

FIVE ARCHITECTS

**EISENMAN
GRAVES
GWATHMEY
HEJDUK
MEIER**

NEW YORK
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
1975

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Introduction

Colin Rowe

"What you should try to accomplish is built meaning. So get close to the meaning and build." Aldo Van Eyck, *Team Ten Primer*, p. 7

When, in the late Nineteen-Forties, modern architecture became established and institutionalized, necessarily, it lost something of its original meaning. Meaning, of course, it had never been supposed to possess. Theory and official exegesis had insisted that the modern building was absolutely without iconographic content, that it was no more than the illustration of a program, a direct expression of social purpose. Modern architecture, it was pronounced, was simply a rational approach to building; it was a logical derivative from functional and technological facts; and — at the last analysis — it should be regarded in these terms, as no more than the inevitable result of twentieth century circumstances.

There was very little recognition of meaning in all this. Indeed the need for symbolic content seemed finally to have been superseded; and it was thus that there emerged the spectacle of an architecture which claimed to be scientific but which — as we all know — was in reality profoundly sentimental. For very far from being as deeply involved as he supposed with the precise resolution of exacting facts, the architect was (as he always is) far more intimately concerned with the physical embodiment of even more exacting fantasies.

Fantasies about ineluctable change were combined in his mind with further fantasies about imminent and apocalyptic catastrophe and with still others about instant millenium. Crisis threatened; but hope abounded. A change of heart was therefore required — for, if a new world might still rise, like a phoenix, from out of the ashes of the old, it was up to all men of good will to help bring this about; and, thus while a holocaust of conventional vanities now ensued, the architect called upon himself simultaneously to assume the virtues of the scientist, the peasant and the child. The objectivity of the first, the naturalness of the second and the naivete of the third indicated the values which the situation required; and the architect, transformed in terms of this image could now assume his proper role — part Moses, part St. George — as the leader and the liberator of mankind.

The idea was grand and, for a time, the messianic program was productive. The architect found himself to be an enthusiast for speed and for sport; for youth, sunbathing, simple life, sociology, Canadian grain elevators, Atlantic liners, Vuitton trunks, filing cabinets and factories. And his buildings became the illustrations of these enthusiasms. But they became also the outward and visible signs of a better world, a testament in the present as to what the future would disclose; and there was always the proviso that his buildings were the agents of this future, that the more modern buildings were erected the more the hoped for condition would ensue.

The hoped for condition did not ensue. For, when modern architecture became proliferated throughout the world, when it became cheaply available, standardized and basic, as the architect had always wished it to be, necessarily there resulted a rapid devaluation of its ideal content. The intensity of its social vision became dissipated. The building became no longer a subversive proposition

about a possible Utopian future. It became instead the acceptable decoration of a certainly non-Utopian present. The *ville radieuse* — that city where life would become intelligent, educated and clean, in which social justice would be established and political issues resolved — this city was not to be built. Compromise and accommodation were therefore in order; and hence, with deflation of conviction, there followed divergence of interest.

The scene was now ripe for the cheap politician and the commercial operator. The revolution had both succeeded and failed. The cautious and the careful could, therefore, now emerge; but, while they could acclaim revolutionary success and repudiate suggestion of failure, there still remained the predicament of 'the true believer' who, above all else, was obliged to detach himself from success.

The camp of success — always eclectic, facile and agreeable — proceeded to modify and to use the revolution. The camp of 'the true believer' — always anxious for authenticity — attempted to work over the results of the revolution so as to make them strange, arcane, difficult; interesting to the few and inaccessible to the many. And both parties were prone, as advantage seemed to dictate, to employ sometimes the polemics of revolution and sometimes its forms.

Thus there ensued that succession of fractional style phases: the cult of townscape and the new empiricism, Miesian neoclassicism, neo-Liberty, the New Brutalism, Team X, the Futurist Revival. Archigram, in terms of which involutions any consideration of architecture in the Nineteen-Seventies must be based; and, indeed, the two camps — of success and 'the true believer' — have, by now, so much interpenetrated, so infected one another, so much exchanged arguments and apologetic, appearances and motifs, that to discriminate either is becoming a major operation.

So much is largely true today of modern architecture in general; but it should go without saying that these remarks do not wholly describe its *modus vivendi* — either past or present — within the United States. Thus, while with regard to Europe, it is possible to argue that modern architecture was conceived as an adjunct of socialism and probably sprang from approximately the same ideological roots as Marxism, in America an indigenous modern architecture was very conspicuously unequipped with any such implicit social program or politically critical pedigree. That is: an indigenous modern architecture was the result of no largely obtrusive collective social concern and its exponents seem scarcely to have been obsessed by any overwhelming vision of either impending cataclysm or of unitary future world. These visions were distinctively European and, in extreme form, perhaps more specifically Germanic; but, whatever their place of origin and concentration, rooted as they were in the circumstances of World War I and the Russian Revolution, they qualified European production as they never could American. In post World War I Europe, the combined promise and threat of *Architecture or Revolution* could seem to many important innovators to be a very real one; but, in the United States, the presumption that only architecture could turn a 'bad' revolution into a 'good' one, that only a Wagnerian recourse to 'total' design could avert social catastrophe,

this could never seem to be very highly plausible. For in the United States the revolution was assumed to have already occurred — in 1776, and it was further assumed to have initiated a social order which was not to be superseded by subsequent developments. In other words, with the revolutionary theme divested by circumstances of both its catastrophic and futurist implications, with this theme rendered retrospective, legalistic and even nationalist, an indigenous modern architecture in America deployed connotations quite distinct from its European counterparts. Its tacit assumptions were infinitely less grand. It was clean, efficient, empirically reasonable, simple, evidently to be related to the time-honored Yankee virtues; and while a Frank Lloyd Wright could — and did — claim revolutionary antecedents, could represent his buildings as the natural sequel to something latent and libertarian in American air, as the *Usonian* efflorescence of a politically democratic society; still, in doing so, he proposed no intrinsic challenge to the social order and inferred no scheme of radical social reconstruction. Instead, such an architecture as his was essentially a call for a particular political society to become more completely itself.

But, if the Architecture-Revolution confrontation (whatever value is attached to either of its components) is one of the more obviously unexplored ingredients of modern architecture's folklore, and if any attempt to explore it would, almost certainly, meet with the most strenuous disavowal of its significance and, if it might be possible to demonstrate the action or the inaction of this fantasy, for present purposes it should be enough simply to reiterate that the revolutionary theme was never a very prominent component of American speculation about building. European modern architecture, even when it operated within the cracks and crannies of the capitalist system, existed within an ultimately socialist ambiance: American modern architecture did not. And it was thus, and either by inadvertence or design, that when in the Nineteen-Thirties, European modern architecture came to infiltrate the United States, it was introduced as simply a new 'approach to building — and not much more. That is: it was introduced, largely purged of its ideological or societal content; and it became available, not as an evident manifestation (or cause) of socialism in some form or other, but rather as a *decor de la vie* for Greenwich, Connecticut or as a suitable veneer for the corporate activities of 'enlightened' capitalism.

Depending on our values, this was either triumph or tragedy; but the presentation of modern architecture primarily in terms of formal or technological construct, its disinfection from political inference, its divorce from possibly doubtful ideas, in other words, its ultimate American qualification, should be recognized as being important — both inside and outside the United States — and as having direct bearing upon developments at the present day. For, by these means, and for better or worse, the message of modern architecture was transformed. It was made safe for capitalism and, with its dissemination thereby assisted, the products of a movement which became crystalized in the stress and the trauma of the central European Nineteen-Twenties became agreeably available to be catalogued — on either side of the Atlantic — among the cultural trophies of the affluent society.

The ironies of a European revolution which, perhaps, tragically failed to make it, do not comprise the most gratifying of spectacles. When these are compounded with the further ironies of trans-Atlantic architectural interchange and their physical results, in America, Europe

and elsewhere, we find ourselves confronted with an evidence — an adulteration of meaning, principle and form — which is far from easy to neglect. The impeccably good intentions of modern architecture, its genuine ideals of social service, above all the poetry with which, so often, it has invested random twentieth century happening may all conspire to inhibit doubts as to its present condition, to encourage a suppression of the obvious; but, conspire as they may, and however reluctantly we recognize it, the product of modern architecture compared with its performance, the gap between what was anticipated and what has been delivered, still establishes the base line for any responsible contemporary production and, in doing so, introduces the context for consideration of such buildings and projects as are here published.

These, had they been conceived c. 1930 and build in France, Germany, Switzerland or Italy, had then they been illustrated by Alberto Sartoris or even F. R. S. Yorke, would today very likely be approached as ancient monuments; and as exemplary of the heroic periods of modern architecture, they would be visited and recorded. Indeed one can imagine the tourists and almost concoct the historical evaluations. But these buildings were not conceived c. 1930. They are of comparatively recent origin; they are built in, or proposed for, the vicinity of New York City; and therefore, whatever their merits and demerits, such is the present constellation of critical ideas, they can only be regarded as constituting a problem.

For we are here in the presence of what, in terms of the orthodox theory of modern architecture, is heresy. We are in the presence of anachronism, nostalgia, and, probably, frivolity. If modern architecture looked like this c. 1930 then it should not look like this today; and, if the real political issue of the present is not the provision of the rich with cake but of the starving with bread, then not only formally but also programmatically these buildings are irrelevant. Evidently they propound no obvious revolution; and, just as they may be envisaged as dubiously European to some American tastes, so they will seem the painful evidence of American retardation to certain European and, particularly, English judgments.

Now these evaluations will not be made to go away. A grass roots Neo-Populist Americanism will approve of these buildings no more than a Pop-inspired and supercilious European, or English, neo-Marxism; and, given the situation in which opposite but sympathetic extremes will, alike, both smell abomination, it might be best to address arguments to neither of these two states of mind but, instead, to withdraw attention to that body of theory, alleged or otherwise, of which these buildings, like so many of their predecessors of the Nineteen-Twenties and Thirties, may be construed as violation.

With the establishment and institutionalization of modern architecture, not only was much of its original meaning lost; but it also became apparent that it was scarcely that synthesis it had so widely been proclaimed to be. It became apparent that never had it been so much the limpid fusion of content and form, that famous integration of feeling and thinking, which Siegfried Giedion had supposed a symbiosis of highly discrete and ultimately incompatible procedures; and, if the incompatibility between the form of modern architecture and its professed theoretical program, however apparently happy was their brief co-existence some thirty to forty years ago, has now long been evident, it has also been the subject of, in general sardonic comment. The configuration of the modern building was

alleged to derive from a scrupulous attention to particular and concrete problems, it was supposed to be induced from the empirical facts of its specific case; and yet modern buildings looked alike whether their specific case was that of a factory or an art museum. Therefore there was no one to one correspondence between practice and theory. Thus it could come to be argued that, from almost the beginning, the buildings erected in the name of modern architecture had comprised an enormous series of misunderstandings; that they had represented no intrinsic renewal; that, ultimately, they had constituted no more than a simultaneously sophisticated and naive rearrangement of surfaces. Reyner Banham's *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* celebrated just this problem and it concluded with what amounted to a repudiation of modern architecture's forms and an endorsement of what the modern movement, theoretically, was supposed to be. And this is a style of critique which, for obvious reasons, has now become very well known. For, at one and the same time, it allows its exponents the pleasures of condemning, or of patronizing, most of modern architecture's classic achievements and, also, of annexing that revolutionary tone which, though it may be ancient, can still posture as new.

But, if it is possible to speak of the theoretical program of modern architecture and to observe how, almost invariably, it was largely honored in the breach, then, by now, the logical contradictions within this alleged theory itself should, equally, be glaring — though, perhaps, it would be more correct to speak of this theory not in terms of its logical contradictions. For in the light of any critical perspective, what we have here is very little more than an incoherent bundle of highly volatile sentiments, not so much the stipulation of a consistent dogma as the registration of a general tendency of thought and the evidence of a highly pronounced climate of feeling.

As already suggested, in its theory, modern architecture was conceived to be no more than a rational and unprejudiced response to twentieth century enlightenment and its products; and, if we subject this theoretical conception to a slight caricature, we might distinguish what is still a prevalent and orthodox position. It may be outlined as follows:

Modern architecture is no more than the result of the age;
The age is creating a style which is not a style because this style is being created by the accumulation of objective reactions to external events;
and hence, this style is authentic, valid, pure and clean, self-renewing and self-perpetuating.

Thus, compressed and rendered absurd, it becomes, of course, difficult to understand how passion could, and can still, revolve around such a statement as this one; that is until we recognize that what we have here is the conflation of two powerful nineteenth century tendencies of thought. For here, in varying degrees of disguise, we are presented with both 'science' and 'history.' We are provided with the Positivist conception of fact (without any great epistemological reservations as to what does constitute a fact) and we are provided with the Hegelian conception of manifest destiny (without any doubts as to the substantial reality of the inexorable *zeitgeist*) and then, as a corollary, we have the implicit assertion that when these two conceptions are allied, when the architect recognizes only 'facts' and thus, by endorsing 'science,' becomes the instrument of 'history,' then a situation will infallibly ensue in which all problems will vanish away.

But again, although in these notices we may touch upon one of the central motivations of twentieth century architecture, it is only when we introduce subsidiary arguments into this scene that it fully begins to acquire color and momentum. And thus, the idea of relying upon the 'facts,' however ill determined these may be, the idea that when once the relevant data are collected then the controlling hypothesis will automatically divulge itself, becomes very easily allied with the so many attacks upon 'art' (the gratuitous transformation of private concern into public pre-occupation) which, even though 'art' is bought and consumed to its destruction, is typically conceived to be a reprehensible activity. And, correspondingly, attacks upon 'architecture' conducted by the architect have always expressed irritation at the continued existence of the institution and dismay that the item is still to be found available. For architecture, so it is consistently inferred, is only morally acceptable so long as the architect suppresses his individuality, his temperament, his taste and his cultural traditions; and unless, in this way, he is willing to win through to 'objectivity' and to a 'scientific' state of mind, then all his work can do is to obstruct the inexorable unrolling of change and thereby, presumably, retard the progress of humanity.

However, if we are here presented with what might seem to be an argument for pure passivity, with an argument that the architect should act simply as the midwife of history, then we might also recognize an entirely contrary strand of thought which no less urgently clamors for attention. The idea that any repetition, any copying, any employment of a precedent or a physical model is a failure of creative acuity is one of the central intuitions of the modern movement. This is the deep seated idea that repetition establishes convention and that convention leads to callousness; and thus, almost constitutionally, modern architecture has been opposed to the dictatorship of the merely received. Opposed to the imposition of a *a priori* pattern upon the multifariousness of events, instead it has set re-eminent value upon 'discovery' — which, characteristically, it has been unwilling to recognize as 'invention.' Without an unflinching consciousness of flux and of the human efforts which this implies, without a continuous ability to erect and to dismantle scaffolds of reference, then — so proceeds an argument — it is entirely impossible to enter and to occupy those territories of the mind, where, alone, significant creation moves and flourishes.

The idea can only deserve respect; but, if it is pressed, then like so many ideas which also deserve respect, it can only become something doctrinaire and destructive of its own virtues; and, with its heroic emphasis upon the architect as activist, the notion of architecture as ceaseless moral experiment must now be subjected to the presence of yet another equally coercive but contrary proposition. This, quite simply, is the idea that modern architecture was to instigate order, that it was to establish the predominance of the normative, the typical and the abstract.

However we may estimate the record of nineteenth century building, it is not hard to see how ideas of order and type should have recommended themselves to the modern movement. For, in contrast to the products of Romantic individualism and political *laissez faire*, there was always the evidence of previous centuries, of Bath or Potsdam, Amsterdam or Nancy; and, there was always involved some sort of fantasy concerned with a contemporary simulacrum of just such cities as these, then, in the *siedlungen* of Frankfurt or at Siemenstadt, among the early triumphs of modern architec-

ture, one may presumably discern the influence of this intention. Ben

But such developments belonged to the age of innocence; and while in them the reasonable demands of the particular versus the abstract, of specific function versus general type might seem to have been approximately met, there still remained to prevent the multiplication of such achievements the overriding inhibition as to repetition, the conviction that to reproduce something, to allow precedent to enforce itself, was to betray the forces of change and to deny the drive of history.

Now whether it was thus that the demand for order became vitiated by the competing necessity to illustrate the action of experiment or the behavior of 'first' principles, it should be enough to state that it seems likely — whatever value we may wish to attribute to change and order — that a high valuation of change must, in the end, cancel out a high valuation of order, that, given the perpetual re-definition of a situation, no theory of types can survive, that, if the terms of a problem are constantly altered before approaching solution, then that problem never can be solved. But if, with this statement, though it is rarely made, there is nothing remarkable announced, then attention might usefully be directed towards another of those paradoxes which sprout so irresistibly the more the theory of modern architecture is, even casually, scrutinized.

Modern architecture professed to address itself to the great public. What was believed to be its intrinsic rationality was never overtly intended for the delectation of minor professional interest groups; but rather the architect was to address himself to *the natural man*. Enlightenment won by bitter struggle was to speak to enlightenment which was innate. As simply a scientific determination of empirical data modern architecture was to be understood by *the natural man*; and hence that the modern building, believed to be purged of mythical content, became conceivable as the inevitable shelter for a mythical being in whose aboriginal psychology myth could occupy no place.

other written down
The notion, of course, continues to possess a certain eighteenth century decency. Without rhetoric, the truth will be accepted as the truth. But, in practice, it has always allied with an alternate ambition. The modern building should — and can — act as a prophetic statement. Retrospection is to be tabooed; the memory is to be exercised no more; nostalgia can only corrupt; and it is with reference to this ambition, perhaps never explicitly uttered, that we revert again to the thesis of an architecture which does not involve itself with minor sophistications, which is no way concerned with local ambiguities, ironical references and witty asides, which is absolutely not at all addressed to the few, but which, of its nature, is absolutely available and intelligible to the uninstructed (or to the however instructed) many. For there should be no doubt whatsoever that this was the objective, and it is here, when the ideal of public intelligibility makes its extreme claim, that it might be proper to obtrude the issue of prophecy versus memory.

The concept of the modern building as a compilation of recognizable empirical facts is, evidently, immediately compromised by the more suppressed concept of the building as a prophetic statement (for are prophetic speculations empirical facts?); but the simultaneous orientation towards both the prophetic and the intelligible should now be related to modern architecture's emphatic anathema of retrospec-

Derivation
or translation
in language
force
and signification

tion and its products. And it should not be necessary to itemize the details of this anathema. Simply it should be enough to ask the question: *How to be intelligible without involving retrospection?*; and, without being unduly sententious, it should be enough to observe that except in terms of retrospection, in terms of memory upon which prophecy itself is based, upon recollection of words with meaning, mathematical symbols with values and physical forms with attendant overtones, it is difficult to see how any ideal of communication can flourish. In a better world, no doubt, the problem would not exist; but if, in conceiving a better world, modern architecture here conceived no problem, then we might abruptly conclude this issue by suggesting that, unless a building in some way or other evokes something remembered, it is not easy to see how it can enlist even a shred of popular interest. The ideal of order based upon public understanding if it is to be insisted upon, requires some suppression of both experimentalist and futurist enthusiasm.

The foregoing remarks have been an attempt, admittedly over-compressed and far too generalized, to identify — not without critical asides — the complex of sentiments about architecture in terms of which the buildings here published are likely to be condemned — for formalism, bourgeois lack of conscience, esoteric privacy and failure to keep pace with the social and technological movement of the age. But the moment that this body of ideas is subjected to even the most casual skeptical analysis, the moment that it ceases to be unexamined gospel, then it also becomes evident that, while it may serve to illustrate what was once a creative state of mind, it can no longer very seriously serve the purposes of useful criticism. The theoretical presumptions of modern architecture, located as they once were in a matrix of eschatological and utopian fantasy, began to mean very little when the technological *and* social revolution whose imminence the modern movement had assumed failed to take place. For with this failure, if it became obvious that theory and practice were disrelated, it could also become apparent that theory itself was never so much a literal directive for the making of buildings as it was an elaborately indirect mechanism for the suppression of feelings of guilt: guilt about the products of the mind — felt to be comparatively insignificant, guilt about high culture — felt to be unreal, guilt about art — the most extreme anxiety to disavow the role of private judgment in any analytical or synthetic enterprise. In the end what is understood as the theory of modern architecture reduces itself to little more than a constellation of escapist myths which are all active in endeavouring to relieve the architect of responsibility for his choices and which all alike combine to persuade him that his decisions are not so much his own as they are, somehow, immanent in scientific, or historical, or social process.

And this realization breeds another. For if these once convincing and still seductive doctrines — with their strong determinist and historicist bias — are very readily susceptible to demolition, and if they are not yet demolished is surely a tribute to modern architecture's public virtues, then one might still ask why it is that an attitude of mind which places so much emphasis upon change, which sets such a high value upon exploration and discovery, itself continues *not* to change. The *sense* of what was said some fifty years ago prohibits repetition; but then the *repetition* of what was said persists. . . .

Now, either statements made about architecture in the Nineteen-Twenties comprise an immutable revelation valid for all time (which

is contrary to the meaning of these statements), or they do not. But if, logically — in terms of the principle which it tends to stipulate — the use and re-use of verbal or polemical model deriving from the Nineteen-Twenties should be conceived as subject to the same reservations as the use of a physical model belonging to the same years, then that such logic does not widely apply is easy to explain. For, while the forms of words can still seem to provide an heroic litany of revolution, the form of buildings does not so readily offer itself as any religious intoxicant; and, if the steady incantation of, now, very old 'revolutionary' themes will encourage the further joys of rhetorical excursion into areas of assumed social and technological relevance, the recapitulation of the themes of building offers no present career so blissful and free from trouble; and thus, while the derivative argument continues to thrive, its exponents, conceiving themselves to be the legitimate and sole heirs of the modern movement, display very little tolerance for what ought to be recognized as the absolutely parallel phenomenon of the derivative building.

Which is again to establish that the *physique* and the *morale* of modern architecture, its flesh and its word, were (and could) never be coincident; and it is when we recognize that neither word nor flesh was ever coincident with itself, let alone with each other, that, without undue partiality, we can approach the present day. For under the circumstances what to do? If we believe that modern architecture did establish one of the great hopes of the world — always, in detail, ridiculous, but never, *in toto*, to be rejected — then do we adhere to *physique*-flesh or to *morale*-word?

To repeat: this choice became visible once it became almost too evident to bear that the central and socialist mission of modern architecture had failed — or, alternatively, that this mission had become dissolved in the sentimentalities and bureaucracies of the welfare state. The simple fusion of art and technology, of symbolical gesture and functional requirement was now not to be made; and, in default of this fusion, a variety of alternatives have offered themselves.

These have included what has already been listed: Miesian neo-classicism (with some kind of dependent theory of Platonic form); the New Brutalism (with the inference that self-flagellation may elicit the better world); the Futurist Revival (with the very popular supposition that science fiction might provide the ultimate hope); and the neo-*art nouveau* (which, both in its Shingle Style and Italian ramifications, insists that if we only retreat to the Eighteen-Nineties — and also simulate a naivete — then health will inevitably ensue.

And, to this catalogue, there must also be added the notion that we ignore the situation altogether: that, in default of that convenient anti-'art' entity of the Twenties called 'the machine,' we substitute the equally useful entities designated 'the computer' and 'the people' and that, if these two abstractions are absolutely at variance with each other, we will not indulge ourselves in too many scruples about this problem. It is a problem which exists only in the minds of the far too sensitive; and if research and data-collection are the wave of the future — if the public wisdom so indicates — then it is certainly to the future we belong.

It is in this context of choices (none of them very agreeable) that we should place what is here published; and, having recognized this context, we should not then be too ready to impute charges of irre-

sponsibility. It is difficult to generalize the work of these five architects. Eisenman seems to have received a revelation in Como; Hejduk seems to wish affiliation both to Synthetic Cubist Paris and Constructivist Moscow. Nor will the more obviously Corbusian orientation of Graves, Gwathmey and Meier so readily succumb to all encompassing observations. But, for all this, there is a point of view shared which is quite simply this: that, rather than constantly to endorse the revolutionary myth, it might be more reasonable and more modest to recognize that, in the opening years of this century, great revolutions in thought occurred and that then profound visual discoveries resulted, that these are still unexplained, and that rather than assume intrinsic change to be the prerogative of every generation, it might be more useful to recognize that certain changes are so enormous as to impose a directive which cannot be resolved in any individual life span.

Or, at least, such would seem to be the argument. It concerns the plastic and spatial inventions of Cubism and the proposition that, whatever may be said about these, they possess an eloquence and a flexibility which continues now to be as overwhelming as it was then. It is an argument largely about the physique of building and only indirectly about its morale; but, since it should also be envisaged as some sort of interrogation of the mid-twentieth century architect's capacity to indulge his mostly trivial moral enthusiasm at the expense of any physical product, it might also be appropriate to conclude what has been a largely negative introduction — an attack upon a potential attack — with a series of related questions which might, ambiguously, help to establish the *meaning* — if any — in Aldo Van Eyck's terms, of what is here presented.

- Is it necessary that architecture should be simply a logical derivative from functional and technological facts; and, indeed, can it ever be this?
- Is it necessary that a series of buildings should imply a vision of a new and better world; and, if this is so (or even if it is not) then how frequently can a significant vision of a new and better world be propounded?
- Is the architect simply a victim of circumstances? And should he be? Or may he be allowed to cultivate his own free will? And are not culture and civilization the products of the imposition of will?
- What is the *zeitgeist*; and, if this is a critical fiction, may the architect act contrariwise to its alleged dictates?
- How permissible is it to make use of precedent; and therefore, how legitimate is the argument that the repetition of a form is a destruction of authenticity?
- Can an architecture which professes an objective of continuous experiment ever become congruous with the ideal of an architecture which is to be popular, intelligible, and profound?

These are reasonably important questions which it is ostrich-like not to consider. They propound problems which are not any less real because the 'theory' of modern architecture failed to give them

attention; and, by the introduction of such problems, there is immediately implied a concept of society very radically different from that which modern architecture presumed. This is the concept of society and building implied by our five architects. It is all indisputably bourgeois (but what, in the United States, is not?); most of it makes a parade of cosmopolitan erudition (but, given the information explosion, how to avoid?); and it is all of it belligerently second hand, what Whitehead called 'novelty in the use of assigned pattern' (but, assuming a present hiatus so far as creative breakthrough is concerned, how do otherwise?). However, perhaps the great merit of what follows lies in the fact that its authors are not enormously self-deluded as to the immediate possibility of any very violent or sudden architectural or social mutation. They place themselves in the role, the secondary role, of Scamozzi to Palladio. Their posture may be polemical but it is not heroic. Apparently they are neither Marcusian nor Maoist; and, lacking any transcendental sociological or political faith, their objective — at bottom — is to alleviate the present by the interjection of a quasi-Utopian vein of poetry. There could be less worthy objectives, less tolerable options; and, in a truly pluralist society (supposing such a society could ever exist) what is here published would no doubt receive acknowledged-

ment — as one possibility amongst many. It is what some people and some architects want; and therefore, in terms of a general theory of pluralism one must wonder how, *in principle*, it can be faulted. Faults in detail may perhaps be recognized; but faults *in principle*? For, in terms of a general theory of pluralism, how can any faults in principle be imputed?

Which is to suggest that these five architects (who sometimes seem to regard buildings as an excuse for drawing rather than drawings as an excuse for building) are highly likely to be crudely manhandled by an allegedly pluralist, but, intrinsically, a determinist, technocratic and historicist establishment; and which is further to suggest that the apologetic which has here been made is by way of being a critical umbrella almost too catholic in its functions — an umbrella which is not only intended to protect the graphic contents of this book but which is also to be understood as outspread to protect a good deal else, a good deal else which is by no means necessarily comparable in *maniera*.

Colin Rowe

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