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Social Space

I

Our project calls for a very careful examination of the notions and terminology involved, especially since the expression 'the production of space' comprises two terms neither of which has ever been properly clarified.

In Hegelianism, 'production' has a cardinal role: first, the (absolute) Idea produces the world; next, nature produces the human being; and the human being in turn, by dint of struggle and labour, produces at once history, knowledge and self-consciousness – and hence that Mind which reproduces the initial and ultimate Idea.

For Marx and Engels, the concept of production never emerges from the ambiguity which makes it such a fertile idea. It has two senses, one very broad, the other restrictive and precise. In its broad sense, humans as social beings are said to produce their own life, their own consciousness, their own world. There is nothing, in history or in society, which does not have to be achieved and produced. 'Nature' itself, as apprehended in social life by the sense organs, has been modified and therefore in a sense produced. Human beings have produced juridical, political, religious, artistic and philosophical forms. Thus production in the broad sense of the term embraces a multiplicity of works and a great diversity of forms, even forms that do not bear the stamp of the producer or of the production process (as is the case with the logical form: an abstract form which can easily be perceived as atemporal and therefore non-produced – that is, metaphysical).

Neither Marx nor Engels leaves the concept of production in an indeterminate state of this kind. They narrow it down, but with the result that works in the broad sense are no longer part of the picture;

what they have in mind is things only: *products*. This narrowing of the concept brings it closer to its everyday, and hence banal, sense – the sense it has for the economists. As for the question of who does the producing, and how they do it, the more restricted the notion becomes the less it connotes creativity, inventiveness or imagination; rather, it tends to refer solely to labour. 'It was an immense step forward for Adam Smith to throw out every limiting specification of wealth-creating activity [and to consider only] labour in general. . . . With the abstract universality of wealth-creating activity we now have the universality of the object defined as wealth, the product as such or again labour as such. . . .'¹ Production, product, labour: these three concepts, which emerge simultaneously and lay the foundation for political economy, are abstractions with a special status, *concrete* abstractions that make possible the relations of production. So far as the concept of production is concerned, it does not become fully concrete or take on a true content until replies have been given to the questions that it makes possible: 'Who produces?', 'What?', 'How?', 'Why and for whom?' Outside the context of these questions and their answers, the concept of production remains purely abstract. In Marx, as in Engels, the concept never attains concreteness. (It is true that, very late on, Engels at his most economicist sought to confine the notion to its narrowest possible meaning: 'the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life', he wrote in a letter to Bloch on 21 September 1890. This sentence is at once dogmatic and vague: production is said to subsume biological, economic and social reproduction, and no further clarification is forthcoming.)

What constitutes the forces of production, according to Marx and Engels? Nature, first of all, plays a part, then labour, hence the organization (or division) of labour, and hence also the instruments of labour, including technology and, ultimately, knowledge.

Since the time of Marx and Engels the concept of production has come to be used so very loosely that it has lost practically all definition. We speak of the production of knowledge, or ideologies, or writings and meanings, of images, of discourses, of language, of signs and symbols; and, similarly, of 'dream-work' or of the work of 'operational' concepts, and so on. Such is the extension of these concepts that their comprehension has been seriously eroded. What makes matters worse is that the authors of such extensions of meaning quite consciously

¹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, tr. Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin, 1973), p. 104.

abuse a procedure which Marx and Engels used ingenuously, endowing the broad or philosophical sense of the concepts with a positivity properly belonging to the narrow or scientific (economic) sense.

There is thus every reason to take up these concepts once more, to try and restore their value and to render them dialectical, while attempting to define with some degree of rigour the relationship between 'production' and 'product', as likewise those between 'works' and 'products' and 'nature' and 'production'. It may be pointed out right away that, whereas a *work* has something irreplaceable and unique about it, a *product* can be reproduced exactly, and is in fact the result of repetitive acts and gestures. Nature creates and does not produce; it provides resources for a creative and productive activity on the part of social humanity; but it supplies only *use value*, and every use value – that is to say, any product inasmuch as it is not exchangeable – either returns to nature or serves as a natural good. The earth and nature cannot, of course, be divorced from each other.

Why do I say that nature does not produce? The original meaning of the word suggests the contrary: to lead out and forward, to bring forth from the depths. And yet, nature does not labour: it is even one of its defining characteristics that it *creates*. What it creates, namely individual 'beings', simply surges forth, simply appears. Nature knows nothing of these creations – unless one is prepared to postulate the existence within it of a calculating god or providence. A tree, a flower or a fruit is not a 'product' – even if it is in a garden. A rose has no why or wherefore; it blooms because it blooms. In the words of Angelus Silesius, it 'cares not whether it is seen'. It does not know that it is beautiful, that it smells good, that it embodies a symmetry of the *n*th order. It is surely almost impossible not to pursue further or to return to such questions. 'Nature' cannot operate according to the same teleology as human beings. The 'beings' it creates are works; and each has 'something' unique about it even if it belongs to a genus and a species: a tree is a particular tree, a rose a particular rose, a horse a particular horse. Nature appears as the vast territory of births. 'Things' are born, grow and ripen, then wither and die. The reality behind these words is infinite. As it deploys its forces, nature is violent, generous, niggardly, bountiful, and above all open. Nature's space is not staged. To ask why this is so is a strictly meaningless question: a flower does not know that it is a flower any more than death knows upon whom it is visited. If we are to believe the word 'nature', with its ancient metaphysical and theological credentials, what is essential occurs in the depths. To say 'natural' is to say spontaneous. But today nature is drawing away from us, to say the

very least. It is becoming impossible to escape the notion that nature is being murdered by 'anti-nature' – by abstraction, by signs and images, by discourse, as also by labour and its products. Along with God, nature is dying. 'Humanity' is killing both of them – and perhaps committing suicide into the bargain.

Humanity, which is to say social practice, creates works and produces things. In either case labour is called for, but in the case of works the part played by labour (and by the creator *qua* labourer) seems secondary, whereas in the manufacture of products it predominates.

In clarifying the philosophical (Hegelian) concept of production, and calling for this purpose upon the economists and political economy, Marx was seeking a rationality immanent to that concept and to its content (i.e. activity). A rationality so conceived would release him from any need to evoke a pre-existing reason of divine or 'ideal' (hence theological and metaphysical) origin. It would also eliminate any suggestion of a goal governing productive activity and conceived of as preceding and outlasting that activity. Production in the Marxist sense transcends the philosophical opposition between 'subject' and 'object', along with all the relationships constructed by the philosophers on the basis of that opposition. How, then, is the rationality immanent to production to be defined? By the fact, first of all, that it organizes a sequence of actions with a certain 'objective' (i.e. the object to be produced) in view. It imposes a temporal and spatial order upon related operations whose results are coextensive. From the start of an activity so oriented towards an objective, spatial elements – the body, limbs, eyes – are mobilized, including both *materials* (stone, wood, bone, leather, etc.) and *matériel* (tools, arms, language, instructions and agendas). Relations based on an order to be followed – that is to say, on simultaneity and synchronicity – are thus set up, by means of intellectual activity, between the component elements of the action undertaken on the physical plane. All productive activity is defined less by invariable or constant factors than by the incessant to-and-fro between temporality (succession, concatenation) and spatiality (simultaneity, synchronicity). This form is inseparable from orientation towards a goal – and thus also from functionality (the end and meaning of the action, the energy utilized for the satisfaction of a 'need') and from the structure set in motion (know-how, skills, gestures and co-operation in work, etc.). The formal relationships which allow separate actions to form a coherent whole cannot be detached from the material preconditions of individual and collective activity; and this holds true whether the aim is to move a rock, to hunt game, or to make a simple or complex object. The rationality of space, accord-

ing to this analysis, is not the outcome of a quality or property of human action in general, or human labour as such, of 'man', or of social organization. On the contrary, it is itself the origin and source – not distantly but immediately, or rather inherently – of the rationality of activity; an origin which is concealed by, yet at the same time implicit in, the inevitable empiricism of those who use their hands and tools, who adjust and combine their gestures and direct their energies as a function of specific tasks.

By and large, the concept of production is still that same 'concrete universal' which Marx described on the basis of Hegel's thinking, although it has since been somewhat obscured and watered down. This fact has indeed been the justification offered for a number of critical appraisals. Only a very slight effort is made, however, to veil the tactical aim of such criticisms: the liquidation of this concept, of Marxist concepts in general, and hence of the *concrete universal* as such, in favour of the generalization of the abstract and the unrealistic in a sort of wilful dalliance with nihilism.²

On the right, so to speak, the concept of production can scarcely be separated out from the ideology of productivism, from a crude and brutal economism whose aim is to annex it for its own purposes. On the other hand, it must be said, in response to the left-wing or 'leftist' notion that words, dreams, texts and concepts labour and produce on their own account, that this leaves us with a curious image of labour without labourers, products without a production process or production without products, and works without creators (no 'subject' – and no 'object' either!). The phrase 'production of knowledge' does make a certain amount of sense so far as the development of concepts is concerned: every concept must come into being and must mature. But without the facts, and without the discourse of social beings or 'subjects', who could be said to produce concepts? There is a point beyond which reliance on such formulas as 'the production of knowledge' leads onto very treacherous ground: knowledge may be conceived of on the model of industrial production, with the result that the existing division of labour and use of machines, especially cybernetic machines, is uncritically accepted; alternatively, the concept of production as well as the concept of knowledge may be deprived of all specific content, and this from the point of view of the 'object' as well as from that of the

² See Jean Baudrillard, *Le miroir de la production* (Tournai: Casterman, 1973). Eng. tr. by Mark Poster: *The Mirror of Production* (St Louis: Telos Press, 1975).

'subject' – which is to give *carte blanche* to wild speculation and pure irrationalism.

(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object. At the same time there is nothing imagined, unreal or 'ideal' about it as compared, for example, with science, representations, ideas or dreams. Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others. Among these actions, some serve production, others consumption (i.e. the enjoyment of the fruits of production). Social space implies a great diversity of knowledge. What then is its exact status? And what is the nature of its relationship to production?

'To produce space': this combination of words would have meant strictly nothing when the philosophers exercised all power over concepts. The space of the philosophers could be created only by God, as his first work; this is as true for the God of the Cartesians (Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz) as for the Absolute of the post-Kantians (Schelling, Fichte, Hegel). Although, later on, space began to appear as a mere degradation of 'being' as it unfolded in a temporal continuum, this pejorative view made no basic difference: though relativized and devalued, space continued to depend on the absolute, or upon duration in the Bergsonian sense.

Consider the case of a city – a space which is fashioned, shaped and invested by social activities during a finite historical period. Is this city a *work* or a *product*? Take Venice, for instance. If we define works as unique, original and primordial, as occupying a space yet associated with a particular time, a time of maturity between rise and decline, then Venice can only be described as a work. It is a space just as highly expressive and significant, just as unique and unified as a painting or a sculpture. But what – and whom – does it express and signify? These questions can give rise to interminable discussion, for here content and meaning have no limits. Happily, one does not have to know the answers, or to be a 'connoisseur', in order to experience Venice as festival. Who conceived the architectural and monumental unity which extends from each palazzo to the city as a whole? The truth is that no one did – even though Venice, more than any other place, bears witness to the existence, from the sixteenth century on, of a unitary code or common language of the city. This unity goes deeper, and in a sense

higher, than the spectacle Venice offers the tourist. It combines the city's reality with its ideality, embracing the practical, the symbolic and the imaginary. In Venice, the *representation of space* (the sea at once dominated and exalted) and *representational space* (exquisite lines, refined pleasures, the sumptuous and cruel dissipation of wealth accumulated by any and every means) are mutually reinforcing. Something similar may be said of the space of the canals and streets, where water and stone create a texture founded on reciprocal reflection. Here everyday life and its functions are coextensive with, and utterly transformed by, a theatricality as sophisticated as it is unsought, a sort of involuntary *mise-en-scène*. There is even a touch of madness added for good measure.

But the moment of creation is past; indeed, the city's disappearance is already imminent. Precisely because it is still full of life, though threatened with extinction, this work deeply affects anyone who uses it as a source of pleasure and in so doing contributes in however small a measure to its demise. The same thing goes for a village, or for a fine vase. These 'objects' occupy a space which is not produced as such. Think now of a flower. 'A rose does not know that it is a rose.'³ Obviously, a city does not present itself in the same way as a flower, ignorant of its own beauty. It has, after all, been 'composed' by people, by well-defined groups. All the same, it has none of the intentional character of an 'art object'. For many people, to describe something as a work of art is simply the highest praise imaginable. And yet, what a distance there is between a work of nature and art's intentionality! What exactly were the great cathedrals? The answer is that they were political acts. The ancient function of statues was to immortalize the dead so that they would not harm the living. Fabrics or vases served a purpose. One is tempted to say, in fact, that the appearance of art, a short time prior to the appearance of its concept, implies the degeneration of works: that no work has ever been created as a work of art, and hence that art – especially the art of writing, or literature – merely heralds that decline. Could it be that art, as a specialized activity, has destroyed works and replaced them, slowly but implacably, by products destined to be exchanged, traded and reproduced *ad infinitum*? Could it be that the space of the finest cities came into being after the fashion of plants and flowers in a garden – after the fashion, in other words, of works of nature, just as unique as they, albeit fashioned by highly civilized people?

³ Cf. Heidegger's commentary on Angelus Silesius's diptych in *Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), pp. 68–71.

The question is an important one. Can works really be said to stand in a transcendent relationship to products? Can the historical spaces of village and city be adequately dealt with solely by reference to the notion of a work? Are we concerned here with collectivities still so close to nature that the concepts of production and product, and hence any idea of a 'production of space', are largely irrelevant to our understanding of them? Is there not a danger here too of fetishizing the notion of the work, and so erecting unjustified barriers between creation and production, nature and labour, festival and toil, the unique and the reproducible, difference and repetition, and, ultimately, the living and the dead?

Another result of such an approach would be to force a radical break between the historical and economic realms. There is no need to subject modern towns, their outskirts and new buildings, to careful scrutiny in order to reach the conclusion that everything here resembles everything else. The more or less accentuated split between what is known as 'architecture' and what is known as 'urbanism' – that is to say, between the 'micro' and 'macro' levels, and between these two areas of concern and the two professions concerned – has not resulted in an increased diversity. On the contrary. It is obvious, sad to say, that repetition has everywhere defeated uniqueness, that the artificial and contrived have driven all spontaneity and naturalness from the field, and, in short, that products have vanquished works. Repetitious spaces are the outcome of repetitive gestures (those of the workers) associated with instruments which are both duplicatable and designed to duplicate: machines, bulldozers, concrete-mixers, cranes, pneumatic drills, and so on. Are these spaces interchangeable because they are homologous? Or are they homogeneous so that they can be exchanged, bought and sold, with the only differences between them being those assessable in money – i.e. quantifiable – terms (as volumes, distances, etc.)? At all events, repetition reigns supreme. Can a space of this kind really still be described as a 'work'? There is an overwhelming case for saying that it is a product *strictu sensu*: it is reproducible and it is the result of repetitive actions. Thus space is undoubtedly produced even when the scale is not that of major highways, airports or public works. A further important aspect of spaces of this kind is their increasingly pronounced visual character. They are made with the visible in mind: the visibility of people and things, of spaces and of whatever is contained by them. The predominance of visualization (more important than 'spectacularization', which is in any case subsumed by it) serves to conceal repetitiveness. People look, and take sight, take seeing, for life itself. We build on the basis

of papers and plans. We buy on the basis of images. Sight and seeing, which in the Western tradition once epitomized intelligibility, have turned into a trap: the means whereby, in social space, diversity may be simulated and a travesty of enlightenment and intelligibility ensconced under the sign of transparency.

Let us return now to the exemplary case of Venice. Venice is indeed a unique space, a true marvel. But is it a work of art? No, because it was not planned in advance. It was born of the sea, but gradually, and not, like Aphrodite, in an instant. To begin with, there was a challenge (to nature, to enemies) and an aim (trade). The space of the settlement on the lagoon, encompassing swamps, shallows and outlets to the open sea, cannot be separated from a vaster space, that of a system of commercial exchange which was not yet worldwide but which took in the Mediterranean and the Orient. Another prerequisite of Venice's development was the continuity ensured by a grand design, by an ongoing practical project, and by the dominance of a political caste, by the 'thalassocracy' of a merchant oligarchy. Beginning with the very first piles driven into the mud of the lagoon, every single site in the city had of course to be planned and realized by people – by political 'chiefs', by groups supporting them, and by those who performed the work of construction itself. Closely behind practical responses to the challenge of the sea (the port, navigable channels) came public gatherings, festivals, grandiose ceremonies (such as the marriage of the Doge and the sea) and architectural inventiveness. Here we can see the relationship between a place built by collective will and collective thought on the one hand, and the productive forces of the period on the other. For this is a place that has been *laboured on*. Sinking pilings, building docks and harbourside installations, erecting palaces – these tasks also constituted social labour, a labour carried out under difficult conditions and under the constraint of decisions made by a caste destined to profit from it in every way. Behind Venice the work, then, there assuredly lay production. Had not the emergence of social surplus production – a form preceding capitalist surplus value – already heralded this state of things? In the case of Venice, a rider must be added to the effect that the surplus labour and the social surplus production were not only realized but also for the most part expanded on the spot – that is to say, in the city of Venice. The fact that this surplus production was put to an aesthetically satisfying use, in accordance with the tastes of people who were prodigiously gifted, and highly civilized for all their ruthlessness, can in no way conceal its origins. All Venice's now-declining splendour reposes

after its fashion on oft-repeated gestures on the part of carpenters and masons, sailors and stevedores; as also, of course, on those of patricians managing their affairs from day to day. All the same, every bit of Venice is part of a great hymn to diversity in pleasure and inventiveness in celebration, revelry and sumptuous ritual. If indeed there is a need at all to preserve the distinction between works and products, its import must be quite relative. Perhaps we shall discover a subtler relationship between these two terms than either identity or opposition. Each work occupies a space; it also engenders and fashions that space. Each product too occupies a space, and circulates within it. The question is therefore what relationship might exist between these two modalities of occupied space.

Even in Venice, social space is produced and reproduced in connection with the forces of production (and with the relations of production). And these forces, as they develop, are not taking over a pre-existing, empty or neutral space, or a space determined solely by geography, climate, anthropology, or some other comparable consideration. There is thus no good reason for positing such a radical separation between works of art and products as to imply the work's total transcendence of the product. The benefit to be derived from this conclusion is that it leaves us some prospect of discovering a dialectical relationship in which works are in a sense inherent in products, while products do not press all creativity into the service of repetition.

A social space cannot be adequately accounted for either by nature (climate, site) or by its previous history. Nor does the growth of the forces of production give rise in any direct causal fashion to a particular space or a particular time. Mediations, and mediators, have to be taken into consideration: the action of groups, factors within knowledge, within ideology, or within the domain of representations. Social space contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information. Such 'objects' are thus not only things but also relations. As objects, they possess discernible peculiarities, contour and form. Social labour transforms them, rearranging their positions within spatio-temporal configurations without necessarily affecting their materiality, their natural state (as in the case, for instance, of an island, gulf, river or mountain).

Let us turn now to another example: Tuscany. Another *Italian* example, be it noted, and no doubt this is because in Italy the history of precapitalism is especially rich in meaning and the growth leading up

to the industrial era particularly rapid, even if this progress was to be offset during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by slowdown and relative retardation.

From about the thirteenth century, the Tuscan urban oligarchy of merchants and burghers began transforming lordly domains or latifundia that they had inherited or acquired by establishing the *métayage* system (or *colonat partiaire*) on these lands: serfs gave way to *métayers*. A *métayer* was supposed to receive a share of what he produced and hence, unlike a slave or a serf, he had a vested interest in production. The trend thus set in train, which gave rise to a new social reality, was based neither on the towns alone, nor on the country alone, but rather on their (dialectical) relationship in space, a space which had its own basis in their history. The urban bourgeoisie needed at once to feed the town-dwellers, invest in agriculture, and draw upon the territory as a whole as it supplied the markets that it controlled with cereals, wool, leather, and so on. Confronted by these requirements, the bourgeoisie transformed the country, and the countryside, according to a preconceived plan, according to a model. The houses of the *métayers*, known as *poderi*, were arranged in a circle around the mansion where the proprietor would come to stay from time to time, and where his stewards lived on a permanent basis. Between *poderi* and mansion ran alleys of cypresses. Symbol of property, immortality and perpetuity, the cypress thus inscribed itself upon the countryside, imbuing it with depth and meaning. These trees, the criss-crossing of these alleys, sectioned and organized the land. Their arrangement was evocative of the laws of perspective, whose fullest realization was simultaneously appearing in the shape of the urban piazza in its architectural setting. Town and country – and the relationship between them – had given birth to a space which it would fall to the painters, and first among them in Italy to the Siena school, to identify, formulate and develop.

In Tuscany, as elsewhere during the same period (including France, which we shall have occasion to discuss later in connection with the 'history of space'), it was not simply a matter of material production and the consequent appearance of social forms, or even of a social production of material realities. The new social forms were not 'inscribed' in a pre-existing space. Rather, a space was produced that was neither rural nor urban, but the result of a newly engendered spatial relationship between the two.

The cause of, and reason for, this transformation was the growth of productive forces – of crafts, of early industry, and of agriculture. But growth could only occur via the town–country relationship, and hence

via those groups which were the motor of development: the urban oligarchy and a portion of the peasantry. The result was an increase in wealth, hence also an increase in surplus production, and this in turn had a retroactive effect on the initial conditions. Luxurious spending on the construction of palaces and monuments gave artists, and primarily painters, a chance to express, after their own fashion, what was happening, to display what they perceived. These artists 'discovered' perspective and developed the theory of it because a space in perspective lay before them, because such a space had already been produced. Work and product are only distinguishable here with the benefit of analytic hindsight. To separate them completely, to posit a radical fissure between them, would be tantamount to destroying the movement that brought both into being – or, rather, since it is all that remains to us, to destroy the concept of that movement. The growth I have been describing, and the development that went hand in hand with it, did not take place without many conflicts, without class struggle between the aristocracy and the rising bourgeoisie, between *popolo minuto* and *popolo grosso* in the towns, between townspeople and country people, and so on. The sequence of events corresponds in large measure to the *révolution communale* that took place in a part of France and elsewhere in Europe, but the links between the various aspects of the overall process are better known for Tuscany than for other regions, and indeed they are more marked there, and their effects more striking.

Out of this process emerged, then, a new representation of space: the visual perspective shown in the works of painters and given form first by architects and later by geometers. Knowledge emerged from a practice, and elaborated upon it by means of formalization and the application of a logical order.

This is not to say that during this period in Italy, even in Tuscany around Florence and Siena, townspeople and villagers did not continue to experience space in the traditional emotional and religious manner – that is to say, by means of the representation of an interplay between good and evil forces at war throughout the world, and especially in and around those places which were of special significance for each individual: his body, his house, his land, as also his church and the graveyard which received his dead. Indeed this *representational space* continued to figure in many works of painters and architects. The point is merely that *some* artists and men of learning arrived at a very different *representation of space*: a homogeneous, clearly demarcated space complete with horizon and vanishing-point.

II

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, in a few 'advanced' countries, a new reality began to agitate populations and exercise minds because it posed a multitude of problems to which no solutions were as yet apparent. This 'reality' – to use a conventional and rather crude term – did not offer itself either to analysis or to action in a clear and distinct way. In the practical realm, it was known as 'industry'; for theoretical thought, it was 'political economy'; and the two went hand in hand. Industrial practice brought a set of new concepts and questions into play; reflection on this practice, in conjunction with reflection on the past (history) and with the critical evaluation of innovations (sociology), gave birth to a science that would soon come to predominate, namely political economy.

How did the people of that time actually proceed, whether those who laid claim to responsibilities in connection with knowledge (philosophers, scholars, and especially 'economists') or those who did so in the sphere of action (politicians, of course, but also capitalist entrepreneurs)? They proceeded, certainly, in a fashion which to them seemed solid, irrefutable and 'positive' (cf. the emergence of positivism at the same period).

Some people counted things, objects. Some, such as the inspired Charles Babbage, described machines; others described the products of machinery, with the emphasis on the needs that the things thus produced fulfilled, and on the markets open to them. With a few exceptions, these people became lost in detail, swamped by mere facts; although the ground seemed firm at the outset – as indeed it was – their efforts simply missed the mark. This was no impediment, however, in extreme cases, to the passing-off of the description of some mechanical device, or of some selling-technique, as knowledge in the highest sense of the term. (It scarcely needs pointing out how little has changed in this respect in the last century or more.)

Things and products that are measured, that is to say reduced to the common measure of money, do not speak the truth about themselves. On the contrary, it is in their nature as things and products to conceal that truth. Not that they do not speak at all: they use their own language, the language of things and products, to tout the satisfaction they can supply and the needs they can meet; they use it too to lie, to dissimulate not only the amount of social labour that they contain, not only the productive labour that they embody, but also the social relationships of

exploitation and domination on which they are founded. Like all languages, the language of things is as useful for lying as it is for telling the truth. Things lie, and when, having become commodities, they lie in order to conceal their origin, namely social labour, they tend to set themselves up as absolutes. Products and the circuits they establish (in space) are fetishized and so become more 'real' than reality itself – that is, than productive activity itself, which they thus take over. This tendency achieves its ultimate expression, of course, in the world market. Objects hide something very important, and they do so all the more effectively inasmuch as we (i.e. the 'subject') cannot do without them; inasmuch, too, as they do give us pleasure, be it illusory or real (and how can illusion and reality be distinguished in the realm of pleasure?). But appearances and illusion are located not in the use made of things or in the pleasure derived from them, but rather within things themselves, for things are the substrate of mendacious signs and meanings. The successful unmasking of *things* in order to reveal (social) relationships – such was Marx's great achievement, and, whatever political tendencies may call themselves Marxist, it remains the most durable accomplishment of Marxist thought. A rock on a mountainside, a cloud, a blue sky, a bird on a tree – none of these, of course, can be said to lie. Nature presents itself as it is, now cruel, now generous. It does not seek to deceive; it may reserve many an unpleasant surprise for us, but it never lies. So-called social reality is dual, multiple, plural. To what extent, then, does it furnish a reality at all? If reality is taken in the sense of materiality, social reality no longer *has* reality, nor *is* it reality. On the other hand, it contains and implies some terribly concrete abstractions (including, as cannot be too often emphasized, money, commodities and the exchange of material goods), as well as 'pure' forms: exchange, language, signs, equivalences, reciprocities, contracts, and so on.

According to Marx (and no one who has considered the matter at all has managed to demolish this basic analytical premise), merely to note the existence of things, whether specific objects or 'the object' in general, is to ignore what things at once embody and dissimulate, namely social relations and the forms of those relations. When no heed is paid to the relations that inhere in social facts, knowledge misses its target; our understanding is reduced to a confirmation of the undefined and indefinable multiplicity of things, and gets lost in classifications, descriptions and segmentations.

In order to arrive at an inversion and revolution of meaning that would reveal authentic meaning, Marx had to overthrow the certainties

of an epoch; the nineteenth century's confident faith in things, in reality, had to go by the board. The 'positive' and the 'real' have never lacked for justifications or for strong supporting arguments from the standpoint of common sense and of everyday life, so Marx had his work cut out when it fell to him to demolish such claims. Admittedly, a fair part of the job had already been done by the philosophers, who had considerably eroded the calm self-assurance of common sense. But it was still up to Marx to smash such philosophical abstractions as the appeal to transcendence, to conscience, to Mind or to Man: he still had to transcend philosophy and preserve the truth at the same time.

To the present-day reader, Marx's work may seem peppered with polemics that were flogged to death long ago. Yet, despite the superfluity, these discussions have not lost all their significance (no thanks, be it said, to the far more superfluous commentaries of the orthodox Marxists). Already in Marx's time there were plenty of people ready to sing paeans to the progress achieved through economic, social or political rationality. They readily envisaged such a rationality as the way forward to a 'better' reality. To them, Marx responded by showing that what they took for progress was merely a growth in the productive forces, which, so far from solving so-called 'social' and 'political' problems, was bound to exacerbate them. On the other hand, to those who lamented the passing of an earlier era, this same Marx pointed out the new possibilities opened up by the growing forces of production. To revolutionaries raring for immediate all-out action, Marx offered concepts; to fact-collectors, he offered theories whose 'operational' import would only become apparent later on: theories of the organization of production as such, theories of planning.

On the one hand, Marx retrieved the contents which the predominant tendency – the tendency of the ruling class, though not so perceived – sought to avoid at all costs. Specifically, these contents were productive labour, the productive forces, and the relations and mode of production. At the same time, countering the tendency to fragment reality, to break it down into 'facts' and statistics, Marx identified the most general form of social relations, namely the form of exchange (exchange value). (Not their sole form, it must be emphasized, but rather the form in its generality.)

Now let us consider for a moment any given space, any 'interval' provided that it is not empty. Such a space contains things yet is not itself a thing or material 'object'. Is it then a floating 'medium', a simple abstraction, or a 'pure' form? No – precisely because it has a content.

We have already been led to the conclusion that any space implies,

contains and dissimulates social relationships – and this despite the fact that a space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things (objects and products). Might we say that it is or tends to become the absolute Thing? The answer must be affirmative to the extent that every thing which achieves autonomy through the process of exchange (i.e. attains the status of a commodity) tends to become absolute – a tendency, in fact, that defines Marx's concept of fetishism (practical alienation under capitalism). The Thing, however, never quite becomes absolute, never quite emancipates itself from activity, from use, from need, from 'social being'. What are the implications of this for space? That is the key question.

When we contemplate a field of wheat or maize, we are well aware that the furrows, the pattern of sowing, and the boundaries, be they hedges or wire fences, designate relations of production and property. We also realize that this is much less true of uncultivated land, heath or forest. The more a space partakes of nature, the less it enters into the social relations of production. There is nothing surprising about this; the same holds true after all for a rock or a tree. On the other hand, spaces of this type, spaces with predominantly natural traits or containing objects with predominantly natural traits, are, like nature itself, on the decline. Take national or regional 'nature parks', for instance: it is not at all easy to decide whether such places are natural or artificial. The fact is that the once-prevalent characteristic 'natural' has grown indistinct and become a subordinate feature. Inversely, the social character of space – those social relations that it implies, contains and dissimulates – has begun *visibly* to dominate. This typical quality of visibility does not, however, imply decipherability of the inherent social relations. On the contrary, the analysis of these relations has become harder and more paradoxical.

What can be said, for example, of a peasant dwelling? It embodies and implies particular social relations; it shelters a family – a particular family belonging to a particular country, a particular region, a particular soil; and it is a component part of a particular site and a particular countryside. No matter how prosperous or humble such a dwelling may be, it is as much a work as it is a product, even though it is invariably representative of a type. It remains, to a greater or lesser degree, part of nature. It is an object intermediate between work and product, between nature and labour, between the realm of symbols and the realm of signs. Does it engender a space? Yes. Is that space natural or cultural? Is it immediate or mediated – and, if the latter, mediated by whom and to what purpose? Is it a given or is it artificial? The answer to such

questions must be: 'Both.' The answer is ambiguous because the questions are too simple: between 'nature' and 'culture', as between work and product, complex relationships (mediations) already obtain. The same goes for time and for the 'object' in space.

To compare different maps of a region or country – say France – is to be struck by the remarkable diversity among them. Some, such as maps that show 'beauty spots' and historical sites and monuments to the accompaniment of an appropriate rhetoric, aim to mystify in fairly obvious ways. This kind of map designates places where a ravenous consumption picks over the last remnants of nature and of the past in search of whatever nourishment may be obtained from the *signs* of anything historical or original. If the maps and guides are to be believed, a veritable feast of authenticity awaits the tourist. The conventional signs used on these documents constitute a code even more deceptive than the things themselves, for they are at one more remove from reality. Next, consider an ordinary map of roads and other communications in France. What such a map reveals, its meaning – not, perhaps, to the most ingenuous inspection, but certainly to an intelligent perusal with even minimal preparation – is at once clear and hard to decipher. A diagonal band traverses the supposedly one and indivisible Republic like a bandolier. From Berre-l'Étang to Le Havre via the valleys of the Rhône (the great Delta), the Saône and the Seine, this stripe represents a narrow over-industrialized and over-urbanized zone which relegates the rest of our dear old France to the realm of underdevelopment and 'touristic potential'. Until only recently this state of affairs was a sort of official secret, a project known only to a few technocrats. Today (summer 1973) it is common knowledge – a banality. Perhaps not so banal, though, if one turns from tourist maps to a map of operational and projected military installations in southern France. It will readily be seen that this vast area, which has been earmarked, except for certain well-defined areas, for tourism, for national parks – that is, for economic and social decline – is also destined for heavy use by a military which finds such peripheral regions ideal for its diverse purposes.

These spaces are *produced*. The 'raw material' from which they are produced is nature. They are products of an activity which involves the economic and technical realms but which extends well beyond them, for these are also political products, and strategic spaces. The term 'strategy' connotes a great variety of products and actions: it combines peace with war, the arms trade with deterrence in the event of crisis, and the use of resources from *peripheral* spaces with the use of riches from industrial, urban, state-dominated centres.

Space is never produced in the sense that a kilogram of sugar or a yard of cloth is produced. Nor is it an aggregate of the places or locations of such products as sugar, wheat or cloth. Does it then come into being after the fashion of a superstructure? Again, no. It would be more accurate to say that it is at once a precondition and a result of social superstructures. The state and each of its constituent institutions call for spaces – but spaces which they can then organize according to their specific requirements; so there is no sense in which space can be treated solely as an *a priori* condition of these institutions and the state which presides over them. Is space a social relationship? Certainly – but one which is inherent to property relationships (especially the ownership of the earth, of land) and also closely bound up with the forces of production (which impose a form on that earth or land); here we see the polyvalence of social space, its 'reality' at once formal and material. Though a *product* to be used, to be consumed, it is also a *means of production*; networks of exchange and flows of raw materials and energy fashion space and are determined by it. Thus this means of production, produced as such, cannot be separated either from the productive forces, including technology and knowledge, or from the social division of labour which shapes it, or from the state and the superstructures of society.

III

As it develops, then, the concept of social space becomes broader. It infiltrates, even invades, the concept of production, becoming part – perhaps the essential part – of its content. Thence it sets a very specific dialectic in motion, which, while it does not abolish the production–consumption relationship as this applies to things (goods, commodities, objects of exchange), certainly does modify it by widening it. Here a unity transpires between levels which analysis often keeps separate from one another: the forces of production and their component elements (nature, labour, technology, knowledge); structures (property relations); superstructures (institutions and the state itself).

How many maps, in the descriptive or geographical sense, might be needed to deal exhaustively with a given space, to code and decode all its meanings and contents? It is doubtful whether a finite number can ever be given in answer to this sort of question. What we are most likely confronted with here is a sort of instant infinity, a situation reminiscent of a Mondrian painting. It is not only the codes – the map's legend, the

conventional signs of map-making and map-reading – that are liable to change, but also the objects represented, the lens through which they are viewed, and the scale used. The idea that a small number of maps or even a single (and singular) map might be sufficient can only apply in a specialized area of study whose own self-affirmation depends on isolation from its context.

There are data of the greatest relevance today, furthermore, that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to map at all. For example, where, how, by whom, and to what purpose is information stored and processed? How is computer technology deployed and whom does it serve? We know enough in this area to suspect the existence of a space peculiar to information science, but not enough to describe that space, much less to claim close acquaintanceship with it.

We are confronted not by one social space but by many – indeed, by an unlimited multiplicity or uncountable set of social spaces which we refer to generically as ‘social space’. No space disappears in the course of growth and development: the *worldwide does not abolish the local*. This is not a consequence of the law of uneven development, but a law in its own right. The intertwinement of social spaces is also a law. Considered in isolation, such spaces are mere abstractions. As concrete abstractions, however, they attain ‘real’ existence by virtue of networks and pathways, by virtue of bunches or clusters of relationships. Instances of this are the worldwide networks of communication, exchange and information. It is important to note that such newly developed networks do not eradicate from their social context those earlier ones, superimposed upon one another over the years, which constitute the various *markets*: local, regional, national and international markets; the market in commodities, the money or capital market, the labour market, and the market in works, symbols and signs; and lastly – the most recently created – the market in spaces themselves. Each market, over the centuries, has been consolidated and has attained concrete form by means of a network: a network of buying- and selling-points in the case of the exchange of commodities, of banks and stock exchanges in the case of the circulation of capital, of labour exchanges in the case of the labour market, and so on. The corresponding buildings, in the towns, bear material testimony to this evolution. Thus social space, and especially urban space, emerged in all its diversity – and with a structure far more reminiscent of flaky *mille-feuille* pastry than of the homogeneous and isotropic space of classical (Euclidean/Cartesian) mathematics.

Social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another. They are not *things*, which have mutually

limiting boundaries and which collide because of their contours or as a result of inertia. Figurative terms such as ‘sheet’ and ‘stratum’ have serious drawbacks: being metaphorical rather than conceptual, they assimilate space to things and thus relegate its concept to the realm of abstraction. Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity. The space of a room, bedroom, house or garden may be cut off in a sense from social space by barriers and walls, by all the signs of private property, yet still remain fundamentally part of that space. Nor can such spaces be considered empty ‘mediums’, in the sense of containers distinct from their contents. Produced over time, distinguishable yet not separable, they can be compared neither to those local spaces evoked by astronomers such as Hoyle, nor to sedimentary substrata, although this last comparison is certainly more defensible than any to be derived from mathematics. A much more fruitful analogy, it seems to me, may be found in hydrodynamics, where the principle of the superimposition of small movements teaches us the importance of the roles played by scale, dimension and rhythm. Great movements, vast rhythms, immense waves – these all collide and ‘interfere’ with one another; lesser movements, on the other hand, interpenetrate. If we were to follow this model, we would say that any social locus could only be properly understood by taking two kinds of determinations into account: on the one hand, that locus would be mobilized, carried forward and sometimes smashed apart by major tendencies, those tendencies which ‘interfere’ with one another; on the other hand, it would be penetrated by, and shot through with, the weaker tendencies characteristic of networks and pathways.

This does not, of course, explain what it is that produces these various movements, rhythms and frequencies; nor how they are sustained; nor, again, how precarious hierarchical relationships are preserved between major and minor tendencies, between the strategic and tactical levels, or between networks and locations. A further problem with the metaphor of the dynamics of fluids is that it suggests a particular analysis and explication; if taken too far, that analysis could lead us into serious error. Even if a viable parallel may be drawn with physical phenomena (waves, types of waves, their associated ‘quanta’ – the classification of radiation in terms of wavelengths), this analogy might guide our analysis, but must not be allowed to govern the theory as a whole. A paradoxical implication of this paradigm is that the shorter the wavelength the greater the relative quantum of energy attaching to each discrete element. Is there anything in social space comparable to this law of physical

space? Perhaps so, inasmuch, at any rate, as the practical and social 'base' may be said to preserve a concrete existence, inasmuch as the counter-violence which arises in response to a given major strategic trend invariably has a specific and local source, namely the energy of an 'element' at the base – the energy, as it were, of 'elemental' movement.

Be that as it may, the *places* of social space are very different from those of natural space in that they are not simply juxtaposed: they may be intercalated, combined, superimposed – they may even sometimes collide. Consequently the local (or 'punctual', in the sense of 'determined by a particular "point"') does not disappear, for it is never absorbed by the regional, national or even worldwide level. The national and regional levels take in innumerable 'places'; national space embraces the regions; and world space does not merely subsume national spaces, but even (for the time being at least) precipitates the formation of new national spaces through a remarkable process of fission. All these spaces, meanwhile, are traversed by myriad currents. The hypercomplexity of social space should by now be apparent, embracing as it does individual entities and peculiarities, relatively fixed points, movements, and flows and waves – some interpenetrating, others in conflict, and so on.

The principle of the interpenetration and superimposition of social spaces has one very helpful result, for it means that each fragment of space subjected to analysis masks not just one social relationship but a host of them that analysis can potentially disclose. It will be recalled that the same goes for *objects*: corresponding to needs, they result from a division of labour, enter into the circuits of exchange, and so forth.

Our initial hypothesis having now been considerably expanded, a number of remarks are called for.

1 There is a certain similarity between the present situation, in both its practical and its theoretical aspects, and the one which came to prevail in the middle of the nineteenth century. A fresh set of questions – a fresh 'problematic' as the philosophers say – is in the process of usurping the position of the old problems, substituting itself for them and superimposing itself upon them without for all that abolishing them completely.

The most 'orthodox' among the Marxists will doubtless wish to deny this state of affairs. They are firmly and exclusively committed to the study of production in the usual sense of the production of things, of 'goods', of commodities. They are even reluctant to acknowledge that, inasmuch as the 'city' constitutes a means of production (inasmuch as it amounts to something more than the sum of the 'productive factors' that it embodies), there is a conflict between the social character of this

production and the private ownership of its location. This attitude trivializes thought in general and critical thought in particular. There are even some people, seemingly, who go so far as to claim that any discussion of space, of the city, of the earth and urban sphere, tends only to obscure 'class consciousness' and thus help demobilize the workers so far as class struggle is concerned. One should not have to waste time on such asininity but, sad to say, we shall be obliged to come back to this complaint later on.

2 Our chief concern is with space. The problematic of space, which subsumes the problems of the urban sphere (the city and its extensions) and of everyday life (programmed consumption), has displaced the problematic of industrialization. It has not, however, destroyed that earlier set of problems: the social relationships that obtained previously still obtain; the new problem is, precisely, the problem of their *reproduction*.

3 In Marx's time, economic science (or, rather, attempts to elevate political economy to the rank of a science) became swallowed up in the enumeration and description of products (objects, things) – in the application to them of the methods of book-keeping. Already at that time there were specialists waiting to divide up these tasks, and to perform them with the help of concepts or pseudo-concepts which were not yet referred to as 'operational' but which were already an effective means for classifying and counting and mentally pigeonholing 'things'. Marx replaced this study of things taken 'in themselves', in isolation from one another, with a critical analysis of productive activity itself (social labour; the relations and mode of production). Resuming and renewing the initiatives of the founders of so-called economic science (Smith, Ricardo), he combined these with a fundamental critique of capitalism, so achieving a higher level of knowledge.

4 A comparable approach is called for today, an approach which would analyse not things in space but space itself, with a view to uncovering the social relationships embedded in it. The dominant tendency fragments space and cuts it up into pieces. It enumerates the things, the various objects, that space contains. Specializations divide space among them and act upon its truncated parts, setting up mental barriers and practico-social frontiers. Thus architects are assigned architectural space as their (private) property, economists come into possession of economic space, geographers get their own 'place in the sun', and so on. The *ideologically* dominant tendency divides space up into parts and parcels

in accordance with the social division of labour. It bases its image of the forces occupying space on the idea that space is a passive receptacle. Thus, instead of uncovering the social relationships (including class relationships) that are latent in spaces, instead of concentrating our attention on the production of space and the social relationships inherent to it – relationships which introduce specific contradictions into production, so echoing the contradiction between the private ownership of the means of production and the social character of the productive forces – we fall into the trap of treating space as space ‘in itself’, as space as such. We come to think in terms of spatiality, and so to fetishize space in a way reminiscent of the old fetishism of commodities, where the trap lay in exchange, and the error was to consider ‘things’ in isolation, as ‘things in themselves’.

5 There can be no doubt that the problematic of space results from a growth in the forces of production. (Talk of ‘growth’ *tout court* is better avoided, since this abstraction is forever being used in an ideological manner.) The forces of production and technology now permit of intervention at every level of space: local, regional, national, worldwide. Space as a whole, geographical or historical space, is thus modified, but without any concomitant abolition of its underpinnings – those initial ‘points’, those first foci or nexuses, those ‘places’ (localities, regions, countries) lying at different levels of a social space in which nature’s space has been replaced by a space-*qua*-product. In this way reflexive thought passes from produced space, from the space of production (the production of things in space) to the production of space as such, which occurs on account of the (relatively) continuous growth of the productive forces but which is confined within the (relatively) discontinuous frameworks of the dominant relations and mode of production. Consequently, before the concept of the production of space can fully be grasped, it will be necessary to dispel ideologies which serve to conceal the use of the productive forces within modes of production in general, and within the dominant mode of production in particular. The ideologies which have to be destroyed for our immediate purposes are those which promote (abstract) spatiality and segmented representations of space. Naturally, such ideologies do not present themselves for what they are; instead, they pass themselves off as established knowledge. The difficulty and complexity of our critical task derives from the fact that it applies at once to the (mental) forms and practical (social) contents of space.

6 The search for a science of space has been going on for years, and this from many angles of approach: philosophy, epistemology, ecology,

geopolitics, systems theory (decision-making systems; cognitive systems), anthropology, ethnology, and so on. Yet such a science, forever teetering on the brink of existence, has yet to come into being. This situation is truly tantalizing for workers in these fields, but the reason for it is not far to seek. Knowledge of spaces wavers between description and dissection. Things in space, or pieces of space, are described. Part-spaces are carved out for inspection from social space as a whole. Thus we are offered a geographical space, an ethnological space, a demographic space, a space peculiar to the information sciences, and so on *ad infinitum*. Elsewhere we hear of pictorial, musical or plastic spaces. What is always overlooked is the fact that this sort of fragmentation tallies not only with the tendency of language itself, not only with the wishes of specialists of all kinds, but also with the goals of existing society, which, within the overall framework of a strictly controlled and thus homogeneous totality, splits itself up into the most heterogeneous spaces: housing, labour, leisure, sport, tourism, astronautics, and so on. The result is that all focus is lost as the emphasis shifts either to what exists in space (things considered on their own, in reference to themselves, their past, or their names), or else to space emptied, and thus detached from what it contains: either objects in space or else a space without objects, a neutral space. So it is indeed because of its predilection for partial representations that this search for knowledge is confounded, integrated unintentionally into existing society and forced to operate within that society’s framework. It is continually abandoning any global perspective, accepting fragmentation and so coming up with mere shards of knowledge. From time to time it makes an arbitrary ‘totalization’ on the basis of some issue or other, thus creating yet another ‘area of specialization’. What is urgently required here is a clear distinction between an imagined or sought-after ‘science of space’ on the one hand and real knowledge of the production of space on the other. Such a knowledge, in contrast to the dissection, interpretations and representations of a would-be science of space, may be expected to rediscover *time* (and in the first place the time of production) in and through space.

7 The real knowledge that we hope to attain would have a retrospective as well as a prospective import. Its implications for history, for example, and for our understanding of time, will become apparent if our hypothesis turns out to be correct. It will help us to grasp how societies generate their (social) space and time – their representational spaces and their representations of space. It should also allow us, not to foresee the future, but to bring relevant factors to bear on the future in prospect –

on the *project*, in other words, of another space and another time in another (possible or impossible) society.

IV

To suggest out of the blue that there is a need for a 'critique of space' is liable to seem paradoxical or even intellectually outrageous. In the first place, it may well be asked what such an expression might mean; one normally criticizes a person or a thing – and space is neither. In philosophical terms, space is neither subject nor object. How can it be effectively grasped? It is inaccessible to the so-called critical spirit (a spirit which apparently reached its apogee in the watered-down Marxism of 'critical theory'). Perhaps this difficulty explains why there is no architectural or urbanistic criticism on a par with the criticism of art, literature, music and theatre. There would certainly seem to be a need for such criticism: its 'object' is at least as important and interesting as the aesthetic objects of everyday consumption. We are talking, after all, of the setting in which we live. Criticism of literature, art or drama is concerned with people and institutions: with painters, dealers, galleries, shows, museums, or else with publishers, authors and the culture market. Architectural and urbanistic space seems, by contrast, out of range. On the mental level, it is evoked in daunting terms: readability, visibility, intelligibility. Socially, it appears as the intangible outcome of history, society and culture, all of which are supposedly combined within it. Should we conclude that the absence of a criticism of space is simply the result of a lack of an appropriate terminology? Perhaps – but, if so, the reasons for this lack themselves need explaining.

At all events, a criticism of space is certainly called for inasmuch as spaces cannot be adequately explained on the basis either of the mythical image of pure transparency or of its opposite, the myth of the opacity of nature; inasmuch, too, as spaces conceal their contents by means of meanings, by means of an absence of meaning or by means of an overload of meaning; and inasmuch, lastly, as spaces sometimes lie just as things lie, even though they are not themselves things.

Eventually, moreover, it would also fall to a critique of this kind to rip aside appearances which have nothing particularly mendacious about them. Consider a house, and a street, for example. The house has six storeys and an air of stability about it. One might almost see it as the epitome of immovability, with its concrete and its stark, cold and rigid

outlines. (Built around 1950: no metal or plate glass yet.) Now, a critical analysis would doubtless destroy the appearance of solidity of this house, stripping it, as it were, of its concrete slabs and its thin non-load-bearing walls, which are really glorified screens, and uncovering a very different picture. In the light of this imaginary analysis, our house would emerge as permeated from every direction by streams of energy which run in and out of it by every imaginable route: water, gas, electricity, telephone lines, radio and television signals, and so on. Its image of immobility would then be replaced by an image of a complex of mobilities, a nexus of in and out conduits. By depicting this convergence of waves and currents, this new image, much more accurately than any drawing or photograph, would at the same time disclose the fact that this piece of 'immovable property' is actually a two-faceted machine analogous to an active body: at once a machine calling for massive energy supplies, and an information-based machine with low energy requirements. The occupants of the house perceive, receive and manipulate the energies which the house itself consumes on a massive scale (for the lift, kitchen, bathroom, etc.).

Comparable observations, of course, might be made apropos of the whole street, a network of ducts constituting a structure, having a global form, fulfilling functions, and so on. Or apropos of the city, which consumes (in both senses of the word) truly colossal quantities of energy, both physical and human, and which is in effect a constantly burning, blazing bonfire. Thus as exact a picture as possible of this space would differ considerably from the one embodied in the representational space which its inhabitants have in their minds, and which for all its inaccuracy plays an integral role in social practice.

The error – or illusion – generated here consists in the fact that, when social space is placed beyond our range of vision in this way, its practical character vanishes and it is transformed in philosophical fashion into a kind of absolute. In face of this fetishized abstraction, 'users' spontaneously turn themselves, their presence, their 'lived experience' and their bodies into abstractions too. Fetishized abstract space thus gives rise to two practical abstractions: 'users' who cannot recognize themselves within it, and a thought which cannot conceive of adopting a critical stance towards it. If this state of affairs were to be successfully reversed, it would become clear that the critical analysis of space as directly experienced poses more serious problems than any partial activity, no matter how important, including literature, reading and writing, art, music, and the rest. Vis-à-vis lived experience, space is neither a mere 'frame', after the fashion of the frame of a painting, nor

a form or container of a virtually neutral kind, designed simply to receive whatever is poured into it. Space is social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure. To picture space as a 'frame' or container into which nothing can be put unless it is smaller than the recipient, and to imagine that this container has no other purpose than to preserve what has been put in it – this is probably the initial error. But is it error, or is it ideology? The latter, more than likely. If so, who promotes it? Who exploits it? And why and how do they do so?

The *theoretical* error is to be content to see a space without conceiving of it, without concentrating discrete perceptions by means of a mental act, without assembling details into a whole 'reality', without apprehending contents in terms of their interrelationships within the containing forms. The rectification of this error would very likely lead to the dissolution of not a few major ideological illusions. This has been the thrust of the preceding remarks, in which I have sought to show that a space that is apparently 'neutral', 'objective', fixed, transparent, innocent or indifferent implies more than the convenient establishment of an inoperative system of knowledge, more than an error that can be avoided by evoking the 'environment', ecology, nature and anti-nature, culture, and so forth. Rather, it is a whole set of errors, a complex of illusions, which can even cause us to forget completely that there is a total subject which acts continually to maintain and reproduce its own conditions of existence, namely the state (along with its foundation in specific social classes and fractions of classes). We also forget that there is a total object, namely absolute political space – that strategic space which seeks to impose itself as reality despite the fact that it is an abstraction, albeit one endowed with enormous powers because it is the locus and medium of Power. Whence the abstraction of the 'user' and of that so-called critical thinking which loses all its critical capacities when confronted by the great Fetishes.

There are many lines of approach to this truth. The important thing, however, is to take one or other of them instead of making excuses or simply taking flight (even if it is forward flight). In the ordinary way, the study of 'real' (i.e. social) space is referred to specialists and their respective specialities – to geographers, town-planners, sociologists, *et alii*. As for knowledge of 'true' (i.e. mental) space, it is supposed to fall within the province of the mathematicians and philosophers. Here we have a double or even multiple error. To begin with, the split between 'real' and 'true' serves only to avoid any confrontation between practice

and theory, between lived experience and concepts, so that both sides of these dualities are distorted from the outset. Another trap is the resort to specialities which antedate 'modernity', which are themselves older than capitalism's absorption of the entirety of space for its own purposes, older than the actual possibility, thanks to science and technology, of producing space. Surely it is the supreme illusion to defer to architects, urbanists or planners as being experts or ultimate authorities in matters relating to space. What the 'interested parties' here fail to appreciate is that they are bending their *demands* (from below) to suit *commands* (from above), and that this unforced renunciation on their part actually runs ahead of the wishes of the manipulators of consciousness. The real task, by contrast, is to uncover and stimulate demands *even at the risk* of their wavering in face of the imposition of oppressive and repressive commands. It is, one suspects, the ideological error *par excellence* to go instead in search of specialists of 'lived experience' and of the morphology of everyday life.

Let everyone look at the space around them. What do they see? Do they see *time*? They live time, after all; they are *in* time. Yet all anyone sees is movements. In nature, time is apprehended within space – in the very heart of space: the hour of the day, the season, the elevation of the sun above the horizon, the position of the moon and stars in the heavens, the cold and the heat, the age of each natural being, and so on. Until nature became *localized* in underdevelopment, each place showed its age and, like a tree trunk, bore the mark of the years it had taken it to grow. Time was thus inscribed in space, and natural space was merely the lyrical and tragic script of natural time. (Let us not follow the bad example of those philosophers who speak in this connection merely of the degradation of duration or of the outcome of 'evolution'.) With the advent of modernity time has vanished from social space. It is recorded solely on measuring-instruments, on clocks, that are as isolated and functionally specialized as this time itself. Lived time loses its form and its social interest – with the exception, that is, of time spent working. Economic space subordinates time to itself; political space expels it as threatening and dangerous (to power). The primacy of the economic and above all of the political implies the supremacy of space over time. It is thus possible that the error concerning space that we have been discussing actually concerns time more directly, more intimately, than it does space, time being even closer to us, and more fundamental. Our time, then, this most essential part of lived experience, this greatest good of all goods, is no longer visible to us, no longer intelligible. It cannot be constructed. It is consumed, exhausted, and

that is all. It leaves no traces. It is concealed in space, hidden under a pile of debris to be disposed of as soon as possible; after all, rubbish is a pollutant.

This manifest expulsion of time is arguably one of the hallmarks of modernity. It must surely have more far-reaching implications than the simple effacement of marks or the erasing of words from a sheet of paper. Since time can apparently be assessed in terms of money, however, since it can be bought and sold just like any object ('time is money'), little wonder that it disappears after the fashion of an object. At which point it is no longer even a dimension of space, but merely an incomprehensible scribble or scrawl that a moment's work can completely rub out. It is reasonable to ask if this expulsion or erasure of time is directed at historical time. The answer is: certainly, but only for symbolic purposes. It is, rather, the time needed for living, time as an irreducible good, which eludes the logic of visualization and spatialization (if indeed one may speak of logic in this context). Time may have been promoted to the level of ontology by the philosophers, but it has been murdered by society.

How could so disturbing, so outrageous an operation have been carried out without causing an outcry? How can it have been passed off as 'normal'? The fact is that it has been made part and parcel of social norms, of normative activity. One wonders just how many errors, or worse, how many lies, have their roots in the modernist trio, triad or trinity of readability-visibility-intelligibility.

We may seem by now to have left the practico-social realm far behind and to be back once more amidst some very old distinctions: appearance *versus* reality, truth *versus* lies, illusion *versus* revelation. Back, in short, in philosophy. And that is true, certainly, inasmuch as our analysis is an extension of the philosophical project; this, I hope, has already been made abundantly clear. On the other hand, the 'object' of criticism has shifted: we are concerned with practical and social activities which are supposed to embody and 'show' the truth, but which actually comminute space and 'show' nothing besides the deceptive fragments thus produced. The claim is that space can be shown by means of space itself. Such a procedure (also known as tautology) uses and abuses a familiar technique that is indeed as easy to abuse as it is to use – namely, a shift from the part to the whole: metonymy. Take images, for example: photographs, advertisements, films. Can images of this kind really be expected to expose errors concerning space? Hardly. Where there is error or illusion, the image is more likely to secrete it and reinforce it than to reveal it. No matter how 'beautiful' they may be, such images

belong to an incriminated 'medium'. Where the error consists in a segmentation of space, moreover – and where the illusion consists in the failure to perceive this dismemberment – there is simply no possibility of any image rectifying the mistake. On the contrary, images fragment; they are themselves fragments of space. Cutting things up and rearranging them, *découpage* and *montage* – these are the alpha and omega of the art of image-making. As for error and illusion, they reside already in the artist's eye and gaze, in the photographer's lens, in the draftsman's pencil and on his blank sheet of paper. Error insinuates itself into the very objects that the artist discerns, as into the sets of objects that he selects. Wherever there is illusion, the optical and visual world plays an integral and integrative, active and passive, part in it. It fetishizes abstraction and imposes it as the norm. It detaches the pure form from its impure content – from lived time, everyday time, and from bodies with their opacity and solidity, their warmth, their life and their death. After its fashion, the image kills. In this it is like all signs. Occasionally, however, an artist's tenderness or cruelty transgresses the limits of the image. Something else altogether may then emerge, a truth and a reality answering to criteria quite different from those of exactitude, clarity, readability and plasticity. If this is true of images, moreover, it must apply equally well to sounds, to words, to bricks and mortar, and indeed to signs in general.⁴

Our space has strange effects. For one thing, it unleashes desire. It presents desire with a 'transparency' which encourages it to surge forth in an attempt to lay claim to an apparently clear field. Of course this foray comes to naught, for desire encounters no object, nothing desirable, and no work results from its action. Searching in vain for plenitude, desire must make do with words, with the rhetoric of desire. Disillusion leaves space empty – an emptiness that words convey. Spaces are devastated – and devastating; incomprehensibly so (without prolonged reflection at least). 'Nothing is allowed. Nothing is forbidden', in the words of one inhabitant. Spaces are strange: homogeneous, rationalized, and as such constraining; yet at the same time utterly dislocated. Formal boundaries are gone between town and country, between centre and periphery, between suburbs and city centres, between the domain of automobiles and the domain of people. Between happiness and unhappiness, for that matter. And yet everything ('public facilities', blocks of flats, 'environments for living') is separated, assigned in isolated fashion

⁴ See for example a photographic feature by Henri Cartier-Bresson in *Politique-Hebdo*, 29 June 1972.

to unconnected 'sites' and 'tracts'; the spaces themselves are specialized just as operations are in the social and technical division of labour.

It may be said of this space that it presupposes and implies a logic of visualization. Whenever a 'logic' governs an operational sequence, a strategy, whether conscious or unconscious, is necessarily involved. So, if there is a 'logic of visualization' here, we need to understand how it is formed and how applied. The arrogant verticality of skyscrapers, and especially of public and state buildings, introduces a phallic or more precisely a phallogocratic element into the visual realm; the purpose of this display, of this need to impress, is to convey an impression of authority to each spectator. Verticality and great height have ever been the spatial expression of potentially violent power. This very particular type of spatialization, though it may seem 'normal' or even 'natural' to many people, embodies a twofold 'logic', which is to say a twofold strategy, in respect of the spectator. On the one hand, it embodies a metonymic logic consisting in a continual to-and-fro movement – enforced with carrot and stick – between the part and the whole. In an apartment building comprising stack after stack of 'boxes for living in', for example, the spectators-*cum*-tenants grasp the relationship between part and whole directly; furthermore, they recognize themselves in that relationship. By constantly expanding the scale of things, this movement serves to compensate for the pathetically small size of each set of living-quarters; it posits, presupposes and imposes homogeneity in the subdivision of space; and, ultimately, it takes on the aspect of pure logic – and hence of tautology: space contains space, the visible contains the visible – and boxes fit into boxes.

The second 'logic' embodied in this spatialization is a logic (and strategy) of metaphor – or, rather, of constant metaphorization. Living bodies, the bodies of 'users' – are caught up not only in the toils of parcellized space, but also in the web of what philosophers call 'analogons': images, signs and symbols. These bodies are transported out of themselves, transferred and emptied out, as it were, via the eyes: every kind of appeal, incitement and seduction is mobilized to tempt them with doubles of themselves in prettified, smiling and happy poses; and this campaign to void them succeeds exactly to the degree that the images proposed correspond to 'needs' that those same images have helped fashion. So it is that a massive influx of information, of messages, runs head on into an inverse flow constituted by the evacuation from the innermost body of all life and desire. Even cars may fulfil the function of analogons, for they are at once extensions of the body and mobile homes, so to speak, fully equipped to receive these wandering

bodies. Were it not for the eyes and the dominant form of space, words and dispersed fragments of discourse would be quite incapable of ensuring this 'transfer' of bodies.

Metaphor and metonymy, then. These familiar concepts are borrowed, of course, from linguistics. Inasmuch, however, as we are concerned not with words but rather with space and spatial practice, such conceptual borrowing has to be underwritten by a careful examination of the relationship between space and language.

Any determinate and hence demarcated space necessarily embraces some things and excludes others; what it rejects may be relegated to nostalgia or it may be simply forbidden. Such a space asserts, negates and denies. It has some characteristics of a 'subject', and some of an 'object'. Consider the great power of a façade, for example. A façade admits certain acts to the realm of what is visible, whether they occur on the façade itself (on balconies, window ledges, etc.) or are to be seen *from* the façade (processions in the street, for example). Many other acts, by contrast, it condemns to obscurity: these occur *behind* the façade. All of which already seems to suggest a 'psychoanalysis of space'.

In connection with the city and its extensions (outskirts, suburbs), one occasionally hears talk of a 'pathology of space', of 'ailing neighbourhoods', and so on. This kind of phraseology makes it easy for people who use it – architects, urbanists or planners – to suggest the idea that they are, in effect, 'doctors of space'. This is to promote the spread of some particularly mystifying notions, and especially the idea that the modern city is a product not of the capitalist or neocapitalist system but rather of some putative 'sickness' of society. Such formulations serve to divert attention from the criticism of space and to replace critical analysis by schemata that are at once not very rational and very reactionary. Taken to their logical limits, these theses can deem society as a whole and 'man' as a social being to be sicknesses of nature. Not that such a position is utterly indefensible from a strictly philosophical viewpoint: one is at liberty to hold that 'man' is a monster, a mistake, a failed species on a failed planet. My point is merely that this philosophical view, like many others, leads *necessarily* to nihilism.

V

Perhaps it would make sense to decide without further ado to seek inspiration in Marx's *Capital* – not in the sense of sifting it for quotations nor in the sense of subjecting it to the 'ultimate exegesis', but in the

sense of following *Capital's* plan in dealing with space. There are several good arguments in favour of doing so, including the parallels I mentioned earlier between the set of problems with which we are concerned and the set which existed in Marx's time. In view of the fact that there are plenty of 'Marxists' who think that discussing problems related to space (problems of cities or of the management of the land) merely serves to obfuscate the real political problems, such an association between the study of space and Marx's work might also help dispel some gross misunderstandings.

The plan of *Capital*, as it has emerged from the many commentaries on and rereadings of the book (the most literal-minded of which seem, incidentally, to be the best), itself constitutes a strong argument in favour of proceeding in this way. In his work preparatory to *Capital*, Marx was able to develop such essential concepts as that of (social) labour. Labour has existed in all societies, as have representations of it (pain, punishment, etc.), but only in the eighteenth century did the concept itself emerge. Marx shows how and why this was so, and then, having dealt with these preliminaries, he proceeds to the essential, which is neither a substance nor a 'reality', but rather a *form*. Initially, and centrally, Marx uncovers an (almost) pure form, that of the circulation of material goods, or *exchange*. This is a quasi-logical form similar to, and indeed bound up with, other 'pure' forms (identity and difference, equivalence, consistency, reciprocity, recurrence, and repetition). The circulation and exchange of material goods are distinct but not separate from the circulation and exchange of signs (language, discourse). The 'pure' form here has a bipolar structure (use value *versus* exchange value), and it has functions which *Capital* sets forth. As a *concrete abstraction*, it is developed by thought – just as it developed in time and space – until it reaches the level of social practice: via money, and via labour and its determinants (i.e. its dialectic: individual *versus* social, divided *versus* global, particular *versus* mean, qualitative *versus* quantitative). This kind of development is more fruitful conceptually than classical deduction, and suppler than induction or construction. In this case, of course, it culminates in the notion of surplus value. The pivot, however, remains unchanged: by virtue of a dialectical paradox, that pivot is a quasi-void, a near-absence – namely the form of exchange, which governs social practice.

Now, as for the form of social space, we are acquainted with it; it has already been identified. Another concrete abstraction, it has emerged in several stages (in certain philosophies and major scientific theories) from representations of space and from representational spaces. This

has occurred quite recently. Like that of exchange, the form of social space has an affinity with logical forms: it calls for a content and cannot be conceived of as having no content; but, thanks to abstraction, it is in fact conceived of, precisely, as independent of any specific content. Similarly, the form of material exchange does not determine what is exchanged: it merely stipulates that *something*, which has a use, is also an object of exchange. So too with the form of non-material communication, which does not determine what sign is to be communicated, but simply that there must be a stock of distinct signs, a message, a channel and a code. Nor, finally, does a logical form decide what is consistent, or what is thought, although it does prescribe the necessity, if thought is to exist, for formal consistency.

The form of social space is encounter, assembly, simultaneity. But what assembles, or what is assembled? The answer is: everything that there is *in space*, everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either through their co-operation or through their conflicts. Everything: living beings, things, objects, works, signs and symbols. Natural space juxtaposes – and thus disperses: it puts places and that which occupies them side by side. It particularizes. By contrast, social space implies actual or potential assembly at a single point, or around that point. It implies, therefore, the possibility of accumulation (a possibility that is realized under specific conditions). Evidence in support of this proposition is supplied by the space of the village, by the space of the dwelling; it is overwhelmingly confirmed by urban space, which clearly reveals many basic aspects of social space that are still hard to discern in villages. Urban space gathers crowds, products in the markets, acts and symbols. It concentrates all these, and accumulates them. To say 'urban space' is to say centre and centrality, and it does not matter whether these are actual or merely possible, saturated, broken up or under fire, for we are speaking here of a dialectical centrality.

It would thus be quite possible to elaborate on this form, to illuminate its structures (centre/periphery), its social functions, its relationship to labour (the various markets) and hence to production and reproduction, its connections with precapitalist and capitalist production relations, the roles of historic cities and of the modern urban fabric, and so on. One might also go into the dialectical processes bound up with this relationship between a form and its contents: the explosions, the saturation points, the challenges arising from internal contradictions, the assaults mounted by contents being pushed out towards the periphery, and so forth. In and of itself, social space does not have all of the characteristics of 'things' as opposed to creative activity. Social space *per se* is at once

work and *product* – a materialization of ‘social being’. In specific sets of circumstances, however, it may take on fetishized and autonomous characteristics of things (of commodities and money).

There is thus no lack of arguments for undertaking the ambitious project we have been discussing. A number of objections may also be reasonably raised, however – quite aside from those based on the very immensity of the task.

In the first place, the plan of *Capital* is not the only one Marx ever formulated. Its aims concern exposition rather than content; it envisages a strict formal structure, but one which impoverishes because of its reductionism. In the *Grundrisse* we find a different project, another plan and a more fruitful one. Whereas *Capital* stresses a homogenizing rationality founded on the quasi-‘pure’ form, that of (exchange) value, the *Grundrisse* insists at all levels on difference. Not that the *Grundrisse* leaves form out of the picture; rather, it goes from one content to the next and generates forms on the basis of these contents. Less rigour, less emphasis on logical consistency, and hence a less elaborate formalization or axiomatization – all leave the door open to more concrete themes, especially in connection with the (dialectical) relations between town and country, between natural reality and social reality. In the *Grundrisse* Marx takes all the historical mediations into consideration, including the village community, the family, and so on.⁵ The ‘world of the commodity’ is less far removed from its historical context and practical conditions, matters which are only taken up in the concluding (and unfinished) portion of *Capital*.

Secondly, there have after all been some changes and new developments in the last hundred years. Even if we want to keep Marx’s concepts and categories (including the concept of production) in their central theoretical position, it is still necessary to incorporate a number of categories that Marx considered only at the end of his life. A case in point is the reproduction of the relations of production, which superimposes itself upon the reproduction of the means of production, and upon the (quantitatively) expanded reproduction of products, but which remains distinct from these. When reproduction is treated as a concept, however, it brings other concepts in its wake: repetition, reproducibility, and so on. Such ideas had no more place in Marx’s work than did the terms ‘urban’, ‘everyday life’ or ‘space’.

If the *production of space* does indeed correspond to a leap forward in the productive forces (in technology, in knowledge, in the domination

⁵ See my *La pensée marxiste et la ville* (Tournai: Casterman, 1972).

of nature), and if therefore this tendency, when pushed to its limit – or, better, when it has overcome its limits – must eventually give rise to a *new mode of production* which is neither state capitalism nor state socialism, but the collective management of space, the social management of nature, and the transcendence of the contradiction between nature and anti-nature, then clearly we cannot rely solely on the application of the ‘classical’ categories of Marxist thought.

Thirdly (though what I am about to say actually takes in and extends the first two points), another new development since Marx’s time is the emergence of a plethora of disciplines known as ‘social’ or ‘human’ sciences. Their vicissitudes – for each has had its own particular ups and downs – have occasioned not a little anxious inquiry concerning disparities of development, crises, sudden expansions followed by equally sudden declines, and so on. The specialists and specialized institutions naturally seek to deny, combat or silence whatever is liable to damage their reputation, but their efforts in this direction have been largely in vain. Resounding failures and catastrophic collapses have been frequent. The early economists, for example, deluded themselves into thinking that they could safely ignore the Marxist injunctions to give critical thought priority over model-building, and to treat political economy as the science of poverty. Their consequent humiliation was an eminently public event, all their attempts to prevent this notwithstanding. As for linguistics, the illusions and the failure here could scarcely be more obvious, especially in view of the fact that, following the earlier examples of history and political economy, this specialization set itself up as the epitome of science – as the ‘science of sciences’, so to speak. In actuality linguistics can legitimately concern itself only with the deciphering of texts and messages, with coding and decoding. After all, ‘man’ does not live by words alone. In recent decades, linguistics has become a metalanguage, and an analysis of metalanguages; an analysis, consequently, of social repetitiveness, one which allows us – no more and no less – to apprehend the enormous redundancy of past writings and discourse.

Despite the uneven character and vicissitudes of their development, the existence of these sciences cannot be denied. In Marx’s time, by contrast, they did not exist, or existed only in virtual or embryonic form; their degree of specialization was negligible and their future expansionist ambitions were as yet inconceivable.

These areas of specialized knowledge, at once isolated and imperialistic – the two are surely connected – have specific relationships with mental and social space. Some groups of scholars have simply sliced off

their share, so to speak – staking out and enclosing their particular ‘field’. Others, following the example of the mathematicians, have constructed a mental space so designed as to facilitate the interpretation, according to their particular principles, of theoretical and practical (social) history; in this way they have arrived at specific representations of space. Architecture offers plenty of instances of procedures of this kind, which are essentially circular in form. Architects have a trade. They raise the question of architecture’s ‘specificity’ because they want to establish that trade’s claim to legitimacy. Some of them then draw the conclusion that there are such things as ‘architectural space’ and ‘architectural production’ (specific, of course). Whereupon they close their case. This relationship between cutting-up and representation, as it refers to space, has already found its place in the order (and the disorder) of the connections we have been examining.

Sections and interpretations of this kind can be understood and taken up not as a function of some ‘science of space’, or of some totalizing concept of ‘spatiality’, but rather from the standpoint of *productive* activity. Specialists have already inventoried the objects in space, some of them cataloguing those that come from nature, others those that are produced. When knowledge of space (as a product, and not as an aggregate of objects produced) is substituted for knowledge of things *in* space, such enumerations and descriptions take on another meaning. It is possible to conceive of a ‘political economy of space’ which would go back to the old political economy and rescue it from bankruptcy, as it were, by offering it a new object: the production of space. If the critique of political economy (which was for Marx identical with knowledge of the economic realm) were then to be resumed, it would no doubt demonstrate how that political economy of space corresponded exactly to the self-presentation of space as the worldwide medium of the definitive installation of capitalism. A similar approach might well be adopted towards history, psychology, anthropology, and so on – perhaps even towards psychoanalysis.

This orientation calls for thoroughly clarified distinctions to be drawn between thought and discourse *in* space (i.e. in one particular space, dated and located), thought and discourse *about* space (i.e. restricted to words and signs, images and symbols), and thought *adequate to the understanding of* space (i.e. grounded in developed concepts). These distinctions are themselves founded on a more fundamental one: they presuppose careful critical attention, on the one hand, to the *materials* used (words, images, symbols, concepts), and, on the other hand, to the *matériel* used (collection procedures, tools for cutting-up and

reassembling, etc.) – all this within the framework of the scientific division of labour.

The distinction between materials and *matériel*, though originally developed in other conceptual contexts, is in fact well worth borrowing for our purposes. Materials are indispensable and durable: stone, brick, cement and concrete, for example – or, in the musical sphere, scales, modes and tones. *Matériel*, by contrast, is quickly used up; it must be replaced often; it is comprised of tools and directions for their use; and its adaptative capability is limited: when new needs arise, new *matériel* must be invented to meet them. Instances of *matériel* in music would be the piano, the saxophone or the lute. In the construction industry, new techniques and equipment fall under this rubric. This distinction may achieve a certain ‘operational’ force inasmuch as it can be used to discriminate between what is ephemeral and what is more permanent: to decide what, in a particular scientific discipline, is worth preserving or reassigning to new tasks, and what deserves only to be rejected or relegated to a subsidiary role. For obsolete *matériel* can have only marginal applications; it often ends up, for example, in the realm of pedagogy.

Our re-evaluation of subdivisions and representations, along with their materials and *matériel*, need not be confined to the specialized disciplines we have been discussing. On the contrary, it should extend to philosophy, which after all does propose representations of space and time. Nor should a critique of philosophical ideologies be assumed to release us from the need to examine political ideologies in so far as they relate to space. And in point of fact such ideologies relate to space in a most significant way, because they intervene in space in the form of *strategies*. Their effectiveness in this role – and especially a new development, the fact that worldwide strategies are now seeking to generate a global space, their *own* space, and to set it up as an absolute – is another reason, and by no means an insignificant one, for developing a new concept of space.

VI

Reduction is a scientific procedure designed to deal with the complexity and chaos of brute observations. This kind of simplification is necessary at first, but it must be quickly followed by the gradual restoration of what has thus been temporarily set aside for the sake of analysis. Otherwise a methodological necessity may become a servitude, and the

legitimate operation of reduction may be transformed into the abuse of *reductionism*. This is a danger that ever lies in wait for scientific endeavour. No method can obviate it, for it is latent in every method. Though indispensable, all reductive procedures are also traps.

Reductionism thus infiltrates science under the flag of science itself. Reduced models are constructed – models of society, of the city, of institutions, of the family, and so forth – and things are left at that. This is how social space comes to be reduced to mental space by means of a ‘scientific’ procedure whose scientific status is really nothing but a veil for ideology. Reductionists are unstinting in their praise for basic scientific method, but they transform this method first into a mere posture and then, in the name of the ‘science of science’ (epistemology), into a supposed absolute knowledge. Eventually, critical thought (where it is not proscribed by the orthodox) wakes up to the fact that systematic reduction and reductionism are part and parcel of a political practice. The state and political power seek to become, and indeed succeed in becoming, reducers of contradictions. In this sense reduction and reductionism appear as tools in the service of the state and of power: not as ideologies but as established knowledge; and not in the service of any specific state or government, but rather in the service of the state and power in general. Indeed, how could the state and political power reduce contradictions (i.e. incipient and renewed intrasocial conflicts) other than via the mediation of knowledge, and this by means of a strategy based on an admixture of science and ideology?

It is now generally acknowledged that not too long ago a functionalism held sway which was reductionistic with respect to the reality and comprehension of societies; such functional reductionism is readily subjected to criticism from all sides. What is not similarly acknowledged, and indeed passed over in silence, is that structuralism and formalism propose, after their fashion, equally reductive schemata. They are reductionist in that they give a privileged status to one concept – because they extrapolate; conversely, their reductionism encourages them to extrapolate. And, when the need to correct this error, or to compensate for it, makes itself felt, ideology stands ready to step into the breach with its verbiage (its ‘ideological discourse’, to use the jargon) and with its abuse of all signs whether verbal or not.

Reduction can reach very far indeed in its implications. It can ‘descend’ to the level of practice, for instance. Many people, members of a variety of groups and classes, suffer (albeit unevenly) the effects of a multiplicity of reductions bearing on their capacities, ideas, ‘values’ and, ultimately, on their possibilities, their space and their bodies. *Reduced models*

constructed by one particular specialist or other are not always abstract in the sense of being ‘empty’ abstractions. Far from it, in fact: designed with a *reductive practice* in mind, they manage, with a little luck, to impose an order, and to constitute the elements of that order. Urbanism and architecture provide good examples of this. The working class, in particular, suffers the effects of such ‘reduced models’, including models of space, of consumption and of so-called culture.

Reductionism presses an exclusively analytic and non-critical knowledge, along with its attendant subdivisions and interpretations, into the service of power. As an ideology that does not speak its name, it successfully passes itself off as ‘scientific’ – and this despite the fact that it rides roughshod over established knowledge on the one hand and denies the possibility of *knowing* on the other. This is the scientific ideology *par excellence*, for the reductionist attitude may be actualized merely by passing from method to dogma, and thence to a homogenizing practice camouflaged as science.

At the outset, as I pointed out above, every scientific undertaking must proceed reductively. One of the misfortunes of the specialist is that he makes this methodological moment into a permanent niche for himself where he can curl up happily in the warm. Any specialist who clearly stakes out his ‘field’ may be sure that as long as he is prepared to work it a little he will be able to grow something there. The field he selects, and what he ‘cultivates’, are determined by the local conditions in his speciality and by that speciality’s position in the knowledge market. But these are precisely the things that the specialist does not want to know about. As for the reduction upon which his procedures are founded, he adopts a posture that serves in its own way to justify it: a posture of denial.

Now, it is hard to think of any specialized discipline that is not involved, immediately or mediately, with space.

In the first place, as we have already learnt, each specialization stakes out its own particular mental and social space, defining it in a somewhat arbitrary manner, carving it out from the whole constituted by ‘nature/society’, and at the same time concealing a portion of the activity of segmentation and rearrangement involved in this procedure (the sectioning-off of a ‘field’, the assembling of statements and reduced models relating to that field, and the shift from mental to social). All of which necessarily calls in addition for the adduction of propositions justifying – and hence interpreting – that activity.

Secondly, all specialists must work within the confines of systems for naming and classifying things found in space. The verification, descrip-

tion and classification of objects in space may be viewed as the 'positive' activity of a particular specialization – of geography, say, or anthropology, or sociology. At best (or at worst) a given discipline – as for example political science or 'systems analysis' – may concern itself with statements *about* space.

Lastly, specialists may be counted on to oppose a reduced model of the knowledge of space (based either on the mere noting of objects in space or else on propositions concerning – and segmenting – space) to any overall theory of (social) space. For them this stance has the added advantage of eliminating time by reducing it to a mere 'variable'.

We should not, therefore, be particularly surprised if the concept of the production of space, and the theory associated with it, were challenged by specialists who view social space through the optic of their methodology and their reductionistic schemata. This is all the more likely in view of the fact that both concept and theory threaten interdisciplinary boundaries themselves: they threaten, in other words, to alter, if not to erase, the specialists' carefully drawn property lines.

Perhaps I may be permitted at this point to imagine a dialogue with an interlocutor at once fictitious (because indeed imaginary) and real (because his objections are real enough).

'I am not convinced by your arguments. You talk of "producing space". What an absolutely unintelligible phrase! Even to speak of a *concept* in this connection would be to grant you far too much. No, there are only two possibilities here. Either space is part of nature or it is a concept. If it is part of nature, human – or "social" – activity marks it, invests it and modifies its geographical and ecological characteristics; the role of knowledge, on this reading, would be limited to the description of these changes. If space is a concept, it is as such already a part of knowledge and of mental activity, as in mathematics for example, and the job of scientific thought is to explore, elaborate upon and develop it. In neither case is there such a thing as the production of space.'

'Just a moment. The separations you are taking for granted between nature and knowledge and nature and culture are simply not valid. They are no more valid than the widely accepted "mind-matter" split. These distinctions are simply no improvement on their equally unacceptable opposite – namely, confusion. The fact is that technological activity and the scientific approach are not satisfied with simply modifying nature. They seek to master it, and in the process they tend to destroy it; and, before destroying

it, they misinterpret it. This process began with the invention of tools.'

'So now you are going back to the Stone Age! Isn't that a little early?'

'Not at all. The beginning was the first premeditated act of murder; the first tool and the first weapon – both of which went hand in hand with the advent of language.'

'What you seem to be saying is that humankind emerges from nature. It can thus only understand nature from without – and it only gets to understand it by destroying it.'

'Well, if one accepts the generalization "humankind" for the sake of the argument, then, yes, humankind is born in nature, emerges from nature and then turns against nature with the unfortunate results that we are now witnessing.'

'Would you say that this ravaging of nature is attributable to capitalism?'

'To a large degree, yes. But I would add the rider that capitalism and the bourgeoisie have a broad back. It is easy to attribute a multitude of misdeeds to them without addressing the question of how they themselves came into being.'

'Surely the answer is to be found in mankind itself, in human nature?'

'No. In the nature of *Western* man perhaps.'

'You mean to say that you would blame the whole history of the West, its rationalism, its Logos, its very language?'

'It is the West that is responsible for the transgression of nature. It would certainly be interesting to know how and why this has come about, but those questions are strictly secondary. The simple fact is that the West has broken the bounds. "O felix culpa!" a theologian might say. And, indeed, the West is thus responsible for what Hegel calls the power of the negative, for violence, terror and permanent aggression directed against life. It has generalized and globalized violence – and forged the global level itself through that violence. Space as locus of production, as itself product and production, is both the weapon and the sign of this struggle. If it is to be carried through to the end – there is in any case no way of turning back – this gigantic task now calls for the immediate production or creation of something other than nature: a second, different or new nature, so to speak. This means the production of space, urban space, both as a product and as a work, in the sense in which art created works. If this project fails, the failure

will be total, and the consequences of that are impossible to foresee.'

VII

Every social space is the outcome of a process with many aspects and many contributing currents, signifying and non-signifying, perceived and directly experienced, practical and theoretical. In short, every social space has a history, one invariably grounded in nature, in natural conditions that are at once primordial and unique in the sense that they are always and everywhere endowed with specific characteristics (site, climate, etc.).

When the history of a particular space is treated as such, the relationship of that space to the time which gave rise to it takes on an aspect that differs sharply from the picture generally accepted by historians. Traditional historiography assumes that thought can perform cross-sections upon time, arresting its flow without too much difficulty; its analyses thus tend to fragment and segment temporality. In the history of space as such, on the other hand, the historical and diachronic realms and the generative past are forever leaving their inscriptions upon the writing-tablet, so to speak, of space. The uncertain traces left by events are not the only marks on (or in) space: society in its actuality also deposits its script, the result and product of social activities. Time has more than one writing-system. The space engendered by time is always actual and synchronic, and it always presents itself as of a piece; its component parts are bound together by internal links and connections themselves produced by time.

Let us consider a primary aspect, the simplest perhaps, of the history of space as it proceeds from nature to abstraction. Imagine a time when each people that had managed to measure space had its own units of measurement, usually borrowed from the parts of the body: thumb's breadths, cubits, feet, palms, and so on. The spaces of one group, like their measures of duration, must have been unfathomable to all others. A mutual interference occurs here between natural peculiarities of space and the peculiar nature of a given human group. But how extraordinary to think that the body should have been part and parcel of so idiosyncratically gauged a space. The body's relationship to space, a social relationship of an importance quite misapprehended in later times, still retained in those early days an immediacy which would subsequently

degenerate and be lost: space, along with the way it was measured and spoken of, still held up to all the members of a society an image and a living reflection of their own bodies.

The adoption of another people's gods always entails the adoption of their space and system of measurement. Thus the erection of the Pantheon in Rome pointed not only to a comprehension of conquered gods but also to a comprehension of spaces now subordinate to the master space, as it were, of the Empire and the world.

The status of space and its measurement has changed only very slowly; indeed the process is still far from complete. Even in France, cradle of the metric system, odd customary measures are still used when it comes, for example, to garment or shoe sizes. As every French schoolchild knows, a revolution occurred with the imposition of the abstract generality of the decimal system, yet we continue to make use of the duodecimal system in dealing with time, cycles, graphs, circumferences, spheres, and so on. Fluctuations in the use of measures, and thus in representations of space, parallel general history and indicate the direction it has taken – to wit, its trend towards the quantitative, towards homogeneity and towards the elimination of the body, which has had to seek refuge in art.

VIII

As a way of approaching the history of space in a more concrete fashion, let us now for a moment examine the ideas of the nation and of nationalism. How is the nation to be defined? Some people – most, in fact – define it as a sort of substance which has sprung up from nature (or more specifically from a territory with 'natural' borders) and grown to maturity within historical time. The nation is thus endowed with a consistent 'reality' which is perhaps more definitive than well defined. This thesis, because it justifies both the bourgeoisie's national state and its general attitude, certainly suits that class's purposes when it promotes patriotism and even absolute nationalism as 'natural' and hence eternal truths. Under the influence of Stalinism, Marxist thought has been known to endorse the same or a very similar position (with a dose of historicism thrown in for good measure). There are other theorists, however, who maintain that the nation and nationalism are merely ideological constructs. Rather than a 'substantial reality' or a body corporate, the nation is on this view scarcely more than a fiction projected by the bourgeoisie onto its own historical conditions and