

# The Imperfect

## I.

SOCRATES: Well then, shall we begin the enquiry in our usual manner? Whenever a number of individuals have a common name, we assume them to have also a corresponding idea or form. Do you understand me?

GLAUCON: I do.

Let us take any common instance; there are beds and tables in the world - plenty of them, are there not?

Yes.

But there are only two ideas or forms of them: one the idea of a bed, the other of a table.

True.

And the maker of either of them makes a bed or he makes a table for our use, in accordance with the idea - that is our way of speaking in this and similar instances - but no artificer makes the ideas themselves. How could he?

Impossible.

And there is another artist, I should like to know what you would say of him.

Who is he?

One who is the maker of all the works of all other workmen.

Plato, *The Republic* (c. 380 BC)

Evils, then, if those be meant which are properly so called, were not created by God; but some, although few in comparison with the order of the whole world, have resulted from His principal works, as there follow from the chief works of the carpenter such things as spiral shavings and sawdust, or as architects might appear to be the cause of the rubbish which lies around their buildings in the form of the filth which drops from the stones and the plaster.

Origen, *Contra Celsum* (c. 248 AD)

The table I write on I say exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed - meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it. There was an odour, that is, it was smelt; there was a sound, that is, it was heard; a colour or figure, and it was perceived by sight or touch. This is all that I can understand by these and the like expressions. For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that is to me perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse* is *percipi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence

out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them.

Bishop George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710)

This very table which we see white, and which we feel hard, is believed to exist, independent of our perception, and to be something external to our mind, which perceives it. Our presence bestows not being on it: our absence does not annihilate it. It preserves its existence uniform and entire, independent of the situation of intelligent beings, who perceive or contemplate it.

David Hume, *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748)

Thus our familiar table, which has roused but the slightest thoughts in us hitherto, has become a problem full of surprising possibilities.... Among these surprising possibilities, doubt suggests that perhaps there is no table at all. Philosophy, if it cannot answer so many questions as we could wish, has at least the power of asking questions which increase the interest of the world, and show the strangeness and wonder lying just below the surface even in the commonest things of daily life.

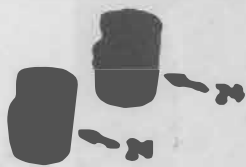
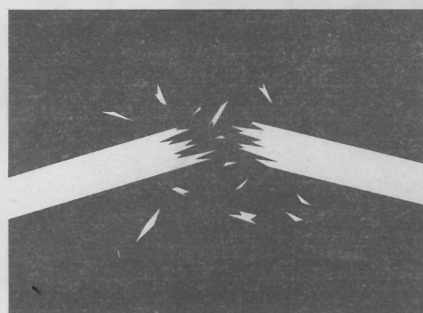
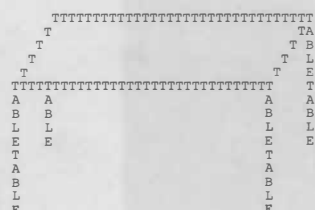
Bertrand Russell, *Appearance and Reality* (1912)

Suppose I see a table. I have a so-called perception of a table, a visual table-experience. On the other hand, I may close my eyes and imagine a table. Independently of any consideration of "reality," two different types of experiences can be distinguished, non-mental experiences and mental experiences. A belief as a mental act consists of having the attitude toward a mental experience that it is a non-mental experience. The "attitude" which is involved is not a proposition. There are no words to describe it in greater detail; only introspection can provide examples of it. The attitude is a self-deceiving psychological trick which corresponds to the definitional trick in the belief-assertion.

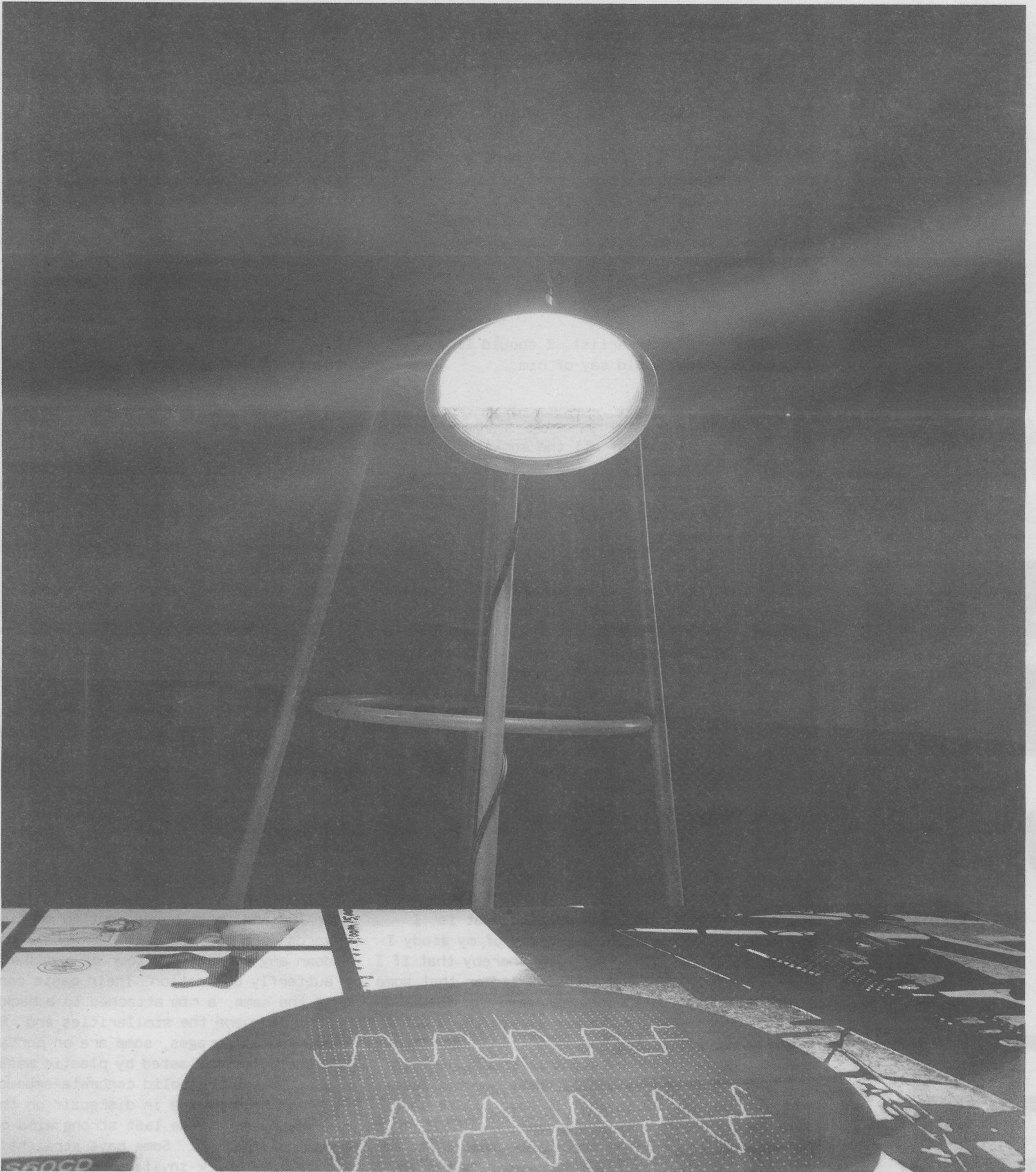
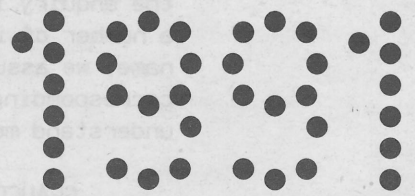
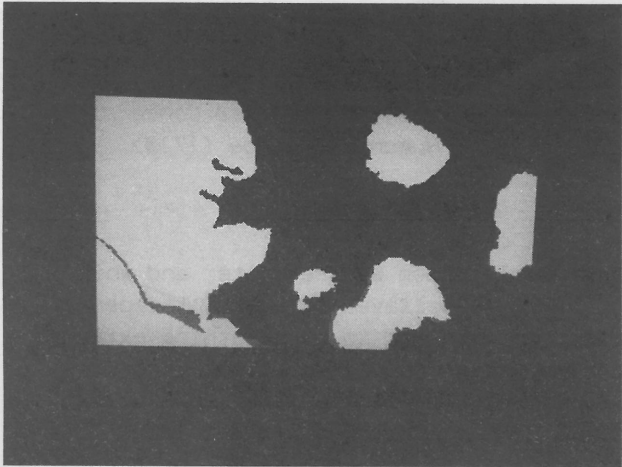
Henry Flynt, *The Flaws Underlying Beliefs* (1975)

## II.

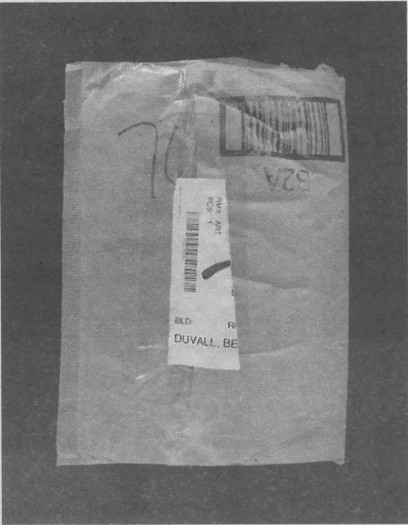
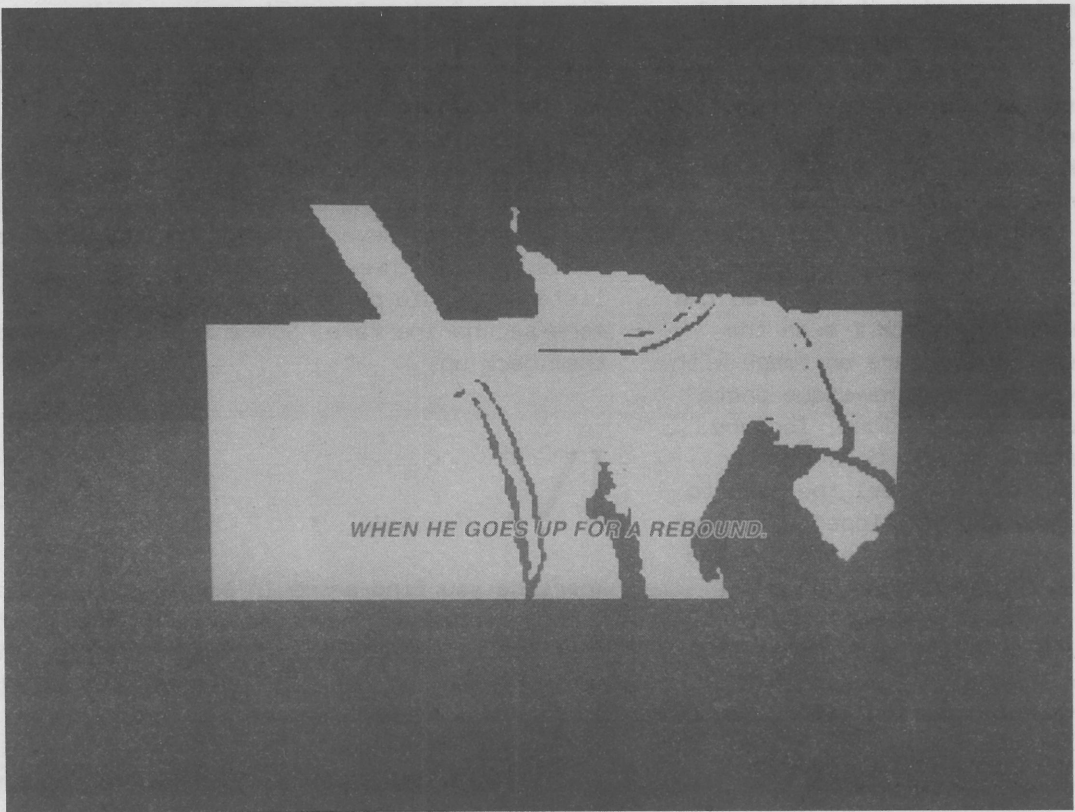
In Indiana, most homes, not to mention schoolyards, are adorned with basketball hoops. A drive down any street is a tour of a basketball hoop butterfly collection. Their basic configuration is the same, a rim attached to a backboard, but that is where the similarities end. Some are mounted on garages, some are on portable stand-alone poles ballasted by plastic water-filled bases, some are solid concrete-embedded steel uprights, some are in disrepair on the ground or tipped over by the last strong wind or propped against the wall. Some have straight orange rims, some have brick-inviting, rusted double rims, some are battered and skewed at an impossible



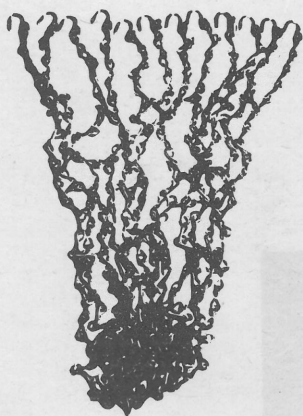
1954-Present











angle, some have weathered rope nets, some have painfully bright white new nets, some have finger-shredding chain nets. Some have wooden backboards with hand-painted squares, some have rounded K-mart-special plastic backboards, some have heavy layer-upon-layer painted white metal rectangles with bolted on rims. Some are feats of engineering, some are works of art, some are built to endure nuclear war, some are master classes in the aesthetics of making due.

James Naismith once said "I am sure that no man can derive more pleasure from money or power than I do from seeing a pair of basketball goals in some out of the way place." I often wish for a thing, which I call in my own head the "photographer's impulse", by which I mean the reflex or maybe patience to capture an image with a camera. One can envision a Ruscha-esque photo book, *Every Basketball Hoop in Upland, Indiana*, and it would not be a dull study. Upon further consideration though, I did not feel the need to develop that impulse here - I developed an almost reverent respect for their placement and for the hoops as artifacts. To document them too specifically would be a shame in the same way that one who takes a picture of every work in an art museum has an impoverished experience with the collection. Without the photos, the memory may be less exact, but more fragrant.

### III.

And in the universe, even that which is called evil, when it is regulated and put in its own place, only enhances our admiration of the good; for we enjoy and value the good more when we compare it with the evil. For the Almighty God, who, as even the heathen acknowledge, has supreme power over all things, being Himself supremely good, would never permit the existence of anything evil among His works, if He were not so omnipotent and good that He can bring good even out of evil. For what is that which we call evil but the absence of good? In the bodies of animals, disease and wounds mean nothing but the absence of health; for when a cure is effected, that does not mean that the evils which were present - namely, the diseases and wounds - go away from the body and dwell elsewhere: they altogether cease to exist; for the wound or disease is not a substance, but a defect in the fleshly substance, - the flesh itself being a substance, and therefore something good, of which those evils - that is, privations of the good which we call health - are accidents. Just in the same way, what are called vices in the soul are nothing but privations of natural good. And when they are cured, they are not transferred elsewhere: when they cease to exist in the healthy soul, they cannot exist anywhere else.

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Enchiridion* (c. 420)

The album I am thinking of possesses a precariously cantilevered form of symmetry. Not so simple as each move having its opposite, but rather careening and grounding mechanisms reach across the divide (the pivot point: a single snare hit at 22:26) to respond to each other, alternately flinging the listener into orbit pulling them back to earth. The inspiration

comes from the foil in hip-hop, the alternating rebuke, correction and rebuild that drives the music along.

Scientists recently discovered evidence of gravitational waves. Predicted in 1916 by Albert Einstein, just a few weeks ago, ripples were observed emitting from a pair of black holes. These ripples may be what keep us from floating off unchecked or what maintains the planets in their orbits. This album seems to have known that all along though. Without the dissonance (tactically deployed) the octaval choruses would leave the ground and never return. Something brutal needs to beat them down. Without the choruses, listeners would be quickly defeated, opting for more saccharine fare. Something needs to raise them back up.

### IV.

Where do you find a sea in land-locked Grant County, Indiana? The state touches the southernmost tip of Lake Michigan, which is some 3 hours away from Upland, but in February, forget it. Surface water temperatures can get close to 0° F and most boaters don't test the waters until May.

There are sailors to be found, though. A conversation with one directed me towards Thor Heyerdahl, famous for his *Kon-Tiki* expedition, in which he sailed a hand-built raft from South America to the Tuamotu Islands in the South Pacific. This 1947 voyage was hailed as a success, and played a critical role in shaping anthropological models of trans-cultural diffusion. Heyerdahl launched several other similar expeditions in subsequent years, based on his theories, but none met with the success of *Kon-Tiki*.

For some reason, I had arrived thinking about Bas Jan Ader, the Dutch-Californian artist who set sail from Cape Cod on July 9, 1975 in what would have been the smallest sailboat to cross the Atlantic at that time. He entitled his journey *In Search of the Miraculous* and his friends saw him off with sea shanties the night before. Tragically, he never reached his destination in Falmouth, England, though his partially intact boat eventually washed up off the coast of Ireland.

The reason Ader had been on my mind occurred to me only after my arrival: the plains are their own kind of sea. At dusk, or on days when the snow on the ground is nearly the same color as the gray of the sky, it is not hard to imagine a small, long-lost vessel appearing on the horizon. If you are reading this, and it is such a day, squint towards that gently bowed divide, and you may just see one.

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Ben DuVall  
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ALL AGES WELCOME



Eternal Father, strong to save,  
Whose arm hath bound the  
restless wave,  
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep,  
Its own appointed limits keep.

