The new in art is becoming so new and coming so fast that it is hard even to report it, and harder to stop and appreciate or criticize it. Looking for a basis for assessment, one may wonder which of the traditional philosophies of art is most helpful or whether a fresh one is needed now. There is a parallel between novelty in art and the accelerating changes in society, owing largely to developments in science and technology. John Dewey comes to mind as foremost in advocating a reconstruction of outlook to overcome the split in our society between the advance of science, altering all practical activity, and the lag of culture, including attitudes toward art. His *Art as Experience* (1934) called for restoring the continuity between art and life. Heeding this call, or feeling it without needing to hear it, goes far to explain what is happening in the arts today and the quickening response to them.

Relating art to life might suggest that, as things in general become mechanized and routinized, art should too. But Dewey counted on science to help men live more freely and humanly, once the dislocations and aberrations of the industrial revolution were understood and corrected by the acumen which science uses and sharpens. He also saw science and art teaming up in the use of imagination and critical intelligence to recover the zest of living which, with luck and health, is natural for man as for any “live creature in the environment.” Though neither artist nor scientist may think of “doing good” while doing his work, this does not reduce what he does for the common good. As the difference between art and the uses of science dwindles, so does that between fine art and other arts or ways of making. Dams, hydroelectric plants, automobiles and airplanes, launching pads and space machines all take imagination and catch it aesthetically. The satisfaction in imaginatively making needed things flows over into making things for fun, to see what can be made and what will come of it, by chance as well as by design, not only in the drips and blots of glazing and painting but in the surprises of welding and wiring, and working in the opening domain of sound. Welcoming what enters unforeseen into work, to merge with what is controlled, makes a further bond between the artist and the scientist who, with all his calculation, must at
least provisionally accept the indeterminate. Peirce is confirmed in recognizing both chance and necessity in the universe. But, if he was right about a general movement from less order toward more, the artist enjoys both a more and a less predictable kind of organization.

Dewey was ahead of his time in relating art and science with life. Still, what he was able to say thirty years ago can be supplemented, as by Victorino Tejera in *Art and Human Intelligence* (1965). He takes up post-Dewey contributions to aesthetics, to show how they support him or come short of his insight that creativity in art is that of being human. Dewey’s objection to the reductive fallacy in psychoanalysis holds good, that a work of art is not explained aesthetically by factors “that may—or may not—have played a part in the causative generation” of it. Tejera observes: “In making the point that art excites before it is ‘understood,’ psychoanalysis is, after all, confirming the pragmatistic emphasis on the pre-reflective phase of any experiential situation . . .” And Merleau-Ponty is like Dewey in relating aesthetics to “the phases of life-situations.”

Eugene Kaelin had already associated Dewey with Merleau-Ponty in saying that, for existentialist and pragmatist alike, “what is being deplored is the separation of art experiences from the ordinary experiences which make up the lives of men.” Also: “It is significant that Merleau-Ponty, like Dewey, may be said to have begun his aesthetics with an account of ‘the live creature.’”

Not only philosophers but nearly everyone discussing art recently brings out the connection with life and the state of society. The connection is often seen to be a tension between art and the public, or between the creativity of art and much that passes for art. Thirty years ago Dewey asked: “Why is the architecture of our large cities so unworthy of a fine civilization? . . . not merely slums but the apartments of the well-to-do . . . are so destitute of imagination. Their character is determined by an economic system . . .”

Adorno sees the serious composer now, and the musician who would perform his work, in conflict with the “culture industry.” Even in jazz the popular demand prevents performers, who must earn a living, from doing what for them is the real thing. George Amberg feels obliged to say that “proportionately with the increase of the audience diminishes the value of its aesthetic appreciation.” And: “. . . the mass media threaten to create an imbalance between artistic supply and demand that can only be stabilized by increasing production at the expense of quality.”

Since there is justification for such pessimism, the effort to create today involves the urge to rebel, at the risk of imitating gestures that were fresh when dada and surrealism defied society in the 1920’s and 1930’s. The push to free the human spirit from inertia and reaction will be carried on by art worthy of the name, even if unworthy absurdities are repeated. Sartre spotted the contradiction between the surrender of the mind in the
“automatic” productions of the surrealists and their assertion of individual and social responsibility. But, if Sartre is right about their “flickering” between incompatible positions and counting on a magic of chance to produce unity, Roger Shattuck thinks: “‘Flickering’ is not at all a bad word to describe . . . registering a wide range of experience . . . in communication with other minds or forces.” It is appealing that, unlike their successors the existentialists, the surrealists were not anguished but delighted by the bizarre inconsistencies of life,” without ceasing to criticize society.

If it is time to move on, it would be good to recover their idealism and see that, under the fun and fooling, to be an artist is not to be a freak but a person.

To think the zest of making and enjoying art is only for a few is to fear that some of the best of life cannot be made available to everyone. So many things now are made readily available, ready to wear, ready to eat or heat, it may seem that art too should be mass-produced if not pre-appreciated. If everyone should be free to read the best books, at least these should be printed copiously and economically enough to be within easy reach. And people should be free to make up their own minds about books in doubt. But this requires the ability and the will, which cannot be taken for granted, to read with the mind’s eye open and not just feed on print. There is no escaping the need for more and better education. Painting and sculpture are brought to the public in permanent and traveling exhibitions. There are “artmobiles” as well as “bookmobiles.” But people must learn what it can mean to look. Reproductions have become cheap enough to have at home. Records and tapes of music have increased interest even in much that is far from popular. If it is important to compare reproductions of visual art with the originals, it is easier now for crowds to travel and see for themselves. If accessibility and familiarity develop immunity to the established things of beauty, and even prevent the effort to enjoy newer works, apparently night clubs and sports, if not circuses, will continue to entertain for nothing but money. But pastimes, to be more rewarding than boring for people who know the difference, require participation in the effort and skill that approach art or become indistinguishable from it. If Duchamp has been assiduous at chess he did not altogether give up art. And no matter how numerous the knowing and doing few become who really care about art, or how much they learn, there is always more to try. What is being done maintains a frontier.

It is easy to deride the idea that more than a minority will ever be discriminating, and to ridicule the effort to spread art education in schools and colleges. All education has faults enough to make an easy mark. But the proposal to educate everyone is so recent, and the problem of educating anyone so complicated, that the headway already made should be encouraging. What has been achieved in awakening interest and latent tal-
ent in children is amazing, in painting, music, and other arts where the attempt has been resourceful. Classes for adults have also been worth while. What if the number of geniuses is limited? Whitman said, “To have great art there must be great audiences.” But why care how much is great? There has been too much acceptance of the misguided spirit of commercialized sport, exaggerating competitiveness to the point where it seems a waste of time to play and not win, not be the best, the greatest. Especially in art this makes no sense, where individuality counts so much as to make grading irrelevant if not impossible. A city, instead of enjoying its orchestra for what it does, and wanting it to do its best, wants it rated above rivals. If conductors can be compared, their differences cannot. Umpires and scorekeepers are not necessary for a game. Art does not exist for the sake of critics, and certainly not when they would be judges. As the playing is the thing, so is the painting, the writing, the building, the making of any kind. That is enough for the maker, or for the appreciator who is with him. Who gets left may laugh, or try to catch on.

What to make of what is made leads to questions which may affect and even help what is being done. But criticism which counts must be so close to making as to be like the eye that does not guide the hand so much as follow what the hand does, it knows not how but feels. Since art for Dewey draws its force from close to the source of life, criticism is important less in finding fault, and still less in giving grades, than in perceiving the unique vitalizing qualities of a work and opening eyes to them. This requires knowing what artists have done before, while keeping up with what they are up to. Dewey realizes that the artist, though feeling his way or plunging on without stopping to think, also uses thinking as strenuous as that of the scientist. Thought for both is, to begin with and again to go on with, hunches and patches, but piecing them together and sighting ahead to calculate their drift is an intellectual process. If the work of the scientist is for the sake of what can be done with it, more than for appreciation of what it is in itself, the main use of science is for further science, whatever the uses along the way, however practical or earthshaking. So too, the work of the artist leads to more art, which turns out to be further work in progress, for him or for others. Art and science belong to the full career of the live creature when he becomes human enough to be creative, solving problems only to set up or get into more, which are the breath of life as long as he can cope with them.

Part of the interest in art is in the fresh experience it provides or brings to light. The other part is in the technical means employed. Human experience always has been and is increasingly inseparable from the means, the tools and devices used. These may at first be intended simply to improve previous methods, to facilitate the familiar ways of making the same things, doing the same chores, going about the old roads, fighting the old
battles. But inevitably, doing things differently leads to doing different things. New kinds of work and play and war keep changing the way people live and feel, and how they think. All this is reflected, abetted and accelerated in art. New art forms make use of antecedent and even rather new technologies. Marshall McLuhan sees that the industrial (mechanical) revolution put what had been “nature” into art, and that electric technology made its mechanical predecessor into the content and form of art for “futurists, cubists, Vorticists, and others.” Pop art uses “the old environment of advertising technology. . . . When the film was new, it used the novel and drama as content . . . in the documentary, it was in effect using the newspaper as content. Dickens anticipated the form of film when he was most documentary. . . . D. W. Griffiths . . . habitually carried a volume of Dickens with him on location.”

The fascination of the film for all kinds of people has been its power to present unlimited aspects of the world realistically. But sticking to reality, asking things and persons just to speak for themselves, as if that sufficed for art, often has resulted in the flat and lifeless. Yet departure from the expected naturalism is not easily accepted, as in the conventions of the theater. A Naples scene must seem to be in Naples and not in Paris. Not only settings and furnishings are enjoyed for their faithfulness to reality. Actors are admired for their own physical and personal charms rather than for ability to impersonate characters. As Professor Bianca has also pointed out, in television especially, the sense of immediacy and spontaneity, the seeming to be present at what is just occurring, even though it was filmed some time before, counts above all. For Bianca this answers to “a religious need to see and hear, in the world we live in, a resonance and extension of our own psychic states,” to reassure us that we are not alone in an indifferent universe.

Comic films amuse by getting away from reality, though not too far, as they frolic on well-worn tracks. Films in general, for all their realism, have accustomed the public to tricks of montage which scramble space and time, as in the novels of Proust and Joyce. Arnold Hauser said that the film “has made it possible to represent visually experiences that have previously been expressed only in musical forms.” When, however, he said that “the film is not finding its writers or . . . the writers are not finding their way to the film,” he did not know that Robbe-Grillet would write for Last Year at Marienbad, or Marguerite Duras for Hiroshima Mon Amour. Hauser did know that Eisenstein and other Russians had developed a method of “short cutting” which gave “speed and rhythm” to “the change of shots” and extended “the boundaries of the cinematically feasible.” Still, it struck Hauser that the “revolutionary quality of this montage technique” was less important than “the fact that it was no longer the phenomena of a homogeneous world of objects, but of quite heterogeneous elements of real-
ity, that were brought face to face.” Coming from Italy lately, the discontinuities, irrelevancies, strange double exposures of scenes as different as baths and launching pads, beds and cars, with a director filmed in search of his film and cast, in Federico Fellini’s 8½, are difficult for people not initiated in the discrepancies and non sequiturs of happenings in other arts. As movie tricks become familiar, people lose interest in them and want back the “well told story” or the fact and actuality of the “document,” though Hauser agrees with Bianca that this means “very often a renunciation of art altogether.” But the “art movie” does not have to avoid reality when it can fit fancy to fact. The imaginative need not be imaginary.

In painting, the relation to reality has become complicated. Alan Solomon, who organized the two American exhibitions at the Biennale XXXII, stresses the involvement of the viewer “directly in the artist’s struggle with his problem” in the “arena” of the canvas. Whether reference to “the real world” is avoided, or familiar objects are translated to a new reality, the chief interest is in the dynamic tension of the artist’s very real activity. There is the exciting way the late Morris Louis achieved his “veils” with “an effect of chromatic translucency . . . by tacking the unstretched canvas on a slanting frame and flooding thin washes . . . onto the surface at the top, directly from the can.” Staple holes show how, in a happy combination of skill and luck, he gathered and fastened folds in the canvas “to provide channels to control the flow of the paint. . . . Since the paintings never had a chance to dry as he worked, it is difficult to imagine how he kept the rows of color so close without having them fuse . . .” The tension in Jasper Johns is different. In his flag painting he forces a new look at the commonplace, and yet “he retains the animated, worked surface of abstract expressionism; like Rauschenberg, he uses it as a foil to introduce an element of ambiguity between the real and the painted. . . . His irony rests on the fact that his paintings remain rich and . . . limitless evocative, in spite of their violations of all our preconceptions.”

In Venice there was the open question of American pop art. Remote origin, history or poetry can do wonders with ordinary things. Household utensils dug up by archaeologists have the glory of Greece as well as their form to thank for being admired as art. The Pylos bathtub, celebrated by Homer, would be aesthetic even if not marble. But Homer honored things of use because they had the honor of being used, whether ship, shield, or tub. If things we use must go unsung, we are unwilling to be ourselves. Pop art faces us with what we make and live with, by daring to dispense with aesthetic distance and by providing it surprisingly, so that we have to stop and consider instead of just buying, using, or passing by. Things may be shiny-new as Jim Dine’s “Shovel” or battered as the bucket, rickety as the ladder, worn as the bed quilt in the “combines” of Rauschenberg
when he won the first prize in the Biennale XXXII in 1964. John Chamberlain exploited “the inherent formal qualities, the curvilinear energy, and the expressive roughness and tactility of scrap automobile parts.” Claes Oldenburg mimicked and magnified consumer articles. Pop artists force realization that cities and technology have become our “nature.” We must accept a bathroom rather than a sylvan dale as the scene of bathing. Suddenly we are made to see who we are when it startles us to look for art and see our plumbing fixtures, the elements of our billboards and comic strips, the appearance of our women now, the way beer is canned and labeled, and sandwiches decked. Here, in terms of today, are the elemental things of religion and original art. Here are food, drink, sex, and ablation now. Dewey expected art to clarify life. The artist is not to blame when his clarity is hard on us.

Dewey is more than confirmed in his conviction that almost anything can provide content and suggest form for art. He observed that railway coaches, “actually third class,” appealed to Daumier, “apples, napkins, and plates” to Cézanne. What counted was not these things but what was done with them. Cézanne was not “doing” his wife but a painting never meant to do her justice as a portrait when she sat for him. In the 1964 international art shows of the Biennale at Venice and the Documenta III at Kassel, there was much that did not take off from anything as long familiar as railway coaches, dishes or women, but from mad mechanisms or from experiments with shifting colored light. Still, Dewey was apropos in saying: “Art throws off the covers that hide the expressiveness of experienced things . . . and orders them in a new experience of life.”

Jean Dubuffet, in his painting and lithography at the Biennale, had series and suites of the components of earth, of ocean, of sand under water, the splash of sun and shade, the texture of skin, of dust, of vegetation. Returning to the human scene, he plunged into the crowd to make colored patterns of intricate streets, flat and twisted autos and people, gay as peppermint sticks. Instead of simply taking over, he made over. Even when he kept to what was under foot, in soil or pavement, there was his own making, as he transferred what he saw to what he did with a medium.

Dewey spoke for many a painter in saying: “Any product whose quality is not of the very ‘easy’ sort exhibits dislocations. . . . Ordinary prepossession must be broken through if the degree of energy required for an aesthetic experience is to be evoked.” Yet he did not take sufficient account of art that is very difficult to enjoy. He assumed that even unlovely art should be exhilarating. Roberto E. Matta had a triptych in Kassel, showing an anxious couple pushed aside by a technology out of control. Yet here was Dewey’s theme that, because “science has brought with it a radically novel conception of physical nature and of our relation to it . . . things of the physical world and those of the moral realm have fallen apart
The dire consequence of such disruption was evident in the canvases of Fritz Winter, painted in hiding from the Nazis—dark, complex—and in monstrous, lumpy human shapes in bronze by Otto Freundlich. "Frankfurter Frühling" by Otto-Herbert Hajek was done in "elements" of concrete and color like the wreck of a building. In Venice, Giovanni Paganini's bronze "Adamo" and "Madre" stood hacked and blasted beyond a trace of grace. Pierluca’s "Grande Lacerazione," in aluminum, was a gaping gash. Here was more than the "not easy" that Dewey allowed for, although he could have known Goya's "Massacre of the Citizens of Madrid," Edvard Munch’s "The Scream," and the work of Käthe Kollwitz.

Ivan Albright of Chicago does not show the catastrophic effects of science or war but only what happens anyway, in a manner devastating to a comfortable view: the aging of human flesh, the dust on all we have. Dubuffet expressed his own admiration for Albright's revelation of a "crumbling . . . world . . . in place of the one in which we had believed we lived . . . constituted of objects thrown into a terrifying isolation . . . unchained disorder." Yet Dubuffet felt that, if we can do without "the tranquillity obtained by means of blindness" and "opt for navigation in the great deeps," we will not want his work burned. Nor if we have some of Albright's sympathy for the way of flesh and the wear on things we live with. We may enjoy his mastery of paint itself, as we do the inventive control of the medium by other disquieting artists. When we become more seeing and more impatient with ugliness we also come to wonder whether anything is intrinsically ugly or beyond the wand of transformation, any more than in the fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast. But in the "literary" or social implications of art, inseparable from the technical side, whether intended or not, we cannot escape indictment of a society which has not done what it could to alleviate the human condition, fateful as it must remain.

Since most art education has been traditional, people who have been taught what art is cannot quickly discard invidious distinction between "fine art" and lesser art (or less than art), to admire or accept the departures appearing now as the work of artists. There are the changing hues and luminosities, on revolving forms, shining through glass. Findings of the laboratory, the clack and clank of shop and factory reveal their own possibilities of fascination. Multiple reflections of balls on strings, easy to jiggle, tiny white disks trembling on spring-like stems when breathed on, compete with arrangements to give only the illusion of motion. The artist cannot be satisfied to copy or repeat the work of the past. He must be impatient if not contemptuous toward people content with hand-me-down notions of subject matter and pleased with hackneyed techniques. It is surprising when he sells or suits the box office. He would agree with Dewey's saying: "What happens in the movement of art is emergence of new materials
of experience demanding expression, and therefore involving . . . new forms and techniques."18

Not to be ignored is the growing number of people, with no interest in "fine art," who have lived in touch with shops, factories, and garages, if not in them or in what Peirce called "the laboratory band," used to having tools in their hands, even power tools, and enthusiastic about what can be done with them, not just to get work done but for fun. They have a fellow feeling for the makers of newfangled contrivances under the heading of Licht und Bewegung in Documenta III or included in Arte d’Oggi in Biennale XXXII. Gillo Dorfles said of the Biennale that the artisan’s technical control largely accounted for the things on display. He asked whether Rauschenberg had ever been surpassed in using real objects to reveal an aesthetic-social atmosphere while successfully working them into painting. Dorfles admitted the crudity of Oldenburg’s and Chamberlain’s productions, but welcomed the "osmosis between the art of the élite and the art of the masses,” and concluded that “neither social nor technical problems can be ignored in this day and age.”19

Art obliges us to take a fresh look around us. A change comes over an object from a wrecked car lot merely in being exhibited, lighted, seen from a new angle, put on a pedestal: a ruined radiator or a broken axle. It is just a step from the junk object to junk sculpture, as from a found object to a constructed one. When what had been thought to be a work of art is “proved to be an accidental natural product,” Dewey said, it is reduced from art to “a natural ‘curiosity.’” For him, “making” or its absence made that much difference. This is difficult to accept when aesthetic interest is taken in driftwood, in shells and stones, partly or largely because they are not art objects but “just as good,” not to mention the spacious “beauties of nature.” A merely found object is impregnated with aesthetic value when its constitutive trail of events includes having been selected and kept as if made, while admired for not being man-made. To regard something as if it were art is at least on the way to making it art, since a real part of any art is seeing what is already given in the material. Ordinarily the material needs to be worked up into a medium, and the medium worked into something further, but the amount of work and reworking is always more or less. Why not say work is reduced to a minimum when all that has to be done is to delight in what is found? This question may be rhetorical, as shown in the book by Gyorgy Kepes illustrating “The New Landscape Exhibition” at M.I.T. in 1951, where scientists’ photographs not intended as art can be mistaken for artists’ paintings.20

There is no doubt about advance in science and technology. Whether it is possible to paint better than the cave artists of Lascaux or to write better than Isaiah or Tu Fu, if there is no room for improvement, there is room for difference. The development of reflective or critical ability,
when it becomes more analytical and mathematical, leads to programming a series of steps to follow automatically. Losing the liberty to introduce further moves of his own, the artist may seek to recover his freedom from the grip of number by relying entirely on chance and accident. But this is another way of tying his mind behind his back. Extremes of calculation and the aleatory both reduce the artist to a helpless spectator of work slipping out of his control. Effort to avoid effort becomes self-defeating for an artist, because he ceases to be one if he long foregoes the constant touch and adjustment of being alive to a live situation, like an alert sailor in rough weather, or anyone who has to keep his wits about him. Not to need vigilance, resource and sagacity, with imagination, is not to be really living as a human being, and certainly not as an artist, though luck will count. While an artist needs to use his head, he will agree with Dewey that “the unexpected turn, something which the artist himself does not definitely foresee, is a condition of the felicitous quality of a work of art . . .”21

There is a tantalizing question as to how skill and luck come together. Each seems to bring out the other. Strokes of genius come to a genius as star performance to a born athlete. The artist adroitly turns to advantage what turns up. He will shape his carving to the grain or knots in wood, the veins in marble. He will use the way the paint runs, the glaze drips. He will go along as well as take charge. When well mounted he will hold a loose rein, as a good rider will do when he can. As horse and rider become one, so do work and worker. In the rhythm of the organism the hand shows the head as much as the head tells the hand, or more. Victorino Tejera says: “The ‘rightness’ of works of art is based on their congruence with human sensory processes, not on systematic consistency like the theoretical products of intelligence.”22

This was confirmed by the composers and devotees of new music in the summer gatherings at Darmstadt. In 1952 they had their first presentation of electronic music. In 1957 music from India was demonstrated in its endless variation and improvisation, within the bounds of tradition. Also in 1957 Karlheinz Stockhausen’s “Klavierstück XI” showed that he had moved from his previous idea, that electronic tapes would replace performers, to the principle of inexhaustible variation and interpretation. In the same season Pierre Boulez gave his lecture on “Alea,” which he illustrated by playing his “Third Piano Sonata,” explaining the mistake of contriving a scheme to take over a piece completely.23

This mistake has to be watched in other arts where mathematical precision or programming is also tried. There is the “use of modules in architecture, the word-counts and ‘text-algebra’ applied to poetry . . . the whole notion of ‘permutational art’ . . . a new and would-be exact formalism.” There is also a spreading endeavor to fuse the permutational-pre-
cisionist method with the artist’s freedom to go on making decisions and taking advantage of accidents. Since we are acquiring new instruments, “we may as well learn how to play them as we already play the typewriter, the printing press, the symphony orchestra, the film studio and other pieces of apparatus.” One may write poetry with a computer, but to rely too much on its permutations may have a result as tedious and senseless as trusting to the “automatisms” of the subconscious. Work with words in purely verbal patterns becomes a highly conscious reduction of language to its own terms, with no reference to anything but words, much as Kandinsky freed painting from objects. The consequent obscurity in Max Bense and his Stuttgart group, and in similar groups of new writers in other countries, goes with an intellectual elegance which admittedly shuts out appalling things that words would evoke if allowed to stray off the page. These people have found a way of writing when there is nothing to say. Refraining from saying makes a close relation between their technical and their social motivation.

In music it is easier to avoid reference to events, though social protest may enter in more than might be supposed. But in composing music, as in writing poetry, there is the same question today of how much to rely upon the exact formalism of new permutational methods. The conclusion of Boulez comes to uniting the irrational with the rational, to keep surprise, which means to him that not only the composer but the performer must be free to make decisions. Still, Boulez wants to keep a feeling of necessity, whereas his friend and colleague John Cage wants to get away from any sense of necessity as much as possible. And Cage feels as free with tapes as with conventional instruments, delighting in the opening up of the whole field of sound by the new devices. Yet, eager as he is to let sounds be themselves, it is clear that he is busy organizing them in various ways instead of just letting them happen. Having studied with Schoenberg, and knowing what there is to know about music, Cage not only invites chance but is skillful with it. But artists, like other men, often seem afraid of freedom as soon as they attain it. Strangely, they clamp it down again with imposed order, even when they have learned that no conventions are binding or lasting. Cage appears to many as an enfant terrible because he seeks in his music (and in his writing) as much discontinuity as he can get in a composition. He does not mind form if it is loose enough. Boulez wants spontaneity if it is controlled enough. Between them they personify the bipolar tension in contemporary art.

In architecture, utilitarian and durable though it usually must be, accident and plan come together as in music. Differences of climate, difficulties of topography, what there is to build with, and what has to be housed enter in. The idea that architecture is “frozen music” has melted. Bernard Rudofsky has shown: “There is much to learn from architecture
before it became an expert’s art.” His illustrations in *Architecture Without Architects* make a modern Western reader wonder how his society could give up so much imagination.  

Now there is American appreciation of surprise in the city planning of Europe. Esther McCoy speaks of “the delight of turning a corner of an Italian street and coming unexpectedly upon a fountain, a courtyard or an exciting perspective.”  

The architect John M. Johansen is interested “in processes rather than finality; improvisation rather than predetermination.” He says: “Because it is difficult today to anticipate the future uses of a building, producing precious and exquisite designs is folly. The idea of growth should not only be a part of planning, but a part of aesthetics as well.” He is “willing to allow the half-designed building to assert its own young will. . . . Elements of a kind, or elements unlike, grow together, accumulate, build up by natural process . . . mechanical equipment, like vents, and exhaust housing tunnels” make their contribution openly to the visible structure, along with “boxes for rooms, tubes for corridors, towers for stairs.”

This is like letting everyday sounds into music, or ordinary objects into the “combines” of Rauschenberg. So modern dance, notably in the work of Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham, as Cage has said, will “introduce an audience, not to a specialized world of art, but to the open, unpredictably changing, world of everyday living.” Much the same can be said of the theater today, when it is of today, as of photography and the movies. Here is the spirit of Wordsworth, going from “poetic” diction down to the idiom of common life and speech; also the spirit of Whitman, Pound, and on to Robert Lowell and John Berryman. William Carlos Williams is belatedly appreciated for working out his way of voicing love for ordinary things and fellow beings, a river, a person, a sparrow, or buds on a branch. He joined Duchamp in presenting unmodified “objects,” though also learning to work in their worth. As Thom Gunn has seen, Williams “insisted on the American idiom” in the belief that writing “thoroughly local in origin has some chance of being universal in application.” In the foreword to the Fiftieth Anniversary issue of *Poetry*, the editor Henry Rago wrote: “Mr. Pound’s *Make It New* will not be eluded—what is good is what is new. There is no point otherwise in writing the poem. A poet does not write the poem he knows can be written; he writes what he will know only when he has written it. . . . The good poem is always a surprise.”

In John Berryman the new is so irreverent toward tradition, so high-wrought that the reader cannot sit back and be lulled or soothed, but is(jostled awake. He has to pay attention, watch for irony, use all he knows and feels, fears and doubts, as well as hopes. To freshen speech, clichés are rejected or used brutally, syntax is broken, English departments are spoofed. The crack of the vernacular is heard, the retort and repartee
of vaudeville, of night spots and garages, family circles. There is no filling or coasting. Anything is used, out of the paper or out of the past, to play with or depart from, unless it cannot be said better. Then it is allowed to stand and speak for itself, and for us. Dewey seems to have meant this when he said that art aims at “a full and intense experience,” and so “keeps alive the power to experience the common world in its fullness.”

The simple trajectory is out of favor in verbal work as in music. The rational linear form of before and after becomes multidimensional. Not only is a straightforward sequence of narration or ideation jumbled up. A sentence may not admit of being parsed. Even the familiar relationship of letters in a word may be disordered, as in Joyce’s punning and playing hob with English, though the fun must depend upon still knowing what is departed from. If Joyce’s Irish resentment against having to use the language of England was involved, this is further evidence of the close relation between social and artistic creation and criticism. But, without Joyce’s vast knowledge, intelligence, and patience, it is possible now to carry on in his wake with no serious or very personal effort of imagination. Irreverent antics, though almost automatic, elicit a response from readiness to rebel against a self-righteously superior culture which has mantled itself with an air of rationality.

More than other artists, writers are expected to react to the social situation, but with the help of the others in developing new techniques. Michel Butor, returning the compliment of Pierre Boulez, admits the influence not only of Pound, Joyce, and French literary explorers, but also of the new composers. Butor has collaborated with the Belgian composer Henri Pousseur in a treatment of the Faust theme, in which only some of the musical choices are used in any one performance. One way of introducing the unpredictable is now and then to draw someone at random from the audience on to the stage. In Butor’s novel _L’Emploi du Temps_, the map of a city is like a score which can be taken up at any point in any direction. Plunging in and wandering at will is invited in Butor’s _Mobile_, as in Joyce’s complex constructions. With the typographical experiments of Rabelais and Mallarmé in mind, Butor has used some of the new procedures in printing technology for overcoming the linear monotony of the page.

Cage and Boulez exemplify the freemasonry among the various arts today. Cage began with poetry and went on to architecture before studying with Schoenberg. Boulez, influenced by the novels of Joyce, Kafka, Butor, and the poetry of Mallarmé (who used musical models), wanted to compose in a way to escape “a simple trajectory, traced between a point of departure and a point of arrival,” which practically eliminates surprise. And Boulez likes Henry Miller’s saying that accident con-
tributes to a masterwork. Mistakes, backtracking and corrections help inspiration.37

As influential as James Joyce upon recent fiction is Franz Kafka. His K characters are not persons in particular but any reflective individuals who feel threatened by nearly everything in the impersonal modern world. Now that the self is felt to be in jeopardy, the highly individual expression of Mallarmé, Rilke, and Emily Dickinson is a defense and a comfort. So is the older “poetry of sensibility,” as Kenneth Rexroth calls it, in his versions from the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Greek.38 The impossibility of living apart makes tension between the self and others, a yearning to get away, and so for criticism of society along with the song of fellow feeling. The violent reaction of Poe, Baudelaire, and Rimbaud against their time and place drove their poetry away; but their estrangement has become only too common, in spite of the sense that, deep down, no self is separate.

The nouveau roman practically does without characters and the plots that went with them. Samuel Beckett & Co. represent what Wylie Sypher has called, in the title of his book, Loss of the Self in Modern Literature and Art. Sypher goes back to Gide’s principle of the discontinuity of the self, shared with Dostoevsky. Conrad is seen “able to dismantle the Western self” in The Heart of Darkness. Robert Musil’s hero without qualities, in Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften, was made to order for Sypher. If he is convincing, then it is desperate for Sartre and the literary existentialists to hold on to the self, disillusioned and precarious as it is for them, in a world of not-self and of other selves bent on reducing one’s own self to an object. Sypher recalls that Hamlet and Julien Sorel had doubts about the self, and finds the anti-novel’s denial of a continuous or solid self in Hardy’s Jude the Obscure; also in Sterne’s Tristram Shandy; further, in drama from Strindberg to Ionesco. Sypher concludes that Hiroshima and the concentration camps ruined the “Promethean image of man.”39

No one can say it has not been shaken. But in speaking of “the scuttling of literature” when “Verlaine wanted to take eloquence and wring its neck,” or when Lewis Carroll wrote “anti-poetry,” Sypher forgets the denial in his foreword that he is “attacking modern art.” He calls the “anti-painting” of the impressionists “the ruination of art,” and deplores “the subversion of art now in progress.” To take Dubuffet’s word that his painting is “anti-painting” and repeat his shouting “Down with galleries! Down with museums! Down with art critics and dealers!” as if this announced the end of painting instead of trumpeting a summons to make it new, is to miss the message. Sypher proceeds to equate Dubuffet’s readiness to paint anything, and his having no “compulsion to choose,” with Zen capacity to “feel a unity between the self and things,” and then asserts that
in both Dubuffet and Zen the refusal to be choosy is a "brutal" sacrifice of the self. Only by identifying loss of self with loss of the self-centered Romantic conception of self could the rest of Zen and the exhilaration of Dubuffet be thought to sacrifice anything. Sypher himself corrects this in saying that when Dubuffet "has absorbed the painter in his painting" he is "losing nothing." All that is lost is separateness, which is an illusion. John Cage clarifies the point in writing: "It is not a question of going in to oneself or out to the world. It is rather a condition of fluency that's in and out." And: "... one must see that humanity and nature, not separate, are in this world together, that nothing was lost when everything was given away." Zen does not abandon the self or anything to an absolute, but sees things as they are, in themselves as well as in relations and in the whole. Cage heard Suzuki say: "... in all space each thing and each human being is at the center and furthermore ... each one being at the center is the most honored of all. Interpenetration means that each one of these most honored ones of all is moving out in all directions." So with Dubuffet. So with Cage. Neither Cage nor dancer Merce Cunningham, nor painter Robert Rauschenberg, nor pianist David Tudor lost a thing, let alone a self, when they evolved together a combination of movement, sight and sound that won acclaim across the Atlantic and the Pacific as well as in New York. Applause and renown are not necessary to a self, even for an artist. It can be enough for him to have his work and "give himself" to it, when it enables him to make his own decisions and his own difference. For others, interest in his life may displace interest in his œuvre, with the justification that to think finished work is what makes the maker an artist is to put the cart before the horse. It puts matters back in their right order to see the artist as a man making, ahead of what he makes, not to mention his preceding the appreciator, the collector, the curator, and the critic. Making might seem to be in vain without their looking. But the artist makes them possible, and he can do without them. Growing interest in the activity of the artist goes with realization that here, as in science, but more in view and closer home, is evolution coming alive in the acts of men, becoming little by little, then more and more, their venture, their doing, and their choosing. Even in the scientists' photographs in the Kepes volume, making remained. Though not intended to be art, there was human selection in the focus of the camera. There was the edge between a picture and what was left out. We may simply have to say with Merleau-Ponty that fresh perception itself is aesthetic; and that whatever nature or man does tends to be aesthetic or artistic, if at all what a man enjoys or does when living as a healthy and untrammelled animal grown human.

Since it is now clear that life is inherently an unfinished business, that our universe itself is "in the making," as William James said, and
that man is taking more part in the making, it is not surprising that the
1964 Congress on Aesthetics in Amsterdam was much taken up with
the non-finito. Fascination with the unfinished follows the shift away
from passive acceptance or admiration of art things regarded, like things
in general, as naturally or miraculously there rather than as having been
made, or made by remote creation—if by men, then by geniuses of an-
other time and race, poles apart from the rest of men. Dewey occasion-
ally seems old-fashioned when he values completeness as a trait of pre-
ferred experience, in contrast to the common dismissal, in much recent
art, of any attempt to reach a terminal whole. Thinking of art not as
thing but as activity, not as finished work but as ways of working,
heightens interest in the creative processes of artists who may be local,
whose latest undertaking is hardly dry or not yet performed. It is not felt
to be definitive but in mid-career, as likely to veer as the course of a
chipmunk, child, or energetic man. So De Kooning slashes with his brush,
scrapes, slashes again, with no final goal.

Ezra Pound’s “Make it new” holds good, but so does the old love of
life. In fact, they are the same. But the artist’s urge to celebrate exis-
tence turns to resentment, at least implied, against what society does or
fails to do which thwarts or dulls natural delight. So the critical aspect
of art is not confined to freeing it from lifeless forms. Technical and
professional use of critical acumen in the artist’s work is at the same
time inevitably directed against social abuses and failures. Anything which
keeps people from being free and creative persons will hamper and arouse
them as artists. D. W. Gotshalk has well shown that art has social im-
lications even as “a purely aesthetic enterprise,” since these are “part
of its artistic structure,” in as much as the materials, forms, and ex-
pressions of art are those of life, focused and emphasized. “There is no
need to sacrifice artistic subtlety for doctrinal explicitness. The art can be-
come saturated with the outlook of the artist, and this outlook can be
empowered by all the subtleties and devices of the art.”

Adorno has written of the musician’s revulsion against the degradation of music in radio
and film, especially in the singing commercial: “The isolation of radical
modern music comes not from its a-social but from its social content.”
And Kallen: “... the liberty of the artist ... has become the avatar of
all the freedoms men fight and are ready to die for. It is the spon-
taneity and fertility of the very life of us, and so contagious that where
the artist is free no other man can remain bond.”

The architect Johansen has said: “Mass production has not fully served
human needs, and has served the psyche not at all. ... There is skep-
ticism about institutionalized religion, disillusionment with our society,
disengagement and disenchantment among our youth.” And since these
attitudes are deep and widespread, “it is natural that the arts should express them.”

In the same vein Dewey has said that “since the surroundings which man has made, under the influence of modern industry, afford less fulfillment and more repulsion than at any previous time, there is only too evidently a problem that is still unsolved.” Though “production for private gain” is much to blame, the answer is not merely in “social alteration.” Men need to realize what it could mean to live with more freedom and imagination, and here is the moral function of art. Dewey held “that art is more moral than moralities. For the latter either are, or tend to become, consecrations of the status quo, reflections of custom, reenforcements of the established order. . . . Art has been the means of keeping alive the sense of purposes that outrun evidence and of meanings that transcend indurated habit.”

When many people have little interest in what they do, and little sense of really doing or deciding anything, a mood of emptiness and absurdity is general. War, overpopulation, and automation are hard on the Romantic name-self, but also on the semi-nameless one. Yet the Promethean spirit is no more chained than challenged. It is stirring to break free and make a society which will let people become persons, and help them to. The depressing “residue of selfhood” in Beckett sounds a warning. If that is what we are coming to, we are indebted to his art for jarring us awake to it.

The way back from such a dead end does not lie in exaggerating the self again, but in restoring everyday experience so that people can like what they do and where they live, privately and together. This seems to be what Dewey hoped for in recovering continuity between the fine and the useful in art and life. Much the same fusion of the unique and the usual is cherished in Suzuki’s Zen and Japanese Culture and in Hisamatsu’s Zen and Fine Arts. In Japan as in America, however, the hope is not to return to what once made a good life but to work out what can be a good life now, in spite of or with the help of new developments. Perhaps life cannot be better than it has been for a few in the past. The need is to use the new means to improve living for more people.

This calls for more relation between art and industrialism. To a growing number of people, instead of measuring art by suitability for museum exhibition or having at home, with invitations to see and discuss painting, drawing, sculpture, and individual works in various media, there should be a shift to concern with making the environment more aesthetic. Critical aesthetic attention should be given to how transportation is designed, how printing and labeling are done in merchandising, how food is prepared and served, how housing is produced with new uses of steel,
concrete, wood, plastics, membrane, and how whole neighborhoods are planned in the development of a city. Such redirection of aesthetic interest leads to tours of new dwellings and buildings; also of old sections of a city which often are newly appreciated on the eve of demolition. The result is a rekindling of civic pride, with wider and more discerning participation in decisions to restore or rebuild. Then cooperation is more possible, though conflict still threatens the long approach to a truly human community. How much art in all its forms can help toward that goal may be wondered. At least it is clear that art crosses national borders in a grand give and take of influence and response, ever trying out what can be done with what has been done, with what there is and is coming to be. It does not follow that there should be a moratorium on more personal art, since all art has a social function, especially now, urging us to change our life, with the double shove of the creative and the critical.

Much as we admire the artist as individual, we see that artists come in schools, and that the same movements pervade all the arts. Some arts have always combined the talents of committees and teams. Without cooperation there would have been no cathedrals or other architecture, no theater, no opera or ballet, no music to speak of, or film or television. City and regional planning must be collective. Often as not, it is in working together that men do their best as individuals. When they appear to work alone they have the company of colleagues and rivals, living or dead.

Offsetting the fear that men will not only be driven but bred and led to live without personality, and like it or no longer care, there is promise in the critical and creative activity of contemporary art, which joins or uses the same dual force of science. Such power is dangerous and may be disastrous, if its own controls get out of control. But man does have the capacity to see where he is heading, far enough ahead to change course while it is not too late. The future of the human race is in doubt, and that of art is bound up with it, but it is too soon to announce the ruination of art when it is being renewed all around. With such vitality in art, there is a chance for life.

NOTES


13. Ibid.


15. Ibid., p. 173.

16. Ibid., p. 337.


