

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

origins, to begin with as a way of magnifying these in imaginary fashion, and later on as a way of masking class contradictions and seducing the working class into an illusory national solidarity. It is easy, on the basis of this hypothesis, to reduce national and regional questions to linguistic and cultural ones – that is to say, to matters of secondary importance. We are thus led to a kind of abstract internationalism.

Both of these approaches to the question of the nation, the argument from nature and the argument from ideology, leave space out of the picture. The concepts used in both cases are developed in a mental space which thought eventually identifies with real space, with the space of social and political practice, even though the latter is really no more than a representation of the former, a representation itself subordinate to a specific representation of historical time.

When considered in relationship to space, the nation may be seen to have two moments or conditions. First, nationhood implies the existence of a *market* gradually built up over a historical period of varying length. Such a market is a complex ensemble of commercial relations and communication networks. It subordinates local or regional markets to the national one, and thus must have a hierarchy of levels. The social, economic and political development of a national market has been somewhat different in character in places where the towns came very early on to dominate the country, as compared with places where the towns grew up on a pre-existing peasant, rural and feudal foundation. The outcome, however, is much the same everywhere: a focused space embodying a hierarchy of centres (commercial centres for the most part, but also religious ones, 'cultural' ones, and so on) and a main centre – i.e. the national capital.

Secondly, nationhood implies *violence* – the violence of a military state, be it feudal, bourgeois, imperialist, or some other variety. It implies, in other words, a political power controlling and exploiting the resources of the market or the growth of the productive forces in order to maintain and further its rule.

We have yet to ascertain the exact relationship between 'spontaneous' economic growth on the one hand and violence on the other, as well as their precise respective effects, but our hypothesis does affirm that these two 'moments' indeed combine forces and *produce a space*: the space of the nation state. Such a state cannot therefore be defined in terms of a substantive 'legal person' or in terms of a pure ideological fiction or 'specular centre'. Yet to be evaluated, too, are the connections between national spaces of this kind and the world market, imperialism and its strategies, and the operational spheres of multinational corporations.

Let us now turn to a very general view of our subject. Producing an object invariably involves the modification of a raw material by the application to it of an appropriate knowledge, a technical procedure, an effort and a repeated gesture (labour). The raw material comes, whether directly or indirectly, from nature: wood, wool, cotton, silk, stone, metal. Over the centuries, more and more sophisticated – and hence less and less 'natural' – materials have replaced substances obtained directly from nature. The importance of technical and scientific mediation has increased constantly. One only has to think of concrete, of man-made fibres, or of plastics. It is true, none the less, that many of the earliest materials, such as wool, cotton, brick and stone, are still with us.

The object produced often bears traces of the *matériel* and time that have gone into its production – clues to the operations that have modified the raw material used. This makes it possible for us to reconstruct those operations. The fact remains, however, that productive operations tend in the main to cover their tracks; some even have this as their prime goal: polishing, staining, facing, plastering, and so on. When construction is completed, the scaffolding is taken down; likewise, the fate of an author's rough draft is to be torn up and tossed away, while for a painter the distinction between a study and a painting is a very clear one. It is for reasons such as these that products, and even works, are further characterized by their tendency to detach themselves from productive labour. So much so, in fact, that productive labour is sometimes forgotten altogether, and it is this 'forgetfulness' – or, as a philosopher might say, this mystification – that makes possible the fetishism of commodities: the fact that commodities imply certain social relationships whose misapprehension they also ensure.

It is never easy to get back from the object (product or work) to the activity that produced and/or created it. It is the only way, however, to illuminate the object's nature, or, if you will, the object's relationship to nature, and reconstitute the process of its genesis and the development of its meaning. All other ways of proceeding can succeed only in constructing an abstract object – a model. It is not sufficient, in any case, merely to bring out an object's structure and to understand that structure: we need to generate an object in its entirety – that is, to reproduce, by and in thought, that object's forms, structures and functions.

How does one (where 'one' designates any 'subject') perceive a picture, a landscape or a monument? Perception naturally depends on the 'subject': a peasant does not perceive 'his' landscape in the same way as a

town-dweller strolling through it. Take the case of a cultured art-lover looking at a painting. His eye is neither that of a professional nor that of an uncultivated person. He considers first one and then another of the objects depicted in the painting; he starts out by apprehending the relationships between these objects, and allows himself to experience the effect or effects intended by the painter. From this he derives a certain pleasure – assuming that the painting in question is of the type supposed to give pleasure to eye or mind. But our amateur is also aware that the picture is framed, and that the internal relations between colours and forms are governed by the work as a whole. He thus moves from consideration of the objects in the painting to consideration of the picture as an object, from what he has perceived in the pictorial space to what he can comprehend about that space. He thus comes to sense or understand various 'effects', including some which have not been intentionally sought by the painter. He deciphers the picture and finds surprises in it, but always within the limits of its formal framework, and in the ratios or proportions dictated by that framework. His discoveries occur on the plane of (pictorial) *space*. At this point in his aesthetic inquiry, the 'subject' asks a number of questions: he seeks to solve one problem in particular, that of the relationship between effects of meaning that have been sought by means of technique and those which have come about independently of the artist's intentions (some of which depend on him, the 'looker'). In this way he begins to trace a path back from the effects he has experienced to the meaning-producing activity that gave rise to them; his aim is to rediscover that activity and to try and identify (perhaps illusorily) with it. His 'aesthetic' perception thus operates, as one would expect, on several levels.

It is not hard to see that this paradigm case is paralleled by a trend in the history of philosophy that was taken up and advanced by Marx and by Marxist thought. The post-Socratic Greek philosophers analysed knowledge as social practice; reflecting the state of understanding itself, they inventoried the ways in which known *objects* were apprehended. The high-point of this theoretical work was Aristotelian teaching on *discourse* (*Logos*), and on the *categories* as at once elements of discourse and means for apprehending (or classifying) objects. Much later, in Europe, Cartesian philosophy refined and modified the definition of 'Logos'. Philosophers were now supposed to question the Logos – and put it into question: to demand its credentials, its pedigree, its certificate of origin, its citizenship papers. With Descartes, therefore, philosophy shifted the position of both questions and answers. It changed its focus, moving from 'thought thought' to 'thinking thought', from the objects

of thought to the act of thinking, from a discourse upon the known to the operation of knowing. The result was a new 'problematic' – and new difficulties.

Marx recommenced this Cartesian revolution, perfecting and broadening it in the process. His concern was no longer merely with works generated by knowledge, but now also with *things* in industrial practice. Following Hegel and the British economists, he worked his way back from the results of productive activity to productive activity itself. Marx concluded that any reality presenting itself in space can be expounded and explained in terms of its genesis in time. But any activity developed over (historical) time engenders (produces) a space, and can only attain practical 'reality' or concrete existence within that space. This view of matters emerged in Marx's thinking only in an ill-defined form; it was in fact inherited by him in that form from Hegel. It applies to any landscape, to any monument, and to any spatial ensemble (so long as it is not 'given' in nature), as it does to any picture, work or product. Once deciphered, a landscape or a monument refers us back to a creative capacity and to a signifying process. This capacity may in principle be dated, for it is a historical fact. Not, however, in the sense that an event can be dated: we are not referring to the exact date of a monument's inauguration, for example, or to the day that the *command* that it be erected was issued by some notability. Nor is it a matter of a date in the institutional sense of the word: the moment when a particular social organization acceded to a pressing *demand* that it embody itself in a particular edifice – the judiciary in a courthouse, for instance, or the Church in a cathedral. Rather, the creative capacity in question here is invariably that of a community or collectivity, of a group, of a fraction of a class in action, or of an 'agent' (i.e. 'one who acts'). Even though 'commanding' and 'demanding' may be the functions of distinct groups, no individual or entity may be considered ultimately responsible for production itself: such responsibility may be attributed only to a social reality capable of investing a space – capable, given the resources (productive forces, technology and knowledge, means of labour, etc.), of producing that space. Manifestly, if a countryside exists, there must have been peasants to give it form, and hence too communities (villages), whether autonomous or subject to a higher (political) power. Similarly, the existence of a monument implies its construction by an urban group which may also be either free or subordinate to a (political) authority. It is certainly necessary to describe such states of affairs, but it is hardly sufficient. It would be utterly inadequate from the standpoint of an understanding of space merely to describe first rural landscapes, then

industrial landscapes, and finally urban spatiality, for this would simply leave all transitions out of the picture. Inasmuch as the quest for the relevant productive capacity or creative process leads us in many cases to political power, there arises the question of how such power is exercised. Does it merely command, or does it 'demand' also? What is the nature of its relationship to the groups subordinate to it, which are themselves 'demanders', sometimes also 'commanders', and invariably 'participants'? This is a historical problem – that of all cities, all monuments, all landscapes. The analysis of any space brings us up against the dialectical relationship between demand and command, along with its attendant questions: 'Who?', 'For whom?', 'By whose agency?', 'Why and how?' If and when this dialectical (and hence conflictual) relationship ceases to obtain – if demand were to outlive command, or vice versa – the history of space must come to an end. The same goes for the capacity to create, without a doubt. The production of space might proceed, but solely according to the dictates of Power: production without creation – mere reproduction. But is it really possible for us to envision an end to demand? Suffice it to say that silence is not the same thing as quietus.

What we are concerned with, then, is the long *history of space*, even though space is neither a 'subject' nor an 'object' but rather a social reality – that is to say, a set of relations and forms. This history is to be distinguished from an inventory of things *in space* (or what has recently been called material culture or civilization), as also from ideas and discourse *about space*. It must account for both representational spaces and representations of space, but above all for their interrelationships and their links with social practice. The history of space thus has its place between anthropology and political economy. The nomenclature, description and classification of objects certainly has a contribution to make to traditional history, especially when the historian is concerned with the ordinary objects of daily life, with types of food, kitchen utensils and the preparation and presentation of meals, with clothing, or with the building of houses and the materials and *matériel* it calls for. But everyday life also figures in representational spaces – or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it forms such spaces. As for representations of space (and of time), they are part of the history of ideologies, provided that the concept of ideology is not restricted, as it too often is, to the ideologies of the philosophers and of the ruling classes – or, in other words, to the 'noble' ideas of philosophy, religion and ethics. A history of space would explain the development, and hence the temporal conditions, of those realities which some geographers call

'networks' and which are subordinated to the frameworks of politics.

The history of space does not have to choose between 'processes' and 'structures', change and invariability, events and institutions. Its periodizations, moreover, will differ from generally accepted ones. Naturally, the history of space should not be distanced in any way from the history of time (a history clearly distinct from all philosophical theories of time in general). The departure point for this history of space is not to be found in geographical descriptions of natural space, but rather in the study of natural rhythms, and of the modification of those rhythms and their inscription in space by means of human actions, especially work-related actions. It begins, then, with the spatio-temporal rhythms of nature as transformed by a social practice.

The first determinants to consider will be anthropological ones, necessarily bound up with the elementary forms of the appropriation of nature: numbers, oppositions and symmetries, images of the world, myths.<sup>6</sup> In dealing with these elaborated forms, it is often hard to separate knowledge from symbolism, practice from theory, or denotation from connotation (in the rhetorical sense); the same goes for the distinctions between spatial arrangements (subdivision, spacing) and spatial interpretations (representations of space), and between the activities of partial groups (family, tribe, etc.) and those of global societies. At the most primitive level, behind or beneath these elaborate forms, lie the very earliest demarcations and orienting markers of hunters, herders and nomads, which would eventually be memorized, designated and invested with symbolism.

Thus mental and social activity impose their own meshwork upon nature's space, upon the Heraclitean flux of spontaneous phenomena, upon that chaos which precedes the advent of the body; they set up an order which, as we shall see, coincides, but *only up to a point*, with the order of words.

Traversed now by pathways and patterned by networks, natural space changes: one might say that practical activity writes upon nature, albeit in a scrawling hand, and that this writing implies a particular represen-

<sup>6</sup> As representative examples of a vast literature, see Viviana Pâques, *L'arbre cosmique dans la pensée populaire et dans la vie quotidienne du Nord-Ouest africain* (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, 1964); Leo Frobenius, *Mythologie de l'Atlantide*, tr. from the German (Paris: Payot, 1949); Georges Balandier, *La vie quotidienne au royaume de Kongo du XVI<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1965); Luc de Heusch, 'Structure et praxis sociales chez les Lele du Kasai', *L'homme: revue française d'anthropologie*, 4, no. 3 (Sep.-Dec. 1964), pp. 87-109. See also A. P. Logopoulos et al., 'Semeiological Analysis of the Traditional African Settlement', *Ekistics*, Feb. 1972.

tation of space. Places are marked, noted, named. Between them, within the 'holes in the net', are blank or marginal spaces. Besides *Holzwege* or woodland paths, there are paths through fields and pastures. Paths are more important than the traffic they bear, because they are what endures in the form of the reticular patterns left by animals, both wild and domestic, and by people (in and around the houses of village or small town, as in the town's immediate environs). Always distinct and clearly indicated, such traces embody the 'values' assigned to particular routes: danger, safety, waiting, promise. This graphic aspect, which was obviously not apparent to the original 'actors' but which becomes quite clear with the aid of modern-day cartography, has more in common with a spider's web than with a drawing or plan. Could it be called a text, or a message? Possibly, but the analogy would serve no particularly useful purpose, and it would make more sense to speak of texture rather than of texts in this connection. Similarly, it is helpful to think of architectures as 'archi-textures', to treat each monument or building, viewed in its surroundings and context, in the populated area and associated networks in which it is set down, as part of a particular production of space. Whether this approach can help clarify spatial practice is a question to which we shall be returning.

Time and space are not separable within a texture so conceived: space implies time, and vice versa. These networks are not closed, but open on all sides to the strange and the foreign, to the threatening and the propitious, to friend and foe. As a matter of fact, the abstract distinction between open and closed does not really apply here.

What modes of existence do these paths assume at those times when they are not being actualized through practice, when they enter into representational spaces? Are they perceived as lying within nature or as outside it? The answer is neither, for at such times people animate these paths and roads, networks and itineraries, through accounts of mythical 'presences', genies and good or evil spirits, which are conceived of as having a concrete existence. There is doubtless no such thing as a myth or symbol unassociated with a mythical or symbolic space which is *also* determined by practice.

It is certainly not impossible, moreover, that such anthropological determinants, carried down through the centuries by a particular group, perhaps abandoned only to be taken up once more, displaced or transferred, should have survived into the present. On the other hand, careful investigation is called for before any conclusions can possibly be drawn about structural invariability or patterns of repetition and reproduction.

Let us turn with this in mind to the case of Florence.<sup>7</sup> In 1172 the commune of Florence reorganized its urban space in response to the growth of the town, its traffic and its jurisdiction. This was an undertaking of global intent, not a matter of separate architectural projects each having its own repercussions on the city; it included a town square, wharves, bridges and roads. The historian can fairly easily trace the interplay of command and demand in this instance. The 'demanders' were those people who wished to benefit from the protections and advantages, including an improved enceinte, that the city could vouchsafe them. The command aspect stemmed from an ambitious authority, with the wherewithal to back up its ambitions. The Roman walls were abandoned, and the four existing city gates were replaced by six main gates and four secondary ones on the right bank of the Arno, and three more in the Oltrarno, which was now incorporated into the city. The urban space thus produced had the form of a symbolic flower, the *rose des vents* or compass-card. Its configuration was thus in accord with an *imago mundi*, but the historian of space ought not to attribute the same degree of importance to this representational space, which originated in a far distant and far different place, as he does to the upheavals which were simultaneously transforming the *contado* or Tuscan countryside and its relationship to its centre, namely Florence, giving rise in the process to a new representation of space. The fact is that what was anthropologically essential in ancient times can become purely tangential in the course of history. Anthropological factors enter history as *material*, apt to be treated variously according to the circumstances, conjunctures, available resources and *matériel* used.<sup>8</sup> The process of historical change, which entails all kinds of displacements, substitutions and transfers, subordinates both materials and *matériel*. In Tuscany we have a period of transition from a representational space (an image of the world) to a representation of space, namely perspective. This allows us to date an important event in the history under consideration.

The history of space will begin at the point where anthropological

<sup>7</sup> Cf. J. Renouard, 'Les villes d'Italie' (duplicated course notes), fascicle 8, pp. 20ff.

<sup>8</sup> See above, pp. 77 ff., my remarks on the space of Tuscany and its repercussions for the art and science of the Quattrocento. We shall return to these issues later (see below, pp. 257 ff.) in connection with Erwin Panofsky's *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* and Pierre Francastel's *Art et technique au XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles*. So long as the focus is on architecture, the best discussion is still E. E. Viollet-le-Duc, *Entretiens sur l'architecture*, 4 vols (Paris: A. Morel, 1863-72); Eng. tr. by Benjamin Bucknall: *Lectures on Architecture*, 2 vols (Boston, Mass.: Ticknor, 1889).

factors lose their supremacy and end with the advent of a production of space which is expressly industrial in nature – a space in which reproducibility, repetition and the reproduction of social relationships are deliberately given precedence over works, over natural reproduction, over nature itself and over natural time. This area of study overlaps with no other. It is clearly circumscribed, for this history has a beginning and an end – a prehistory and a ‘post-history’. In prehistory, nature dominates social space; in post-history, a localized nature recedes. Thus demarcated, the history of space is indispensable. Neither its beginning nor its end can be dated in the sense in which traditional historiography dates events. The beginning alone took up a period traces of which remain even now in our houses, villages and towns. In the course of this process, which may be properly referred to as historical, certain abstract relations were established: exchange value became general, first thanks to silver and gold (i.e. their functions), then thanks to capital. These abstractions, which are social relations implying forms, become tangible in two ways. In the first place, the instrument and general equivalent of exchange value, namely money, takes on concrete form in coins, in ‘pieces’ of money. Secondly, the commercial relations which the use of money presupposes and induces attain social existence only once they are projected onto the terrain in the shape of relational networks (communications, markets) and of hierarchically organized centres (towns). It must be presumed that in each period a certain balance is established between the centres (i.e. the functioning of each one) and the whole. One might therefore quite reasonably speak here of ‘systems’ (urban, commercial, etc.), but this is really only a minor aspect, an implication and consequence of that fundamental activity which is the production of space.

With the twentieth century, we are generally supposed to have entered the modern era. Despite – and because of – their familiarity, however, such crude terms as ‘century’, ‘modern’ and ‘modernity’ serve to conceal more than one paradox; these notions are in fact in urgent need of analysis and refinement. So far as space is concerned, decisive changes occurred at this juncture which are effectively obscured by invariant, surviving or stagnant elements, especially on the plane of representational space. Consider the house, the dwelling. In the cities – and even more so in the ‘urban fabric’ which proliferates around the cities precisely because of their disintegration – the House has a merely historic-poetic reality rooted in folklore, or (to put the best face on it) in ethnology. This *memory*, however, has an obsessive quality: it persists in art, poetry, drama and philosophy. What is more, it runs through

the terrible urban reality which the twentieth century has instituted, embellishing it with a nostalgic aura while also suffusing the work of its critics. Thus both Heidegger’s and Bachelard’s writings – the importance and influence of which are beyond question – deal with this idea in a most emotional and indeed moving way. The dwelling passes everywhere for a special, still sacred, quasi-religious and in fact almost absolute space. With his ‘poetics of space’ and ‘topophilia’, Bachelard links representational spaces, which he travels through as he dreams (and which he distinguishes from representations of space, as developed by science), with this intimate and absolute space.<sup>9</sup> The contents of the House have an almost ontological dignity in Bachelard: drawers, chests and cabinets are not far removed from their natural analogues, as perceived by the philosopher-poet, namely the basic figures of nest, shell, corner, roundness, and so on. In the background, so to speak, stands Nature – maternal if not uterine. The House is as much cosmic as it is human. From cellar to attic, from foundations to roof, it has a density at once dreamy and rational, earthly and celestial. The relationship between Home and Ego, meanwhile, borders on identity. The shell, a secret and directly experienced space, for Bachelard epitomizes the virtues of human ‘space’.

As for Heidegger’s ontology – his notion of building as close to thinking, and his scheme according to which the dwelling stands opposed to a wandering existence but is perhaps destined one day to ally with it in order to welcome in Being – this ontology refers to things and non-things which are also far from us now precisely inasmuch as they are close to nature: the jug,<sup>10</sup> the peasant house of the Black Forest,<sup>11</sup> the Greek temple.<sup>12</sup> And yet space – the woods, the track – is nothing more and nothing other than ‘being-there’, than beings, than *Dasein*. And, even if Heidegger asks questions about its origin, even if he poses ‘historical’ questions in this connection, there can be no doubt about the main thrust of his thinking here: time counts for more than space; Being has a history, and history is nothing but the History of Being.

<sup>9</sup> See Gaston Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), p. 19. Eng. tr. by Maris Jolas: *The Poetics of Space* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1969), p. xxxiv.

<sup>10</sup> See Martin Heidegger, ‘The Thing’, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 166ff. [Original: ‘Das Ding’, in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954).]

<sup>11</sup> See Martin Heidegger, ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 160. [Original: ‘Bauen Wohnen Denken’, in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*.]

<sup>12</sup> See the discussion in Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1950).

This leads him to a restricted and restrictive conception of production, which he envisages as a causing-to-appear, a process of emergence which brings a thing forth as a thing now present amidst other already-present things. Such quasi-tautological propositions add little to Heidegger's admirable if enigmatic formulation according to which 'Dwelling is the basic character of Being in keeping with which mortals exist.'<sup>13</sup> Language for Heidegger, meantime, is simply the dwelling of Being.

This obsession with absolute space presents obstacles on every side to the kind of history that we have been discussing (the history of space / the space of history; representations of space / representational space). It pushes us back towards a purely descriptive understanding, for it stands opposed to any analytic approach and even more to any global account of the generative process in which we are interested. More than one specific and partial discipline has sought to defend this stance, notably anthropology (whose aims may readily be gauged from the qualifiers so often assigned to it: cultural, structural, etc.). It is from motives of this sort that anthropology lays hold of notions derived from the study of village life (usually the Bororo or Dogon village, but occasionally the Provençal or Alsatian one), or from the consideration of traditional dwellings, and, by transposing and/or extrapolating them, applies these notions to the modern world.

How is it that such notions can be transferred in this way and still retain any meaning at all? There are a number of reasons, but the principal one is nostalgia. Consider the number of people, particularly young people, who flee the modern world, the difficult life of the cities, and seek refuge in the country, in folk traditions, in arts and crafts or in anachronistic small-scale farming. Or the number of tourists who escape into an elitist (or would-be elitist) existence in underdeveloped countries, including those bordering the Mediterranean. Mass migrations of tourist hordes into rustic or urban areas which their descent only helps to destroy (woe unto Venice and Florence!) are a manifestation of a major spatial contradiction of modernity: here we see space being consumed in both the economic and the literal senses of the word.

The modern world's brutal liquidation of history and of the past proceeds in a very uneven manner. In some cases entire countries – certain Islamic countries, for example – are seeking to slow down industrialization so as to preserve their traditional homes, customs and representational spaces from the buffeting of industrial space and industrial representations of space. There are other – very modern – nations

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 160.

which also try to maintain their living-arrangements and spaces unchanged, along with the customs and representations which go along with them. In Japan, for instance, which is a hyper-industrialized and hyper-urbanized nation, traditional living-quarters, daily life, and representational spaces survive intact – and this not in any merely folkloric sense, not as relics, not as stage management for tourists, not as consumption of the cultural past, but indeed as immediate practical 'reality'. This intrigues visitors, frustrates Japanese modernizers and technocrats, and delights humanists. There is an echo here, albeit a distant one, of the West's infatuation with village life and rustic homesteads.

This kind of perseverance is what makes Amos Rapoport's book on the 'anthropology of the home' so interesting.<sup>14</sup> The traditional peasant house of the Périgord is indeed just as worthy of study as those anthropological *loci classici*, the Eskimo's igloo and the Kenyan's hut. The limitations of anthropology are nonetheless on display here, and indeed they leap off the page when the author seeks to establish the general validity of reductionistic schemata based on a binary opposition – i.e. does the dwelling strengthen or does it reduce domesticity? – and goes so far as to assert that French people always (!) entertain in cafés rather than at home.<sup>15</sup>

Much as they might like to, anthropologists cannot hide the fact that the space and tendencies of modernity (i.e. of modern capitalism) will never be discovered either in Kenya or among French or any other peasants. To put studies such as these forward as of great importance in this connection is to avoid reality, to sabotage the search for knowledge, and to turn one's back on the actual 'problematic' of space. If we are to come to grips with this 'problematic', instead of turning to ethnology, ethnography or anthropology we must address our attention to the 'modern' world itself, with its dual aspect – capitalism, modernity – which makes it so hard to discern clearly.

The raw material of the production of space is not, as in the case of particular objects, a particular material: it is rather nature itself, nature transformed into a product, rudely manipulated, now threatened in its very existence, probably ruined and certainly – and most paradoxically – *localized*.

It might be asked at this juncture if there is any way of dating what might be called the moment of emergence of an awareness of space and its production: when and where, why and how, did a neglected knowl-

<sup>14</sup> *House Form and Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

edge and a misconstrued reality begin to be recognized? It so happens that this emergence can indeed be fixed: it is to be found in the 'historic' role of the Bauhaus. Our critical analysis will touch on this movement at several points. For the Bauhaus did more than locate space in its real context or supply a new perspective on it: it developed a new conception, a global concept, of space. At that time, around 1920, just after the First World War, a link was discovered in the advanced countries (France, Germany, Russia, the United States), a link which had already been dealt with on the practical plane but which had not yet been rationally articulated: that between industrialization and urbanization, between workplaces and dwelling-places. No sooner had this link been incorporated into theoretical thought than it turned into a project, even into a programme. The curious thing is that this 'programmatic' stance was looked upon at the time as both rational and revolutionary, although in reality it was tailor-made for the state – whether of the state-capitalist or the state-socialist variety. Later, of course, this would become obvious – a truism. For Gropius or for Le Corbusier, the programme boiled down to the production of space. As Paul Klee put it, artists – painters, sculptors or architects – do not show space, they create it. The Bauhaus people understood that things could not be created independently of each other in space, whether movable (furniture) or fixed (buildings), without taking into account their interrelationships and their relationship to the whole. It was impossible simply to accumulate them as a mass, aggregate or collection of items. In the context of the productive forces, the technological means and the specific problems of the modern world, things and objects could now be produced in their relationships, along with their relationships. Formerly, artistic ensembles – monuments, towns, furnishings – had been created by a variety of artists according to subjective criteria: the taste of princes, the intelligence of rich patrons or the genius of the artists themselves. Architects had thus built palaces designed to house specific objects ('furniture') associated with an aristocratic mode of life, and, alongside them, squares for the people and monuments for social institutions. The resulting whole might constitute a space with a particular style, often even a dazzling style – but it was still a space never rationally defined which came into being and disappeared for no clear reason. As he considered the past and viewed it in the light of the present, Gropius sensed that henceforward social practice was destined to change. The production of spatial ensembles as such corresponded to the capacity of the productive forces, and hence to a specific rationality. It was thus no longer a question of introducing forms, functions or structures in isolation, but rather one

of mastering global space by bringing forms, functions and structures together in accordance with a unitary conception. This insight confirmed after its fashion an idea of Marx's, the idea that industry has the power to open before our eyes the book of the creative capacities of 'man' (i.e. of social being).

The Bauhaus group, as artists associated in order to advance the total project of a total art, discovered, along with Klee,<sup>16</sup> that an observer could move around any object in social space – including such objects as houses, public buildings and palaces – and in so doing go beyond scrutinizing or studying it under a single or special aspect. Space opened up to perception, to conceptualization, just as it did to practical action. And the artist passed from objects in space to the concept of space itself. Avant-garde painters of the same period reached very similar conclusions: all aspects of an object could be considered simultaneously, and this simultaneity preserved and summarized a temporal sequence. This had several consequences.

- 1 *A new consciousness of space* emerged whereby space (an object in its surroundings) was explored, sometimes by deliberately reducing it to its outline or plan and to the flat surface of the canvas, and sometimes, by contrast, by breaking up and rotating planes, so as to reconstitute depth of space in the picture plane. This gave rise to a very specific dialectic.
- 2 *The façade* – as face directed towards the observer and as privileged side or aspect of a work of art or a monument – *disappeared*. (Fascism, however, placed an increased emphasis on façades, thus opting for total 'spectacularization' as early as the 1920s.)
- 3 *Global space* established itself in the abstract as a void waiting to be filled, as a medium waiting to be colonized. How this could be done was a problem solved only later by the social practice of capitalism: eventually, however, this space would come to be filled by commercial images, signs and objects. This development would in turn result in the advent of the pseudo-concept of the environment (which begs the question: the environment of whom or of what?).

The historian of space who is concerned with modernity may quite confidently affirm the historic role of the Bauhaus. By the 1920s the

<sup>16</sup> In 1920 Klee had this to say: 'Art does not reflect the visible; it renders visible.'



great philosophical systems had been left behind, and, aside from the investigations of mathematics and physics, all thinking about space and time was bound up with social practice – more precisely, with industrial practice, and with architectural and urbanistic research. This transition from philosophical abstraction to the analysis of social practice is worth stressing. While it was going on, those responsible for it, the Bauhaus group and others, believed that they were more than innovators, that they were in fact revolutionaries. With the benefit of fifty years of hindsight, it is clear that such a claim cannot legitimately be made for anyone in that period except for the Dadaists (and, with a number of reservations, a few surrealists).

It is easy enough to establish the historic role of the Bauhaus, but not so easy to assess the breadth and limits of this role. Did it cause or justify a change of aesthetic perspective, or was it merely a symptom of a change in social practice? More likely the latter, *pace* most historians of art and architecture. When it comes to the question of what the Bauhaus's audacity produced in the long run, one is obliged to answer: the worldwide, homogeneous and monotonous architecture of the state, whether capitalist or socialist.

How and why did this happen? If there is such a thing as the history of space, if space may indeed be said to be specified on the basis of historical periods, societies, modes of production and relations of production, then there is such a thing as a space characteristic of capitalism – that is, characteristic of that society which is run and dominated by the bourgeoisie. It is certainly arguable that the writings and works of the Bauhaus, of Mies van der Rohe among others, outlined, formulated and helped realize that particular space – the fact that the Bauhaus sought to be and proclaimed itself to be revolutionary notwithstanding. We shall have occasion to discuss this irony of 'History' at some length later on.<sup>17</sup>

The first initiative taken towards the development of a history of space was Siegfried Giedeon's.<sup>18</sup> Giedeon kept his distance from practice but worked out the theoretical object of any such history in some detail; he put space, and not some creative genius, not the 'spirit of the times', and not even technological progress, at the centre of history as he conceived it. According to Giedeon there have been three successive

periods. During the first of these (ancient Egypt and Greece), architectural volumes were conceived and realized in the context of their social relationships – and hence from *without*. The Roman Pantheon illustrates a second conception, under which the *interior* space of the monument became paramount. Our own period, by contrast, supposedly seeks to surmount the exterior–interior dichotomy by grasping an interaction or unity between these two spatial aspects. Actually, Giedeon succeeds here only in *inverting* the reality of social space. The fact is that the Pantheon, as an image of the world or *mundus*, is an opening to the light; the *imago mundi*, the interior hemisphere or dome, symbolizes this exterior. As for the Greek temple, it encloses a sacred and consecrated space, the space of a localized divinity and of a divine locality, and the political centre of the city.<sup>19</sup> The source of such confusion is to be found in an initial error of Giedeon's, echoes of which occur throughout his work: he posits a pre-existing space – Euclidean space – in which all human emotions and expectations proceed to invest themselves and make themselves tangible. The spiritualism latent in this philosophy of space emerges clearly in Giedeon's later work *The Eternal Present*.<sup>20</sup> Giedeon was indeed never able to free himself from a naïve oscillation between the geometrical and the spiritualistic. A further problem was that he failed to separate the history he was developing from the history of art and architecture, although the two are certainly quite different.

The idea that space is essentially empty but comes to be occupied by visual messages also limits the thinking of Bruno Zevi.<sup>21</sup> Zevi holds that a geometrical space is animated by the gestures and actions of those who inhabit it. He reminds us, in a most timely manner, of the basic fact that every building has an interior as well as an exterior. This means that there is an architectural space defined by the inside–outside relationship, a space which is a tool for the architect in his social action. The remarkable thing here, surely, is that it should be necessary to recall this duality several decades after the Bauhaus, and in Italy to boot, supposedly the 'birthplace' of architecture. We are obliged to conclude that the critical analysis of the façade mentioned above has simply never taken hold, and that space has remained *strictly visual*, entirely subordinate to a 'logic of visualization'. Zevi considers that the visual conception of space rests upon a bodily (gestural) component which the

<sup>17</sup> See Michel Ragon, *Histoire mondiale de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme modernes*, 3 vols (Tournai: Casterman, 1971–8), esp. vol. II, pp. 147ff.

<sup>18</sup> Siegfried Giedeon, *Space, Time, and Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Heidegger's discussion of the Greek temple in *Holzwege*.

<sup>20</sup> Siegfried Giedeon, *The Eternal Present*, 2 vols (New York: Bollingen Foundation/Pantheon, 1962–4).

<sup>21</sup> See Bruno Zevi, *Architecture as Space: How to Look at Architecture*, tr. Milton Gendel, rev. edn (New York: Horizon Press, 1974).

trained eye of the expert observer must take into account. Zevi's book brings this 'lived' aspect of spatial experience, which thanks to its corporal nature has the capacity to 'incarnate', into the realm of knowledge, and hence of 'consciousness', without ever entertaining the idea that such a bodily component of optical (geometrico-visual) space might put the priority of consciousness itself into question. He does not appear to understand the implications of his findings beyond the pedagogical sphere, beyond the training of architects and the education of connoisseurs, and he certainly does not pursue the matter on a theoretical level. In the absence of a viewer with an acquired mastery of space, how could any space be adjudged 'beautiful' or 'ugly', asks Zevi, and how could this aesthetic yardstick attain its primordial value? To answer one question with another, how could a constructed space subjugate or repel otherwise than through *use*?<sup>22</sup>

Contributions such as those of Giedeon and Zevi undoubtedly have a place in the development of a history of space, but they herald that history without helping to institute it. They serve to point up its problems, and they blaze the trail. They do not tackle the tasks that still await the history of space proper: to show up the growing ascendancy of the abstract and the visual, as well as the internal connection between them; and to expose the genesis and meaning of the 'logic of the visual' – that is, to expose the *strategy* implied in such a 'logic' in light of the fact that any particular 'logic' of this kind is always merely a deceptive name for a strategy.

## IX

Historical materialism will be so far extended and borne out by a history so conceived that it will undergo a serious transformation. Its objectivity will be deepened inasmuch as it will come to bear no longer solely upon the production of things and works, and upon the (dual) history of that production, but will reach out to take in space and time and, using nature as its 'raw material', broaden the concept of production so as to include the production of space as a process whose product – space – itself embraces both things (goods, objects) and works.

The outline of history, its 'compendium' and 'index', is not to be found merely in philosophies, but also beyond philosophy, in that

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23ff. See also Philippe Boudon's comments in his *L'espace architectural* (Paris: Dunod, 1971), pp. 27ff.

production which embraces concrete and abstract, historicizing both instead of leaving them in the sphere of philosophical absolutes. Likewise history is thus thoroughly relativized instead of being made into a substitute metaphysics or 'ontology of becoming'. This gives real meaning to the distinctions between prehistorical, historical and post-historical. Thus the properly historical period of the history of space corresponds to the accumulation of capital, beginning with its primitive stage and ending with the world market under the reign of abstraction.

As for dialectical materialism, it also is amplified, verified – and transformed. New dialectics make their appearance: work *versus* product, repetition *versus* difference, and so on. The dialectical movement immanent to the division of labour becomes more complex when viewed in the light of an exposition of the relationship between productive activity (both global labour – i.e. social labour – and divided or parcelled-out labour) and a specific product, unique in that it is also itself a tool – namely, space. The alleged 'reality' of space as natural substance and its alleged 'unreality' as transparency are simultaneously exploded by this advance in our thinking. Space still appears as 'reality' inasmuch as it is the milieu of accumulation, of growth, of commodities, of money, of capital; but this 'reality' loses its substantial and autonomous aspect once its development – i.e. its production – is traced.

There is one question which has remained open in the past because it has never been asked: what exactly is the mode of existence of social relationships? Are they substantial? natural? or formally abstract? The study of space offers an answer according to which the social relations of production have a social existence to the extent that they have a spatial existence; they project themselves into a space, becoming inscribed there, and in the process producing that space itself. Failing this, these relations would remain in the realm of 'pure' abstraction – that is to say, in the realm of representations and hence of ideology: the realm of verbalism, verbiage and empty words.

Space itself, at once a product of the capitalist mode of production and an economico-political instrument of the bourgeoisie, will now be seen to embody its own contradictions. The dialectic thus emerges from time and actualizes itself, operating now, in an unforeseen manner, in space. The contradictions of space, without abolishing the contradictions which arise from historical time, leave history behind and transport those old contradictions, in a worldwide simultaneity, onto a higher level; there some of them are blunted, others exacerbated, as this contradictory whole takes on a new meaning and comes to designate 'something else' – another mode of production.

## X

Not everything has been said – far from it – about the inscription of time in space: that is, about the temporal process which gives rise to, which produces, the spatial dimension – whether we are concerned with bodies, with society, with the universe or with the world.

Philosophy has left us but the poorest of indications here. The world is described as a sequence of ill-defined events occurring in the shadows. The Cosmos amounts to a luminous simultaneity. Heraclitus and his followers propose an ever-new universal flux which carries 'beings' along and in which all stability is merely appearance. For the Eleatics, on the other hand, only stability constitutes the 'real' world and renders it intelligible, so that any *change* is merely appearance. Hence the absolute primacy of now difference (always and continually – and tragically – the new), now repetition (always and everywhere – and comically – the same thing over and over again). For some, then, space means decline, ruin – a slipping out of time as time itself slips out of (eternal) Being. As a conglomeration of things, space separates, disperses, and shatters unity, enveloping the finite and concealing its finiteness. For others, by contrast, space is the cradle, birthplace and medium of nature's communications and commerce with society; thus it is always fertile – always full of antagonisms and/or harmonies.

It is surely a little-explored view of time and space which proposes that time's self-actualization in space develops from a kernel (i.e. from a relative and not an absolute origin), that this actualizing process is liable to run into difficulties, to halt for rest and recuperation, that it may even at such moments turn in upon itself, upon its own inner uniqueness as both recourse and resource, before starting up again and continuing until it reaches its point of exhaustion. 'Feedback', to the extent that it played any part at all in such a view of things, would not set in motion a system appropriate to the moment; rather, it would establish synchrony with that diachronic unity which never disappears from any living 'being'. As for time's aforementioned inner resources, and fundamental availability, these stem from the real origins.

## XI

I have already ventured a few statements concerning the relations between language and space. It is not certain that systems of non-verbal

signs answer to the same concepts and categories as verbal systems, or even that they are properly systems at all, since their elements and moments are related more by contiguity and similarity than by any coherent systematization. The question, however, is still an open one. It is true that parts of space, like parts of discourse, are articulated in terms of reciprocal inclusions and exclusions. In language as in space, there is a before and an after, while the present dominates both past and future.

The following, therefore, are perfectly legitimate questions.

- 1 Do the spaces formed by practico-social activity, whether landscapes, monuments or buildings, have meaning?
- 2 Can the space occupied by a social group or several such groups be treated as a message?
- 3 Ought we to look upon architectural or urbanistic works as a type of mass medium, albeit an unusual one?
- 4 May a social space viably be conceived of as a language or discourse, dependent upon a determinate practice (reading/writing)?

The answer to the first question must, obviously, be yes. The second calls for a more ambiguous 'yes and no': spaces contain messages – but can they be reduced to messages? It is tempting to reply that they imply more than that, that they embody functions, forms and structures quite unconnected with discourse. This is an issue that calls for careful scrutiny. As for the third and fourth questions, our replies will have to include the most serious reservations, and we shall be returning to them later.

We can be sure, at any rate, that an understanding of language and of verbal and non-verbal systems of signs will be of great utility in any attempt to understand space. There was once a tendency to study each fragment or element of space separately, seeking to relate it to its own particular past – a tendency to proceed, as it were, etymologically. Today, on the other hand, the preferred objects of study are ensembles, configurations or textures. The result is an extreme formalism, a fetishization of consistency in knowledge and of coherence in practice: a cult, in short, of *words*.

This trend has even generated the claim that discourse and thought have nothing to express but themselves, a position which leaves us with no truth, but merely with 'meaning'; with room for 'textual' work, and such work only. Here, however, the theory of space has something to

contribute. Every language is located in a space. Every discourse says something about a space (places or sets of places); and every discourse is emitted from a space. Distinctions must be drawn between discourse *in* space, discourse *about* space and the discourse *of* space. There are thus relationships between language and space which are to a greater or lesser extent misconstrued or disregarded. There is doubtless no such thing as a 'true space', as once postulated by classical philosophy – and indeed still postulated by that philosophy's continuation, namely epistemology and the 'scientific criteria' it promotes. But there is certainly such a thing as a 'truth of space' which embodies the movement of critical theory without being reducible to it. Human beings – why do we persist in saying 'man'? – are in space; they cannot absent themselves from it, nor do they allow themselves to be excluded from it.

Apart from what it 're-marks' in relation to space, discourse is nothing more than a lethal void – mere verbiage. The analogy between the theory of space (and of its production) and the theory of language (and of its production) can only be carried so far. The theory of space describes and analyses textures. As we shall see, the straight line, the curve (or curved line), the check or draughtboard pattern and the radial-concentric (centre *versus* periphery) are forms and structures rather than textures. The production of space lays hold of such structures and integrates them into a great variety of wholes (textures). A texture implies a meaning – but a meaning for whom? For some 'reader'? No: rather, for someone who lives and acts in the space under consideration, a 'subject' with a body – or, sometimes, a 'collective subject'. From the point of view of such a 'subject' the deployment of forms and structures corresponds to functions of the whole. Blanks (i.e. the contrast between absence and presence) and margins, hence networks and webs, have a *lived* sense which has to be raised intact to the *conceptual* level.

Let us now try to pursue this discussion to its logical conclusion. At present, in France and elsewhere, there are two philosophies or theories of language. These two orientations transcend squabbles between different schools of thought and, though they often overlap, they are basically distinct.

1 According to the first view, no sign can exist in isolation. The links between signs and their articulation are of major importance, for it is only through such concatenation that signs can have meaning, can signify. The sign thus becomes the focal point of a system of knowledge, and even of theoretical knowledge in general (semiology, semiotics).

Language, the vehicle of understanding, gives rise to an understanding of itself which is an absolute knowledge. The (unknown or misconstrued) 'subject' of language can only attain self-certitude to the extent that it becomes the subject of knowledge via an understanding of language as such.

The methodical study of chains of signifiers is thus placed at the forefront of the search for knowledge (*connaissance*). This search is assumed to begin with linguistic signs and then to extend to anything susceptible of carrying significance or meaning: images, sounds, and so on. In this way an absolute Knowledge (*Savoir*) can construct a mental space for itself, the connections between signs, words, things and concepts not differing from each other in any fundamental manner. Linguistics will thus have established a realm of certainty which can gradually extend its sovereignty to a good many other areas. The science of language embodies the essence of knowledge, the principle of absolute knowledge, and determines the order in which knowledge is acquired. It provides our understanding with a stable basis to which a series of extensions may be added – epistemology, for example, which indeed deals with acquired knowledge and the language of that knowledge; or semiology, which concerns itself with systems of non-verbal signs; and so on. Seen from this angle, everything – music, painting, architecture – is language. Space itself, reduced to signs and sets of signs, becomes part of knowledge so defined. As, little by little, do all objects in that space.

The theory of signs is connected to set theory, and hence to logic – that is, to 'pure' relationships such as those of commutativity, transitivity and distributivity (and their logical opposites). Every mental and social relationship may thus be reduced to a formal relation of the type: *A* is to *B* as *B* is to *C*. Pure formalism becomes an (albeit empty) hub for the totalization of knowledge, of discourse, of philosophy and science, of perceptibility and intelligibility, of time and space, of 'theoretical practice' and social practice.

It is scarcely necessary to evoke the great success that this approach has enjoyed recently in France. (In the English-speaking countries it is generally considered to be a substitute for logical empiricism.) But what are the reasons for this success? One is, certainly, that such an orientation helps ensconce knowledge, and hence the university, in a central position whence, it is thought, they may dominate social space in its entirety. Another reason is that in the last analysis this view of things attempts to save a Cartesian, Western, and Europe-centred Logos which is compromised, shaken, and assailed on all sides, from within as from without. The notion is, and everyone is surely familiar with it by now,

that linguistics, along with its auxiliary disciplines, can be set up as a 'science of sciences' capable of rectifying the shortcomings, wherever they might occur, of other sciences such as political economy, history or sociology. The irony is that linguistics, in seeking to furnish knowledge with a solid core, has succeeded only in establishing a void, a dogmatically posited vacuum which, when not surrounded by silence, is buried in a mass of metalanguage, empty words and chit-chat about discourse. Caution – scientific caution – forbids any rash attempt to bridge the (epistemological) chasm between known and not-known; the forbidden fruit of lived experience flees or disappears under the assaults of reductionism; and silence reigns around the fortress of knowledge.

2 'Ich kann das Wort so hoch unmöglich schätzen': 'I cannot grant the word such sovereign merit.' Thus Goethe's *Faust*, Part I.<sup>23</sup> And indeed it is impossible to put such a high value upon language, on speech, on words. The Word has never saved the world and it never will.

For the second view of language alluded to above, an examination of signs reveals a terrible reality. Whether letters, words, images or sounds, signs are rigid, glacial, and abstract in a peculiarly menacing way. Furthermore, they are harbingers of death. A great portion of their importance lies in the fact that they demonstrate an intimate connection between words and death, between human consciousness and deadly acts: breaking, killing, suicide. In this perspective, all signs are bad signs, threats – and weapons. This accounts for their *cryptic* nature, and explains why they are liable to be hidden in the depths of grottoes or belong to sorcerers (Georges Bataille evokes Lascaux in this connection). Signs and figures of the invisible threaten the visible world. When associated with weapons, or found amidst weapons, they serve the purposes of the will to power. Written, they serve authority. What are they? They are the doubles of things. When they assume the properties of things, when they pass for things, they have the power to move us emotionally, to cause frustrations, to engender neuroses. As replicas capable of disassembling the 'beings' they replicate, they make possible the breaking and destruction of those beings, and hence also their reconstruction in different forms. The power of the sign is thus extended both by the power of knowledge over nature and by the sign's own hegemony over human beings; this capacity of the sign for action embodies what Hegel called the 'terrible power of negativity'. As compared with what is signified, whether a thing or a 'being', whether actual

<sup>23</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, Part I, l. 1226; tr. Walter Arndt (New York: Norton, 1976), p. 30.

or possible, a sign has a repetitive aspect in that it adds a corresponding representation. Between the signified and the sign there is a mesmerizing difference, a deceptive gap: the shift from one to the other seems simple enough, and it is easy for someone who has the words to feel that they possess the things those words refer to. And, indeed, they do possess them up to a certain point – a terrible point. As a vain yet also effective trace, the sign has the power of destruction because it has the power of abstraction – and thus also the power to construct a new world different from nature's initial one. Herein lies the secret of the Logos as foundation of all power and all authority; hence too the growth in Europe of knowledge and technology, industry and imperialism.

Space is also felt to have this deadly character: as the locus of communication by means of signs, as the locus of separations and the milieu of prohibitions, spatiality is characterized by a death instinct inherent to life – which only proliferates when it enters into conflict with itself and seeks its own destruction.

This pessimistic view of signs has a long pedigree. It is to be found in Hegel's notion of a negativity later compensated for by the positivity of knowledge.<sup>24</sup> It occurs, in a more acute and emphatic form, in Nietzsche the philologist–poet and philosopher (or metaphilosopher).<sup>25</sup> For Nietzsche, language has an anaphorical even more than a metaphorical character. It always leads beyond presentness, towards an elsewhere, and above all towards a hypervisualization which eventually destroys it. Prior to knowledge, and beyond it, are the body and the actions of the body: suffering, desire, pleasure. For Nietzsche the poet, poetry consists in a metamorphosis of signs. In the course of a struggle which overcomes the antagonism between work and play, the poet snatches words from the jaws of death. In the chain of signifiers, he substitutes life for death, and 'decodes' on this basis. The struggle is as terrible as the trap-ridden and shifting terrain upon which it is waged. Happily for the poet, he does not fight without succour: musicians, dancers, actors – all travel the same road; and, even if there is much anguish along the way, incomparable pleasures are the prize.

It is facile in this context – and simply too convenient – to draw a distinction between a poetry which intensifies life (Goethe's *Faust*, or Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*) and a poetry of death (Rilke, Mallarmé).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See my *Le langage et la société* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 84ff.

<sup>25</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Das Philosophenbuch/Le Livre du philosophe* (Paris: Aubier-Flammation, 1969), pp. 170ff.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Maurice Blanchot, *L'espace littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955).

These two orientations in the theory (or philosophy) of language have rarely been presented separately – in their ‘pure’ forms, so to speak. French authors have for the most part sought a compromise of some kind, though Georges Bataille and Antonin Artaud are notable exceptions. This widespread eclecticism has been facilitated by psychoanalysis. A transition from discourse-as-knowledge to a ‘science of discourse’ is made suspiciously painlessly, as though there were no abyss between them. The science of discourse is next easily made to embrace the spoken, the unspoken and the forbidden, which are conceived of as the essence and meaning of lived experience. By which point the science of discourse is well on the way to bringing social discourse as a whole under its aegis. The death instinct, prohibitions (especially that against incest), castration and the objectification of the phallic, writing as the projection of the voice – these are just so many way-stations along this expansionist route. Semiotics, we are told, is concerned with the instincts of life and death, whereas the symbolic and semantic areas are the province of signs properly speaking.<sup>27</sup> As for space, it is supposedly given along with and in language, and is not formed separately from language. Filled with signs and meanings, an indistinct intersection point of discourses, a container homologous with whatever it contains, space so conceived is comprised merely of functions, articulations and connections – in which respect it closely resembles discourse. Signs are a necessity, of course, but they are sufficient unto themselves, because the system of verbal signs (whence written language derives) already embodies the essential links in the chain, spatial links included. Unfortunately, this proposed compromise, which sacrifices space by handing it on a platter to the philosophy of language, is quite unworkable. The fact is that signifying processes (a signifying practice) occur in a space which cannot be reduced either to an everyday discourse or to a literary language of texts. If indeed signs as deadly instruments transcend themselves through poetry, as Nietzsche claimed and sought to show in practice, they must of necessity accomplish this perpetual self-transcendence in space. There is no need to reconcile the two theses concerning signs by means of an eclecticism which is somehow respectful of both

<sup>27</sup> See Julia Kristeva’s doctoral thesis, ‘Langage, sens, poésie’ (1973), which puts much emphasis on this distinction between the semiotic realm (involving instincts) and the symbolic one (involving language as a system of communications). Indeed, Kristeva goes even further in this direction than Jacques Lacan in his *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966). The author most adept at keeping both these balls in the air is Roland Barthes, as witness his entire work. The problem is forcefully posed by Hermann Hesse in his *Glass Bead Game* (see above, p. 24, note 30), but Hesse offers no solution.

‘pure’ knowledge and ‘impure’ poetry. The task confronting us is not to speculate on an ambiguity but rather to demonstrate a contradiction in order to resolve it, or, better, in order to show that space resolves it. The deployment of the energy of living bodies in space is forever going beyond the life and death instincts and harmonizing them. Pain and pleasure, which are poorly distinguished in nature, become clearly discernible in (and thanks to) social space. Products, and *a fortiori* works, are destined to be enjoyed (once labour, a mixture of painful effort and the joy of creation, has been completed). Although spaces exist which give expression to insurmountable separations – tombs being a case in point – there are also spaces devoted to encounter and gratification. And, if poets struggle against the iciness of words and refuse to fall into the traps set by signs, it is even more appropriate that architects should conduct a comparable campaign, for they have at their disposal both materials analogous to signs (bricks, wood, steel, concrete) and *matériel* analogous to those ‘operations’ which link signs together, articulating them and conferring meaning upon them (arches, vaults, pillars and columns; openings and enclosures; construction techniques; and the conjunction and disjunction of such elements). Thus it is that architectural genius has been able to realize spaces dedicated to voluptuousness (the Alhambra of Granada), to contemplation and wisdom (cloisters), to power (castles and châteaux) or to heightened perception (Japanese gardens). Such genius produces spaces full of meaning, spaces which first and foremost escape mortality: enduring, radiant, yet also inhabited by a specific local temporality. Architecture produces living bodies, each with its own distinctive traits. The animating principle of such a body, its presence, is neither visible nor legible as such, nor is it the object of any discourse, for it reproduces itself within those who *use* the space in question, within their lived experience. Of that experience the tourist, the passive spectator, can grasp but a pale shadow.

Once brought back into conjunction with a (spatial and signifying) *social practice*, the concept of space can take on its full meaning. Space thus rejoins material production: the production of goods, things, objects of exchange – clothing, furnishings, houses or homes – a production which is dictated by necessity. It also rejoins the productive process considered at a higher level, as the result of accumulated knowledge; at this level labour is penetrated by a materially creative experimental science. Lastly, it rejoins the freest creative process there is – the signifying process, which contains within itself the seeds of the ‘reign of freedom’, and which is destined in principle to deploy its possibilities under that reign as soon as labour dictated by blind and immediate

necessity comes to an end – as soon, in other words, as the process of creating true works, meaning and pleasure begins. (It may be noted in passing that such creations are themselves very diverse: for example, contemplation may involve sensual pleasure, which, though it includes sexual gratification, is not limited to it.)

Let us now consider a seminal text of Nietzsche's on language, written in 1873. More of a philologist than a philosopher, and a lover of language because he approached it as a poet, Nietzsche here brought forward two concepts which were then already classic, and which have since been vulgarized: metaphor and metonymy. For the modern school of linguistics, which takes its inspiration from Saussure, these two figures of speech go beyond primary language; in other words, they transcend the first level of discourse. This is consistent with the meaning of the Greek prefix *meta-*: metaphor and metonymy are part of metalanguage – they belong to the second level of language.

In Nietzschean thought (which appears very different today from the way it appeared at the turn of the century), *meta-* is understood in a very radical manner. Metaphor and metonymy make their appearance here at the simplest level of language: words as such are already metaphoric and metonymic for Nietzsche – Kofmann, who seems to think that these terms apply only to concepts, notwithstanding.<sup>28</sup> Words themselves go beyond the immediate, beyond the perceptible – that is to say, beyond the chaos of sense impressions and stimuli. When this chaos is replaced by an image, by an audible representation, by a word and then by a concept, it undergoes a metamorphosis. The words of spoken language are simply metaphors for things.<sup>29</sup> The concept arises from an identification of things which are not identical – i.e. from metonymy. We take a language for an instrument of veracity and a structure of accumulated truths. In reality, according to Nietzsche, it is 'A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people'.<sup>30</sup> In more modern terms: language in action is more important than language in general or discourse in general; and speech is more creative than language as a system – and *a fortiori* than writing or reading. Language in action and

<sup>28</sup> See S. Kofmann, *La métaphore nietzschéenne* (Paris: Payot, 1972).

<sup>29</sup> See Nietzsche, *Philosophenbuch*, p. 179.

<sup>30</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense' (1873), in Walter Kaufmann, ed. and tr., *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking, 1954), pp. 46–7.

the spoken word are inventive; they restore life to signs and concepts that are worn down like old coins. But just what is it that 'figures of speech', metaphors, metonyms and metamorphoses invent, call forth, translate or betray? Could it be that reality is grounded in the imagination? That the world was created by a god who was a poet or a dancer? The answer – at least so far as the social realm is concerned – must be no. The fact is that a 'pyramidal order', and hence a world of castes and classes, of laws and privileges, of hierarchies and constraints, stands opposed to the world of first impressions as 'that which is firmest, most general, best known, most human, and hence that which regulates and rules'.<sup>31</sup> A society is a space and an architecture of concepts, forms and laws whose abstract truth is imposed on the reality of the senses, of bodies, of wishes and desires.

At several points in his philosophical (or metaphilosophical) and poetic work, Nietzsche stresses the visual aspect predominant in the metaphors and metonyms that constitute abstract thought: idea, vision, clarity, enlightenment and obscurity, the veil, perspective, the mind's eye, mental scrutiny, the 'sun of intelligibility', and so on. This is one of Nietzsche's great discoveries (to use another visual metaphor). He points out how over the course of history the visual has increasingly taken precedence over elements of thought and action deriving from the other senses (the faculty of hearing and the act of listening, for instance, or the hand and the voluntary acts of 'grasping', 'holding', and so on). So far has this trend gone that the senses of smell, taste, and touch have been almost completely annexed and absorbed by sight. The same goes for sexuality, and for desire (which survives in travestied form as *Sehnsucht*). Here we see the emergence of the anaphorical aspect of language, which embraces both metaphor and metonymy.

The following conclusions may thus be drawn.

1 Metaphor and metonymy are not figures of speech – at least not at the outset. They *become* figures of speech. In principle, they are acts. What do such acts accomplish? To be exact, they decode, bringing forth from the depths not what is there but what is sayable, what is susceptible of figuration – in short, language. Here is the source of the activities of speech, of language in action, of discourse, activities which might more properly be named 'metaphorization' and 'metonymization'. What is the point of departure of these processes? The body metamorphosed. Do representations of space and representational spaces, to the degree that

<sup>31</sup> Nietzsche, *Philosophenbuch*, p. 185.

they make use of such 'figures', tend to 'naturalize' the spatial realm? No – or not merely – because they also tend to make it evaporate, to dissolve it in a luminous (optical and geometrical) transparency.

2 These procedures involve displacement, and hence also transposition and transfer. Beyond the body, beyond impressions and emotions, beyond life and the realm of the senses, beyond pleasure and pain, lies the sphere of distinct and articulated unities, of signs and words – in short, of abstractions. Metaphorization and metonymization are defining characteristics of signs. It is a 'beyond', but a nearby one, which creates the illusion of great remoteness. Although 'figures of speech' express much, they lose and overlook, set aside and place parentheses around even more.

3 It is perhaps legitimate to speak of a logic of the metaphorical and a logic of the metonymic, because these 'figures of speech' give birth to a form, that of coherent and articulate discourse, which is analogous to a logical form, and above all because they erect a mental and social architecture above spontaneous life. In discourse, as in the perception of society and space, there is a constant to-and-fro both between the component elements and between the parts and the whole.

4 This immense movement has myriad connections: on the one hand with rationality, with the Logos, with reasoning by analogy and by deduction; and on the other hand with social structures which are bound up in their turn with political structures – that is to say, with power. Hence the ever-growing hegemony of vision, of the visible and the legible (of the written, and of writing). All these elements – these forms, functions and structures – have complex spatial interrelationships which can be analysed and explained.

So, if there is *fetishism* (of a visual, intelligible and abstract space), and if there is *fascination* (with a natural space which has been lost and/or rediscovered, with absolute political or religious spaces, or with spaces given over to voluptuousness or death), then theory is well able to trace their genesis, which is to say their production.

## XII

What is it that obscures the concept of production as it relates to space? Sufficient attention has already been paid to the proponents of absolute knowledge and to the new dogmatists, and there is no further need here

to examine their talk of an epistemological field or base, of the space of the episteme, and so forth. We saw earlier how they reduce the social to the mental and the practical to the intellectual, at the same time underwriting the extension of the laws of private property to knowledge itself. I have not dealt, however, with the fact that a number of notions which tend to confuse the concept with which we are concerned derive from semiology, notably the thesis according to which social space is the result merely of a *marking* of natural space, a leaving of traces upon it. Though made use of by the semiologists, notions such as those of marks, marking and traces do not actually originate with them. Anthropologists, among others, used them earlier. The semiological use, however, places more emphasis on meaning: marks are supposed to signify, to be part of a system, and to be susceptible of coding and decoding. Space may be marked physically, as with animals' use of smells or human groups' use of visual or auditory indicators; alternatively, it may be marked abstractly, by means of discourse, by means of signs. Space thus acquires symbolic value. Symbols, on this view, always imply an emotional investment, an affective charge (fear, attraction, etc.), which is so to speak deposited at a particular place and thereafter 'represented' for the benefit of everyone elsewhere. In point of fact, early agricultural and pastoral societies knew no such split between the practical and the symbolic. Only very much later was this distinction detected by analytical thinking. To separate these two spheres is to render 'physical' symbols incomprehensible, and likewise practice, which is thus portrayed as the practice of a society without the capacity for abstraction. It is reasonable to ask, however, whether one may properly speak of a production of space so long as marking and symbolization of this kind are the only way of relating to space. And the answer to this question has to be: not as yet, even though living bodies, mobile and active, may already be said to be extending both their spatial perception and their occupation of space, like a spider spinning its web. If and to the extent that production occurs, it will be restricted for a long time to marks, signs and symbols, and these will not significantly affect the material reality upon which they are imprinted. For all that the earth may become Mother Earth, cradle of life, a symbolically sexual ploughed field, or a tomb, it will still be the earth.

It should be noted that the type of activity that consists in marking particular locations and indicating routes by means of markers or blazes is characteristic only of the very earliest stages of organized society. During these primitive phases, the itineraries of hunters and fishermen, along with those of flocks and herds, are marked out, and *topoi* (soon



to become *lieux-dits*, or 'places called' such and such) are indicated by stones or cairns wherever no natural landmarks such as trees or shrubs are to hand. These are times during which natural spaces are merely *traversed*. Social labour scarcely affects them at all. Later on, marking and symbolization may become individualized or playful procedures, as for example when a child indicates her own corner because it amuses her to leave behind some trace of her presence.

This mistaken notion of the semiologists has given rise to the diametrically opposite but complementary idea that 'artificial' space is solely the result of a denaturing or denaturalization of some objective, authentically 'natural' space. What forces are said to be responsible for this? The obvious ones: science and technology, and hence abstraction. The problem with this view is that it studiously ignores the diversity of social spaces and of their historical origins, reducing all such spaces to the common trait of abstraction (which is of course inherent to all conceivable activity involving knowledge).

Semiology is also the source of the claim that space is susceptible of a 'reading', and hence the legitimate object of a practice (reading/writing). The space of the city is said to embody a discourse, a language.<sup>32</sup>

Does it make sense to speak of a 'reading' of space? Yes and no. Yes, inasmuch as it is possible to envisage a 'reader' who deciphers or decodes and a 'speaker' who expresses himself by translating his progression into a discourse. But no, in that social space can in no way be compared to a blank page upon which a specific message has been inscribed (by whom?). Both natural and urban spaces are, if anything, 'over-inscribed': everything therein resembles a rough draft, jumbled and self-contradictory. Rather than signs, what one encounters here are directions – multifarious and overlapping instructions. If there is indeed text, inscription or writing to be found here, it is in a context of conventions, intentions and order (in the sense of social order *versus* social disorder). That space signifies is incontestable. But what it signifies is *dos* and *don'ts* – and this brings us back to power. Power's message is invariably confused – deliberately so; dissimulation is necessarily part of any message from power. Thus space indeed 'speaks' – but it does not tell all. Above all, it prohibits. Its mode of existence, its practical 'reality' (including its form) differs radically from the reality (or being-there) of something written, such as a book. Space is at once result and cause, product and producer; it is also a *stake*, the locus of projects and actions

<sup>32</sup> See Roland Barthes in *Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, nos 132 and 153.

deployed as part of specific strategies, and hence also the object of *wagers* on the future – wagers which are articulated, if never completely.

As to whether there is a spatial code, there are actually several. This has not daunted the semiologists, who blithely propose to determine the hierarchy of levels of interpretation and then find a residue of elements capable of getting the decoding process going once more. Fair enough, but this is to mistake restrictions for signs in general. Activity in space is restricted by that space; space 'decides' what activity may occur, but even this 'decision' has limits placed upon it. Space lays down the law because it implies a certain order – and hence also a certain disorder (just as what may be seen defines what is obscene). Interpretation comes later, almost as an afterthought. Space commands bodies, prescribing or proscribing gestures, routes and distances to be covered. It is produced with this purpose in mind; this is its *raison d'être*. The 'reading' of space is thus merely a secondary and practically irrelevant upshot, a rather superfluous reward to the individual for blind, spontaneous and *lived* obedience.

So, even if the reading of space (always assuming there is such a thing) comes first from the standpoint of knowledge, it certainly comes last in the genesis of space itself. No 'reading of the space' of Romanesque churches and their surroundings (towns or monasteries), for example, can in any way help us predict the space of so-called Gothic churches or understand their preconditions and prerequisites: the growth of the towns, the revolution of the communes, the activity of the guilds, and so on. This space was *produced* before being *read*; nor was it produced in order to be read and grasped, but rather in order to be *lived* by people with bodies and lives in their own particular urban context. In short, 'reading' follows production in all cases except those in which space is produced especially in order to be read. This raises the question of what the virtue of readability actually is. It turns out on close examination that spaces made (produced) to be read are the most deceptive and tricked-up imaginable. The graphic impression of readability is a sort of *trompe-l'oeil* concealing strategic intentions and actions. Monumentality, for instance, always embodies and imposes a clearly intelligible message. It says what it wishes to say – yet it hides a good deal more: being political, military, and ultimately fascist in character, monumental buildings mask the will to power and the arbitrariness of power beneath signs and surfaces which claim to express collective will and collective thought. In the process, such signs and surfaces also manage to conjure away both possibility and time.

We have known since Vitruvius – and in modern times since Labrouste

(d. 1875), who was forever harping on it – that in architecture form must express function. Over the centuries the idea contained in the term ‘express’ here has grown narrower and more precise. Most recently, ‘expressive’ has come to mean merely ‘readable’.<sup>33</sup> The architect is supposed to construct a signifying space wherein form is to function as signifier is to signified; the form, in other words, is supposed to enunciate or proclaim the function. According to this principle, which is espoused by most ‘designers’, the environment can be furnished with or animated by signs in such a way as to appropriate space, in such a way that space becomes readable (i.e. ‘plausibly’ linked) to society as a whole. The inherence of function to form, or in other words the application of the criterion of readability, makes for an instantaneousness of reading, act and gesture – hence the tedium which accompanies this quest for a formal–functional transparency. We are deprived of both internal and external distance: there is nothing to code and decode in an ‘environment without environs’. What is more, the significant contrasts in a code of space designed specifically to signify and to ‘be’ readable are extremely commonplace and simple. They boil down to the contrast between horizontal and vertical lines – a contrast which among other things masks the vertical’s implication of hauteur. Versions of this contrast are offered in visual terms which are supposed to express it with great intensity but which, to any detached observer, any ideal ‘walker in the city’, have no more than the appearance of intensity. Once again, the impression of intelligibility conceals far more than it reveals. It conceals, precisely, what the visible/readable ‘is’, and what traps it holds; it conceals what the vertical ‘is’ – namely, arrogance, the will to power, a display of military and police-like machismo, a reference to the phallus and a spatial analogue of masculine brutality. Nothing can be taken for granted in space, because what are involved are real or possible acts, and not mental states or more or less well-told stories. In produced space, acts reproduce ‘meanings’ even if no ‘one’ gives an account of them. Repressive space wreaks repression and terror even though it may be strewn with ostensible signs of the contrary (of contentment, amusement or delight).

This tendency has gone so far that some architects have even begun to call either for a return to ambiguity, in the sense of a confused and not immediately interpretable message, or else for a diversification of

<sup>33</sup> See Charles Jencks, *Architecture 2000: Predictions and Methods* (New York: Praeger, 1971), pp. 114–16.

space which would be consistent with a liberal and pluralistic society.<sup>34</sup> Robert Venturi, as an architect and a theorist of architecture, wants to make space dialectical. He sees space not as an empty and neutral milieu occupied by dead objects but rather as a field of force full of tensions and distortions. Whether this approach can find a way out of functionalism and formalism that goes beyond merely formal adjustments remains (in 1972) to be seen. Painting on buildings certainly seems like a rather feeble way of retrieving the richness of ‘classical’ architecture. Is it really possible to use mural surfaces to depict social contradictions while producing something more than graffiti? That would indeed be somewhat paradoxical if, as I have been suggesting, the notions of ‘design’, of reading/writing as practice, and of the ‘signifier–signified’ relationship projected onto things in the shape of the ‘form–function’ one are all directed, whether consciously or no, towards the dissolving of conflicts into a general transparency, into a one-dimensional present – and onto an as it were ‘pure’ surface.

I daresay many people will respond to such thinking somewhat as follows.

Your arguments are tendentious. You want to re-emphasize the signified as opposed to the signifier, the content as opposed to the form. But true innovators operate on forms; they invent new forms by working in the realm of signifiers. If they are writers, this is how they produce a discourse. The same goes for other types of creation. But as for architects who concern themselves primarily with content, as for ‘users’, as for the activity of dwelling itself – all these merely reproduce outdated forms. They are in no sense innovative forces.

To which my reply might be something like this:

I have no quarrel with the proposition that work on signifiers and the production of a language are creative activities; that is an incontestable fact. But I question whether this is the whole story – whether this proposition covers all circumstances and all fields. Surely there comes a moment when formalism is exhausted, when only a new injection of content into form can destroy it and so open up the way to innovation. The harmonists invented a great

<sup>34</sup> See Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art/Doubleday, 1966).

musical form, for instance, yet the formal discoveries about harmony made by the natural philosophers and by theorists of music such as Rameau did not take the exploration and exploitation of the possibilities that far. Such progress occurred only with the advent of a Mozart or a Beethoven. As for architecture, the builders of palaces worked with and on signifiers (those of power). They kept within the boundaries of a certain monumentality and made no attempt to cross them. They worked, moreover, not upon texts but upon (spatial) textures. Invention of a formal kind could not occur without a change in practice, without, in other words, a dialectical interaction between signifying and signified elements, as some signifiers reached the exhaustion point of their formalism, and some signified elements, with their own peculiar violence, infiltrated the realm of signifiers. The combinatorial system of the elements of a set – for our purposes a set of signs, and hence of signifiers – has a shorter life than the individual combinations that it embraces. For one thing, any such combinatorial system of signs loses its interest and emotional force as soon as it is known and recognized for what it is; a kind of saturation sets in, and even changing the combinations that are included or excluded from the system cannot remedy matters. Secondly, work on signifiers and the production of a discourse facilitate the transmission of messages only if the labour involved is not patent. If the 'object' bears traces of that labour, the reader's attention will be diverted to the writing itself and to the one who does the writing. The reader thus comes to share in the fatigue of the producer, and is soon put off.

It is very important from the outset to stress the destructive (because reductive) effects of the predominance of the readable and visible, of the absolute priority accorded to the visual realm, which in turn implies the priority of reading and writing. An emphasis on visual space has accompanied the search for an impression of weightlessness in architecture. Some theorists of a supposed architectural revolution claim Le Corbusier as a pioneer in this connection, but in fact it was Brunelleschi, and more recently Baltard and then Eiffel, who blazed the trail. Once the effect of weightiness or massiveness upon which architects once depended has been abandoned, it becomes possible to break up and reassemble volumes arbitrarily according to the dictates of an architectural neoplasticism. Modernity expressly reduces so-called 'iconological' forms of expression (signs and symbols) to surface effects. Volumes or masses are deprived of any physical consistency. The architect considers

himself responsible for laying down the social function (or use) of buildings, offices, or dwellings, yet interior walls which no longer have any spatial or bearing role, and interiors in general, are simultaneously losing all character or content. Even exterior walls no longer have any material substance: they have become mere membranes barely managing to concretize the division between inside and outside. This does not prevent 'users' from projecting the relationship between the internal or private and a threatening outside world into an invented absolute realm; when there is no alternative, they use the signs of this antagonism, relying especially on those which indicate property. For an architectural thought in thrall to the model of transparency, however, all partitions between inside and outside have collapsed. Space has been comminuted into 'iconological' figures and values, each such fragment being invested with individuality or worth simply by means of a particular colour or a particular material (brick, marble, etc.). Thus the sense of circumscribed spaces has gone the same way as the impression of mass. Within and without have melted into transparency, becoming indistinguishable or interchangeable. What makes this tendency even more paradoxical is the fact that it proceeds under the banner of structures, of significant distinctions, and of the inside–outside and signifier–signified relationships themselves.

We have seen that the visual space of transparency and readability has a content – a content that it is designed to conceal; namely, the phallic realm of (supposed) virility. It is at the same time a repressive space: nothing in it escapes the surveillance of power. Everything opaque, all kinds of partitions, even walls simplified to the point of mere drapery, are destined to disappear. This disposition of things is diametrically opposed to the real requirements of the present situation. The sphere of private life ought to be enclosed, and have a finite, or finished, aspect. Public space, by contrast, ought to be an opening outwards. What we see happening is just the opposite.

### XIII

Like any reality, social space is related methodologically and theoretically to three general concepts: form, structure, function. In other words, any social space may be subjected to formal, structural or functional analysis. Each of these approaches provides a code and a method for deciphering what at first may seem impenetrable.

These terms may seem clear enough, but in fact, since they cannot avoid polysemy, they all carry burdens of ambiguity.

The term 'form' may be taken in a number of senses: aesthetic, plastic, abstract (logico-mathematical), and so on. In a general sense, it evokes the description of contours and the demarcation of boundaries, external limits, areas and volumes. Spatial analysis accepts this general use of the term, although doing so does not eliminate all problems. A formal description, for example, may aspire to exactitude but still turn out to be shot through with ideological elements, especially when implicit or explicit reductionistic goals are involved. The presence of such goals is indeed a defining characteristic of *formalism*. Any space may be reduced to its formal elements: to curved and straight lines or to such relations as internal-*versus*-external or volume-*versus*-area. Such formal aspects have given rise in architecture, painting and sculpture to genuine systems: the system of the golden number, for example, or that of the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders, or that of moduli (rhythms and proportions).

Consideration of aesthetic effects or 'effects of meaning' has no particular right of precedence in this context. What counts from the methodological and theoretical standpoint is the idea that none of these three terms can exist in isolation from the other two. Forms, functions and structures are generally given in and through a material realm which at once binds them together and preserves distinctions between them. When we consider an organism, for example, we can fairly easily discern the forms, functions and structures within this totality. Once this threefold analysis has been completed, however, a residue invariably remains which seems to call for deeper analysis. This is the *raison d'être* of the ancient philosophical categories of being, nature, substance and matter. In the case of a produced 'object', this constitutive relationship is different: the application to materials of a practical action (technology, labour) tends to blur, as a way of mastering them, the distinctions between form, function and structure, so that the three may even come to imply one another in an immediate manner. This tendency exists only implicitly in works of art and objects antedating the Industrial Revolution, including furniture, houses, palaces and monuments; under the conditions of modernity, on the other hand, it comes close to its limit. With the advent of 'design', materiality tends to give way to transparency – to perfect 'readability'. Form is now merely the sign of function, and the relation between the two, which could not be clearer – that is, easier to produce and reproduce – is what gives rise to structure. A case where this account does not apply is that not uncommon one where 'designer' and manufacturer find it amusing to confuse the issue, as it were, and give

a form (often a 'classical' one) to a function completely unconnected with it: they disguise a bed as a cupboard, for example, or a refrigerator as bookshelves. The celebrated signifier–signified dichotomy is singularly appropriate when applied to such objects, but this special application is just that – and a good deal more limited than semantico-semiological orthodoxy would probably care to admit. As for social 'realities', here the opposite situation obtains: the distances between forms, functions and structures lengthen rather than diminish. The three tend to become completely detached from one another. Their relationship is obscured and they become indecipherable (or undecodable) as the 'hidden' takes over from the 'readable' in favour of the predominance of the latter in the realm of objects. Thus a particular institution may have a variety of functions which are different – and sometimes opposed – to its apparent forms and avowed structures. One merely has to think of the institutions of 'justice', of the military, or of the police. In other words, the space of objects and the space of institutions are radically divergent in 'modern' society. This is a society in which, to take an extreme example, the bureaucracy is supposed to be, aspires to be, loudly proclaims itself to be, and perhaps even believes itself to be 'readable' and transparent, whereas in fact it is the very epitome of opacity, indecipherability and 'unreadability'. The same goes for all other state and political apparatuses.

The relationship between these key terms and concepts (form, function, structure) becomes much more complex when one considers only those very abstract forms, such as the logical form, which do not depend on description and which are inseparable from a content. Among these, in addition to the logical form, must be numbered identity, reciprocity, recurrence, repetition (iteration), and difference. Marx, following Adam Smith and Ricardo, showed how and why the form of *exchange* has achieved predominance in social practice in association with specific functions and structures. The form of social space – i.e. the centre–periphery relationship – has only recently come to occupy a place in our thinking about forms. As for the urban form – i.e. assembly, encounter and simultaneity – it has been shown to belong among the classic forms, in company with centrality, difference, recurrence, reciprocity, and so on.

These forms, which are almost 'pure' (at the extreme limit of 'purity' the form disappears, as in the case of pure identity: A's identity with A) cannot be detached from a content. The interaction between form and content and the invariably concrete relationship between them are the object of analyses about which we may repeat what we said earlier:

each analytic stage deals with a residue left over from the previous stage, for an irreducible element – the substrate or foundation of the object's 'presence' – always subsists.

Between forms close to the point of purity at which they would disappear and their contents there exist mediations. In the case of spatial forms, for example, the form of the curve is mediated by the curved line, and the straight form by the straight line. All spatial arrangements use curved and/or straight forms; naturally, one or the other may predominate.

When formal elements become part of a *texture*, they diversify, introducing both repetition and difference. They articulate the whole, facilitating both movement from the parts to the whole and, conversely, the mustering by the whole of its component elements. For example, the capitals of a Romanesque cloister differ, but they do so within the limits permitted by a model. They break space up and give it rhythm. This illustrates the function of what has been called the 'signifying differential'.<sup>35</sup> The semicircular or ogival arch, with its supporting pillars and columns, has a different spatial meaning and value according to whether it occurs in Byzantine or in Oriental, in Gothic or in Renaissance architecture. Arches have both repetitive and differential functions within a whole whose 'style' they help determine. The same sort of thing goes in music for the theme and its treatment in fugal composition. Such 'diaeretic' effects, which the semiologists compare to metonymy, are to be met with in all treatments of space and time.

The peopling and investment (or occupation) of a space always happens in accordance with discernible and analysable forms: as dispersal or concentration, or as a function of a specific (or for that matter a nebulous) orientation. By contrast, assembly and concentration as spatial forms are always actualized by means of geometric forms: a town may have a circular (radial–concentric) or a quadrangular form.

The content of these forms metamorphoses them. The quadrangular form, for example, occurs in the ancient Roman military camp, in medieval *bastides*, in the Spanish colonial town and in the modern American city. The fact is, however, that these urban realities differ so radically that the abstract form in question is their only common feature.

The Spanish-American colonial town is of considerable interest in this regard. The foundation of these towns in a colonial empire went hand in hand with the production of a vast space, namely that of Latin

<sup>35</sup> See Julia Kristeva, *Semiotike* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), pp. 298ff. The 'signifying differential' is to be distinguished from Osgood's 'semantic differential'.

America. Their urban space, which was instrumental in this larger production process, has continued to be produced despite the vicissitudes of imperialism, independence and industrialization. It is an urban space especially appropriate for study in that the colonial towns of Latin America were founded at the time of the Renaissance in Europe – that is to say, at a time when the study of the ancient world, and of the history, constitution, architecture and planning of its cities, was being resumed.

The Spanish-American town was typically built according to a plan laid down on the basis of standing orders, according to the veritable code of urban space constituted by the *Orders for Discovery and Settlement*, a collection, published in 1573, of official instructions issued to founders of towns from 1513 on. These instructions were arranged under the three heads of discovery, settlement and pacification. The very building of the towns thus embodied a plan which would determine the mode of occupation of the territory and define how it was to be reorganized under the administrative and political authority of urban power. The orders stipulate exactly how the chosen sites ought to be developed. The result is a strictly hierarchical organization of space, a gradual progression outwards from the town's centre, beginning with the *ciudad* and reaching out to the surrounding *pueblos*. The plan is followed with geometrical precision: from the inevitable Plaza Mayor a grid extends indefinitely in every direction. Each square or rectangular lot has its function assigned to it, while inversely each function is assigned its own place at a greater or lesser distance from the central square: church, administrative buildings, town gates, squares, streets, port installations, warehouses, town hall, and so on. Thus a high degree of segregation is superimposed upon a homogeneous space.<sup>36</sup> Some historians have described this colonial town as an artificial product, but they forget that this artificial product is also an instrument of production: a superstructure foreign to the original space serves as a political means of introducing a social and economic structure in such a way that it may gain a foothold and indeed establish its 'base' in a particular locality. Within this spatial framework, Spanish colonial architecture freely (so to speak) deployed the Baroque motifs which are especially evident in the decoration of façades. The relation between the 'micro' (architectural) plane and the 'macro' (spatial–strategic) one does exist here, but it cannot be reduced to a logical relationship or put into terms of formal implication. The main point to be noted, therefore, is the production of a social

<sup>36</sup> See Emma Scovazzi in *Espaces et société*, no. 3.

space by political power – that is, by violence in the service of economic goals. A social space of this kind is generated out of a rationalized and theorized form serving as an instrument for the violation of an existing space.

One is tempted to ask whether the various urban spaces with a grid pattern might not have comparable origins in constraints imposed by a central power. It turns out upon reflection, however, that there is no real justification for generalizing from the particular development of urban space in Latin America. Consider, for example, that transformation of space in New York City which began around 1810. Obviously it is to be explained in part by the existence and the influence of an already powerful urban nucleus, and by the actions of a duly empowered authority. On the other hand, developments in New York had absolutely nothing to do with the extraction of wealth by a metropolitan power, the colonial relationship with Britain having come to an end. Geometrical urban space in Latin America was intimately bound up with a process of extortion and plunder serving the accumulation of wealth in Western Europe; it is almost as though the riches produced were riddled out through the gaps in the grid. In English-speaking North America, by contrast, a formally homologous meshwork served only the production and accumulation of capital *on the spot*. Thus the same abstract form may have opposing functions and give rise to diverse structures. This is not to say that the form is indifferent to function and structure: in both these cases the pre-existing space was destroyed from top to bottom; in both the aim was homogeneity; and in both that aim was achieved.

What of the equally cross-ruled space of the Asian town and countryside? Here, apropos, is a résumé of the remarks of a Japanese philosopher of Buddhist background who was asked about the relationships between space, language and ideograms.

You will no doubt take a long time to understand the Chinese characters and the thinking behind these forms, which are not signs. You should know that for us perceptibility and intelligibility are not clearly distinct; the same goes for the signifier and what it signifies. It is hard for us to separate image and concept. So the meaning of an ideogram does not exist independently of its graphic representation. To put it in terms of your distinctions, sensation and intellect are merged for us into a single level of apprehension. Consider one of the simplest characters: a square and two strokes joining its centre to the middle points of each of its sides. I read

this character, and I pronounce it *ta*. What you see, no doubt, is a dry geometrical figure. If I were to try and translate for you what I see and understand simultaneously when I look at this character, I would begin by saying that it was a bird's-eye view of a rice field. The boundary lines between rice fields are not stone walls or barbed-wire fences, but rather dykes which are an integral part of the fields themselves. When I contemplate this character, this rice field, I become the bird looking down from the optimum vantage point vertically above the centre of the field. What I perceive, however, is more than a rice field: it is also the order of the universe, the organizing-principle of space. This principle applies as well to the city as to the countryside. In fact everything in the universe is divided into squares. Each square has five parts. The centre designates He who thinks and sustains the order of the universe – formerly, the Emperor. An imaginary perpendicular line rises from the centre of the square. This is the ideal line going up to the bird overhead, to the perceiver of space. It is thus the dimension of thought, of knowledge, identified here with Wisdom and hence with the Power of the wise man to conceive and conserve the order of nature.

The Japanese notion of *shin-gyo-sho* elaborates further on this view of things. A basic principle rather than simply a procedure for ordering spatial and temporal elements, it governs the precincts of temples and palaces as well as the space of towns and houses; it informs the composition of spatial ensembles accommodating the broadest possible range of activity, from family life to major religious and political events. Under its aegis, public areas (the spaces of social relationships and actions) are connected up with private areas (spaces for contemplation, isolation and retreat) via 'mixed' areas (linking thoroughfares, etc.). The term *shin-gyo-sho* thus embraces three levels of spatial and temporal, mental and social organization, levels bound together by relationships of reciprocal implication. These relationships are not merely logical ones, though the logical relationship of implication certainly underlies them. The 'public' realm, the realm of temple or palace, has private and 'mixed' aspects, while the 'private' house or dwelling has public (e.g. reception rooms) and 'mixed' ones. Much the same may be said of the town as a whole.

We thus have a global perception of space rather than representations of isolated spots. Meeting-places, intersections in the checkerwork pattern, crossroads – these are more important to us than

other places. Whence a number of social phenomena which may seem strange to your anthropologists, such as Edward T. Hall in his *Hidden Dimension*,<sup>37</sup> but which seem perfectly normal to us. It is indeed true, for example, that before the Americans came to Japan crossroads had names but the roads themselves did not, and that our houses bear numbers based on their age, not on their positions in the street. We have never had fixed routes for getting from one place to another, as you do, but that does not mean that we do not know where we are coming from or going to. We do not separate the ordering of space from its form, its genesis from its actuality, the abstract from the concrete, or nature from society. There is no house in Japan without a garden, no matter how tiny, as a place for contemplation and for contact with nature; even a handful of pebbles *is* nature for us – not just a detached symbol of it. We do not think right away of the distances that separate objects from one another. For space is never empty: it always embodies a meaning. The perception of gaps itself brings the whole body into play. Every group of places and objects has a centre, and this is therefore true of the house, the city or the whole world. The centre may be perceived from every side, and reached from every angle of approach; thus to occupy any vantage point is to perceive and discover everything that occurs. The centre so conceived can never become neutral or empty. It cannot be the 'locus of an absence', because it is occupied by Divinity, Wisdom and Power, which by manifesting themselves show any impression of void to be illusory. The accentuation of and infusion of metaphysical value into centres does not imply a corresponding devaluation of what surrounds those centres. Nature and divinity in the first place, then social life and relationships, and finally individual and private life – all these aspects of human reality have their assigned places, all implicatively linked in a concrete fashion. Nor is this assertion affected by the fact that the emphasis may shift upwards in order to express the transcendence of divinity, wisdom or power, whereas private life with its attendant gestures remains on a 'horizontal' plane, pitching its tent, so to speak, at ground level. A single order embraces all. Thus urban space is comprised, first, of wide avenues leading to the temples and palaces, secondly of medium-sized squares and streets which are the transitional and

<sup>37</sup> Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966).

connecting spaces, and, thirdly and lastly, of the charming flower-filled alleys that afford access to our houses.

The important thing here is not to reconstruct a view which, though different from the Western one, is no less viable and up-to-date (and hence only indirectly the concern of anthropology in the broad sense, and even more distantly of ethnology), but rather to understand the grid that underlies it. Interestingly, this religious or political space has retained its relevance for thousands of years because it was rational from the outset. If we let the letter *G* (for 'global') represent the level of the system which has the broadest extension – namely the 'public' level of temples, palaces and political and administrative buildings; if we let *P* represent the level of residence and the places set aside for it – houses, apartments, and so on; and if *M* is allowed to stand for intermediate spaces – for arteries, transitional areas, and places of business – then we arrive at the following scheme.

$$G \left\{ \begin{array}{l} g \\ m \\ p \end{array} \right.$$

$$M \left\{ \begin{array}{l} g \\ m \\ p \end{array} \right.$$

$$P \left\{ \begin{array}{l} g \\ m \\ p \end{array} \right.$$

In general descriptive terms, the 'private' realm *P* subsumes (though they are clearly distinct) entrances, thresholds, reception areas and family living-spaces, along with places set aside for retreat and sleep. Each individual dwelling likewise has an entrance, a focus, a place of retreat and so on. The level *M* takes in avenues and squares, medium-sized thoroughfares and the passageways leading to the houses. As for level *G*, it may be subdivided into interior spaces open to the public and the closed headquarters of institutions, into accessible itineraries and places reserved for notables, priests, princes and leaders. Similar considerations apply for each element of the system. Each location, at each level, has

its characteristic traits: open or closed, low or high, symmetrical or asymmetrical.

Let us return now to the Japanese philosopher's remarks, the conclusion of which is something of a diatribe, something of an indictment of Western civilization:

Your streets, squares and boulevards have ridiculous names which have nothing to do with them, nor with the people and things around them – lots of names of generals and battles. Your cities have smashed any reasonable conception of space to pieces. The grid on which they are based, and the way you have elaborated upon it, are the best that the West can manage in this area, but it is a poor best. It is based merely on a set of transformations – on a structure. It took one of your greatest researchers to discover the fact that complex spaces in the form of trellises or semi-trellises are superior in practice to simplified spaces planned out in a branched or rectilinear manner. Our system, which I have been describing to you, shows why this is true: it has a concrete logic, a logic of the senses. Why don't you take it as a gift from us? Work on the hypothesis of a discourse at once theoretical and practical, a discourse of the everyday which also transcends everyday life, a discourse both mental and social, architectural and urbanistic. Something like the discourse of your forebears – and I am talking about the ancient Greeks, not the Gauls. Such a discourse does not *signify* the city: it is the urban discourse itself. True, it partakes of the absolute. But why shouldn't it? It is a living discourse – unlike your lethal use of signs. You say you can 'decode' your system. Well, we do better than that: we create ours.

Here is the 'pro-Western' rejoinder:

Not so fast, my friend. You say that the East has possessed a secret from time immemorial that the West has either lost or never had – namely, the key to the relationship between what people living in society do and what they say. In other words, the East is supposedly well acquainted with a vital connection which brings the religious, political and social realms into harmony with one another, whereas the West has destroyed all prospect of such harmony through its use of signs and its analytical proclivities. And you propose that your experience and thinking be made the

basis for the definition of a scheme closely akin to what Erwin Panofsky calls, apropos of the Middle Ages, a *modus operandi* – a scheme responsible at once for a specific way of life, a specific space, specific monuments, specific ideas – in short, for a specific civilization. You suggest that there is an underlying grid, or deep structure, which explains the nature of places, the ways in which they are put to use, the routes followed by their occupants, and even the everyday gestures of those occupants. Permit me to point out just how complicated such a scheme becomes as soon as one tries to reconstruct it. Take a space *Gg*, closed, elevated and symmetrical. It has to be distinguished from a space *Gm*, open, elevated and symmetrical, as also from a space *Gp*, closed, located at a lower level and asymmetrical – and so on and so forth. The combinatory system involved is vast – and hard to work with even with the help of a computer. Furthermore, can you be sure that it accounts adequately for actual reality? Is it true, or sufficient, to say that a temple in Kyoto has a public part, a part set aside for rites, and a part reserved for priests and meditators? I grant that your scheme explains something very important: difference within a framework of repetition. Considered in its various contexts, for example, the Japanese garden remains the same yet is never the same: it may be an imperial park, an inaccessible holy place, the accessible annex of a sanctuary, a site of public festivity, a place of 'private' solitude and contemplation, or merely a way from one place to another. This remarkable institution of the garden is always a microcosm, a symbolic work of art, an object as well as a place, and it has diverse 'functions' which are never merely functions. It effectively eliminates from your space that antagonism between 'nature' and 'culture' which takes such a devastating toll in the West: the garden exemplifies the appropriation of nature, for it is at once entirely natural – and thus a symbol of the macrocosm – and entirely cultural – and thus the projection of a way of life. Well and good. But let's not go overboard with analogies. You say you are the possessors of a rationality. What exactly is that rationality? Does it include conceiving of space as a discourse, with rooms, houses (not forgetting gardens), streets, and so on functioning as that discourse's component and signifying elements? Your space, which is indeed both abstract and concrete, has one drawback: it belongs to Power. It implies (and is implied by) Divinity and Empire – knowledge and power combined and conflated. Is that what you would have the West adopt? Well, we



find it hard to accept the idea that space and time should be produced by political power. Such ultra-Hegelianism (to use our terminology) is very fine, but it is unacceptable to us. The state is not (or is no longer) and can never for us be Wisdom united with Power. There is every reason to fear that your scheme could become a terrible weapon of oppression. You want to formalize this scheme scientifically in the Western manner. Westerners, on the other hand, might be more inclined to see it as an authoritarian definition of the space-time totality.

#### XIV

Formal and functional analyses do not eliminate the need to consider scale, proportion, dimension and level. That is the task of structural analysis, which is concerned with the relations between the whole and the parts, between 'micro' and 'macro' levels. Methodologically and theoretically, structural analysis is supposed to complement and complete the other kinds of analysis, not to transcend them. It is responsible for defining the whole (the global level) and for ascertaining whether it embodies a logic – that is, a strategy accompanied by a measure of symbolism (hence an 'imaginary' component). The relationship between the whole and the parts is bound up with general and well-known categories such as those of anaphora, metonymy and metaphor, but structural analysis introduces other, specific, categories into the discussion.

We have already encountered a case where structural analysis adduces such specific categories: the case of the production of monumental space. The ancient world worked with heavy masses. Greek theory and practice achieved the effect of unity by using both gravity and the struggle against weight; vertical forces, both ascending and descending, were neutralized and balanced without destroying the perception of volumes. Basing themselves on an identical principle, on the use of great volumes, the Romans exploited a complex arrangement of counterposed loads, supports and props, to obtain an effect of massiveness and strength unabashedly founded on weight. A less blatant structure, the outcome of an interplay between opposing forces, was typical of the Middle Ages; balance and the effect of balance were assured by lateral thrusts; lightness and *élan* were the order of the day. The modern period has seen the triumph of weightlessness, though in a way still consistent with

the orientation of medieval architecture. Structural analysis is concerned, therefore, with clearly determined forces, as with the material relationships obtaining between those forces – relationships which give rise to equally clearly determined spatial structures: columns, vaults, arches, pillars, and so on.

Might it be said, then, that our analytic concepts correspond to certain classical terms, still often used, referring to the production of architectural space: that form and formal analysis correspond to 'composition', function to 'construction', and structure to proportion, scale, rhythm and the various 'orders'? The answer is yes – up to a certain point. The correspondence is sufficient, at any rate, to allow for the translation of 'classical' texts, from Vitruvius to Viollet-le-Duc, into modern terms. But this terminological parallelism cannot be taken too far, because that would be to forget the context, the materials and *matériel* – to forget that 'composition' is informed by ideologies, that 'construction' is a function of social relations, and that techniques, which have a great influence upon rhythm and upon the order of space, are liable to change.

As for the rather widely espoused view that the Greeks discovered a completely rational unity of form, function and structure, that this unity has been broken up in the course of history and that it needs to be restored, this hypothesis is a not unattractive one, but it takes no account of the new set of problems associated with the construction of ordinary buildings. The Greeks' celebrated unity applies almost exclusively to monumentality – to temple, stadium or agora.

The nexus of problems relating to space and its production extends beyond the field of classical architecture, beyond monuments and public buildings, to take in the 'private' sphere, the sphere of 'residence' and 'housing'. Indeed the relationship between private and public is now fundamental: today the global picture includes both these aspects, along with their relationship, and partial analyses, whether formal, functional or structural, must take this into account. The West's 'classical' terminology and perceptions must therefore be modified. The East may have something to teach the West in this regard, for the 'Asiatic mode of production' was always more apt to take 'private' residence into consideration. At all events, the categories of private and public and the contrast between monuments and buildings must henceforth be integral to our paradigm.

The tripartite approach founded on formal, functional and structural analyses cannot therefore be unreservedly endorsed as *the* method for

deciphering social spaces, for what is truly essential gets through the 'grid'. By all means let us adopt this approach, and make the best use of it we can, but caution is very much in order.

I attempted earlier to show that semantic and semiological categories such as message, code and reading/writing could be applied only to spaces already produced, and hence could not help us understand the actual production of space. Relationships basic to semantic or semiological discussion which may refer to space in one way or another include: with respect to signs, the relationship between signifier and signified, and that between symbol and meaning; with respect to value, that between the value-imparting element and the element invested with value, likewise that between the devaluing factor and the factor divested of value; and, lastly, the relationship between what has a referent and what does not. Of the fact that spaces may 'signify' there can be no doubt. Is what is signified invariably contained by the signifier? Here, as elsewhere, the relationship of signifier to signified is susceptible to disjunction, distortion, instability, disparity and substitutions. Consider the presence of Greek columns on the façade of a stock exchange or bank, for example, or that of a pseudo- agora in a suburban 'new town'. What do such cases signify? Certainly something other than what they appear or seek to signify: specifically, the inability of capitalism to produce a space other than capitalist space and its efforts to conceal that production as such, to erase any sign of the maximization of profit. Are there spaces which fail to signify anything? Yes – some because they are neutral or empty, others because they are overburdened with meaning. The former fall short of signification; the latter overshoot it. Some 'over-signifying' spaces serve to scramble all messages and make any decoding impossible. Thus certain spaces produced by capitalist promoters are so laden with signs – signs of well-being, happiness, style, art, riches, power, prosperity, and so on – that not only is their primary meaning (that of profitability) effaced but meaning disappears altogether.

It is possible, and indeed normal, to decipher or decode spaces. This presupposes coding, a message, a reading and readers. What codes are involved? I use the plural advisedly, for it is doubtless as correct apropos of space as it is in the cases of philosophical and literary 'readings'. The codes in question, however, still have to be named and enumerated – or else, should this prove impossible, the questions of how and why this is so should be answered, and the meaning of this state of affairs explained.

According to Roland Barthes, we all have five codes available to us

when reading a text.<sup>38</sup> First and foremost, the code of knowledge: on arrival in St Mark's Square, 'Ego' knows a certain number of things about Venice – about the doges, the Campanile, and so on. Memory floods his mind with a multitude of facts. Before long, he elicits another kind of meaning as he begins reading this (materialized) text in a manner roughly corresponding to the use of concept of function, to the use of functional analysis. ('Roughly' is the operative word here, of course, because his comprehension does not extend much beyond some sense of the *raison d'être*, or former *raison d'être*, of the Doge's Palace, the Piombi or the Bridge of Sighs.) He will also inevitably latch onto a few symbols: the lion, the phallus (the Campanile), the challenge to the sea. Though he may have learnt to attach dates to these, he also perceives them as embodying 'values' that are still relevant – indeed eternal. The disentanglement of these impressions from knowledge allows another code or reading – the symbolic one – to come into play. Meanwhile, 'Ego' is bound to feel some emotion: he may have been here before, long ago, or always dreamt of coming; he may have read a book or seen a film – *Death in Venice* perhaps. Such feelings are the basis of the subjective and personal code which now emerges, giving the decoding activity the musical qualities of a fugue: the theme (i.e. this place – the Square, the Palace, and so on) mobilizes several voices in a counterpoint in which these are never either distinct or confused. Finally, the simple empirical evidence of the paving-stones, the marble, the café tables leads 'Ego' to ask himself quite unexpected questions – questions about truth *versus* illusion, about beauty *versus* the message, or about the meaning of a spectacle which cannot be 'pure' precisely because it arouses emotions.

This kind of semantico-semiological research has gradually become more diversified. At the outset its theoretical project, on the basis of a strictly interpreted distinction between signifier and signified, posited the existence of two codes and two codes only: a denotative code operating at a primary level (that of the literal, the signified) which was acceptable to all linguists, and a connotative code, operating at a secondary (rhetorical) level, which was rejected by the more scientifically minded linguists as too vague a conception. More recently, however, the theory's basic concepts (message, code, reading) have become more flexible; a pluralistic approach has replaced the earlier strict insistence on an integral unity, and the former emphasis on consistency has given way to an emphasis on differences. The question is: how far can this

<sup>38</sup> See Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), pp. 25ff. Eng. tr. by Richard Miller: *S/Z* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), pp. 18ff.

emphasis be carried, and how is difference to be defined in this context?

Barthes, for example, as we have seen, proposes five codes of equal importance and interest, worked out analytically *a posteriori*. Why five, rather than four or six, or some other number? By what mechanism is the choice made between one and another of these codes? And how are transitions made between them? Is there nothing to which they do not apply? Do they permit a truly exhaustive decoding of a given text, whether it is made up of verbal or non-verbal signs? If, to the contrary, residual elements remain, are we to conclude that infinite analysis is possible? Or are we being referred implicitly to a 'non-code' realm?

In point of fact this approach leaves two areas untouched, one on the near side and the other on the far side, so to speak, of the readable/visible. On the near side, what is overlooked is the body. When 'Ego' arrives in an unknown country or city, he first experiences it through every part of his body – through his senses of smell and taste, as (provided he does not limit this by remaining in his car) through his legs and feet. His hearing picks up the noises and the quality of the voices; his eyes are assailed by new impressions. For it is by means of the body that space is perceived, lived – and produced. On the far side of the readable/visible, and equally absent from Barthes's perspective, is power. Whether or not it is constitutional, whether or not it is disseminated through institutions and bureaucracies, power can in no wise be decoded. For power has no code. The state has control of all existing codes. It may on occasion invent new codes and impose them, but it is not itself bound by them, and can shift from one to another at will. The state manipulates codes. Power never allows itself to be confined within a single logic. Power has only strategies – and their complexity is in proportion to power's resources. Similarly, in the case of power, signifier and signified coincide in the shape of violence – and hence death. Whether this violence is enacted in the name of God, Prince, Father, Boss or Patrimony is a strictly secondary issue.

It is pure illusion to suppose that thought can reach, grasp or define what is *in* space on the basis of propositions *about* space and general concepts such as message, code and readability. This illusion, which reduces both matter and space to a representation, is in fact simply a version of spiritualism or idealism – a version which is surely common to all who put political power, and hence state power, in brackets, and so see nothing but things. Cataloguing, classifying, decoding – none of these procedures gets beyond mere description. Empiricism, however, whether of the subtle or the crude variety, whether based on logic

or on the facts themselves, presupposes a conception of space which contradicts the premises of empiricism itself in that it is incompatible as much with finite enumerations (including a restricted muster of codes) as with the indeterminacy of unlimited analysis. There is a proper role for the decoding of space: it helps us understand the transition from representational spaces to representations of space, showing up correspondences, analogies and a certain unity in spatial practice and in the theory of space. The limitations of the decoding-operation appear even greater, however, as soon as it is set in motion, for it then immediately becomes apparent just how many spaces exist, each of them susceptible of multiple decodings.

Beginning with space-as-matter, paradigmatic contrasts proliferated: abundance *versus* barrenness, congeniality *versus* hostility, and so on. It was upon this primary stratum of space, so to speak, that agricultural and pastoral activity laid down the earliest networks: *ur*-places and their natural indicators; blazes or way-markers with their initial duality of meaning (direction/orientation, symmetry/asymmetry). Later, absolute space – the space of religion – introduced the highly pertinent distinctions between speech and writing, between the prescribed and the forbidden, between accessible and reserved spaces, and between full and empty. Thus certain spaces were carved out of nature and made complete by being filled to saturation point with beings and symbols, while other spaces were withdrawn from nature only to be kept empty as a way of symbolizing a transcendent reality at once absent and present. The paradigm became more complex as new contrasts came into play: within/without, open/closed, movable/fixed. With the advent of historical space, places became much more diverse, contrasting much more sharply with one another as they developed individual characteristics. City walls were the mark of a material and brutal separation far more potent than the formal polarities they embodied, such as curved-*versus*-straight or open-*versus*-closed. This separation had more than one signification – and indeed implied more than any mere signification, in that the fortified towns held administrative sway over the surrounding countryside, which they protected and exploited at the same time (a common enough phenomenon, after all).

Once diversified, places opposed, sometimes complemented, and sometimes resembled one another. They can thus be categorized or subjected to a grid on the basis of 'topias' (isotopias, heterotopias, utopias, or in other words analogous places, contrasting places, and the places of what has no place, or no longer has a place – the absolute,

the divine, or the possible). More importantly, such places can also be viewed in terms of the highly significant distinction between *dominated* spaces and *appropriated* spaces.

## XV

Before considering the distinction between domination and appropriation, however, a word must be said about the relationship between the basic axes of diachronic and synchronic. No space ever vanishes utterly, leaving no trace. Even the sites of Troy, Susa or Leptis Magna still enshrine the superimposed spaces of the succession of cities that have occupied them. Were it otherwise, there would be no 'interpenetration', whether of spaces, rhythms or polarities. It is also true that each new addition inherits and reorganizes what has gone before; each period or stratum carries its own preconditions beyond their limits. Is this a case of metaphorization? Yes, but it is one which includes a measure of metonymization in that the superimposed spaces do constitute an ensemble or whole. These notions may not explain the process in question, but they do serve a real expository function: they help describe how it is that natural (and hence physical and physiological) space does not get completely absorbed into religious and political space, or these last into historical space, or any of the foregoing into that practico-sensory space where bodies and objects, sense organs and products all cohabit in 'objectality'. What are being described in this way are metamorphoses, transfers and substitutions. Thus natural objects – a particular mound of earth, tree or hill – continue to be perceived as part of their contexts in nature even as the surrounding social space fills up with objects and comes also to be apprehended in accordance with the 'objectality' shared by natural objects on the one hand and by products on the other.

Now let us consider *dominated* (and dominant) space, which is to say a space transformed – and mediated – by technology, by practice. In the modern world, instances of such spaces are legion, and immediately intelligible as such: one only has to think of a slab of concrete or a motorway. Thanks to technology, the domination of space is becoming, as it were, completely dominant. The 'dominance' whose acme we are thus fast approaching has very deep roots in history and in the historical sphere, for its origins coincide with those of political power itself. Military architecture, fortifications and ramparts, dams and irrigation systems – all offer many fine examples of dominated space. Such spaces

are works of construction rather than 'works' in the sense in which we have been using the term, and they are not yet 'products' in its narrow, modern and industrial meaning; dominant space is invariably the realization of a master's project. This may seem simple enough, but in fact the concept of dominated space calls for some elucidation. In order to dominate space, technology introduces a new form into a pre-existing space – generally a rectilinear or rectangular form such as a meshwork or chequerwork. A motorway brutalizes the countryside and the land, slicing through space like a great knife. Dominated space is usually closed, sterilized, emptied out. The concept attains its full meaning only when it is contrasted with the opposite and inseparable concept of *appropriation*.

In Marx, the concept of appropriation is sharply opposed to that of property, but it is not thoroughly clarified – far from it, in fact. For one thing, it is not clearly distinguished from the anthropological and philosophical notion of human nature (i.e. what is 'proper' to human beings); Marx had not entirely abandoned the search for a specific human nature, but he rejected any idea that it might be constituted by laughter, by play, by the awareness of death, or by 'residence'; rather, it lay in (social) labour and – inseparably – in language. Nor did Marx discriminate between appropriation and domination. For him labour and technology, by dominating material nature, thereby immediately transformed it according to the needs of (social) man. Thus nature was converted directly from an enemy, an indifferent mother, into 'goods'.

Only by means of the critical study of space, in fact, can the concept of appropriation be clarified. It may be said of a natural space modified in order to serve the needs and possibilities of a group that it has been appropriated by that group. Property in the sense of possession is at best a necessary precondition, and most often merely an epiphenomenon, of 'appropriative' activity, the highest expression of which is the work of art. An appropriated space *resembles* a work of art, which is not to say that it is in any sense an *imitation* work of art. Often such a space is a structure – a monument or building – but this is not always the case: a site, a square or a street may also be legitimately described as an appropriated space. Examples of appropriated spaces abound, but it is not always easy to decide in what respect, how, by whom and for whom they have been appropriated.

Peasant houses and villages speak: they recount, though in a mumbled and somewhat confused way, the lives of those who built and inhabited them. An igloo, an Oriental straw hut or a Japanese house is every bit

as expressive as a Norman or Provençal dwelling.<sup>39</sup> Dwelling-space may be that of a group (of a family, often a very large one) or that of a community (albeit one divided into castes or classes which tend to break it up). Private space is distinct from, but always connected with, public space. In the best of circumstances, the outside space of the community is dominated, while the indoor space of family life is appropriated.<sup>40</sup> A situation of this kind exemplifies a spatial practice which, though still immediate, is close, in concrete terms, to the work of art. Whence the charm, the enduring ability to enchant us, of houses of this kind. It should be noted that appropriation is not effected by an immobile group, be it a family, a village or a town; time plays a part in the process, and indeed appropriation cannot be understood apart from the rhythms of time and of life.

Dominated space and appropriated space may in principle be combined – and, ideally at least, they ought to be combined. But history – which is to say the history of accumulation – is also the history of their separation and mutual antagonism. The winner in this contest, moreover, has been domination. There was once such a thing as appropriation without domination – witness the aforementioned hut, igloo or peasant house. Domination has grown *pari passu* with the part played by armies, war, the state and political power. The dichotomy between dominated and appropriated is thus not limited to the level of discourse or signification, for it gives rise to a contradiction or conflictual tendency which holds sway until one of the terms in play (domination) wins a crushing victory and the other (appropriation) is utterly subjugated. Not that appropriation *disappears*, for it cannot: both practice and theory continue to proclaim its importance and demand its restitution.

Similar considerations apply to the body and to sexuality. Dominated by overpowering forces, including a variety of brutal techniques and an extreme emphasis on visualization, the body fragments, abdicates responsibility for itself – in a word, disappropriates itself. Body cultures and body techniques have been developed, in antiquity and since, which truly appropriate the body. Sports and gymnastics as we know them, however, to say nothing of the passive exposure of the body to the sun, are little more than parodies or simulations of a genuine ‘physical culture’. Any revolutionary ‘project’ today, whether utopian or realistic, must, if it is to avoid hopeless banality, make the reappropriation of

the body, in association with the reappropriation of space, into a non-negotiable part of its agenda.

As for sex and sexuality, things here are more complicated. It may reasonably be asked whether an appropriation of sexuality has ever occurred except perhaps under certain transitory sets of circumstances and for a very limited number of people (one thinks, for example, of Arab civilization in Andalusia). Any true appropriation of sex demands that a separation be made between the reproductive function and sexual pleasure. This is a delicate distinction which, for reasons that are still mysterious, and despite great scientific advances in the sphere of contraception, can only be made in practice with great difficulty and attendant anxiety. We do not really know how and why this occurs, but it seems that detaching the biological sexual function from the ‘human’ one – which cannot properly be defined in terms of functionality – results only in the latter being compromised by the elimination of the former. It is almost as though ‘nature’ were itself incapable of distinguishing between pleasure and pain, so that when human beings are encouraged by their analytical tendencies to seek the one in isolation from the other they expose themselves to the risk of neutralizing both. Alternatively, they may be obliged to limit all orgiastic pleasure to predictable states reached by codified routes (drugs, eroticism, reading/writing of ready-made texts, etc.).

The true space of pleasure, which would be an appropriated space *par excellence*, does not yet exist. Even if a few instances in the past suggest that this goal is in principle attainable, the results to date fall far short of human desires.

Appropriation should not be confused with a practice which is closely related to it but still distinct, namely ‘diversion’ (*détournement*). An existing space may outlive its original purpose and the *raison d’être* which determines its forms, functions, and structures; it may thus in a sense become vacant, and susceptible of being diverted, reappropriated and put to a use quite different from its initial one. A recent and well-known case of this was the reappropriation of the Halles Centrales, Paris’s former wholesale produce market, in 1969–71. For a brief period, this urban centre, designed to facilitate the distribution of food, was transformed into a gathering-place and a scene of permanent festival – in short, into a centre of play rather than of work – for the youth of Paris.

The diversion and reappropriation of space are of great significance, for they teach us much about the production of new spaces. During a period as difficult as the present one is for a (capitalist) mode of

<sup>39</sup> See Rapoport, *House Form and Culture*. Like Hall, Rapoport inflates the significance of socio-cultural factors and ‘actors’.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Bachelard, *La poétique de l’espace* (see above, p. 121, n. 9).

production which is threatened with extinction yet struggling to win a new lease on life (through the reproduction of the means of production), it may even be that such techniques of diversion have greater import than attempts at creation (production). Be that as it may, one upshot of such tactics is that groups take up residence in spaces whose pre-existing form, having been designed for some other purpose, is inappropriate to the needs of their would-be communal life. One wonders whether this morphological maladaptation might not play a part in the high incidence of failure among communitarian experiments of this kind.

From a purely theoretical standpoint, diversion and production cannot be meaningfully separated. The goal and meaning of theoretical thinking is production rather than diversion. Diversion is in itself merely appropriation, not creation – a reappropriation which can call but a temporary halt to domination.

## 3

*Spatial Architectonics*

## I

Having assigned ontological status by speculative diktat to the most extreme degree of formal abstraction, classical philosophical (or metaphysical) thought posits a substantial space, a space 'in itself'. From the beginning of the *Ethics*, Spinoza treats this absolute space as an attribute or mode of absolute being – that is, of God.<sup>1</sup> Now space 'in itself', defined as infinite, has no shape in that it has no content. It may be assigned neither form, nor orientation, nor direction. Is it then the unknowable? No: rather, it is what Leibniz called the 'indiscernible'.

In the matter of Leibniz's criticism of Spinoza and Descartes, as in that of Newton's and Kant's criticism of Leibniz, modern mathematics tends to find in favour of Leibniz.<sup>2</sup> For the most part, philosophers have taken the existence of an absolute space as a given, along with whatever it might contain: figures, relations and proportions, numbers, and so on. Against this posture, Leibniz maintains that space 'in itself', space as such, is neither 'nothing' nor 'something' – and even less the totality of things or the form of their sum; for Leibniz space was, indeed, the indiscernible. In order to discern 'something' therein, axes and an origin must be introduced, and a right and a left, i.e. the direction or orientation of those axes. This does not mean, however, that Leibniz espouses the 'subjectivist' thesis according to which the observer and the measure together constitute the real. To the contrary, what Leibniz means to say is that it is necessary for space to be *occupied*. What, then, occupies

<sup>1</sup> Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, proposition xiv, corollary 2, and proposition xv, Scholium.

<sup>2</sup> See Hermann Weyl, *Symmetry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1952), and my discussion of Weyl's work below.