

The gesture of making.

The symmetry between our hands is such that we would have to turn our left hand in a fourth dimension, if we wanted it to coincide with our right hand. Since such a fourth dimension is practically inaccessible, ("practically" meaning of course: handily), our two hands can never coincide, and are condemned to mirror each other forever. We may, of course, "imagine" their coincidence, for instance by complex manipulations of gloves or through film tricks. But if we imagine such a thing, we become dizzy. A giddiness takes hold of us which is not dissimilar to what is called the "philosophical vertigo". The reason is that the symmetrical opposition of our two hands is an important aspect of the human condition, and if we were able to overcome it, even if only through imagination, we would have overcome our condition. Still: in a different sense we do try to overcome it. We do try to make our two hands "coincide" by bringing them together in a very specific gesture. Not, to be sure, in the "empty" gesture of clasping one hand with the other. That is no "coincidence" of hands, only a confirmation of their mutual opposition. But in the "full" gesture of bringing the two hands together through the mediation of some obstacle, some object. Let this kind of gesture be called the "gesture of making". The purpose of the gesture is to make our two hands "coincide" within the object grasped between them. The object changes its shape under the pressure of our two hands which try to come together through it, and it is this new shape of the thing that is how our two hands coincide. The gesture of making changes the shape of the things around us, "at our hands", and by thus "informing" our world, (changing its form), the gesture succeeds, in a sense, to make our two hands coincide, and thus overcome the human condition.

To be sure: many of the terms we use to describe the gesture of our hands as they try to coincide within the object have acquired by now an "abstract" meaning. So much so that we tend to forget that such a meaning has been "abstracted" from hand gestures. Terms like "grasp", "seize", "apprehend", "comprehend", "manipulate", "handle", "manufacture". This shift of meaning from hands toward mind is however, in itself, revealing. It shows to what extent the gesture of making, of having our two hands coincide within an object, is the model of our thought processes. If we were to imagine a being just as capable of thought as we are, but with no hands comparable to ours, we would see how totally different would be its thought structures. Let us suppose that the deep sea octopus has a brain capacity similar to the human one: but it would be incapable of conceiving, of defining, of calculating, because those are aspects of hand gestures. To understand how we think, it is necessary to look at our hands: how our fingers move, how the thumb is opposed to the other fingers, how our finger tips and palms touch things and each other, how our hands may become fists, and so forth. And to understand our hands in their opposition.

To say that our world is "at hand" is therefore not a sufficient description of the way we are in the world and face it. We are not in it with one hand only.. If we were, the world would be a totally different place to be in. Just as different as must be the world the octopus finds itself in, with its eight arms. The fact is that our world is perceivable, conceivable, graspable, manipulable, because it is "at our two hands" in their mutual opposition. We are capable of "embracing" the world from the two sides of that opposition. We cannot "embrace" it like an octopus from eight sides, nor can we "embrace" it like an ameba by wrapping ourselves around it. Thus the curious symmetry of our hands, this opposition which allows no immediate coincidence, imposes on the world its dialectical structure. Of course: we may speculate that such a structure is specifically human, and that for species with eight arms it has a different structure. But such a speculation is not "practical": since we have only two hands, we cannot grasp or conceive or comprehend its impact. For us, the world has two sides: a good one and a bad one, a beautiful one and an ugly one, and light one and a dark one, a right one and a left one. And if we conceive "totality", we conceive it as a coincidence of oppositions. And such a totality, such a coincidence, is the aim of the gesture of making.

Let there be no mistake about this: the gesture of making must, by its structure, seek totality, seek "perfection", but, by the very same structure, it can never achieve it. Because that structure is the symmetry of our two hands, a symmetry which precludes coincidence in this our three-dimensional world. Of course, we may project a superhuman "Maker", a perfect Creator, who makes the world from outside. ~~By~~ such a projection of ours ~~we~~ attempt, so to speak, to make our own hands coincide outside the world. In this sense, God is indeed anthropomorphic: a two-handed perfect artist. But what we are doing when projecting thus is a "model" in the strict sense of the term. "God the Creator" is our model for the gesture of making. ~~Our~~ imposing form on chaos by the meeting of two hands opposite to each other. No special theological research is needed to show that the model itself is the result of a gesture of making. As is any other of our models. Thus we are caught in a circle. Any model of the gesture of making is itself the result of that gesture. We cannot approach that gesture with a model, if we want to understand it. We have to make the effort of observing it as it happens. A phenomenological effort. Not an easy undertaking. Because we are, ourselves, the phenomenon we are watching. We are, ourselves, the gesture of making, because that gesture is the way we are in the world. "Hominis fabri". Makers, artists. Frustrated seekers of perfection.

Once we admit that we must put all available models "between bracket and that the gesture of making is the gesture of "art", ("techné"), our task will be to forget all we believe we know about art, if we want to see

how we perform that gesture. Of all the models this seems to be the most difficult to store away, because it somehow shines through our most humble gesture of making. Although we would not, as a rule, consider most of the gestures of making that we perform in our everyday life to be "artistic", still, when we come to think about them, they are, all of them, characteristic of what art is. Even if we just fasten shoe laces or fill a pipe, we are doing what we believe art is about: changing the world by composing objects into new forms. It is not as if we recognized "Art" with a capital "A" in such humble gestures, but it is the other way round: we recognize those humble gestures when we consider art even in its most glorious form. We recognize the gesture of the frustrated search for perfection. Let us put this recognition away for a moment, and let us try to look at the gesture as we experience it while performing its motions.

Our hands are almost never idle. To keep them still, we must make an effort. Somehow, they are always on the look-out for things to handle. Busy animals with five antennae, which become however almost monstrous, if we thus consider their motion as if amputated from their context, which is our body and the life impetus behind that body. A Martian, that ideal phenomenological observer of things human, would probably feel more nauseated while watching our hands than we feel while watching spiders. It is this hunger for things to be handled, this yearning for making, this irrepressible nervous curiosity of our hands, that would probably fill the Martian observer with disgust, with fear, and with wonder. He would find no other phenomenon on Earth quite like it. Hands are not only organs of perception nor are they only weapons for attack and defense, nor are they only means of communication. They are all of this, of course, and the Martian would find many similar phenomena on Earth in this sense. But hands are also, and most characteristically, tools for disinterested, almost automatic investigation. And the Martian might find phenomena approaching this, but nothing quite like it. Hands are a characteristically human form of being

Now why should this be disgusting, if seen from an "époché", from a distance which is not human? (And often, while observing the motions of the hands of somebody else, we are in fact in such a distance.) Because, from the point of view of order, of harmony, of equilibrium, in short: from the point of view of perfect form, the nervous, unquenchable lust for novelty and for change, which are our hands, (and which are we), is monstrously disgusting. Hands are subversive, disruptive elements in the order of things, foreign intruders into the order of nature. They are unnatural nay anti-natural, and this is why they are disgusting. To anybody, that is, who does not take the human standpoint. From our viewpoint, of course hands are the fountains of new forms, and therefore of beauty. And they are it for the same reasons for which they are disgusting for others. The human being in the world must be disgusting for every other being.

Our hands are almost always in motion, but almost never in a disorganized one. There are various very complex patterns to how hands move, and those patterns have to do with various levels of relations. There is the relation of each finger to all the others, and more specially of the four fingers to the thumb, there is the relation of the fingers to the palm of the hand and of the other hand, there is the relation of the hand to both arms and to other body organs, there is the relation of the hands to what stands and moves about them, and there is, above all, that curiously symmetrical relation of the hands to each other. If we were to fix the line the hands follow while moving, for instance on a surface like in action painting, or on a video tape, we would probably discover an image of quite unbearable beauty: the image of our being-in-the-world. But do we not dispose in fact of just such an image? I mean of course: is not the world of art and artifact, the world of culture which surround us, a fixation of the lines human hands have followed in the course of the ages? Not quite: it is the fixation of those lines as they have been broken, again, and again, by the resistance offered by the objective world.

The complexity of the motions of our hands is such that it defies description. But the gesture of making, which is only one among those motions, may be decomposed, for "didactical" purposes, in a few relatively more simple phases. Let us repeat the basic structure of that gesture: the two hands reach out into the world of objects, seize one of those objects, tear it out of its context, and then press upon it from their two sides, in order to coincide within it. This is of course an entirely insufficient description of the gesture, because it concentrates attention upon the two hands only. It goes without saying that the eyes, the feet, the whole body (and, on a different level of reality what is called "mind" also), participate in that gesture. But this is the method here followed: attention is being focussed on hands, and everything else is left in the penumbra of diffused peripheral vision.

First, then, the hands reach out into the world, arms outstretched, fingers wide open, palms facing each other. We know that sort of gesture. It has to do with friendly welcome, with admission of an adventure, with opening oneself to the future. Let us call this phase the gesture of "perception". But let us not be fooled by its passive, friendly, submissive aspect. Perception is not merely reception. It is, if watched more closely, a violently active gesture. It does violence to the world, it acts upon the future. It divides the world into a region between the two palms, (which it admits), and all the rest, (which it refuses). It opens a channel for the future to flow in, and by doing this, it excludes all the events which lie outside that channel. It is a segregating, (or, as Kant would say: categorical), gesture. It receives the world of objects, to be sure, but within categories imposed upon the world by the very gesture of perception.

Having thus defined their field of action, the hands begin to move toward each other, until that motion is stopped by some object. No doubt: there are always objects in the way of the two hands which reach out for each other, because the world is full of objects. And were it only the air through which the hands are moving. But as long as those objects do not oppose a considerable resistance to the moving hands, as long as they may be easily pierced or removed out of the way, the moving hands despise them. They move as if they were moving through empty space and time, or as if they were drilling a channel through a despicable time-space toward each other. Let us call this phase the gesture of "exploring". There is something imperialistic, dominating to this gesture, as if the world belonged to the hands, as if they owned it by right, and as if they were free to open their way through it. In fact, the gesture of exploring shows that it is anti-world. It takes possession of the world, as long as it can ignore it. And if it cannot quite ignore it, it waves it away like so many flies that are no problem, but a bother. The hands do not really bother with such dispensable matters, they keep on moving. Tradition has called the exploring gesture the motion of "criticism".

It may happen, of course, that the hands keep on moving thus until they meet each other. That would have been a purely critical, and in a sense "empty" gesture, because such an exploration would have resulted in nothing. But it may also happen that the hands strike upon an object which prevents them from further motion. Then two things may happen. The hands may move back, or they may insist on meeting. If they do the first thing, we shall have the gesture of fright, of flight, of evasion, and that is a gesture which lies outside the present investigation. But it is if they do the second thing that we must watch them. They start moving around the object, they touch it with the finger tips, they follow its contours, they weigh it on the palms, they grasp it, they pass it from one hand into the other. Let us call this phase the gesture of "apprehending". It is, in spite of what one may tell us in the so-called "scientific" tradition, not a process of "pure" disinterested learning, no "objective observation". It is true: the hands may have no interest in the object itself they are thus apprehending. And this disinterest in the object itself is specifically human with regard to hand motions. They "play" with the object. But still hands to have an interest, not in the object itself, but in the object as an object, namely an obstacle to their motion. They are interested in meeting each other, and the object prevents their meeting. It is interesting as a "problem". The gesture of apprehending is not a "pure", a contemplative gesture. It is an active step toward problem solving. If some scientists try to deny it, they are mistaken. There is no such thing a learning for the sake of learning. Hand motions are never "pure" motions. They are "practical", have a purpose.

Because the gesture of apprehending is a practical one, it need not go on until it has learned everything about the object. That would be an absurd undertaking. Hands can never learn every side of the object, because there is practically an infinite number of sides to every object. This is, in fact, what makes of the object a part of the concrete world: this practical infinity of its sides, this uniqueness which permits no comparison with other objects, no generalisation. But it is not necessary for hands that want to meet each other to reach out for the absurd aim of total objective knowledge. Practically it is sufficient if the interesting sides only are apprehended. And interesting are those sides of the object which look promising for a later hand meeting. Which seem to permit a penetration or a reformulation of the object. Thus the hands concentrate upon such sides of the object. This phase of the gesture may be called the gesture of "comprehending". It is, in fact, a motion which compares this object with others already penetrated or reformulated in previous gestures. Although the object cannot be "really" compared with others in its uniqueness, still there are some sides to it which are like the sides of other objects. Tradition calls this gesture one of classification, of generalisation, of induction. Now these terms seem to suggest that it is abstract, logical, mathematical, formal. Of course: if we forget that the meaning of all those and similar terms was abstracted from hand motions, comprehension does become a motion of the "spirit". But if we go back again to the hands as they move about the object, we may see the gesture of comprehending in its practical context. To "com-prehend" becomes again to "apprehend together", namely together with other objects, in order to penetrate the object, to reformulate it, to change it.

The object is now practically comprehended, which means: previous gestures of making suggest methods how to change this one. Of course, there may be objects not easily comprehended, and others, where comprehension fails altogether. In fact: it may happen that apprehension of an object shows to the hands that apprehend an object that they can never hope to comprehend it. Such objects are not suitable for the gesture of making. Hands then perform other types of gestures with regard to such objects, gestures which lie outside the present considerations. It does good to admit that there are such objects around us, incomprehensible ones, and that hands cannot apply the gesture of making to the entire objective world. Frustration may set in even in such relatively early stages of the gesture of making.

But of course: the immense majority of the objects around us does suggest methods of how to change the objects. The hands comprehend them, and as the gesture of making goes on through history, an increasing region of the objective world is opened up for comprehension. And there is a curious aspect to the motion of comprehension, "curious" in the strict sense of the term. Hands seem to like to play with objects not yet comprehended, in order to comprehend them. This curiosity of hands may be explained very not

ly by saying that the hands of men are the organs through which men take an ever increasing possession of the objective world, and that "curiosity" is the climate in which this conquest progresses. But if we keep our attention centered on those hands themselves, we need no such noble explanation. If hands in their motion of meeting each other strike against objects already having been comprehended, they do not waste much time in fingering and handling them: they proceed in their motion. But if they strike against so far not comprehended objects, they ~~are~~ must perform the gesture of comprehension, if they are to proceed in their motion toward each other. They must "conquer progressively the world". Curiosity, progressive comprehension and the urge for it, are thus seen to be an aspect inherent in hands and their motion of making.

If one now goes on in the description of the gesture of making, and tries to see what happens after the hands had comprehended their object, one feels that there is a sort of barrier which stands in the way of a linear description of that gesture. The reason of this barrier is the fact that what one does is describing one's own gesture of making, and that one feels, at this point, that the hands change their motion due to some "inner" motive. A wedge is driven into the motion of making at this point, one feels, a wedge which drives into the motion coming from a totally different level of reality which cannot be directly observed in the motion of the hands themselves. If one wants to remove that barrier, it will not help if one shifts one's attention from one's own gesture to the gesture of some other person. Because one will recognize one's own gesture in that foreign one, and the barrier will still be there. The honest thing to do is to confess that feeling and to try and describe it, with the hope that such a description will, in the end, lead back to the hands one is watching

This is the feeling: the moment the hands have comprehended the object, one "knows" that the object is not as it should be. Now this is of course a totally unsatisfactory statement. Every single word in it is vague and open to grave doubts. Who or what is the "one" that thus becomes the "subject" of the hands, and how does one experience that "one", unless one approaches it through phenomena like hand motions? What does the term "to know" mean in this context, if not "to have comprehended"? And where does this distinction between "to be" and "ought to be", between reality and value, come from, and what sort of "knowledge" is that which distinguishes between reality and value? There is of course an endless discussion of all this in our tradition, (not a very successful one), but did we not put this discussion out of our way when putting all models between brackets? Yes, all this is true, but such is the power which our hands hold over our thinking that we cannot honestly escape such a dialectical approach even when we try to escape from it when describing hand motions. The ancient

viscious circle between hands and thought cannot be so easily escaped from, and one better submit ~~to~~ it at this point of the description.

Let us put our feeling this way: The comprehended object is now being held between our two hands. The left hand has comprehended what the object is, meaning that it has compared it with other such objects. And the right hand has comprehended what the object ought to be, meaning that it has compared it with some previously manipulations of objects, manipulations which have resulted in new shapes of objects. Now such a distinction between left and right hand is of course only a figurative way of speaking, not a description of an observation. Still: there is a difference between the right and the left hand which can be observed, and the symmetry between the two hands is observably imperfect. Let us hope that the figurative way of speaking does reflect, somehow, a real dialectical contradiction between the two hands. In the figurative distinction the left hand may be called the hand of "praxis", and the right one the hand of "theory", and the gesture of making that follows may be considered to be that motion in which "praxis" and "theory" attempt to meet each other. A motion through which the left hand tries to meet the right one by transforming the object into what it ought to be, and through which the right hand tries to meet the left one by transforming what ought to be into the object. The two hands will have met if the object becomes what it ought to be, and what ought to be becomes objective. If the object becomes a value, and the value becomes an object. Thus the two hands will have coincided within the object, and the fourth dimension within which the left hand must turn in order to coincide with the right one will have been shown to be the dimension of value.

This is then what we feel if we come to this point of our description: all of a sudden, the two hands try to impress a value upon the object, a shape, a form, and the left hand tries to press the object into the form, while the right hand tries to press the form upon the object. Let us call this phase: the gesture of "evaluation". It is "as if" the two hands had somehow agreed upon a form suitable to this specific object. It is as if they had comprehended that the object "leather" is "good" for the shoe form, and that the shoe form is "good" for the object "leather". Evaluation then is this gesture of weighing the scale of object against the scale of form, this choosing of a suitable form for an object comprehended. || Of course: the gesture may go the other way round: it may choose an object suitable for a specific form. Tradition tells us that those are two entirely different gestures. If a form is chosen in function of an object, we are said to perform the gesture of technological making which follows the research of "value-free" science. If an object is chosen in function of a form, we are said to perform the gesture of artistic making which is the "expression" of previously only imaginary values. But I believe that tradition vastly ex-

agerates the difference between technology and art, between shoe making and sculpture making, by distinguishing neatly between the choice of a form in function of an object and the choice of an object in function of a form. If we observe the hand motion itself, we can see that those two choices are in reality one, being functions of each other. Evaluation is the coming together of theory and praxis, of object and form, and it does not matter very much whether the accent lies on one side or the other. Because in what follows evaluation, the two sides become mingled in such a way, and the accent shifts so rapidly, that any initial difference becomes unimportant. There is only one basic structure to the gesture of making: technology and art are two aspects of it, and tradition has separated them without justification.

Once the object had been evaluated, the two hands press upon it to force it into a form. They violate it: they do not permit it to be as it is. They deny the object as an object. They affirm themselves with regard to the object, and by thus affirming themselves they affirm the object as a virtual product. This phase of the gesture may be called: the gesture of "production". It tears the object out of its context, which is the objective world, and inserts it into a different context, the world of products, of culture, of civilisation. To produce is to lead an object out of one world into another. To change its ontological standing. To tear it out from a world that is as it ought not to be into a world that is as it ought to be. The gesture of production affirms that the world of objects is wrong, is bad, is ugly. It is wrong, and bad, and ugly, because it hinders the hands to come together. It is not handy. This is the reason why hands must seem to be monstrous, if looked at from an unhuman standpoint. They affirm, through their gesture of producing, that everything that is is bad, unless it is handled. Other hand gestures may of course lead to a different interpretation of hands, but it is their productive gesture which reveals most clearly their being-in-the-world. It is a being-against-the-world.

In all the phases previous to the one of producing, the object lay merely there, passive, mute and deaf to the gesture of making. It just insisted, stupidly and stubbornly, in being there "at hand", an obstacle to hand motions. This passivity, deafness and stubbornness was precisely its objectiveness, its being an object. But now, under pressure of production, the object begins to resist the gesture of violation. It begins to affirm itself in a raw and brutal, because stupid and stubborn, fashion. Because the hands hate it, it becomes hateful. It becomes a "raw material", and the hands begin to feel this rawness. This encounter of the rawness of the object changes, of course, the motion of the hands, because it hurts them. This phase of the gesture of making may be called:

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the gesture of "understanding". Through this gesture the object is being understood as a raw material for production, which means in its relation to a value to be imposed upon it. Thus the gesture of making reveals a difference not always clearly established by our tradition: the one between comprehension and understanding. In comprehension the world of objects is being handled with a view to comparing between objects; in understanding it is being handled with a view to comparing objects with values. Understanding goes deeper into the objects than does comprehension, because it provokes the objects to resist hand pressure, and thus to reveal what might be called their "inner structure". Thus understanding is a later phase of the gesture of making than is comprehension. But understanding is different from comprehension in a different sense also: in it the object is being penetrated by the hands, hands and object mingle, and it is therefore less "objective" than is comprehension. In understanding man is so to speak within the understood object. Thus comprehension is a knowledge from without the world, and understanding a knowledge from within the world.

To be sure: the famous saying that 'we can understand only what we make' is confirmed by this observation. But the conclusion often drawn from that saying, namely that understanding is a function of praxis, is not fully confirmed by the observation. Understanding is shown to come as a result of the resistance which objects oppose to the effort of making theory coincide with praxis. Unlike comprehension, understanding is not a "free" motion of hands as they move over the world of objects. It is, on the contrary, a motion of hands constantly being injured by objective resistance, and therefore a motion constantly being diverted from its "deliberate" direction. Thus, although understanding is less objective than is comprehension, it still reveals more of the object than does comprehension. It is shown to be true, then, that we understand only what we are making, but this "making" of ours involves as much theory as it involves praxis. A mechanical handling of objects without a theory, as for instance in factories, is not the gesture of making, and does not result in understanding. Because it is nothing but "praxis". Factory workers handle raw material as if their theoretical arm had been amputated, they can never understand the object they are handling, and it is in this sense that they are "alienated" from their own gesture.

The resistance which objects offer to the pressure of production varies in kind and degree from object to objects. Some objects like glass are brittle, others like cotton wool react to pressure by swallowing it up others like water are slippery and escape through the fingers, still others like marble reveal unsuspected inner flaws under pressure. Every object has its own way to frustrate the effort of the hands to impress a form

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upon it. Every object requires a different strategy, a different method for pressing it into a form. Some objects must be handled violently, others must be stroked gently, still others must be tricked into the form. As hands come to understand their object, they come to discover the strategy best suited for pressing them into a value. It is as if, after having been injured over and over by the resisting object, the hands had ~~become~~ taken hold of its secret, and may now submit it to their form. Now after such a discovery of the secret, after understanding, the gesture of making enters a new phase, which may be called the gesture of "manufacture". It is this phase during which the two hands change the object into a form which permits the hands to coincide within the object.

A new difficulty arises at this point of the description of the gesture of making: the problem of specialisation, of "division of labor". Since every object requires a different strategy, the gesture of manufacturing is different for every object. So much so that it seems to be, in each case, a totally different gesture, not comparable to any other. How can one, in one general description of the gesture of making, take account of such different gestures as are, for instance, the manufacture of manuscript and the manufacture of railroad bridges? To be sure: one can not, and the very idea is absurd. But it is quite unnecessary, if one wants to seize the structure of the gesture of making, to follow the hands as they advance along the thousands of branches of the tree of specialisation, in hot pursuit of their purpose to change the objective world. It is sufficient to observe the tree which is the support of the gesture of manufacture. But how can one observe it? Is it not an abstraction from the concrete thousands of gestures of manufacture? Is it not a model? Fortunately, this is not so. The whole tree may be seen within each single gesture of manufacturing, if one watches it closely. Because each single gesture of manufacturing is the result of a choice: the hands have chosen to manufacture this object; change it into this shape, and have thus rejected all other possible shapes and objects. The gesture of rejection is immanent within the gesture of election, and each single gesture of manufacturing, being a gesture of selection, contains all other gestures of manufacturing by their rejection. Thus, if we have closely watched one single such gesture, we will have observed the whole tree.

This is what one sees: after having understood their object, after having discovered its secret, the hands come to understand their own secret. Their specific dexterity and sinistry with regard to this object. They come to understand whether the object understood is indeed "their" object, or whether it is not the object for some different hands, and thus not "their" object. In fact: the understanding "this is an object for me" or "this is not an object for me" is the other side of the understanding

of the object. If the hands understand the object to be for them, appropriate to their own specific way of moving, they proceed to the gesture of its manufacture. If they understand the object not to be for them, they must let it fall back, frustrated, into the objective world, to be picked up by other hands which move along a different branch of the tree of specialisation. This frustrated letting go of an object is present in every gesture of manufacturing, and every gesture of manufacturing is a confession to the fact that no hands are capable of one now calls "plurivalent" manipulation. The fact that these hands handle this object is a proof that they do not handle that object there being manufactured by those hands over yonder.

The point involved in this description of the gesture of manufacturing is, of course, what our tradition calls "vocation". But the observation of the gesture has the advantage of de-mythifying the concept of vocation. It is not the result of some mysterious voice which calls to the hands from somewhere "within" to choose this object there and impose a form upon it. And it is not only specifically "noble" objects like musical sounds, words or canvasses which are thus chosen by vocation. Vocation is seen to be the result of the discovery by the hands of their own specific aptitude within an understood object, any object. There is the vocation for making shoes just as much as there is a vocation for making poems, and it does not result from some mysterious special election, but from the fact that every single pair of hands has its own, specific aptitude, its own, specific way of moving in the world of objects.

But having thus de-mythified vocation, the observation of the gesture of making does show indeed the enormous existential importance of vocation. Indeed: it stresses it, after having de-mythified it. Because one can see, very concretely, how aimlessly, lost in the world, hands move about if they find no object appropriate to being manufactured by them, pressed into a form, valued. For such aimlessly moving hands the world of objects quite literally has no value. It does not help any, if those hands in fact apprehend, and comprehend, and evaluate, and produce, and understand object. All these motions of frustrated gestures of making still accentuate the aimlessness of those motions. If hands do not find an object appropriate to them, if they do not find their vocation, the more they apprehend, comprehend and understand, the more they get lost in the world. Because such hands cannot coincide with each other within an object, they cannot become "real" in this sense, they are as if amputated from realisation. But if they do find an object which is for them, quite suddenly their motion acquires the meaningful, purposeful structure of manufacturing, of putting a form, a value, upon the world. Hands that were able to choose their object have found their vocation: they become committed to a value.

Although, then, the gesture of manufacturing is different for every object, one may observe its general structure in every single such gesture, because one can observe in it the general aspect of specific vocations. It becomes thus possible to describe all gestures of manufacturing as follows: the object, understood by now as a raw material, is held in the left, the practical hand, while the right, the theoretical hand, holds a form, a value, and the two hands press in each other's direction, in order to coincide within the object. During this process, to be sure, the object changes. It assumes, by and by, the shape of the value pressed upon it. But more important still: the value, the form, the shape, the "idea", or however one wants to call what is held by the right hand, also changes. Under the stubborn, perfidious, resistance of the raw material the theoretical hand is forced to adapt the form it holds to the various transformations which occur in the object. This phase of the gesture of making, this progressive reformulation of the form to be impressed upon the object, may be called the "gesture of creation". It is the gesture by which the hands establish new forms, and impress new information upon the world.

Observation of the gesture shows that new forms are always elaborated under the pressure of objective resistance. They do not spring, ready, out of some "inner inspiration", like Pallas Athene out of the head of Zeus, as our romantic tradition would have us believe, but they result from the shock between an already established form and the resistance of a specific raw material against it. To "have new ideas" is not creative. Creation is to elaborate new ideas in the process of making. Hands do not realize themselves creatively, if they impress stereotypes, (already established ideas), on raw material prepared "ad hoc", which is the process of industrial manufacture. They realize themselves creatively only, if they impress prototypes, (new ideas), upon a raw material which is really raw, namely being understood by the hands during this specific process of manufacture. In the present situation, it is in laboratories, in studios and similar places, but not in factories or the mass media, that one may observe the gesture of creation. The present pernicious division between stereotypical and prototypical gestures, between the alienated and the true gesture of making, is one of the roots of our crisis.

One way to overcome that crisis is to rid ourselves of traditional prejudices with regard to "ideas". The Platonic prejudice, although apparently long since abandoned, is still very much with us, because we have not yet succeeded in overcoming his idealistic "realism". This is how Plato saw the gesture of making: The hands move between two opposite places, "topoi". In one of those places stand the eternal, unchanging ideas, (topos uranikós), in the other place flow the ever changing plastic objects, (physis). In making, one hand takes one of those unchanging ideas, the

other takes one of those ever changing objects, and they press against each other. The result is a change of both idea and object. But since the "true" idea can never change, since it stands there eternally in Heaven, the changed idea which one can now observe in the object is a "false" idea. Plato calls it a "mere opinion", (doxa). This is why Plato rejected, snobbishly, the gesture of making, (art = techné), as a way of betraying true ideas. For him the honest, philosophical attitude is the passive contemplation of eternal ideas. In short: for Plato to make was to imitate, ("mimesis"), true ideas and thus to make them "imperfect". And this prejudice is still with us, because it is infiltrated in our whole tradition. But if we observe the gesture of manufacturing in the concrete, we can see how wrong Plato was in his refusal to expose his hands to objective resistance. We can observe that ideas are not eternal, and not stored away in some noble place, but that they result, again and again, from the contradiction between theory and praxis. To be sure: the new ideas thus elaborated are stored away after the gesture, but not in some heavenly memory "above us". They are stored within the changed object. Not Heaven, but the world of culture, is the store of ideas. And ideas do not come to us from Heaven, but from the gesture of making. If we come to really grasp this through observation of this gesture, if we come to understand that theory without praxis is just as alienated as is praxis without theory, we shall have made an important step toward overcoming our crisis. Marxist analysis of 'work' is, of course, such a step, but it is itself burdened with an "ideology", with a spectre of the Platonic Heaven, namely with "materialistic dialectics".

The gesture of creation, then, is that phase of the gesture of making by which hands change established forms to adapt them to objective resistance. But, in many cases, such a resistance is too strong for mere, highly vulnerable, easily bleedable, weak human hands: it threatens to destroy them. If this is the case, one of two things may happen. Either the hands give up, in despair, and the gesture of making aborts, in frustration. Or the hands let go, provisionally, of the revolting object, seek around in the objective world for something that might strengthen them and render them more efficient, and then return, thus fortified, to the original object in order to subjugate it. This second alternative, which permits the gesture of making to proceed, may be called the gesture of "tool making". It is an excursion into the world around the original object, and its aim is to overcome the original object.

Now this is a very ambiguous and dangerous gesture, and, in a sense the entire problematic of the gesture of making is hidden in it. Tool making can be described as follows: Hands let go of the revolting object. They move about to find a different object which is in some way similar to hands but more resistant and efficient. A stick, for instance, which is like a

long and hard finger, or a stone, which is like a fist, but stronger. If they find such an object, they bear it out of its context, which means that they apprehend it, comprehend it, produce it, understand it, and manufacture it, and then they turn it around to become part of the hands. Once the object is thus turned around against its original context, which is the objective world, it has become a tool, and the hands may now apply it against their original object. The gesture of making, which had been interrupted by the excursion into tool making under the pressure of the object, can now proceed, because the hands have been strengthened.

The ambiguity and danger of the excursion into tool making is, of course, the fact that it is itself a series of gestures of making. It is, itself, a motion through which hands may coincide within objects. It is itself a motion through which hands may find their vocation. A tool maker is, in this sense, like any other maker. He is just as creative. But there is, of course, a dangerous contradiction in such an affirmation. Because a tool, by its ontological standing, is not an object to be changed, but an object turned around to change other objects. If we consider that tool making may require further tools in almost infinite regression, and if we consider that the excursion into tool making may absorb the interest of hands for whole historical periods, (like the Modern Age), we will easily understand how the original object to be changed may be forgotten in the process. Indeed; if we observe the gestures of making that go around about us, this is our most obvious impression: most hands seem to have forgotten their original objects. Tool making has absorbed them, and this is the essence of the industrial revolution and of technological progress.

Now why should this be ambiguous and a danger? If tool making is like any other making, if hands can realize their vocation through it, why should one distinguish between primary and secondary objects? The answer is obvious, and it can be observed at present how valid it is. The reason why tool making is ambiguous and dangerous is the fact that tools become hand-like, and hands become tool-like. Tools become humanized, and hands become objective. To understand the impact of this, we have to go back to our first description of the gesture of making. It is a violent, imperialistic, hateful, disgusting gesture. It denies its object. Now there is nothing ethically wrong with such a gesture if it is directed against the objective world. Because the objective world has no "value", and it is the gesture of making that impresses a value upon it. But hands with tools, hands that have forgotten their original object and have become tool-like, may turn, not toward their original forgotten object, but against people. Hands with tools, hands become tool-like, have lost that feeling in their finger-tips which permits them to distinguish between people and objects. They may now try to change people into products, and even into tools for the manufacture of products.

The distinction between objects and people is never easy. If hands reach out into the world, arms outstretched, fingers wide open, palms facing each other, and if they strike against something, it is never easy for them to know whether that something is an object or another person. It is only if they encounter within that something a gesture like theirs, that they recognize themselves, and thus recognize the other person. If such a precious encounter does not happen, the hands will mistake the something for an object, and proceed to handle it, to apprehend it. But if the hands that thus stretch out into the world hold tools, they can no longer recognize any other person. The whole world has become objective for them: a context of manipulable and manufacturable objects. This pernicious solipsism which tools impose upon hands cannot be here analyzed further, because it exceeds the gesture of making. Suffice it to say that if tool making absorbs the interest of hands to the point of forgetting the original object, the whole gesture of making becomes an immoral, because a-political, gesture. On the other hand, of course, if the original object is not forgotten, the gesture of tool making is a beautiful phase of the gesture of making. This is what is so ambiguous and dangerous about it. If only we could remember the original objects of technological progress, the terrible danger of technocratic manipulation, of our transformation into products and tools, could be avoided.

Armed with tools, with objects turned around to become weapons against other objects, the hands return from their excursion to the original object to break its resistance. They can now penetrate it deeply and coincide with it. Of course: the tools do not have an influence on the object only, but also on the "value" that is being impressed upon it. The form held by the right hand does not change only under the pressure of objective resistance, but also by the shape of the tool it is holding. Thus the form finally impressed upon the object will mirror not only the original value chosen by the hands, and the object through its resistance, but also the tool which broke that resistance. Let us call this final stage of the gesture of making the gesture of "realisation". The right hand now coincides with the left hand in the very core of the object, both having turned about within the dimension of value. They have "made it".

Now let us look at the result of this complex, and so characteristically human gesture. The most obvious result is that a piece of the objective world has been torn out of its context and has become as it should be. It has achieved a value. An almost equally obvious result is that the hands have left a trace upon the world which will remain there for some time after their own disappearance. The hands have realized themselves. But although these two aspects are obvious, there is a taste of defeat in this victorious result of the gesture. Not only because the object does not show the form

originally pretended by the hands, and therefore cannot be said to have been informed as it should be. In this sense Plato is right, of course and to make is always "betray perfect forms". But also because the two hands cannot really coincide within the manufactured object, and become a "totality", a synthesis of oppositions. Right and left, theory and praxis, value and reality, form and matter, (or however one wants to call the two sides of the opposition), cannot really coincide in the "work", the manufactured object, because such a coincidence is a "limit situation" of the gesture of making. The two hands advance within the object to meet each other, they come ever nearer and nearer, but their meeting is a situation which can be infinitely approached, but never really accomplished. The gesture of making shows this to be so: ~~and~~ no point is it possible to say that the work is finished, ("perfect").

The gesture of making ends when the two hands withdraw from the object, open their palms in a wide angle, and let the object slip into the context of valuable objects, of "culture". We know, of course, this sort of gesture. It is the gesture of giving, of sacrifice, of resignation. Let us call it the gesture of "exhibiting". Hands perform this gesture at a very imprecise point in the course of realisation, when it has become obvious that any further progress toward coincidence, toward "perfection", has become insignificant, "infinitesimal". When it has become obvious that any further attempt to achieve totality will not really change the object. Hands exhibit their work, not when they are satisfied with it, but when they are satisfied that they can make nothing further. Thus to exhibit is a gesture of resignation.

But it is more than that. Although it is, in a sense, the last stage of the gesture of making, it has an entirely different structure. It is a loving gesture. The fundamental structure of the gesture of making is hatred. It is the gesture of defining, confining, violating and changing. The gesture of exhibiting is of a different world: it is one of offering, of abandon. The hands offer their work, and thus themselves to other human beings. They "publish", they make public. To exhibit is a political gesture. A gesture which puts itself at the disposal of others. And since it is the last phase of the gesture of making, it shows what making is all about: it is a gesture which seeks "perfection" through impression of values upon objects for the sake of others. Seen thus, as a whole, the gesture of making is a frustrated loving gesture.

Let us resume what was said here concerning the gesture of making: One may observe how man is in the world, if one observes how his hands move about in it. They move dialectically, because there are two of them, and because their symmetry is one of opposition. Some of their motions show especially well this attempt of the hands to achieve a syn-

thesis of their opposition, and the gesture of making is one such motion. It may be considered to be a series of gestures, one following the other. The present investigation has distinguished between various such phases, although, of course, other observers may suggest a different classification: (a) perception, (b) apprehension, (c) comprehension, (d) evaluation, (e) production, (f) understanding, (g) manufacture, (h) creation, (i) tool making, (j) realisation, and (k) exhibition. Each of those phases has its own existential climate. They are specific forms of being-in-the-world. But there is an overall climate to the gesture of making: it is the climate of violent search of perfection in the objective world for the sake of others, and it ends in loving resignation.

Hands may seem disgusting to unhuman observers as they move in the various stages of the gesture of making. But for us, who are those hands as they move, or who are those hands that will receive the result of that motion, hands are the fountain of truth, of beauty, of value.