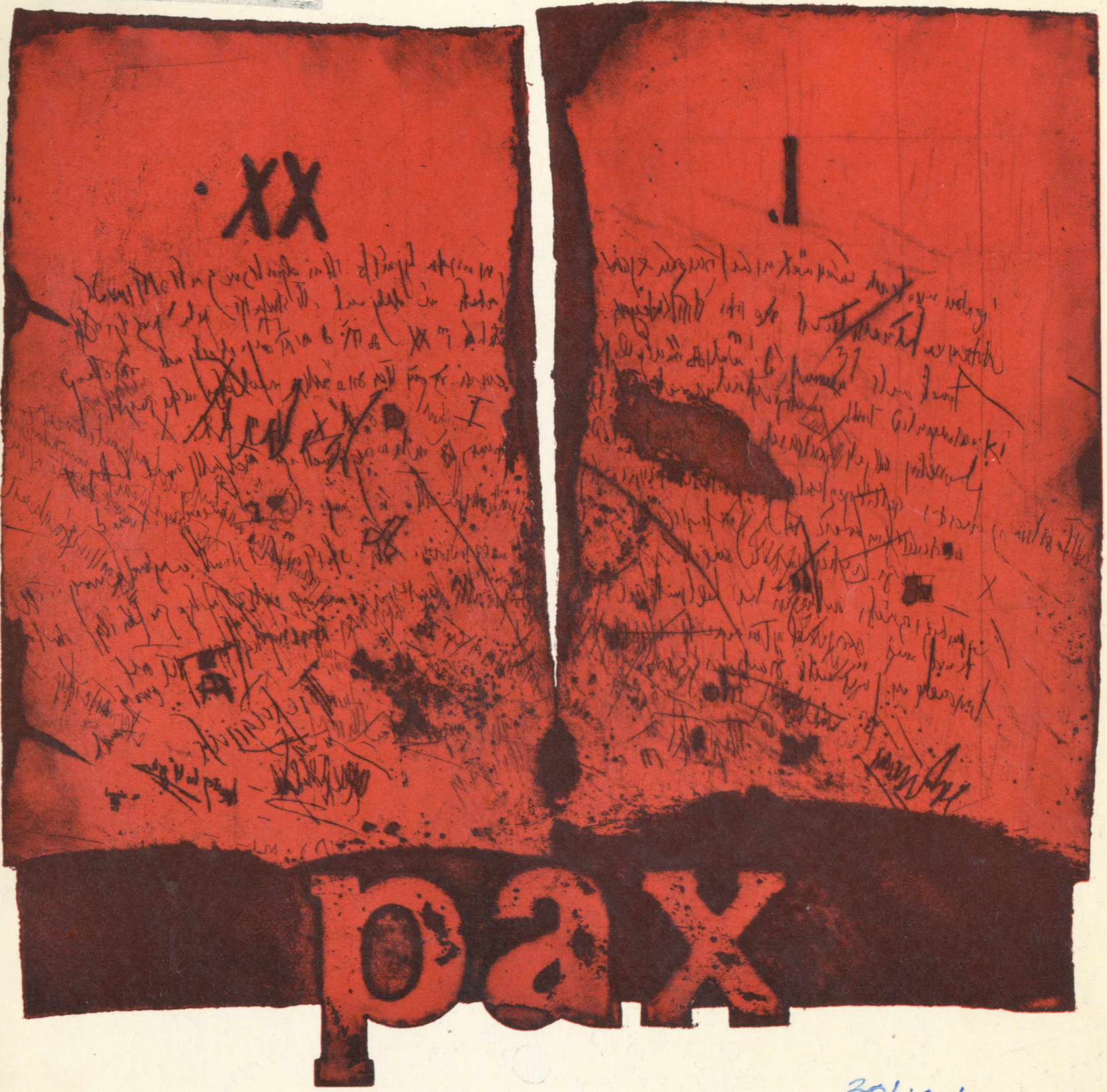


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Pacem in Terris II: Drawing by Janez Bernik
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Robert Jungk,

with whom this discussion took place around the conference table of the Center, is the director of Mankind 2000 International in Vienna, Austria. Among the staff members talking with Mr. Jungk were: Robert M. Hutchins, Scott Buchanan, Harvey Wheeler, W. H. Ferry, Linus Pauling, Hallock Hoffman, and Gerald H. Gottlieb. See *Center Diary: 17* for other papers concerned with "Possible Futures."

The Need for Social Invention

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Jungk: Five years ago I began a long voyage in search of the future and in search of people concerned with the future. The proliferation of studies of the future is much greater than most people imagine; what is surprising is the lack of cooperation and interaction among the groups engaged in this work. One of the reasons, of course, is that the field is new. It seems to be in the same state that sociology was in fifty years ago.

It would be helpful to establish some "switchboards" so that the people involved in the subject could know about each other's research and findings. Some of the main tasks would be to develop common norms, to compare and contrast the different methods of studying the future, and to establish a common semantic base so that, for example, the same word is not used, as it is nowadays, to mean five or six different things. Only a common language can establish common understanding.

Serious research into the future is very costly and difficult. It means gathering enormous amounts of data and employing intellectual technicians able to evaluate, compare, and use such data. This is why almost all the important work so far has been done by governments, military establishments, and large industrial firms. This is creating a dangerous monopoly. Those of us working on a smaller scale do not realize how handicapped we are in trying to debate with these powerful groups on the meaning and va-

lidity of prognostic studies, for we cannot discuss them on any basis of equality.

It is urgent for this new field of research into the future to be democratized. This might be done by establishing independent look-out groups sponsored by organizations like trade unions, which can afford to do it, or by independent services within universities, or by departments within parliaments. These services could then be consulted by every group in society, either free or for a relatively modest fee. They might not be sufficiently objective at the start, but they could be one step in the direction of a more equitable distribution of power. There should also be international, inter-disciplinary look-out institutions. Experienced international public servants feel that agencies of this sort would be more successful working for but outside the United Nations because they would have a higher degree of intellectual independence; it might prove wise, in fact, to provide the United Nations with a minimum of, say, three studies by three different agencies, based on three separate evaluations of the data available on any given problem.

There should be more interest in the desirable future, and not merely with the probable or possible future. Many groups are working on the latter; there are very few looking at the desirable future. There has been little "social invention." This is unfortunate but understandable: The after-effects of totalitarian

inventions have proved to be nightmares rather than paradises; social and political processes are much more complex than earlier revolutionaries and reformers thought; contemporary intellectuals overvalue analysis of the phenomenal, factual world instead of creating new concepts; ridicule is heaped on the “visionary” by an effect-oriented society.

Social invention can be effective only when intellectual obstacles like these are removed. First, the fear of the totalitarian effects of social invention might be dispelled by creating groups devoted to multiple and permanent inventions of models for a better world. Second, social inventors might try to take advantage of the growing amount of data rather than be frightened by it. Third, serious educational reform would strengthen man’s imaginative potential. Meanwhile, before we reach the goal of producing more creative types in our schools, we might include in meetings of social planners more persons who have contrived to cling to a certain amount of creativity—artists, poets, writers; they might help to supply the imaginative quality that is now lacking in almost all social planning.

We still have a choice. To sit back and say, “Let the future take care of itself,” may lead us directly—if it has not already done so—into a new kind of totalitarian society. We should not commit what Dennis Gabor has called the “second *trahison des clercs*”; that is, as intellectuals, to deny the call that has come to us to have useful visions of the future. This cannot be done piecemeal. It can only be done by work as thorough, as professional, and as sophisticated as that of the military-industrial establishments and the other groups that are now in power.

Hutchins: The question of what a desirable future may be, within the limits of the possible, is not open to the same kind of scientific investigation and computerization of data that the people who are concerned only with the probable and possible future engage in, is it?

Jungk: No, but too many of the people who are interested in a desirable future try to project it with no aid from scientific tools, and this makes them less effective and their work less real. It is like trusting,

in an age that possesses telescopes, only what you can see with your own unaided eyes. You can see many things with your own eyes that you cannot see with a telescope, but if you are in competition with groups using telescopes, you can no longer afford to rely only on your own eyes.

Buchanan: There seems to be a new style of prognostication at present, all based on exponential curves, exponential functions, growth curves, and the like. Is there any method by which one may choose the curves he will follow in his extrapolations? I don’t mean to reduce the study of the future to extrapolation alone, but shouldn’t there be something besides extrapolation from factual data alone? Is there any method by which the various functions can be brought into something like an ecology of research? Is there any way of talking about side-effects and interrelations between functions?

Jungk: There are many new methods. There is the method of scenario writing. There is the method of trying to track down diffusion rates of invention. The scenario method uses imagination in trying to invent or think about possible alternative futures. The diffusion method doesn’t extrapolate only directly or in a straight line but also takes side-effects into consideration. It is a pity that there has been so little comparison of the various methods. There should also be a combination of methods, and even an invention of new methods. Finally, there should be studies comparing the predictions of, say, fifty years ago with what actually happened, and there has been almost none of these.

Wheeler: What is new about studies of the future? Haven’t we just been discussing *planning*, and the way in which new equipment and new developments in mathematical logic can be used?

Jungk: What is new is that this can be the first inter-disciplinary discipline; it can be the creation of a whole new way of looking at the world. A proper study of the future breaks down all the old artificial disciplines, which are just not valid any more. Many people are convinced that we must now advance to

a new level of universal knowledge, in which at every moment one must think about the relationship of every piece of knowledge to all other pieces of knowledge. This is the “newest” thing in the studies of the future. It goes far beyond the utilitarian approach of planning. It is more than extrapolations of single disciplines. It is really concerned with the whole of knowledge.

Wheeler: What about the philosophy of time? I don't understand time very well. It is like historicism. When one tries to look ahead, it seems to me one has almost the same problem as when one tries to look back in an effort to identify the issues that once excited people.

Jungk: How much are we a “prisoner of the present”? How much is everything that we want to talk about for the future only projections of the present? I used to think that by an effort of the imagination one could actually jump out of the present into something new. Now I am beginning to doubt it, because even high imagination and sudden flashes of insight may still be conditioned by what one knows and feels today. Even Einstein's creativity was to a large extent shaped by the thinking of his time. But if we are conscious of this handicap and recognize how it may affect our attitudes in our work on the future, it can make us less rigid, less narrow, and we can realize that many things may be possible even when our imaginations can't evoke them.

Ferry: All Utopias—all visions of desirable futures—are flawed, not because the Utopists ignore what the “realists” are saying and producing, but because they take them too seriously and don't recognize what they themselves represent. They think that what the realists are predicting really represents the future. As an old-line, practicing Utopist myself, I am guilty of this too. Utopists tend to take the technologists so seriously that they repeat, “Everything is now possible.” This is the wildest of over-statements. A few things are possible; not many important things are possible. It is not possible through technology and science, for example, to create understanding between the white and the black races in this country,

or between the white and black sides of the line throughout the world. It's important to recognize that many of the large decisions and the large questions about the future are outside the scope of science and technology.

Pauling: I agree with Dr. Jungk that anyone who attacks the problem of the future, even the problem of a Utopian future, must make use of all the methods of the scientists and technologists. We should recognize that these methods are not mere calculations. They are really powerful means of helping us to decide what the probable futures are for the world and to answer the question of what the desirable future for the world may be.

Ferry: Any way you look at the Negro-white situation in this country, it seems unsolvable. Tell me, how do you use these technical methods—computerized data and the rest—to attack that problem?

Jungk: I don't think one would have had to use those methods ten years ago. Without a lot of the data at that time I knew what was going to happen and I wrote about it. Prediction was not very respectable or forceful then; it was looked upon as speculation that could be discarded. But I believe there is no problem in the world that is hopeless. If you combine anticipation with imagination and if you don't attack the thing frontally but ecologically, and if you see the Negro-white problem in a much larger context than we have been doing, you should be able to devise possible solutions.

As to Utopian thinking, I think there are two kinds, one of which I no longer describe, really, as Utopian. This is thinking about things that might be possible to do but are not yet being done. On the other hand, genuine Utopian thinking is truly visionary. The comparison is like that between pure science and applied science. We must rehabilitate public understanding and appreciation of the visionary. We ought to give him back the prestige and importance he had in classical and ancient times.

Hoffman: On the matter of the democratization of information, you said that because of the large

amounts of money needed to gather, process, and analyze information the military, the government, and large private businesses have monopolized studies of the future along lines of specialized interest rather than of general significance. You suggested that information-gathering outfits should be established, attached to parliaments or the United Nations, which would undertake to service the informational needs of citizens' groups and private individuals. But this would not automatically insure the democratization you're looking for, would it? Isn't there something inherent in the very process of information-gathering and information-analysis that must also be democratized?

What could be done to insure that a new civilian-oriented Rand Corporation-type agency attached to Congress or to the United Nations would be able to break with old Rand-type assumptions, that it would broaden the range of its inquiries and speculations beyond what is already being done in these specialized planning groups? The problem of how to democratize information-gathering and -analysis seems to me much larger than simply creating a few more planning groups and telling them to diversify and widen their goals.

Jungk: I feel as you do. Even if we had a civilian Rand or a number of civilian Rands, there is a danger that we might have an intellectual elite imposing its image of the future on the people. However, we must remember that for a long time the people have not been asked to say what they think about the future. And so now, when you ask them point-blank, most of them can produce only clichés. They have been passive, they have been on the receiving side, they have been "consumers of information" for many years. As a result, they give either commonplace answers or no answers at all. But I have seen some intellectuals who, with a lot of patience and by asking the right questions and listening seriously to the answers, can revive imaginative thinking in people.

Gottlieb: The biggest problem is how planners might plan for their own survival. One of the greatest experiments we had in this country was the National Resources Planning Board. But it became

extinct very early because, among other reasons, it could not figure out a way to "sell itself" to the American public, to convince them that they needed such a planning body. What can be done to insure the perpetuity of the planning function in a society, taking planning in its broadest aspects rather than the kind of internal, parochial planning that goes on within General Electric, U.S. Steel, or whatever?

Jungk: Our efforts at planning—at thinking about the future—have been too weak and too defensive in the past. We must be defensive, of course, and fight off the forces of brutality and reaction, but I feel as though we always arrive too late. Most of my life has been spent defending the victims of fascism, or attempting to remedy a situation that was already beyond repair.

It is important to anticipate the future in order for a lot of these defensive actions to become unnecessary. If such things as national boards of resources for the future are shortsightedly discarded, maybe it is partly because we—and I take this very personally because I am what you call a "mass communicator"—have not given the people a clear enough or detailed enough picture of what a good world might be, and how important it is to manage one's resources and to do it before it is too late. I think intellectuals somehow have been sucked into the same kind of *ad hoc*, day-to-day, muddling-through attitude characteristic of the politicians, who seem to be inevitably and helplessly limited to thinking about short-range problems and short-range policies.

Looking into the future can be an extremely important tool to overcome international tension. This is why we started our project, Mankind 2000—to develop internationally valid images of peace. How can peace be? How *will* it be, beyond the fuzzy picture that pacifists and others have developed so far? Their image of peace is not much more than an absence of war. It would be important to show what could be done with the money now spent for arms and war, to create places where we could meet together and develop truly international projects, to plan, in short, how we could actually build a peace together. Thinking about the future is more than just a tool. It is an affirmative philosophy. ■