

ALFRED KORZYBSKI MEMORIAL LECTURE 1990

**No Dinosaurs on the Ark
Science, Language and Art in Evolving Human Culture**

by

Warren Robbins

Founder of the National Museum of African Art and of the Center for Cross-Cultural Communication

[At the Yale Club of New York City, November 30, 1990]

Editor's Note:

Mr. Robbins' lecture was actually two separate lectures which he related with a title encompassing his life-long interest in both communication and art. The first part was a presentation of his own pedagogical approach to the problems of education and communication addressed by General Semantics. Part II was a separate, but not unrelated, slide presentation of African art in juxtaposition with works by Picasso, Klee, and other 20th century artists who were heavily influenced by African art.

The text of Part I has been cast in a "Cubist Poetry" format devised by Robbins to connote emphasis and subordination of ideas by placement and spacing on the page, suggesting intonation and pace characteristic of aural presentations. If this format had been converted by the editors of the Bulletin to conventional rectangular page-filling form, it would have failed ignominiously to reproduce for readers the tempo and flavor of its original presentation. "The whole idea of the format," Robbins says, "is to have the reader 'hear' what is being silently read."

Robbins' informal, less than rigorous use of terms such as *is* (of identity), mind, reality, idea, spiritual, essence, psyche, concept, etc. caused the editors some consternation for neuro-linguistic or general epistemological reasons. But we decided that, since we could never have either put together such a lecture-picture-show, or rewritten his text in non-Aristotelian "correctness", the best course was to say simply: here it is, get some of the 'feel' of it. And for the rest, you would have had to have been there!

Just as Marshall McLuhan's
"Medium is the Message"

one might well observe
that the title of this presentation alone
— all by itself —
is broad enough
to constitute my message

suggesting as it does
treatment of the full gamut of human experience
— and all within 30 minutes.

Indeed, the title was chosen to reflect
the inter-connectedness and interplay
of its several components:

Science, Language, Art, and Culture

(we'll get to Noah and the Dinosaurs later).

But mainly, the title is intended
as a frame of reference
for observations I would make
concerning cross cultural communication

with Africa in relation to European civilization
as the case in point.

My presentation will be in two parts
separate but related:

Part I:

an informal and somewhat personal
recounting of ideas that address
what I believe is the single most crucial
educational problem of our time:

How to reorient public thinking;

how to turn people's minds around
so that they become disposed
to evaluating the roots of their beliefs
according to 20th century criteria of understanding

instead of rejecting or resisting modern (scientific) understanding
on the basis of historically more limited
and perforce more naive perspectives of the past
that people hold fast to.

In searching for an effective approach
to this pedagogical dilemma,
in several facets of my own work in public education
during the past 40 years

I have integrated the ideas
of three important 20th century social scientists,
all now deceased,
who have influenced me:

The first: those of Alfred Korzybski
on language in relation to science
and what he defines as sanity for our century.

The second: the work of Leslie A. White
who was for many years
Chairman of the Department of Anthropology
at the University of Michigan

and pre-eminent today
in the American school of Cultural Anthropology.

White founded his own discipline: culturology
which focuses not so much on
the human being as the maker of culture,
the emphasis of cultural anthropology,
as on culture itself,
operating according to its own rules
of evolutionary development (thus: culturology).

The third: the ideas of Social Psychologist Hadley Cantril
whose Perception Centers
at Dartmouth and Princeton universities
have demonstrated in the most conclusive way
that assumption determines perception,
not the other way around

("Believing is seeing,"
not "Seeing is believing").

Together the writings of these three scientists
comprise, I believe,

a comprehensive approach to
understanding the human being
in relation to modern life

and a prototype orientation for modern education

(*Education for What is Real*,
as Earl Kelley titled his important little book
of some years ago).

Part II of my presentation

concerns art as a manifestation of human creativity
in whatever culture it finds expression,

in this case traditional African culture

Mostly visual,
this part of my presentation
will deal specifically with
how the sculpture of Africa,

never made as "art" per se

and originally functioning
 within its indigenous culture
 as a socio-religious — and therefore political —
 tool of communication

has taken on an entirely new communicative function
 as historical circumstances
 have projected it across cultural boundaries
 to influence profoundly and in the most direct way
 the modern art of the Western world.

I myself am the youngest of eleven children
 and, as you can well imagine,
 I grew up with a compelling need to communicate

to be heard

to have my very existence
 acknowledged

(not very easy
 when you're the youngest of eleven children).

My earliest interest in personal communication (or lack of it)
 led to a concern for problems of communication barrier in general

between parents and children;
 teachers and pupils;
 and among siblings, groups, cultures, nations.

This in turn led me
 to the investigation of language:

semantics in general as distinguished from
 the more specific "General Semantics ."

I was introduced to General Semantics
 during graduate study
 at the University of Michigan
 where, although a history major,
 I was doing ancillary work
 in Cultural Anthropology
 under Leslie White's tutelage

Specifically, I encountered the subject in 1947
 in reading Stuart Chase's *The Tyranny of Words*
 then, S.I. Hayakawa's *Language in Action*.

*[more accurately] linguistic semantics as distinguished from the more far-reaching "General Semantics".[Ed.]

Ultimately I became acquainted with Korzybski's own writings
at the 1950 GS Seminar at Great Barrington

(Korzybski himself was no longer alive then
but I did meet the artist/educator Harry Holtzman).

My introduction to General Semantics
marked a turning point in my education
for it gave me the pedagogical vocabulary
I had long been seeking
for ideas dormant within me.

For this very personal reason,
it is a special privilege
to have been included in this illustrious lecture series
memorializing Korzybski's contribution
to modern understanding.

I do not presume to include myself
among such milestone 20th century minds as
F.S.C. Northrup, Lancelot Whyte, J. Bronowski or Ashley Montagu
among others noted in the announcement
as previous lecturers in the series

or Buckminster Fuller and Henry Lee Smith who,
like Hayakawa and Holtzman, were personal mentors of mine.

Though I haven't been "in the classroom" for forty years
I regard myself as a teacher still,

considering my function
in the 20th century educative process

to be that of an interpreter
of the fundamental ideas
of the great teachers of scientific understanding
who have influenced me,

helping to bridge the gap
— that cultural lag of 50-75 years —
between the point
where a key concept is introduced in culture
by some genius

(here defined as a person of exceptional capacity
who is on the scene when culture in its own evolution
is ready for important ideas of the past
to be synthesized and built upon)

and the time
when that idea comes to pervade public understanding.

Consider, for example, the concept of Cultural Relativism
 the handmaiden of Democracy
 now widely put into practice as
 “doing your own thing.”

We have now bridged that gap in our society
 but what we seem to have ended up with
 is cultural relativism run amuck —

in which there has been
 a capitulation of standards
 by which to govern our thoughts and behavior
 and a gross misinterpretation by the public
 of both the requisites and the rewards
 of a democratic society.

Even Einstein was not an unqualified relativist.

He recognized well the need for standards
 and even he had to get
 an absolute fix on the universe
 to attach his theory to.

Or think of Korzybski's
 educationally vital differentiation
 between assumption and conclusion

best translated into present-day parlance as
 “I see where you're coming from.”

(The mere use of that phrase by the public
 can be seen as representing
 real progress in overcoming cultural lag).

And to report on the very up-to-date,
 consider what is now called “Reality Erosion”

as in the case of the Milli Vanilli tapes
 in which the public has soundly denounced
 these rock musicians
 for the creation of a false reality
 when they lip-synched their own vocals.

Such public denunciation
 can also be looked upon as progress.

Could we have here the beginnings
of popular recognition
of the dangers inherent
in the use of the "is" of identity?

Up till now, anyone could become
a "Wizard of Is"
and create his own reality.

This is all very different of course
from negative reality:

"Ain't nobody here but us chickens,"
said the fox.

But that's simply lying.

And now, I read that
they're even digging up

an archeologist is actually excavating
in a desert in California

the mammoth set of Cecil B. De Mille's
1923 silent film "The Ten Commandments".

Must this not be seen
as a highly responsible thing to do
when one considers
the havoc that could be wrought
in future academic speculation
if archaeologists of 3000 or 4000 AD
were to discover huge statues of Ramses II
and his Queen —
in California
10,000 miles away from Egypt.

Which ones would be the originals?

Does all this portend well for the future?
Will the public become
linguistically more sophisticated?

(Sometimes understanding is enhanced
through negative example.)

The late Nobel prize-winning German physicist
Werner Heisenberg
warns us in his *Principles of Quantum Theory*:

One should particularly remember that human language permits the construction of sentences which do not involve any consequences and which therefore have no content at all — in spite of the fact that these sentences produce some kind of picture in our imaginations...one should be especially careful in using the words “reality,” “actuality,” etc....

There is a story of a little boy, a deaf mute who never spoke a single word all the seven years of his young life. Nevertheless, his mother cared for him with undiminished love and tenderness. One morning as she brought him his breakfast at the dining room table, he suddenly said:

“Take this damn lousy oatmeal back to the kitchen.”

“Sweetheart,” she exclaimed,

“You can speak! I’m thrilled; I’m overjoyed!”

“But tell me,” she said,

“why didn’t you ever say anything before now?”

“Well,” he replied, “up till now, everything has been okay.”

Well, we know that
in our 20th century world,
everything is far from okay.

Gyorgy Kepes, in his essay “Scale, Structure and Rhythm”
put it this way:

There is an increasing hopelessness among many of the most sensitive and best equipped minds today. Resultless efforts have led them to conclude that whatever their honesty and knowledge, they cannot tame the fury of approaching social disasters. They live in a tense barrenness as their best feelings, their cleanest purposes and most passionate efforts become only a mockery.

And an old Arab proverb reflects such despair more concisely:

If your surroundings have gone mad
Your reason will be of no use to you.

Yet the times we are living in
for all their faults and failures
are possibly the most exciting
that have yet been experienced

during the still very brief period
that the human being has been on hand in the universe.

For we are participating
in a tremendous acceleration of knowledge.

Force-fed by science,
it is a phenomenon which, it should be stressed,
is not a thing apart from nature
but is itself an aspect of nature.

Contrary to the belief of many people,
man is not the enemy of nature.

Nor does science represent simply
man's attempt to do battle with nature,
to control and exploit it.

What others do with what science learns
is not to the detriment of science.

You can't blame an apple tree
because mean little boys
throw at each other,
the fruit it bears.

Science too
represents nature in operation.

Working through the collective, cumulative human mind,
nature changes itself.

Through science,
nature is creating
a qualitatively different
kind of human being.

"Time-binding"
is Korzybski's term for this process of
language enabled, language ennobled,
evolution of human culture.

An invaluable concept, Korzybski's
but so disarmingly simple
as to be often simply not comprehended.

Fostering understanding of what science "is"
in the evolution of human culture
reflects the life's work of the late Leslie White.

In White's phrase, "science is sciencing,"
 a particular way that the human being
 can gather, organize, evaluate, utilize, and build upon information.

In the ideal,
 science represents the human being functioning
 in the most efficient, reasonable, logical, intelligent,
 predictable, and honest way.

Yes, honest — for science demands above all
 the honesty and integrity of its findings.

Science does not go the way of superstition, hallucination,
 belief in witches, exhortation of guardian angels,
 exorcism of evil spirits

nor of the irrational confusion
 of the "reality" of fantasy (only inside the head)
 with "reality" in the verifiable external world.

There is nothing more "real" than an hallucination
 or the existence of witches
 to those who believe in them.

The question is: WHERE IS THE REALITY?

Just in the world of words
 (that Heisenberg warns us of)?

Inside our heads
 where we can create reality
 with the "is" of identity
 but with no necessary reference
 to material phenomena?

Or outside of the individual mind
 where symbolization
 must be put to the test
 of observation and reason?

Korzybski equates science with sanity
 in the title and in the contents of
 his master work *Science and Sanity*.

For him, science is sanity

if I may violate his own
 non-Aristotelian principle
 by substituting "is" for "and"

since the system of science
represents the human being functioning
in the most sane way.

Science does not pit “materialist” man
against the “spirituality” that has traditionally been regarded as
an inherent part of the “human psyche.”

There is no essential battle between science and religion,
mythologist Joseph Campbell insists.

Religion would represent the recognition
of that deeper dimension in man
that science cannot reveal to us.

But religion holds no monopoly on spirituality
and the rationality of science
is not incompatible with spirituality.

One could cite no better affirmation of this
than in the words of Albert Einstein:

The cosmic religious experience is the strongest, noblest mainspring of scientific research. The most beautiful and profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the power of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms — this knowledge, this feeling is at the center of true religiousness.

The real conflict of our time,
Joseph Campbell holds,
is not between religion and science,
but between the science of 2000 years ago
and the science of today.

To elaborate, if I may, upon Campbell’s observation:

The spiritual life of the human being
must today follow the lead of science
if, in this age, it is to continue to influence significantly
the evolution of the human mind.

The guiding principles of the spiritually motivated life
may constitute “eternal verities” for us

but the worldview as expressed in the conventional vocabulary of spirituality must keep pace with the frontiers of human comprehension, must be consistent with the findings of science as they are continually unfolding in the process of knowledge accumulation and synthesis that is the essence of human culture.

This worldview must not lag behind; not 75 years, not 2000 years, not 5000 years

For it runs counter to what it means to be a human being and to the process of human culture, if religious values are held to be incompatible with scientific understanding

It is a false dichotomy that separates the spiritual from the rational.

Human culture results from the interaction of the universal human mind with the accumulated inheritance of the past.

The individual human being, born into history at any given point, assimilates what culture proffers, contributes to the accumulation and changes it with his or her own contribution

or even modest presence

the role of the perceiver in the thing perceived being a fundamental *tenet of modern physics*.

This process of knowledge accumulation, synthesis, and preservation that Korzybski calls "time-binding" is a biological function of our species.

Just as a cow eats grass with her system producing milk, the brain of the human being "chews ideas," as it were, digests them and produces new ideas.

In other words,

in the symbolic language of ideas,
1 + 1 does not equal 2.

One idea plus a second idea
does not result in just two ideas
but in a new, third idea.

Compounded with each new generation,
“1 + 1 = 3”
is the basic mathematical formula
the basic building block
of cultural evolution.

But some ideas cause us indigestion
and most people prefer to believe
that 1 + 1 = only 2.

For such people, the first necessity
is to recognize

both within themselves as individuals
and within human culture as a whole

the process of cumulative growth.

Into whatever era
human beings are born,
they must live in accordance
with the cumulative understanding of that era.

“Reality” for the human being
must therefore be seen
as directly related to culture
in its own evolutionary process.

“Reality” cannot be established or interpreted
in terms of the static understanding
of an earlier place and time in history.

This is one of the most difficult notions
for people to grasp.

“What is reality anyway?”
asks Lily Tomlin in the words of Jane Wagner, writer of
The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe.

Possibly as good a social scientist
as Tomlin is a social satirist,
Wagner's answer to the question
as delivered by Tomlin, is

"Nothing but a collective hunch".

But "reality"
that vast and vague abstraction
that human beings project
upon their environment

must be recognized
as an ever-expanding hunch.

"Reality" is determined for each of us
as individuals or groups

not only by our separate experiences
in our lives, our culture, or our histories
(or by hallucinations which gain historical credibility)

but also by the characteristic way
that different languages
structure and determine what human beings perceive.

It is the uniquely human symbolic capacity
— the language capability —
that enables the human being to
both feed into and benefit from
the evolution of culture.

No other animal has the ability
to conceptualize,

to convey concepts to others,

and, with audible, written or painted symbols,
to pass them on (for better or for worse)
from generation to generation.

No other species can do this.
(Each generation of cats, for example, must start from scratch.)

To be sure
animals can communicate.
They can signal, they can use and respond directly to signs.

Dogs, for example, can themselves signal: danger, stay back, I want
or they can respond to signals.

A dog can respond to the command "come here."

But a dog simply cannot comprehend:

"come here on Tuesday...

at 3 o'clock...

and bring your lawyer."

(He might just show up on Monday
at 11:00 am
and without legal representation.)

In this symbolic capacity
lies not only the origin and the essence
of individual human behavior

but the basis for cultural evolution,
the building block for our evolving "universal reality"
which the human being "is" (or can be) plugged into.

Accordingly, the oldest human being
is not the one among us
who has been alive the longest biologically

but the one who comes the latest (in potential)
in the total span of human existence.

With this idea in mind,
I once addressed to a high school graduating class,
the question:

Are you seventeen
or are you 17,000 years old?

Have you grown up to reach
only your biological age
or are you prepared to be as old as
the recorded history that is available to you?

And if the latter,
are you, in your evolved mind,
only 15,000 years old,
or 12,000 years old?
(let alone, seventeen)

Human beings who are biologically older
but whose beliefs are arrested
at an earlier century's stage

of cumulative intellectual growth
and "conventional wisdom"

are culturally younger by hundreds or by thousands of years
than those whose understanding rides the rim
of our ever-expanding reality.

On Noah's ark, there were no dinosaurs,
because dinosaurs were not part of
the "reality" of Noah's time.

One cannot deny their existence in the reality of today, however.

That they roamed the earth in earlier eons
is affirmed by their skeletal remains
that have been unearthed
and placed in museums of natural history
the world over.

But for Noah, they simply did not exist.

Should we therefore
continue to root our spirituality
on the mentality and scope of understanding of a Noah
or should we make it compatible
with the understanding of science?

The "reality" of today's world is radically different
from what it was 17,000 years ago
when the first great accelerations of knowledge
began to take place.

It is radically different
from what it was in Noah's time,

or what it was 2,000 years ago
when shepherding societies
were led by wise men

ahead of their own time in their wisdom, to be sure,
but certainly way behind ours
in their understanding of the phenomenon
of being human.

The reality of today is radically different
from what it was in the world of even 300-400 years ago

just before Galileo and Newton
introduced the empirical principles
of modern science

thus changing unalterably
the way the human being evaluated the circumstances
of life and environment.

If those high school students I addressed
were pre-Galileo and pre-Newton
in their thinking
then they were 350 years younger, culturally,
than what they have the potential of being today.

(Actually now, 390 years younger,
since it was 40 years ago
that I spoke to them,
and consider how "reality" has changed
even in only those 40 years!)

Like the individual human being
who grows from infancy to adolescence to adulthood,
humanity itself has been growing from its infancy
to some future adulthood

being today still in its adolescence
and being "dragged kicking and screaming," as they say,
into what we arbitrarily call the 20th century.

Today we are riding the crest of an almost
incomprehensible exponential curve of knowledge expansion.

This curve is to be seen
in every aspect of modern culture;
in the harnessing and utilization of energy
in population growth
in speed of travel
in explosive power
and most significantly of all
in the increase in learning
by the human being.

It has been the advent of empirical science

that has set in motion
this radical expansion in knowledge

further accelerated exponentially
through the automatic printing press;
the media of radio, film, and television;
and above all, the computer

which can gather, assimilate and correlate
in an hour or a day
what it formerly took individuals
lifetimes or more to do.

We are told that there are
more scientists at work today
than in all ages of man combined
prior to our own generation;

that an estimated 90%
of all the scientists who ever lived
are living and working today;

and that knowledge is doubling every six or seven years
with the rate of increase,
increasing all the time.

Knowledge expansion has been further enhanced
by the fantastic development of instruments of perception:

telescopes and space cameras
to view the outer-reaches of space
(photography of Saturn 800,000,000 miles away!);

atomic microscopes
enabling us to see not only
organisms not visible to the naked eye,
with their fantastic micro-creatures
as horrendous as the most frightening
mythological animals of childhood fantasies

(any old microscope can do that),
but into the inner-reaches of cellular structure;

sonic scanners which enable us to "see"
with sound transformed into visual images.

This exponential development
of man's ability to perceive

and therefore to better understand nature
which has given us such great insights
not only into the "realities" of nature
but into the nature of "reality" itself

is also part of nature;
technology is also nature.

Through such instrumentation
nature is unlocking itself

with the human symbolic capacity
providing the key to secrets
which are being defined, observed,
assimilated, utilized and adjusted to.

Sensory enhancing instruments give us a reality
in the face of which
the naive oversimplifications of knowledge of the past
can no longer suffice or compete.

Yet these oversimplifications
from the infancy and the adolescence
of the human being

do compete .

They compete for the attention of the public

in our education systems,
in our political institutions,
in our churches,
in our press and media,
in our publishing houses,

and they compete on a 50-50 basis
in which it becomes a matter of
"your reality" versus "my reality".

For example,
blandly ignoring irrefutable historical evidence,
the fundamentalist (of whatever group)
says to the scientist:

"In this world of relative knowledge
you have your opinion and I have mine."

"You have your scientific theory of evolution
and I have mine — of creationism,"

All the while, the fundamentalist
 is usurping scientific terminology
 to rationalize theories
 which are completely inconsistent
 with the cumulative intelligence before us

from which the fundamentalist, ironically,
 in medicine, material convenience, and countless other ways,
 is quite ready to benefit.

Thus, the "12th century man" or the "1st century man,"
 living in the 20th century,
 is oblivious to the process
 of knowledge accumulation
 and of cultural evolution,

and through his ignorance of the cultural and historical forces
 that have shaped the human being,
 would block the flowering of the human mind
 in its own process of evolutionary growth.

Without recognition of the cumulative process of human culture
 the fundamentalist not only hoodwinks himself,
 but deludes the bewildered multitudes,

who are vainly seeking spiritual refuge
 from what the poet W. H. Auden
 has characterized as the "Age of Anxiety."

As a result, the multitudes remain bogged down
 in lesser, earlier stages of human comprehension.

* * *

The education problem I have sketchily outlined herein
 is vital to resolve

if ever we are to bring into alignment
 with the 20th — now 21st — century mind

these vast numbers of people
 who are stuck within the confines
 of the far more restricted collective human mind
 of earlier centuries.

Today, in all parts of the world
 — no less so in America —

there are virtually millions and millions of people —
fundamentalists, by whatever name —

who confine their thinking
to the time-stopping (as opposed to time-binding)
mentality of shepherd societies and the like,
no matter whether they be

highly orthodox adherents of rigid religions
believers of secular-superstitions,
practitioners of astrology,
purveyors of the warmed-up old ideas of New Age-ism,
or dupes of the fraudulence of televangelism
and political demagoguery.

Such people reject their human, natural
— shall we say “God-given” — capacity
to expand their awareness of history and culture
to observe the laws of nature
to recognize its process
to build on past knowledge
to grow — and to change — as nature changes.

And of gravest danger, geo-politically,
are whole nations of such minds
arrested in the world views of past ages
yet armed with the technology of 20th century weaponry
and reinforced by 20th century communications media

who are ready to die — in waves —
not only for the preservation
of the mentality of thousands of years ago
but more alarmingly,
for the proselytization
of that mentality today.

An incongruous, volatile situation

(reason enough to justify
a restrained military force in the Middle East
to protect not simply oil reserves,
but far more important,
the stability of the present
against a resurging onslaught of the past).

Are we swimming against the tide
with our new knowledge

(our little pockets of reason)
 while millions of people proliferate
 to solidify and perpetuate
 the perspectives of the old?

Jonas Salk
 who has turned some of his attention
 in recent years to the subject of human evolution
 would say no.

Keep swimming, would be his advice to the educator,
 and point the direction.

In a recent conversation
 I was privileged to have with him, he suggested
 that those who cannot keep pace
 with the progression of culture
 will disappear in a generation or two.

They will die out
 to be ultimately replaced by new generations
 of those prepared to live in accordance with
 the reason and wisdom
 accumulated in us all.

Mr. Robbins concluded the first part of his presentation with a demonstration of the rotating (trapezoid) window, one of the Perception devices utilized by Hadley Cantril at the Princeton University Perception Center, demonstrating the effect of assumption on perception.

Part II of Mr. Robbins' lecture was a slide presentation demonstrating the role played by traditional African sculpture in the revolutionary 20th century Western art movement, which will be illustrated in *General Semantics Bulletin #61*.

Was the relationship between the two art forms a matter of aesthetic coincidence, he asked; or of the affinity that certain artists felt for the tribal sculpture of Africa and the Pacific? Did a universal "collective unconscious" account for the remarkable similarities to be seen in the two art traditions, as the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung suggests?

With some 80 juxtapositions of African art images with works by Picasso, Braque, Matisse, Klee, Brancusi, and others he demonstrated conclusively that there is much greater evidence of direct derivation from African forms than most Western art historians and critics have been prepared to recognize and acknowledge.

BIOGRAPHY

Warren Robbins is the Founder (1964) and since 1982 Director Emeritus of the National Museum of African Art, which became a Bureau of the Smithsonian in 1979. He was also the Founder (1963) of the Center for Cross Cultural Communication, an inter-disciplinary educational institute that was the progenitor of the Museum.

A former secondary school teacher and editor-writer, Mr. Robbins served with the United States Information Agency in the American diplomatic service as an Education Advisor, Cultural Attaché, and Public Affairs Officer stationed during the years 1950 to 1960 at various posts in Germany and Austria. In Austria he published the educational journal *Erziehung* (Education), in which he included articles featuring Korzybski, Irving Lee, Hayakawa, and Stuart Chase. He attended various Institute-sponsored programs, including the 1950 Seminar on General Semantics.

The recipient of many awards and honors for his creation, almost single-handedly, of the National Museum of African Art, Mr. Robbins is the author of the two volume *African Art in American Collections* (1966, 1989); with 1,950 illustrations of some 240 different styles of traditional African sculpture, it is the most comprehensive photo survey of African Art ever produced.

The Museum of African Art, established as a private institution in 1964, was through Congressional legislation merged with the Smithsonian in 1979. Over the years, at the Museum and in extension programs, Mr. Robbins organized some 100 exhibitions of African Art, African-American Art, and African-American history, producing in addition to the afore-mentioned book, 20 catalogues, an award-winning film, and an audio-visual educational aid distributed by Encyclopedia Britannica. He has lectured at hundreds of universities, museums, and other institutions throughout the United States and in Europe and Africa. Dealing with a wide variety of cultural and educational themes, all of his publications, lectures and exhibitions reflect a strong general-semantics orientation.

Currently in preparation by Mr. Robbins are two additional publications, one on the history and the pedagogical approach of the Museum of African Art as an instrument of cross cultural education, and the other on the impact of African sculpture on modern art.

Mr. Robbins received an MA degree in History from the University of Michigan (where he also studied cultural anthropology with Leslie A. White) and a BA degree from the University of New Hampshire, which awarded him an Honorary Degree as a distinguished alumnus in 1976. Mr. Robbins is the recipient of the de Menil Rothko Chapel Medal for "Dedication to Truth and Freedom"; the Smithsonian's prestigious Joseph Henry Medal, awarded to only 13 other persons throughout its history; and the Aggrey Medal of the Phelps-Stokes Educational Fund. In 1994 he received an Outstanding Achievement Award from the University of Michigan. The library of the National Museum of African Art has been designated as the Warren M. Robbins Library.