound of sweet nothings whispered in love on a beach, or the vigorous grip of your father's stentorian voice, the peaceful endlessness of time or the sad swift loss of the fleeting present. This is what is there, in the world, before you have organized, interpreted, and reconstructed it. If, in organizing those experiences into what we call a "world," you stress the voices, if you interpret moods to be external and colors internal, then we will accuse you of hearing voices and being abnormal. If, on the other hand, you organize the material into "running water" which mesmerizes you, so that "water" is "outside" and "associations, voices, and moods" are "inside," then you have restructured the raw material in a "normal" way. Normal and abnormal are not absolutes; from a purely logical point of view they are equal. Normal and abnormal are freely chosen value ascriptions around which you have decided to organize your experience.

The most important conclusion to be drawn from these considerations is not that the stream of water—as stream rather than voices—is your creation, but that Man is your creation. The nature of man, the meaning of human existence, the provenance and destiny of man, the essence and definition of man, all these are not found or discovered but they are *invented*. The supreme and most difficult creative act in world-constitution is the creation of ourselves. We invent ourselves as either God-fearing or as conceited and proud. We sometimes constitute the world with us in it as a noble giant, a Prometheus or a Zeus, or with us in it as insignificant and anonymous toothpicks in an infinite expanse of space and time. We choose ourselves as either heroic or as cowardly, as sensuous or as ascetic, as self-centered or as altruistic. And we choose ourselves as either at home or as alien in the world. At the focal point

of our self-constitution there always is a value. That value becomes the absolute around which our world is organized. But that absolute is chosen by you out of an empty abyss, chosen with total arbitrariness but also with total responsibility. The existentialist believes in the existence of absolute values, values to which he is totally committed and for which he will die. He is therefore free of the pusillanimity of the relativist—the man with no opinions, no convictions, no commitments, and no substance. But the existentialist also believes that he has freely chosen those values to be absolute. They are not *discovered* as absolutes, but he has *invented* them as absolutes. In this way the existentialist is free of the chauvinism and intolerance of the absolute the man for whom there is but one correct opinion . . . and he happens to hold it. In addition, your creation of absolute values, far from making you weightless like the relativist without backbone, endows you with a powerful and concrete human existence.

We must be cured of our propensity to accept the uncritical everyday world-view as the correct image of ourselves. There are some fundamental presuppositions—about ourselves and the world—which are not borne out by a philosophic analysis of the facts of immediate experience. These assumptions are really our inventions, and a philosopher, in assessing man, must discard them, because through their disclosure we discover what we really are, as opposed to what we have invented ourselves to be.

Assumption one: "I am awake." Dreams can duplicate all conditions of the waking state, even to the extent that I can dream that I am awake. That the distinction is clear and final and that the waking state is real whereas the dream state is illusory are not given data in experience but are aspects of our everyday world constitution.

Assumption two: "I am a body with a mind or soul in it"—a ghost in a machine, in the words of Gilbert Ryle. In actual fact, you experience yourself to be more like a vast sea of

consciousness (called *Transcendental Consciousness* or *Sein, Being*) within which the world takes shape and moves, rather than an isolated mind-body complex. In that sea you have constituted "anchor points," hard cores or nodules of presentations that we call "things" or "objects." As you see me now, I am part lectern, part man, and part wall. But you, in a synthesizing act of conscious constitution, separate these areas of the given continuum into three independent "objects": lectern, man, wall. Furthermore, you associate the sounds with the man, not the lectern. But most important of all, you do not experience yourself to be coextensive with your body, or even your personality. On the contrary, your body is but one item within that vast sea of consciousness that you experience yourself as being. You experience first the room, first other bodies—your consciousness reaches out to them, is them. Only later do you reach out and identify with your own body. The newborn child does not automatically separate his body from that of his mother. In fact, when very young, he is likely to experience his mother's breast as part of him, but not his foot. Eventually, of course, your body becomes an item of the first importance within that sea of consciousness which you are.

Assumption three: "The ego is split from the external world by an unbridgeable gap." The philosophic problems of perception, volition, and knowledge in fact, the whole issue of mind-matter interaction—are related to the presumed irrevocable chasm between the inner world of subjectivity and the outer world of objectivity. In actual fact, however, such a gap is our invention. Pure experience discloses a Man-World continuum. The vast sea of consciousness is, in fact, such an ego-universe continuum which we sever artificially into two incompatible regions.

Assumption four: "Man is a homunculus (a tiny man) within an infinite universe." Confronted with the totality of being, man is a nothing; he is a nothing in infinite space, a nothing in infinite time; his power is like nothing, and his knowledge is, in

the words of Socrates, only about the fact that he knows nothing. This view of man is contrary to the facts of scientific experience. It applies to man's body, but not to his awareness. And I am my awareness, first and last. The view that man is a nothing is an image in the mind of man, an image he himself has constituted. Rather than being a nothing, man's subjectivity or inwardness (as Kierkegaard called it) is the very foundation of everything. Man's inwardness has the power of world-constitution, and only words such as "divine" and "holy" can describe this potential adequately. The supreme power of creativity found in man's inwardness is encapsulated in Aristotle's and Aquinas's conception of God as the Creator—the First Mover, First Cause, and Ultimate Substance. And it is written in Genesis that "God created man in His image," that is, as a creator.

Assumption five: "Man is not free. His physical and spiritual life is the result of determining forces beyond his control." This is a most common albeit strange assumption, especially in view of the fact that we *do* experience our free will. For the existentialist, to espouse universal determinism or fatalism and to say that what I am, what I believe, and what I do are events beyond my control, that these are determined by heredity, environment, or divine edict, is merely to have made the deliberate and free choice to avoid recognizing the responsibility over my life that I do in fact possess. Determinism is rationalization; it is deliberate self-deception because the burden of freedom is too heavy.

If we examine this assumption in the light of the actual facts of experience, we discover it to be once more an inaccurate constitution. There is a center in my experience aptly called "free will." Free will has three characteristics. First, it is spontaneity, which I experience as joy. When I act freely I experience *creatio ex nihilo*, the uncaused creation of something out of nothing. This is particularly true in the arts and in the

education of a child, which is the creation of a man. Second, it is self-determination, which I experience as power or a sense of importance. The creative act is mine. In fact, it solidifies me into an existential reality. And third, it is the knowledge that I could have acted otherwise, and this I experience as inevitable guilt or responsibility. Whatever my action, it is always true that I could have chosen differently. Existentialism holds man totally responsible for his life-situation. If you are depressed, then you are responsible for it to the extent that you have spontaneously chosen not to conquer your depression. If you lose your temper, then you are responsible because you have spontaneously chosen to no longer control your emotions. The realization that my responsibility is total leads, of course, to anxiety—because of the enormous burden—but it leads also to a sense of power and control, since in his freedom man becomes a genuine creator.

Prior to any interpretation, anxiety, like all moods, manifests itself to us as an integral part of the world. It is only a subsequent act of our own subjective reconstruction, structuring, or constitution of the world that decides to place the anxiety that suffuses the world before us *in me* and locate the colors, shapes, and sounds of the world *outside of me*. In addition, we must recognize that anxiety does not manifest itself as an ancillary phenomenon, but is, quite on the contrary, exceptionally pervasive—just as darkness is ubiquitous at night. It follows that the experience of anxiety is not merely an undesirable pain but is, quite on the contrary, a fundamental clue to the authentic structure of the human condition.

What does anxiety disclose? If we do not fight or repress anxiety but allow it to develop its message to us, we discover the following.

A. If we are honest with ourselves we uncover the truth that we place certain irrevocable demands on life (total satisfaction or happiness, for example) and that conversely life places

irrefragable demands on us (that we meet the demands of our conscience and our roles). A woman who in her own eyes fails in her role as mother feels that she herself has robbed life of meaning. Again, a man whose life-long profession offers him no satisfaction is overpowered with the knowledge that life has failed to give him meaning. These truths are experienced as anxiety. Anxiety is therefore a clue that we in fact experience life as empty, bored, pointless, meaningless, although we may at the same time be terrified to admit it.

B. Anxiety shows that we are in the presence of our supreme dread, anguish, *Angst*. Its name is "nothing," and its essence is the extinction of all value and of all being. Death is a common symbol for that nothingness. However, if we follow rather than fight anxiety to wherever it will lead us, we make additional and extraordinary discoveries. We realize that our supreme anxiety and our supreme values coincide. We are anxious about losing the things that matter most. We discover, for example, that the highest and perhaps only meaning that life has to offer is found, as was suggested earlier, in the concrete and clear experience of one's existence. We experience the succulent richness of our existence in pleasure, in courage, and in nobility, in achievement, in sacrifice, and in responsibility. When all is lost, we can still experience the reality of our existence by simply saying "No!" Anxiety is the threatened loss of that existence. But if we now continue the introspective analysis of anxiety we discover that the coincidence of our highest aspirations and deepest fears is even greater than we thought. For, what happens when we reach the nadir of despair? Does being cease? Not at all!

C. It seems that we choose our lowest despair as our highest goal precisely because that is the one way we can savor and see the fullness of our existence. If we permit anxiety to go even further than we have discussed up to this point, we discover that ultimate anxiety discloses the

indestructible presence of consciousness. When, in the abyss of despair, the soul's dark night of nothingness finally arrives, we are still very much conscious, awareness is still around us everywhere. The adumbration suddenly comes to us—like a divine afflatus—that even total despair annihilates neither our consciousness nor our ego. In fact, "nothingness" is a term bereft of all meaning except as an objectivity confronting an *ego*. It is impossible for the mind of man to even imagine what could be meant by the elimination of its existence. This insight that there can be no such thing as nothing, that I am a consciousness that cannot even imagine the non-being of that very same consciousness, is the rock-bottom foundation for all ultimate security. It is a direct, experienced return to the very ground of the being that I am. Anxiety is thus the threshold that leads to the understanding that the consciousness and the ego that I am (which is not the same as my body or my person) cannot be thought of as not existing.

Democracy. Existentialism provides a modern philosophic foundation and justification for the democratic way of life. The cornerstone of democracy is the dignity and even sanctity of the individual. Why should a student accept democracy? (In fact, studies show many do not.) If he does, his reasons may be as follows: He has learned, by imitation, to use the right—that is, the accepted—words to describe our society, and the word "democracy" is one of them. But does he know that the democratic way of life is not just voting but is, above all, a profound respect for the humanity in each of us? When I see the behavior of some of our teenagers, especially at the wheel of a car, I doubt whether they know that. The student may also have vague notions about the religious conceptions of a soul and of its relation to God; perhaps he knows something about the theory of natural law, on which Jefferson based his views of democracy. Perhaps he is even familiar with Locke's *Treatise on Civil Government*, Mill's essay *On Liberty*, and Rousseau's *Social Contract*. In all these cases the

justification for the dignity of man is either oblique or based on complex metaphysics that are difficult to understand and have been, and can be, severely criticized.

A much simpler justification for democracy and the dignity of man stems from the existentialist analysis of inwardness. We may call it the principle of *reverence for subjectivity*. A careful scientific description of the world leads existentialism to the conclusion that man's innermost subjectivity is the foundation for the structure of the world and the existence of those absolute values which guide the process of world-constitution. Man is indeed an Atlas who carries the world; man's vision literally illuminates the world to make it what it is. How can he who understands that show disrespect for any human being? To understand the meaning of subjectivity is to automatically revere it. "Virtue is knowledge," said Socrates.

Religion. Existential philosophy has reconciled the insights of mankind's religious consciousness with the most advanced views in the philosophy of science and with the entire tradition of philosophic skepticism characteristic of the last three hundred years. It has become possible to teach the meaning of religion without violating the commitments of conscience of any man—theist, deist, atheist, or agnostic; Catholic, Protestant, Jew, or Buddhist. The religious meanings of God, soul, immortality, sin, guilt, salvation, etc. have been given an existential reinterpretation. These concepts are all crucial aspects of the describable preconceptual experience of every man. Differences among religions and with atheism are but cultural and symbolic variants on one and the same theme. In fact, modern theology is based on precisely this principle. And existentialism attempts to give us the literal meaning of that theme.

Free Will and Responsibility. According to the position here developed, every individual must take total responsibility for his life's situation because, in most cases, he could have acted or

chosen otherwise. Such an attitude does not lead to an overburden of guilt but to a sense of power, control, and direction over the quality of one's life. A student must be reminded that "man is a being who has no excuses." But it must be made clear to him that total freedom is a sacred fact of life and not a moralistic reproach. Furthermore, the teacher who instills this knowledge of responsibility in the student is human too and must as a consequence likewise assume total responsibility for his success with the student. The situation is no different with administrators and parents. Each must assume total responsibility for the situation. When a child has a problem, then, on the existentialist analysis, he is fully responsible both for its existence and its solution. But similar full responsibility rests on the child's teacher, the teacher's principal, the district administrators, and the child's parents. Each one is *fully* responsible since it is a scientific fact of human existence as introspectively observed that each one can influence the situation to an extraordinary degree. Not only is each individual responsible for the solution of that child's problem, but he is likewise responsible to make clear to others their full responsibility. Thus, the principal is totally responsible for the welfare of the child, but his responsibility extends also to teach the child that he is fully responsible for his life and also to make clear to the teacher that he is likewise fully responsible for the child. The statement "I am responsible for you" implies the statement "I am responsible for teaching you that you are responsible for yourself." This ostensibly paradoxical approach of relegating responsibility without any personal exoneration is called the sense of subjective responsibility. Responsibility has the same magical properties of knowledge and of wisdom. You do not reduce your share of it by giving all of it away to the world. In fact, you increase it.

Paideia (the creation of man from the child). Teachers and administrators—for optimum effectiveness and because of their position at the fulcrum of society—must not only be competent

professionals but, even more importantly, authentic human beings. An engineer can program a computer effectively with skill alone. He needs no humanity for it. A teacher, on the other hand, cannot create a human being with skill alone. He needs the potential for *encounter* with his students (and their parents) as an authentic human being. The educator therefore must be himself thoroughly grounded in the science of man. Existentialism, as philosophical anthropology, tries to synthesize, reinterpret, reassess, and revitalize the history of ideas, which is the study of man's actuality and of his potential. The educator must teach the philosophy of man to his students not as a separate subject but as the permanent horizon against which all education takes place. The goals of education depend on our theory of man. Today's goals are often based on unclear theology, outdated political philosophy, uncritical common sense, and the youngest of our sciences, psychology. We must continue to develop a thoroughly scientific and yet belletristic theory of man. Existentialism purports to do precisely that.

Values. An educator must make clear, to himself as well as to his students, that every one has the responsibility to choose a commitment to values. To live is to have such a commitment. We have made a choice of values, whether we like it or not, even if that choice has been the repression of the issues involved. Every youngster in your classes is a god with respect to his values. He *chooses* whether to accept his religion, his parental admonitions, and his culture. He *chooses* whether to rebel and strike out on his own or whether to accept what his environment offers him. He *chooses* whether to concern himself with values or to ignore the problem. And in choosing the values he chooses the consequences of his choices. Whether he likes it or not, he is fully responsible for his relation to values, but at the same time his decision is final and is true by virtue of the fact that he has made it. It is the educator's responsibility to instruct the student of the gravity of this situation, its

inevitability, and the extraordinary power and dignity associated with it. That is the existential method of teaching maturity.

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REVIEW

JUNG'S THOUGHT IN 1935

IN the fall of 1935, C. G. Jung gave five lectures on analytical psychology at the Tavistock Clinic in London. The audience was mainly medical men, and after each lecture there was lively discussion. Except for a mimeographed version, and some extracts printed in French, no printing of these lectures has been available until the book just published by Pantheon, *Analytical Psychology, its Theory and Practice* (\$6.95). In his Foreword, Dr. E. A. Bennett says:

As an introduction to the principles upon which Jung's work rested these lectures are excellent. They are systematic, yet presented informally; and the record of his spoken word conveys a lasting impression of his personality.

No literate person needs to be informed of the enormous influence of Dr. Jung on the practice of psychotherapy and upon modern thought generally. Many people have read at least one or two of his books, and there are those to whom his writings have a semi-religious appeal. One quality that makes Jung's work attractive is that they are interesting reading, and not forbiddingly technical. Then, in an age of increasing mechanization and dehumanization, Jung dared to develop themes of human wholeness, of balanced and healthy individuality, and by his use of mythic material and ancient symbolism he restored a sense of continuity for modern man with the high civilizations of the distant past. Born in 1875, he lived through the most troubled and agonizing years of the modern epoch (he died in 1961, at eighty-six), yet one must say of him that throughout all this he remained a healthy-minded man. Reading Jung does not depress the reader. He is not, as he admits and affirms, a philosopher, but he deals with freshness and sagacity with materials that engage philosophers. While he has enormous learning, he speaks of his researches into history and mythology only when he has taken some old idea and put it to work in either the theory or the practice of psychotherapy. A

plain, refractory common sense emerges everywhere in his writing. He has a spontaneous moral sense, but he cannot be called moralistic. He followed his hungering mind wherever it led, and if he was reticent, now and then, about what he came to think, this was probably because he wanted to hold his professional audience.

Jung based his ideas on experience, following his own bent. He made no bones about the fact that analytical psychology was an expression of his bent:

I know what Freud says agrees with many people, and I assume that these people have exactly the kind of psychology that he describes. Adler, who has entirely different views also has a large following, and I am entirely convinced that many people have an Adlerian psychology. I too have a following—not so large as Freud's—and it consists presumably of people who have my psychology. I consider my psychology to be my subjective confession.... As a boy I lived in the country and took things very naturally, and the natural and unnatural things of which Freud speaks were not interesting to me. To talk of an incest complex just bores me to tears. But I know exactly how I could make myself neurotic: if I said something or believed something that is not myself. . . .

To Freud the unconscious is chiefly a receptacle for things repressed. He looks at it from the corner of the nursery. To me it is a vast historical storehouse. I acknowledge that I have a nursery too, but it is small in comparison with the vast spaces of history which were more interesting to me from childhood than the nursery.

Manifestly, there is a freewheeling liberality of mind in this man. You will get no dogmas from him, no rigid categories. Yet there are themes of explanation of human behavior in Jungian analysis and, in this book, even diagrams to help the reader visualize what is meant. One core idea of analytical psychology is that of the collective unconscious. Jung tells how he was driven to assume its reality:

The idea of the collective unconscious is really very simple. If it were not so, then one could speak of a miracle, and I am not a miracle-monger at all. I simply go by experience. If I could tell you the

experiences you would draw the same conclusions about these archaic motifs. By chance I stumbled somehow into mythology and have read more books perhaps than you. I have not always been a student of mythology. One day, when I was still at the clinic, I saw a patient with schizophrenia who had a peculiar vision, and he told me about it. He wanted me to see it and, being very dull, I could not see it. I thought, "This man is crazy and I am normal and his vision should not bother me." But it did. I asked myself: What does it mean? I was not satisfied that it was just crazy, and later I came upon a book by a German scholar, Dieterich, who had published a part of a magic papyrus. I studied it with great interest, and on page 7 I found the vision of my lunatic "word for word." That gave me a shock. I said, "How on earth is it possible that this fellow came into possession of that vision?" It was not just one image, but a series of images and a literal repetition of them....

This astonishing parallelism set me going.... if you had read the same books and observed such cases you would have discovered the idea of the collective unconscious.

The deepest we can reach in the exploration of the unconscious mind is the layer where man is no longer a distinct individual, but where his mind widens out and merges into the mind of mankind—not the conscious mind, but the unconscious mind of mankind, where we are all the same.

So, for all of Jung's deliberate rejection of "metaphysics," his adherence to the idea of "psychological truth," and his almost lighthearted avoidance of the language of deep commitment, certain symmetries of ultimate union, of inward connection at the root of things, give his thought the glow of an earthy mysticism. Jung is continually playful, perhaps lest he be thought pompous, and he justifies his daring by unprejudiced recognition of "facts." "This is what I see in the mirror of my mind," he seems to be saying. "My perspective is unprejudiced, or as unprejudiced as I can make it, and if you look carefully, and search as thoroughly as I have searched, you may see the same things."

Thirty or even twenty years ago, it was still possible to read Jung and to feel that here was a man who might be leading us back to the basic realities of human existence. In those days, the

stabilities of thought had not been so shaken and undermined as they are today. One saw the force of his questions, delighted in the free, fresh independence of his wonderings, and welcomed the purifying simplicity of his humanistic common sense. But now the very ground on which he stood is coming under suspicion. His ultimate "givers," the all-powerful archetypes of the collective unconscious, which from time to time sweep into history, engulfing mankind and making a mockery of human intentions: can we any longer regard them dispassionately—from the sidelines, so to speak, as he regarded them? In his final lecture, he said:

The archetypes are the great decisive forces, they bring about the real events, and not our personal reasoning and practical intellect. Before the Great War all intelligent people said: "We shall not have any more war, we are far too reasonable to let it happen, and our commerce and finance are so interlaced internationally that war is absolutely out of the question." And then we produced the most gorgeous war ever seen. And now they begin to talk that foolish kind of talk about reason and peace plans and such things, they blindfold themselves by clinging to a childish optimism—and now look at reality! Sure enough, the archetypal images decide the fate of man. Man's unconscious psychology decides, and not what we think and talk in the brain-chamber up in the attic.

Who would have thought in 1900 that it would be possible thirty years later for such things to happen in Germany as are happening today? Would you have believed that a whole nation of highly intelligent and cultivated people could be seized by the fascinating power of an archetype? I saw it coming, and I can understand it because I know the power of the collective unconscious.

Jung's Olympian detachment from the demonic forces of history now jars our nerves. "Gorgeous" hardly seems the right word, in these days, to apply to war. Jung seems too much the Voltairean observer, making rhetoric of his abstraction. It isn't that we want him to forget psychotherapy and become politically engaged, but only, if he can, to strike more sympathetic chords in consciousness, or to show that he is longing for them. Jung seems to accept

archetypal determinism too passively, simply because it exists and operates in history. For example, because many Catholics, when they have psychological trouble, prefer a priest to a doctor, he concludes that their church, "with its rigorous system of confession and its director of conscience, is a therapeutic institution." He adds:

I have had some patients who now go to the so-called Oxford Group Movement—with my blessing! I think it is perfectly correct to make use of these psychotherapeutic institutions which history has to give us, and I wish I were still a medieval man who could join such a creed. Unfortunately it needs a somewhat medieval psychology to do it, and I am not sufficiently medieval. But you see from this that I take the archetypal images and a suitable form for their projection seriously, because the collective unconscious is really a serious factor in the human psyche.

Well, this seems permissive beyond the call of duty. Something is seriously missing here, in the way of critical analysis of the long-term psychological influence of institutions. And the idea of the obsessive power of archetypes might have examination in terms of the two realms of the will as developed by Leslie Farber in his recent book on the subject. We may not be quite as helpless in the presence of these forces as Jung seems to suggest.

COMMENTARY

ACCESS TO LAND

ANOTHER look at the problem of land distribution in the American South (see *Frontiers*) is provided by papers presented last September at a conference on Rural Development at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara. The *Fortune* article reviewed in *Frontiers* is a necessary and important account of how the black people of the South are being squeezed off the land. The contributions of Slater King, of Albany, Georgia, and of Robert Swann and Erick Hansch of the International Independence Institute, represent carefully thought-out plans for new access to the land, with security on it for the many thousands of families who would prefer this life to a hungry, jobless existence in the already over-crowded cities.

The foundation idea is of an independently financed agency, called a Land Trust, which would—

- (1) Get options on land in large tracts and buy the land.
- (2) Encourage the organization of land settlement groups or associations but depend upon existing field organizations for this purpose. Some of these groups or associations would primarily be interested in farming, others might be more interested in housing and industry.
- (3) Help plan the land use for these associations as a service to them.
- (4) Lease the land to such associations on a long-term (lifetime) and renewable lease, as is done by the Jewish National Fund.
- (5) When needed advise these associations on management problems.

The proposal, in short, meets the spontaneous development of Southern co-ops, already in existence, and envisions far wider development of these tendencies as a means of regenerating rural life in the South. Already, the Independence Institute has financed a loan (\$25,000) to the Southwest Alabama Farmers Cooperative Association, enabling the members of this group

to launch its now well-known program of intensive cultivation of garden crops (see *Nation*, Sept. 21, "Black Cooperatives"). Because of the success of the long-term leaseholds in Israel, under which land is managed for the benefit of all the inhabitants, representatives of several organizations working in the American South visited Israel to study this land policy. Much of the practical side of the planning of the land trust idea is based on the methods followed in Israel. For information on the plans of the Institute, including its sponsorship of a nonprofit corporation, New Communities, Inc., which has particular land purchases already in view, write to International Independence Institute, Inc., Voluntown, Conn. 06834.

CHILDREN

... and Ourselves

UNFAMILIAR ART IN A FAMILIAR WORLD

[This is Part Two of another of Robert Jay Wolff's lectures on art and designer education. It first appeared in the *Magazine of Art* for December, 1946.]

II

THERE is nothing new in the fact that mankind, in periods of stress, is turned in upon itself in the absence of external securities. We each sense in the painting of Salvador Dali the fear and distress of our own isolation. To those of us who will admit it, Dali has utilized as subject matter an authentic segment of contemporary reality. And yet this painting is of small contemporary significance. For Dali has taken the instrument that produces poetry and offered it to us in an ancient and stereotyped disguise as the substance of poetry. We are asked to willingly lock ourselves in the house of our own unresolved distress and then throw away the key because the house is called art. This goes further than escape. It is resignation to self-pity and sublimation of self-concern.

It is important to understand how Dali and the practitioners of pictorial subjectivity have departed from the spirit of the revolution of the dada expressionist innovators and the earlier cubism of Braque, Gris and Picasso. For the work of Dali is the popular symbol of unfamiliar art and has done much to distort its meaning.

The dada movement was the deliberate negation of the European culture that culminated in the first World War. It was not meant to be art; it was meant to negate art. And, as in the case of Courbet and the modern photograph, its status as an art form is secondary. It accomplished this: it brought the approach to art into conformity with the dislocation and isolation of the individual. Picasso, Braque, Leger, Klee, Kandinsky and a whole succession of modern painters chose to see

this period in history as a moment of liberation. Dali has academicized the psychosis of the revolt as an end in itself.

The rubbish picture illustrated here will not hang together for many more years. But the work of the generations to follow will bear witness to its importance. It is made up of odds and ends of everyday life so familiar that at first glance they are rendered absurd in the presence of art. Yet, in the end, the vague and half-seen familiarity of the rubbish heap becomes inescapable recognition of new and strange realities. In the case of dada, the last laugh was on "art."

With the exception of Dali and those he influenced, the intense subjective individualism of our time has been the conscience of a generation which, in the face of artificiality and sham, has been forced to seek reality and build from there a new art.

In the painting by Juan Gris are the same discarded, commonplace objects to which the dada painters turned. Cubism, however, established a painter's approach to the problem. This painting sets out to destroy stereotyped appearances by simultaneously revealing different aspects of the same object, by penetrating the substance of each form, and by altering contours and flattening the expected roundness of solid things. This would be enough to jolt the onlooker into a reconsideration, at least, of old acceptances. But this painting goes farther, in that its negation of accepted values is subordinated to the necessity to express new findings and re-establish order. The protest is accompanied by an affirmation of art.

Cubism was the most intensive object-analysis ever attempted by painters. But this analysis, in the process of breaking up the object, relieved us of our fixation on it and provided painting with the freedom to move on in terms of free and multiple relationships. Thus, space was to become a new medium of expression. The slow tradition of art was finally catching up with the new world.

The world of mechanization is our world. Someday it will be a more equitable world. If, for the present, we can see it not always as the uncertain means to life's securities, but as life itself, then the art of our times may begin to reveal itself. How does this environment differ from the world of the past?

For one thing, artificial light has given us an illuminated night, throwing back the object world into deep blackness and illuminating the air we breathe. Sculptured forms become spatial and abstract.

Transparent construction and fabrication have permitted the penetration of the hitherto opaque object. Vast and visible embodiments of space have infused the faculties of the common man with what was once the secret experience of the mystic and the metaphysician.

Automotion has given us a mobile world. Objects moving through space, passing each other endlessly in all directions through crowded thoroughfares and underpasses, over elevated highways and multi-leveled bridges—the airplane, the automobile, the motion picture—all this has altered in a way unknown to men before us, our relationship to the object world, space and time.

Here is the inescapable configuration of our environment. The kinetic factor has become the very essence of common reality. We cannot "arrange" or "interpret" this reality in the static terms of other and quieter times.

What then is demanded of contemporary visual expression? It is evident that we cannot extract fixed images from this environment without destroying kinetic continuity, nor without creating artificial dimensional limitations. In short, we cannot identify a world in flux by immobilizing, isolating and sublimating single elements, and then arranging them in a certain order. The order which we seek cannot be a mere refuge from disorder. Rather it must be the power to maintain empirical equilibrium within the realm of the unresolved.

Within us all a great potential for multiple perception has been developing. We are entering areas of visually unexplored reality, where seeing is not confined to fixed islands of substance, but simultaneously encompasses everything, mobile and static alike, within the peripheral limits of vision.

The so-called common man, the average, artless city dweller, is likely to be visually in advance of the artist or designer who enters the ivory tower of immobilized and unrelated perfection; for this artist, unlike the layman, finds it necessary to turn his back on the common environment because it cannot be compressed into a static art form.

There is no one symbol which fulfills the contemporary experience. In painting and sculpture, in architecture and town planning, in the theater, the motion picture, and television, in graphic publications, we will look for symbols of relationships, for the coordination of simultaneous events grasped in a single projection. We will seek order and meaning in a totality of many ingredients, each of which yesterday stood alone in self-sufficient and incomparable isolation.

Creative forces, coming alive at last in this confused and tragic period, will renounce old escapes to challenge the chaos, and withal, the wonder of things endlessly moving and disappearing, reappearing and disintegrating, and again arising.

Today, certitude is no longer the destination—it is the journey itself.

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FRONTIERS Forced Off the Land

WHAT may be the best brief account, published anywhere, of the recent changes in the agricultural and rural South, and the effect of these changes on the rest of the country, appeared in *Fortune* for last August. The writer, Roger Beardwood, begins with the fact of "sweeping mechanization of farming in the South" since World War II. The migration of out-of-work southern Negroes to northern cities—and more lately to southern cities also—is no longer the pursuit of the dream of a better life away from rural racism, but the result of sheer desperation. More than a million Negroes have gone north in the past ten years, and another hundred thousand will have migrated by the end of 1968. Mr. Beardwood says:

Most of the migrants know what awaits them in the urban North is little better than a rattlesnake's hole. Most of them arrive virtually penniless. Many are illiterate. Few have trades or skills that command more than the minimum wage. Some are doomed to search in vain for work.

Still they continue to migrate; indeed, they have little choice. For if good jobs are hard to find in Chicago, Detroit, and New York, there is no work at all back home.

Mechanized agriculture, encouraged and financially aided by the Department of Agriculture, has helped the large farmers to grow and raised the productivity of their land, at the same time reducing labor requirements. This has been economically beneficial to the farmers, but the sharecroppers and hired hands find less to do each year, and poor wages for what work there is, because of the excess of available labor. As a result, many southern Negroes are chronically hungry. Behind the migration to the cities are such facts as the following:

Between 1950 and 1960, 493,000 Negroes and 1,024,000 whites lost their jobs in southern agriculture. In the coming seven years, at least another quarter of a million people, white and black, will be thrown out of work. This collision with agricultural economics has been disastrous for all

farm workers. But it has been catastrophic for Negroes; they are confronted by almost unsurmountable barriers of race as well as poverty in the South. Segregated schools have left them less educated than whites, and most jobs are still closed to them because of their color. Thus the Negro's transition from farm to factory, from hoe to lathe, from tractor to office, lies over an obstacle course laid out by a society in which he has no voice.

For the dwindling number of Negroes who remain on the land, the problem is how to make a living wage. The U.S. Agriculture Department estimates that in 1964, the latest year for which figures are available, the average Negro farm worker in sixteen southern states worked seventy-seven days a year and earned \$353. He also spent twenty-four days doing nonfarming jobs—domestic, gardening, and laboring work, for example—and earned an additional \$150, bridging his total annual income to \$503. That official estimate conceals some wide variations. In 1964, wages on farms in the South ranged from a low of 65 cents an hour in South Carolina to a high of 99 cents in Florida. Moreover, some farm workers are earning less than 65 cents an hour, even in 1968.

The *Fortune* writer swings back and forth between generally informing statistics and illustrative situations on particular farms. Employers vary in quality; one man charged Negro workers on his farm \$70 a month rent for shacks worth no more than \$5. Another big farmer wanted no rent at all for decent housing. But the fact remains that the progressive farmers need less and less manual labor, and that government aid, whether in consultation service on farming methods or as subsidy for not planting surpluses, helps the large farmers almost exclusively. The ugly bias of prejudice works against the Negro in every practical situation, making services that are supposed to assist him exist only on paper. Mr. Beardwood illustrates this frustration of the intent of federal law over and over again. Actually, this article, titled "The Southern Roots of Urban Crisis," ought to be made into a pamphlet and given a wide circulation throughout the country. It goes a long way in making plain the deep and continuing causes of Negro desperation: "Bigotry, misguided policy,

and technology all have a hand in the tragic upheaval."

Fortunately, there is another side to this story. While the black co-op movement, Mr. Beardwood says, "is young, underfinanced, and short of experienced management," it is beginning to grow and here and there gathering strength. MANAS has already reported the achievements of the Poor Peoples Corporation in helping with the organization and financing of producer co-ops in Mississippi, with retail Liberty Outlets in several big cities in the North, and a distribution center in Jackson, Miss. Mr. Beardwood tells of several other groups, including farming co-ops, helped into existence by the Ford Foundation. The spirit of the Movement flowed into some of these enterprises:

Another new co-op, with far-reaching hopes, can be found just outside Crawfordville, Georgia, in a schoolhouse made of rough-hewn wood. The school was built by the Negro community in the 1930's when the county refused to provide a school. Today, that humble monument to Negro self-help is the home of Crawfordville Enterprises, a cooperative that employs ninety-six black seamstresses and six men and has a payroll of some \$350,000 a year.

The co-op was set up without help from local whites, and whites get little financial benefit from its growing payroll. Many Negroes in the area have been boycotting white-owned stores since 1965, when the school board refused to desegregate its schools.

If you wanted to be optimistic, you could say that a new pattern of self-help is emerging in the South, but these developments are only a very small beginning. And even with the present rate of migration from the South, Mr. Beardwood predicts that by 1975 there will be some twelve per cent more Negroes in the South than there were in 1960. The problem, as he sees it, is to make the South an attractive and habitable land, so that people who want to farm will be able to stay there. Many of them would if they could.