

Crisis of the Object: Predicament of Texture

Cities force growth and make men talkative and entertaining *but* they make men artificial.
RALPH WALDO EMERSON

I think that our governments will remain virtuous as long as they are chiefly agricultural.
THOMAS JEFFERSON

But . . . how can man withdraw himself from the fields? Where will he go, since the earth is one huge unbounded field? Quite simple; he will mark off a portion of this field by means of walls, which set up an enclosed finite space over against amorphous, limitless space . . . For in truth the most accurate definition of the *urbs* and the *polis* is very like the comic definition of a cannon. You take a hole, wrap some steel wire tightly around it, and that's your cannon. So the *urbs* or *polis* starts by being an empty space . . . and all the rest is just a means of fixing that empty space, of limiting its outlines . . . The square . . . This lesser rebellious field which secedes from the limitless one, and keeps to itself, is a space *sui generis* of the most novel kind in which man frees himself from the community of the plant and the animal . . . and creates an enclosure apart which is purely human, a civil space.

JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET

In intention the modern city was to be a fitting home for the noble savage. A being so aboriginally pure necessitated a domicile of equivalent purity; and, if way back the noble savage had emerged from the trees, then, if his will-transcending innocence was to be preserved, his virtues maintained intact, it was back into the trees that he must be returned.

One might imagine that such an argument was the ultimate psychological rationale of the *ville radieuse* or *Zeilenbau* city, a city which, in its complete projection, was almost literally imagined as becoming nonexistent. Immediately necessary buildings appear, so far as possible, as delicate and unassertive intrusions into the natural continuum; buildings raised above the ground provide as little contact as possible with the potentially reclaimable earth; and, while there ensues a freedom-releasing qualification of gravity, we are perhaps also encouraged to recognize a commentary upon the dangers of prolonged exposure to any conspicuous artifact.

The projected modern city, in this way, may be seen as a transitional piece, a proposal which eventually, it is hoped, may lead to the re-establishment of an unadulterated natural setting.

Sun, space, verdure: essential joys, through the four seasons stand the trees, friends of man. Great blocks of dwellings run through the town. What does it matter? They are behind the screen of trees. Nature is entered into the lease.³

Such was the vision of an ever-evolving return to nature, a return that was (and is) evidently felt to be so important that, whenever possible, demonstrations of this vision have insisted on their absolute detachment, symbolic and physical, from any aspects of existing context which has been, typically, envisaged as a contaminant, as something both morally and hygienically leprous. And thus Lewis Mumford on an illustration in his *Culture of Cities*:

Rear of a handsome facade in Edinburgh: barracks architecture facing a catwalk: typical indifference to rear views characteristic of scene painting. An architecture of fronts. Beautiful silks, costly perfumes. Elegance of mind and small pox. Out of sight, out of mind. Modern functional planning distinguishes itself from this purely visual conception of the plan, by dealing honestly and competently with every side, abolishing the gross distinction between front and rear, seen and obscene, and creating structures that are harmonious in every dimension.²

Paris, Place des Vosges (Place Royale).
From the Plan Turgot, 1739



Le Corbusier: Ville Radieuse, 1930



Which, allowing for a characteristically Mumfordian rhetoric, is all classically representative of the bias of the inter-war period. The prominent criteria are honesty and hygiene, the city of vested interest and impacted association is to disappear; and, in place of traditional subterfuge and imposition, there is to be introduced a visible and rational equality of parts—an equality which insists upon openness and is readily to be interpreted as both cause and effect of any condition of humane well-being.

Now, of course, the equation of the backyard with moral and physical insalubrity, which becomes the opposition of closure and openness and their investment with negative and positive qualities ('Elegance of mind and small pox'—as though the one automatically followed the other), could be illustrated from an abundance of other sources; and, in terms of that distinctively nineteenth century vision of the *danse macabre*, the human scarecrow in the cholera-infected courtyard, this style of argument should scarcely require reinforcement. Visually oriented architects and planners, preoccupied with the trophies and triumphs of culture, with the representation of the public realm and its public façades, had, for the most part, shamefully compromised not only the pleasurable possibilities but, worse than this, the essential sanitary bases of that more intimate world within which 'real' people, people as deserving aspects of concern, actually do exist. And, if this statement were to be augmented to say something about pragmatically callous capitalists then its general substance would not be radically transformed.

But, if such was the one-time negative and necessary criticism of traditional metropolis, then if an overview of nineteenth century Paris can be allowed to represent the evil, an overview of Amsterdam South may also be introduced to exhibit the initial conceptions of an alternative; and both illustrations derive from the accessible pages of Siegfried Giedion.³

The Hausmannesque situation, as witnessed by a bird or from a balloon, is so sufficiently comparable to the air photo of Berlagian Amsterdam as to need the minimum of comment. Both are subservient to the aesthetic of the French seventeenth century hunting forest with its *ronds-points* and *pattes-d'oie*; and, in being so, they both of them, by means of major arteries converging at a, hopefully, significant place, describe a triangular territory as subject for development or infill. But then it is here, with the infill, that resemblance ceases. For, if among the *grandeurs* and brutalities of Second Empire Paris, logical infill could be disregarded, if it could be reduced to the abstract volumetric status of trees in a garden by Le Nôtre, then in conscientious early twentieth century Holland such a highly casual universal matrix or 'texture' was, emphatically, not available. And, because of the French prototype, the result is a Dutch embarrassment. In Amsterdam a genuine attempt has been made to provide a more tolerable theatre of existence. Air, light, prospect, open space have all been made available; but, while one may sense that one is here on the threshold of the welfare state, one may still be overcome by the anomaly. The two big avenues, for all their ambitious protestation, are diffident and residual. They are lacking in the vulgar or the boring swagger and self-confidence of their Parisian prototypes. They are among the last



above
Cheltenham, rear view of Lansdown
Terrace

below
Exeter, Barnfield Crescent



pathetic gestures to the notion of the street; and their carefully edited concessions to *De Stijl* or to Expressionism do not conceal their predicament. They have become no more than the conservatively insinuated props to a dying idea. For, in the argument of solid versus void they have become redundant; and their references to a vision of classical Paris now have nothing to say. Simply these avenues are disposable. In no way do their façades designate any effective frontier between public and private. They are evasive. And much more than the façades of eighteenth century

opposite above Paris, Boulevard Richard-Lenoir, 1861-3

below
Amsterdam South, 1934

opposite below Amsterdam South, c.1961



Edinburgh, they reflectively conceal. For the important reality has now become what lies behind. The matrix of the city has become transformed from continuous solid to continuous void.

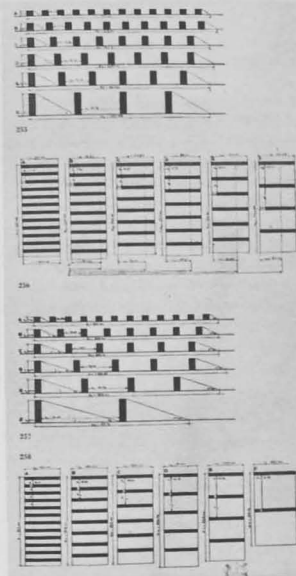
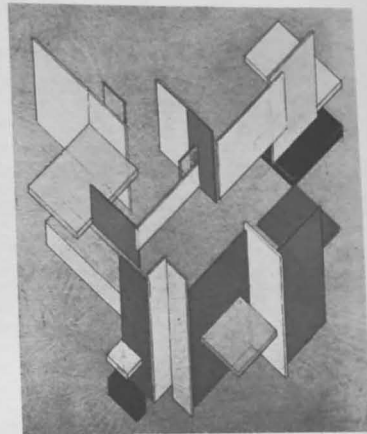
It goes without saying that both the failure and success of Amsterdam South, and of many comparable projects, could only activate the conscience; but, whatever may have been the doubts (the conscience is always more activated by failure than success), it probably remains true to say that logical scepticism was not able to digest the issue for at least some ten years. Which is to say that, until the late nineteen-twenties, the culturally obligatory street still dominated the scene and that, as a result, certain conclusions remained unapproachable.

In this sequence, the questions of who did what and precisely when and where are, for present purposes, irrelevant. The City of Three Million Inhabitants, miscellaneous Russian projects, Karlsruhe-Dammarsstock, etc., all have their dates; and the assignment of priority or praise or blame is not here an issue. Simply the issue is that, by 1930, the disintegration of the street and of all highly organized public space seemed to have become inevitable; and for two major reasons: the new and rationalized form of housing and the new dictates of vehicular activity. For, if the configuration of housing now evolved from the inside out, from the logical needs of the individual residential unit, then it could no longer be subservient to external pressures; and, if external public space had become so functionally chaotic as to be without effective significance, then—in any case—there were no valid pressures which it could any longer exert.

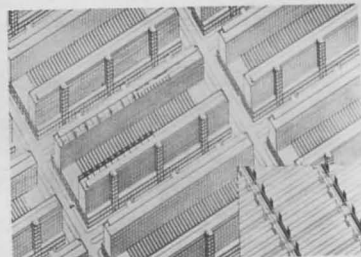
Such were the apparently unfailable deductions which underlay the establishment of the city of modern architecture; but, around these primary arguments, there was evidently the opportunity for a whole miscellany of secondary rationalizations to proliferate. And thus the new city could achieve further justification in terms of sport or of science, in terms of democracy or equality, in terms of history and absence of traditional *parti pris*, in terms of private automobiles and public transport, in terms of technology and socio-political crisis; and, like the idea of the city of modern architecture itself, in some form or another, almost all of these arguments are still with us.

And, of course, they are reinforced (though whether reinforcement is the correct word may be doubted) by others. 'A building is like a soap bubble. This bubble is perfect and harmonious if the breath has been evenly distributed from the inside. The exterior is the result of an interior.'⁴ This debilitating half truth has proved to be one of Le Corbusier's more persuasive observations. That it never had very much to do with practice should be obvious; but, if it is an impeccable statement of academic theory relating to domed and vaulted structures, it is also a dictum which could only lend support to the notion of the building as preferably a free standing object in the round. Lewis Mumford intimates as much; but, if for Theo Van Doesburg and many others it was axiomatic that 'the new architecture will develop in an all sided plastic way',⁵

Theo Van Doesburg: Counter-construction, maison particulière, 1923



Walter Gropius: diagrams showing the development of a rectangular site with parallel rows of apartment blocks of different heights, 1929

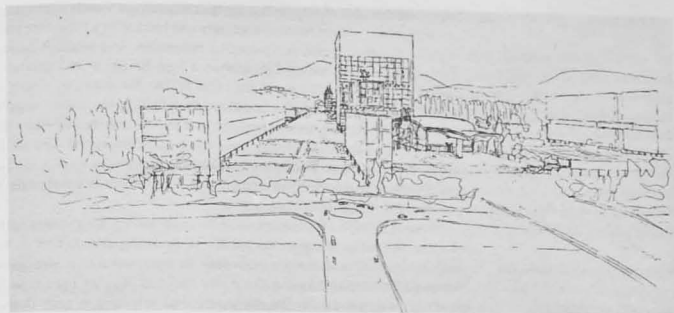


Ludwig Hilberseimer: project for central Berlin, 1927

this placing of immensely high premia upon the building as 'interesting' and detached object (which still continues) must now be brought into conjunction with the simultaneously entertained proposition that the building (object ?) must be made to go away ('Great blocks of dwellings run through the town. What does it matter? They are behind the screen of trees'). And, if we have here presented this situation in terms of a typically Corbusian self-contradiction, there is obvious and abundant reason to recognize that one is confronted with this same contradiction any, and every, day. Indeed, in modern architecture, the pride in objects and the wish to dissimulate pride in this pride, which is everywhere revealed, is something so extraordinary as to defeat all possibility of compassionate comment.

But modern architecture's object fixation (the object which is not an object) is our present concern only in so far as it involves the city, the city which was to become evaporated. For, in its present and unevaporated form, the city of modern architecture become a congeries of conspicuously disparate objects is quite as problematical as the traditional city which it has sought to replace.

Let us, first of all, consider the theoretical desideratum that the rational building is obliged to be an object and, then, let us attempt to place this proposition in conjunction with the evident suspicion that buildings, as man-made artefacts, enjoy a meretricious status, in some way, detrimental to an ultimate spiritual release. Let us further attempt to place this demand for the rational materialization of the object and this parallel need for its disintegration alongside the very obvious feeling that space is, in some way, more sublime than matter, that, while the affirmation of matter is inevitably gross, the affirmation of a spatial continuum can only facilitate the demands of freedom, nature and spirit. And then let us qualify what became a widespread tendency to space worship with



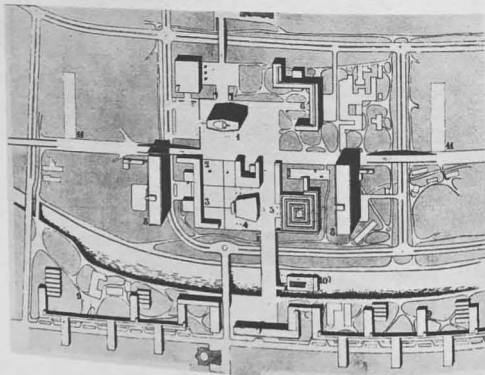
Le Corbusier: project for city centre of Saint-Dié, 1945, perspective

yet another prevalent supposition: that, if space is sublime, then limitless naturalistic space must be far more so than any abstracted and structured space; and, finally, let us upstage this whole implicit argument by introducing the notion that, in any case, space is far less important than time and that too much insistence—particularly upon delimited space—is likely to inhibit the unrolling of the future and the natural becoming of the 'universal society.'

Such are some of the ambivalences and fantasies which were, and still are, embedded in the city of modern architecture; but, though these could seem to add up to a cheerful and exhilarating prescription, as already noticed, even when realizations of this city, though pure, were only partial, doubts about it began very early to be entertained. Perhaps these were scarcely articulated doubts and whether they concerned the necessities of perception or the predicament of the public realm is difficult to determine; but, if, in the Athens Congress of 1933² CIAM had spelled out the ground rules for the new city, then by the mid-forties there could be no such dogmatic certainty. For neither the state nor the object had vanished away; and, in CIAM's *Heart of the City*³ conference of 1947, lurking reservations as to their continuing validity began, indecisively, to surface. Indeed, a consideration of the 'city core', in itself, already indicates a certain hedging of bets and, possibly, the beginnings of a recognition that the ideal of indiscriminate neutrality or inconspicuous equality was hardly attainable or even desirable.

But, if a renewed interest in the possibilities of focus and hence of confluence seems, by this time, to have been developing, while the interest was there, the equipment to service it was lacking; and the problem presented by the revisionism of the late forties might best be typified and illustrated by Le Corbusier's plan for St. Dié, where modified

Le Corbusier: project for city centre of Saint-Dié, 1945, plan



standard elements of Athens Charter specification are loosely arranged so as to insinuate some notions of centrality and hierarchy, to simulate some version of 'town centre' or structured receptacle. And might it be said that, in spite of the name of its author, a built St. Dié would, probably, have been the reverse of successful; that St. Dié illustrates, as clearly as possible, the dilemma of the free standing building, the space occupier attempting to act as space definer? For, if it is to be doubted whether this 'centre' would facilitate confluence, then, regardless of the desirability of this effect, it seems that what we are here provided with is a kind of unfulfilling schizophrenia—an acropolis of sorts which is attempting to perform as some version of an agora!

However, in spite of the anomaly of the undertaking, the re-affirmation of centralizing themes was not readily to be relinquished; and, if the 'core of the city' argument might easily be interpreted as a seepage of townscape strategies into the CIAM city diagram, a point may now be made by bringing the St. Dié city centre into comparison with that of the approximately contemporary Harlow new town which, though evidently 'impure,' may not be quite so implausible as, sometimes, has appeared to be the case.

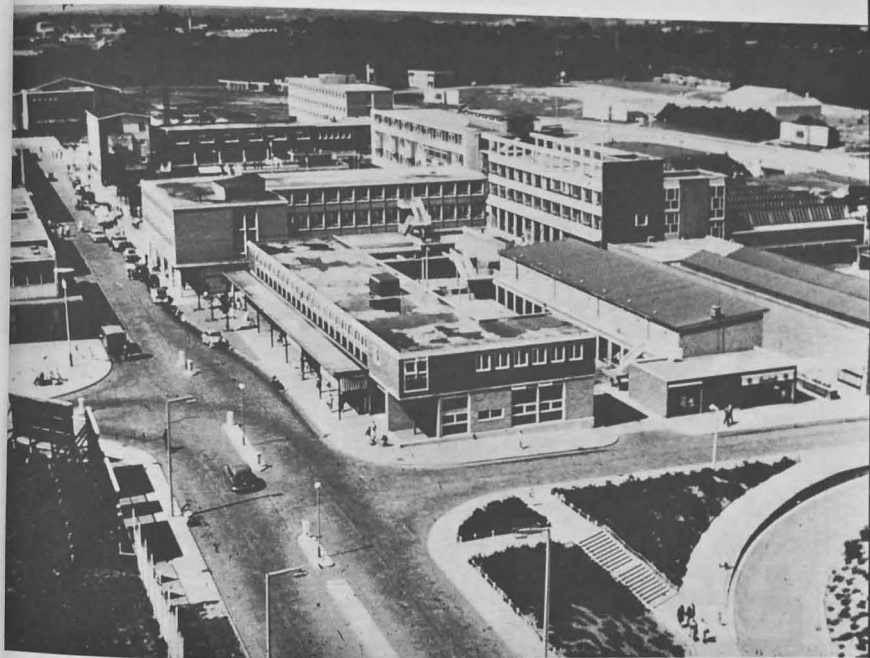
At Harlow, where there is absolutely no by-play with metaphors of acropolis, there can be no doubt that what one is being offered is a 'real' and literal market-place; and, accordingly, the discrete aspects of the individual buildings are played down, the buildings themselves amalgamated, to appear as little more than a casually haphazard defining wrapper. But, if the Harlow town square, supposed to be the authentic thing itself, a product of the vicissitudes of time and all the rest, may be a little over-ingratiating in its illusory appeal, if one might be just a little fatigued with quite so enticing a combination of instant 'history' and overt 'modernity,' if its simulation of medieval space may still appear believable as one stands

inside it, then, as curiosity becomes aroused, even this illusion quickly disappears.

For an overview or quick dash behind the immediately visible set piece rapidly discloses the information that what one has been subjected to is little more than a stage set. That is, the space of the square, professing to be an alleviation of density, the relief of an impacted context, quickly lends itself to be read as nothing of the kind. It exists without essential back up or support, without pressure, in built or human form, to give credibility or vitality to its existence; and, with the space thus fundamentally 'unexplained,' it becomes apparent that, far from being any outcropping of an historical or spatial context (which it would seem to be), the Harlow town square is, in effect, a foreign body interjected into a garden suburb without benefit of quotation marks.

But, in the issue of Harlow versus St. Dié, one is still obliged to recognize a coincidence of intention. In both cases the object is the production of a significant urban foyer; and, given this aim, it seems perfectly fair to say

Harlow New Town, Market Square,
1950s, air view



Harlow New Town, Market Square,
1950s, view



that, whatever its merits as architecture, the Harlow town square provides a closer approximation to the imagined condition than ever St. Dié might have done. Which is neither to endorse Harlow nor condemn St. Dié; but is rather to allow them both, as attempts to simulate the qualities of 'solid' city with the elements of 'void,' to emerge as comparable gestures of interrogation.

Now, as to the relevance of the questions which they propound, this might be best examined by once more directing attention to the typical format of the traditional city which, in every way, is so much the inverse of the city of modern architecture that the two of them together might, sometimes, almost present themselves as the alternative reading of some Gestalt diagram illustrating the fluctuations of the figure-ground phenomenon. Thus, the one is almost all white, the other almost all black; the one an accumulation of solids in largely unmanipulated void, the other an accumulation of voids in largely unmanipulated solid; and, in both cases, the fundamental ground promotes an entirely different category of figure—in the one *object*, in the other *space*.

However not to comment upon this somewhat ironical condition; and simply, in spite of its obvious defects, to notice very briefly the apparent virtues of the traditional city: the solid and continuous matrix or texture giving energy to its reciprocal condition, the specific space; the

ensuing square and street acting as some kind of public relief valve and providing some condition of legible structure; and, just as important, the very great versatility of the supporting texture or ground. For, as a condition of virtually continuous building of incidental make up and assignment, this is not under any great pressure for self-completion or overt expression of function; and, given the stabilizing effects of public façade, it remains relatively free to act according to local impulse or the requirements of immediate necessity.

Perhaps these are virtues which scarcely require to be proclaimed; but, if they are, everyday, more loudly asserted, the situation so described is still not quite tolerable. If it offers a debate between solid and void, public stability and private unpredictability, public figure and private ground which has not failed to stimulate, and if the object building, the soap bubble of sincere internal expression, when taken as a universal proposition, represents nothing short of a demolition of public life and decorum, if it reduces the public realm, the traditional world of visible civics to an amorphic remainder, one is still largely impelled to say: so what? And it is the logical, defensible presuppositions of modern architecture—light, air, hygiene, aspect, prospect, recreation, movement, openness—which inspire this reply.

So, if the sparse, anticipatory city of isolated objects and continuous

Le Corbusier: project for Saint-Dié,
figure-ground plan



Parma, figure-ground plan



voids, the alleged city of freedom and 'universal' society will not be made to go away and if, perhaps, in its essentials, it is more valuable than its discreditors can allow, if, while it is felt to be 'good', nobody seems to like it, the problem remains: what to try to do with it?

There are various possibilities. To adopt an ironical posture or to propound social revolution are two of them; but, since the possibilities of simple irony are almost totally pre-empted and since revolution tends to turn into its opposite, then, in spite of the persistent devotees of absolute freedom, it is to be doubted whether either of these are very useful strategies. To propose that more of the same, or more of approximately the same, will-like old-fashioned *laissez faire*—provide self-correction? This is just as much to be doubted as is the myth of the unimpaired capacities of self-regulating capitalism; but, all of these possibilities apart, it would seem, first of all, to be reasonable and plausible to examine the threatened or promised city of object fixation from the point of view of the possibility of its perception.

It is a matter of how much the mind and eye can absorb or comprehend; and it is a problem which has been around, without any successful solution, since the later years of the eighteenth century. The issue is that of quantification.

Pancras is like Marylebone, Marylebone is like Paddington; all the streets resemble each other ... your Gloucester Places, and Baker Streets, and Harley Streets, and Wimpole Streets ... all of those flat, dull, spiritless streets, resembling each other like a large family of plain children, with Portland Place and Portman Square for their respectable parents.⁸

The time is 1847 and the judgement, which is Disraeli's, may be taken as a not so early reaction to the disorientations produced by repetition. But, if the multiplication of spaces long ago began to elicit such disgust, then what is there now to be said about the proliferation of objects? In other words, whatever may be said about the traditional city, is it possible that the city of modern architecture can sustain anything like so adequate a perceptual base? And the obvious answer would seem to be not. For it is surely apparent that, while limited structured spaces may facilitate identification and understanding, an interminable naturalistic void without any recognizable boundaries will at least be likely to defeat all comprehension.

Certainly, in considering the modern city from the point of view of perceptual performance, by *Gestalt* criteria it can only be condemned. For, if the appreciation or perception of object or figure is assumed to require the presence of some sort of ground or field, if the recognition of some sort of however closed field is a prerequisite of all perceptual experience and, if consciousness of field precedes consciousness of figure, then, when figure is unsupported by any recognizable frame of reference, it can only become enfeebled and self-destructive. For, while it is possible to imagine—and to imagine being delighted by—a field of objects which are

legible in terms of proximity, identity, common structure, density, etc., there are still questions as to how much such objects can be agglomerated and of how plausible, in reality, it is to assume the possibility of their exact multiplication. Or, alternatively, these are questions relative to optical mechanics, of how much can be supported before the trade breaks down and the introduction of closure, screening, segregation of information, becomes an experiential imperative.

Presumably this point has not, as yet, quite been reached. For the modern city in its cut-price versions (the city in the park become the city in the parking lot), for the most part still exists within the closed fields which the traditional city supplies. But, if, in this way—not only perceptually but also sociologically parasitic, it continues to feed off the organism which it proposes to supplant, then the time is now not very far remote when this sustaining background may finally disappear.

Such is the incipient crisis of more than perception. The traditional city goes away; but even the parody of the city of modern architecture refuses to become established. The public realm has shrunk to an apologetic ghost but the private realm has not been significantly enriched; there are no references—either historical or ideal; and, in this atomized society, except for what is electronically supplied or is reluctantly sought in print, communication has either collapsed or reduced itself to impoverished interchange of ever more banal verbal formulae.

Evidently, it is not necessary that the dictionary, whether Webster or OED, need retain its present volume. It is redundant; its bulk is inflated; the indiscriminate use of its contents lends itself to specious rhetoric; its sophistications have very little to do with the values of 'just' plain folks'; and, certainly, its semantic categories very little correspondence with the intellectual processes of the neo-noble savage. But, if the appeal, in the name of innocence, seriously to abbreviate the dictionary *might* find only a minimum of support, even though built forms are not quite the same as words, we have here sketched a programme strictly analogous to that which was launched by modern architecture.

Let us eliminate the gratuitous; let us concern ourselves with needs rather than wants; let us not be too preoccupied with framing the distinctions; instead let us build from fundamentals... Something very like this was the message which led to the present impasse; and, if contemporary happenings are believed (like modern architecture itself) to be inevitable, of course, they will become so. But, on the other hand, if we do not suppose ourselves to be in the Hegelian grip of irreversible fate, it is just possible that there are alternatives to be found.

In any case the question at this point is not so much whether the traditional city, in absolute terms, is good or bad, relevant or irrelevant, in tune with the *Zeitgeist* or otherwise. Nor is it a question of modern architecture's obvious defects. Rather it is a question of common sense and common interest. We have two models of the city. Ultimately, wishing to surrender neither, we wish to qualify both. For in an age, allegedly, of

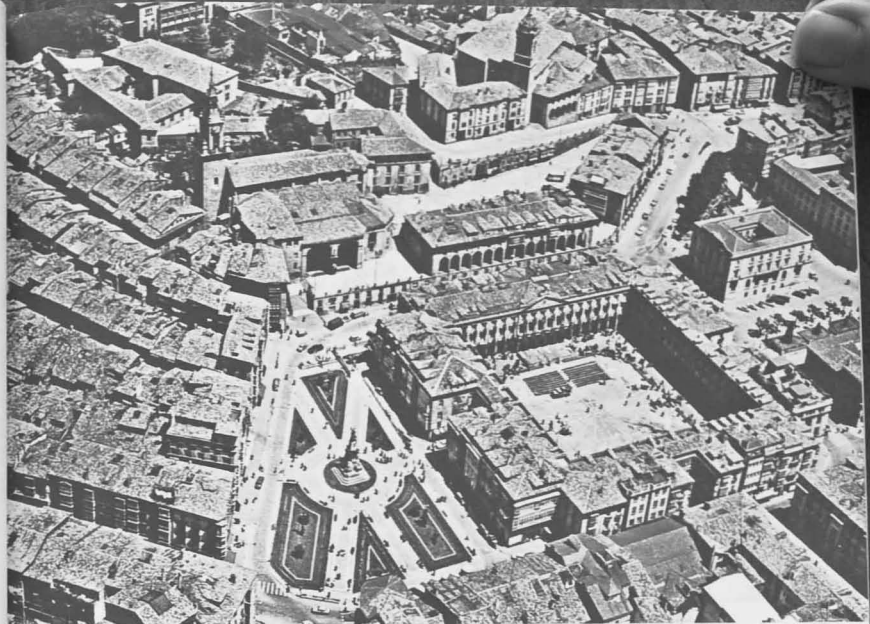
optional latitude and pluralist intention, it should be possible at least to plot some kind of strategy of accommodation and coexistence.

But, if in this way we now ask for deliverance from the city of deliverance, then in order to secure any approximation to this condition of freedom, there are certain cherished fantasies, not without final value, which the architect must be called upon to imagine as modified and re-directed. The notion of himself as messiah is one of these; and, while the notion of himself as eternal proponent of avant gardeism is another, even more important is the strangely desperate idea of architecture as oppressive and coercive.⁹ Indeed, particularly, this curious relic of neo-Hegelianism will require to be temporarily suppressed; and this in the interests of a recognition that 'oppression' is always with us as the insuperable condition of existence—'oppression' of birth and death, of place and time, of language and education, of memory and numbers, being all of them components of a condition which, as yet, is not to be superseded.

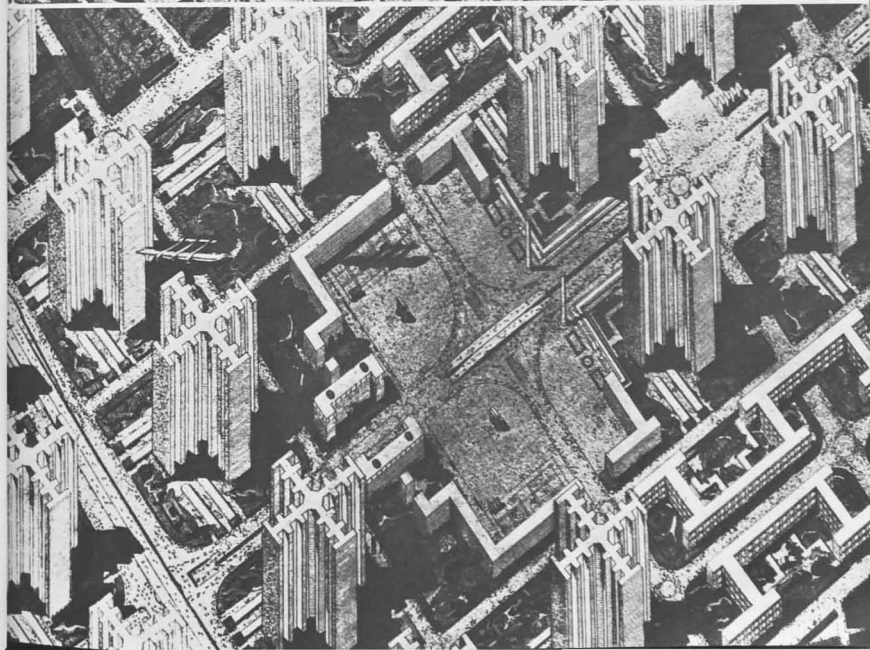
And so to proceed from diagnosis—usually perfunctory—to prognosis—generally even more casual—firstly there might be suggested the overthrow of one of modern architecture's least avowed but most visible tenets. This is the proposition that all outdoor space must be in public ownership and accessible to everybody; and, if there is no doubt that this was a central working idea and, has, long since, become a bureaucratic cliché, there is still the obligation to notice that, among the repertoire of possible ideas, the inordinate importance of this one is very odd indeed. And thus, while its iconographic substance may be recognized—it meant a collectivized and emancipated society which knew no artificial barriers—one may still marvel that such an offbeat proposition could ever have become so established. One walks through the city—whether it is New York, Rome, London or Paris who cares; one sees lights upstairs, a ceiling, shadows, some objects; but, as one mentally fills in the rest and imagines a society of unexampled brilliance from which one is fatally excluded, one does not feel exactly deprived. For, in this curious commerce between the visible and the undisclosed, we are well aware that we too can erect our own private proscenium and, by turning on our own lights, augment the general hallucination which, however absurd it may be, is never other than stimulating.

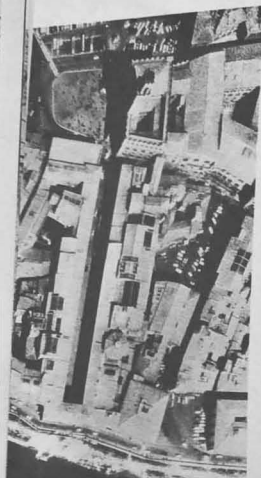
This is to specify, in a particularly extreme form, a way in which exclusion may gratify the imagination. One is called upon to complete apparently mysterious but really normal situations of which one is made only partially aware; and, if literally to penetrate all these situations would be destructive of speculative pleasure, one might now apply the analogy of the illuminated room to the fabric of the city as a whole. Which is quite simply to say that the absolute spatial freedoms of the *ville radieuse* and its more recent derivatives are without interest; and that, rather than being empowered to walk everywhere—everywhere being always the same—almost certainly it would be more satisfying to be presented with

Vittoria, Spain. Plaza Mayor



Le Corbusier: Paris, Plan Voisin, 1925, aerial axonometric





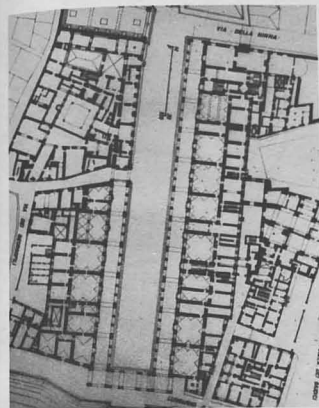
Uffizi, air view

the exclusions—wall, railings, fences, gates, barriers—of a reasonably constructed ground plane.

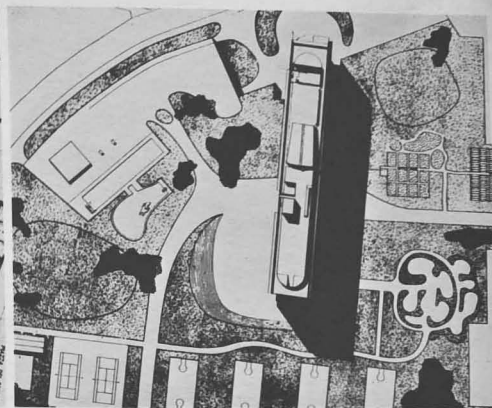
However, if to say so much is only to articulate what is already a dimly perceived tendency, and if it is usually provided with sociological justification¹⁰ (identity, collective 'turf', etc.), there are more important sacrifices of contemporary tradition which are surely required; and we speak of a willingness to reconsider the object which allegedly nobody wants and to evaluate it not so much as figure but as ground.

A proposal which, for practical purposes, demands a willingness to imagine the present dispensation as inverted, the idea of such inversion is most immediately and succinctly to be explained by the comparison of a void and a solid of almost identical proportions. And, if to illustrate prime solid nothing will serve better than Le Corbusier's Unité, then, as an instance of the opposite and reciprocal condition, Vasari's Uffizi could scarcely be more adequate. The parallel is, of course, trans-cultural; but, if a sixteenth century office building become a museum may, with certain reservations, be brought into critical proximity with a twentieth century apartment house, then an obvious point can be made. For, if the Uffizi is Marseilles turned outside in, or if it is a jelly mould for the Unité, it is also void become figurative, active and positively charged; and, while the effect of Marseilles is to endorse a private and atomized society, the Uffizi is much more completely a 'collective' structure. And, to further bias the comparison: while Le Corbusier presents a private and insulated building which, unambiguously, caters to a limited clientèle, Vasari's model is sufficiently two-faced to be able to accommodate a good deal more. Urbanistically it is far more active. A central void-figure, stable and obviously planned, with, by way of entourage, an irregular back up which may be loose and responsive to close context. A stipulation of an ideal world and an engagement of empirical circumstance, the Uffizi may be seen as reconciling themes of self-conscious order and spontaneous randomness; and, while it accepts the existing, by then proclaiming the new the Uffizi confers value upon both new and old.

Again, a comparison of a Le Corbusier product, this time with one by Auguste Perret, may be used to expand or to reinforce the preceding; and, since the comparison, originally made by Peter Collins, involves two interpretations of the same programme, it may, to that extent, be considered the more legitimate. Le Corbusier and Perret's projects for the Palace of the Soviets which, the two together, might have been designed to confound the proposition that form follows function, could almost be allowed to speak for themselves. Perret gestures to immediate context and Le Corbusier scarcely so. With their explicit spatial connections with the Kremlin and the inflection of their courtyard towards the river, Perret's buildings enter into an idea of Moscow which they are evidently intended to elaborate; but Le Corbusier's buildings, which are apt to proclaim their derivation from immediate necessity, are certainly not so much responsive to the site as they are symbolic constructs supposedly



Florence, Uffizi, plan



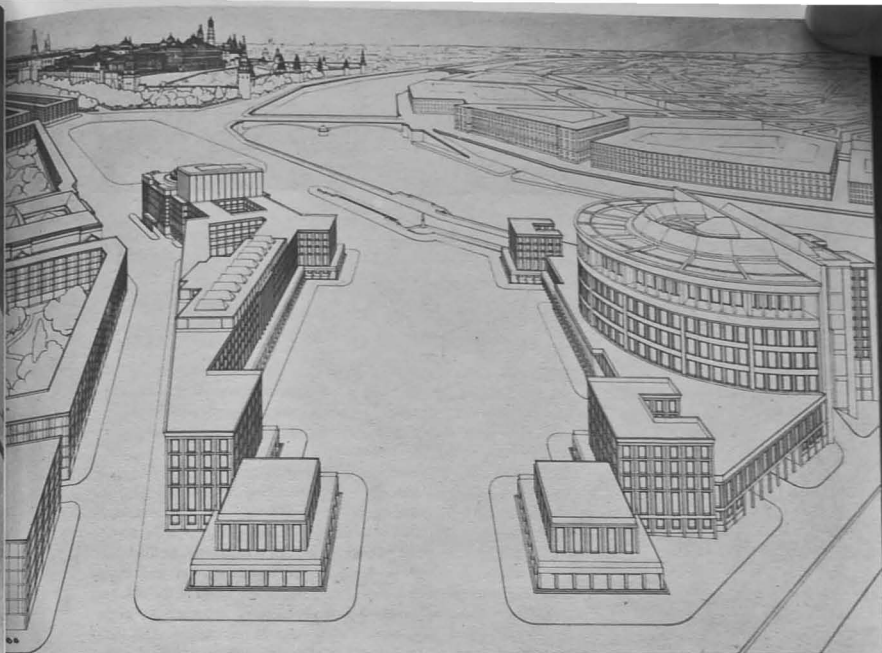
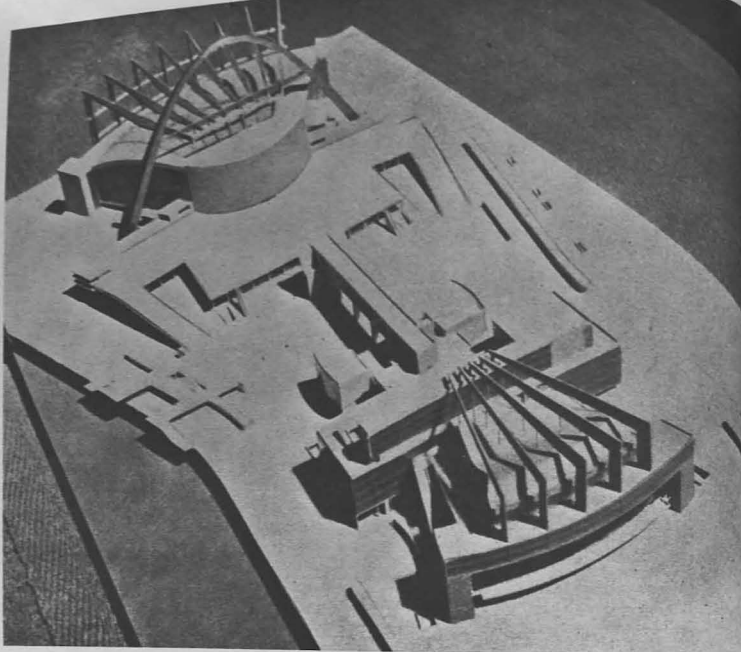
Le Corbusier: Marseilles, Unité d'Habitation, 1946, site plan



Unité d'Habitation, view



Uffizi, view



left top

Le Corbusier: Moscow, project for the Palace of the Soviets, 1931

above

Auguste Perret: Moscow, project for the Palace of the Soviets, 1931

far left below

Le Corbusier, plan

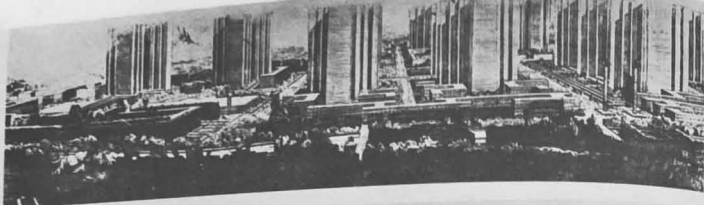
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Perret, plan

responsive to an assumed newly liberated cultural milieu. And if in each case, the use of site is iconographically representative of an attitude to tradition, then, in these two evaluations of tradition, it may be entirely fair to read the effects of a twenty year generation gap.

But in one further parallel along these lines there is no such gap that can be interposed. Gunnar Asplund and Le Corbusier were entirely of the same generation; and, if one is here not dealing with comparable programmes or proposals of equivalent size, the dates of Asplund's Royal Chancellery project (1922) and Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin (1925) may still facilitate their joint examination. The Plan Voisin is an outgrowth of Le Corbusier's Ville Contemporaine of 1922. It is the Ville Contemporaine injected into a specific Parisian site; and, however unvisionary it was professed to be—indeed however 'real' it has become—it evidently





above
Le Corbusier: Paris, Plan Voisin, 1925,
perspective

below
Gunnar Asplund: Stockholm, project
for the Royal Chancellery, 1922,
elevation

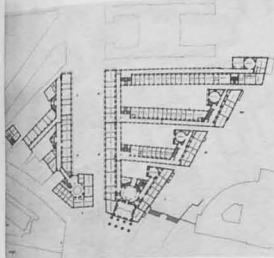
proposes a completely different working model of reality from that employed by Asplund. The one is a statement of historical destiny, the other of historical continuity; the one is a celebration of generalities, the other of specifics; and, in both cases, the site functions as icon representative of these different evaluations.

Thus, as almost always in his urbanistic proposals, Le Corbusier largely responds to the idea of a reconstructed society and is largely unconcerned with local spatial minutiae. If the Portes Saint-Denis and Saint-Martin may be incorporated in the city centre so far so good; if the Marais is to be destroyed no matter: the principal aim is manifesto. Le Corbusier is primarily involved with the building of a Phoenix symbol; and, in his concern to illustrate a new world rising above the ashes of the old, one may detect a reason for his highly perfunctory approach to major monuments—only to be inspected after cultural inoculation. And thus, by contrast, Asplund for whom, one might suppose, ideas of social continuity become represented in his attempt to make of his buildings, as much as possible, a part of the urban continuum.

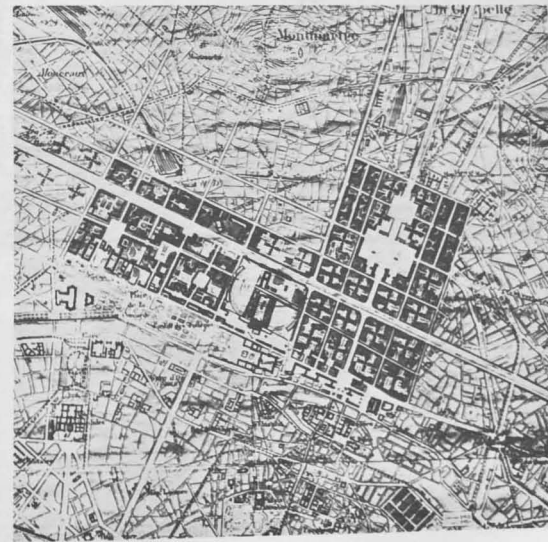
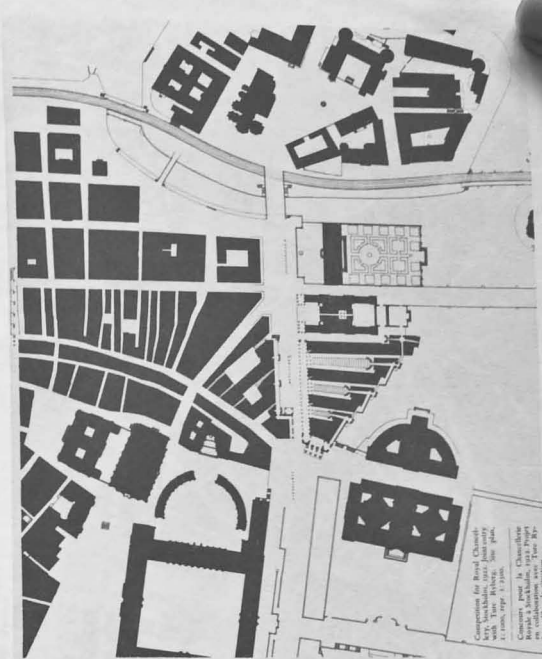
But, if Le Corbusier simulates a future and Asplund a past, if one is almost all prophecy theatre and the other almost all memory, and if it is the present contention that both of these ways of looking at the city—spatially as well as sentimentally—are valuable, the immediate concern is with their spatial implications. We have identified two models; we have suggested that it would be less than sane to abandon either; and we are, consequently, concerned with their reconciliation, with, at one level, a recognition of the specific and, at another, the possibilities of general statement. But there is also the problem of one model which is active and predominant and another which is highly recessive; and it is in order to correct this lack of equilibrium that we have been obliged to introduce Vasari, Perret and Asplund as purveyors of useful information. And, if there is no doubt about it that, of the three, Perret is the most banal and, maybe, Vasari the most suggestive, then, probably, Asplund may be felt to illustrate the most elaborate use of multiple design strategies. Simultaneously the empiricist reacting to site and the idealist concerned with

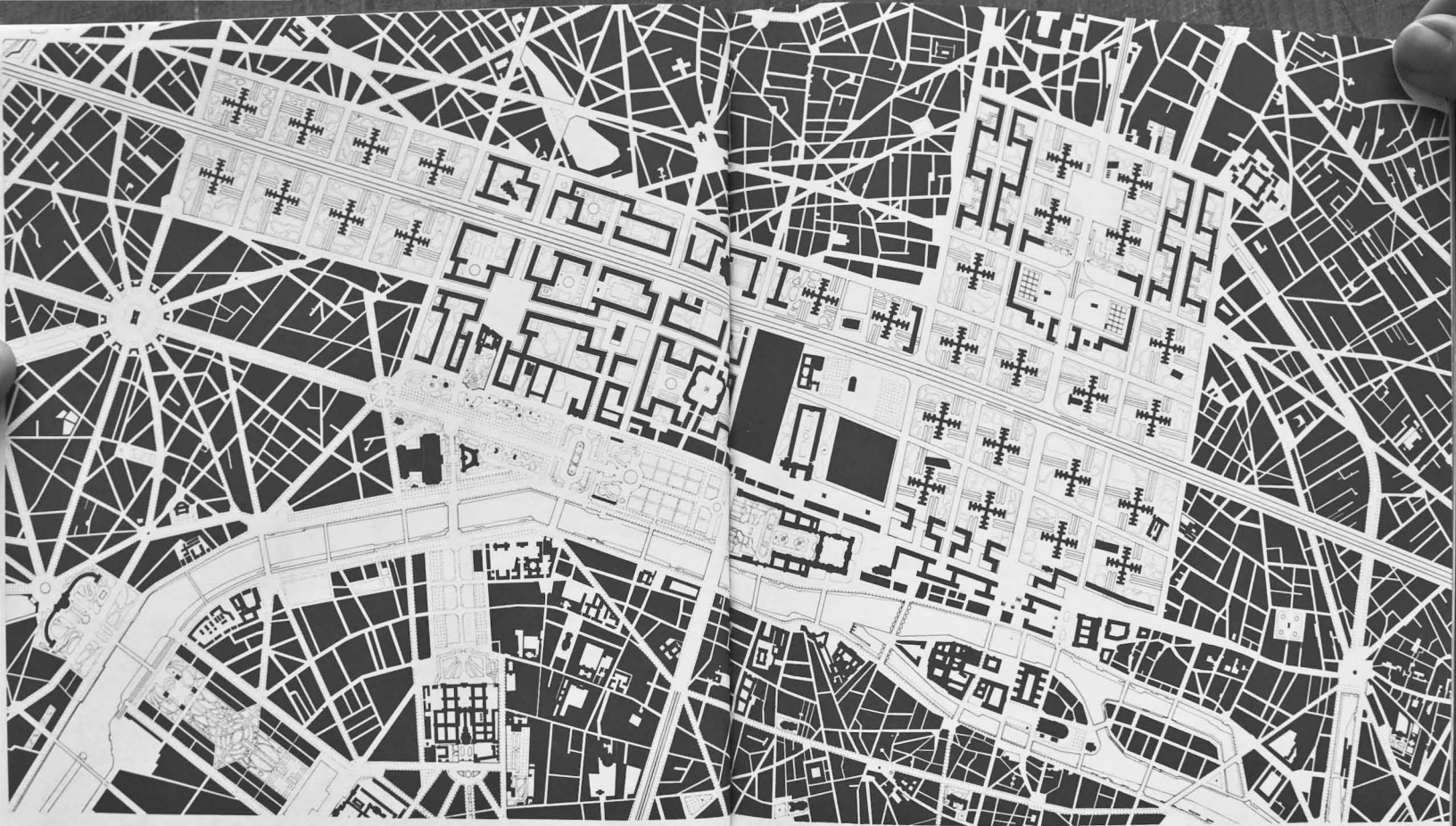
right
Asplund: Chancellery, site plan

below
Asplund: Chancellery, plan



right
Le Corbusier: Paris, Plan Voisin,
site plan

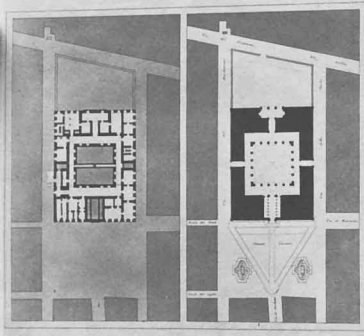




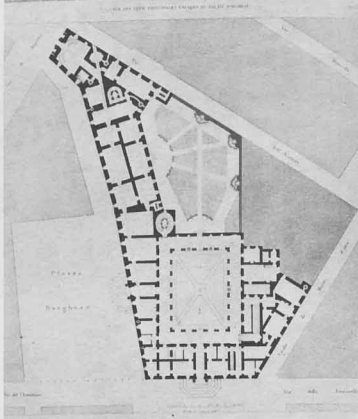
Le Corbusier: Paris, Plan Voisin, 1925,
figure-ground plan



Una veduta de la Piazza di de Farnese



Una veduta dell'Interno della Piazza di S. Maria della Consolazione



far left above
Rome, Palazzo Farnese, view and plan

left above
Rome, Palazzo Borghese, view and plan

far left below
Todi, Santa Maria della Consolazione

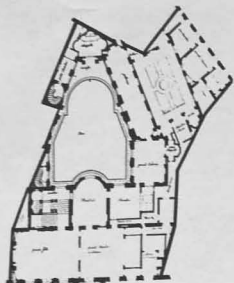
left below
Rome, Sant' Agnese in Piazza Navona

normative condition, in one work he responds, adjusts, translates, asserts to be—and all at once—passive recipient and active reverberator.

However, Asplund's play with assumed contingencies and assumed absolutes, brilliant though it may be, does seem to involve mostly strategies of response; and, in considering problems of the object, it may be useful to consider the admittedly ancient technique of deliberately distorting what is also presented as the ideal type. And to take a Renaissance-Baroque example: if Santa Maria della Consolazione at Todi may, in spite of certain provincial details, be allowed to represent the 'perfect' building in all its pristine integrity, then how is this building to be 'compromised' for use in a less than 'perfect' site? This is a problem which a functionalist theory could neither envisage nor admit. For though, in practice, functionalism could often become compounded with a theory of types, intrinsically it was scarcely able to comprehend the notion of already synthesized and pre-existent models being shifted around from place to place. But, if functionalism proposed an end to typologies in favour of a logical induction from concrete facts, it is precisely because it was unwilling to consider iconic significance as a concrete fact in itself, unwilling to imagine particular physical configurations as instruments of communication, that functionalism can have very little to say with reference to the deformation of ideal models. So Todi we know to be a sign and an advertisement; and, as we concede the freedom to use the advertisement wherever conditions may require it, we also infer the possibilities of sustaining, or salvaging the meaning while manipulating the form according to the exigencies of circumstance. And, in such terms, it may be possible to see Sant' Agnese in Piazza Navona as a Todi which is simultaneously 'compromised' and intact. The constricted site propounds its pressures: the piazza and the dome are the irreducible protagonists in a debate; the piazza has something to say about Rome, the dome about cosmic fantasy; and, finally, via a process of response and challenge, both of them make their point.

So the reading of Sant' Agnese continuously fluctuates between an interpretation of the building as object and its reinterpretation as texture; but, if the church may be sometimes an ideal object and sometimes a function of the piazza wall, yet another Roman instance of such figure-ground alternation—of both meanings and forms—might still be cited. Obviously not so elaborate a construct as Sant' Agnese, the Palazzo Borghese, located upon its highly idiosyncratic site, contrives both to respond to this site and to behave as a representative palace of the Farnese type. The Palazzo Farnese provides its reference and meaning. It contributes certain factors of central stability, both of façade and plan; but, with the 'perfect' cortile now embedded in a volume of highly 'imperfect' and elastic perimeter, with the building predicated on a recognition of both archetype and accident, there follows from this duplicity of evaluation an internal situation of great richness and freedom.

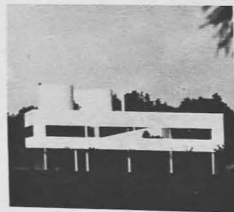
Now this type of strategy which combines local concessions with



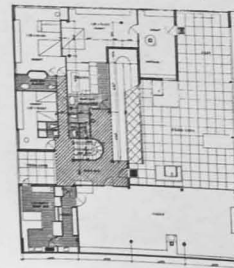
Paris, Hôtel de Beauvais, plan



Hôtel de Beauvais, elevation



Le Corbusier: Villa Savoye at Poissy



Villa Savoye, plan

a declaration of independence from anything local and specific could be indefinitely illustrated; but, perhaps, one more instance of it will suffice. Le Pautre's Hôtel de Beauvais, with its ground floor of shops, is externally something of a minor Roman *palazzo* brought to Paris; and, as an even more elaborate version of a category of free plan, it might possibly prompt comparison with the great master and advocate of the free plan himself. But Le Corbusier's technique is, of course, the logical opposite to that of Le Pautre; and, if the 'freedoms' of the Villa Savoye depend on the stability of its indestructible perimeter, the 'freedoms' of the Hôtel de Beauvais are derived from the equivalent stability of its central *cour d'honneur*.

In other words, one might almost write an equation: *Unité* = Hôtel de Beauvais; Villa Savoye; and, as a simple convenience, this equation is of completely crucial importance. For on the one hand at the Villa Savoye, as at the *Unité*, there is an absolute insistence upon the virtues of primary solid, upon the isolation of the building as object and the urbanistic corollary of this insistence scarcely requires further commentary; and, on the other, in the Hôtel de Beauvais, as at the Palazzo Borghese, the built solid is allowed to assume comparatively minor significance. Indeed, in these last cases, the built solid scarcely divulges itself; and, while unbuilt space (courtyard) assumes the directive role, becomes the predominant idea, the building's perimeter is enabled to act as no more than a 'free' response to adjacency. On the one side of the equation building becomes prime and insulated, on the other the isolation of identifiable space reduces (or elevates) the status of building to infill.

But building as infill! The idea *can* seem to be deplorably passive and empirical—though such need not be the case. For, in spite of their spatial preoccupations neither the Hôtel de Beauvais or the Palazzo Borghese are, finally, flaccid. They, both of them, assert themselves by way of representational façade, by way of progression from façade-figure (solid) to courtyard-figure (void); and, in this context, although the Villa Savoye is by no means the simplistic construct which we have here made it appear (although it too, to some extent, operates as its opposite) for present purposes its arguments are not central.

For, far more clearly than at Savoye, at the Hôtel de Beauvais and the Palazzo Borghese the *Gestalt* condition of ambivalence—double value and double meaning—results in interest and provocation. However, though speculation may thus be incited by the fluctuations of the figure-ground phenomenon (which may be volatile or may be sluggish), the possibilities of any such activity—especially at an urban scale—would seem very largely to depend upon the presence of what used to be called *poché*.

Frankly, we had forgotten the term, or relegated it to a catalogue of obsolete categories; and were only recently reminded of its usefulness by Robert Venturi.¹¹ But if *poché*, understood as the imprint upon the plan of the traditional heavy structure, acts to disengage the principal spaces of the building from each other, if it is a solid matrix which frames a series of major spatial events, it is not hard to acknowledge that the recognition of

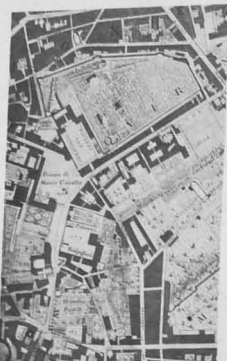
poché is also a matter of context and that, depending on perceptual field, a building itself may become a type of *poché*, for certain purposes a solid assisting the legibility of adjacent spaces. And thus, for instance, such buildings as the Palazzo Borghese may be taken as types of habitable *poché* which articulate the transition of external voids.

So, thus far, implicitly, we have been concerned with an appeal for urban *poché* and the argument has been primarily buttressed by perceptual criteria; but, if the same argument might, just as well, receive sociological support (and we would prefer to see the two findings as interrelated), we must still face a very brief question of how to do it.

It seems that the general usefulness of *poché* in a revived and overhauled sense, comes by its ability, as a solid, to engage or be engaged by adjacent voids, to act as both figure and ground as necessity or circumstance might require; but with the city of modern architecture, of course, no such reciprocity is either possible or intended. But, though the employment of ambiguous resources might foul the cleanliness of this city's mission, since we are involved in this process anyway, it will be opportune again to produce the *Unité* and, this time, to bring it into confrontation with the Quirinale. In plan configuration, in its nimble relationship with the ground and in the equality of its two major faces the *Unité* ensures its own emphatic isolation. A housing block which, more or less, satisfies desired requirements in terms of exposure, ventilation, etc., its limitations with regard to collectivity and context have already been noted; and it is in order to examine possible alleviation of these shortcomings that the Palazzo del Quirinale is now introduced. In its extension, the improbably attenuated Manica Lunga (which might be several *Unités* put end to end), the Quirinale carries within its general format all the possibilities of positive twentieth century living standards (access, light, air, aspect, prospect, etc.); but, while the *Unité* continues to enforce its isolation and object quality, the Quirinale extension acts in quite a different way.

Thus, with respect to the street on the one side and its gardens on the other, the Manica Lunga acts as both space *occupier* and space *definer*, as positive figure and passive ground, permitting both street and garden to exert their distinct and independent personalities. To the street it projects a hard, 'outside' presence which acts as a kind of datum to service a condition of irregularity and circumstance (Sant' Andrea, etc.) across the way; but, while in this manner it establishes the public realm, it is also able to secure for the garden side a wholly contrary, softer, private and, potentially, more adaptable condition.

The elegance and the economy of the operation, all done with so little and all so obvious, may stand as a criticism of contemporary procedures; but, if a consideration of perhaps more than one building has here been implied, such an expansion may be carried a little further. To consider, for instance, the courtyard of the Palais Royal, admired but not 'used' by Le Corbusier, as providing a clear differentiation between an internal condition of relative privacy and an external, less comprehensible



above
Rome, the Quirinale and its vicinity,
1748, from the plan of Noli

right
Rome, the Quirinale, air view

below right
Rome, the Quirinale and Manica Lunga

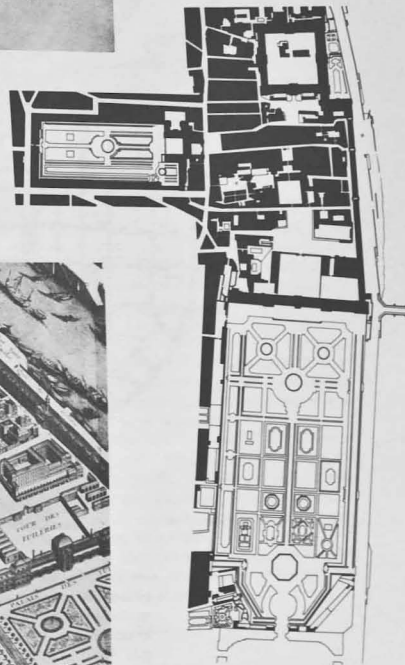


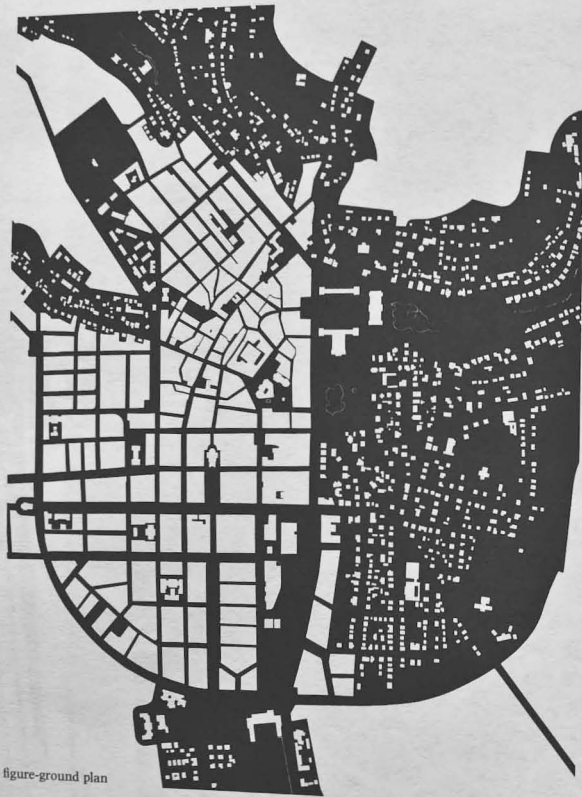
Paris, courtyard of the Palais Royal

Paris, the Louvre, Tuileries, and Palais
Royal, from the Plan Turgot, 1739



Paris, the Louvre, Tuileries, and Palais
Royal, c.1780, figure-ground plan





Wiesbaden, c.1900, figure-ground plan

world; to consider it not only as habitable *poché* but as an urban room, perhaps one of many; and to consider then a number of towers, current specification—smooth, bumpy, with or without entrails, whatever—to be located as urban furniture, perhaps some inside the 'room' and some outside. The order of the furniture is no matter; but the Palais Royal thus becomes an instrument of field recognition, an identifiable stabilizer and

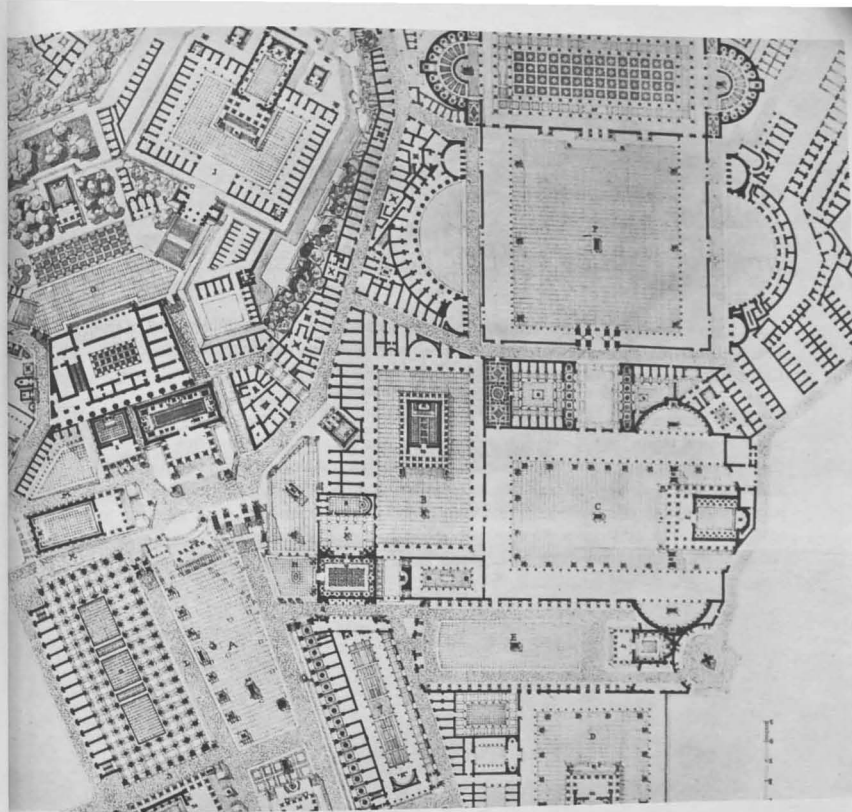
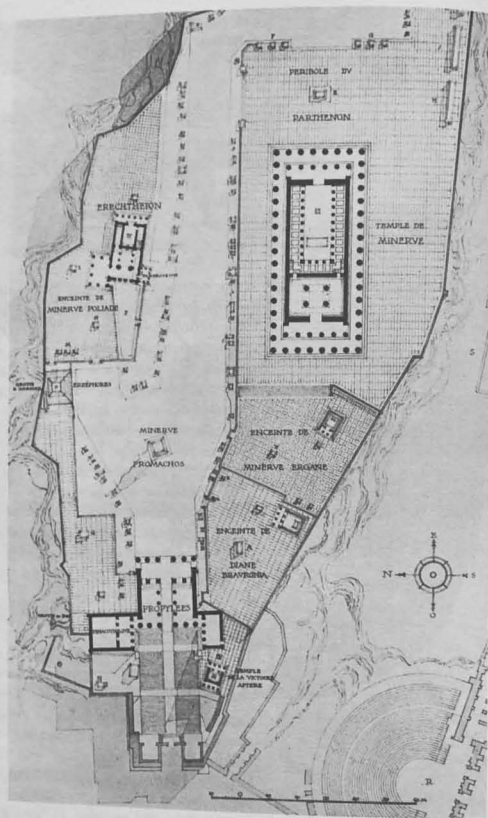
a means of collective orientation. The combination provides a condition of mutual reference, complete reciprocity, relative freedom. In addition, being essentially foolproof, it might almost 'make the evil difficult and the good easy.'¹²

That all this is of no consequence...? That between architecture and human 'activity' there is no relationship...? Such one knows to be the continuing prejudice of the 'Let us evaporate the object, let us interact' school; but, if existing political structure—whatever one might wish—seems scarcely to be upon the threshold of impending dissolution and if the object seems equally intractable to important physico-chemical decomposition, then, by way of reply, it *might* be arguable that it *could* be justifiable to make at least *some* concessions to these circumstances.

To summarize: it is here proposed that, rather than hoping and waiting for the withering away of the object (while, simultaneously manufacturing versions of it in profusion unparalleled), it might be judicious, in most cases, to allow and encourage the object to become digested in a prevalent texture or matrix. It is further suggested that neither object nor space fixation are, in themselves, any longer representative of valuable attitudes. The one may, indeed, characterize the 'new' city and the other the old; but, if these are situations which must be transcended rather than emulated, the situation to be hoped for should be recognized as one in which both buildings *and* spaces exist in an equality of sustained debate. A debate in which victory consists in each component emerging undefeated, the imagined condition is a type of solid-void dialectic which might allow for the joint existence of the overtly planned and the genuinely unplanned, of the set-piece and the accident, of the public and the private, of the state and the individual. It is a condition of alerted equilibrium which is envisaged; and it is in order to illuminate the potential of such a contest that we have introduced a rudimentary variety of possible strategies. Cross-breeding, assimilation, distortion, challenge, response, imposition, superimposition, conciliation: these might be given any number of names and, surely, neither can nor should be too closely specified; but if the burden of the present discussion has rested upon the city's morphology, upon the physical and inanimate, neither 'people' nor 'politics' are assumed to have been excluded. Indeed, both 'politics' and 'people' are, by now, clamouring for attention; but, if their scrutiny can barely be deferred, yet one more morphological stipulation may still be in order.

Ultimately, and in terms of figure-ground, the debate which is here postulated between solid and void is a debate between two models and, succinctly, these may be typified as *acropolis* and *forum*.

Athens, the acropolis
 Rome, the imperial fora



INTRODUCTION

1. Aristote, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I para III.

2. *UTOPIA: DREAMS AND FALL?*

- 1 We are indebted to Ian Boyd Whyte for calling to our attention this statement of Fintler's of 1919 which was republished in the catalogue of the Glaserite Exhibition (organized by O. M. Ungers, Berlin, 1960).
- 2 Frank Lloyd Wright, *A Testament*, New York, 1954, p.24.
- 3 Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, New York, 1964, p.143.
- 4 Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, New York, n.d., p.213. First published in 1916 in the International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method.
- 5 Justin Shkadez, 'The Political Theory of Utopia: From Melancholy to Nostalgia', *Architectural Spring*, 1965, p.169.

6 For the *Andalus* image we are indebted to Françoise Choay. *The Modern City: Planning in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 1969; but, unhappily and so far as we can discover, André remains a mere name, without dates or as yet further information. He is not listed in the *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française*, and, according to Mme. Choay, since her publication of this utopia, even the engraving itself has vanished from the Bibliothèque Nationale.

7 Henri de Saint-Simon, *Lettres d'un habitant de Genève à ses contemporains*, Geneva, 1803, republished in *Oeuvres de Saint-Simon et d'Enfantin*, Paris, 1865-78, Vol.XX.

8 The motto of Saint-Simon, *Opinions littéraires et philosophiques*, Paris, 1825. Also the motto of the Saint-Simonian periodical, *Le Producteur*, 1825-26.

9 Gabriel-Desire Laverdant, *De La Mission de l'Art et du Rôle des Artistes*, Paris, 1841, quoted from Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1968.

10 Leon Holey, *Le Producteur*, Vol.I, p.399; Vol.III, pp.110 and 526.

11 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1790, World Classics Ed., 1950.

12 William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, New York, 1890, London, 1891.

13 Burke, op.cit., p.186.

14 We allude to Burke's *Philosophical Inquiry into Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, London, 1756.

15 Burke, ibid., p.109.

16 Burke, ibid., pp.105-6.

17 *Oeuvres de Saint-Simon et d'Enfantin*, Vol.XX, pp.199-200.

18 It would be absurd on our part to pretend that what follows is any very specific scrutiny of Hegel. We have attempted to be conscientious; but are also obliged to concede fatigue. Our primary interest is, obviously, far from philosophical, but what we here attempt is a stipulation of Hegel's enormous, and generally unacknowledged importance to modern architecture.

19 Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe, G. M. 1 (November, 1921), quoted from Philip Johnson, *Mies Van der Rohe*, New York, 1947; Walter Gropius, *Scope of Total Architecture*, New York, 1955, p.61; Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, New York, 1964, p.28, from the CIAM Manifesto of 1928.

20 F.W. Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, Chapter entitled 'Skirmishes in a War with the Age' section 38.

21 T. T. Marinetti, from the *Futurist Manifesto*, 1909, Proposition 9.

22 Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*, London, 1955, p.48.

23 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, London, 1927, pp.14, 251.

24 *AFTER THE MILLENNIUM*

1 This reference to Kenneth Burke is approximate and its source appears now entirely to rest accurate recall.

2 The devotees of Futurism have, on the whole, been characteristically unwilling to advertise (or even scrutinize) the Marinetti-Mussolini relationship; but, at the risk of exaggerating its importance, one may still think of Marinetti's great-even superb-eclogium of the Duce:

built all *italiana*, designed by inspired and brutal hands, forged, carved to the model of the mighty rocks of our peninsula.

Square crushing wings. Scorrill jutting lips that spit and defiance and swagger on everything solid, pedantic and flicking. Massive rock-like head, but the ultradynamic eyes dart with the speed of automobiles racing on the Lombard plains. To right and left flashes the gleaming corner of a wolf.

and later:

...rising to speak, he bends forward his masterful head, like a squared off projectile, package full of gunpowder, the cubic will of the State. But he lowers it in conclusion, ready to smash the question head on or, better, to pore in like a bull. Futurist eloquence well modulated by teeth of steel...

and still later:

He will split the crowd like a swift anteaubmarine boat, an exploding torpedo. Rush but sure, because his classic good sense has accurately judged the distance. Without cruelty, because his vibrant fresh lively childlike sensibility laughs. I remember how he smiled, like a happy infant, as he counted off twenty shots from his enormous revolver into the policeman's kiosk on the Via Paolo di Cannobio.

From *Marinetti and Futurism*, 1929, quoted from R. W. Flint, *Marinetti*, Selected Writings, New York, 1971.

3 Françoise Choay, *The Modern City: Planning in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 1969.

4 Jacob B. Bakema, lecture at Cornell University, Spring 1972.

5 G. Carlo de Carlo, seminar at Cornell University, Spring 1972.

6 See, for instance, the criticism of Alan Colquhoun, Central Beher, Apeldoorn, Holland, *Architecture*, Sept-Oct., 1974.

7 Robert Venturi reported in Paul Goldberger, 'Mickey Mouse Teaches the Architects', *New York Times Magazine*, 22 October, 1972.

8 ed. Emilio Ambasz, *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, New York, 1972, p.249.

9 Ambasz, ibid., p.247.

10 Ambasz, ibid., p.248.

11 From a Disney World brochure.

12 Paul Goldberger, op.cit.

13 We think of many locations but, particularly, of Orvego, New York and Lockhart, Texas.

14 Ambasz, op.cit., p.250.

15 Of interest in this context could be Edmund Burke's 'Liberty, too, must be limited in order to be possessed', from *A Letter From Burke to the Sheriffs of Bristol on the Affairs of America*, London, 1777, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, London, 1845, p.217.

16 Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, London and Chicago, 1966.

CRISIS OF THE OBJECT: PRELUDE TO TEXTURE

1 Le Corbusier, *The House of Man*, London, 1948, pp.91, 96.

2 Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*, London, 1940, p.136.

3 Siegfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, Cambridge, Mass., 1941, p.524.

4 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, London, 1927, p.167.

5 Point XIV of Van Doesburg's Madrid lecture of 1930: but this statement was implicit in 1924; in contrast to frontality sanctified by a rigid static concept of life, the new architecture offers a plastic wealth of multifaceted temporal and spatial effects'. *De Stijl*, Vol. VI, No.6-7, p.80.

6 Le Corbusier, *La Chartre d'Athènes*, Paris, 1943, English translation, Anthony Bartley, *The Athens Charter*, New York, 1973.

7 J. Turrell, J. L. Sert and E. N. Rogers (eds.), *The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanization of Urban Life*, New York, 1951, London, 1952.

8 Benjamin Drexler, *Tancred*, London, 1847.

9 Alexander Tzonis, *Towards a Non-Oppressive Environment*, Boston, 1972.

10 Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space*, New York and London, 1972. *Architectural Design for Crime Prevention*, Washington, 1973. Newman offers pragmatic justification for what, in any case, ought to be normative procedure; but his inference (surely correct) that spatial dispositions may operate to prevent crime is an argument distressingly far removed from the more classical supposition that the

purposes of architecture are intimately related with the idea of the good society.

11 Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, The Museum of Modern Art Papers on Architecture I, New York, 1966.

12 Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre Complète* 1938-46, Zurich, 1964, p.171. The statement: 'It is a language of proportions which makes evil difficult and good easy' is, supposedly, Albert Einstein's reaction to the Modulor.

COLLISION CITY AND THE POLITICS OF BUREAU

1 Walter Gropius, *Scope of Total Architecture*, New York, 1955, p.91.

2 Thomas More, *Utopia*, 1516.

3 Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, London, 1953; New York, 1955, p.7.

4 Berlin, ibid., p.10.

5 Berlin, ibid., p.11.

6 William Jurgens, *The Symbolic Essence of Modern European Architecture: of the Twentieth and its Continuing Influence*, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. XXII, No. 3, 1963.

7 Karl Popper, *Logik der Forschung*, Vienna, 1934, English translation, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, London, 1959; *The Open Society and its Enemies*, London, 1945; *The Poverty of Historicism*, London, 1957.

8 Christopher Alexander, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*, Cambridge, Mass., 1964. The presumed revival of Positivism in the 1960s-at a time when it might have been supposed to be extinct, and its arguments long ago demolished-well surely, in the course of time, begin to present itself as one of the more interesting architectural curiosities of the twentieth century.

9 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, London, 1966; New York, 1969, p.16.

10 Lévi-Strauss, ibid., p.16.

11 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, London, 1927, pp.18-19.

12 Lévi-Strauss, op.cit., p.17.

13 Lévi-Strauss, op.cit., p.22.

14 Lévi-Strauss, ibid., p.19.

15 Lévi-Strauss, ibid., p.22.

16 The possibilities of an exponential, progressive dialectic-whether Marxian or Hegelian-are not here assumed to be 'useful'.

17 Frederick Law Olmsted and James R. Cross, *Preliminary Report of the Landscape Architect and the Civil and Topographical Engineer, Upon the Laying Out of the Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Wards, City of New York*, No. 72, Board of Public Parks, 1877, Extracted from R. Sutton (ed.), *Civilizing American Cities*, Cambridge, Mass., 1971.

18 We are indebted for this image to Charles Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture*, New York and London, 1973.

19 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translation, Henry Reeve, London, 1835-40; New York, 1848, part 2, p.347.

COLLAGE CITY AND THE RECOGNITION OF TIME

1 Ernest Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, trans. Ralph Manheim, New Haven and London 1953, and, for instance, Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Cambridge, Mass., 1942, but also and not incidentally-the whole Warburgian tradition should surely here be cited.

2 Particularly, Karl Popper, 'Utopia and Violence', 1947; and 'Towards a Rational Theory of Tradition', 1948. Published in *Conversations and Reflections*, New Haven and New York, 1962.

3 Popper, ibid., pp.120-35.

4 Popper, ibid., pp.355-63.

5 *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, Richard Nixon, 1969, No. 265, Statement of the Establishment of the National Goals Research Staff.

6 Edward Surtz, S.J., St. Thomas More: *Utopia*, New Haven and London, 1964, pp.viii-vii.

7 At least such an idea, or so we believe, is reported in one of the earlier volumes of *Le Rêve Général de l'Architecture*-though at the time of writing this note, the exact location of the source seems to evade our retrieval. In any case, a reading of such a document as Emmanuel de Las Cases, *Mémoires de Sainte Hélène* will provide at least some Longwood were mostly of a military or political concern, but, from time to time, matters of architecture and urbanism did arise and, then,

the drift of thought is characteristic. Napoleon is concerned with 'practical' performance (harbours, canals, water supply); but he is concerned, quite as much, with 'representational' gesture. And thus from Las Cases, ed. Paris 1956, the following quotations may be suggestive:

On Paris, Vol.I, p.403.

Si le ciel avait continué d'être à Paris, à la fin de ces quelques années, assurément j'aurais fait de Paris la capitale de l'univers et de toute l'Europe un véritable roman.

On Rome, Vol.I, p.411.

L'Empereur disait qu'à Rome il fut resté sous sa domination, elle fut sortie de ses ruines, il se proposait de la nettoyer de tous ses débris, de restaurer tout ce qui eût été possible, et la rendre à son état pas que le moins repoussé, et si étendant dans le voeuage, il eût pu en être en quelque sorte le maître de l'Europe, laquelle ne pouvait manquer d'être victorieuse par force du reste de l'univers.

On Versailles, Vol.I, p.570.

De ces beaux bosquets, je chassais toutes ces symphonies de marais, j'allais, et je les remplaçais par des panoramas, en maçonnerie, de toutes les capitales ou non d'Europe, et de toutes les cités, de toutes les célèbres batailles qui avaient illustré l'histoire victorieuse, de toutes les monuments de la gloire, de toutes les victoires, et de toutes les batailles de la porte de la capitale de l'Europe, laquelle ne pouvait manquer d'être victorieuse par force du reste de l'univers.

And, finally, Vol.II, p.154.

Il regretta fort, du reste, de n'avoir pas fait construire un temple égyptien à Paris; c'était un monument, dit-on, et dit il voudrait avoir enrichi la capitale, etc.

But the notion of the city as museum, as a monument to the state and a representative of its culture, as an index and an instrument of education, which might seem to be implicit in Neo-Classical idealism also receives a macroscopic reflection in the notion of the house as museum; and we think here of Thomas Hope, see John Soane, Karl Friedrich Schinkel and, possibly, John Nash. For the Egyptian temple which Napoleon wished to have built in Paris, and which would have enriched the capital, substitute the sarcophagus of Set I with which Soane succeeded in enriching his own domestic basement and the analogy begins to take shape. Add Soane's Parlor of Padra Giovanni and his Shalimar Room to Hope's Indian Room and Flaxman Cabinet (see David Watkin, *Thomas Hope and the Neo-Classical Idea*, London 1968) and the traces of what Schinkel was to attempt in Berlin and Potsdam are abundantly present. Indeed we are surprised that the category: city as museum, with its sub-category 'the museum street' (visible in places so far apart as Athens and Washington) has, so far, remained unidentified.

8 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, London, 1966; New York, 1969, p.10. Also refer to Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, New York, 1969, London 1970.

9 Alfred Barr, *Recession: Fifty Years of his Art*, New York, 1946, pp.270-1.

10 Alfred Barr, ibid., p.241.

11 Lévi-Strauss, op.cit., p.11.

12 Barr, op.cit., p.79.

13 Barr, ibid., p.79.

14 Abraham Cowley, *Lives of English Poets*, Works of Samuel Johnson, LLD, London, 1823, Vol. IV, p.20.

15 At this stage, one thinks of the observations of Mr. Justice Brandeis: 'The irresistible is often only what which is not resisted'.

16 F. T. Marinetti, from the *Futurist Manifesto*, 1909 and from appendix to A. Beltrami, *L'Uomo nuovo*, Milan, 1923. Both quotations extracted from James Joll, *Intellectuals in Politics*, London and New York, 1960.

17 Barr, op.cit., p.271.

18 St. Paul, *Epistle to the Romans*, 5:20.

19 Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1968, p.219.

20 We are indebted to Kenneth Frampton for this quotation from Hannah Arendt. He is unable to specify its source.

21 O. M. Ungers, a much repeated remark addressed to students at Cornell University, c. 1969-70.

22 Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, no.194 (Saturday, 25 January 1752).

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