

PROVOKE | *Provocative Materials for Thought* No. 1

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Statement of Intent

Images do not constitute thought in themselves. They do not possess the totality that ideas do, nor are they substitutable symbols in the way that words are. However, their irreversible materiality — the reality snipped out by the camera — inhabits a world behind words, and consequently inspires the world of words and concepts. When that happens, words break away from their own fixed concepts and mutate into new words, which is to say, they transform into new thought.

We now live in a world in which words have lost their material foundations, have become detached from reality and wander in space. Faced with this, what we photographers can do — indeed, must do — is capture with our own eyes those fragments of reality which are utterly impossible to capture with existing words, and actively keep creating materials to confront those words and thought. This was the instigation behind **PROVOKE**, and the reason we chose, admittedly a little self-consciously, the subtitle “**Provocative Materials for Thought.**”

Editors:

Yutaka Takanashi, Takuma Nakahira*, Kōji Taki*, Takahiko Okada

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Cannot see, aching with a *setsunai* feeling, and wanting to fly

– Takahiko Okada

The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & god, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it. – Blake

It is perfectly natural for humans, existing in and inhabiting reality as we do, to aspire to an ideal existence. There is no need for me to deliberately obfuscate my desire for a life of comfort and ease. Speaking entirely personally, when I picture the ideal everyday life in my mind, my wife and daughter are definitely adumbrated somewhere in the midst of that hazy scenario.

When we humans protest that we must get what we want, whatever drives us to unwittingly tense our muscles, and cry out that it has to be this way, is no doubt propelled by the coiled spring of *setsunai* [frustrated emotions mixed with longing and admiration], but its generation is apparently almost all due to the condition wherein, for us, “special” images well up.

Whenever we pop out of the house on some errand, or when we are just pottering aimlessly around, or even when it is obvious that we are stressed out to breaking point, these special images come welling up inside. When this happens, we are undoubtedly grappling with some image or other which seizes us.

Either when engaged in games, leisure, or rituals such as the coming of age ceremony, marriages and deaths, or romance and sex, or a vignette of daily life typified by the parents and child relaxing *en famille* in the cool of the evening under the arbor of bottle gourds illustrated in the Edo period painter Morikage Kusumi’s

diptych screen; or, alternatively, enduring the friction and disputes which erupt in groups and organizations, or tragic events and disasters — whatever position the human being caught up in the activity might be in — when in those situations he fills himself with *setsunai*, or to put it another way (if the hypothesis I have just proposed is accepted), at times when he is weighed down with and subjected to unbelievable pain by the force of an image which is the incarnation of an obsession (what might perhaps be called an “obsessive image”), the thrust of his consciousness moves in the direction of release from that oppression and pain and craves an untrammelled, sparkling **“absolute reality.”**

At that point, he is drawn into an ecstatic release from mind and body amidst an outburst of trapped emotions, and thirsts for an ambience of comfort. But the truth is that this is no more than an event at a physiological level; he attempts to concretize real “freedom” itself in his own way (just as images start to form inside dimly lit interior spaces) — *“quietly sobbing, pitiable, bitter tears of longing.”*

Freedom, Expression, and the Totality of the Human

What exactly is *freedom*? I would like to consider this from all angles without being restricted by any conventions. Seen at its most abstract, “freedom” is probably describable as a state whereby a human being’s totality is unfolded, and for humans is probably the most advanced state of abundant potentiality.

If anyone were to attempt to explore and try to pin down how this state is brought about and realized, they would inevitably be denounced for distorting the structure of contemporary society, regardless of whether they took a cold and rational probative stance, or whether they made an emotional appeal.

There will be occasions when one delves into the world of the complex and vast maneuvering and deceptions embodied in Realpolitik and takes on a scarcely unavoidable principled search; there will be times when one will attempt to reform social conditions after having exposed the superhuman avarice of the state as a fiction; and there will be occasions when one turns away from the polar opposite of the extreme manifestation of repressed feelings and acts purely on a completely separate extreme impulsive feeling which brims over, leaving one with a burning anger to set the world to rights.

Further, even from the perspective of a stubborn mind, it is undoubtedly the fact that there may be a way to totally crystallize freedom via a fiction by metastasizing the colossal power of the state as a fiction to a completely different dimension with the entirety of the expressive act (whatever in art that might be called). But the same mule-headedness totally vitiates the expressive act by its dilettante, lackadaisical nature as a result of either treating with disdain or simply forgetting the following simple facts.

The disorderly fluttering of feelings, even if at times they emit a beautiful glow, are doomed to fade away naturally if they simply end there. One may appeal to the beauty of the very existence of trees and flowers, or roof tiles, or clouds, or thermal calories, but they, for the one who chooses, and is chosen, to make the expressive act, are just the objects of a quality which needs to be further activated and fortified.

If the one making the expressive act finally succeeds in accomplishing something based on his own desires and thoughts, what appears in front of his eyes is undoubtedly something either terribly pure or so demonic that it instils trepidation. I may sound a little boastful, but in regard to this I would add that I was always plagued by an indescribable discomfort with images and various happenings I had encountered ever since I could remember.

I stress that I am only an ordinary person, and not someone special who can be pigeonholed. But when, while ascending into the midst of a clear light up from the animal nature which makes me want to wander off and immerse myself in the feeling of *setsunai* that embraces the energy which hurtles straight towards a better reality, and while swallowing masses of information whole but still intent on events as they unfold, I command a view of the totality of human beings, and assimilate their creative acts, and when the feeling of *setsunai* and freedom referred to above coalesce, the images that pass through my brain are quite transparent and bright, though, sadly, I cannot see them very well.

I, as an utterly ordinary person, am content to be of one mind and body — one flesh, and of one spirit — in the vast ambient expanse of a tiny corner of the shining state of the total brightness of real, actual society. This wish confronts me with great confusion. But what sort of confusion?

In the full knowledge that it is already obvious, I repeat: if it is true that the act of achieving freedom for ourselves is a practice that we cannot shy away from, artistic expression, which is the representation of the essence of the life-space of human beings, is also a truth. To put it bluntly, the subjects of the valiant struggle at the level of real, actual society and the subject of artistic expression are the same: they are both human beings.

Two Kinds of Truth and the Limits of Fiction

Despite this — even though my stamina for the two types of action is greater than that of others — I cannot make these two types of truth my own. Choosing artistic expression and devoting myself to constructing a fiction, losing myself in it, and abandoning fixed views of actual society is not compatible with the construction of fiction; their foundations are not linked.

I know this is a cumbersome way of putting it, but all I want to say is that these two kinds of truth are often actually conflicting; on the other hand, in the process of getting near to them, the two truths interact in complex, subtle ways. To be honest, I can only express their complex subtle relationship in vague terms. Which means that, actually, their true nature cannot be seen clearly.

If I could distinguish the two types of truth as true, the paradox should be apparent to me empirically at the very least. But, at the same time as wondering about the reasons for this paralogism, and how one human being can straddle two phenomena, and very fundamental phenomena — Urphenomena — at that, I am unable to discern the logic, or the moment, that is, the nature of the occasion, required to sublimate the conflict of these contradictions.

Of course, I want to “see,” and desire so. But I don’t want to pretend that I can see something which is invisible. I do my best to be true to my feelings, and will tell no lies. I know that many people tell themselves that they can see when they cannot, so risk falling subsequently into T. E. Hulme’s “false category” (a term he coined); allowing images that are different from what could be conceived by true consciousness to run rampant, and end up distracted by, and led astray into,

hilotheism, and losing themselves in embellishing these fantasies while making the amount of energy the measure of their own worth; they have often hidden away in shame and lost themselves in embellishing these fantasies.

This is, of course, not someone else's problem. It is because I am of a weak disposition, and because I have the habit of forgetting myself in the act of constructing a fiction.

Wanting clarity but not being able to see well — there is nothing which accentuates this sense of *setsunai* so much as this. The heightening of feelings of *setsunai* — and I only want to discuss it in general terms — possesses a violently explosive force, and due precisely to that, considerable thought must be given to what these may be transformed into.

Humans will probably choose either to face them directly and turn them into a concrete form, by giving the languishing feelings direction and crystallizing them into something productive, or else will be thrown aside by the explosive force I have just referred to, and run away from them.

Actually, the truth is probably that there is no choosing. For better or worse, it is all just an outflow of emotions or a slipping of consciousness; the impression is that it is something far exceeding mere subjective selection. That said, there is nothing more pathetic than running away, and being deluded by self-deception (however impressive the outward show might seem).

For an individual human being, there are ideas formed out of specific ways of being; they lie beyond a definition of their worth, and are essentially what produces concrete action and the development of critical thought. However, they are something which everybody shares: the problem boils down to a single point:

To what extent can ideas be brought close to the essential reality of “seeing,” and how well can that essence be grasped?

Corruption of Consciousness and Alienation

When, due to a variety of circumstances, a firm grasp of that essence, and the ability of the individual's own true consciousness to embrace ideas in a manner which totally reflects it, becomes impossible (or when the attempt is abandoned), humans, in effect, lose their freedom, suffer the consequences of their own folly, and end up drifting through a fantasy world, or through their own megalomaniac inner world.

This kind of extreme slipping of consciousness becomes either an opportunity for a reform of the spirit, or else a corruption of the spirit; it is all dependent on the courage to live on a knife-edge, and on the ability to keep one's emotions bright and clear. To borrow a superbly apt suggestion from R. G. Collingwood, the latter is a case of the **"corruption of consciousness."**

"A true consciousness is the confession to ourselves of our feelings; a false consciousness would be disowning them, i.e. thinking about one of them: 'That feeling is not mine.'"

This is a good juncture to consider the arising of various distorted feelings. When consciousness is faced with its own reality — a consciousness that is undoubtedly accompanied by a sense of discomfort or resistance — the process, at whatever level that might occur at, of the attempt by its circuits to search spontaneously and construct ideas may be abandoned due to constant stress, or due to the sense that an idea cannot be formulated; then the individual will switch that consciousness to "another consciousness" which has an equivalent value, but merely in a separate dimension of heightened emotions or physiological stimuli.

It is possible for the layers of speculative logic to illuminate the unintended fallacies of speculation; these distortions themselves prove the wide and deep expanse of the human consciousness, but analysing this in such a broad-brush manner gets no closer to solving the problem I am facing.

In artistic expression, when consciousness is eroded or corrupted, history has proven that it sometimes illuminates a healthy spiritual life just as if it were backlit. But that does not justify the delusion which encompasses the antinomy we have been examining.

Delusions should first be unraveled before the eye and exposed as such, and must also be forced to converge on a lucid consciousness — even I understand that. But I am ashamed to say that through vacillating and dilly-dallying as a result of these delusions, the truth is that I got numb, dozed off, or got suddenly excited — time drifted aimlessly by.

These delusions, which only occupy a tiny place (or to add, perverted like a “real image” projected on one side but not the other side of a concave spherical mirror), may be a crowning mistake. Even so, some of them certainly had intonation and tone.

I suppose I ought, from this point on, to have been able to write my own impressions. But partly in order to avoid repetition of the same arguments, all I can do is to put the matter inside parentheses and just leave it to wonder what on earth the inner truth of our feelings and consciousness (which, for better or worse, float around spontaneously and are trapped in delusions) are caught up in, and, like the distant stars, to wonder what on earth they are?

Art, Illusion, and Alienation

The fiction self-generated in the unfolding of imagination, and the fiction constructed coercively by real society, and by the State in particular, while they are characterized by a complex entwining with illusions and material objects and a mutual blending and penetrating of one by the other, naturally wield an absolute authority over human beings.

Regardless of whether this is intentional or not, both, in their effect, aspire to the completion of their Imperial domain. Then, the acknowledging and taking literally of “both,” and their mechanical categorization, are virtually ineffective in the real space, and the acts of those involved, who treat them as something distinct for the sake of convenience, are concentrated in the universal human being.

So, in order to understand the delusion which this complex interweaving and antinomy and paradox causes me, the best approach is to think about how humans can be freed from this delusion. The corruption of consciousness in the sphere in

which it is manifested can be interpreted as the alienation of human beings themselves.

It was Marx, as everyone knows, who called for the overcoming of alienation, the elimination of all private property in every sense, and the recapturing of human beings' true consciousness, and who attempted, through a scientific process of discovery, to achieve the realization of **“a total human being”** (*ein totalischer Mensch*), who would represent the embodiment of freedom itself.

In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, he says something to the effect that where the object is either a human object as far as humans are concerned, or an objective human, humans become they themselves within their own object. In particular, I found that there is much to be learned from the following passage, which touched on the connection between human senses and human essence, in the recognition that this is also probably linked to the “unique essential powers of human beings”:

“...only music can awaken the musical sense in man and the most beautiful music has no sense for the unmusical ear, because my object can only be the confirmation of one of my essential powers – i.e., can only be for me insofar as my essential power exists for me as a subjective attribute (this is because the sense of an object for me extends only as far as my sense extends, only has sense for a sense that corresponds to that object). In the same way, and for the same reasons, the senses of social man are different from those of non-social man. Only through the objectively unfolded wealth of human nature can the wealth of subjective human sensitivity – a musical ear, an eye for the beauty of form, in short, senses capable of human gratification – be either cultivated or created. For not only the five senses, but also the so-called spiritual senses, the practical senses (will, love, etc.), in a word, the human sense, the humanity of the senses – all these come into being only through the existence of their objects, through humanized nature. The cultivation of the five senses is the work of all previous history. Sense which is a prisoner of crude practical need has only a restricted sense.”

Not only is the “wealth of subjective human sensibility” generated through the objectively unfolded wealth of human nature, but it is also conceivable that it can be extended in the field of artistic expression, which is normally made to be the

load-bearing element, in a completely different vector, of the sublation of private property.

Art as a World of Imagination

The following viewpoint of a certain poet captures the situation well:

“...The literary arts are created and enjoyed as a result of the desire, both conscious and unconscious, of humans, who in reality exist within the constraints of social pressures and alienation, to create and to experience a world of imagination which is not repressed by these phenomena, using their basic characteristic of having to be independent phenomenally of the subjectivity of artists and of platforms as a shield firstly to express that world of imagination. But if there is no basic assumption that the nature of art is to create and make independent a separate world of imagination that is phenomenally distinct from actual social processes, then there is no chance of it gaining a foothold. Howsoever this world of imagination is generated, it will not actually lead to a release from social repression and constraints. On the other hand, Art, by way of its characteristic as a world of imagination severed phenomenally from society and the subjectivity of individual artists, can freely and wholly clash and interact with humans, images and events more than actual society can. Because of this, people who experience and enjoy this sort of world of imagination can experience spiritually a world of substance and essential alienation which transcends actual social constraints. Through this, people can spiritually experience the potential of human essence and a comprehensive alienation which uniquely may be experienced only in a world without social constraints or repression, albeit only in the world of the literary arts.” (underlining by Okada)

The underlined passage hits the bullseye, but I think that, precisely because it does, it also harbors a profound problem. The poet, in a passage slightly after this one, talks about realism and anti-realism arising from the artistic process of attempting to give form to Art, and holds that these are ideas which the essential character of the literary arts inevitably demand of it.

And, (as I also mentioned previously), the subject of these two acts — that of the expression of a created world and that designed to reform the relationship with production in order to free itself from the repression and constraints of real society — is the same: namely, the human being.

If this line of thought is pursued to its logical conclusion, there emerges the obstacle of a mechanistic understanding of the two kinds of fiction I myself warned about earlier, so long as it is thought that these can be psychologically experienced in the world of the literary arts alone; artistic expression then becomes, as it were, a mere illusion.

And again, in so far as the poet relates it, the impression is also that artistic expression is being alienated by someone or something and that a hint of a utilitarian nuance stands out. On the other hand, in the same passage, the poet does reject viewing art in a utilitarian way in one respect, at its core, in so far as he is saying that:

“...in spite of Art’s affecting the hearts of people who have experienced its world of the imagination, and its assisting indirectly to change reality, art is not created with that objective in mind.” (underlining by Okada)

Indeed! **Art is the ultimate objective, given that it belongs to humans.** It is without doubt the actual, solid world just as it is. Therefore, the process of generating artistic expression involves the intermittent observing of and seeing the world, seeking it and travelling through it.

I secretly suspect that there is a possibility that this could become actual, real freedom (with the illusion of freedom eliminated from the world of imagination due to human intervention). I continue to believe that this intermittent observation of the world and travelling through it frequently forces “the body as a social being,” that is, the human being, to confront the repression of freedom that he faces because it contains the continuum and the stagnation of time, and an extension and contraction of space in human reality.

Naturalism, Corrosion of Consciousness, and Historical Examples

At this point, I must confess to a rigorous self-examination whenever I reflect on the two completely contrasting reactions to the brutal shock which the Kōtoku Incident of 1911 delivered to the literary figures of the time.

As Takuboku Ishikawa incisively pointed out, the superficially vigorous Naturalism movement of the period was a mixture of conflicting elements of self-negation and self-assertiveness. But, because of that contradiction, it is generally accepted, I think, that the centralization of state power at the end of the Meiji period peaking with the Kōtoku Incident and the abnormal development of capitalism revealed its weaknesses and was gradually replaced by aestheticism and the optimistic humanism of the White Birch Society.

Here too it appears that a classic “corrosion of consciousness” can be observed.

It was Takuboku Ishikawa who, as a literary man of integrity — actually, as a courageous ordinary citizen — fought back with all his might in the midst of a tectonic shift in thinking. He, touching in a written piece on the shock he got from the Kōtoku Incident, wrote that it was fruitless for him by himself to try and construct a rational lifestyle while leaving the current social organization, economic organization and the family system intact.

Already, in 1909, six months prior to Kōtoku Shūsui being apprehended in June of 1910, he had bluntly stated, *“An observation of the world up until now and its present condition [suggests that] it would be a grave error to think of the nature of virtue and its development separately from the organization known as the state.”* In his diary entry for 21 August 1910, he recorded the following poem:

***“Noticing that my lungs were somehow getting smaller, I rose out of bed.
One morning as autumn approached.”***

Although painfully aware of his illness, Takuboku shortly afterwards wrote *The Current State of Society’s Stagnation — Authoritarianism, The End of Pure Naturalism and Thoughts of the Future*, putting into specific form the mental tension confronting his own reality. In it, he argues that we should study society’s stagnation “today” thoroughly, courageously and freely, and should discover our own need for a “tomorrow.”

“We must all rise up as one and first make a declaration of the current state of this stagnating age. Cast off Naturalism, give up unquestioning opposition, drop the nostalgia for the idealized past of the Genroku era, and devote our entire souls to considering the future. We must direct our energies to an examination of organizations of our own era.”

Takuboku’s yearning for a healthy approach is more clearly expressed in *Impervious Thoughts*, which was written six months before *The Current State of Society’s Stagnation* (i.e. prior to the Kōtoku Incident). Part of it goes as follows:

“For instance, the person who writes poetry jumps to the conclusion that modern people are qualified by virtue of their fine sensibility... not only do they have this unhealthy attitude, they are proud of it, and even show off by using various methods to raise it to a level of unhealthiness. What are we to make of this?... If, by not behaving in such a manner, so-called ‘new poetry’ and ‘new literature’ did not emerge, we, or at least myself, who wishes for health and a long life, who try as hard as we can to improve ourselves and our lives (humans and human life), would not miss that sort of poetry and that sort of literature at all, along with strong drink and the faces of women with a look as though they want to have sex on the street or somewhere. To share the weaknesses of the age is in no way an honor in any circumstances, in no meaningful sense, nor for anyone.”

The fact that the author himself supplied the underlining shows that his thinking was becoming impetuous, and, as a result of his devotion to literary expression’s complete acceptance of reality, compared with having to take a roundabout way to confront the contradiction which destroys the ideals that ordinary people embrace, the problem is made even more complicated.

In 1919, Kafū Nagai, who Takuboku had strongly criticized as petit bourgeoisie, wrote as follows of his recollections of the impact which the Kōtoku Incident had had on him several years after he returned from a trip to Paris:

“In 1911, while I was commuting to Keio University, I saw five or six tumbrils in succession rush past from time to time along the Ichigaya road in the direction of the court in Hibiya. Of all the events I have witnessed in this world, I have never felt such an indescribably uncomfortableness as on

these occasions. I, as a man of literature, should not have remained silent about these problems of thought. Did not the novelist Zola go into exile because he had called for justice to be done in the Dreyfus Affair? But I, along with all the other writers, said nothing. I somehow felt unable to bear the pangs of my conscience, and felt an enormous shame at being a writer. From that time on, I thought it was best to lower the quality of my art to the level of the popular fiction writers and artists of Edo times. I slung a tobacco pouch from my waist, collected woodblock prints, and started to play the shamisen. And then, instead of being disgusted at the reactions of the writers at the end of the Edo period and the woodblock artists who, whether it was the Black Ships arriving off the coast of Uraga, or an Elder in the Tokugawa Government getting assassinated by the Sakurada Gate of Edo castle, would instinctively decide that these events were none of the ordinary people's business – in fact, it would be above their station to get involved – and would just carry on writing erotic penny dreadfuls or drawing pornographic prints as if nothing had happened, I started to have some respect for them.”

This relinquishment and resolve, and the pathos that Kafū writes about here should perhaps not, as Yoshimi Usui says, be taken literally. However, when viewed from a general perspective, and discounting Kafū's first-class modesty, there is much food for thought. If Takuboku had lived on, it is abundantly clear that a corruption of consciousness, which he would have attacked fiercely, was there.

In addition to the case of Kafū, I think that the mental territory which writers at the end of the Meiji period shared comes into stark relief when one also takes into account the appeal to a “foreign sensibility” and the addiction to the sensuous in the Pan Society, of which Mokutarō Kinoshita and Hakush Kitahara were key members (and which lasted for nearly four years after its founding in 1908).

In 1932, Mokutarō, in a passage in which he looks back on that era, writes as follows:

“The Pan Society was dissolute in a certain respect, but, after all, it was an artistic and literary movement, and a movement supporting Europeanism and opposed to the relic of a faltering feudal age.”

But the attitude to and the methods by which the relic of the feudal age were opposed then becomes the problem. The “foreign sensibility” which Mokutarō, imbuing the phrase with a special nuance, created in the sense of their exoticism was the obverse of “Edo sensibility,” and was a decadent emotion which could be alternatively seen as a dilettante ukiyo-e-ism.

If the structure of actual society is borne in mind, the meaning which being absorbed with decadence embodies also has to be understood in relative terms; its contradictions and fallacies may also sometimes be a force sufficient to propel artistic expression, and its demonic character cannot be ignored.

However, as seen in the decadence of the Pan Society and as anticipated in the prescient passage by Kafū, the total “freedom” of human beings should perhaps of course be seen as warped and repressed. In any case, the two instances remind us of how raw emotions can be displaced with other fictional impostors, and excited in a warped way.

Longing, Nostalgia, Love, and the Image

Here I will again consider human beings as a species-being, and about the nature of freedom once it has fully accepted that. And I am reminded that it is linked with another passage which the poet whose words I quoted above wrote:

“...if I am asked about how my poetry is created, I have no choice but to answer that I try, as an alienated human being, to bring self-awareness closer to social issues while sticking resolutely to an awareness of a reality of my own, and considering the problem of expression in the direction of the total relativizing of that awareness of reality.”

Slightly before the same passage (it is a passage full of implications, so I cite it without being sure whether I have understood it accurately or not) the following passage appears:

“...when human senses and thought, which should flourish in a society untrammelled by repression or constraints, are expressed predictively while, without dispensing with the social pressures and constraints of the age, and shifting from insights into them, or resistance to them, to the question of expression, we apparently call this sort of literature a work of artistic importance.” (underlining by Okada)

But surely it is not a question of construction by shifting from insights and resistance to the problem of expression, as stated above. Art is not something that is “shifted” or transposed, but is surely a process that must involve the creator of the expression crystallizing the longing as it is, the true emotion of lived reality.

If one accepts that the emotion of longing is generated as it breathes of its own accord, and proceeds along its own vector, (this may seem surprising, but) the intention towards its crystallization undoubtedly corresponds exactly to the feeling of nostalgia. The emotion of longing derives in a sense from the consciousness of distance; it is a fundamental harmonic of the keen desire to close the gap with something.

If thought of as containing the intent towards “transmission” with the object and containing the intent to merge and possess, then saying that the utmost expression of the emotion of nostalgia is the truthful emotion of “**love**” is by no means far-fetched. What is joined at the extremes is a heavenly, eternal hermaphroditic image of the essence of **Anthropos**.

“In the union of love of I and thou, and rather, only within that, a person can completely realize the richness of possibilities, and expand the self to unlimited and eternal experience and to the experience of the homeland. L. Binswanger uses exactly the same expression as Jaspers when he states effectively as follows: he stands on his territory protected by this sense of belonging to his homeland, replete with all the riches of his potential, and the human loving as a person does not see either himself or his partner readily and simply as a phenomenon which is finite, specific and destined to die. Rather, through both the loving self and thou the whole world becomes transparent to the point of being an eternal and original essential image of a completely static human that has no desire or intent. That is why in love,

and only in love, two things, in other words, the content, which is destined to perish, and the eternal form, factum and eidos, simulacrum and original, are truly united and experienced.”

If nostalgia, which has reached the seeing-through of a love that will be diffused with light, lies in the direction of origins, even granted that it certainly and undoubtedly faces the past, it can truly be existentially free; seeing-through becomes perfection as it is conceived with another functional vision of the future.

So one must assume that foresight promotes free experimentation, and experimentation launches itself into the physical reformation of real social structure. However, union and mixing cannot be predicated from the outset when nostalgia and its opposite, foresight, arise in actual reality. In reality, nostalgia and looking ahead both attract and repel each other.

While embracing the contradiction of a strong repulsive force, it is an arena for the co-existence of opposite emotions and opposite intentions. In a sense, creating this arena and bringing it clearly into consciousness is said to be “seeing,” and while transient (or perhaps I should restate this as, precisely because it is transparent and transient), it is “*the possession of an image*” in the sense of consciousness of *distance* towards it, an object that never gives up convulsing the self.

Here precisely (assuming that the one initiating the action is a free agent) is the basis for recording reality, expressing it, the rationale for the sorts of photographs in which excited images are brought into being. Only when that unknown world is conceived with the crystallization of light and shadow acting as the sperm can it be claimed that the photograph has made its commitment to history.

Evil, Bataille, and the Demon Inside Freedom

However, this does not necessarily mean that conception in an unknown world predicts a rosy future. My limiting the expression to “unknown” means precisely that. This sometimes also leads to the complete destruction of reality in the sense of a fiction which is thought to be reality through internally generated violence. Or rather, ultimately, reality is destroyed.

The demonic is already embodied in the whole process of realizing excited images and the unknown world in which they are conceived. The power which eradicates and destroys the continuous unfolding of the feeling of *setsunai*, and the power to coagulate images, is one power which evil possesses.

Georges Bataille, in order to explain what is basically a similar concept, employs the following expression:

“What literature expresses is Evil itself – an acute form of Evil – but I think that it is precisely that Evil which has a sovereign value for us.”

Even without probing deeply, we get a hint of this, for example, in the act of conceiving a single excited image, but the “embodiment of freedom” too houses the demon which smashes itself. This means that what we are pursuing and attempting to do (here let us avoid self-consciously extending the superficial aspects) is fundamentally similar to the dynamics of life.

So, it might seem that I have more or less expressed what I was trying to get myself to say, and express on this occasion, but let’s consider. If it were possible to express, it would be an easy matter!

Let’s just say that it’s OK that the “embodiment of freedom” houses the demon that is trying to smash it up. What then becomes immediately problematic is the question of:

What kind of housing, what kind of crystallized body, and what sort of projection of light and shadow which imagination forms spontaneously will transform this devil’s intense energy and fiery breath into a “pure angel” and make it fly?

1968 Summer 1

– *Kōji Taki*

There were no major rioting of blacks in the USA either. And after the disturbances in June in Sanya, the summer passed quietly in Japan too. However, there was unrest everywhere.

In the mines, where there are hardly any seasons, and time seems to stand still, the fullness of existence, and its absence, was exposed. In the universities, students waited patiently at the barricades during the summer break. Reality made its presence felt there, like dark blood. There were also strikes in nondescript alleyways which people hardly noticed, and continual clashes between workers and the mob.

The wind started to blow. Our spirits were shaken and we were forced into a painful awakening.

1968 Summer 2

— *Yutaka Takanashi*

I roll the natural color film forward, trigger the sun as the strobe, and the two-month long calendar shoot ends. It is as if we were experiencing the seasons in advance.

I fix my consciousness, which has been flitting between the tasks of avoiding the overhead electric cables, and framing out empty discarded Coca-Cola cans. Civilization's four seasons.

1968 Summer 3

— *Takuma Nakahira*

Like a thick theatre curtain, the summer dropped slowly down and clung to the ground and stopped moving. The crushed, hot-rolled megalopolis. Human puppets.

It will probably take centuries for humans to surpass the [vegetable] consciousness of even an engorged amaranthus flower. It would be pointless to rush. All we can do now is wait patiently and put our arms round our infant consciousness, embedded like an embryo in the womb.

Memo – The Corruption of Knowledge

– *Koji Taki*

The theme of the corruption of **chi** [knowledge of a high order, close to wisdom from a holistic perspective] has been preoccupying me for quite some time. But *chi* is a vague, hard-to-define concept. To say that knowledge is the ideology of a culture, and that it has a dual structure in which both its sources and its subjects are human beings does not accurately capture it. So-called *chi* manifests itself from all directions, and is also inside of us, so it is unlikely that I will be able to find the appropriate and precise words, and consequently, my memo on it below may also lack logical consistency.

It is obvious that such activities as, for instance, research and the creation of works of art, comprise systems different from those of daily life. Knowledge also gives autonomy to them in their respective, specific fields. Intellectuals then consciously take this and turn it into a principle [to justify] their own existence – an ideology. Intellectuals think that they have extracted this knowledge from within themselves, but it actually has been taken from the culture, and beyond the various knowledge there is also a totality of aggregated knowledge.

These knowledges have now started to break down in every sphere because the circumstances surrounding them have started to manifest themselves. And this breakdown and exposure performs the role of scrutinizing each intellectual's knowledge, and has given rise to the question whether knowledge as the ideology of the intellectuals is nowadays worthy any longer of being called genuine *chi*.

The current university campus disturbances are a good example of what is happening. For instance, there are undoubtedly some outstanding thinkers among the professors at The University of Tokyo, but we have not heard them make any statements where they put their own lives on the line in response to the developing situation, perhaps because they are unable to comprehend what is really going on. It beggars belief.

The students are directly criticizing the system as it is represented, but behind their actions lies hidden a deeper criticism. The degenerated knowledge, which is animated by each of the lecturers as the deep structure of the university, is being savagely criticised by the students. And so we must focus on the prostration of this fundamental denial of education and research which is regimented by this kind of knowledge.

It is obvious that both research and development in Big Science these days is impossible without the illicit union forged between the military, industry and state capital. This shows that the *chi* which supports these research activities is manifested only as the theory and knowledge of specific scientific disciplines, but does not progress towards a knowledge which unites human beings and the world holistically.

Even if one admits that research or art are themselves independent, the fact is that the theory of each system was developed by humans and did not exist before humans. Their knowledge lacks a holistic dimension, and unless it tries to encompass the whole structure of human culture and the whole of human existence living within it, then the very structure of each scientific discipline, which was thought to be whole and complete, comes into question.

The partnership of industry and academia, or the injection of US military capital, happens unquestioningly in this kind of structure and with this sort of knowledge. I do not want it to be thought that I am promoting a hasty logic. But frequently the defects of theory in what is superficially seen as having scientific rationality arise from the deficiency of holistic knowledge.

However, by barricading each system in its own silo, a gap was actually exposed in the relationship between different systems, and when this gap was noticed, the researchers whose starting point was the specific and particular should have had

the opportunity to realize that there exists something between the various knowledge and theory which needs to be united and made whole, and that there is a nirvana, a goal to strive for on the far shore which can act as a measure of value for all things.

The problem lies in contradictions being sewn from the start into reality by an impostor knowledge. They are deluded into thinking that such knowledge is actually part of reality. But holistic knowledge is not yet here.

Holistic Knowledge, Agnosticism, and Mu

There is a goal, a nirvana, and all we are trying to do is head in that direction in search of a holistic vision. And the reason why, surprisingly, agnosticism appears to avoid this type of error is because from the outset it has renounced a realistic suturing.

I stress that I am not referring to the absence of a political dimension. The problem of knowledge must either be considered in a broader or in a deeper sense — I am not referring to the fantasy of having all the actions of artists, designers, photographers, researchers work for the purpose of revolution — for the purpose of political reform.

I believe that human phenomena are varied, rich, and replete with contradictions, so I look for a single absolute essence which intuition alone can discern. Without factoring in the fact of real humans living in the real world, there can be no revolution.

I should add that, when we came up with the title **“Provoke,”** I want to stress that this was not meant to be taken as a political provocation. Politics is clearly positioned within the area which our images can provoke, but the areas which we are trying to provoke go beyond this and extend to a negative region below. Alternatively, I also believe that by becoming a completely negative being there emerges something provocative. We are not disingenuous people.

Some people may not need the sophistication which we have accumulated between reality and consciousness and images. That is why I cannot rid myself of the desire to clarify for myself what exactly is a human being. Whenever I try to accomplish something, I wonder what on earth the source of that urge is, and I feel that all attempts end up as an exercise in futility as a result of our own *mu* (nothingness, or emptiness).

Mu, or nothingness, would manifest itself at the extremes as long as human consciousness was analytical and sought the law of cause and effect. For example, people will probably allude to Rimbaud. With the insight from nothingness, consciousness was unable to establish existence. This is, so to speak, the failure of humanism since the Renaissance.

Suddenly, it can be seen that humans are complete nothingness, and that we are surrounded by anti-humanness. It reveals the bankruptcy of the idea that the world is of the same mold as humans, and at the same time, that humans are of the same mold as the world.

So long as humans perceive of themselves as “in the world,” humans cannot wholly depict themselves through consciousness. Humans are a part of the world, open and something not perceived or aware of; humans are particular units and decidedly not anyone else; living units of specificity. Humans therefore are ultimately not complete in themselves.

That I turn back to the word “theoretical” is because of this vantage point. *Chi*, or knowledge, is the striving towards a theory which captures the world and the human in totality. The knowledge itself is not at the end of this striving, but there is ideology, which probably corresponds to it. It is the departure point from where Rimbaud foundered, and goes beyond *mu*.

That is why for me nihilism is something extreme, and therefore the only recourse is the self, gnawed at by nihil and despair. At the same time, this is no longer something which I propound. From the outset I am empty to the same extent that I am body and flesh.

The meaning of the “theorizing” of the existence of human beings alluded to above started to become clear to me when I thought that the consciousness which discovers *mu*, the consciousness which leaves nothing after it has completely disassembled us, may actually have nothing to do with the structure of the world existing outside us as the denial we face, as transcendent.

The world has a history and mode of being expressed in an invisible structural representation, but at the same time humans exist in it in a state best describable as absolute. From the human perspective, this is manifested in the awful, unbearable contradictions and rupturing of our unconsciousness as we pursue various visible connections, being unable to gain anything from transposing our own molds onto the world despite being aware that we cannot.

So human beings only exist within the transcending of the dualism of this consciousness of self and lack of consciousness of the world. The reason that the world is not “visible” is not our fault, but is because of the nature of the world. From this, we can only derive despair. Moreover, humans can only be in a continual transcending mode without any end in sight.

Entwurf is the word used for this transcending, but actually *Entwurf* only has a discontinuous structure which can be labelled “due to X,” and is definitely not simply an aimless gamble. It is an action which can be defined only as “aimed at X,” and is an opportunity capable of restoring humans in the world to being “one specific, particular human being.”

By specific, particular human being I mean someone who has authentic flesh and blood and feelings. It is not that we do not soar up and fly because we cannot see. I would describe *chi* as the attempt to decide what direction to take and give meaning to one’s existence within the context of theorizing about the invisible.

Beauty, Design, and Holistic Knowledge

The Italian designer Ettore Sottsass, after seeing photos of a guerrilla crossing a deep marsh in Vietnam, recorded some poignant words to the effect that so long as there was one human being left somewhere in the world, there would be someone

wondering what exactly beauty is. It is from these weighty words that the sophistication of beauty that attains his indescribably pure actualization begins. His designs were actually driven by something akin to the holistic working of knowledge.

To turn to the field of modern art, whether it be D'Arcangelo or Lichtenstein, an obviously unreal virtual image being simultaneously an indescribably concrete representation for which no adjective can be found was attained. But I cannot think that this is just simply the development of the expressional plane. The total absurdity of what is in these works has something which awakens the holistic knowledge that is not made apparent in the exterior space.

Let us take a look at what is happening within us. What have we lost?

Sottsass basically knows that beauty is kaput. In the same text, he often talks of the temptation to run away, of buying some island in the middle of the sea, lying down and doing nothing. But this is the mirror image of his holistic knowledge. The quest for such knowledge is a painful one. Why? Because human beings know that however much they try to be complete and whole within themselves, it is a fruitless quest so long as they are in this world, and because they know the self is empty when confronted with another consciousness directed at the self, and that they are being fatally damaged by the world which they have created.

This awareness is the substrate comprising today's knowledge. We cannot extract either a way of living, or art, or expression from anything but it.

Humans were complacent when so-called "holistic knowledge" was within their reach. As Sartre says:

"A philosophy is first of all a particular way in which the arising class becomes conscious of itself."

And in the era of bourgeois philosophy the myth of universality was positioned as knowledge. Even now, it is possible to languish in this phase of knowledge as a bourgeois ideology. Why? Because the world is still under the control of the bourgeoisie.

The reason for EXPO '70 theme's being "**Progress and Harmony for Mankind**" is not because of clever word plays, nor out of lack of shame. It is, truthfully, a consequence of their ideology.

For example, Kenzo Tange is a symbolic presence of EXPO '70. It is clear from looking at his progression how he has continued to faithfully express bourgeois ideology. The criticism often expressed that his spaces do not bring about actual wholeness but start from apparent wholeness is spot on.

Instead of continuing to strive to reach the unattainable holistic knowledge, he merely substitutes an ideology which is no more than a simple principle of the specific and particular for the holistic. Consequently, regardless of all his erudition and genius, a holistic completeness is absent, and what is left is a reliance on specific idiosyncrasy. If this ideology were to be destroyed, his spaces too would collapse and end up in ruins, the rubble of specificity.

Therefore, so long as the plans for the future which come out of him and his school of architecture are not open to true knowledge as they face that future, then they will never bring about a novelty of substance for human beings beyond the superficial. Their limited knowledge may be effective within the realm of specific, particular fields, but even in those specific fields, it will only perform a technological role, and the absence of a philosophy of human beings and the world will undoubtedly eventually render it invalid.

I once gave high praise to an architect in an essay on his work for his attempt to enclose, to achieve completeness, to create an autonomous space that was completely inward-looking. That was because it became clear that the more one encloses, and the more completely the space is absolutely isolated from the outside, the more clearer that there is a space left within the larger space, and because early signs of a holism which had to be attained within that remaining space were already starting to appear.

That was because he experimentally limited the area of the action of his knowledge, and because he was aware of the rupture with the wholeness and because he was aware of the fissure between it and wholeness, he treated the creation of wholeness as something unknowable, an unknown nirvana on the far side.

There is a practical reality to this method, but something which is impossible for sociologists who go around saying “Right, everyone, now the information age is upon us. Computers will lead to more leisure and then design will be freed up” to understand.

I repeat. The question lies within us.

Modern Design, Anti-Humanism, and Communication

Modern design probably has nothing to offer us. Variation is possible, and the degree of refinement will improve no doubt. I have no choice but to deny the knowledge that emerges from within the general praxis and that governs modern design.

Knowledge in modern design converges symbolically on the debate about the future, but this debate does not at all attempt to completely liberate human beings. It has the vocabulary of dreams, of symbols, of the existential. But these are no more than phony trickery.

Designers are only interested in systems, and believe that these systems are “for humans.” However, systems in the end eliminate humans. At least when we have the sagacity to understand this structure, the anti-humanism will play the role of the sharp surgeon’s knife that exposes the conflicts between structure and the existential, and makes it possible to grasp the opportunity for a realization of a holistic totality.

The reason why this kind of knowledge does not manifest itself as an anti-humanistic ideology in the field of design is because there is an illusion that design has always affirmed humans through utility. Even utility has a double meaning. That is why the recognition that “humans do not exist” and “they are caused to exist” has validity.

And when function used to be cited as a decisive factor, it operated in parallel with human liberation. But once it was attempted to extract functions of functions of functions as a structure which determines the whole, it no longer has anything to do

with humanism. Humans become targets for measurement, and what spills out of this measurement — color, shape, light, and so on, which are not deciding factors in the masterplan — can hardly be equivalent to the quality of being human, or as *Gemit* [“mind”].

That is to mix up mathematics and the plastic arts. Modern design is no more than multi-dimensional functionalism. However, if its anti-human structure can be clarified, that would not be a corruption of knowledge. Degeneration begins by substituting humanism with it.

New design exhibits a novel structure within the very conflict between anti-human structure and the specific particular existential state. The distinction between what is measured and what is not measured and a new rationality of that which cannot be measured are predicated. The holistic knowledge which I have been alluding to up till now is what gives them the correct framework, and possibilities to the research and practice of them.

The same state of affairs prevails in graphic design. Graphic designers, despite their verbosity, do not take into account the knowledge which treats humans holistically in their designs. They are limited in all their work to sensory representation and the problem of specific particularized expression. This results in the closing of the torus, and that is why the JAAC exhibition ends up as a museum of design devoted to a fiction.

If fiction was stated as the object from the outset, then it should be possible for it to revive as art. The imitation of art in the shape of design appears as a natural result of consciousness, not of slavish copying. However, for me, art is the sending of signals at the fringes for the sake of humans and their world whilst knowing that beauty is kaput. I hear in art the signals from a holistic knowledge.

I doubt whether there was anybody among those designers who drew and displayed the anti-war posters at the JAAC exhibition who had sufficiently keen self-awareness to see that it was ineffective. If they had, as Sottsass did as mentioned above, in raising his consciousness to the existence of a solitary Vietnamese escaping across the marsh mentioned above, seen the world and themselves from a holistic perspective, they should have realized how hollow the words “anti-war” were.

I am not saying that one must not draw anti-war posters. But in order to write “anti-war” in the face of this vacuous hollowness this should surely involve realizing the reality of graphic design, or communication, as part of their own praxis. If this is not solved in a practical way, then drawing anti-war posters is tantamount to the corruption of knowledge. And they even autographed them.

They are not aware of the danger of these autographs, of thrusting their lived selves out on the world. The JAAC is the graveyard of knowledge and in that sense is a complete failure. In the area of graphic design, this calls for an emancipation at the level of communication.

What is left after shutting a poster up in a specific, particular area of visual representation is technique, and reality does not change. All they are doing is following in the footsteps of art which aims at holistic knowledge from the outset and creates signals of concrete objects full of the absurd.

However, seizing back communication from the logistics mechanism of commercial goods to the human sphere is a basic condition which will make its revival as communicational design possible. Unless designers live by a knowledge which aims at a holistic vision, they will hit a wall which neither information technology nor techniques of artistic expression can breach — the wall of conflict between the world and existence. The wall cannot be surmounted without going via their own subjective praxis. Only then will the message start to have reality and the structure of design start to change.

Recapture the media, or if that is not possible, recreate it.

This is the only road which can currently open up communications between humans. If design does not at a minimum mount a recovery from this essential alienation, it is because it is making capitalist ideology its structure, and because it does not try to create a structure founded in the contradictions between people and the world.

The deluded impression that the anti-war posters exhibited at the JAAC exhibition are a statement about presence, about existence, is the worst possible situation.

There are also some young people who are trying to revive design through the praxis of making their own posters and posting them on public streets. To think that this is a political act is a mistake. Rather, they are trying to tackle design within the holistic vision of knowledge.

Or to put it another way, they are starting to grasp that, firstly, there is a particular specific existence for which there is no other word but absolute, and, simultaneously, that there is a conflict because the absolute disappears inside the structural nature of the world; under the illumination of this knowledge, it becomes clear that what up to now has been called “design” is simply a particular specific technology.

No matter how intricate or how wretched these posters appear compared with the showiness of commercials, these young designers had no alternative but to choose this method of making an effort to restore communications. I see in this approach the rehabilitation of designers.

Universities, EXPO '70, and the Ideology of Knowledge

The corruption and degeneration of knowledge has now completely taken over the universities. So long as The University of Tokyo, symbolic in the existence of academia, continues with this structure, then it deserves to collapse. Today, whether there is any meaning to the media of university education should be examined. But at least through the collapse of The University of Tokyo a dent will be made in the denial of degenerated, corrupted knowledge itself.

At the same time, degeneration and corruption is also being revealed in EXPO '70. There is no topic as appropriate to thinking about the problem of knowledge today as Expo. It has led to concepts dealing with holistic knowledge in the context of the world and humans raising awareness again of the debate over class theory, and through this it has also become a place to test the determination of knowledge as ideology.

The Expo has two meanings in today's Japan:

1. **The reorganization and reinforcement of culture by bourgeois ideology.**
2. **A strategic move in relation to the Anpo protests of 1970.**

The first was the primary motive for hosting Expo; the second, hosting it in 1970, also had the strategic sense of taking into account the Anpo protests. The first point is deeply connected with the second and, combined, they form a powerful capitalist offensive.

They firstly attempt to completely reorganize all cultural elites on the side of the establishment. Ideologues position cultural elites as the standard bearers of Expo, and give it a civilizational significance, but ultimately it is predicated on a social structure organized by monopoly capital.

This work on the establishment side then moves relentlessly forward — elite architects starting with Kenzo Tange and including Sachio Otani, Arata Isozaki and others; designers led by Kobei Sugiura, Kiyoshi Awazu and Shigeo Fukuda; screenwriters such as Toshio Matsumoto and Hiroshi Teshigahara, but also, on the other hand, Sakyu Komatsu and others active in the Vietnam anti-war movements under the Beheiren — all of them were dragooned into Expo.

There are, of course, some people who view those who were left out, whether architects or designers, as losers.

In fact, they should realize how deeply rooted the problem that Expo is presenting them if the holistic knowledge required to see Expo is somewhere in a remote corner of their lives. For instance, if design is the recovery of communication, and if they have inside them an accurate image of ordinary people as human beings in the world — both historically and theoretically (and realistically) — then there should be a fundamental denial of the culture, communication, or the Expo-centered communication network which regiments humans in the direction of culture.

The same applies to technology. I believe that architects and designers have now lost forever the opportunity to rehabilitate themselves. What they have lost is inside of them, and to that extent recovery is impossible.

“Basically, it’s just a party/festival.” I heard this many times from designers participating in EXPO ’70. What they meant is that it is no big deal so I should not get so upset. It also means that a huge amount of money will be spent on it so they should “do what they want” there in part.

What I see in this is their awareness of culture. What they “want to do” fundamentally does not contradict this culture, or rather, because it is just neutral technology, ergo, it is also of the same essence.

So it is only natural that those who have succeeded in bourgeois society, such as Kenzo Tange and his ilk, who from quite soon after WWII have clearly articulated a capitalist ideology and have created spaces in various forms on the back of it, should promote this view.

It grieves me that the concept of culture which the likes of Kiyoshi Awazu and Arata Isozaki have, let alone ideologues such as Hidetoshi Kato, who sees in EXPO ’70 a third frontier of culture, amounts to this.

In the criticism of the symposium which they conducted under the rubric of **EXPOSE ’68**, I pointed out that what had the closest connection with the intrinsically human would not appear at all in Expo, and I alluded to the vacuousness of the method which the EXPOSE ’68 avant-garde group employed. This was because I saw an absence of thinking about culture; a degenerated, corrupted knowledge that was beyond help.

The reason that criticism of Expo has become so difficult is because the true distinction between popular culture which the Establishment has regimented through communication and popular culture has not been made. By “people” I mean here each human’s actual existential being, living with the authenticity of his or her own feelings, and who is not controlled by the knowledge prevalent in ideology around the world.

We are painfully aware of the difficulty of the fight. All these things push us toward a holistic knowledge, or *chi*. In all fields of endeavor, we must **provoke** a challenge in the direction of this goal. Even if it is via a terribly roundabout sophistication!

Editorial Afterword

As **PROVOKE** is a pretty ambitious title, one might have expected it to be full of stimulating political content, but anyway this is what it has turned out as.

Of course, we indulged in plenty of wondering about *what if we had done this, or perhaps we should have tried that*, and so forth, but the truth is that we had no choice but to start from where we did, namely here. In that sense, it is probably a fair reflection of where each of the four of us was coming from.

Haneda, Sasebo, Okinawa, the “Bei-tan” accident — the era had started to take on a political dimension. That continued unchecked directly towards 1970, the year of the Osaka EXPO and the Anpo protests, so a sort of climax should have been reached.

How **PROVOKE** will change within that historical process and what will become of it when the 1970’s have passed is an open question, but I do not want to be disheartened; I would prefer to see the future as a positive challenge. If it turns out that **PROVOKE** fails to inspire, so be it; the intention is that at that point we will cease publication without a glance back and with no regrets.

How to close the gap between politics and art?

This is an ancient problem, but also a modern one, and one which of course has “actuality” even now.

However, I have little interest in solving it at the level of fundamental principles because hasty, word-based solutions always contain lies. And, above all, it is because a proper resolution can probably only be obtained by living through history as it unravels.

For the time being, all we can do is accept the contradiction between politics and the act of creating something, and live our lives amidst that tension as best we can. I do not believe that there is much else we can do.

For myself — I cannot speak for anyone else — I want to act, based on a clear-cut dualism:

- **Participating actively in politics**, and
- **Taking photos.**

Daido Moriyama will join us from the next issue.

In the hope that the vocabulary of PROVOKE will spread far and wide...

PROVOKE // Provocative Materials for Thought

No. 2 (Published Quarterly)

Photography, EROS.

Takuma Nakahira

Daido Moriyama

Yutaka Takanashi

Kōji Taki

Back to feitiço

Takahiko Okada

Spread your legs wide open and wander off

Takahiko Okada

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If we reduce sex to a physiological phenomenon, and verify it through the swellings and erections caused by the engorgement of membranes, convulsions, spasms, the secretion of bodily fluids and so on, in very many instances this would all count with people today as sex without necessarily going through the normal process of courtship and bargaining between the sexes. Sexual love, though it does not extend to the whole world which erotic life pervades, can be achieved through a multitude of sexual perversions. And if, in place of physiological phenomena, sex is rendered further to just mental and sensory phenomena, it becomes apparent that the self is substituting sexual love with something unusual. Right now my interest is in the latter.

***The ruddy limbs & flaming hair
But Desire Gratified
Plants fruits of life & beauty there.
— William Blake***

It cannot be denied that, whatever the particular circumstances, fetishism, which rears its head when consciousness is reversed, gives a certain satisfaction to modern people nowadays, who are starved of sexual love. So long as it remains clinging to the surface as a superficial phenomenon, fetishism may be tolerated as a control device and a necessary evil which keeps the world stable and safe from sexual deviancy, with criminal acts at its extreme.

However, the situation is actually much more serious, to the extent that this stability is simply a house built on sand. The fetishism I alluded to may give those entranced by it an impression of vivid reality, but seen from a deeper perspective there is a strong indication that they are dozing in a fantasy inside another fantasy.

***Throughout their lives, everyone interprets dreams
while confused and deluded by false and imagined
household deities. – Dōgen***

***Who speaks of interpreting dreams within dreams?
Those who have awoken! – Ryōkan***

***I lay down my head on a pillow of grass on my
travels in this world. Even in my dreams I see
dreams. – Jichin***

***To the world of dreams my pillow of grass links
dreams. I awake with a lingering sense of loneliness.
– Ryōkan***

(Right) Isamu Wakabayashi – *1 Grenade You Can Hold (1968)*

(Left) Konrad Klapheck – *Die Kapitulation (1968)*

Sex scatters and scatters, things glitter

The excessive maturation of capitalist society, like rotting overripe fruit, causes sexual phenomena and sexual images to spread. The consciousness of every individual falls behind the Juggernaut of material progress and, simultaneously, a fictitious cultural progress is marketed in exchange for the repression of the individual's desires.

And there, the illusory polarization of sex arises, the upshot of which is the reversal into the opposite in sex.

People no longer relate to an integral whole, but start to engage with the micro-aspects of sex; none other than a mental inclination towards preparation for total absorption in fetishism.

However, I stress that the vocabulary I am employing here is not necessarily identical to fetishism in the sense of deviant sexual drives in which sexual excitement and satisfaction can merely be gained by seeing, touching, or visualizing the opposite sex's possessions or body parts aside from the genitals.

It does have fundamentally the same meaning, but I want the reader to see that it has a broader extension.

Before explaining further, an outline of fetishism may be offered through the discussions of experts. Following von Gebattel (based on Medard Boss, *Meaning and Content of Sexual Perversions*), we begin with Hirschfeld's idea of "partial attractiveness."

Von Gebattel views this "partial attractiveness" as inclusive of a normal sexual attitude toward the whole, not merely a part. Fetishism is characterized as the opposite possibility of normal sexual experience.

The creative impulse of erotic excitement moves toward an integral whole in the instant of generation; but the direction of fetishistic desire is in the destruction of that whole—its carving into parts—and the elevation of a part into an independent whole.

The object of love in fetishism is animated, endowed with a life force, and given holistic significance. “The fetishist,” von Gebattel writes, “is an entire integral whole, being none other than a complete reality, sexually emphasized and heightened real love itself...”

Seen like this, fetishism is made problematic by the desperation for wholeness created through splitting, and by the animation of the part.

This splitting—this mirroring of circumstances—is the putrefaction of sex. In its extreme form it becomes indiscriminate animation of the object.

“Animation” boils down to “activation.” Though it sounds powerful, it includes the drive toward *animatism*—the primitive attribution of life-force to inanimate objects—an attempt to stave off the fear that sex’s appeal has been lost.

Fetishism – breathing life into it

Images repeatedly pumped out by the mass media plant strange fixations in people's minds, creating instant adulation for transient projections.

Even without awareness, people immediately fetishize the image.

Recently, commercialized leisure facilities have mastered the exploitation of modern Man’s fetishistic tendencies. Discotheques, for example: everything seen, felt, and heard stimulates brutally.

Segmented sound and flickering light invade.
Young people hypnotize themselves into excitement.

Fluorescent colors, strobe-like effects, artificial
psychedelic atmospheres—these induce a state akin
to LSD experiences, where form and color
disintegrate and vividness seems to arise from within.

This reveals that beneath technological progress lies
a primitive consciousness.

Thus competing fetishisms invade daily emotional
life.

Life-giving to artificial objects without self-critical
awareness runs parallel to attributing life-force to
information systems.

Through this, objects are elevated to fetish status
and begin to infiltrate.

Ultimately this is the phenomenon of the reversal of
consciousness: people are controlled by the results of
their own actions.

Unable to grasp the unified world-image, desire
aimlessly elevates itself and acquires a life of its own.

The crisis of losing reality generates obsession and a
desperate reaching for objects that can be “fully
felt,” triggering physiological stimulation and
self-hypnosis.

This effort to excite the senses through animating the
object is tied to deeming the emphasized part as a
symbol of the whole.

If that is no good, nothing is.

Risqué partialism

When negotiating the whole is abandoned, people justify themselves violently by deifying the object. The deified part becomes the individual's whole world, while everything else becomes meaningless.

The more tightly one clings to the emphasized part, the more all other specificity is destroyed.

Repressed spontaneity leads to overwrought feeling and decay.

Evidence of fetishism's grip is seen in the construction of fake realities where mood alone floats in the void.

Products connected graphically to sexual imagery become instinctive fetishes, but later the *feelings* projected by objects become the fetish.

Capabilities, attitudes, expression, character—these become fetishistic material.

In extreme cases, everything is turned into material for paranoiac desire.

Even in intercourse itself, an excess desire for perfect possession leads to frustration, fantasy, and escape.

Sex, the last vestige of raw nature, becomes obscured by systematized irrationality.

Modern sexual attitudes are structured but primitive. Thus we return to *feitiço*—to fetishism’s origins.

Portuguese navigators saw African natives worship inanimate objects—teeth, nails, wood, shells—and called these *feitiço* (“charms”). Catholics already had icons and relics as *feitiço*, so the term extended to anything worshipped.

The roots of modern fetishization of sex lie here.

Eros is for sale on the Shinto mini-altars in department stores

Freud is invoked here. Von Ehrenfels divided sexual mores into “natural” and “cultural” (1908).

“Cultural” sexual morality represses instincts, leading to neuroses—substitute phenomena for repressed sexuality.

Freud stressed that sexual instincts seek pleasure, not reproduction. Civilization evolves by restricting instincts:

1. Free sexual instinct
2. Repression except reproduction
3. Monogamist restriction to reproduction

Modern mores fall into (3). Struggling inside this system changes nothing unless its foundation is destroyed.

Neurotics suppress instincts only superficially and at great inner cost.

Freud distinguishes **sublimation** (redirected instincts) and **fixation** (obstinate, unserviceable attachment). Sublimation may annihilate reality. Fixation is a “deep-rooted” block.

Rebellion and Resistance – it is all over if these are repressed

To understand fetishization we must consider sex as a commodity under capitalism, as Marx details in *Capital*.

Products acquire a “mysterious” character when produced as commodities—social relations appear as relations between things.

Commodity-fetishism parallels sexual fetishism: products gain life-like autonomy.

Fetishism as destructive reaction

Von Gebattel says fetishism is a destructive reaction against the natural composition of erotic reality—“rebellion and resistance.”

Thus, we must free fetishism from voodoo enchantment, seize raw material, and transpose it into corresponding forms.

But neurosis and fiction grow independently;
understanding alone cannot produce force.

Accepting the body is essential. Accepting substance
leads to renewed action; denying the self; resisting
this dynamism determines whether reality comes.

EROS: four examples studied

Mistrust of love has become ordinary. But pushing
this mistrust to extremity reveals something
fundamental.

Eros is uncivilized and primitive—an unknown
element remaining despite civilization, flowing in the
dark underside of the world.

EROS does not simply mean sexuality; it includes
the emergence of images from quiet presences in the
night, taking residence in the soul.

False images layered over faded real images may be
supported by instinctual EROS.

Shattered personal connections may awaken nature
hidden behind a veil.

But EROS is also wilderness.

We are not interested in indulgent ennui. Our quest
is the logic of flesh and spirit under civilization's
repression.

Spread your legs wide open and wander off

No need to rush down the road.
Those who fear making mistakes always perish.
The value they have to threaten the morrow is an illusion.
If you freeze the wind's shadow, you will flinch at its vulgarity...
No need to rush down the road.
But you should connect with reality vertically.

Spread your legs wide, solemnly, and
keep wandering through the imaginary steppe.

Don't try to discover your purpose in a rush.
Face those things which should be kept secret.
Tolerate the forks of trees torn asunder, no tears...

Let the pain in your beating chest deepen. Then
you will descend alone into that lonely abyss.

It is the river of death so you can make headway.
If you last and have lost everything, don't speak.
Look at the birds flying silently like the blue sky.
Yourself deceived by the promises you seek...
No need to rush down the road.

Editorial Afterword

We present Issue 2 of PROVOKE. We apologize for the slightly overdue publication of this quarterly, as Issue No. 1 was published on 1 November last year.

After the first issue, we received many comments and much criticism, and are surprised by the unexpected significance of what we attempted.

For this issue, we chose the short word “EROS” as a unifying theme, but each of us struggled with the semantic breadth of the word.

We accept the criticisms humbly and intend to adapt ourselves while continuing to publish regularly.

The next issue is expected at the end of May.

PROVOKE // Provocative Materials for Thought

No. 3 (Published Quarterly)

Provocative Fragments for Photography

Gōzō Yoshimasu

Photographs

Daido Moriyama
Takuma Nakahira

Poem and Essay

Provocative Fragments for Photography — Gōzō Yoshimasu
Don't draw the now with points and lines — Takahiko Okada

Editorial Afterword

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Provocative Fragments for Photography

Gōzō Yoshimasu

To photographers —

With your golden spears you are piercing the skull of your dog, and
Your Alps resemble breasts but
That is not the question...

I wrote these few lines of poetry on 10 March 1969,
but they are even more impenetrable now.
Sometimes, if you don't set out to kill two or three living things,
or two or three people,
then how can an expression be made!

As this thought brushes past like a shaft of light,
I shall write further.
I have no idea which part of my brain this shaft of light burned through,
or whether it left an abrasion.
But whether a blade was involved cannot be proven from the wound.

All you do is press the shutter, that's all you have to do...

Once there was this terrible song, wailing like the sirens
in the ears of the navigators.

Now the fear of Chikage Ogi's Fujica Single-8
starts to spread through my mind.

Who explained that hole disappearing into the subway?
Now our brain sits on top our necks rumbling with a single shudder
floating around like algae.

Brain and head float adrift.
I sink into further despair because sometimes, for no reason,
it smirks.

Maybe it is in love.

Suntory, Toshiba Unicolor TV.

It was a fierce light that seemed as though it would burn out in a few seconds.

Personally, all I yearn after is elegance and refinement.

Because it smirks, OK.

Boss, put on your loincloth with the tiger drawn on it.

The fear of Chikage Ogi's Fujica Single-S is overwhelming.

You'll get hooked in no time!

"Just press the shutter. That's all you have to do."

According to democracy, the sun is water.

According to democracy, water is the sun.

According to democracy, apart from human beings there's no problem.

Say, no!

Down with eroticism!

*

My own Sanyo Proto,

and my own magnificent Linhof.

I am an ogler,

so sometimes I get on a plane and go and gaze at the amazing blue sky.

In the plane, with the young Hibari Misora singing *Echigo Jishi*,

it would be so GREAT doing a backflip inside the plane.

My own Olympus-Pen.

Taking pictures with my left hand!

Pen, pen, pen — what are you spouting?

It doesn't bloody rhyme!

Olympus-Pen, Irving Penn,
Avedon Penn, Kenbishi — throw them all out into space.
Off on a navigation again.
Oh no, self-recrimination again.

They are all still here — it's enough to make you weep.
You idiot, you idiot, you idiot...

Like the marvelous Arabic numeral **7**,
embracing my own solitary loneliness,
as I climb up to the scaffold,
as I climb up like the sun suspended by a string,

Desperately climbing...
then everything climbs up,
everything climbs in a frenzy.

They were my strings.
The Buddha in Paradise pulling the strings went crazy.
Aaah — I was dropped into hell.

I write, "*The sun drowns.*"
I write, "*The world ate it.*"

I hear a faint sound.

I have taken a walk around —
Right, let's head for home.

The golden shutter, wearing a white shirt.
My own waltz awaits.

Right! Buy some sake...

(14 June 1969)

Don't draw the now with points and lines

Takahiko Okada

Where the hell is your kingdom?
When quizzed about it,
I am soon overcome with the nervous vomiting of perspective,
and thirst to want to give a dense answer using points and lines.

There was a time of sowing seeds
when I could drink the world with my eyes,
and the journey was sober, but
it's no good.

I just end up knitting together a stark emptiness
melting through from my skin to my insides.

Things that can be grasped
and things that cannot be foreseen
interweave and form this arc;
the only difference between night and day
is the amount of blue.

The squalid city billows with
the too-vast inside of the tent, and
the force of the flapping sail
envelop the helixes in my ears
and gradually spread across my eyeballs.

I can't grasp the outline,
the horses of an aimless dream.

Where the hell is your kingdom?
I keep asking —

Now I am
inside the dove's breast filled with the wind,
small and motionless,
the swelling consumed by movement and flapping of wings,
pierced through,

filling like a balloon,
opening like a shell,

then ending up overflowing —

And so long as I aspire to a kingdom on this near shore —

The fragrance of flower pistils,
the moist sea under the clouds,
the silhouettes of agitated birds,
the call of the hippopotamus.

From the grind of drawing the gentle bay-like curves of a woman
get right away!

And then immediately,
amplify the transparent body more than it is shattered!

The kingdom is not a metaphor,
so draping it on points and lines
after ripping it into vital organs and fluids
is the best that can be expected.

Breath swells deep in the bosom
and gently floats —
arrows loose fire into the void
and steal past the war chariots of hell.

You should stand large astride the city.
Hey, come over here!

Editorial Afterword

PROVOKE 3 came out very late for a particular reason. The reason is connected to ourselves, the circumstances, and due to creative reasons.

It is definitely not something that will go away, but we believe that the only way we can tackle this problem is to go on issuing PROVOKE.

To catch up with the delay, Issue No. 4 will probably appear at the beginning of October, in line with the initial quarterly schedule.

Collectives are a loose form of organization. While in conversation somewhere, I was asked what precisely are the bonds which link this group.

Although I felt I could not give a ready answer, I explained it as follows:

The four photographers' photos are in four different styles. There is no connection between their methods. In fact, they are clearly at loggerheads.

However, when it comes to the question *"What could the photos which are between us and the world become?"* they are almost identical.

There is no illusion here. We do not think that the photos will go that far, but we know that there is a raw layer of meaning about the world which only the photos bring out.

Not scientific, not investigative,
not aesthetic technique —
but a **taste of the world**,
an intangible totality beyond.

Examples:

- Nakahira continued the theme of “contemporaneousness” in *Design* magazine.
- Moriyama publicized a method of drawing out reality freshly from the *Schein* — as a single pre-made poster.
- Takanashi, through dangerous beauty, forced us to stop predicting whether the world was floating or sinking.

All of this shows our ceaseless search for where we stand in these strange times.

This unease, and the awareness that we must go as far as we can under our own steam,
is what brings us together
but also what puts us at odds.

Collectives can unify,
but they also tear apart.

We are living in a time where we must *do something*.
A time in which the meaning of art and expression
is destroyed and then reconstituted.

We have no desire to produce “good work” as judged by past values.
It has no value for us.

The future holds little meaning.
We can capture current circumstances,
but the future is invisible.

We turn our backs on officially approved “contemporaneity,”
in the true sense of Nakahira’s question:
“What is contemporaneousness?”

Our lack of strength,
the daily ominousness,
saps our power.

But **PROVOKE** is proof we believe in its importance.

Our works will be accused of not going far enough.
But we are content that these “fragments,”
the shards of our spirit and reality,
are slivers of no consequence.

This project is not a comprehensive record,
nor a complete account.
That would be a separate project.

Someone accused me of “absolutizing” the 70s.
A grotesque error.
But regardless, the coming season will be
a trial of the spirit.

We may have to intensify our internal contradictions.
History is inside us —
and it will push us into the streets.

Those endeavors,
and what we probe in PROVOKE,
will make a connection deep inside us.

For these reasons,
we will confine ourselves to producing fragments —
bitter ones —
for the time being.

(Kōji Taki)