

In the 1960s the recourse by many leftist architects to sociology and politics reflected a fundamental questioning of the architect's role in society. In France, in the increasingly turbulent atmosphere that would culminate in the student upheavals of 1968, critics inside and outside the profession were asking whether there was still a need for architects at all. The traditional figure of the architect as form-giver, "isolated in his 'liberal' profession like a demigod," as one writer put it, "an individual artisan enshrined in corporate egoism," was not only *passé* but a complicitous symbol of what was wrong with the existing system.

A central intellectual figure within this context was the Marxist philosopher and sociologist **Henri Lefebvre**, whose multivolume *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, begun in the late 1940s, focused on the relations between everyday life in modern society and urbanism. The evolution of many of Lefebvre's central themes—the need for play and spontaneity in daily life, the suppression of human vitality through bureaucratic planning, the eruptive role of "moments" of radical possibility in urban experience—paralleled the rise of the bleak and anonymous social housing developments built on the outskirts of French cities in the 1950s and 1960s, immortalized by Jean-Luc Godard in his film *Alphaville* (1965) and decried by Lefebvre. In influential writings of the 1960s, notably *Le Droit à la ville* (1968), the title chapter of which appears here, he sought to bridge the gap between urban practice and theory—to outline a *praxis* of the city synthesizing objective analysis and "experimental utopia." The latter involved the deployment of the "imaginary" in the production of new concepts of urban life. Critical of what he saw as the three dominant architectural ideologies of the day—structuralism, formalism, and functionalism—in equal measure, Lefebvre assailed architects for their mechanistic application of these partial models. Through his own totalistic approach he aimed to counter the overspecialization of the various disciplines acting on the city, including architecture, while offering a perspective that, despite its globalism, remained open to future transformations.

Lefebvre's ideas were translated into urban agitprop by the International Situationists, an avant-garde group led in the 1960s by Guy Debord. Debord used Lefebvre's concept of the festival to attack the "society of the spectacle," depicted in his book of 1967. Another group of young Lefebvre protégés, also influenced by the Situationists, was *Utopie*, founded in 1967. Its interdisciplinary membership included urban historian Hubert Tonka, theorist Jean Baudrillard, feminist Isabelle Auricoste, and architects Jean Aubert, Jean-Paul Jungmann,

and Antoine Stinco; like other radical architects at the time, Aubert, Jungmann, and Stinco were experimenting with pneumatic structures. The group published two issues of *Utopie: Revue de sociologie de l'urbain*, a journal dedicated to a revolutionary critique of the city, culture, and power, illustrated with comic strip satires and "detourned" images. Lefebvre's essay "De la science à la stratégie urbaine" appeared in the second issue along with critiques by Baudrillard of technology and of "a society not exactly of repression but of persuasion."

In spring 1968, when the student movement coalesced at the University of Nanterre where Lefebvre had been an outspoken faculty member since 1965, the explosive disruptions of daily life appeared to many to be the apotheosis of his philosophy, confirming the revolutionary potential of urban action.

Le Droit à la ville is dated "Paris, 1967 (Centenary of *Capital*)."

In 1970 Lefebvre founded the journal *Espaces et Sociétés* with Anatole Kopp. In 1973 he published a sequel to *Le Droit à la ville* entitled *Espace et politique*, and in 1974 a magnum opus, *La Production de l'espace*, now translated into English.

From Henri Lefebvre, *Le Droit à la ville* (Paris: Editions Athropos, 1968), pp. 115–33. Translated by Christian Hubert. Courtesy of Editions Economica, Paris.

The Right to the City

Henri Lefebvre

Theoretical analysis must redefine the forms, functions, and structures of the city (economical, political, cultural, etc.) as well as the social needs inherent to urban society. Until now, only individual needs, their motivations marked by what is known as consumer society (the bureaucratic society of programmed consumption), have been considered and have in fact been more manipulated than effectively recognized and examined. Social needs have an anthropological basis; they have opposite and complementary aspects: they include the need for security and the need for openness, the need for certainty and the need for adventure, that of the organization of labor and that of play, needs for predictability and unpredictability, for unity and difference, for isolation and encounter, for exchanges and investments, for independence (even solitude) and communication, for immediacy and for long-term perspective. The human being also needs to accumulate energy as well as to expend it, even to waste it in play. He needs to see, to hear, to touch, and to taste, and he needs to unify these perceptions in a "world." In addition to these anthropological requirements which are socially developed (that is to say sometimes separated, sometimes combined, in one instance compressed and in another distended) one must add specific needs which are not satisfied by the commercial and cultural complexes that urbanists take rather meagerly into account. It is a matter of the need for creative activity, for work (not just products and material consumer goods); of the needs for information, for symbolism, for imagination, for play. A fundamental desire resides in these specific needs, which finds its specific embodiments, its *moments*, in play, in sexuality, in corporeal activities like sports, in creative activity, in art and in learning, which more or less overcome the specialized division of labor. In the end, the needs of the city and of urban life are only given free expression in the perspectives which emerge here and the horizons that they open up. Are not needs for designated places, places of simultaneity and encounter, places where exchange does not pass into exchange value, commerce, and profit—are these not specific urban needs? Is there not also the need for a time for such encounters, such exchanges?

Today the requisite *analytical science of the city* exists only in its barest outlines. Its concepts and theories, currently in their beginning stages, can only advance along with urban reality in formation, with the *praxis* (the social practice) of urban society. The current move beyond the ideologies and practices that blocked the horizon, those bottlenecks of knowledge and action that marked a threshold to be crossed is proceeding only with difficulty.

The *science of the city* has the city as its object. This science borrows its methods, procedures, and concepts from the specialized sciences. Synthesis eludes it on two fronts. First, inasmuch as a truly total synthesis, based on analysis, can only consist of a systematization and programming that are strategic. Second, because its object, the city as a developed reality, is itself decomposing. The inquiry which seeks to cut up and recompose the fragments of the city confronts a historical entity already modified. As a social text, this historical city no longer expresses a series of coherent prescriptions for spending time in relation to symbols, to a style. The text recedes. It takes on the quality of a document, of an exhibition, of a museum. It is no longer possible to inhabit the historically formed city in concrete practice. It has become a mere object of cultural consumption for tourists, for an aesthetic attitude avid for spectacle and the picturesque.

The city is dead even to those who seek to know it most sympathetically. And yet the *urban* still persists, in a state of dispersal and alienation, as a seed, as a virtuality. What the eye sees and analysis distinguishes in this landscape can at best be the passing shadow of a future object in the light of a rising sun. It is impossible to envisage the reconstituting of the old city, only the construction of a new city, on a new basis, at another scale, in other conditions, in another society. Neither return to the past (to the traditional city) nor headlong flight into the future, toward a colossal and unformed agglomeration—this is the prescription. In other words, as far as the city is concerned, the object of inquiry has not been given. The past, the present, and the future are not to be separated. Thought studies a *virtual object*. It calls for new procedures.

The career of the old classical humanism ended long ago, and badly. The old humanism is dead. Its embalmed and mummified corpse is heavy and doesn't smell good. It occupies many a public place, transforming each one into a cemetery with a human appearance: museums, universities, various publications. Then there are the new towns and periodicals devoted to urbanism. They serve as packaging for trivialities and platitudes. "Human scale," they say. When it is immoderation that we should take as our task, and create "something" on the measure of the universe.

This old humanism met its death in the two world wars, during the demographic surges that accompanied the great massacres, in the face of the brutal demands of economic competition and under the impetus of poorly mastered techniques. Humanism is not even an ideology anymore, barely a theme of official rhetoric.

As if the death of classical humanism implied that of man as well, we have recently heard cries of "God is dead, and man is too." There is nothing new in these slogans for best-sellers, taken up in turn by irresponsible advertising. The Nietzschean meditation on the theme started almost a century ago, during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, an ill omen for the culture and civilization of Europe. When Nietzsche announced the death of God and that of man, he did not leave a gaping void; nor did he fill it in with whatever baggage was at hand: with language and linguistics. He announced the Superman as well, whom he thought was to come. He overcame the nihilism that he diagnosed. Those authors who coin theoretical and poetic currency a century too late plunge us back into nihilism. Since the time of Nietzsche, the dangers of the Superman have made themselves all too cruelly clear. In addition, the "new man" born of industrial production and rational planning as such has only been a disappointment. There is one more path available, that of urban society and of that which is human as creative work in a society which would be a work, not a product. Either the supersession of the old "social animal" and of the inhabitant of the old city, the urban animal, in favor of urban man, polyvalent, polysensory, and capable of complex and transparent relations to "the world" (his environment and himself); or nihilism. If man is dead, for whom should we build? How should we build? It scarcely matters whether the city has disappeared for it to be necessary to think the city anew, to reconstruct it on a new set of principles, or to supersede it altogether. It scarcely matters whether terror reigns, whether the atomic bomb is dropped, whether the world explodes. What is important? Who thinks? Who acts? Who still speaks and for whom? If meaning and purpose disappear, if we can no longer consider them as part of a praxis, then nothing of importance or interest remains. And what is one to reply, what is one to do if the capacities of the "human being"—technique, science, imagination, art, or their absence—are set up as autonomous agents and if reflective thought simply accepts this observation?

The old humanism is receding in the distance and disappearing behind us. We are becoming less and less nostalgic and only occasionally turn back to gaze upon its outline stretched across the road. It was the ideology of the liberal bourgeoisie. It turned its attention to the people, to human suffering. It sustained the rhetoric of poetic souls, of grand sentiments and good consciences. It was concocted out of Greco-Latin citations sprinkled with Judeo-Christian elements. A ghastly cocktail, enough to make one vomit. Only a few "left" intellectuals (do any intellectuals still remain on the "right"?), neither revolutionary nor openly reactionary, neither dionysiac nor apollonian, still have a taste for this sorry potion.

We must direct ourselves toward a new humanism, toward a new praxis and an other being, that of urban society. We must get away from the myths that threaten our will by destroying the ideologies that turn us back from this project and the strategies that divert its course. Urban life has yet to begin. Today we are concluding the inventory of the debris of a millennium in which the country dominated the town, whose ideas, whose "values," whose taboos and prescriptions were for the most part of agrarian origin, whose dominants were rural and "natural." Only sporadically did cities manage to emerge from the vastness of the countryside. Rural society was (and remains) one of unavailability, of scarcity and deprivation accepted or rejected, of prohibitions that developed and normalized those deprivations. It was also a society of festivals, but this, its best aspect, has been lost and is what should be resurrected, not the myths and limitations! A crucial observation: the crisis of the traditional city goes with the worldwide crisis of agrarian society, which is equally traditional. They go together and indeed coincide. It is for "us" to resolve this double crisis, particularly in the creation of both the new city and the new form of life in the city. The revolutionary states (including the U.S.S.R. ten or fifteen years after the October revolution) have sensed the development of society based on industry, but only as a premonition.

In the preceding sentences, the term "we" is only a metaphor. It designates the interested parties. Neither the architect nor the urban planner, neither the sociologist nor the economist, neither the philosopher nor the politician, can pluck the new forms and new relations out of the air. To be more specific, the architect cannot work miracles any more than the sociologist. Neither one creates social relations. Under certain favorable conditions, they can help tendencies to find expression (to take on form). Only social life (praxis) in its global capacity has such power—or lacks this power. The people mentioned above, either separately or as a team, can clear the path. They can also propose, try out, prepare forms. They can also (and most importantly) make an inventory of their acquired experiences, draw lessons from failures, help give birth to the possible, through a *maieutics* nourished by science.

At this point we must indicate the urgent necessity of a transformation of intellectual procedures and instruments. Recalling some of the formulations we used elsewhere, we consider certain mental procedures that still remain unfamiliar to be indispensable.

a. Transduction. This is an intellectual operation which can be carried out methodically and which differs from induction, from classical deduction, and also from the construction of "models," from simulation, and from the simple expression of hypotheses. Transduction constructs and develops a theoretical object, a *possible* object on the basis of information that applies to reality as well as to a problematic raised by that reality. Transduction entails a constant feedback between the conceptual framework and empirical observation. Its theory (methodology) gives form to certain spontaneous

mental operations of the urbanist, the architect, the sociologist, the political scientist, the philosopher. It brings rigor to invention and knowledge to utopianism.

b. *Experimental utopia.* Who is not a *utopian* today? Only narrowly specialized practitioners who work on demand without the least critical examination of the norms and constraints stipulated of them. Only these relatively uninteresting individuals escape utopianism. Everyone else is utopian, including futurologists, the planners projecting the Paris of the year 2000, the engineers who built Brasilia, and so on! But there are several utopianisms. Isn't the worst the unacknowledged one, which wears the mantle of positivism and imposes in its name the strictest constraints and the most derisory lack of technique?

Utopia should be considered experimentally, by studying its implications and consequences in the field. They may surprise. What are and what will be socially successful places? How can we detect them? According to what criteria? What modes of time, what rhythms of daily life inscribe themselves, write themselves, prescribe themselves in these "successful" places, that is to say, places which are conducive to happiness? This is what is interesting.

Other indispensable intellectual procedures: to discern, without dissociating them, three fundamental theoretical concepts—structure, function, and form. To know their range of influence, their areas of application, their limits, and their reciprocal relations; to understand that they form a whole, but that the elements of the whole have a certain independence and relative autonomy; not to privilege one of them, which gives rise to an ideology, that is to say a dogmatic and closed system of significations—structuralism, formalism, or functionalism. To use them one by one, on an equal footing, for the analysis of the real (an analysis which is never exhaustive, never without residue) as well as for the operation of "transduction." To firmly understand that the same function can be carried out by different structures, that there is no unique link between the terms. That function and structure take on different forms which both reveal and conceal them—that this triple aspect constitutes a "whole" which is more than these aspects, elements, and parts.

Among the intellectual tools we possess, there is one that merits neither disdain nor absolute privilege: the *system* (or rather *subsystem*) of significations.

Politicians have their own systems of signification—ideologies—which allow them to subordinate their actions and their social influence to their strategies.

At the ecological level, the humble inhabitant has his own system of significations (or rather his subsystem). The simple fact of living here or there entails the reception, the adoption, and the transmission of such a system, for example the one that goes with the habitat of the detached dwelling. The inhabitant's system of signification tells of his activities and passivities; it is received but also modified in practice. It is perceived.

Architects seem to have established and made dogma out of a complex of significations, poorly explained as such and expressed under diverse terms: "function," "form," "structure"; or rather functionalism, formalism, and structuralism. They develop these notions not on the basis of the meanings that are perceived and experienced by the inhabitants, but from facts of habitation, as they themselves interpret them. These facts are verbal and discursive, tending toward metalanguage. They involve writings and visualizations. Because of the fact that architects constitute a social body, that they are tied to institutions, their system tends to close up, to impose itself, and to escape all criticism. This allows for the system to be formulated and set up as *urbanism* by extrapolation, without any other procedure or precaution.

The theory which could legitimately be called *urbanism*, which would tie into the significations of the old practice of *inhabitation* (that is to say, the human) and which would add to these partial facts the general theory of urban *time-spaces* and which would lead to a new practice stemming from its development—this urbanism already exists virtually. It can only be thought of as the practical implication of a complete theory of the city and of the urban, superseding the current schisms and separations. In particular the split between the philosophy of the city and the science (or sciences) of the city. Current urbanistic projects may find their place in this trajectory, but only when subjected to vigilant critical examination of their ideological and strategic implications.

Insofar as one can define it, our object—the *urban*—will never be fully present and realized in our thought of today. More than any other object, its nature as a whole is extremely complex in nature, both in action and in potential. As an object of research it reveals itself in piecemeal fashion and will perhaps never be known exhaustively. To take this “object” as real and truthful is an ideology, a mythifying operation. Our inquiry must consider a vast number of methods for seizing this object, without fixating on one procedure. Analytic divisions must adhere as closely as possible to the internal articulations of this “thing” which is not a thing; they will give rise to reconstructions that can never be complete. Descriptions, analyses, attempts at synthesis can never claim to be exhaustive or definitive. Every notion, every arsenal of concepts comes into play: form, structure, function, level, dimension, dependent and independent variables, correlations, totality, ensemble, systems, etc. Here as elsewhere, but here even more, the residue is the most precious. The construction of every “object” will itself be subjected to critical review. Insofar as possible, it will be carried out and subjected to experimental verification. The science of the city requires a historical time frame to establish itself and to direct its social practice.

While it is necessary, this science is not sufficient. We can see not only its necessity but also its limits. Urbanistic thought proposes the establishment or the reconstitution of highly original (and localized) social units, particularized and centralized, whose relations and tensions would reestablish an urban unity endowed with a complex internal order, not without structure but with a supple structure and hierarchy. More specifically, sociological reflection aims at the understanding and the reconstitution of the integrative capacities of the urban as well as the conditions for practical participation. Why not? On one condition: one should never exempt these specialized and thus partial attempts from criticism, from verification in practice, from an overall perspective.

Knowledge can thus construct and propose “models.” Each “object” in this sense is none other than a model of urban reality. And yet such a “reality” will never become manageable like a material object, it will never become instrumentalized. This holds true even for the most operational forms of knowledge. Who would not wish the city to become what it once was: the act and creation of a complex thought? But one remains at the level of wish and aspiration if one does not determine an *urban strategy*. Such a strategy cannot but take into account both existing strategies and previously acquired knowledge: the science of the city, the knowledge directed at the planning of growth and control of development. To mention “strategy” is to refer to the hierarchy of “variables” to be taken into account, some of which have strategic capacities, while others remain at the tactical level—and is also to refer to the forces capable of realizing this strategy in the field. Only groups, classes, or segments of social classes capable of revolutionary initiatives can assume the burden and fully accomplish solutions to urban problems; the renovated city will become the creation of these social and

political forces. The first task is to undo the strategies and dominant ideologies within contemporary society. The fact that there are several groups and several strategies with their own differences (between private interests and the state, for example) does not change the situation. From issues of land ownership to problems of segregation, each project of *urban reform* calls into question the structures of the existing society, of immediate (individual) and quotidian relations, as well as those that are intended to be imposed by constraint and institution on what remains of urban reality. While *reformist* in itself, the strategy of urban reform becomes "necessarily" revolutionary, not because of the force of events but because of its opposition to what is already in place. An urban strategy based on the science of the city needs a social basis and political force to be effective. It cannot act on its own. It cannot help but rely on the existence and actions of the working class, the only class capable of putting an end to a segregation aimed essentially against it. Only this class, as a class, can decisively contribute to the reconstitution of the center destroyed by segregation and redeployed in the menacing forms of "centers of decision-making." This is not to say that the working class alone will make urban society, but that nothing is possible without it. Integration without the working class is meaningless, and without it disintegration will continue, masked by a nostalgia for integration. This is not just an option, but a whole horizon of possibility that opens up or closes down. When the working class remains silent, when it does not act and cannot accomplish what theory defines as its "historic mission," then both the "subject" and the "object" are missing. And reflective thought ratifies this absence. As a result, one must develop two series of proposals:

a. A *political program of urban reform* defined neither by the managers nor by the possibilities of current society, not subjected to "realism" although based on the study of reality (in other words: reform not limited to reformism). This program will thus have a singular and even paradoxical character. It will be in the form of a proposal to the existing political forces, to the parties. One can even add that it will be submitted preferentially to the parties of the "left," the political entities that represent or seek to represent the working class. But this program will not be set forth as a function of these forces and formations. Its specific character will be in relation to knowledge. It will thus contain a scientific aspect. It will be *proposed* (even though this may entail modifications by those who take it on). The political forces should assume their responsibilities. In this domain which affects the future of modern society as well as its producers, we appeal to the responsibility to history which ignorance and indifference put at risk.

b. Intensively elaborated *urban projects* that include "models" and forms of urban space and time without concern for whether they can be realized today, for whether they are utopistic (which is to say, "utopian" projects). It would appear that these models cannot result from simple analysis of existing cities and urban types nor from the simple combination of elements. The possible forms of time and space, unless proven otherwise, are to be invented and proposed to praxis. Imagination must be deployed, not the imaginary which allows for escape and evasion, which is the conveyor of ideologies, but the imaginary which is engaged in *appropriation* (of space, of time, of physiological activity, of desire). Why not counter the idea of the eternal city with ephemeral cities, the fixed center with multiple moving centers? Every daring gesture is permitted. Why limit these proposals to the single morphology of time and space? Why not include in this plan proposals for life styles, for ways of living in the city, for development of the urban?

Short-term, medium-term, and long-term proposals will all enter these two series

and will constitute the urban strategy proper.

The society we live in seems directed toward plenitude or at least satiation (of durable goods and objects, quantity, satisfaction, rationality), but in fact it opens up a colossal void. Ideologies dance about in this void. The fog of rhetoric spreads across it. One of the greatest ambitions for active thought, moving out of speculation and contemplation, and away from the fragmentary divisions of specialized knowledge, is to populate this lacuna, and not simply with words.

In a period in which ideologues carry on about structures, the destructuring of the city is an indication of the depths of disintegration (both social and cultural). This society, taken as a whole, reveals itself *lacking*. There are holes, sometimes gaping voids between the subsystems and the structures that are consolidated by various means (constraint, terror, ideological persuasion). These empty places are not the products of chance. They are also sites of possibility. They contain elements that float freely or are dispersed without the strength to assemble them. What is more: the structuring activity and the power of the social vacuum tend to prohibit the actions or the simple presence of such a force. The instances of the possible can only be realized in the course of a radical metamorphosis.

In this conjuncture, ideology claims to give an absoluteness to "scientificity," the science which applies to the real, dividing it up, recombining it, and on this basis dispelling the possible and blocking the path. In such a context science (that is to say the specialized sciences) has no more than a *programmatic* effect. It procures certain elements for a program. But if one takes these elements for an already constituted totality, if one tries to execute the program literally, then one comes to treat the virtual object as a technical object, already available. This is an uncritical project, without self-criticism, and when carried out, this project realizes an ideology, the ideology of technocrats. The programmatic is insufficient. It becomes transformed in the course of being carried out. Only the social force which is capable of investing itself in the urban, through the course of a long political experience, can take on the responsibility for realizing a program for urban society. In return, the science of the city brings a theoretical and critical foundation, a positive base, to that perspective. Utopia controlled by dialectical reason provides a safety barrier to fictions of scientificity, to imagination without direction. This foundation and basis keeps thought from losing itself in pure program as well. The dialectical movement presents itself here as a relation between science and political power, as a dialogue which actualizes the relations of "theory-practice" and "positivity-critical negativity."

Like science, *art* is necessary but not sufficient. It brings its own long meditation on life as drama and pleasure to the realization of urban society. Above all, it restores the sense of the creative work. It gives multiple figures of *appropriated* time and space: not passively endured, not accepted with resignation, but transformed into creation. Music reveals the appropriation of time, painting and sculpture the appropriation of space. If the sciences discover partial determinisms, art (as well as philosophy) shows how a totality is born out of partial determinisms. It is incumbent upon the only social force capable of realizing urban society to unite effectively and efficiently (in "synthesis") art, technique, and knowledge. Art and the history of art, as much as the science of the city, should enter into reflections on the urban in order to put its images into effect. This meditation geared toward realization in action will thus be both utopian and realistic and will overcome the distinction between the two. One can even assert that the greatest utopianism will become one with the optimum realism.

Among the contradictions that characterize our epoch we encounter those (particularly harsh) ones between the realities of society and the achievements of civilization inscribed there. On the one hand genocide, on the other the capacities (medical and others) that can save a child or prolong life. One of the last, but certainly not the least, of those contradictions comes to light precisely here: between the *socialization of society* and *general segregation*. There are many others, for example the contradiction between being called a *revolutionary* and being attached to an outdated productivist rationalism. The individual does not disappear in the midst of the social effects caused by the pressures of the masses, but is instead affirmed. Certain *rights* come to light. They enter into customs or prescriptions more or less followed by actions. We know how these concrete "rights" come to complete the abstract rights of man and citizen that were inscribed on the front of buildings by democracy in its revolutionary beginnings: the rights of age and sex (of women, children, and the elderly); rights of condition (the proletarian, the peasant); rights to education and instruction; rights to work, to culture, to leisure, to health, and to housing. Despite, and even through, the terrible destruction, the world wars, the threats, the nuclear terror. The pressure of the working class has remained necessary (but not sufficient) for the recognition of these rights, for them to become part of custom, for their inscription in law, even if incompletely.

Rather oddly, the *right to nature* (to the countryside and "pure nature") has come into social practice in the past few years in the form of *leisure activities*. It has advanced by way of the protests that have become commonplace against noise, against fatigue, against the "concentrationary" universe of the cities (as the city decays and explodes). A strange course of events, we would say. Nature gains exchange value and becomes merchandise. It is bought and sold. The various leisure activities that are commercialized, industrialized, institutionalized, destroy the "natural" which is now to be trafficked in. What one calls "nature" becomes the ghetto of leisure, a separate place of pleasure and a refuge for "creativity." But urban people bring the urban along with them, even if they do not bring urbanity! Once they colonize it, the countryside loses its own qualities, those properties and charms of rural life. The urban ravages the countryside; this urbanized countryside dispossesses and replaces the rural: an extreme case of the misery of the inhabitants, of the habitat, and of inhabitation. Are not the right to nature and the right to the countryside self-destroying?

In the face of this right, or pseudoright, the *right to the city* becomes a rallying cry, a demand. This right takes a slow and tortuous route through unexpected detours — through nostalgia, tourism, the return to the heart of historic cities, the requirements of existing centers or of newly created ones. The demand for nature, the desire to enjoy it, diverts attention from the right to the city. This last demand expresses itself only indirectly, as a tendency to flee the deteriorating and unrenovated city, to flee the alienated form of "urban life" rather than the forms which have yet to "really" exist. The need and "right" to nature frustrate the right to the city without altogether escaping it. (This does not mean that one should not preserve vast "natural" spaces in the face of the spread of the exploded city.)

The *right to the city* cannot be considered a simple visiting right or a return to the traditional city. It can only be formulated as the *right to urban life*, in a transformed and renewed form. It scarcely matters if the urban fabric encroaches upon the countryside and what remains of country life. No matter, as long as the "urban," the place of encounter, the prime value of exchange, inscribed in space and time as the highest

value, finds its morphological basis and practical and sensual realization. This requires an integral theory of the city and of urban society, using all the resources of science and art. Only the working class can become its agent, the bearer or social support of this achievement. Here still, as it did a century ago, the very existence of the working class negates and contests the strategy of segregation directed against it. As it did a century ago, although under new conditions, it unifies the interests of society as a whole (going beyond the immediate and superficial), and especially the interests of those who *inhabit*. The superrich and the new bourgeois aristocracy (who can deny it?) no longer inhabit. They go from palace to palace, from chateau to chateau, they manage a fleet or a country from their yacht. They are everywhere and nowhere. This is one reason that they are so fascinating to people who are steeped in the everyday. They transcend the quotidian. They own nature and let their henchmen produce culture. Is it really necessary to describe at length the conditions of the young, of students and intellectuals, of the armies of workers with or without white collars, of provincials, of the colonized and semicolonized of every sort—all those who endure a well-organized existence? Is it necessary to spell out the pathetic misery without tragedy of the inhabitants of the working-class suburbs, of those who live in residential ghettos, in the decaying centers of the traditional cities and in the misguided proliferations far from these centers? One has merely to open one's eyes in order to understand the daily life of a person who runs from his housing to a near or distant station, to a crowded subway, to the office or factory, only to take the same route back in the evening in order to recover the strength to start all over in the morning. The portrait of this general misery would not be complete without the image of the "compensations" that conceal it and become means of its escape and evasion.