

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1965 American culture was in a state of rapid transition. U.S. military presence in Vietnam had escalated, students were marching in protest and burning their draft cards; the militant human rights activist Malcolm X had been assassinated, Martin Luther King, Jr. was becoming the leading spokesperson for the civil rights movement, and the word “hippie” appeared for the first time in print in the *San Francisco Examiner*.

In the dozen years since receiving his doctorate, Sid had produced a large number of research studies on a variety of subjects, including: ego-strength, self-image, a person’s body self-satisfaction or dissatisfaction in relation to body size and to images of the ideal female figure, the traits and aspects of healthy personality; self-disclosure in relation to a person’s age, race, gender, and their religious denomination. The year abroad included exposure to new subjects: existentialism, mystic and religious experiences, and his second and seemingly profound experience with LSD. Sid was reading psychologist William James’s *The Varieties of Religious Experience* with its discussions of mysticism, repentance, conversion, saintliness and the inclusion of excerpts from personal reports of such experiences throughout human history, unexplained by science but profoundly real to the recipient. Other books of influence to Sid’s thinking included Alan Watts’s *Psychotherapy East and West* that drew parallels from Buddhism, Taoism and Yoga to psychotherapy, and *The Joyous Cosmology: Adventures in the Chemistry of Consciousness* in which Watts describes his own pursuit of altered states through psychedelics. These books explored experiences outside the mainstream of scientific thought and explanation. Sid’s exposure



Sid in Gainesville, circa 1966

to existentialism and the works of Jean-Paul Sartre had been broadened by Ronald Laing, who had co-edited a book on Sartre's work.¹

Soon after his return to Florida Sid spoke at the Invitational Conference on Independent Learning in Milwaukee. He was assigned the task of addressing the problem of independent learning from the standpoint of Personality Theory, but he instead became engrossed with the question of fascination itself: what is independent learning and why is it a problem? Sid presents his hypothesis

that independent learning, the embodiment of the state of being fascinated, involves six stages. The first is the experience of the impasse. The next stage we will provisionally call the stage of detachment, a kind of dying. The third is immersion in oneself—an entry into one's center, one's source of experiencing. Next is an emergence, or rebirth. Fifth is the experience of new possibilities. Sixth is the selection and pursuit of one of these.²

Sid's recent return after a year abroad is viewed in such a light:

It has just occurred to me, after completing a year of sabbatical leave in England, that the process I just described is a sabbatical leave of one's mind, of one's personality structure. The academic sabbatical is a removal from one's usual surroundings, but I discovered it is easier to get out of one's surroundings than to get them out of oneself so that new surroundings can invite one into encounter. Many of my American colleagues in England successfully shielded themselves from fascination with and involvement in the English experience, because of the panic they felt when invited to let go their usual preoccupations. They carried America with them. Indeed, the phenomenon of "culture shock," long noted by anthropologists, is another dimension of the experience of leaving, not just one's country, but one's mind. One has to let the American in one die in order to become a participant in a new experience, to be reborn.³

An Objective Look at Subjectivity

Phenomenology is a school of thought that focuses on the objective study of topics usually regarded as subjective: consciousness and the content of conscious experiences, such as judgment, perception, and emotion. Although phenomenology seeks to be scientific, it doesn't approach consciousness from the perspective of clinical psychology or neurology. Phenomenologists attempt this study through systematic reflection on the essential properties and structures of experience. From a phenomenological view, experiences are reality to the experienter. Experiences such as a religious feeling of connection to a higher power or force, an unexpected ecstatic feeling not physically-based—these reports from the experienter could not be wished away by the argument that such experiences weren't scientifically detectable and that without quantifiable measurement they didn't exist. William James believed that all religions are built from the personal religious experiences of the founders of such religions.

Phenomenology chooses as a starting point for research persons in their environment, with the view that human experience cannot be isolated from the environment. According to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, a more precise name for a human being was *being-in-the-world-with-others*, which acknowledged each person as a network of interpersonal relationships.⁴ The two poles of self and

world are dialectically related. Self implies world and world self; there's neither without the other, and each is fully understandable only in relation to the other. From this viewpoint, stating that a person is *in* an environment, or asking what influence the environment has *on* a person are both simplifications. The person and the environment are an integral whole.

Six months prior to his LSD experience in London, Sid had written a brief essay, "The Mystical Dimension of Self"⁵ wherein he discusses the ability of the artist to "flip out" into a different consciousness in order to create, then return to a social state to refine and present the art. Some artists stay in the mystic state of creation constantly; others can move in and out of the state at will and with success. The history of art provides examples of both, from Van Gogh to Picasso.

California Beckons

Intellectually and culturally refreshed by his year abroad, Sid's attention became drawn to certain centers of learning on the West Coast exploring ideas that resonated with his own. Sid became aware of a self-described growth center on the northern California coastline in Big Sur Hot Springs that eventually became known as the Esalen Institute. Founded by two wealthy Stanford graduates, Michael Murphy and Richard Price, the mission of the Esalen Institute was to host workshops led by writers and therapists interested in humanistic psychology.⁶ Esalen became a well-known site for many counterculture and human potential gatherings involving encounter groups, consciousness raising, psychedelic drug experimentation, body awareness, and yoga, a wide range of activities that merged comfortably with the hippie culture that grew in the latter half of the nineteen-sixties.

Two months after his return from England Sid drove from Florida to California to participate in the programs of the Esalen Institute:⁷

Esalen Institute at Big Sur Hot Springs announces November 12-17
Sidney Jourard (University of Florida) and *Gerald Goodman* (University of California) will discuss theory and research on self-disclosure and related concepts in "A Psychology of Intimacy." Demonstrations and workshop.

Out of My American Mind

A lecture taped for Big Sur Records⁸ provides an insight into Sid's thinking following the intellectual stimulation of his year abroad. The topic was "Human Uses of Behavioral Research." He begins:

I'm a psychologist by trade; supposedly a psychologist is a scientist who aims to study human behavior, and the purpose of studying the human behavior and experience, according to the various textbooks, is to understand man's experience and behavior in order to predict it and control it. This supposedly is the charge that we psychologists have, except that I renege on it. I've been trained, like most psychologists—and I see my mission as one of understanding man—to find out what are the things that determine his being and his behavior and his experience. But it's at this point that I draw a sharp division between myself and some of my colleagues, most of my colleagues. I want to find out what are the things that could determine man, in order to subvert them, transcend them, in short, to study man with a view toward maximizing his *freedom* from determiners, his ability to transcend his past, his genetic endowment, social pressures, and to discover what his possibilities might be, and to fulfill them.

He then questions the premise of psychotherapy as an approach to healing the patient, and comments on his experiences of the previous year, recounting his view from abroad:

For years past I was very much uncomfortable with the whole field of abnormal psychology and psychiatry. I used to teach abnormal psychology, it was one of the most popular courses at the University of Florida; I'm a good lecturer. But I came gradually, through a number of experiences, to realize that what they call abnormal psychology, or psychiatric nosology, is actually a very peculiar kind of politics, an invalidation of those ways of behaving and experiencing that for one reason or another don't fit the existing social system. It's as if each society decides what range of human possibility will be regarded as sane and good for that time and place, and everything else that doesn't fit those criteria of what's sane and good are going to be disqualified and punished and regarded as evil and insane.

This growing realization that psychiatry and clinical psychology and to some extent social work and the ministry that concerns itself with pastoral counseling—the realization that people who practice this

counseling and psychotherapeutic art, that these people are political counter-revolutionaries, that they are the velvet glove at the end of the steel fist of social control—came most sharply to me in the past year when I went out of the country, spent a year in London both studying existential phenomenology and just being away from what I usually do. In that time and place being out of the country and at the same time out of my American mind, it became apparent, as a very serious professional student of man, committed to enlarging his possibilities, that if I wanted to do my job the way I was beginning to see it, I would have among other things, to reread the Marx that I studied when I was an undergraduate. Not to become a Marxist revolutionary but to reacquaint myself with Karl Marx’s perspective on how social systems work, how they come to be stratified into classes with a minority dominant class and a larger mass of people who were socialized and trained to fit certain roles in social systems that they would have to fit in order to keep the social system going in turn, to perpetuate the privilege of the few against the mystified being of the many.

This excerpt brings some clarity to Sid’s interest in maximizing a person’s freedom from various determiners that include his past, his genetic endowments, social pressures (as mentioned above) and to “discover what his possibilities might be, and to fulfill them.” The word “possibilities” seems abstract and vague, until Sid clarifies how he views the force of social conformity. The year overseas provided an objective look at the forces in American culture that worked against this maximizing of freedom. The subject of existential freedom, as theoretic as it can sound, was a core philosophy of Sidney’s life stance.

One of the things that occurred to me in my period of meditation on what I’d been doing for twenty years, was this: that the institutions have the wealth, and they hire the behavioral scientists, and they don’t spend money unless they get something in return. So you have psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists for the *institution*. They study man for the institution. Well, who then, is the student of man for the individual person? Who is the psychologist for the person? Well it turns out to be the psychotherapist, but the psychotherapist has priced himself way beyond the range of the individual. And so a very worthwhile mission is for more and more physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists and anthropologists to study man for the individual instead of the institution.