ABSTRACT

This paper revolves around Martin Heidegger’s *Das Wohnen des Menschen* (“Man’s Dwelling”), an essay that he wrote in 1970 and which until now had not been translated into English. Thematically, stylistically, and chronologically, “Man’s Dwelling” stands as a coda to a three essay sequence that began with Heidegger’s “Building Dwelling Thinking” and “Poetically Man Dwells” (both of which were written in 1951). Unlike these two earlier essays by Heidegger, “Man’s Dwelling” further stands out because it illuminates Heidegger’s idea of poetic dwelling by turning our attention to the unpoetic.

In its emphasis on unpoetic dwelling, “Man’s Dwelling” supports an architecture of opposition, that is, an architecture that seeks the poetic by specifically rebuffing the unpoetic. To illustrate my argument, I will rely on the historical example of the architect Heinrich “Henry” Klumb (1905-1984). Klumb’s relevance to this study stems from the fact that his life and works were characterized in many ways by a rejection of the unpoetic and a search for the “poetic exuberance” of architecture. Klumb was a German immigrant, a one-time associate of Frank Lloyd Wright, and for forty years a prolific modern architect on the Caribbean island of Puerto Rico.

This paper combines two projects I have been working on for the past four years. One is a series of Heidegger translations of various short works and poems, and the other is my doctoral dissertation on the houses that Klumb designed and built in Puerto Rico between 1944 and 1983.

**Key Words:** Heidegger, dwelling, architectural oppositions, Henry Klumb.
INTRODUCTION

Between 1949 and 1970, Martin Heidegger wrote several poems, short works, and essays that dealt with notions of dwelling and place in ways similar to his best-known works. Unfortunately, because most of these other works have previously never been translated into English they are rarely cited within architectural theory or in Heidegger studies in general.² Heidegger’s 1970 essay “Man’s Dwelling” (Das Wohnen des Menschen) stands out among these other works because it acts as a coda to a sequence of three essays that include “Building Dwelling Thinking” and “Poetically Man Dwells.” “Man’s Dwelling” further stands out because it illuminates Heidegger’s notions of poetic dwelling by focusing on the unpoetic.

In this paper I will explore how “Man’s Dwelling” fits alongside “Building Dwelling Thinking” and “Poetically Man Dwells.” I contend that ultimately “Man’s Dwelling” supports an architecture of opposition, that is, an architecture that promotes poetic dwelling by specifically rebuffing the unpoetic. By way of historical example I will supplement my argument by discussing the case of Henry Klumb (1905-1984). Klumb was a German immigrant, a one-time associate of Frank Lloyd Wright, and for forty years a prolific modern architect in Puerto Rico. Furthermore, his life was characterized in many ways by a turning to the poetic in direct and conscious opposition to the unpoetic.

“MAN’S DWELLING” AS A CODA

“Man’s Dwelling” takes many of its cues from “Building Dwelling Thinking” and “Poetically Man Dwells.” It relates building and placemaking as a natural consequence of dwelling. It alludes to Heidegger’s fourfold of mortals, divinities, earth, and sky. And it gleans a greater understanding of poetic dwelling through an analysis of Friedrich Hölderlin’s poetry.³ Due to the closer nature of these three essays, let’s review some of these themes.

In “Building Dwelling Thinking” Heidegger asserts the following:

- It is in man’s nature to dwell. Heidegger calls us all “dwellers.”
- To dwell is to acknowledge a unique kinship between humans and the world around them.
- The more that we acknowledge such a kinship, the more likely that we will care for places and live in harmony with them.
- Building and placemaking are the physical manifestations that result from our awareness of dwelling.
In dwelling, then, we possess a singular state of mind that gives us a unique outlook on the world, our daily lives, and ourselves. This outlook is keenly aware of humans being grounded in the world. It also means that in dwelling we are led in our thoughts and actions to engage in the world in a caring, respectful, and mutually beneficial manner.

In “Poetically Man Dwells,” Heidegger argues that the highest and purest form of dwelling is poetic dwelling. In doing so Heidegger equates poetic dwelling to measuring. This posits a contrast between measuring as a scientific or technical activity and measuring that projects poetic dwelling’s unique outlook on the world. The first notion of measuring is a very familiar one. Through it we apprehend an object or a phenomenon by quantifying its properties through the use of a measuring device or a scientific instrument. But in the second notion of measuring a person perceives their life and their place in the world from the perspective of a curious and personally engaged human subject. Through this way of measuring people see themselves as part of a larger macrocosm. Humans are not isolated beings. They each have a place on this earth, beneath the sheltering sky, and among a community of our fellow human beings.

“Man’s Dwelling” begins with a warning: The message of “Poetically Man Dwells” has failed to take hold in contemporary thinking. “Man dwells today on this earth – not poetically,” Heidegger wrote. It is therefore necessary to further investigate the nature of poetic dwelling, and the way to do it is by better ascertaining the unpoetic. Heidegger’s reasoning was that the poetic and the unpoetic reside in the same things, the same circumstances. Heidegger also believed that we are beset everyday by the unpoetic, especially as a result of scientific and technological advances. In works previous to “Man’s Dwelling,” Heidegger had cautioned that science and technology tend to disassociate us from the world around us by mediating our perceptions of the world. Technological innovations give us a false sense of space, distance, and time. What seems near is actually very far away, and what is far seems close at hand. The same is also the case when we interact with the world through technology. Machines form a barrier between us and real personal contact with the world. Thus they alter our perceptions of the world. In these previous works, Heidegger’s message could be interpreted to say that it is preferable to bemoan and reject modern scientific and technological advances by retreating from progress, retreating to an idyllic past, retreating towards nature.

In “Man’s Dwelling” Heidegger’s message radically changes. He declares that there is no retreat. The unpoetic is pervasive in our world. It is evident in what he called,
“the mechanization of man”
“his mechanization upon a disfigured earth”
“the monotony of language”
“the language of information, the language of the computer”

Our best hope, and Heidegger’s exhortation, is to face the unpoetic and accept it as a reality in our lives. That way, if we are able to sift between the poetic and the unpoetic then we can escape the one and embrace the other. Conversely, when the differences between the poetic and the unpoetic become irrelevant to us, then our very existence – in the form of a rich, meaningful, and authentic daily life – is in peril.

THE UNPOETIC AND AN ARCHITECTURE OF OPPOSITION

Heidegger described the unpoetic as “the unessential of the ‘poetic,’ its element that is out of place.” He continued, saying, “In ‘being unpoetic’ the ‘poetic’ does not disappear, but rather […] that which gives a measure is not admitted, that which gives a measure will be omitted.” To dwell and to take the measure, as we know from “Building Dwelling Thinking” and “Poetically Man Dwells,” are essential aspects of human life. Thus to the extent that we are attuned to dwelling or turn away from it we can characterize our lives as supporting poetic dwelling or being unpoetic. Additionally, throughout our daily lives our chosen actions and the consequences that flow from them can be characterized as poetic or unpoetic.

Heidegger further distinguished between poetic dwelling and the unpoetic from a careful reading of three poems by Hölderlin. Two recurring themes in these poems are the heavens and heavenly beings. Within Hölderlin’s poems Heidegger saw dwelling as a gift from the heavens, more specifically from the stars above, the nighttime stars and the daytime sun. The sun and the stars are our ever present companions. “The heavenly and mortals” dwell in a reciprocating relationship with each other. The sun illuminates our daily activities, facilitates our ability to dwell, and “allows all things to shine forth in their uniqueness.” The sun makes building and placemaking possible. “In this way,” Heidegger wrote, “a region is kept open for mortals to sojourn within it.” The nighttime stars bring with them the time for rest and quiet contemplation (in Hölderlin’s words, “sweet slumber and foreboding”). And finally, the eternal lifespans of the sun and the stars testify to the constancy of things and the precious fleetingness of human life.

Heidegger’s notions surrounding the heavens and the unpoetic become clearer through two poems that he wrote about the same time he wrote “Man’s Dwelling.” The poems, titled
“Dwelling” and “We Live in the Night,” read as follows:

Without merit, unpoetically
man dwells today,
a stranger to the stars,
devastating the Earth.\(^\text{13}\)

and,

We live in the night
and yet do not see the stars,
because, unfamiliar to the splendor,
what is near becomes distant.\(^\text{14}\)

The allusions to the heavens and heavenly beings in these two poems, and Heidegger’s message in “Man’s Dwelling,” suggest that people today suffer from a perception problem. The sun and the stars are always there before us, but we do not see them for what they are, that is, that first spark on the way to poetic dwelling. Instead the stars have been so subsumed by scientific analysis and the technological triumphs of space exploration (i.e., scientific measuring) that they no longer reside above us in the night sky. They are distant, foreign objects, so much so that we no longer see them at all.

With these things in mind, we now see that “Man’s Dwelling” adds to the discourse begun with “Building Dwelling Thinking” and “Poetically Man Dwells” not just by adding to our understanding of poetic dwelling and the unpoetic, and taking the measure. It also supports an architecture of opposition by serving as a cautionary tale against unpoetic dwelling. Just as Heidegger calls on all people “sensitive and receptive” to his message to face the unpoetic, to accept it as pervasive in our world today, and to then use that knowledge to more successfully dwell poetically, a special burden falls on architects to heed his call.\(^\text{15}\) Architects play a unique role in building and placemaking. Indeed, Heidegger called poets those architects who are highly attuned to dwelling when he wrote, “Authentic building occurs so far as there are poets, such poets as take the measure of architecture, the structure of dwelling.”\(^\text{16}\)

How, then, do architects proceed in this architecture of opposition? To begin with, matters of ecology, conservation, and preservation are paramount. Heidegger makes this clear when he condemns man’s devastating and disfiguring the planet. Beyond this architects must also weigh every influence upon their daily lives and upon their profession – whether a scientific, technological, cultural, historical, social, economic, or other influence – and in each case ask a
host of questions. Does it detract us from dwelling poetically? Does it prohibit us from taking the measure? If so, why does it do so? And, how can we leverage it so that instead it can facilitate our poetic dwelling, my taking the measure?

Of particular importance when weighing between poetic and unpoetic influences are technological and scientific advances in architecture. Some of society’s most ubiquitous technologies today include smart phones, tablets, social media, text messaging, twenty-four hour news and entertainment, online gaming, and the data driven workplace. In the realm of architecture we have computer-aided drafting, geographic information system analysis, building information modeling, and the recent emergence of 3D printing. To be sure, today’s production of architecture is wholly beholden to the computer and what Peter Eisenman called the “electronic paradigm.” These things we cannot escape, we cannot retreat from. But we can take a critical position in determining to what extent they disassociate architects from those aspects of their profession that engender poetic dwelling and taking the measure.

Examples of architectures of oppositions abound. Among them we can point to Adolf Loos’ satirical “Ornament and Crime” and Robert Venturi’s anti-Modernist polemic Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture. Closer to an architecture of opposition consistent with “Man’s Dwelling” is Juhani Pallasmaa’s oft stated position in his books and essays that architecture should be more of a sensual (i.e., sensory, bodily) experience. And even so, it should be more than just a visual experience. It should stimulate all of our senses thus resulting in a more inspiring, authentic, and meaningful experience. Also, with the recent publication in five volumes of Peter Zumthor’s oeuvre from 1985 to 2013, Zumthor explains how in projects such as the Saint Benedict Chapel, the Kunsthaus Bregenz, and the Topography of Terror each had their genesis in response to unpoetic circumstances that ranged from the minor to the cataclysmic.

Below I will offer another example in the case of the German architect Henry Klumb. My current research deals with the evolution of Klumb’s sense of place and the impact it had on his residential architecture in Puerto Rico from 1944 to 1983. Here I will discuss how he related and responded to three unpoetic conditions he encountered in the course of his life.

HENRY KLUMB’S ARCHITECTURAL IDEOLOGY

The historical evidence surrounding Klumb demonstrates that throughout his lifetime he espoused three key precepts. An important aspect of these precepts is that they sprang in large part in opposition to specific unpoetic situations that Klumb encountered and wished to address.
through his work. Below I will introduce the precepts, discuss the unpoetic circumstances that influenced them, and illustrate one of Klumb’s architectural strategies in response to those unpoetic circumstances and in support of his precepts.

The first of Klumb’s precepts was an adherence to “higher values.” This first precept was an overarching one, being supported by the other two, and it inferred that architecture should strive to be more than the inconsequential pursuit of artistic expression or the idiosyncratic release of a creative impulse. As Klumb saw it, architects should solve “pressing problems” in a principled manner by improving and engaging both the built and natural environments.

The second precept promoted “an architecture of social concern.” This proposed that an architectural project can and should simultaneously meet multiple social, economic, and ecological needs. A clear example of this was Klumb’s stated objective in 1944 that the most important benefit of Puerto Rico’s public building programs was not in providing shelter, schools, or government services but rather to alleviate widespread unemployment, thereby raising the standard of living across the island.

The third precept espoused that “man is the measure of all things.” Klumb interpreted this aphorism by the Ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras in a twofold way. First it meant that everything that we do in architecture should be to the betterment of mankind. And inversely, anything that is to the detriment of mankind should be seen as such (i.e., as detrimental) and thus either avoided or rectified.

Klumb cited his pursuit of higher values as a reason for emigrating from Germany to the United States in 1927. At the heart of his decision were adverse consequence of the First World War and Klumb’s opposition to the International Style. Klumb recalled that in the early twentieth century the world of architecture and the world at large were at a crossroads. “A general reassessment of the past was badly needed,” he wrote. In architecture, Frank Lloyd provided a way forward through his highly successful 1910 Wasmuth Portfolio. Unfortunately, “Before its full impact could be felt war intervened. The catastrophic upheaval that followed did not allow evolutionary processes to take their course. The old was buried and the new imposed,” adding that “I grew up in this unsettled era of post war Europe.”

“The old was buried and the new imposed.” But imposed by whom? Although Klumb pointed to the proponents of the International Style, an even more personally felt presence for Klumb was the Bauhaus. At about the same time Klumb left Germany the Bauhaus was at its peak. At this point the Bauhaus had been in operation for eight years and its famous school building on the ground for just one year. Mies van der Rohe (who would later serve as the last
director of the Bauhaus) had just completed the Barcelona Pavilion, and the following year he would open the *Weissenhof Siedlung*, a tour de force in master planning, project management, and building design. Even closer to home, in 1914 the predecessor to the Bauhaus, the Deucher Werkbund, sponsored a major exposition in Klumb’s birthplace of Cologne. This exposition showcased a number of built works by several leading German architects at the time.

All of these successes by the Bauhaus and its associates, Klumb later concluded, were for naught. Klumb responded to a reexamination of modern architecture and the Bauhaus in the early 1980s by calling the Bauhaus movement “the Bauhaus indoctrination,” and further characterizing modern European architecture in the late 1920s as “alive alright with intellectual vengeance, but void of spirit and man’s inner needs – my reason for leaving Germany and the Bauhaus influence to be with Wright.” Likewise he said of his fellow architects and himself working with Wright at Taliesin in 1929, “We were trying to escape from the sterile concepts of an international style.” In Klumb’s mind, the rising influence of people and institutions such as Le Corbusier, the Bauhaus, and Johnson and Hitchcock at the Museum of Modern Art led to “the wholesale importation of hollowed values from abroad.”

Soon after arriving in the United States Klumb noted how American city skylines were palpably different than those of the quaint European cities of that same era. In Europe a single cathedral could dominate a city’s skyline. But in the United States the many different tall buildings competing for aerial supremacy seemed like an urban explosion with no end in sight. In every block of the canyon-like city streets yet more skeletal steel frame high-rises were under construction. Such were the sights that Klumb encountered, photographed, and documented upon arriving in the United States.

Klumb thought that although skyscrapers were a modern inevitability their resulting chokehold on humanity was not. Louis Sullivan’s 1899 Wainwright Building in St. Louis presaged a humane high-rise architecture. Unfortunately, architects, developers, and financiers did not heed Sullivan’s example. Profits and density overruled and have dominated ever since. The end result being an undignified, unhealthy, overcrowded, chaotic, oppressive, and inhumane urban built environment. For the most part, Klumb thought, a humane skyscraper architecture had long ago eluded architects.

Seventeen years after arriving in the United States, in 1944, Klumb’s move to Puerto Rico led him to reconsider the efficacy of industrialization in his new environment. Klumb arrived in Puerto Rico during a time of great transformation. Politicians on the island were actively trying to shift the local economic base from agriculture to manufacturing. The hope was to propel Puerto Rico into the twentieth century and subsequently alleviate its social and economic ills.
While Klumb embraced the many benefits of industrialization, he also understood its unintended consequences. As powerful a force as industrialization had been over the past century, it could also provide countless products and buildings that were far out of reach for the masses. Construction labor could build the best modern houses, for example, but they could not afford to live in them. Also, industrialization in architecture often eschewed local methods and materials that were seen as incompatible with modern approaches. Industrialization could also ravage nature in pursuit of raw materials and the heavy footprints of urbanization and suburbia. Finally, Klumb critiqued industrialization by evoking the German architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Writing about a trip to Manchester, England by Schinkel, Klumb said,

“He [Schinkel] felt that through industrialization a force for good or evil had been let loose. While sensing the possibility of a new and beautiful force, he was at the same time nauseated with the grimy and smoke filled air and the condition under which men had accepted a degraded life to pay the price for such an eventuality.”

Through Klumb’s opinions on the International Style, the modern American city, and industrialization, we see how in his mind architects had done little to abate a dearth of higher values, a lack of interest in “an architecture of social concern,” and a seemingly total disregard for man as the measure. Nevertheless, as an architect he saw it as his responsibility to address those failings. In my current study of Klumb’s houses in Puerto Rico, I have identified five common threads rooted in Klumb’s sense of place as I have been able to study its development from 1927 through the end of his life in 1984. Below I will discuss one such thread that directly relates to Klumb’s three ideological precepts and is in response to the three unpoetic circumstances cited above. That one thread is that Klumb’s houses in Puerto Rico owed a great deal to his knowledge of and experience with vernacular architecture.

KLUMB AND VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

In my investigation of the impact of Klumb’s sense of place on his houses, several houses were a mystery. Klumb’s houses that sat on difficult, hilly, or steep sloping landscapes rose up on concrete pilotis and projected forward and out over their sites. The Fullana House, designed in 1953, is one example among many (see Figure 1). This approach contradicted an assumption I had regarding architects with a strong sense of place, which was that their buildings sat with heavy footprints on their sites. Examples include Frank Lloyd Wright’s Prairie
Style houses and other buildings, and the works of Alvar Aalto, Mario Botta, Alvaro Siza, and Peter Zumthor. If Klumb did indeed possess a strong sense of place, then why did he design these houses in this fashion, seemingly distancing themselves from their sites? Sitting in the Klumb archive in the University of Puerto Rico, wondering where I had seen this type of house before, I realized that the evidence had been right before me all along. Klumb’s inspiration for this building form had been the Jibaro hut of Puerto Rico’s rural working poor (see Figure 2).

Klumb became familiar with the Jibaro hut very early on his time in Puerto Rico. In doing so he came to think that some of their features were worth emulating and reproducing using modern building materials, construction techniques, and design sensibilities. This he tried to do with projects such as the Low Cost Rural Houses and Teacher’s Farms (see Figure 3). Also, more than thirty-five years after his arrival on the island, as Klumb was chronicling his career through a series of self-published manuscripts, he pointedly acknowledged the Jibaro hut as an inspiration to his work in Puerto Rico. In these manuscripts Klumb looked back at the Jibaro hut as emblematic of the rural people’s simple way of life, which he saw as intimately integrated with nature.

While the Jibaro hut was an early and lasting influence upon Klumb, his interest in vernacular architecture did not begin while in Puerto Rico. Between 1938 and 1941 Klumb designed a number of projects with Native American interests in mind. This included two model rooms with Native American arts and crafts and furniture (see Figure 4), highly successful exhibits for the 1939 Golden Gate Exposition in San Francisco and for the Museum of Modern Art in 1941, and a tribal community house in southern Arizona (see Figure 5). Through these projects, Klumb invested himself in Native American culture, worked with local craftsmen and construction trades, created successful exhibits of people and places heretofore foreign to him, and participated in building and placemaking activities with local populations.

Given Klumb’s knowledge of, experience with, and admiration of vernacular architecture both in the American Southwest and Puerto Rico, in retrospect it was perhaps fitting that when it came time to permanently settle down in the island Klumb chose for he and his family to live in a colonial era (i.e., nineteenth century), light-wood frame farmhouse surrounded by five acres of lush vegetation (see Figure 6). The Klumb House, as it is now known, would turn out to be Klumb’s one overarching and most significant bond between he and Puerto Rico. Though neither a modern house nor one he designed, Klumb made many changes to it so as to suit his personal tastes. These changes reflected his affinity for modern open spaces, as well as the local culture, native practices, and built forms predicated on local conditions.

Klumb’s multifaceted relation with vernacular architecture demonstrates an openness to
solutions not slavishly devoted to prevailing architectural conventions (the International Style), to oppressive market forces (the density of modern cities), or to the most advanced construction techniques and materials (industrialization). Had he been versed in the language and the literature, he may have termed those things “unpoetic.” Instead he embraced a more principled approach. He turned to solutions inspired by a heartfelt affection for local populations, and the ingenuity and resourcefulness that enabled them to live in harmony with their surroundings. He turned to solutions that facilitated poetic dwelling.

Figure 1. The Fullana House, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, 1953.

Figure 2. Jibaro hut, near Comerío, Puerto Rico, 1945.
Figure 3. Details, Teacher’s Farm, 1944.

Figure 4. Perspective, Model Room Number 1, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1938.
Figure 5. Perspective, the Papago Tribe Community House, Sells, Arizona, 1940.

Figure 6. Henry and Else Klumb, the Klumb House, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico.
REFERENCES


All references in the text to any unpublished, archived writings from the Architecture and Construction Archives of the University of Puerto Rico are cited in the endnotes.

All figures © The Henry Klumb Collection, the Architecture and Construction Archives of the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras.
Figure 1, drawing by Henry Klumb, 1953; Figure 2, photograph by Edwin Rosskam, 1945; Figure 3, drawing by Henry Klumb, 1944; Figure 4, drawing by Henry Klumb, 1938; Figure 5, drawing by Henry Klumb, 1940; and Figure 6, photographer unknown, date unknown.


These relatively unheralded works by Heidegger, what I call here his “other works,” include the poems “We live in the night,” “Dwelling,” “The Way,” and “Building Dwelling Thinking;” the short works (brief essays of between one and two pages long) “What is that which we call reading?”, “Forrest Walks,” “What is Time;,” and “Signs;” and the essays “The Country Path,” “Language and Home,” and “Man’s Dwelling. The German titles are, respectively, Wir leben in der Nacht, Wohnen, Der Weg, Bauen Wohnen Denken, Was heißt Lesen?, Holzwege, Was ist die Zeit?, Zeichen, Der Feldweg, Sprache und Heimat, and Das Wohnen des Menschen. The first four of these, the poems, are found in Volume 81 of Heidegger’s collected works referenced above. The other short works and essays are found in Volume 13.


4 Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) was a German Romantic poet whose poetry is at the center of many of Heidegger’s works. “The Origin of the Work of Art,” “Letter on Humanism,” and “The Question Concerning Technology” in Heidegger 1993 above, for example, repeatedly refer to Hölderlin’s poems. “What are Poets For?” and, of course, “Poetically Man Dwells” in Heidegger 1971 are wholly indebted to Hölderlin’s works. Heidegger also had two book-length treatments on Hölderlin’s poetry – Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry and Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister.”

5 Heidegger, Gesamtausgabe, Band 13, 216.

6 Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, 163-164.

7 “the mechanization of man […] the language of the computer.” Heidegger, Gesamtausgabe Band 13, 219-220.

8 Heidegger, Gesamtausgabe, Band 13, 218.

9 Ibid.

10 Heidegger, Gesamtausgabe, Band 13, 214, 216, and 217.

The three poems by Hölderlin are “The Archipelago,” “The Journey,” and “What is Nearest, What is Best.” The numerous allusions to the heavens and heavenly beings in these poems include the following. From the poem “The Archipelago” Heidegger concludes that poetic dwelling is “a heavenly gift of measure.” The poem “The Journey” talks of “heaven’s servants,” “all of God’s children,” and of he “who wants just once / To steal from heaven, yet there is retribution for those that / Through forceful means want to be equal to it,” that is, equal to heaven. And then from the poem “What is Nearest, What is Best,” Heidegger determines that “the night spirit,” in “being unpoetic” is “hostile, even rebellious against the heavens.”

11 Heidegger, Gesamtausgabe, Band 13, 215.
Klumb’s notion of “higher values” was often expressed also in terms of “human values” or simply the importance of “values.” Consequently, Klumb referred to higher values, human values, and values as an integral part of a humane architecture in numerous essays and publications referenced above.

Also, late in his life Klumb composed fifteen manuscripts detailing his career in architecture. These manuscripts served many purposes, among them design portfolio, photo album, scrapbook, manifesto, collage, and marketing literature for his architectural office. They also are as close to an autobiography as we have from him. Six of these manuscripts were arranged chronologically and spanned the years 1927 to 1974. Five of these six bore the title The Office of Henry Klumb: Architecture of Social Concern, followed by the years covered in that manuscript. The manuscripts reside today in their various stages of development at the Architecture and Construction Archives of the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras.

To Klumb scholars, “an architecture of social concern” has become the catch-all lens by which to view his life’s work. Consequently they have interpreted it to mean many different things, but primarily an architecture that is post-colonial, politically and economically progressive, and environmentally conscious.

23 Henry Klumb, untitled memorandum of the General Design Section of Puerto Rico’s Committee on Design of Public Works, 16 August 1944, the Henry Klumb Collection, the Architecture and Construction Archives of the University of Puerto Rico at Rio Piedras, archive location number 3.3.
Klumb’s interpretation of “man is the measure of all things” is unusual in that in philosophy Protagoras’ saying is generally understood to refer to the relative or subjective nature of truth. Also, Klumb’s insistence that “man is the measure of all things” should not be confused with an attitude of anthropocentrism as, among other examples, Klumb saw ecological concerns as essential to man’s well-being.

Klumb’s statements were made in response to Ada Louise’s article “Is Modern Architecture Dead?” and Thomas Wolfe’s book From Bauhaus to Our House.

Images of Jibaro huts and of the living conditions of Puerto Rico’s rural working poor are featured prominently in these two Klumb manuscripts. These manuscripts also detail the Low Cost Rural Houses and the Teacher’s Farms, both of which attempted to combine modern design sensibilities (e.g., planning grids, standardized modules, and modern materials) with local building traditions and materials.
The details of Klumb's various Native American projects are also found in numerous letters, telegraphs, memorandums, and drawings in the Henry Klumb Collection, archive location numbers 2.16, 2.19-20, 2.25-26, and 2.28-29.