ROMANTIC MOTIVATION AND
NORTH AMERICAN URBAN DESIGN

by

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This thesis is a study of contemporary urban design in North America. The physical aspects of the architecture of the city are examined in the light of the history of ideas and of urban design.

While most studies show the development of modern architectural and urban design as a chronology of ever new trends and discoveries in a continuous line of progress, this work shows that many essential features of design are not new and have not been changing. On the contrary, ideas developed in the eighteenth century can be regarded as the essential source of inspiration of many aspects of contemporary design.

The central theme of the thesis is that the body of thought developed in the late eighteenth century - defined as romantic thought - is still at the origin of the motivation of contemporary urban design. The study identifies the essential traits of the prevailing style of urban and architectural design and relates them to the main themes of the romantic tradition. The point made is that this tradition has become a very uncritical one and that the establishment of alternative and new traditions is thus made very difficult, if not impossible.

The method followed in the thesis is to make hypotheses of influences between eighteenth century thought and contemporary notions affecting the physical design of cities. The hypotheses are supported by the evidence of the thoughts and projects of representative thinkers quoted and by the attitudes, the laws and the patterns of physical design found in our days.
Among the sources used in this thesis the reader will find passages ranging from Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant to Jane Jacobs, Frank Lloyd Wright and Arthur Erickson. A large body of thoughts from famous and less famous people who spoke and worked in a representative way is used throughout the thesis. Illustrations of "prophetic" designs from the age of Boullee and Ledoux and of many existing projects are introduced to clarify the arguments. Many examples were chosen from Vancouver, British Columbia, but typical examples from the entire North American continent are included.

Most of the aspects influencing design are considered. The reader will find an examination of established patterns of existing urban design in North America, an analysis of the attitudes toward the city and architecture, observations on the by-laws and the economic system influencing design decisions. This material is used to show that there is a great inertia of old styles and ideals which prevent the establishment of alternative life styles and of truly new canons of design, despite a general consensus about the need for some truly new approach in the physical design of our cities.
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1.

INTRODUCTION

Background

At the basis of the urban form and architecture of the modern North American industrial city lies an entire world of philosophical, ethical and religious thought, of newer and older traditions, of attitudes taken for granted and, indeed, of prejudice.

It is an urban form in many ways uniquely North American, and uniquely affected by the body of thought developed only in the last three centuries, or, more clearly, by the culture developed by the intellectual revolution initiated around the middle of the eighteenth century. Most books of history of modern architecture, such as Peter Collins' Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture (1), are focused on the period which begins with the new way of thinking in the second half of the eighteenth century. These works seem to be concerned mostly with the history of changing ideals and with the many innovations of the modern age up to our days.

The interest of this study is centered on those ideals which did not change significantly from the time of their development to our days, and which became more and more profoundly ingrained in our culture: in other words here we are emphasizing the continuity of a body of thought under the surface of changing fashions and of experiments.
The North American city has been seldom praised and often sharply criticized, but it is only now, perhaps, that its viability as a system has come under greater scrutiny and is sometimes seriously questioned. As an example of structural differences of two cities - seen as functioning systems - one may consider an ancient city such as Rome and a newer city such as Washington. Rome is a city that developed over a long period of time, that went through many transformations, and that adopted a flexible urban pattern, adapting to needs and situations which changed rather profoundly. An American journalist, visiting Rome early in 1974*, made the comparison observing that Rome without cars seemed to be as enjoyable and liveable as before. Washington is not prepared to adapt to a similar change: it would become impossible and frightening. The implications behind an example such as this are more profound than it is generally thought.

This thesis will attempt to illustrate many crucial and at times forgotten sources of inspiration in the decision-making process which shapes the North American city, in many cases an uncritical and rather irrational process.

There are many romantic ideals, such as a return to nature outside the cities and a love for isolation, which played

*at a time when cars were banned and the spectre of cities without gasoline was looming.
a great role in the background of thought that shaped the architecture of the North American city.

An analysis of the conscious and unconscious aspects of the cultural background which produced this kind of city may help us to see many real and fictitious problems in a truer light, and to direct future architectural efforts toward a better understood and more genuine service. Human aspirations do change in time, and it would be wrong to imagine as undemocratic the attempt to guide such aspirations to more rational and social ideals, an attempt to put forward new and better ideals starting with the demolition of established illusions. These illusions may be so deeply rooted in the common consciousness that they blind the view of anything else - a mistaken love of emotionalism perpetuates as prejudices the tenets of forgotten philosophies.

A contemporary North American urban dweller may read, for example, in the front page of a weekly magazine: "Our Arctic wildlife needs a permanent home away from man and machine" (2), or he may examine a study of a waterfront redevelopment under a headline: "Concrete or parks: it's your choice" (3). A false concept of nature seems to impair our ability to assess present problems coolly and to make rational choices for the future. A caption from a popular comic strip summarizes the common romantic view of Nature (4):
Nature is seen as the source of goodness and as something which can be opposed to man and his products. Nature is also seen as wisdom, and as speaking to the good man through an inner mysterious voice. "Only man can do evil", but the natural instincts are always good. One should stay away from civilization to avoid corruption (an idea that reminds one of Rousseau). To have to live in cities and to build cities consequently becomes a problem.

This is just one example of a romantic dilemma that we have inherited. The main theme of this thesis is that "from the latter part of the eighteenth century to the present day, art and literature and philosophy, and even politics, have been influenced, positively or negatively, by a way of feeling which was characteristic of what, in a large sense, may be called the romantic movement. Even those who were repelled by this way of feeling were compelled to take account of it, and in many cases
were more affected by it than they knew" (5) (B. Russell).

The North American continent seems to have been most profoundly influenced by the new way of thinking, which we will call romanticism.

The North American colonies shared very little of the culture of the Renaissance and of the Enlightenment, as it was known in the great part of Europe. The most pronounced interests of the early colonial people were work, morality and religion. A gentle, sentimental, pre-romantic literature flourished in the South for the entertainment of those who could read and had the spare time for it. The North American revolution was fought not only in the name of liberty, but also in the name of God. A high degree of idealism, of moralism, of mysticism, and of inspired sentimentalism had always been present since the early times of colonization, providing a fertile ground for the new tide of thought. The love and the fear of nature, seen both as the presence and as the punishment of God, were among the original common sentiments of the settlers, also.

The skeptical worship of reason, doubt, agnosticism, and the irony, the waste, the refined life-style of the enlightenment were hated by North Americans, as if they were the height of corruption. Benjamin Franklin, believed to be the intellectual representative of the enlightenment in North America, preached morality, parsimony and individual liberty. The realism and
the sentimentalism, the renewed mysticism and the idealism, that later manifested themselves as leading trends in the romantic age, were motifs of the North American life style since the early eighteenth century, even if in primitive forms.

Almost nothing was done in North America that would have left a lasting trace of the art and thought of the age preceding romanticism. Baroque art and architecture never achieved a dominant status in the British colonies. The romantic age found North America a virgin land to conquer and to mould exclusively according to its dream.

The dream of the immigrants was a dream of liberty, of individual achievements, of rebellion, of great and invincible ideals that had to be fulfilled in a new land. North America was developed as a dream land where the romantic ideals could be fulfilled. Only in North America was there a clean slate and a wealth of resources that permitted the fulfillment of such dreams on a grand scale. It became a land of dreams where Europeans would come to try to do what could have not been done in Europe. This is one of the reasons why there is a uniformity of styles in North America that does not exist in Europe, where the intricacies of a long history and of a slow and difficult development have prevented the following of a unified dream.

Together with the new tide of thought came the industrial revolution. The relationship between the two factors has been
interpreted by some as if the industrial revolution had produced the essential background for the new way of thinking. The factual evidence presented in this thesis, however, indicates that the ideas preceded the industrial development that made them possible. Thus we see that the suburban trend preceded and created the stage for the need of cars, and that the car-oriented city was conceived and partly designed by people like Frederick Law Olmsted (6) even before the car could be dreamed. In a similar fashion we see drawings of buildings which could not be built without reinforced concrete before the technology of reinforced concrete was known (7). Integral to the theme of this thesis is the evidence that ideas and dreams arise before the technological or political breakthroughs necessary to implement them.

Terminology

Romanticism here is not defined as the narrow category which opposes it to neo-classicism. John Canaday observed in the "New York Times" (8): "It is a truism by now that the seeds of the romantic movement were carried within the classical revival, but the extent to which this revival itself was a romantic manifestation has not been recognized."

According to this interpretation "it is impossible to determine with a single character or with a group of static characters the essence of Romanticism" (9). This is why there
are so many different studies and definitions of romanticism.

L. Geymonat notes (10) that both anti-rationalism and the rationalism of the idealists (e.g. Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) are aspects of romanticism. K. Joel in Der Ursprung der Naturphilosophie aus dem Geiste der Mystik maintained (11) that romanticism came from the mysticism of the Reformation. M. Vinciguerra thought that romanticism was a German renaissance retarded by the Reformation and that "it proceeds from an interior contrast between opposing concepts of life" (12). B. Croce distinguished between a practical and a theoretical romanticism, quoting observations made by Goethe and Hegel (13).

N. Abbagnano, the noted historian and existentialist, wrote (14): "Romanticism was born when this concept of reason (reason acting in a limited field and of limited value, as it was thought earlier - n.a.) was abandoned and an infinite force - which inhabits the world and rules it and therefore constitutes the essence itself of the world - began to be understood as reason. This passage was made by Fichte, who identified reason with the infinite I or absolute Self-Consciousness and made of it the force from which the entire world is produced. Infinity in this sense is an infinity of consciousness and of power, in addition to extension and duration. Although variously called by the romantic philosophers (Fichte called it I; Schelling, Absolute; Hegel, Idea or Self-conscious Reason), the Infinite Principle was constantly understood as consciousness, activity,
liberty, capability of continuous creation.

Despite the common foundation of these characters, the infinite Principle was interpreted by the romantics in two fundamentally different ways. The first interpretation, closer to the ideas of the "Sturm und Drang", considers infinity as a sentiment, that is as free activity, free of determinations or beyond every determination, and that is revealed in man in those activities which are more strictly related with sentiment, that is in religion or in art.

The second interpretation understood infinity as absolute Reason, which moves with rigorous necessity from one determination to the other, so that every determination may be deduced from the other necessarily and a-priori. This is the interpretation which prevailed in the great figures of romantic idealism, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, although Schelling insisted on the presence, in the infinite Principle, of an unconscious or immediate aspect, similar to that which characterizes the aesthetic experience of man.

The two interpretations of infinity were often in contrast and Hegel especially led the struggle against the primacy of sentiment. But it is their contrast and their struggle which constitutes one of the fundamental traits of romanticism in the whole of its complexity."
C. Cappuccio notes (15) that "romanticism represents a new epoch of civilization ... in its most obvious expressions it manifests itself first of all as an opposition to the enlightenment, although in its essence it was the development of the enlightenment and conserved many of the ideal conquests divulged by the Encyclopaedists ... Exaltation of individualism and religious exigency are the two complex elements which dominate the romantic spiritual world ..."

From Russell to Abbagnano and Cappuccio there is a common consensus that a new understanding of the world and a new consciousness emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century. Chief architects in the construction of the vast body of knowledge that followed, laying its foundations, were men like Rousseau and Kant, like Bourke and Schiller. The "Copernican revolution" made by Kant had probably greater consequences than the French revolution itself.

It is the new understanding which permeated the vast new body of knowledge that was developed then and afterwards which will be called romanticism throughout this thesis. To clarify the nature of this new understanding - a far reaching revolution of thought in which no one could avoid being involved - we may observe that before for a "rationalist" such as Leibniz sentiment did not seem to be a difficulty, just as for a rather "sentimental" poet as Petrarca reason did not seem to be a problem. Perfection appeared rather as a
harmony and a cooperation of all factors of the universe without conflict, and perfection was considered possible.

Sentiment and reason, nature and human industry, organic life and science, most of the terms with which the last two centuries have been contending were not new terms and had been studied and discussed before under many different angles. But the feature of the new age is that of seeing them in necessary contrast, as opposing poles or forces. Contrast is the dominant feature. Perfection, if attainable, is the result of a struggle, it is the calm after the tempest of Beethoven in the sixth symphony, or the ideal order that follows the struggle of the revolution. The new way of understanding is a dialectic way of understanding where there may be a progression to sublimity through contrasts.

This was amazingly expressed by the cubists, who tried "the simultaneous presentation of multiple aspects of an object" (16) delivering with astonishing ability and success a coordinated series of contrasts. Previous ages had other dominant features. If I had to give a title to the centuries of romanticism, perhaps I would call it the Age of Contrast, just as I would give a title such as the Age of Religion to the medieval centuries. It is not that during those centuries everyone was a believer, but one could hardly have a social life without coming to terms with religious beliefs. Similarly contrasting romantic ideals have profoundly penetrated our civilization.
Contrast should not be intended as a strict category and purely in a dualistic sense. Romantic, for example, was also the love for infinity and for extreme positions. Among other things, a new form of rationalistic idealism was born, where everything had to be precisely categorized; even logic and science were idealized. (The drawings for a cenotaph to Newton by Boullee are one among many indications of this idealizing trend, where mysticism and science come to a sort of dialectic unity.) Many people have been confused by the incredible eclecticism which developed at the time, not only in architecture, where Greek, Romanesque, Gothic or other individual styles provided new inspiration and contrasts, but also in terms of opposing attitudes and ideas, some directly developed from the previous century, and some revived from many centuries before. The same rationalistic attitudes that had formed the generations of the eighteenth century became romantic once they were related to absolute ideals or accompanied by the new tribute to the sentimental side. Noting that the word and the interest for aesthetics rose together with romanticism one might even say, perhaps, that romanticism was an aesthetic and subjective view of the world, although devotion to an ideal, which could be common, many times brought people back together. The opera house and the stock exchange may be seen as examples of new temples of followers of an ideal in which the virtuoso and the entrepreneur are examples of new heroes: the gifted geniuses.
Approach

The opinion that will emerge from this thesis is that many of the contrasts and of the opposing poles and of the attitudes generated by the romantic mood may not be necessary and may not be reasonable. Many of the design solutions adopted in the last hundred years (and earlier) will be criticised. This is not to say that what is modern is romantic and that what is romantic is bad. The author is not a reactionary and would be disappointed by an attempt to return to the "ancien régime" or to even older styles. Attacking the present in order to praise the past is not at all the intent of this thesis. There is no disagreement with the fact that, despite difficulties and mistakes, there has been a true progress of living conditions in the last two centuries and that some of the most rewarding artistic and intellectual works have been produced during the same time. And the criticism that the reader may note in some places against an ill advised desire for a certain moral order should not be construed as an attack against moral order "tout court".

Purpose

In fact, proving a philosophy or a new modus vivendi is not the objective of this work. The objective of this thesis is that of collecting many scattered elements along one main theme, so that further studies may be made and so that others who are willing may proceed with additional work along the lines of
the theme. The thesis will suggest many relationships between architectural and non-architectural events. There is adequate documentation to indicate that these relationships are well founded. Much of it will be found in the bibliography.

The thesis is concerned with showing several ways in which urban design and architecture are conditioned by a sort of romantic tradition that is not fully recognized and questioned by those who are involved in it in contemporary life. The ideas behind the present "system" of design and of architecture go unchallenged with possible pernicious influence on the future of our cities. Romantic contrasts and dualistic trends, such as that of the man who wants to live in the woods and work in the metropolis may be seriously questioned with the cold eye of a critical analysis - and if found to be detrimental perhaps they should be re-evaluated.

**Organization**

The thesis is organized to present first the observations on the present and then the historical key. This is done in order to point out the features of the present urban pattern that must be noted and in order to underline the ideas, the attitudes, the legal and economic framework that must be observed in their influence on design. After this initial examination - which outlines essential characteristics of the modern city, of modern attitudes and social factors, of modern design and architecture - the historical elements are introduced. The reason for which
this method has been chosen is that it allows one to focus on familiar elements and to gain a realization of the persistence of old trends and of the prevailing influence of certain old and perhaps half forgotten ideas. To analyse the present first seems to develop a better perspective. The present is our life. By starting with an observation of elements of the present we may follow a path to their origins and begin to understand the reason why they exert a force today.

Each chapter has a special theme. The first chapter is concerned mostly with the geometry, the separations and the strict classification of blocks of the fabric of the North American cities. This overall view is important because it allows one to outline what is supposed to be the anti-sentimental pole of the urban structure (and to reflect on some consequences of what may be seen as romantic perfectionism or rational idealism).

The second chapter is concerned with the contrasting pole of interests: the sentimental and picturesque aesthetics, nature, the garden, the individual free expression, the "suburban style". In a way the love of organic nature and of the picturesque is the necessary element of contrast to the need of geometry, of order, of ideal precision, of classification, of uniformity shown by the two-dimensional order of the giant zoned grid.
These two basic poles of interests are introduced in the first two chapters because they represent the leitmotif of the contemporary urban scene: on one side, the law, utopian and ideal reason, zoning, neat blocks of colour on a two-dimensional map, geometry, engineering, science, classification, equality, uniformity of rules. On the other side individualism, creative freedom, organic nature, detached buildings, curvy paths, the imitation of nature and even the imitation of past styles.

The third chapter has for theme the contrast and the opposition of ideal rational and of sentimental irrational poles of interests in the public debates which seem to influence public opinion. A particular theme is the conflict seen between the man-made civilization of the city and the call of organic nature. Some of the misconceptions and of the illusions - in terms of design - generated by the opposing interests are noted.

The fourth chapter is an analysis of the position of the architect and of his office, caught between the image of creative geniality and the pressures from the ruthless logic of business and of politics, between inspiration and the vulgar realism of money. The notions of romantic idealism and realism become elements of contrasting and opposing forces in the daily operations of the architectural office, where the competition and the pressing rhythm of the free enterprise system seem to place an insufferable limit to the intuition and to the creative role of the architect. Design and production become two completely separate activities. The first derives from
intuitive creativity, while the second is dominated by the need of efficiency and speed. The architect becomes an alienated genius in the role of an inspired high priest of the environment.

The fifth chapter discusses popular notions and attitudes derived from romantic dreams and affecting the images of what the city should look like. The "suburban style" has become an attitude: even industries and offices must grow in the middle of green parks wherever possible, spread out in a natural setting. High density is seen as the opposite of everything desirable in the city. The clean, orderly and picturesque neighbourhood of an ideal village of old times is the image cultivated by the majority. The link between Northern romantic ideals, Anglo-Saxon cultural directions and these images of the city is noted and emphasized.

The point that is gradually made through all of these initial chapters is that the real question of what kind of a city we want is obliterated by a wide range of contrasting particular notions about this or that aspect of a dream city. The struggle for romantic ideals becomes the basis for a great deal of confusion. The objective is to help the reader to understand that to be involved in the dilemma: "concrete or parks?", quoted at the beginning of this introduction, means to avoid the truly crucial questions, in terms of design, about what kind of a city we want to choose, that is what kind of dreams are really important today and for the future. Throughout these chapters
it is demonstrated that the particular scheme which became the prevalent model for the city in North America was chosen and fixed upon two and even more centuries ago. It should be clear at the end that a single minded dream, mostly derived from ideas developed in the eighteenth century, is still typically self-imposed by North Americans as the only acceptable urban and architectural system conceivable for now and for the future.

The sixth and seventh chapters deal with the economic, political, legal and cultural factors which seem to condition the present "system" of planning and of designing, noting that the defence of the chosen values seems to be well established in a positive manner through these factors. An attempt is made to show how strongly romantic notions have been embodied in the economic, political and legal framework in which the contemporary design process takes place.

In the eighth, ninth and tenth chapters the patterns of design noted are related to earlier historical antecedents and to ideas which developed at the outset of the romantic period.

In the eighth chapter the grid of the utopian rural planning by Penn and the curves of the naturalistic dream by Olmsted are shown to be at the origins of the "garden city" concept. In the ninth chapter the effect of notions about the sublime and of nature upon design are introduced. The revolutionary architecture of the end of the eighteenth century is shown
as the prototype of the modern pattern of romantic contrast.

In chapter ten the origins of romantic ideas are retraced, relating the observations made in previous chapters to aspects of thoughts of the most influential men of the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Chapters eleven, twelve and thirteen draw the conclusions. The contradictions of daily urban life and what seems to be a blind and unquestioned acceptance of the permanency of outmoded styles, to a point beyond the realm of criticism, are noted in chapter eleven. Chapter twelve has a list of examples of the contemporary style as derived from the romantic interpretations of contrasts and of nature in terms of the aesthetics of the sublime and of the beautiful. Chapter thirteen is the conclusion proper.

Concluding Note

As an end to this introduction I may say with the Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences (1934) that: "The clearest minds of today are quickly outgrowing the crude contrast of romantic and classic" (17), and recommend as a help - even if somewhat limited and outdated - to the reading of the thesis the definition given under the title "Romanticism" in that Encyclopaedia. I am not familiar with a richer definition of romanticism in the English language. The author, G. Borgese, considered himself an enlightened romantic.
A note must be made of some important studies which are a kind of antecedent to this work. Among these the most important by far seems to be The Intellectual Versus the City, the well-known study by Morton and Lucia White. It opens with the observation that "the decay of the American city is one of the most pressing concerns of the nation" (18) and it reviews those thinkers who "virtually constitute our intellectual tradition as it is known today" (19) showing that "the intellect, whose home is the city according to some sociologists, has produced the sharpest criticism of the American city." (20). The study concludes that "the wilderness, the isolated farm, the plantation, the self-contained New England town, the detached neighbourhood are things of the American past" (21) and that a "self-conscious formulation of the values that city planners are seeking to realize in the American city is necessary." (22).

The study points out with surprise a fundamental similarity of attitudes toward the city from people apparently as different as Thomas Jefferson and Frank Lloyd Wright, Benjamin Franklin and Frederick Howe. Where the study fails is in not pointing out that the similarity is not so much a historical accident as the expression of the new tradition of thought arising in the middle of the eighteenth century. In North America the skepticism and the satire of Hume and Voltaire were little known during the eighteenth century. The literature of that age and the war of independence in North America may
be seen as an antecedent to the main themes of the new age of thought, which for the purpose of this study will be called the romantic age.

This study will show that the essential principles of design developed from late eighteenth century thought are still applied today, even if the origins may be forgotten by the less prepared, and that we are still waiting for something truly new, something that will resolve for the next century the now obvious contradictions of what was modern two hundred years ago. A true renewal of principles of design is becoming more and more necessary.

This seems to be among the conclusions of what may be regarded as the most comprehensive history of modern architecture, the monumental *Storia dell'Architettura Moderna* by R. Benevolo, which spans from the middle of the eighteenth century to our days: "If the modern movement were to be left behind, this advance would represent a much more radical step than any of the changes shown up to here: it would truly be necessary to start again, with totally different purposes. To understand the seriousness of this difficulty is something which is certainly not helping contemporary architects to live happily, but which places in a well defined perspective duty and hope toward the future". (23)
Introduction

(1) PETER COLLINS; Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture Montreal, 1967

(2) "Weekend Magazine", vol.24, No.2, January 12, 1974, front page

(3) "The Vancouver Sun", March 9, 1974, p.47, article by ALAN DANIELS.


(6) His contribution to urban design, in the second half of the nineteenth century, is described in chapter 8.

(7) This can be seen particularly in the drawings by Boullee and Ledoux shown in chapter 9. E.L. Boullee and C.N. Ledoux were active in the second half of the eighteenth century.


(10) L. GEYMONAT: Storia del Pensiero Filosofico, Milan 1960, vol.III, p.21: "Vedremo che nei grandi idealisti - Fichte, Schelling, Hegel - i temi ora ricordati del pensiero romantico si riverstono di un formulario filosofico per molti lati diverso da quello religioso - sentimentale dei poeti; ciò non muterà però la loro sostanza. Nello stesso pensiero di Hegel... l'aspirazione mistica verso l'infinito... assume, senza riserva di sorte, della piu' schietta cultura romantica."

(11) K. JOEL; Der Ursprung der Naturphilosophie aus dem Geiste der Mystik, 1900, p.14

(12) M. VINCIGUERRA: Romanticismo, Bari 1931, p.63-4

(13) B. CROCE: Storia d'Europa nel Secolo XIX, 1932, p.47

e per ragione comincia ad indendersi una forza infinita (cioè onnipotente) che abita il mondo e lo domina e perciò costituisce la sostanza stessa del mondo. Questo passaggio viene effettuato da Fichte che identificò la ragione con l'io infinito o Autocoscienza assoluta e ne fece la forza dalla quale l'intero mondo è prodotto. L'infinità in questo senso e un'infinità di coscienza e di potenza, oltre che di estensione e di durata. Per quanto variamente chiamato dai filosofi romantici (Fichte lo chiamò Io, Schelling Assoluto, Hegel Idea o Radione autocosciente), il Principio infinito fu costantemente inteso come coscienza, attività, libertà, capacità di creazione incessante.

Ma pur sul fondamento comune di questi caratteri il Principio infinito venne interpretato dai romantici in due modi fondamentalì diversi. La prima interpretazione, più vicina alle idee dello Sturm und Drang, considera l'infinito come sentimento cioè come attività libera, priva di determinazioni o al di là di ogni determinazione e che si rivela nell'uomo appunto in quelle attività che sono più strettamente connesse con il sentimento cioè nella religione e nell'arte.

La seconda interpretazione intese l'infinito come Ragione assoluta che si muove con necessità rigorosa da una determinazione all'altra, sicché ogni determinazione può essere dedotta dall'altra necessariamente e a priori. È questa l'interpretazione che prevalse nelle grandi figure dell'idealismo romantico, Fichte, Schelling, ed Hegel, per quanto Schelling insistesse sulla presenza, nel Principio infinito, di un aspetto inconsapevole o immediato, analogo a quello che caratterizza l'esperienza estetica dell'uomo.

Le due interpretazioni dell'infinito furono spesso in contrasto ed Hegel specialmente condusse la polemica contro il primato del sentimento. Ma proprio il loro contrasto e la loro polemica costituisce uno dei tratti fondamentali del movimento romantico nel suo complesso."

ABBAGNANO is the first entry in the Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, New York 1967.


(19) Ibidem, p.15

(20) Ibidem, p.15

(21) Ibidem, p.236

(22) Ibidem, p.235

THE EXISTING PATTERN AND PLAN OF THE MODERN NORTH AMERICAN CITY

An ideal order is at the basis of the North American urban fabric. The urban worker of the modern metropolis might well find it chaotic, frustrating and unbearable, but from the early founders to our contemporary planners the attitude has been that of precipitating an abstract mathematical world into the grand physical design of our cities. Mathematical fields and Cartesian diagrams look like an intellectual background of the zoned grid of the North American metropolis. North America seemed to be ideally suited, with its vastness and resources, for establishing the new order, in contrast to the intricacies and complexities of the corrupt, slow moving old world.

In this chapter we will examine zoning and subdividing land as aspects of the dream of perfect order, a dream influenced by moral imperatives as well as by the fascinating beauty of the sciences. It is remarkable that this dream seems to be more influenced by the two dimensional conditioning of the map than by the three dimensional reality of the physical buildings of the city.

Zoning, the system by which cities are divided up into areas of specialized or single use, is one of the most striking features of modern North American cities. We seem to pride ourselves on it, despite some controversies. Zoning is often indicated as a standard of civilization to members of other urban
societies, and as the last stage of urban progress. Many planners in other continents are studying the North American achievements in this field, and are trying to propose forms of zoning to their countries, to reorganize cities which are lacking a strict separation of uses and activities and to bring a new form of order to their cities.

A city such as Paris, for instance, would be very confusing for a planner trying to define zones of single use. In North America, on the other hand, coloured maps indicating uses, with one colour per use, are an accepted way of dividing activities taking place in an urban area, and they are a tool belonging to the last stage in the progress of planning. They are seen as an efficient, clear, clean and orderly way of organizing activities, and even as a sophisticated tool for the study of how to prevent conflicts and hazardous conditions between different activities.

There is a certain psychological satisfaction from the clarity of a map charting the uses of the land in a city, and the map itself is considered a reasonably flexible system susceptible of continuous improvement. The map is a concrete basis for study and discussion, and may even become a clear legal tool when it is incorporated into the zoning by-laws of a city.

From the air most contemporary North American cities show obvious results of zoned development, with clearly defined areas of high and low density, residential suburbs, commercial centres, industrial parks, parks, etc. Zoning has been the major
tool used in the struggle against urban chaos, and it must have appeared even more reasonable and rational to those who noted that it is basically the same system that many architects would apply to divide activities in most or in the more complex designs.

The fact that zoning was used as a tool in the process of planning North American cities by law, rather than through an autocratic designer or team of designers, as Haussmann did in Paris, associated the notion of the zoning map with that of democratic planning. The zoning map was seen as something proposed by the elected representatives and subject to continual approval and verification by the electorate and its representatives. It was easy to understand, and it did not seem to imply a choice of values: it did not imply the choice of an architectural style and the people were left free, to a large extent, to choose any style to suit their individual development.

Zoning seemed to be an impersonal system, less subject to the whims of an autocratic person, and seemed to have the objective qualities that attract people to the cool world of the sciences. The criteria on which the zones were established could be discussed and changed, if necessary, on the basis of quantitative considerations supported by statistical and social studies. What might have been endless debates on the basis of pure opinions could find a convincing solution, it was hoped, with the support of scientific studies. Zoning, proposed and approved in the form of by-laws, became a system of planning North American cities without what was seen as an undemocratic master plan, of the kind proposed
by the totalitarian wing of romanticism, which advanced the idea of a complete design prepared by an intellectual elite for an entire city.

But the concept of zoning a city shares some of the classical romantic idealism too. It comes from a concept of order in which each thing has to fall into a specific place, each activity has to be located according to a category of the use of land in a designated area -- a concept which arose with the late enlightenment and the Encyclopedia. It is an ideal of perfection that may remind one of the classification of the species of Linneus, of the classification of the elements of Mendelejeff, and of the rationalized romanticism which viewed perfection and beauty as the product of an absolute order not unlike that of the most precise sciences. The organization of all activities under categories was something that was not alien from the way of thinking of such an influential nineteenth century idealist as Hegel, for example. To marry rationalism and romanticism, sometimes in an idealistic and sometimes in a pragmatic fashion, often in a new synthesis of European traditions, is part of the North American heritage; in fact, the fusion of the two seems to be at the origin of the common ideal of perfection.

The concept of zoning also responds to an ideal of neatness that can be traced back to "puritanical" moral considerations. It may be more than a coincidence that the artistic geometrical neatness of a movement such as De Stijl, and the perfectionism of the paintings by Mondrian, were colours are laid out in neat, pure and strongly defined "zones", which do not overlap and do not mix,
are contemporary. We may note that in the nineteenth century boundaries of nations started to be clearly defined and the maps showed with a single colour their neatly defined territories. It is a peculiarity that we find in zoning maps, where, interestingly, colours of different uses normally do not mix, and have an appearance and a pattern extremely different from that of geological maps, for example, where all colours indicating the nature of the ground intermingle in an almost psychedelic pattern.

The essence of zoning is that of separating activities and of defining territories for activities, and just as every other ideal rationalization of a dream it causes awkward problems in its absolute quest of separation, such as that of moving entire segments of the population of a city from one compartment of activity to another when a change of activity is required. Zoning has become such a complete system that even the exception has been categorized and "zoned": there are zones for comprehensive developments where different activities are permitted to integrate in one large block, almost as in a mini-city within the city. Inevitably, there is zoning inside the comprehensive block. Zoning has produced a kind of technique of separations of activities in which some territories are used as buffer zones between different districts. The green spaces of parks are used as buffer zones in a variety of circumstances; even apartments are often seen as buffers between single families and commercial uses or light industry.

The zoning map has influenced the development of planning as a discipline concerned more and more with a two dimensional lay-
out rather than with the complex total fabric of the city, despite many studies and observations calling for a different understanding and a different attitude.

Mrs. Beverly Moss Spatt, a Commissioner of the New York City Planning Commission, a teacher and a scholar, notes in A Proposal To Change The Structure of City Planning: "Perhaps the most sensitive and therefore the most susceptible area of development control is that of zoning. A legislative device to regulate the use and intensity of use of land, more frequently than not zoning has proven to be an imperfect and imprecise implementing tool. It should be emphasized that there is nothing wrong with the concept; rather, the difficulty lies in the practice or administration of zoning."(1) F. Choay sees, since the middle of the last century, "a new type of planning on the part of the planner. The process of urban organization at this point loses its original immediacy, as it now evolves about an object that has been removed from its context by analysis; for the first time the umbilical cord has been cut, so to speak, and the city is subjected to critical planning."(2) However, H. Churchill, among others, sees the development of planning rather as the result of disappointing routines: "The practice of city planning consists of lines on paper and tables of figures from calculating machines", and advocates the view that "the art of city planning is four dimensional". (3) But this view is wishful thinking, just as a paean of sentimental praise to an ideal city model which is never realized in actuality. In fact, since the time of Camillo Sitte,

* This is a fundamental attitude regarding the contemporary design of the metropolis, which transforms into an illusion most attempts toward a critical examination.
one of the founders of the theory of city planning as an art in
the romantic tradition, the study of urban problems and proposals
has more and more taken on the aspect of two-dimensional sketches,
plans and maps, in which horizontal symbolism and a kind of
horizontal thinking has strongly prevailed in all essential
matters. Renderings in three dimensions have been used mainly as
aesthetic means of persuasion after the fact of two-dimensional
design has taken place. Zoning has developed as a kind of
horizontal tool, in which separations are seen exclusively in a
horizontal fashion. Not even condominiums and the Strata Titles
Act have changed this exclusive way of thinking about uses.
Condominiums potentially provide an occasion for a vertical mix
of uses, where different floors could be dedicated to different
activities. This is done in many cities of other countries. The
coloured checkerboards of our cities have been designed and
continue to exist as horizontal separations of uses. One cannot
fail to note that in modern planning, the planning profession and
the concept of zoning started almost contemporaneously in our
recent history.

This two-dimensional view of cities and of separation of
uses is reflected also in the most current theories advanced to
explain or predict the pattern to the distribution of uses
and of land values in urban areas, as illustrated by the Con­
centric Zone Concept (fig. 1), by the Sector Concept and by the
Multiple Nuclei Concept (fig. 2)\(^4\). These diagrams and theories
that both explain and produce the contemporary North American
CONCENTRIC ZONE CONCEPT
1. Central Business District
2. Zone of Transition
3. Zone of Workingmen's Homes
4. Zone of Better Residences
5. Commuters' Zone

Figure 1

SECTOR CONCEPT
1. Central Business District
2. Wholesale Light Manufacturing
3. Low-Class Residential
4. Medium-Class Residential
5. High-Class Residential

MULTIPLE NUCLEI CONCEPT
6. Heavy Manufacturing
7. Outlying Business District
8. Residential Suburb
9. Industrial Suburb

Figure 2
pattern are material contained in most textbooks of planning and urban economics. Most economists tend to support the theory illustrated by the Concentric Zone Concept, developed by Homer Hoyt, in which they see the city as following a kind of natural pattern of economic growth.

The very use of the word "subdivision" reflects an important aspect of the origin of the present pattern. It is a system where the subdivision of parcels of land has been complemented by a similar subdivision of uses and activities. In the present pattern the most prevailing system is that of horizontal distribution, just as property was divided horizontally, with a physical separation normally provided by public open spaces, mostly by roads.

Not only is each activity treated separately, generating a completely different style of life and code of fashion (for instance, the same person who dresses up in a business suit for the day in the office will practically undress to go shopping with running shoes in the evening and then dress up again maybe to go to a club or to some entertainment), but each building and type of building (office tower, single family dwelling, duplex, commercial row, etc.) is clearly separated from the others and separately classified. The spirit of the Encyclopedists has been applied to planning and a dictionary of uses and of buildings has been created. The business centre for example is a place where one sees men in business suits and secretaries moving around at coffee breaks, while the shopping centre is a place where one
sees housewives in running shoes, with a few children under school age. The observations relating zoning and behavioural patterns could become very detailed and involved. A large number of studies have been focused particularly on the effects of suburban residential zoning on behaviour. A new activity generated by the separation of activities, commuting, has become a major activity in itself. Also a hierarchy of activities, of clothing and of quality of buildings (particularly in terms of finishes and of durability) has been established, with those considered more noble receiving greater attention. The most fascinating fact is that even enjoyment is often classified under some category: "recreational" or "cultural" or "spiritual" and so on.

These categories may be attributed to the response to a romantic idealistic urge (as Arthur Erickson acutely notes such a word as housing could not have been comprehended in medieval Siena) and to the need of rationalizing each activity according to an ideal order and perfection. We must zone a residential area in order to bring it up to a certain ideal symbolic perfection and beauty that is proper of dwellings alone; and even each type of dwelling has to be classified, in a kind of hierarchy to symbolic perfection, where the individual dream establishes the ultimate value chosen from an eclectic and encyclopedic collection. In a similar manner all the other activities have to be seen in isolation and classified accordingly; for example the perfect commercial activity has to be developed from a specially designated commercial area. Such an attitude was foreign to the way of thinking of previous civilizations. Someone has noticed that zoning was
already applied in Venice in the early Middle Ages (and even
earlier in Constantinople and Alexandria) on a national basis,
because the Turks, the Jews, the Germans, the Armenians, etc.,
had their distinct areas of activity; but to say this is to mis­
understand the essence of the modern meaning of zoning, which is
rather the opposite: zoning means horizontal distribution and
separation of activities, not of people. In the example of
Venice, the people who were separated had a complete integration
of activities in their domains, just as the Venetians did in most
of their city. In North America too, a separation of people on
a racial basis has been established in many places. This occurred
sometimes through economic accident and sometimes through private
economic contrivance and special covenants rather than through
urban planning, and it did not alter the pattern of the urban
plan and of the separation of activities.

The concept of separation is at the basis of the North
American urban system, contrary to what the spirit of the American
Revolution or Canadian democracy is supposed to be, and it responds
to a need that has far-reaching roots. The overall plan of con­
temporary cities reveals a tremendous effort to separate each daily
pursuit and activity from the other, in a strict horizontal system
of categories and even of visual symbols. It has been assumed
that the North American approach to problems, and particularly to
urban problems, is a flexible and pragmatic approach, but this is
an illusion that could not be further from what actually happened
and is happening.
Piecemeal pragmatic and economic considerations, normally invoked to explain the present urban problems, are only a way of delaying a debate on the basic principles which have been dictating patterns and plans of contemporary cities. In fact, one of the last economic studies prepared for the city of Calgary indicated that a change of urban pattern and of philosophy of planning will have to be made in order to avoid absurd results, including bankruptcy for the city, but it was not indicated what change had to be made. It is difficult to step out of a cultural trend and to propose a change of route. There is a Calvinistic and puritanical religious precedent pressing the need for clear, clean and orderly separation of activities, where the timetable of the day is a chief factor of organization. It was only by separating, categorizing and identifying clearly each activity that it was felt that they could be pursued in the right moral order. It was thus that they could be made clean and brought to their noble perfection. The Encyclopedia of the activities of a city assumed a noble moral value, and zoning became a tool toward this end.

The subdivision of activities according to a precise timetable was also considered part of the moral and superior order. The story of the housewives of Keonigsberg, who were able to tell the time by Mr. Kant's daily appearances in his pursuits, is famous. The same spirit permeates the America of Benjamin Franklin and permeates a great part of the contemporary business community. It is an outlook in which time is not only money, in the Calvinistic tradition, but also the organizer of each activity according to a precise division. This may be recognized in the
fact that the majority of the people move from the zone of one activity to the next at the same time. Entire sections of the city may become empty after the hours of their common use. Many studies have pointed out that this has led to dangerous situations in many North American cities, where streets have been abandoned to antisocial elements during certain hours. There is no need to mention all the problems of rush hour change of activity at the same time by everyone in the city. Yet it was through such orderly separation of activities carried out at a specific time and place by everybody that the ideal perfection for each activity was looked for. Rationalistic, aesthetic and moral romantic goals become mixed in these ideal pursuits of order.

The clock and the coloured maps do not provide a truly reasonable system of organization of activities. However, when people ask: "At what time do you go to work?", two questions loaded with moral values have to be answered. First, whether you start work around the time that is considered right for a sound and reliable person, and second, whether you do or do not work in the same location where you sleep. Many other moral values are tied with the location and the appearance of the place of work, with the time and place of meals and with the time when one goes to bed. A careful examination would show that our zoned and timed activities are all enveloped, influenced and guided by a complete and seldom questioned system of moral and philosophical values. But questioning the values and the system is usually blithely avoided. B.M. Spatt, with typically blind bias, declared: "It should be emphasized that there is nothing wrong with the concept; rather, the difficulty
lies in the practice or administration of zoning." (7)

Together with their zoned separations North American cities grow with an ever widening system of subdivisions, each of which is designed as a part of an ideal separate village. The city expands as a conglomerate of villages, well ordered with their various zones and with their commercial and municipal centres. The pattern is that of a constellation of stars and of an ever widening system of centres, with the separate buildings visually taken as the stars. The cities look like a sort of Milky Way. From the air, especially at night, North American cities show a pattern dramatically originating from many, semi-rural galaxies; "the American migration was atomic"(8), and like atoms or stars which scattered and then thickened and grouped, the buildings grew in the fields of the new continent as mixed urban-rural settlements, with millions of detached edifices.

The checkerboard appearance of modern North American geography from the air has distant origins that relate the rectangles of the countryside to those of the villages and towns and in turn to the subdivision of farms. Originally it seemed reasonable to survey and subdivide the land with rectangles, which finally determined the shape of pieces of property. Certainly surveyors gave impetus to a tradition of platting rectangles on a map. "At the time and to meet the needs of the moment, no better system of parcelling land for settlement could have been devised. But a lasting mark has been left upon the entire countryside, which will for all time affect the subdivision of land"(9). This system brings
one's mind back to the geometrical inclinations (of Platonic origin) of the Renaissance and to considerations about the speed and suddeness of the North American colonization, when there was not even the time and the money to give a geographical boundary between most of Canada and the United States: a line was drawn on a map and it was left to future generations to find out exactly where that line actually fell and what it would divide. The curious accidental isolation of Point Roberts between British Columbia and Washington State is one curious result of this kind of two-dimensional geometric simplicity.

"In 1785, on the suggestion of Thomas Jefferson, Congress passed a land ordinance, which resulted in placing a huge checkerboard of survey lines over all the miles of country north and west of the Ohio river, a checkerboard that was regardless of contours and relentless as fate. When one realizes that as a result of this method all the farms, all the suburban areas, all virgin country north and west of the Ohio river, were bought and sold in rectangular plots, either in those of the Government's original survey or in subdivisions of its squares, it is clear that the landowner, whatever his inclinations, would find it difficult to get away from rectangular platting. If his tract was small, and if his streets were to be direct extensions of the streets platted in adjoining tracts, he was almost compelled to adopt such an arrangement.

Thus it is not always lack of imagination, nor failure to appreciate the advantages of an adjustment of plan to contour, nor insensibility to beauties of nature or to the charm of the pic-
turesque which is responsible for the fidelity of the typical American town to rectangular planning."(10)

Rectangular planning was also adopted in Canada and generally won the support of authorities and planners across North America. Because of the insistence that all "parallels" converge at the poles, in Canada the curvature of the earth necessitated more corrections to the rectangles than in the United States. Many unconscious attitudes and philosophies favoured orthogonal or rectangular planning: the geometrical consciousness that the age of idealism inherited from the Enlightenment, a certain paper attitude already noted regarding zoning and the subdivision of activities on coloured squares, the ease of work of draftsmen with the set of squares, the speed and simplicity of a rectangular subdivision on the drafting board. Large rectangular farms sold as one parcel could be subdivided all at once into many tiny identical pieces with the same criteria that were used for the original larger subdivisions. Thus the street pattern of most cities, planned and growing quickly, was determined in a rectangular fashion. It was soon discovered that because of the curvature of the earth the rectangular system of surveying was less than perfect and lines would often not intersect at the expected points. Jogs had to interrupt the established straight lines to make the corners meet. These remained even in the street patterns of the cities, where the regularity of the grid had to be interrupted here and there. Despite the attempt made on a continental scale, an absolute regularity of rectangles could not be obtained. Nevertheless, every effort was made to stimulate rectangular perfection, often to a point of absurdity and inefficiency.
Many practical arguments were advanced in favour of rectangular subdivisions against those romantics who found them antagonistic to their picturesque obsessions. This conflict became especially strong in the field of housing, where the rectangular streets were so often opposed on the adjacent private property by curvilinear paths and driveways, punctuated by irregularly planted shrubs and trees. "The New York commissioners, in justifying their adoption of a rectangular street plan, said that they had rejected an irregular system deliberately, for the reason that a city is composed principally of the habitations of men, and that strait-sided and right-angled houses are the most cheap to build and the most convenient to live in! (Note A)

However these and many other practical arguments should not mislead one to believe that they were truly the most important elements on which a choice had been made. Opposing views could be heard with equal strength and convincing arguments, especially from Britain, where many planners supported the picturesque curvilinear plan of streets, successfully executed in the eighteenth century at Bath with the Crescent of John Wood, the Younger, one of the first romantic interpretations of the baroque curve and further exaggerated in the undulations of Landsdown Crescent. We can see how different plans could have been chosen, in this century, from such British designs as the plan of Larkhill Estate, "Housing of The Working Classes", Liverpool, the plan of Springwood-Allerton Estate, Liverpool (fig. 3), the plan for Moss Park site, Glasgow, and the plan of Portsdown Hill Housing Scheme, Portsmouth (fig. 4), for example. (12)
Figure 3
The main reasons for the overwhelming prevalence of the grid system of subdividing land and of plotting streets in a rectangular manner must be found in the deliberate choice of a rectangular geometric order as a superior form of order, in the desire to make new subdivisions and cities at great speed all at once from bare land, and in a simplistic and rural view of the city that assigned to everyone an equal rectangular field. The high idealism of North American colonization would not easily have permitted individual, irregular and disorderly initiatives in the surveying and in the parcelling of land, the greatest patrimony that could be shared by the new community. The use of time was another truly important factor; the parsimony of early North American morality required the fullest use of time and the maximum speed of development. What appeared to be the most simple system had to be adopted almost on moral grounds. Finally, the city was not seen as a highly integrated fabric with a complex system of public and private parts, but merely as a more dense conglomeration of separate buildings, as a community of many more landowners with smaller parcels of land, as a place where smaller lots had larger buildings and where most of the lots had buildings on them. Opposite to what the European experience had been, in the view of the North American, it was the open land, not the cities, that made the nation. North Americans were directing their dreams, not to the cities that they were building, but to their infinitely vast land, geometrically plotted. The virgin land in front of them constituted an ideal occasion where to transform into reality the dream of a new order, a dream not confined within any boundaries, but infinitely expandible.
APPENDIX

NOTE A

"The rectangular plan has other advantages and economies. It is so easily made that one can make it himself, without the necessity of retaining expert skills; it reduces the cost of surveying to a minimum and makes title descriptions easy to write. Its regularity simplifies a systematic designation of streets; and because of its standardization distances can be readily computed. This, to be sure, would be worth more if the standards were the same for all communities. But they vary considerably, so that one must know the scale in each city.

A plan, too, which provides uniform lot depths makes the levying of assessments easy. Whether these be by the front foot or by the square foot; and it not only induces co-ordination in the street plans of new subdivisions, but it promotes this between the new subdivisions and the existing street plan. It is further claimed that the long straight streets, eliminating the necessity of ever making more than one turn, increase the rapidity of the traffic movement and hence are of special value in case of fire -- an argument offset in part by the fact that for any destination not on the same street one must traverse two sides of a triangle. Furthermore, automobiles have made a promiscuous rapidity of traffic movement on residence streets a danger and a nuisance.
Doubtless, finally, the very universality of the plan's adoption in America is a convenience, in these days of vastly increased travel. Our towns may be monotonous, but at least one can feel pretty much at home in any of them and can hardly lose his way. With the rectangular street plan, one may have to journey a longer distance than should be necessary but one will not need to retrace his steps."

All these arguments in favour of a Cartesian grid -- despite the efficient and scientific theoretical model -- do not consider the factual value of observations which weaken the enthusiasm for the strict rectangular system. First of all, as soon as streets change their names from that of consecutive numbers of streets and avenues, and the perfect regularity of the system is broken, an almost inevitable trend in time, the system becomes a frustrating labyrinth. For example, if one is given an address such as Alma Street in Vancouver, and the sender cannot identify the number of the streets before and after, only a map will allow him to locate it. There would be no peculiar landmark or unusual geometrical feature that would allow him to identify recognizable points in a description of a route. In a baroque plan on the other hand, with its strong identifiable landmarks in terms of geometrical shapes and of architecture, directions can be given regardless of the name of streets. In the grid system, only posted speed limits or a closure to traffic may regulate the flow of traffic, which would otherwise have the maximum speed on any artery. At the same time, except on the same street,
the distance travelled from one point to another would be, in most cases, the maximum, because one is constantly running along the sides of rectangles, instead of running along the short cut of diagonals.

The argument that the grid system does not require a traveller to use the map of an unfamiliar city is exaggerated. In most cases the system has seldom developed according to an ideal order and the map remains a necessity in order to avoid getting lost.

From the point of view of surveying, taxation and title description experience alone would teach us that the irregularity of the lot does not constitute a significant difficulty, especially if it has straight sides or reasonably geometric curvilinear boundaries related to unambiguous reference points. The measures are taken once and for all.

Finally, the argument of the New York Commissioners does not seem to be relevant where buildings must be set back from the streets: the streets may meet at irregular angles or run in a curvilinear fashion, but building fronts do not have to be perfectly parallel to the street.
CHAPTER 1 - THE EXISTING PATTERN AND PLAN OF THE MODERN NORTH AMERICAN CITY.


(5) H. SYMONDS: The Question of Housing, Vancouver 1967, p. 44.

(6) The study showed that a continuous expansion of the city of Calgary in the next quarter of century according to the existing trends would cause such an escalation of expenditures by the city in order to provide the essential services that not even a 100% taxation of the projected income of its population could save it from ever increasing deficits. The study explained that the pattern was that of ever increasing expenses for ever decreasing services.


2. THE SUBURBAN TYPE AND STYLE OF DEVELOPMENT

AND RELATED URBAN SYSTEMS

We will now examine some of the attitudes which tend to complement or to oppose the search for a perfect scientific order, for an infinitely vast and expansible system, for classifications, for geometry, for neatness and a certain moral order noted in the previous chapter. We will observe the manifestations of the attraction to the picturesque in city design and the desire for contact with nature within the urban context.

In the previous chapter we looked at zoning and subdivision of land; in this chapter we will look at the sprawling suburban metropolis, that is, at the content of the abstract boundaries and zones superimposed on the land. We will look at the physical atoms of the fabric of the contemporary cities: its individual, detached buildings. We will also observe several aspects of a social and architectural style that has become prevalent in North American urban development.

Besides the detached building, the house and garden, the eclecticism of the various styles and fashions of the contemporary suburban-oriented metropolis that will be examined here, we will also observe some attitudes towards suburbia, and
the suburban style as a general, endless system, as a concept of design which is used to accommodate all the activities and amenities of the city. It will be shown to be the opposite of the mixed and integrated system that one may derive as a scheme of many European cities, which grew over a longer period of time and under the influence of many cultural and life styles.

"His argument being, why travel five hundred miles of tourist-jammed highway to reach nature's wilds when, by complete absence of effort..."
This chapter is divided in two parts: the first is a presentation of suburbia as a romantic flight from the city toward the joy of the grass, the woods, the purity of air, the simplicity of life, the village atmosphere, etc.; the second is a criticism of suburbia as a system of detached and individual buildings. The important relationship of this system with the ideas of the beautiful and of the sublime developed in the eighteenth century will be expanded upon in chapter nine and ten.

I

"What makes the big city bad is the omnibus character of its contents. It is a jumble and a confusion, incoherent and therefore inefficient. The smaller size and more select quality of the elements entering into the suburb make it more promising to take hold of the problem of the city at that point... the suburbs are simpler, more homogeneous, more rational, and consequently more manageable. Pulling a larger fraction of the city out into them is equivalent to unscrambling a mess of complications and serves to divide urban social difficulties up into masses of such proportion that mankind can perhaps handle them. The suburbs at least give it a better chance to try."(2) These observations were written in 1925 when zoning by-laws were in the process of being introduced across the continent. A little more than a quarter of a century afterwards the suburbs were triumphantly sprawling across North America, and were being more closely studied. Among the
others, William White Jr., of Fortune magazine, had been studying Park Forest, where "he had had the strange feeling of being virtually the only male in the place during the daytime; the men were all at work downtown or at various plants around Chicago, and there were some joking references to his being loose in a harem". (3) He later noted in an article: "Oddly, in this time of 'urbanization', when more people are living in metropolitan areas than ever before, the central city itself seems to be getting further alienated from what most people conceive as the American Way of Life. More and more, it would seem, the city is becoming a place of extremes - a place for the very poor or the very rich, or the slightly odd. Here and there, in pleasant tree-shaded neighbourhoods, there are still islands of middle-class stability, but for the young couple on the way up, they are neighbourhoods of the past. They are often the last stand of an ethnic group, and the people in them are getting old. The once dominant white Protestant majority has long since dispersed, and among the Catholics and the Jews who have been the heart of the city's middle class, the younger people are leaving as fast as they are able.

When scarcely any but the well-to-do lived in suburbia, a home there was a desirable goal; now it is becoming a social imperative."(4)
The growth of the suburbs acquired such gigantic proportions that even there the desired values began to be seen in jeopardy. H. Clay Tate wrote a book, *Building a Better Home Town*, dedicated "to the intelligent young people who are beginning to turn away from centralization to the non-metropolitan areas of the United States in quest of the good life. They are the guardians of the American dream."\(^{(5)}\) "The small town, the small community, this is what seems good about the suburb to most observers, what needs to be preserved, and what the large organization should not be permitted to despoil."\(^{(6)}\) The North American dream is a dream of independence which has always been strongly connected with the features of the rural life and the style of the village, seen as a natural prototype of the ideal small community at the origins of democracy.

*Broadacre City*\(^{(7)}\) is an example of the dream, which was interpreted in a less enthusiastic fashion by Le Corbusier in this sketch\(^{(8)}\):
where there is a synthesis of the historical development of many North American towns and cities.

It was in the small community that the democratic virtues were believed to flourish and prosper. The ideals of equality, of brotherhood and of individual independence were thought to be fostered by its atmosphere. The simplicity and the closeness to nature of the village life was praised. The village grouped around the church was often portrayed as an ideal picturesque image of serenity and of simplicity. The villager was considered naturally inclined toward friendliness, liberty and independent religious worship. He was considered of naturally sound mind, not through the sophistication and corruption given by book-learning but through the natural training of common sense.

Former premier of British Columbia, W. Bennett, used to refer to it as the "C.S. degree".* Others called it "horse sense"). The village was seen as a classless society, and its folklore was cherished. It was a small community where everyone knew his neighbour, and human relations were kept simple, good and strong. "The problem with the village mentality is not one

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*W. Bennett, premier of British Columbia in the nineteen-sixties without interruption, was a man who rose to power from a small town in the interior of British Columbia and who had great faith in the inner guidance of common sense. He had no formal university education.
of fact cut of values, and it is concerned primarily with examining the benefits which the small town supposedly bestows. Thus, the problem is not limited to the present suburb and the present generation. It extends to Tocqueville's Northwest town and Jefferson's ward, to the English parish and the European village before America."(9)
The farm was seen in a light similar to that of village life. The individual farm was the ultimate expression of the virtues of the upright man, industrious, independent and close to nature. His interest in the land made him naturally dedicated to the defence of the democratic institutions. The towns were seen as groups of little villages and of farms, where ideally all pieces of land and all houses were supposed to be equal and open to the view of the free community, where the form of the buildings was not supposed to be in contrast with common taste, established by the majority, and where the will of the majority was supposed to be accurately determined by free enterprise, open competition, and the election of a small local government. The new immigrants, coming from all parts of the world, normally embraced these ideals as part of their new land and of their new condition. These ideals, whose implementation was possible only in North America, because of its formation, of its institutions and of its size, became the source of a style of life and of building that we may now recognize as distinctly North American, even if its intellectual origins are markedly European.

"A well known British critic recently wrote that the roots of the sprawl problem go back to the roots of America. Ian Nairn of the London Observer says: 'Americans tend to forget that the pioneering era ended almost a century ago when
the railways reached California. Land is still treated as though it were an inexpendable commodity like the buffalo. There'll always be more around the corner is still the ruling principle'. Nairn calls suburbia a 'disintegrating landscape', an environment of 'total confusion and mediocrity', a place where you can drive for 'hundreds of miles without ever feeling really free of the suburban tentacles'. (11)

As soon as the economy and transportation made it feasible, the city dwellers fled "en masse" to the greenery of the villages in the small suburban municipalities. Zoning allowed to defend these new frontiers of romanticism as clean dormitories against the expanding industries and other threats, at least for the life span of a generation. "The suburban mystique", (12) caused a migration of people to suburbia which "since World War II has been more than a gradual trend; it has been a stampede." (13) "Clearly the norm of American aspiration is now in suburbia. The happy family of TV commercials, of magazine covers and ads lives in suburbia; wherever there is an identifiable background it is the land of blue jeans and shopping centers, of bright new schools, of barbecue-pit participation, garden clubs, PTA, do-it-yourself, and green lawns." (14)

The North American worker seems to have a need to flee every evening to the suburban dwelling as if it were his
romantic nest. For him it is a refuge from smelliness, social disorder, hectic activity, crowds, pollution, and the lack of greenery and contact with nature. In his educational background the city has been portrayed both as a physical and moral horror; the novels and news of the last two hundred years have focused more on the crime, injustice and corruption of the city, than on its culture, refinement and mutual human improvement. Historical novels tended to confirm the portrait that Burckhardt completed (despite his artistic admiration) of the Italian cities of the Renaissance: centres of corruption.

Such influential North Americans as Jefferson, Emerson Thoreau, Poe, Hawthorne and Melville, among others popularized similar notions about the city. Even commercial America disliked the commercialism of cities.


In "The New Adam and Eve", where Adam and Eve return to Boston after all its inhabitants have disappeared, "Hawthorne
implies that they were innocently observing the remains of a race which paid a price for its 'revolt against nature'. But this criticism was not incompatible with Hawthorne's disapproval of Brook Farm, for it had afforded his hero Coverdale 'some grotesque specimens of artificial simplicity' and was full of 'Arcadian affectation'. The commercial city and the socialist farm had both departed from nature. Both were in this sense unreal." (16) (Note A).

Only when the city had the characteristics of the picturesque it has been looked upon with love. It is in the isolation of the suburbs especially that this romantic dream of the picturesque has been pursued. Little castles, Italian villas, cottages, and any style that could make an attractive picture in the mind of the viewer, mushroomed in the suburbs - mild affirmations of individuality and of personal choice in the general flight from the city.

"Being segregated populations, suburbanites may have a natural tendency to conformity, but, more than any other people, they tend to look anxiously around to see what their neighbours are doing and buying. They seem to think they must have whatever anyone else has, not because they need it but because other people have it, and they seem to want very much to be part of the group." (17) This explains both why fashions
in suburban dwellings may be so sweeping and why suburban dwellers may fall for odd and exotic styles, because an exotic display is part of the fashion. It also explains why despite so many surface treatments the suburban dwelling is so typically and monotonously the same. It has to be remembered that normally the North American suburbanite is among the new rich and is desperately trying to establish for himself a certain status, "class", and recognition, by doing what has been determined by the majority of the "successful people" to be good. This is even more significant when it is considered that North Americans are immigrants, and sons and daughters of immigrants, who want to become accepted and well considered, without having a strong and independent set of values. Values and status are identified. What you believe makes you part of a social group rather than part of a philosophical trend, which may be socially undefinable.

The North American love and even worship of Nature have some historical precedents which should not be forgotten, because of their influence on some early romantic fashions. It was in the Renaissance that a contact with Nature was found by the neo-Platonic aristocracy in the Italian villas. Palladianism brought to the Anglo-Saxon world not only style, but also a taste - aristocratic at the beginning - for a villa in the country, at least as a summer retreat.
King Louis XIV probably established the most famous precedent, by choosing to build Versailles as a suburban royal palace and permanently leaving the city. The rise of such suburban palaces meant at least a partial decay of the cities in the following century. In North America "the pioneers to the suburban frontier have been followed not only by masses of retail trade outlets, but by industry also."(18) A similar phenomenon had happened before around Versailles, which became an economic centre outside Paris and a village more important than the city itself.

In the romantic North American suburbs, especially at the beginning, the first and the wealthiest people who isolated themselves at the outskirts of the commercial city had a tendency to mix their moderate respect for democratic ideals with an aristocratic dream for their dwellings (especially in the southern United States), homes inspired by the illustrious precedents of the Renaissance as well as by the medieval feeling for castles in the country. Noble isolation was chosen with a memory of the past. Sometimes it appears that at the basis of the North American egalitarian and mass-produced suburbs there is the attempt to provide every citizen with a miniature Versailles of his own taste. One has to note, also, that the White House itself has all the features of a larger and earlier suburban house. It is a country mansion set in the midst of urban Washington.
Construction of modern freeways has opened a path for industry and commerce to follow the outpouring of people from major metropolitan centers into the suburbs.

While the population of New York City remains virtually unchanged, suburban communities like this one in Suffolk County, N.Y., are bulging with new residents.
In addition to the ideal motifs, there are practical and psychological reasons which contribute to the growth of suburbia in the present conditions, even if they are mostly related to a romantic background.

The suburbanite moves away from the city, even if he cannot move too far, in order to assert his individuality and his desire for privacy and family life. In his detached house he is his own master and nobody can bother him; there he has room for all the members of his family, and his children can play safely and still have some contact with nature. In addition, the suburban dwelling endows the family with the respect due homeowners, which in turn makes the family part of a smaller, more homogeneous, clean and thoroughly bourgeois municipality. In tune with this he expects to find a fitting school and civic administration. A village-size community may be recreated. By way of fringe benefits the suburban dwelling is a sound investment, partly subsidized by authorities who consider homeownership a remedy to social evils, and it is a defence against inflation.

"One pro-suburban writer has listed some of the features of suburbia which he believes improve the quality of living for adults: 'New mechanical contrivances in the home, the wearing of casual clothes for comfort, outdoor dining, flowers, lawns, pets,
all these and many more pay psychological dividends, in the form of individual achievement, pride in ownership and workmanship, and community approval and admiration. Added to these are the social assets of more intimate associations with the neighbours, pleasures of gossip and visits. The net result is to glamorize life in the suburbs as a place of retreat from the threats and frustrations of urban living. Retreat from the frustrations of urban life, in fact, is a basic virtue of the suburbs."(20)

"Although William White was one of those writers who attacked suburbia in the 1960's, he offered an explanation for its phenomenal growth based on his study of the Park Forest suburb. In most cases the dominant factors for the move to suburbia were the space for the money, the amenities not anywhere else available, and most important, the fact that it was so well set up for children. Park Foresters went there for quite rational and eminently sensible reasons. Once there, however, they created something over and above the original bargain ... a social atmosphere of striking vigor. The developers were quick to recognize it and first they were just advertising Park Forest as housing but then began to advertise happiness."(21) On a similar pattern, even suburban condominiums are now advertised as happiness. Villa Montecito, for example, is advertised on the radio under the slogan "come to club Montecito", as if it were the place of peace and happiness. (Note B)
Usually the suburban dwelling is a building of one or two storeys, with a structure in wood frame, located in the middle of a rectangular lot, averaging sixty by a hundred and twenty feet, with the smaller side facing the street. In front of it there is a strip of grass, a few feet wide, parallel to the road, belonging to the city, which cannot be touched except to maintain it. In most cases the building is embellished with a low garden and a clump of small trees. A driveway and a footpath usually connect the entrance of the building to the public road. There is a garage or carport on one of the sides. This used to be in the back and to lead to an alley, which formed something like an elongated common informal court in the back of two rows of suburban houses, but this practice has been discontinued in the more modern subdivisions, and especially in the elegant suburbs. The building is the sum of a number of rooms generally rectangular, separately dedicated to the various activities of the family: sleeping, washing, cooking, dining, living, etc. The dwelling is a combination of little boxes piled in several different ways, all open to the outside; and the exterior is basically a bare piece of ground, reworked into a garden. The oddest thing about this building is that most windows have to face directly other windows of similar buildings, and that even from the public road it is almost impossible to avoid being seen except by pulling the drapes. The "New Yorker"(22) has a good sketch of a typical suburban situation:
It is important to note that this exposure to the public is not accidental, but deliberate: the good citizen has nothing to hide in North America, and in fact his family life is a kind of show to his neighbours, a continuous testimony of his good life. The neighbours consider their right to know what is going on, and nobody has the right, even legally, to hide.
The height of fences is normally subject to by-laws, and fences which would completely screen a building, especially a two storey building, would be illegal even if one dared to think of putting up such a thing. This leads even to the avoidance of curtains in living room windows. The living room becomes a showcase. It is even considered an offence to shutter one's windows against the neighbours. It is one of the reasons why living rooms are almost invariably placed on the street.

The street is normally quiet and does not lead anywhere in particular. The original grid system was interrupted in the more modern developments by a system of cul de sacs and of meandering curves which cater to the picturesque taste and suppress the amount and speed of vehicular traffic.

To realize that in suburbia one is not in a city it is enough to be dropped by car in the middle of a park-like suburban development, such as West Vancouver, B.C. One is in no man's land, miles away from any facility, from anything that one may need or want to do except walking alone. The fact that one is not in a park becomes obvious because everyone, including the dog, knows that the stranger does not belong there. One could die there, especially at night, as if one were in a desert or in an unfamiliar forest.
The people living in the suburban retreats become more strongly influenced by romantic psychological trends through their style of life, and their isolation becomes associated with a sense of guilt and a desire to be "involved". In "Crestwood Heights", for example, people adopt "a system in which an idealized goal is usually counterpoised by an opposed wish. The ideal of living in a small-town, semi-rural atmosphere is met by a desire to be as near the metropolis as possible. Desire to occupy an exclusive preserve is matched by an ideal of inclusiveness and warmth. Desire to live in a separate community with municipal appurtenances appropriate to the atmosphere of the Heights is accompanied by guilt at the 'selfishness' of this desire". (23) Sobin notes that "the men, women and children of suburbia are never quite together and never quite alone" (24) in their family and social relations. This is very much in tune with the ideal of the North American middle class individual, who may be often described as a loner, romantically incapable of being sincere and open, and yet who wants to feel that he or she is "mixing" with people all the time, is never quite alone, and is always exposed to the view and comment of the others. Isolation and a community are desired at the same time.

A number of studies have outlined the added costs that the "suburban myth" is inevitably causing, beginning with the cost of servicing hundreds of thousands of separate small lots
over a vast area. But despite the incredible sprawl of the North American cities, despite the waste of land caused by the display of grass that nobody can use, despite all the other costs and problems that this sprawl adds to the metropolitan city - from impossible transportation to a large contribution to the energy crisis - most people are still proposing as a solution to current "housing problems" to "make it clear that we have plenty of land to take care of our growth for years to come" and to supply more serviced land at lower costs, whether through incentives to private enterprise or through publicly owned land banks.

Yet the same people who make and implement these proposals are those who may visit a place such as Paris, who fall in love with some picturesque aspects that they may grasp there in a particular spot and who then regret that we do not have such an atmosphere. People note that our central cities have been decaying. As a consequence the proposals for more land for "housing" are matched by similarly ill founded proposals for picturesque renewal developments downtown. In the last years "pedestrian malls" and "sidewalk cafes" have been more and more proposed as a panacea for urban ills. R. Mann adds to these also "open air fish and vegetable markets". A picturesque myth, in the style of a small European town, for the urban centre often matches the suburban myth of a picturesque home among the woods.
The growth of suburbia is fostered by the fact that the choice of dormitories offered to the urban workers is quite limited both in terms of location and of type of accommodation. One can choose between a hotel, a rented apartment, an apartment in condominium, a rowhouse, a duplex, or the single family dwelling. With the exception of some hotels and apartments in the historical core of some of the largest cities, all of these accommodations try to come as close as possible to the concept, the style, and the fashion of the suburban one, which is at the top of the scale for convenience and prestige, in North America.

The hotel is by far the most expensive solution. Some of the most luxurious modern hotels, even if downtown, try to recreate the suburban paradise, as the Bayshore Inn could exemplify in Vancouver. Usually these hotels tend to become complete self contained units, with a small shopping centre within, a pool and recreational area, and a resort or countryside atmosphere. They are trying to conceal the unpleasant reality of being in the middle of a city.

The rented apartment is the next most expensive solution after the hotel. And renting is equivalent to losing money, because the tenant does not build up an equity. It is also risky, because the person who rents is exposed to all the dangers implied in having a landlord, having to meet payments every month, and having to pay ever increasing rent due to
inflation. Unfortunately renting is the only solution for the poor, who pay the cost of inflation in full.

The choice of rental units often is limited, and many landlords and managers have very strict policies, excluding entire categories of people, such as couples with children, students, etc. from their units. Normally the most modern buildings are the most desired and the most expensive. These fall mostly in two categories: the high rise towers on the downtown blocks, and the lower rise spread out townhouses of the areas between the suburbs and the core of the city.

These apartment buildings in form and style share all the concepts of the suburban fashion: they have most or all of the windows to the outside, they are detached buildings with some landscaping surrounding them, and stand in isolation with respect to the rest of the city exactly as the single family dwelling does on its tiny suburban lost. Even in terms of atmosphere and of facade these apartment buildings try to keep as much as possible of the "suburban myth".

Condominiums offer nothing different, except the legal set up. Their initial success was not overwhelming and developers had to "cast a concerned eye at the vacancy rate" of some condominiums. (28) Apart from other reasons, involving taste, marketing and habits, the appreciation of the small share
of real estate owned in many condominiums did not seem to offset sufficiently the depreciation of these semi-suburban inexpensive buildings, so that the advantage with respect to outright renting, for the buyer, was rather small. However, developers seem to find more advantageous the sale of the apartments, rather than the rental, and the housing shortage is producing a market where there is almost no other choice but to buy what is offered. With the increasing inflation that may come, and with rent controls, the entire picture may change drastically in favour of condominiums, and this may become the common set up of apartments of the future.

In contrast with the majority of the North American apartment buildings, European buildings in condominium have a very small rate of depreciation, and their real estate values increase at attractive rates, over a number of years, in direct relationship with their locations. European flats in buildings in condominiums are a prime type of real estate investment, and are treated just like lots are treated in North America, for speculative purposes, with the advantage that they can produce income.

The North American building - or cluster of buildings - in condominium shares in the suburban style not only because it tries to recapture the suburban atmosphere, but because it is a completely detached fabric. One might say that row houses,
an old type of accommodation, are the only North American building
designed for continuity, but it would actually be a mistake. The
typical row house, although sharing side walls for economy, is
in every other respect identical with the detached suburban house. It is similarly set back from the street, all its
windows are open to the outside, and its front and backyards
are equally open to public view. In addition, rowhouses, like
other dwellings, are grouped together as a category and have no
other uses mixed in with them.

There are a few comprehensive developments where
residential and other uses are mixed. Their nature however is
that of being isolated centres, and they are not designed to
merge in continuity with a similar urban pattern. On the
contrary, they normally stand out as distinctively different
massive units, as large detached buildings in which everything
is enclosed. Often, they are oversize shopping centres, or
compact shopping centres.

Shopping centres, the typical product of suburbia,
normally end up being "comprehensive developments" anyhow, because
they soon become surrounded by apartment towers and hotels. These
comprehensive centres have much more to do with the village ideal
than with the city. With their design, "in a profound misreading of the market, architects are fast making the improbable com-
bination of Le Corbusier's 'skyscraper city' and the self-
contained English 'New Town' into the architectural cliche of our
times."

(28)
In the North American urban panorama each building is designed as a detached and separate unit in the fashion of the suburban dwelling, regardless of its size, location and use; from office towers to warehouses the building normally is a detached fabric, located near the centre of the property and embellished by some landscaping at the periphery whenever possible. The model of a new residential project will typically show "a series of high rise tower apartments set in geometric patterns on an abstract green space carefully preserved against human encroachment." (30) The new term of "industrial park" is indicative of a similar mentality.

By contrast, even a superficial observation from the air of a European city like Paris would show a contrary pattern; the buildings extend rather uniformly and occupy the periphery of the blocks between the streets, ending with a sidewalk, and maybe even further, covering the sidewalk itself with an arcade, and ending just above the street.
A few illustrations of European examples may indicate more clearly some features of a contrary pattern:

The continuity of the buildings.
Continuous buildings screened by the scale of the treed boulevards.

Uniformity conceals different uses even in elegant sections: shops, offices, residences, small warehouses, department stores, etc.
An arcade or a gallery allows the continuous body of the buildings to extend above the pedestrian sidewalks.
Enclosed courts and gardens allow many arrangements.
We have mentioned in the first chapter that the North American cities tend to expand as a set of ever increasing villages, with an unlimited suburban sprawl. "Urbanologist Raymond Vernon wondered why the general American public paid little attention to the downgrading reports that suburbia had been receiving. The answer he came up with was that, to most Americans, suburbia represents progress and improvement, while they view the cities as being at a standstill." (31) But in fact, it is the village mentality which perpetuates itself. "Thus, while critics who are sometimes very well-informed scholars are pinpointing the flaws and problems of suburbia, the general public appears more concerned with the personal benefits they see in suburbia relative to their particular situation". (32) The villages multiply in size and number.

As we noted in the previous chapter, the North American urban fabric is atomic. It develops multiplying individual, detached, isolated constructions, growing like the stars in an ever expanding sky. In this it is deeply romantic.

It tends to infinity. It is the opposite and even a rebellion against the finite and limited walled city. However, it seems to be a rebellion in the fashion of an explosion.

"Nearly two-thirds of Canadians live in single detached dwellings". (33) In the best of the circumstances constructions of the new residential units look like this:
The atomic units are grouped in villages around shopping and business centres, and all together this complex forms a bigger individual unit. Sometimes it is even politically independent as a municipality, or two or three of these villages are grouped into a municipality. It is a development by dots and nuclei of dots, rather than an expanding network or other interrelated pattern. Many people equate highways with linear development: they are wrong. The highways have nothing on the sides, all that they do is to supply means of communications, movement, unrelated to the bare ground on the sides. People may not even look at the sides except to find where they have to turn.

Highways and streets in North America have become the answer to the sheer problem of movement, seen as a movement of isolated individuals and between isolated villages or nuclei of activity. This is why the freeway and the individual car have enjoyed so much popularity inside the precincts
of the North American metropolis, as opposite to public rapid transit. (Note C). Zoning fostered the isolation of activities in each village and in the metropolitan context formed by the conglomeration of the villages. The consequence is that according to the time when the various activities are supposed to take place, a stream of atomic individuals transfers at once from one zone to the other. When people go away from work, the business zone tends to be deserted as a field after the battle, an inviting area for drunks and criminals to roam through. When people go to work and to school the suburb empties in a similar manner. The hurly-burly of the shopping centres during peak activity and the vastness of the parking lots (how many times have you been unable to remember exactly where you left your car?) gives a good image of the consequences of these atomic movements in a polar fashion, from one centre of activity to the other, from one coloured block on the zoning map to the other.

There is an eclectic mixture of styles which go together with the areas, not only in fashions of clothing but also in architecture. The business centres retain whatever is left of formality, in a rigid code of semi-informality. The buildings have eliminated the capitals, and have streamlined vertically. Their classicism has been defined chiefly by Mies Van der Rohe. The exterior skin is permanent and shiny.
It bears witness to the industrial revolution and to "puritanical architectural" tendencies with the elimination of openly decorative ornaments and with materials which seem to express the principle of honesty and truthfulness to the natural aspect of materials. In fact these materials turn out to be quite different and generally more attractive than what they are really like in untreated and unsophisticated form. The design is a neat set-up of lines and planes, normally all straight. The buildings express efficiency; in order to communicate the idea of success and of wealth expensive materials and equipment are exposed with abundance.

Shopping centres on the other hand are stage sets for an informal and gay audience. The shopping is enclosed, the stage set is inside and one does not see anything from the huge parking lot or garage, except a large utilitarian oblong building. Inside the style is exotic and extravagant, full of striking colours and lights, deliberately elaborate, heavily decorated, gay and slightly confusing. Materials are often obviously false and imitated. Everything looks temporary. While in the offices everything is removable but made to look strong, stable and well finished, if not permanent, in the shopping centre even the permanent structure of the inside is concealed by materials looking purposefully temporary. The window shops and the interior decor keep changing, and there are almost always some special sales going on. It is as if the style were inspired by the philosophy of buy now, later it will be too late.
The individual house is the free style in the context of suburbia:

It is the little universe of which the family, especially the housewife, always dreamed. It may be Tudor, or Colonial, or Contemporary, or something else. The house is a slightly informal presentation of the dream, where the family retires at the end of the day and during week ends.

The extreme accentuation of the individual style of each activity is something that is in part made easier and in part created by the strict isolation of each activity, both in place and time. This reflects an ideal, not too different from the one that wants to see a specific stylistic form for each function. By the difference of style it is even possible to recognize the use and the activity. Even an item such as the window would be enough to distinguish an office building from a dwelling; an entire list of materials, from reflective glass and glass panels to precast exposed concrete, could be made to indicate the categorized uses of them. Interestingly,
even if apartment towers may be structurally similar to office buildings, the style is markedly different. One will hardly ever see an office building with balconies, or an apartment tower wrapped in shiny reflective glass. And apartment buildings try to camouflage themselves as much as possible to give the impression of being in a resort or in a suburban situation, maybe with a Spanish arcade at the entry, or with some sort of Tudor reminiscence.

By contrast one has to note that in the linear pattern of a city like Paris every activity participates to a degree in the other activities, both in terms of style and of physical proximity. The surface treatment of the facade may be interchangeable for an office, for an apartment, or for a restaurant.

In addition to being atomic, the North American urban fabric is outward oriented, extrovert, while the fabric of a city like Paris would be more of the introvert type. Most activities in the North American detached buildings take place at the periphery of a service core and in front of an area glazed to an unobstructed view. The interior of most buildings is visible from the nearby buildings and public spaces in a striking manner (that is, the attention is even drawn to look inside), while at the same time the interior is strongly influenced by the design for a view. The outside is the overwhelming fact of the North American building; it is always present, even more noticeable than the furniture or even, maybe, than the people inside. For example, chesterfields in
most dwellings will face a large picture window giving those seated on it the benefit of the view, but at the same time putting them on display for those outside; facing a dramatic view of the city from high up makes an office more attractive, and the large glazed area becomes the main feature of the room.

On the contrary, in many European cities the immediate effect of being inside the building is that one may completely forget the outside; the wall acts as a definite separation. It is extremely common to see European living rooms with the main chesterfields with the windows in the back. This happens even in the apartments on the higher floors in those locations that do afford a scenic view of the city, which is then enjoyed rather from a balcony. When one wants to see the outside, it happens that one actually steps outside.

Graphically the North American style can be synthesized by diagram 1, and the European style by diagram 2, where the darkened area is the part of the private land which is built up:

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[Diagram 1]
[Diagram 2]
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Diagram 1 shows the plan of a building that sits in the middle of the property in the rural tradition of the farmer of colonial times. It is the diagram of the basic unit of the atomic development of North America. If these units are added up and separated by public corridors, we have the typical pattern of the North American plan (diagram 3):

![Diagram 3](image)

In diagram 1 it is remarkable that the better part of the land is open, and open to the outside. The building itself has to open from all sides to the outside. The outside is even more dominating because of the vastness it has; the proportion is such and so directed that the relationship between outside and inside is an ever present feeling. The outside is always present to those inside; at the same time, in most cases from the outside the view of the isolated building is eye catching, and the activity behind the windows is highly noticeable. For those outside, the isolation of the building draws attention and at times is even dramatic; for those inside the vastness of the space outside draws as much attention and is sometimes equally dramatic. It is this unique set of relationships that we call the extroversion of the North American style. The open spaces
outside create a constant tension.

On the contrary diagram 4 indicates a different type of development and of relationships, as it took place in many countries in Europe and Asia, in many different periods:

![Diagram 4](image)

It is a style that could be defined, by contrast, as linear; it is normally accompanied by a fairly mixed arrangement of uses. The open spaces are proportionately smaller and clearly divided between enclosed private, and public. The built up area is so close to the open spaces that it creates no drama and tension; it is almost like a high fence, or a side wall which accompanies the movement.

It is important to contrast at least these two different systems because it is normally taken for granted that the atomic type of development is the one dictated by the market and by the natural economic forces. Instead experience in many different countries and traditions shows that other solutions can be equally or more viable even in terms of pure economic considerations, when they are allowed, and would tend to
show that the source of the North American style is of a non-economic nature.

In fact, recent subdivisions in some of the United States show that the market is now pressured by economic considerations to try to take other directions; there are lots that are being sold with concrete blocks at the perimeter, on three sides, so that the owners can extend their buildings to the wall against the other buildings and make better use of a smaller lot.

It is an oversimplified Calvinistic prejudice that "in our society, everybody likes to make a profit". (35). There are many small and large profits that the majority of North Americans will not like to make, for many reasons, unless forced to. For example, the majority of North Americans will never freely elect to ride a free bus to work, going at the same speed as a private car, despite the savings. Ultimately, the desires and motives that drive most people may be related to values which have nothing to do with making a profit, which may be quite irrational and which may not have been scrutinized sufficiently for a long period of time. A good example is the one quoted earlier, of those developers who started to sell Park Forest as money value in the form of housing, and who then noticed that people were more attracted by the appeal of an ideal style of life.
APPENDIX

NOTE A

In the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition classical Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle have been portrayed as defenders of the community of small or limited size. "Classical Greece appears as the first defender of the values of the Modern suburb, for there the small community was originally presented as the centre of the good life and there philosophers first insisted that an ideally satisfactory state must be limited in size" (36). This interpretation may be argued. The Greek debate about the Polis was centered on the perfect form of government. Size was a marginal consideration, which must be understood in the ancient Greek technological and political context. One can easily see that in proportion a town of 30,000 in the geography of ancient Greece was comparable to a city of anywhere from 500,000 to 3,000,000 today, as far as density, facilities and communications are concerned. In addition only free citizens were counted. No relation with the modern suburban village can be truly found: the Greek town was a city in the full sense of the word, autonomous and self-sufficient. The suburbs are specialized municipalities which depend from the metropolis for their very existence.
NOTE B

This is a photocopy of the advertisement for Villa Montecito as it appeared on the "Vancouver Sun":

This weekend, take a drive to the mountain.

Beautiful Burnaby Mountain! A twenty-five minute drive from the hustle and bustle of downtown Vancouver and you're back to nature. Out where the air is fresh and clean, the trees are green and growing, and the woods are there to wander. It's a great place to visit and now, it's a great place to live.

Now there's Montecito 2000 — the ultimate in condominium luxury and liveability. Nestled on the shaded slope of Burnaby Mountain, Montecito 2000 is convenient to both shopping and schools. And right next door is an eighteen hole golf course.

Each two, three or four-bedroom condominium comes with a wide choice of decorator options; private balcony or garden; and professionally landscaped and maintained grounds that leave you lots of spare time to enjoy doing what you enjoy doing.

And at Montecito 2000, prices start at $27,500 with down payments as low as $1,600 and mortgage at 8.5%.

Take a drive to the mountain this weekend. Our display home is open from noon to 6 p.m. Phone 231-6664.

Please keep this map as municipal by-laws restrict the use of directional signs.

MONTECITO 2000
Dawson Developments Limited
YOUR KEY TO CONTEMPORARY LIVING

Note the call to come "back to nature" from the "hustle and bustle of downtown", "out where the air is fresh and clean, the trees are green and growing, and the woods are there to wander."
NOTE C

Public rapid transit has had a continuous history of disappointments and failures in the North American metropolis, and has seldom been freely supported by the majority, despite its convenience and relative inexpensiveness for the individual users. Even more than for other forms of public transit the size of deficits seems to be often overwhelming, despite the financial support of local and of senior governements. The Vancouver Sun of February 27th, 1974, reports under the title: "Closure looms for BART":

"Officials of the most modern rapid transit system in the United States say they may have to close the line unless there is more money to cover operating losses.

Two senior officials of the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit district told a state senate committee Tuesday that they believe the 75-mile commuter train system will never pay its way.

They added that unless the state gives them fresh financial aid the entire $1.6-billion BART system may simply close this fall after less than two years of partial service."
CHAPTER 2.

(1) "The Vancouver Sun", July 30, 1974, p.3.

(2) M. P. DOUGLASS: The Suburban Trend, New York 1925, P. 122

(3) J. SEELY, A. SIM, E. LOOSLEY: Crestwood Heights, Toronto 1956, p. V.


(7) F. L. WRIGHT: Broadacre City, Chicago 1945

(8) LE CORBUSIER: Le Corbusier 1934-38, Zurich 1945, p. 67


(10) "The Vancouver Sun", March 12, 1974, p. 34.

(11) D. P. SOBIN: The Future of the American Suburbs, Port Washington, N.Y. 1971, p. 73


(13) D. P. SOBIN: The Future of the American Suburbs, Port Washington, N.Y. 1971, p. 65


(17) D. P. SOBIN: The Future of the American Suburbs, Port Washington, N.Y., 1971, p. 73

(18) B. BERGER: Working-Class Suburb, Berkeley 1960, p. 9


(20) D.P. SOBIN: The Future of the American Suburbs, Port Washington, N.Y., 1971, p. 69

(22) "New Yorker", June 9, 1973, p. 41


(25) "The Vancouver Sun", June 23, 1973, p. 35


(27) "The Vancouver Sun:, June 12, 1973, p.1 and Mar. 9, 1974, P. 47


(29) "The Vancouver Sun", July 13, 1973, p. 31


(33) "The Vancouver Sun", April 18, 1974, p. 50.


3. SOME CONTEMPORARY URBAN AND ARCHITECTURAL PROBLEMS AND DISCUSSIONS: THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA

It is now about two hundred years since the controversy and the conflict between "natural", "organic" and "human" things on one side, and "man made" and "artificial" and "mechanical" things on the other was brought to life and examined by the first romantics. It is not an accident that the romantic movement and the industrial revolution developed together, and that patrons of romantic art drew their financial well being from the increasing prosperity of the new economy, not without some sense of guilt.

One of the most recent aspects of this controversy is the attack against the automobile, seen as the mechanical idol that destroys not only nature, thanks to byproducts such as freeways, interchanges, pollution, etc., but also the quality of human life and even the existence of the cities.

A title on the front page of "The Vancouver Sun" of May 24, 1973, reads: "City subway proposed. New downtown plan puts people ahead of vehicles." And in the article one reads that "downtown should be made a place for pedestrians". Similar titles, articles, and reports from public and private planning agencies are found now and
then in publications in many North American cities. The automobile is one of the most popular villains in contemporary discussions about urban problems. Walking is seen as a virtuous and pure activity - as opposed to driving - which should be fostered at any cost; we may be approaching the mentality of prohibition in a illusionary crusade against contemporary private transportation. (1)
Many urban critics, attribute to the advent and the use of the automobile the decay of the city centres, the suburbanization of cities, the lack of social life and of opportunities for encounter, and many more ills of our cities and of our civilization. Yet these people do not realize that the automobile, like most industrial products and other aids created by human beings, did not spring from arbitrary circumstances, or as a result of chance.

As Marshall McLuhan put it, "many people would be disposed to say that it was not the machine, but what one did with the machine, that was its meaning or message. In terms of the ways in which the machine altered our relations to one another and to ourselves, it mattered not in the least whether it turned out cornflakes or Cadillacs." This is a mistake. "In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message."(2)

We find that in the case of the automobile, the machine was developed and marketed by the same kind of people and at the same time that suburban living was becoming more fashionable and zoning laws were beginning to be proposed. The people who could afford it were already
deserting the city, commuting the streetcars, railways and less efficient private means of transportation. It was the time when the ideas of Ebenezer Howard were fostering the North American dream of garden suburbs. The automobile came as the product of a well established culture, which, as Morton and Lucia White have clearly explained, was already intrinsically anti-city. Frank Lloyd Wright in his ideal "Broadacre City" made the automobile an integral part of the plan. The automobile, particularly in its North American version, was the medium created by an established cultural message. It was indeed as instrumental in emphasizing the shape of the North American city as subdivisions of land. However, the ideas were already there.* It was the message that created the medium.

It may be of negligible use simply to lament the existence of the automobile and to propose different means of transportation as a solution to the ills of the city; what is probably much more important to consider is that what people think about the city and urban life in general is what shapes the city.

*In this sense, I feel that one should correct and clarify the aphorism coined by McLuhan; otherwise an important element - the sequence in time - would be lost in favour of a vague identity which would not reflect the real aspects of cultural developments.
J.L. Sert said in 1947: "Our mastery of speed has become useless in our cities. Their main arteries are often clogged with vehicles, as though 'some kind of arteriosclerosis had attacked the city structure'. In some cases horses moved faster sixty years ago than automobiles do now." (4) A quarter of a century has passed and automobiles have kept multiplying, even if the problems have increased and in many places a horse or a bicycle would indeed provide faster transportation.

Most of the discussions centered around the automobile and the city ignore the fact that the automobile is a deliberate choice made by the majority of people as a consequence of a well established view of life and of the city. Richard Gerstenberg, chairman of General Motors Corporation, in reporting the record sales growth at the annual stockholders' meeting in 1973, remarked that such growth "is a compelling answer to those who are so quick to write the epitaph of this industry and to say that the people's love affair with the automobile is over." (5) The automobile was created in order to have a certain city, and its role can only increase with the growth of such a city. This involves a style of life, among the other things, that explains why the average car sold in North America has to be so large even if it is used mostly in the city and its suburbs, and it is seldom fully occupied, while the average European car, by contrast, is so much smaller, even if it is used more
often outside the city and to carry several people and luggage.

The North American automobile is a form of transportation produced by the same philosophy that drove the people to the suburbs. It is a rural dream partly derived by a sense of urban claustrophobia, by a desire of bigness, of open spaces, of individualism, and of unlimited expansion. What people do not seem to realize, in their outcry against the automobile, its pollution, the urban freeways, etc., is that the rural dream of the flight to suburbia cannot be accomplished by pedestrian malls and public mass transportation systems; less cars through the cities would necessarily mean a higher density of people residing in the city and over a smaller horizontal area. The failure of public systems of transportation in North America and the ever increasing sprawl of the suburbs and of their double carports should teach us that in a zoned city expanding with ever lower density private means of transportation are inevitable.

The paradox is that the flight to the serenity of the garden suburbs, the flight to the more organic and natural environment away from the dirty pavements of city streets, has produced a gigantic growth of suburban oriented industries, from automobiles and highways to lawn mowers and lawn fertilizing machines.
The recent mild energy crisis in the United States has suddenly shown more vividly some of the costs and the implicit dangers of the continuous expansion of the low-density zoned and suburban metropolis. People had to line up for hours at gas stations in order to continue their daily routines. Tom Wicker, of the "New York Times", noted from a city of North Carolina: "A fuel shortage is a serious matter anywhere, but in cities dependent on the automobile, it could become a catastrophe. It is not just that, here in Charlotte as elsewhere, mass transit facilities are minimal. In addition this city has been built outward from its own centre in long glittering strings of plastic, neon, glass and ersatz. For miles before a motorist reaches what used to be the city, shopping centres, fast-food joints, service stations, apartment and housing developments, glass office buildings line the roads in endless tribute to an illusory prosperity. What happens to the motels, the sprawling cut-rate department stores, the highway restaurants and the one-stop auto service centres if potential customers have no gas with which to drive to their sprawling parking lots?" (6) (And there are many cities in North America where to be unable to drive between isolated precincts means to be exposed to the danger of physical violence. The suburban garden cities may suddenly show in bitter ways their isolation from the urban context).
As we noted in the previous chapter, what has happened is that the exodus to nature toward the suburbs has been followed by a massive movement of commercial activities in the same direction; the metropolis has grown as a conglomerate of regional commercial centres and residential suburbs spread over a vast expanse of land, where the individual automobile has become more and more the only means of transportation. This most mechanical device has become an essential part of the general return to nature in the picturesque suburbs and of the lifeline necessary to maintain them.

The romantic disgust with the automobile, its noise, its pollution, its speed through the serenity of the quiet streets and its crowding through the main arteries, is being expressed now by the closure of important central streets to private cars. The "machine" is publicly rejected with the establishment of pedestrian malls. Here picturesque dreams and the crusade against the automobile have a field day.
Ecologists and conservationists may believe that ripping the pavement of a downtown street to bring back yet another garden with shrubs and trees and fountains in front of shops and stores means to begin a new - more "human" and "organic" - pattern in the city. But is it not a revival of the City Beautiful concept in a new style? Despite the supposed death of the Beaux Arts ideals, we see that the image of beautiful, sublime, artistic or picturesque scenes as the typical stage setting continues to fascinate people are are concerned about urban problems.

As an example one may see the study "Granville as a Pedestrian Transitway"(7) adopted by the City of Vancouver for the new pedestrian mall transforming Granville Street. The objective is to "beautify the street as a major pedestrian street in the downtown peninsula."(8) Among the other things, "parades and festivals"(9) are proposed to keep the area alive. The sketches of the proposed future arrangement seem to indicate rows of trees and sidewalk cafes as the most notable new elements.
For the reader who is not familiar with Vancouver one has to note that the people shown in the sketches could not be residents of the neighbouring blocks, because apartments are not foreseen in the surrounding area. Granville Street is not a street leading from one centre of pedestrian activity to another, like the Galleria in Milan (which goes from Piazza della Scala to Piazza del Duomo, the two most prestigious centres of the city), it is a street going from an eight-lane vehicular bridge to an old empty transcontinental railway station on the waterfront of the harbour. Finally Vancouver is a city that cannot count on a great pedestrian activity outside some sort of gallery, because it is afflicted by an unusual amount of steady rain. Cafes on open sidewalks are undoubtedly a dream transplanted from a vision of a sunny southern European town.

Oddly, this new pedestrian area is at a great distance from Gastown, the previous project of urban beautification and pedestrian enclosure. Gastown is a renewal of a square and adjacent streets aimed at recapturing the atmosphere of an old village. It remained isolated, no provision has been made to introduce any residential quarters for a population that could focus around it, and the shops and restaurants that took advantage of the atmosphere depend upon tourists and commuters. After a few years, its degree of success has already begun to give disappointments. It was another picturesque dream improperly
transplanted; in Europe these squares and streets are supported by the life of an integrated urban system and by the presence of a resident population around them that caters to the services offered there. (Note A.)

Often, it seems as if a beautiful stage, may be in the style of the central square of an ideal village, were all that is proposed to avoid the further decay of the urban centres or to solve the problems of the disintegrating cities. An engineer, an alderman who was elected to the municipal council of Vancouver, ran on a political platform which included: "Revitalize downtown by plazas and sidewalk cafes. - Freeze development where necessary (West End)." (10) But what good will sidewalk cafes make to revitalize downtown if high density residential developments nearby are going to be stopped? The underlying assumption seems to be that people would commute to the cafes as they do to the business centre. Sidewalk cafes seem to capture the imagination of the North American traveller as the key to a romantic dream of a city. Even the premier of British Columbia, returning from his first trip to the European continent, could not refrain from reporting the news that, "In Paris the sidewalk cafes are just fantastic, just fantastic." (11) As a consequence of the trip he decided to relax local liquor laws to encourage the adoption of this European idea.

For the redevelopment of Granville Island, at the centre of Vancouver, the architects included among the
the suggested uses "a museum, galleries, a fine arts school, a fish, fruit and vegetable market," (12) etc. These are some of the most typical romantic visualizations of low-density leisure-oriented activities, lending themselves in an excellent way to picturesque renderings giving a sketchy idea of scenes taken from vague recollections of places somewhere between Istanbul and Paris.

Houston "is luring people from the suburbs with a new kind of mall. It's called the Galleria: a three-level, air-conditioned, enclosed complex in the most affluent part of the city. Modeled after a shopping gallery in Milan, Italy, it also has touches of Rockefeller Centre in New York and San Francisco's Ghirardelli Square."* This "Galleria" is also considered an "antidote for loneliness": "Loneliness-isolation in a crowd - is a major problem in a fast-growing, mobile urban centre like Houston" and"a lot of people are drawn to the Galleria to overcome loneliness. Here they can mingle with the crowd, do things, and feel part of something - if only temporarily". (13)

* This is a confused parallel: the Galleria in Milan is simply composed of a portion of two intersecting streets covered by a glazed roof and reserved for pedestrians, mainly as a shortcut between two main squares and as a distinguished public area; it was not "zoned" for a specialized activity: there is just as much shopping in any of the neighbouring streets.
It is hard to believe that these kinds of scattered developments can do anything to decrease the expansion of the suburbs and to change the trends of the present urban pattern in North America. On the contrary, they only seem to emphasize the prevailing style of life. These pedestrian centres exist only as commercial temporary ghettos or clubs of commuters. Their integration with the rest of the city is quite irrelevant, if ever considered. Despite the fact that these are pedestrian areas, most of the pedestrians arrive by means of private cars; perhaps one per car.

The same romantic dualistic trend that sees as necessary a return to nature but that would like to abolish those automobiles and those highways that have been used to follow the ideal, also sees man as losing against the advance of industrialization and the city as an "inorganic", heartless "mechanical" product of industry and economics. Developers then become public foes, the enemies of nature and of the ideal model of the "organic" city. These issues become the object of strong public debate when new high density developments are proposed in places where pretty old buildings or parks would be lost by the defenders of art and nature. The positions become polarized between the defenders of economic reason, and even of science and efficiency, and those who want to advance the ideal model dear to the romantic heart.

An influential writer such as Lewis Mumford has seen the conflict between technological and organic development almost
as a matter of life and death for the future of civilization: "The internal problems of the metropolis and of its subsidiary areas are refections of a whole civilization geared to expansion by strictly rational and scientific means for purposes that have become progressively more empty and trivial, more infantile and primitive, more barbarous and massively irrational." (14) "The renewal of life is the great theme of our age, not the further dominance, in ever more frozen and compulsive forms, of the machine." (15) Morton and Lucia White noted; "like so many earlier critics of the city, Mumford is enthralled by the notion of the organism, by Emerson's and Coleridge's view that there is an invidious distinction to be drawn between mechanically imposed form and organic form that grows from within." (16)

Mumford, like many other people fearful of the advances of industry and of the conflict that they see between man and the machine, does not seem to realize that the real conflict is not between man or nature and man-made mechanisms, but internally between human ideas and desires that shape our romantic and contradictory civilization. It is conflicting ideals, not the machinery that may express and serve them, which are the source of the shape of our "barbarous" or crazy cities.

Mumford came near to this understanding when he observed: "One cannot bring about the renewal of the city by replacing old structures with new buildings that only confirm the obsolete pattern of city growth and that rest solely on the equally obsolete ideological foundations of 'mechanical progress'". (17)
The problems of the city are "a matter that must be attacked at the source". (18) But he failed to identify the true source. This is the mainstream of philosophy which allows people not only to be dedicated to "mechanical progress", but also to see problems in terms of conflicts between man and machine, or between "Art and Technics", or between intuition and reason, for example.

We owe to this dualistic representation of reality, which we may have inherited from the need for anguish of the romantic generations, not only the inability to see the truth of the circumstances that confront us, but even the creation of some of the conflicts which are worrying so many people, and which are presented as necessary or even inevitable. Instead of seeing the complexities of real life unfolding in a variety of ways with an integral and calm eye, ready to take advantage of what is useful and to reroute what is harmful, recognizing a mixture where pleasant and unpleasant can never be completely separated, the world is seen exclusively as a set of polarized extreme tendencies, where it is necessary to take sides and to fight the enemy to the end. This fight can be absurd if the enemy turns out to be fictitious. It is the struggle in perennial and grand conflicts that rewards the missionary and heroic spirit of the romantic movement, of which we are still part in many ways. The contradictions of the modern metropolis are seen only from one extreme or the other, and instead of being eliminated, they are made permanent: thus we zone residential suburbs and we discourage driving.
The struggle to save nature from human pollution and to save the rural belt around the cities may be seen in this light, as examples of cases where the emotionalism of popular crusades grows in a state of public confusion and romantic ideals obscure understanding of the basic issues.

Recently the provincial government of British Columbia, an "avant garde" government, has undertaken the duty of saving the rural belt around Vancouver with an almost sacred zeal, arousing an uproar only from the defenders of private enterprise, uncontrolled economy and "laissez faire" theories, not because the basic idea of preserving agricultural land as something better than urban development could be questioned, but simply because another area of speculative investments has been restricted. Again lines of battle have been drawn between the "obviously" good and the "obviously" bad. The principle of the goodness of saving a rural belt around Vancouver is not seen as a debatable issue among the majority. (One may be astonished to note here that British Columbia has less than 5% of the population density of European countries, including such mountainous and partly rural countries as Switzerland and Austria).

The question was only whether or how much developers and speculators might be financially hurt by a ban on rezoning as urban land agricultural land. At the same time the side effects of such a decision, the inevitable increase in density of the city, the rise in the prices of urban land and the end of the growth
of suburbia once all the available urban land is used - namely the end of the romantic ideal of a garden city for the metropolis - have all been put out of mind. The dream of the saved rural belt and the passion of the debate about who is going to make or to lose money have, at least temporarily clouded over all other conflicting obsessions.

It is significant that only a short time after the decision to preserve the rural belt had been made, "The Vancouver Sun" came out with the title "Council faces dilemma on West End* rezoning". (19) The dilemma was whether to allow a further increase in density at the core of the city or to put a limit to it.

The opening paragraph of the article said: "City council will decide Tuesday whether it's worth risking large rent increases for West End residents to improve the quality of life in their area." It is important to note that in the news media and in the minds of the majority good quality of life and lower density seem to be identifiable terms even at the expense of limiting the number

* The "West End" is a residential district in Vancouver, close to the downtown area.
of people who should be allowed to take advantage of "downtown" residences to their own convenience and pleasure and for the good of the city (lessening commuter traffic, adding more people to populate the streets, shops, outdoor cafes, etc., thus making the city function properly). Whether this is true or not is never actually discussed in public. When people talk about "the quality of Life" certain values are taken for granted and form the basis of common understanding. Yet these unchallenged sets of values that form the underlying philosophy or cultural trend are those which should honestly be exposed and critically reviewed. It may turn out, then, that some of the dilemmas are improperly understood, or even fictitious.

It is the underlying philosophy* that sets in motion entire chains of decisions at the origins of the problems which people like Mumford and many others have perceived mostly in their unpleasant external manifestations, and then explained in terms of a dualistic interpretation.

* The system of romantic values, which leads to a certain notion of what the relationship between nature and the fabric of the city should be. It is the belief in an organic system where sparse detached buildings and low-density settlements blend with parks and allow a contact with nature.
A planner did note in the case mentioned before that in Vancouver "citizens are not oriented to large city thinking; they are rural-oriented and that's why they are interested in greenbelts." (20) But these occasional observations after the fact may be more useful to stir isolated arguments than to provide an insight into the complexities, profundities and pervasiveness of a strong cultural tendency. It is, after all, worth the trouble to study this matter further, for the attitudes of the citizens of Vancouver are bound to coincide to a great degree with those of people in many parts of North America.

The mayor of Toronto "said he is not against high-rises as such but said they will not be tolerated if they are built at the expense of existing neighbourhoods" and that "most of the automobiles can effectively be banished from within a radius of two miles of the city centre." (21) The conservative government of the province of Ontario has promised legislation to preserve farmland and to establish a parkway greenbelt around the area of metropolitan Toronto. In Vancouver the third crossing of Burrard Inlet, a bridge or a tunnel to relieve the traffic of the existing bridges, was stopped for fear that it would have increased the traffic and the density of the downtown area to an untolerable level. The episode of the Spadina expressway* was an antecedent in Toronto.

* The Spadina expressway was designed to connect the core of metropolitan Toronto with the system of peripheral freeways. It was stopped. The public reacted against the danger of excessive traffic and density downtown.
Yet the only true solution to implement the ideals of a city which does not grow in density and is limited by a permanent rural belt at the outskirts is that of a moratorium on population growth, something that no one is proposing in the open and that may be economically unfeasible even if it were politically possible. In the current trend of population growth, which will not be stopped in the foreseeable future, to advocate less automobile traffic is to advocate at the same time an inevitable increase in density. To advocate lower density is to ask for more land and more private means of transportation in the metropolis. These are the inescapable dilemmas of those who choose the ideal of a romantic garden city but at the same time would like to see it limited in size and for pedestrians only.

The ultimate weapon that romantic conservationists and ecologists may use against the city is the fear of pollution: however true the problem of pollution is, it is also the last device used to keep the public worried about the need for ever larger parks and green spaces, as if these were the elements determining the quality of life in a city. It seems that the ideal city of the future is to look like vine covered Angkor Vat at the moment of its discovery. It is as if a city were considered more livable if it had more parks and greenery; in this respect, cities like Venice and Siena should be considered utterly unhappy. In a new proposal such as the redevelopment of the industrial
area around False Creek, a sea inlet at the heart of Vancouver, to scatter residential buildings as if in park and to provide a pedestrian village-like atmosphere and a large percentage of parkland were the answer in terms of design to the future of the city.

* Mostly land reclaimed from a sea inlet at the very edge of Vancouver's downtown district. This could form a beautiful sea water basin at the centre of the city.
APPENDIX

NOTE A

The "Vancouver Sun" of August 3, 1974 (p. 18), reports: "A York County grand jury said Friday the Yonge Street Mall is a disgrace and should be closed."

Monday, August 5, 1974 a public holiday, downtown Vancouver was closed to traffic for the enjoyment of pedestrians, who were supposed to stroll around and to enjoy the sun from the instant sidewalks cafes. The public response was so unenthusiastic that the experiment will not be repeated.

Kimberley, B.C., had the honour of appearing on newspapers (22) for this prize winning beautification project:
BAVARIAN STYLE street in Kimberley has won 1973 Park and Tilford trophy for beautification in B.C. Regional awards went to Downtown Businessmen's Association of Port Alberni, Chilliwack General Hospital Garden Park, Polson Park in Vernon, Inland Natural Gas of Kamloops and Dawson Creek.
CHAPTER 3 - SOME CONTEMPORARY URBAN AND ARCHITECTURAL PROBLEMS
AND DISCUSSIONS: THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA.

(1) "The Vancouver Sun": August 9, 1973, p. 4.


(8) Ibidem, p. 43

(9) Ibidem, p. 11

(10) "The Vancouver Sun", December 9, 1972, p. 49


(12) "The Vancouver Sun", June 12, 1973


(22) "The Vancouver Sun", Sept. 21, 1973, p. 43.
4. THE ROLE OF ROMANTICISM AS A CONDITIONING FACTOR FOR ARCHITECTS AND OTHER PEOPLE INVOLVED IN URBAN DEVELOPMENTS

"Development is programmable;
Discovery is not programmable."(1)

This statement by Buckminster Fuller synthesizes some of the romantic dilemmas posed by the need to reconcile the necessary work of reason with the creative flash of intuition, which may strike at random and enter into conflict with the planned path of reason. Also, it underscores and it explains the intellectual origins of some of the basic conflicts that are said to exist between the world of industry, of engineers and of planning agencies, and the creative world of architects - two worlds ruled by different laws and objectives: the first presumably following the dictum of "the Moloch that knows no God but more"(2); the second, the architects at least would like to believe, residing within the domain of humanity and nature.

According to circumstances and professions people divide themselves between those who wish the unprogrammable and those who wish "sound development". One side seems drawn to the needs of the heart, of spontaneity, of creativity, of vision, of inspiration, and even of happy randomness. The other seems to respond to the needs of practicality, of "realism", of material necessities, of
bureaucratic planning, of compromised and reasoned solutions, of technological constraints. In our society it is often the one who sides with "creativity" who is considered to be the hero, while the money-maker who sides with practicality and "realism", is classed among the villains.

The architect is expected to take the side of "creativity", of human values, of people, of spontaneity, of discovery, of intuition, against the forces of money, of technology, of mechanization, of dry and uninspiring reason. The architect is expected to be a genius, the man gifted with vision who can channel human efforts towards the creation of inspiring and praiseworthy environments.

Even in the team of architects the people eventually want to know who is the one inspiring the design, who is the leader, who had "the idea". This is the image that has been created by critics and historians for people as remote as Brunelleschi or as recent as Wright, Mies Van der Rohe or Arthur Erickson. It is a widespread image that does not make the work of the architect easy.

Clients want to see in their architect someone who is as certain as a genius should be and who can read their minds. Ultimately he must be the creator of form from a magic pencil, an artist working out of his intuition and inspiration and giving shape to their unexpressed dreams in the physical world. The reasons for the forms chosen may be of little interest to the client, and may be as numerous and conflicting as the philosophies
of the last century, from utilitarian functionalism to communitarian realism, from historical reminiscences to an idyll with nature. Anything goes, provided the dream of the client is captured or the dream of the architect can be successfully presented to him.

Because the architect as an intuitive man can only have an individual inspiration, however, each design must ultimately be an individual statement, according to the prevailing image. By training and by popular notion the architect normally falls into the habit of seeing himself as a kind of artistic genius, and his notions of what things should be tend to become stronger and stronger with less and less critical scrutiny. The architect becomes a victim of the image of genius that is cast on him. "Design" means, among the other things, personal originality and invention. The more "authentic" an architect tries to be, the more vivid the subterranean contrasts between his personality and the client or the other interests become.

In many offices the client himself often becomes the philistine villain who threatens the entire creation, and who has to be persuaded to accept the design and the views of his architect with good or bad manners. Sometimes this may not succeed, and the architect may then blame "society" for some of his compromised and ruined designs, or for some designs which were not accepted. In this way the architect may open his way to a sort of romantic isolation.
Each design is supposed to be new and separate, and to reflect the personality of the man, the team and the institution that produced it. The humility of the continuity of development would be branded "imitation". This fragmentation of "creativity" and of "inspiration" is one of the reasons for which architects too, in general, are against a total city plan, and would find it a dictatorial imposition which would destroy their opportunities for individual inspiration and freedom of expression. It is an exasperated individualism that would render it impossible for architects to work all together as a profession toward the implementation of an urban plan agreeable to all. Unity is impossible. The architect is a romantic loner.

The architect may be anxious to communicate with people, to work for people, to develop an environment for people, but in fact the people are the great victims of architecture in the North American city, even if people are in the mouth and in the drawings of many architects. Renderings show lots of people involved in all sorts of happy activities. Architect Geoffrey Massey ran and was elected to public office in Vancouver saying: "I will work for people-oriented development of Vancouver's downtown waterfront ... Citizen's involvement in all stages in new development."(3) Yet these good intentions fail to materialize even in a structured workable communication system between "the people" and "the designers". They remain a general naive feeling or urge which many leaders pretend to satisfy through a
number of meetings with large groups of people regarding the most emotional issues of this or that development - meetings which seldom result in reasoned, logical action, if any action results at all.

The popular image and the concept of the profession that architects follow seem to conspire to make the architect feel alone and opposed to other people. The architect tends to emphasize his pure artistic commitment as a sort of "puritanical" opposition to the ways of the world, in which he is a "pure" loner. His code of ethics is supposedly stricter than that of comparable professions, such as engineering. Typical injunctions in the by-laws of almost any North American institute of architects will show that "no Architect may engage directly or indirectly in any of the building or decorating trades"(4), and that an architect is not permitted to advertise or to compete as businessmen do.

As a consequence the architect may be rewarded by the feeling of having a more pure profession and of having a greater dedication to the values of art, of conservation and of improvement of the environment, but he is hampered by isolation in the business community and by an uneasy feeling of belonging to a very weak and restrictive profession. He tends to be against engineers and planners because he sees them invading upon his profession and doing poorly what he is supposed to do better.
In particular he is against the engineer because he believes the engineer actually designs without the understanding and the vision of the architect, and because the engineer seems to analyze problems and to promote developments according to what he believes may be an excessively mechanical, materialistic and profit-oriented philosophy. He is against the planner sometimes for similar reasons, but more often because the planner seems to act as a blindly rationalistic bureaucrat and to work according to codes and routines which do not leave any room for imagination, design and creativity. The planner is disapproved for his ostensibly narrow-minded aim toward statistical efficiency, standardization and programming.

Developers and politicians too are castigated by the architect for what he sees as a deficiency of high morals. Developers are seen as enemies of design, of good taste, of the environment, ultimately as enemies of the people and friends of those other "villains", the engineers. The developer is seen as corrupt, as the man or the group who would produce and sell the least for the most profit.

The developer is seen as the typical philistine, even when he is the client. He is sold to the profit mentality and to "the Moloch that knows no God but more". He represents mechanical industrialization and unlimited growth for cities. He wants economy, repetition and uniformity and has no patience for arts and crafts, for details and for the creative originality
of the architect. He is for the highest possible density, while the architect is for a spread of density according to "good design", "human scale", landscaping and proportion. The architect wants to foster contact with nature, while the developer is expected to want the maximum possible artificial enclosure. The developer is equated with the polluter, while the architect brings nature to the people in the city. The architect is against politicians because they are not "pure" enough; they compromise, they are supposedly weak in their stand against philistine developers, they do not have "vision" and they do not allow creativity to express itself.

But the architect himself often can be accused of possessing certain philistine characteristics; his faith in intuition, visions, innate creative ability makes him disregard anything that looks pedantic or scholastic. He is inclined to little study and to avoid the tedious aspects of training; even architectural education itself is a problem. Thus architects may be easy victims of unscrutinized cultural trends and of cyclical fashions.

The position of the architect seems to be as difficult as that of anyone who has to reconcile intuition and reason while at the same time firmly believing that they cannot be reconciled. The architect is caught in a typical and crucial romantic dilemma. It is a dramatic situation, if taken in complete and serious good faith. Many architects seem to be permanently frustrated and many others change their role. Some
surrender and work for developers, lending the prestige of their more pure profession to make acceptable to the public the affronts to nature and common taste that developers sometimes seem to make.

Architects are often frustrated by the limitations imposed by the system of zoning and of the "suburban style" of design. Those architects who try to be faithful to their vocation to creativity and to the pure profession at times unite their voices with the others, who serve the developers, to fight the strict limitations imposed by by-laws and ruling authorities for the design of new buildings, but both fail. The first ones do not have the means to see the real roots of the obstacles, and instead of challenging the basic ideas at the roots of the restrictions, they make a general plea for rather vague notions, such as freedom of creativity or more human needs, and the others are easily defeated as people with a vested interest in getting away with anything that they want.

Because of its ultimate dependence on an obscure notion of intuition, the right intuition that the "gifted" architects have, design tends to have the features of an occult science. Sometimes a complex methodology is used to bring dignity and order to the creative world of intuition and to supply technical, social and scientific foundations. Draftsmen are the large bureaucracy which is entrusted with the responsibility of making the occult science work, in general, once the design concepts have been established by senior architects. The result of this process
is that there is a great inertia of ideas, of principles, of methods that go unchallenged, as if they were the deposit of a religion, because an uncritical, large and hard working bureaucracy is trained and established on them.

The strength of the status quo is reinforced by a wrong emphasis on speed: an intuition of the "gifted" people (called also, with biblical reminiscence, "talented" people) is given to the production teams of draftsmen, whose main concern is that of turning out reasonable working drawings as fast as possible. Money in this case would be an accepted reason for speed. "Time is money". Once the pure flash of creative intuition has permitted the development of a design concept, considerations of time and money regarding the production of working drawings become quite acceptable to the conscience of the architect. But the original concepts developed by individuals or teams of designers, with considerable time, a complex methodology and many intense meetings, and with the background of great experience and of voluminous information, often express intuitive decisions which repeat even in a pedantic way existing patterns of architecture. A blind tradition could continue endlessly through this process, without even being detected. The same "intuitive" creative pattern could be followed by generations of "talented" men, in the absence of a popular rebellion.

It is worth noting that architectural professional
associations expressly forbid their members to criticize the
design work of other members.

The understanding and the development of a new intellec-
tual tradition of design, as a common body on which to grow
and to work and to contribute for many designers, draftsmen
and tradesmen, is made very difficult. The development of
architectural design is a monopoly in the hands of something
not too different from an occult sect: principles of design may
have been placed beyond the realm of reasonable criticism.
And in most cases the balance between individual creative commit-
ment and usefulness and the necessary practical routines is
broken between two categories of people, between two activities:
that of the professional architectural designers and that of the
draftsmen. The creative and the productive processes have been
"zoned".

In addition the builder is normally cut off from the
opportunity to contribute to the design and to the working
drawings for ethical and professional reasons, and even in the
case of a project management with a team of engineers and
architects the builder will have a hard time co-operating with
designers and draftsmen. The consequence is that a great amount
of time is spent producing specifications and drawings whose
major objective is that of being a legal protection for the
independent architectural office and possibly a legal trap
for the builder. Details which do not work or difficulties, in terms of construction, which went undetected will normally increase the cost for the contractor unless he was good enough to spot them before being involved and to clarify the matter with the architect.

The architect regards the builder as a potential legal enemy, and thus isolates himself even further from those with whom he ought to be working in close contact.

Despite the emphasis on design and creativity, the actual method of working makes the architects as a group more inclined to actual repetitive practices than engineers. This happens despite the fact that genial architects see themselves as inventors even more than engineers. Ideas, which are more basic discoveries than new technological contrivances, are often left unused, ignored and unquestioned by a professional group that has isolated itself to an intellectual romantic limbo.

Thus in the "creative" process of the design of most projects the same trite romantic basic notions come out again and again moving toward the assembly line of working drawings: people, nature, "design", and ultimately beauty according to the latest fashion, often contrasted by emotional observations against the evil power of money and commercialism, as if these conflicts were really necessary and had to really exist.
Now planners and politicians also tend to emphasize the need for preservation of the environment, and the need of contact with nature and of recreational developments, against exploitation of the land in high density and pollution. The trend of politicians has been shifting, during this century, from being business-oriented to people-oriented.

The themes that plague the romantic architect are being followed by politicians and other professionals. The other professions seem to trail the leadership of architects, because the image of the architect as that of the romantic hero is still popular and the issues and motifs raised by architects seem to appeal to the popular imagination as part of the romantic struggle against visionary monsters.

Schools of architecture and of planning are places where students often develop an undetected interest for the romantic dragons. Great debates profoundly involve the academic community of future professionals; and students learn not only how to sell their dreams, but especially how to create issues to be fought for or against. Ultimate faith in individualism and personal intuition make communications among the future designers dubious and problematic, so that - especially when the criticism of professors is not immediately available - everyone seems to be working with a different monster and in a different place, even if the main themes of the struggle are quite repetitive and
common. Emotionalism makes difficult a critical analysis. Design is an occult mystique where a few high priests deliver sermons in an obscure language influenced by the vocabulary of the prominent philosophers of the romantic age:

"Design is form-making in order
Form emerges out of system of construction
Growth is construction
In order is creative force
In design is the means - where with what when with how much
The nature of space reflects what it wants to be ...
In the nature of space is the spirit and the will to exist a certain way

Design must closely follow that will ...
Through the nature - why
Through the order - what
Through design - how ..."(6)

In the darkness illuminated by such flashes of intuition faith in nature and organic life seem to be at the basis of the architectural religion. Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright are still among the old prophets. Nature is seen as an uncorrupted source of wisdom (Rousseau is in the back of our minds) that must be preserved and with which we must be in contact; it provides us with the wisdom of the right reason that evolves and develops itself as it would normally if men were not tempering imprudently with nature. Man has to learn and to adapt himself to nature. His environment must be organic and one with nature.
Nature actually is interpreted in a way that is reminiscent of an idealistic sort of Hegelian reason forming the universe, to which we must submit ourselves. And the architect sees himself as a custodian, a defender and an interpreter, through inspiration and intuition, of the correct development and evolution of the universe, guiding the "spaceship earth" (Buckminster Fuller) in the right direction.
CHAPTER 4


(3) "The Vancouver Sun", December 9, 1972, p.49.

(4) BY-LAWS of The Architectural Institute of British Columbia, article 51, paragraph (1).


5. ROMANTIC ATTITUDES AND UNWRITTEN ROMANTIC LAWS
IN THE MODERN NORTH AMERICAN CITY.

Popular notions about the architect, often seen as a sort of high priest of the environment, are accompanied by even stronger common opinions about what the environment should be like.

Jane Jacobs noted: "To say that cities need high dwelling densities and high net ground coverage, as I am saying they do, is conventionally regarded as lower than taking sides with the man-eating shark."(1) In the ideal romantic habitation "everything is in its place. The abruptness, the barbarities of the world are far away. There is not much sound, except perhaps the musical whirr and clack of a mowing machine being pushed back and forth over a neighbouring lawn."(2)

What was the dream of Ebenezer Howard, for the English suburban residence and the garden which is an integral part of it, is now the established ideal. It is now a common notion that it is gardens and parks that make cities beautiful and livable.

One is supposed to love, revere, cultivate and know nature as part of his civilized and suffered urban condition. To know the proper names of decorative vegetation is a sign of education, of good taste and of proper interests, and while the memorization of Latin verses is no longer fashionable,
the knowledge of the proper Latin botanical names classifying flowers and shrubs remains a sign of refined culture and of sophisticated mind in a large segment of our society.

The view of "nature", even if only a chunk of trees, is considered almost an essential need. An apartment must have a view on the sea, on a park, or at least on a golf course, or a secluded hillside, wherever possible. Even if it were not forbidden by the by-laws, a unit with no windows (technically perfectly feasible) would be considered a scandal. Names such as "Twelve Pines" or "Magnolia Manor" are among the advertising devices used to attract buyers to condominiums. The garden and the lawn are such an indispensable symbol that people will simulate a lawn with painted gravel, or plastic grass, or green outdoor carpeting, in places where, as in Arizona, the lawn becomes practically and economically impossible. Entire sections of department and of food stores are dedicated to gardens and lawns. These are the expression of individual creativity, status, and taste, and they are the subject of many conversations and proud remarks. Gardening is also considered a healthy activity, just like jogging, and the trees are known to have a biological purifying function, which is translated into an almost cathartic view of the trees in relation with the city.

If high density or industry cannot be avoided, it must take the form of isolated buildings in a well landscaped setting.
"Industrial Parks" are encouraged. "A 1966 popular booklet on the proposed Official Plan for Toronto declared that "tall, free-standing apartments in landscaped grounds will be encouraged"(3) Elegance and beauty are expected only from isolated buildings in landscaped open grounds, wherever possible. Other arrangements are seen as inferior, if not slum-like.

Not long ago a proposal such as that of taking down the trees along the sides of the streets of the West End, in Vancouver, to make way for wider roads, caused a minor uproar. A gentle old Scottish lady explained with horror that when she was in Quebec "the French" used to bulldoze away all the trees to make wider roads. Also as a consequence of this attitude the car is seen as an enemy of nature, and ultimately of people. The car and the garden are at war. And yet as we noted earlier in Chapter 3, the same forces back both. The more suburban gardens that are created, isolated from places of employment, shopping, entertainment and education, the more private cars are needed. An efficient public capillary transportation system has proven again and again to be economically unfeasible for North American cities, and becoming increasingly so. The suburban citizen simply cannot understand the need to support public services. An unspoken or unconscious preoccupation with private facilities at the expense of public ones seems to be the dream that motivates the majority, whether these dreams be logical and possible or not.
The private means of transportation and the private garden rate equally high among the ideals and the dreams of the people. After all, the successful North American free entrepreneur does not travel in a bus and does not look at a sidewalk from a little balcony: the North American image of success is not living neck to neck with other people. Instead, isolation midst large spaces characterizes this image. The North American hero is the successful loner.

The romantic return to nature in North America has been mostly a movement of isolated individuals, at the head of a family, each toward his own garden. Part of the North American dream has been that of asserting one's superiority, isolation and success at the outskirts of the city. The more successful and the more moral man is expected to live there, close to the grace of his garden and to the inspiration of nature, with his family. The statistics show the consequences of such a dream when everyone wants to share it: \(^{(4)}\)
To have a suburban house with a garden has become almost a moral goal in North America. Being married and living in a house in the suburbs increase substantially not only one's respectability, but also one's credit rating and social acceptance. Love between man and woman and love for nature are recognized ideals, united in a sentimental view of life.

One has to note that historically romanticism seems to have grown earlier and stronger in the northern Anglo-Saxon countries. There, better than anywhere else, the love for emotional inspiration and self-satisfaction, the love for nature and the love for isolation developed as a total way of living and as a complete philosophy. Moral and ideal factors, rather than being drawn from experience, were derived from inner sentiments as a source of inspiration to shape life and experience and to recreate the world according to the ideal. For socialites in North America the beautification of cities became an increasingly popular hobby, just as cultural gossip had been a hobby in the earlier French society. "What ought to be' has nearly as much reality as 'what is'. It is something 'go go for'. (5)

Thus there is always a great deal of concern about urban matters among leaders of the North American communities, and in general, aesthetic urban matters draw a considerable amount of interest. The missionary romantic spirit often manifests itself as a crusade to improve sections of the city.
For those who could not afford the suburban house a substitute for suburbia in the city was made possible by townhouses with a certain amount of open space held in common, or with small individual gardens where density permitted it.

But for the remaining urban dwellers picturesqueness and the planting of trees are proposed again and again in various forms to revitalize the city. Drawing large malls with plenty of trees and shrubs and happy strollers and no cars has become a cliche, and it has become identified with the concept of "revitalization. In *Life for Dead Spaces* Goodman and Eckardt propose a system, illustrated with appealing renderings full of people among trees and shrubs: pedestrian malls would become the nuclei of revitalization. In *The Heart of Our Cities* Victor Gruen follows similar lines.

To eliminate the car, to bring the trees into the decaying centers of the cities (and perhaps add a few sidewalk cafes) is the common recipe for the ills of the modern North American cities. These visual dreams originating with remote memories and visions of happy European villages are deeply rooted and are repeatedly presented as the urban solution. For example, in the 1929 Plan for Vancouver, in the chapter "Civic Art Report", on the page where considerations about the "Burrard Street Site" are made there is an attractive picture of "Foreshore Development, Monteaux (sic), Switzerland." The actual development
of the town of Montreaux, on the lake of Geneva, in French Switzerland, may have nothing to do with the actual development of Vancouver, a less than a century-old harbour on the Canadian Pacific coast.

Yet these romantic images play a major role in guiding politicians, planners, and voters, presenting false and unattainable ideals. I may note, incidentally, that Switzerland is one of the paradises of the Anglo-Saxon world. The pretty images of geranium pots decorating the window sills of the buildings of small Swiss villages are among those dearest to the romantic imagination. Projects of attractive developments attempt to recreate a village atmosphere around landscaped open spaces designed to foster neighbourhood communities.

The mistaken assumptions of this kind of design have been exposed in an article published by Progressive Architecture in October 1973\(^9\): "One widely accepted tenet is that large, shared open areas around project buildings are desirable. On the assumption that every resident could use these areas for recreation and leisure, open space requirements often have been met by building higher and assembling superblocks. The automobile, seen as an anathema, has been banished from the inner space and through roads removed. Since main building entrances are often designed to face away from perimeter streets and into the shared space, their use requires a circuitous route from the street, parking
or public transportation. Even at its busiest, anonymity makes it a no man's land in large projects." The question that should be raised when renderings of these open spaces are presented is whether there is a real basis to believe that they will be used for leisure and recreation as it is assumed.

Actually these common landscaped spaces have become, in many places, a nest of crime, and are feared by the tenants. Crime has transformed the common spaces into feared areas and entire sections of cities, not to speak of individual buildings, are treated as if they were in a virtual state of siege. Patrols, security checks and circumspect behaviour take the place of open urban civilized life. The fragmented, specialized aspects of urban life imposed by the ruling taste are threatened as if in an urban nightmare. Despite this, specialized activities, open spaces, and low density remain the ideal of the majority.

Against facts and evidence crime is said to be fostered by high density per se (a study released in December 1972 by the Vancouver police showed that contrary to popular opinion crime is proportionally higher in suburban areas such as West Vancouver than in high density areas such as the West End). It is an example of the deeply rooted idea in the northern, Anglo-Saxon mind that the city must be evil and full of criminals and vices. This is how cities were portrayed in "puritan"
literature since the Renaissance. Sometimes one must suppose that Rome, the metropolis by antonomasia, is still Babylon, still the power of darkness, still a creation of the devil.

This is why one may see with no surprise that from Sweden to Australia the papers bring us examples of determined opposition to the growth of cities: "The Vancouver Sun" of December 15, 1972\(^{(10)}\) reports that the Swedish government has made it policy to consider urbanization 'an evil per se'. On March 31, 1973\(^{(11)}\) the same paper reports that "The higher you go, the madder you get" and explains that in Sydney, Australia, "The unanimous decision by the 12 aldermen of Kogarah, a 'garden suburb' with a population of 50,000, will restrict future residential dwellings to no more than three storeys for environmental and mental health reasons". One would wonder whether the Parisians, for example, must be half crazy, because so many among them live above the third floor.

Many psychologists and psychiatrists have been supporting this prejudice although evidence for this support has so far been superficial. "I told the council that it is generally accepted in psychiatric circles that the higher you go, the madder you get", said Dr. Koller of Kogarah, mentioning unspecified "research done in many cities throughout the world".\(^{(12)}\) Design, cultural and qualitative aspects seem to be completely ignored in this kind of research and assessment, which is practically impossible to make if one considers all the factors involved.
Probably J. M. Richards is right when he says (13):

"The suburban style - that style which is, we are told, the very citadel of debased and vulgar taste - is, in fact, part of the background of the England we have all grown up in." This seems to be true whether we actually grew up in England or not, probably because of the tremendous influence of the English fashion and taste - even in non Anglo-Saxon countries - in the past century.

Richards continues: "The suburban environment is the choice of people who know what they like, and the architecture of the suburb may even be called a true contemporary vernacular."

"The house has always resisted change and drastic technical improvement because it is the most important resource of tradition and cultural heritage. Custom and symbol have as much to do with the shaping of houses as almost anything else. The hearth of the English cottage, - says Arthur Erickson (14) - the courtyard of the villa, the French window, the painted clapboard of New England, have become like words in a language - symbols of past attitudes and ways of life that stand for comfort or grace or security.

People will buy the symbol in preference to performance. Now Cape Cod comes out in aluminum. What more could one want! Contrast this with the pattern of houses in any of the Mediterranean or Latin cultures (cultures, which, by the way, have a strong sense of social inter-relationship). There the individual house unit defers to the social space - the street, the square - the space between. The perimeter of the house that adjoins the social space, whether it is the house wall or garden wall, joins with
all the other houses to form the architecture of the communal space while, within the privacy of the walled area, each family can, unseen, live its different life. But even now, in Italy and France, they are beginning to buy Texas ranch houses."

Ruralism and specialization of activities are spreading as fashionable myths.

Specialization has created a certain routine, and has built into the people the need for clean, neat, defined separations. People "go" to work, "go" shopping, and it is felt that a certain distance should separate these activities. Even if you are a professional and it is legally permissible, an office in your house detracts from the seriousness of your activity. Similarly an office on the side of a drugstore is not as convincing as an office in the middle of two hundred other offices. A specialized tower is a sign of good taste, order and prestige. Although the pure office tower "constitutes a tremendous waste of well-developed land that is used only about twelve hours a day"[15] it is presented as the most efficient building technically and economically because it is the right thing, supposedly, in the minds of businessmen and of the majority.

Specialization is considered very important in residential buildings too, and the high rise apartment building of distinction is similar to the suburbs in that it strictly isolates itself from any other use. Separation is a sign of distinction and of prestige. The people of success and distinction want to find their togetherness in the separation of a club.
In this respect the "integrated" buildings such as the John Hancock tower in Chicago and other "comprehensive" developments are working on the basis of social separation; they are clean and neat and separate in the sense that they are complete little, self-sufficient, enclosed worlds. Their slogan is: "you never need to walk outside" of these buildings. The typical view of the city is here no longer merely a distortion as seen through rural eyes; it is virtually negated and disregarded. In fact, just outside the well-guarded gates of such a building there could be riots, slums, misery; from inside you do not even have to hear about it. At worst, you switch the television channel. The new form of integration that is being proposed instead of the zoned city is in fact even a more fearful separation. It is the integration of a club. It is the same attitude and the same culture to its extremes. The step is from a fragmentation of activities to a closer grouping of activities with an apartheid of social groups.

Curiously people who take pride in the fact that they were born in North America and that their ancestors were among the original Anglo-Saxon settlers sometimes complain that new immigrants "stick together" and "don't mix". "These immigrants adopt the language of the native American*, they wear his clothes, they steal his name and they are beginning to take his women, but they seldom adopt his religion or understand his ideals."(16)

*Of course, not an Indian
The newcomers were supposed to mix with the natives, but at the price of a complete renunciation of their intellectual and psychological background. The fear of the newcomers, with a confused, unknown and mistrusted cultural background, is part of an important and contradictory racial attitude, whereby the immigrant is at one and the same time welcomed, assimilated and rejected. It would be a mistake to overlook the significance of the Anglo Saxon racial attitude in the organization or urban life, in North America. The theories about evolution developed in the nineteenth century found a fertile ground in the racial observations that people such as Hume and Kant* had contributed, where the Northern and in particular the English race is portrayed as the best and the black races are shown to be at the bottom of the human scale of values.

The evolution of man from the primates became the scientific base for a theory of racial evolution as well, in which the inferior races, such as the black races, were seen as closer to the animals, as if they were primates just come down from the trees. Other races were seen as intermediate stages, and the Anglo-Saxon race was seen as obviously the most developed, advanced, civilized and good race.

Progress therefore also acquired a kind of moral meaning, implying among the other things the acquisition of the values

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*Kant's observations on races were made popular in the English speaking world in the first half of the nineteenth century. Some of these are quoted in Chapter 1. Racism and romantic idealism often nourished each other.
of the most developed race. This is why it is normally considered only a matter of time and of patient education before everybody else would reach the stage in which it would recognize the values and the culture of the leading race as the best. At the same time the other, inferior and feral races were seen as a threat and as a danger if they could not be improved: there could be a falling back in the line of progress and development, a catastrophe destroying the advance of civilization, and the Anglo-Saxon leading race could be threatened or even wiped out. The attempt to purify, to make clean, beautiful and good the North American cities involved also an attempt to control and to mould the non-Anglo-Saxons.

Madison Grant, in "The Passing of the Great Race", expressed some of the common fears: (17) "...It is evident that in large sections of the country the native American will entirely disappear. He will not inter-marry into inferior races and he cannot compete in the sweat shop and in the street trench with the newcomers. One thing is certain: in any such mixture, the surviving traits will be determined by competition between the lowest and most primitive elements and the specialized traits of the Nordic man: his stature, his light coloured eyes, his fair skin and light-colored hair, his straight nose and his splendid fighting and moral qualities, will have little part in the resultant mixture."
The Nordic group saw itself as a missionary group that was supposed to save civilization after having brought it to its highest standards. Just as the North American continent was seen as the promised land, the leaders of the founding race were seen again and again as the new Messiahs. This is why our confidence and ability to put everything into a proper place and to create a neatly organized community supposedly should never be lost. The angelic quality of the superior destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race is also at the roots of what is considered its unwritten right to separation and dominance.

A letter to a Vancouver columnist published on "The Vancouver Sun" reads (18): "I take exception to your harsh, unjust and often-times unwarranted criticism of Anglo Saxons holding lawful power in the community, to the exclusion of other races and 'ethnic' groups. If you care to read history you'll find that wherever the Anglo Saxon has set foot, justice and progress has flourished - not the smugness and arrogance you conjure up. Democracy, as we know it today, springs from the Anglo Saxon system of fair play. Would you deny it? Colonel Winfield Jones summed it up this way: 'The Anglo-Saxon is the typeman of history. To him must yield the self-centered Hebrew, the cultured Greek, the virile Roman, the mystic Oriental. The Psalmist must have had him in mind when he struck his soundless harp and sang:

'O Lord; thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou hast made him to have
dominion over the works of thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet.' " Walter Lippman made this comment about this kind of attitude:\(^{(19)}\) "...We have this feeling - this comes from the Puritans - that we are a chosen people with a mandate from God Himself to make a perfect world for ourselves and everybody else. Of course that is a terrible myth."

This is why in North America in general there has been a silent but deliberate imposition of a certain order on the cities, and an order cast upon situations and things rather than developed through a harmonization, in time, of existing and evolving factors. Even in a place like Houston, where there is not a zoning by-law, the cultural, political, economic and legal pressures have produced the same result as in the other cities, after the introduction of written by-laws. The silent agreement on attitudes and values is actually more powerful and pervasive than the laws.

"The Anglo-Saxon fears overpopulation and crowding. The Anglo-Saxon claims to trust human beings, and to trust as well the benevolence of nature; he abjures the darker, tormented, pessimistic views of Europeans. The Anglo-Saxon relaxes in a clean, orderly, neat, virtuous world; he has a terror of noise, confusion, dirt, human density, tangled emotion. (Contrast a New England Congregational church with a Spanish chapel or Jesuit baroque). But the terror is not clearly stated. The Anglo-Saxon trusts the human heart and the benevolence of nature only under certain conditions: when both are under the control his
own will has imposed. The Anglo-Saxon is not 'at home' in this universe; he must master it. Fundamentally, it terrifies him."(20)

In light of these observations we can have a greater insight into what Jane Jacobs notes:(21) "People gathered in concentrations of big-city size and density can be felt to be an automatic - if necessary - evil. This is a common assumption: that human beings are charming in small numbers and noxious in large numbers. Given this point of view, it follows that concentrations of people should be minimized in every way: by thinning down the numbers themselves insofar as this is possible, and beyond that by aiming at illusions of suburban lawns and small town placidity. It follows that the exuberant variety inherent in great numbers of people, tightly concentrated, should be played down, hidden, hammered into a semblance of the thinner, more tractable variety or the outright homogeneity often represented in thinner populations. It follows that these confusing creatures - so many people gathered together - should be sorted out and stashed away as decently and quietly as possible, like chickens on a modern egg-factory farm ... Systems of thought, no matter how objective they may purport to be, have an underlying emotional base and values. The development of modern city planning and housing reform has been emotionally based on a glum reluctance to accept city concentrations of people as desirable, and this negative emotion about city concentrations of people has helped deaden planning intellectually."
The "International Herald Tribune" of June 26, 1974, reported on the front page: "Congressman Seeks to Plow Funds Into Backyard Gardens".

"Rep. James Burke, D-Mass., is cultivating an idea that he thinks is as ripe as sweet corn in August ... For starters, Rep. Burke has asked the House Agriculture committee to enact a bill distributing free vegetable seeds to home gardeners, three packets to a family. Then he persuaded his colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee to approve tentatively a 7 percent investment tax credit for backyard garden equipment. 'The home and family garden tax credit amendment', as he styled it, would let gardeners subtract up to $7 on their income-tax bills if they spend up to $100 on hoes, rakes, wheel-barrows, spades, pitchforks and such...

Rep. Burke, who remembers with considerable nostalgia the Victory Garden produce he raised as a boy, no longer gardens himself...

Rep. Hays gardens on week-ends - tomatoes, peas, beans, corn and so on - but this is an election year, which means he can't keep up with the weeds the way he ought. Personally, he has been more upset by the rising price of flowers than inflation at
the vegetable counter. 'I usually put in geraniums around the house when the tulips are finished', Rep. Hays said. 'This year geraniums went out of sight. I planted marigolds instead.' "
CHAPTER 5


(3) ALAN POWELL: The City: Attacking Modern Myths, Toronto 1972, p.41

(4) A. DOWNS: Opening Up the Suburbs, Yale University 1973, Table 1

(5) D. MACFADYEN: Sir Ebenezer Howard and the Town Planning Movement, Manchester 1933, p.11


(8) A Plan for the City of Vancouver, B.C. 1921, edited by the Vancouver Town Planning Commission, p.243

(9) "Progressive Architecture", October 1972, p.92

(10) "The Vancouver Sun", December 15, 1972, p.3

(11) "The Vancouver Sun", March 31, 1973, p.89

(12) "The Vancouver Sun", March 31, 1973, p.89


(14) H. SYMONDS: The Question of Housing, Vancouver 1967, p.44

(15) "Progressive Architecture", October 1972, p.92


(18) "The Vancouver Sun", March 28, 1973, letter to A. Fotheringham

(19) "The Vancouver Sun", April 7, 1973, p.6


It is a common assumption that society acts in terms of the best market value. The monetary value - and usually influenced by this the abstract value - of an object is commonly established from what the people will be willing to pay for it. This is considered to be almost a "law of nature". (A question comes to one's mind: even if one gives his life free, is that valueless?).

It is a law of nature not dissimilar to the one established by Hobbes, that each man is a wolf to another man ("homo homini lupus") and that recently led to a situation in the housing market fittingly described as being "like cannibalism"(1). Whether cannibalism is a deviation from nature or is part of nature may be debated. However, what has become clearer in the last few years is that the rights of the market in its unlimited free competition may have to be curbed. A stronger and stronger movement toward controls has developed as a consequence of the distortions of what was supposed to be a naturally free market.

The views on the market of real property and on other kinds of markets have been influenced by almost every philosophy that has arisen from the Renaissance to our days. There are those who believe that men are basically bad and need the defence of government, like Hobbes, and there are those who believe that men are basically good and, like Locke and Rousseau, believe
that assuring "natural" conditions of life the best results will be obtained.

It is probably to Locke that we can attribute the greatest influence on North American thought regarding the concepts of property. He maintained that the state of nature is a state of peace, benevolence, mutual assistance and defence. In the state of nature the property was in common in the sense that all men had the right to draw the means of their subsistence from what nature offers to them. Locke gave an original interpretation to this theory, which was as old as the early Middle Ages, saying that although the state of nature is ideal, it is also true that the individual has a natural right to possess and control all that with which he has "mingled" the work of his body, such as the land that he cultivates.

He was probably influenced both by the examples of the colonists in North America and by the superior capacity of production of private agricultural economy in comparison with the common cultivation of more primitive systems. Fundamentally he thought that through his labour man extends, in a way, his personality to the objects he produces, and by spending his energies working on them he makes them a part of himself - property becomes an extension of man, in the jargon of McLuhan, and of post-Kantian philosophy. Property exists even without the need of any explicit agreement of all the members of the community; it is a right that every individual bears in his own person, just as he bears the physical energy of his own body.\(^{(2)}\)
Therefore society does not create such a right and cannot regulate it except within determinate limits, since both society and the government exist, at least partially, in order to protect the pre-existing rights to property (we will see this concept expressed in the portion of the Municipal Act of British Columbia quoted in Chapter seven).

When Locke enumerates the natural rights, he always speaks of "life, liberty and property",* but in fact property is the only natural right that he examines carefully and with great emphasis. He established a complex of individual and irrevocable rights which limit the competence of the community in defence of liberty and private property of private persons. In this respect he is the forerunner of liberalism, since he presumed that the two things - the defence of common good and the protection of private rights - lead to the one identical result. His theory was based on the idea that in the harmony of nature the good is in any case the final end of evil.

During the American revolution the slogan "life, liberty and property" changed to that of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". In the declaration of independence of July 4, 1776, one reads: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (3). The relationship between property and happiness had always a strong influence on North American thinking and led some people to believe that happiness could be part of a purchase. We made a reference earlier in the second chapter to the notion of buying "happiness" when one buys a house.
Locke's influence on the political thought and on the philosophical premises of the revolutions both in France and in America was great. Even his more sketchy ideas, such as the separation of powers and the inevitable wisdom of the decisions of the majority, remained a fundamental part of North American democratic creed. His influence on the nineteenth and twentieth century has been profound. Among the others, Bentham and utilitarianism were "the culmination of Bacon's, Hobbes' and Locke's methodology". (4) Locke himself was of Puritan descent, and his ideas fused well with the Calvinistic ideal regarding property and ownership which was entrenched in North America.

The romantic religious revival and the rise of the bourgeoisie gave even more strength to the defence of private and individual property as a tangible and visible proof of good moral character and of personal value. Ownership of property, especially of real estate, was the new title to nobility both in a social and in a moral sense. Property was not supposed to be hidden. Owning gold was always considered less virtuous than owning a ranch (eventually it became illegal in the United States), and the person who rented was seen as something less than the person who owned a home, even if both owned the same total worth. Tenants were not allowed to vote in civic elections. It was felt that only the tax-payers - property owners and businessmen in particular - were the ones who were supposed to have a dividend in the country. Their obvious contribution to the general welfare gave them a special aura of sanctity. Owning property was seen as a kind of special right to a first class citizen-
ship, and as a sign of ability to participate in the business of running the country.

A visa to the North American countries may not be granted even today to people who do not own a certain minimum sum of money. Several witnesses report that apparently during the depression of the nineteen thirties, in the towns of the prairies people were arrested for walking in the streets without carrying any money. Not owning anything was a sign of bad character and intentions, and taken as an offence. Being of good character meant to be willing to work hard and therefore to have property. It was considered a theological impossibility that a man could be of good character and willing to work and have no property at all. The same mixture of faith in nature and in a certain kind of divine providence or inspiration allowed the creators of the American dream to believe that the majority of taxpayers would naturally determine the best course of action.

The majority has been granted a kind of collective holiness. Just as earlier the kings were ruling by divine right, the majority came to be seen as a body naturally inspired to move in the right direction. Romanticism not only wanted to bring the people back to nature, but also wanted to transfer the responsibility of the decision-making process from a rather small aristocracy to the crowd. The crowd would freely determine the true destiny of the nation. Many mechanisms were devised to allow the masses to express their desires in an orderly and
accurate manner (including dictatorship), and also to protect the minority from being completely wiped out.

In the economy the free marketplace was supposed to determine accurately the will of the majority; a kind of natural mechanism, through what were supposed to be the laws of demand and offer, in a regime of free enterprise, free ownership, competition and equality, was at work to shape the economic destiny and prosperity of the nation. A mechanical and naturalistic view of the economy was inherited and applied by the romantic bourgeoisie from the philosophy of the rationalistic enlightenment. The laws of the economy soon became another instance of romantic dualism. On one side there was the mechanism of the market, on the other there was the struggling individual. The economic hero soon became as admired and as popular as the great artist and politician. The stories of the Carnegies and the Rockefellers became like the stories of the saints of the late middle ages. Their foundations became institutes for the betterment and the progress of mankind, making their names shine for generations, and maybe for eternity.

The economic hero became a part of the American dream, just as the inventor or as the explorer. An unlimited land with unlimited resources was supplying a market with unlimited growth. The dream of infinity had expanded into the economy; and yet the market was supposed to be a tight, mechanically regulated system. The economic hero was supposed to master its laws and to prevail as an individual; the great free enterpreneur dominating
over unlimited growth. Development was seen as a mission in which the giant free entrepreneurs were the high priests. Success was a virtue which in part could be taught and in part was a divine gift, an indication of having been chosen. Selling became a duty and a test: the market was supposed to be the truthful judge of the value of the individual and of his products.

The architect too, as everybody else, became hard pressed to succeed, both as a businessman and as an artist. Selling his ideas, his personality, his image became extremely important; he was now acting as a free enterpreneur with a public, rather than as the designer for a powerful lord. It was now "the market" that supposedly decided the success of the architect and of the developer. Taking the market toward the desired direction was supposed to be the new task of the successful man. Public relations became a very important part of the selling activity, and a new field of study.

Efficiency and speed were soon discovered to be among the most pressing demands of the market. But speed was the most important factor. It was not only important to sell one's products, but to sell them fast, faster and faster. Speed was also an instrument for beating the competition of the free market. The market was a rather unpredictable entity and this feeling gave a general sense of instability, making speed even more important. What was desired today may not be as desirable tomorrow,
Faith in unlimited resources and the emphasis on speed brought the dawn of the age of consumism; in fact consumism and advanced civilization became identified. According to this trend products were designed to be produced and consumed rapidly, for ever changing demands. Most buildings were designed to be temporary, to last one or two generations, and in fact they were consumed and turned into slums. The time span allowed for the depreciation of buildings is becoming increasingly short and today it is not infrequent for building inspectors to mention that they expect a wood frame building to last only twenty years. There are cases in which the life span of a building is outlasted by the mortgage.

"The market" produced rotten two storey houses and skyscrapers which stood for years side by side. We mentioned earlier the competition to sell the fastest rubbish in town in terms of drawings; actually the competition to sell the fastest saleable rubbish had become a general trend fostered by the market. In the age of consumism pollution control and garbage disposal alone are becoming crucial industries, which do not seem to have the capacity to keep up with the momentum of the production and the refuse generated by the market. It is with a certain alarm that people today are beginning to recognize that the system imposed by "the market" is challenging the existence of that very nature of which it is supposed to be the economic facet, and it seems to be destroying itself. Now people are beginning to talk about an "energy crisis" in North America, and about a scarcity of land. The romantic feeling of an impending catastrophe is succeeding to the visionary dream and the feeling
of unlimited space.

There had been signs before warning that the market and the majority may not be that wise after all. The collapse of the stock market and the depression of the thirties had been the most notable example. In the first years of this decade the economists were bewildered again. It is beginning to be recognized that "the market" may be crazy and unpredictable, undefinable, volatile and irrational. It is noticed that "the market" is a rather mysterious, undefinable entity. The wisdom of the majority and of consumism are beginning to be questioned too. More controls of the free economy are invoked and applied. Some of the socialistic remedies are beginning to be applied to the North American countries. Waste of resources is no longer justified by speed of meeting a demand only.

Strong historical and political reasons however seem to have conjured to make a phantom abstract entity, "the market", the arbiter of all values and developments. The market was a faceless institution hopefully controllable by those already established in a position of managing large capitals. It was a machinery sanctified by operation according to what was believed to be a sum of natural laws, independent of cultural values. It allowed the establishment of a new aristocracy, according to free laws of competition, through the creation of limited companies, where a small number of people could control, without a risky personal financial involvement, the assets of a large number of people.
Europeans have often criticised the inclination of North Americans to refer everything, ultimately, to values in terms of money. They have not realized the magnitude of the problem and of the task of shaping countries made of immigrants, who came from scores of different nations, cultures and religions. It was believed that in such a pluralistic culture the only way to work was to leave personal values at home and to establish the money value as the only valid and natural common denominator among the people. This was very much in tune with the Calvinistic morality of the initial ruling class. At the same time the things which established themselves at the top of the monetary scale of values became identified with status and as such became desirable or even necessary. This is another reason for which the house with garden became a common denominator among the ideals of the growing middle classes.

This was also a reason for shaping the cities according to what were, supposedly, the practical needs, in a very pragmatic manner, and avoiding discussions that would have involved considerations of such dangerous, touchy, emotional and unmeasurable things as sentimental or cultural values.

Land too was subdivided across the continent simply according to the rules of rectangular surveying and of the market. "Town planning is the art of laying out cities to serve the business requirements, convenience, health and comfort of the public. It is guiding the growth of a village or a city in conformity with a scientific design." (5) The city as the
Aristotelian centre of the "good life" is deliberately forgotten. Strictly pragmatic considerations and the fear of conflicts and of physical hazards were the important matters, and only these were allowed to put some restrictions to the free play of the market. How could a Chinese, a Ukrainian, a Negro and an Anglo-Saxon have made decisions together? Therefore the pattern of ownership was developed trying to adhere to a sense of geometrical equality.

We must note again that the romantic revolution was also the revolution of bourgeois liberalism against the previous systems of tyrannical or of feudal origin. Many by-laws, such as setback laws, reflect an interpretation of the ideal of equal opportunities for all in their properties, the defence of individual private property, the ideal of non-encroachment, of liberty with conflicts prevented through legislation.

Individual ownership, and particularly ownership of land, was such a sacred thing that for a long time in North America such things as the ownership of a portion only of a building could not be conceived. Real estate was called real because it was tied to the land. Free enterprise, in real estate as well as in the other fields, was fostered, protected, and regulated through various legal frameworks, such as city by-laws. Land development was protected and encouraged, but it was also realized that the citizens had to be protected from possible excesses of free entrepreneurs. Original subdivision
were planned with these things, and particularly with equality, in mind: and what is more perfectly equal than a square of land assigned to each citizen, apparently according to the ideal of ancient utopias? Thus untouchable boundaries established through ownership and early subdivisions of land paralyzed the cities into gridiron patterns, strictly zoned to protect the investment made by each citizen.

The new moral and religious conscience revived by romanticism stood behind the protectionist attitude toward this system of real estate. The property owner and the taxpayer were the aristocrats of the new system and of the new conscience of the bourgeois community. And like the old aristocrat, the new property owner lives in the fear of change, a change daily emphasized by the uncertainties of the economic free market, and relaxing in the comfort of the legal boundaries and constraints which he expects to be designed to protect his established interests. The bourgeois started fostering the free market (as opposed to the aristocrat who wishes it closed) until he acquired property and by extension some of the privileges of aristocracy; then he began to desire to close the market to others. The desire for stability and the fear of such foreign elements as blacks, Orientals, or Jews, for example, led to the establishment of restrictive covenants. Country clubs and other private institutions in the form of a club sheltered even more the new class.
The rigidity of the present titles to property is one of the reasons for which the pattern that was so quickly established in the North American cities is now so slow to change. The rectangular lots of the North American system may be contrasted with such a view as that of the lots of Arnol, Lewis (figure 1), and of Pitminster, Somerset (figure 2), in England (6), which witness a slow and complicated subdivision of land and transfer of titles over a long period of time, without a geometrical or equalitarian rule. Today the image of these old English subdivisions is appreciated for picturesque aesthetic qualities - and new subdivisions in Olmsted's style may imitate them - rather than as an example of slower and less mechanical subdivision of land, which cannot be imitated in a short time and larger scale. The frightening view of such a thing as Daly City (figure 3), California (7), allows one to see even more clearly the contrast of the North American type of land development and subdivisions. Here we see the effect of the senseless speed at which tiny equal lots for tiny equal houses eat up huge portions of land at the outskirts of cities. These developments foster, in turn, additional land speculation. We have already mentioned the absurdity of a market that spends twenty million dollars on a parcel of land for a skyscraper, while a shack occupies the next parcel, perhaps for an entire generation. It is believed that the "market" proves these things right; after all, if there were no economic convenience involved, presumably they would not happen. (Note A).
Figure 2
This is a misconception, because the economic convenience of most land developments is simply coming from expenses added to other parties, normally the public in the form of municipalities and especially in the form of future generations, which inherit exorbitant costs of land and of services as well as a mess to clean up. Inflation makes most uneconomical skyscrapers economical in the long run. This means that we all pay for them.

From the point of view of the individual developer of the single parcel of land, in the present conditions, it would seem that to build the most compact building on a small portion of the lot is the most economical thing to do. This, however, is not the true situation of a free market, and even this economic argument would collapse if different conditions were allowed. With different laws and with more respect for future generations the developer could choose to establish a more permanent building attached to other more permanent buildings. The overall cost could be very similar with the savings provided by attached and unified buildings and more compact services, and the remaining property could be left with a clear design for recreational and future uses. The market then would not be fragmented into small lots and limited to considerations of return within a relatively short-range speculative return, but would consider a long range return and the total gain of a large number of people including future generations.
It may sound utopian, but this pattern corresponds to a large extent to the pattern of the development of many cities of other continents, where property is subject to different regulations and people inherit amortized and sound buildings. The problem is that the "economic cannibalism" already mentioned is deeply rooted in our society. It used to be a trend built into the romantic culture that different generations would compete, rather than help each other, so that the general attitude of the older generations was that of exploiting the new generations, through the pretext of "the market", in this particular case. The enmity among generations was such that each generation would tend to secure only its immediate desires, and would try to use the other generations to this end.

A recent example in Vancouver, which reached the proportions of a scandal, was the way renters were treated by owners of wood-frame apartments with a high rate of depreciation, who converted their apartments into condominiums forcing young and old to buy their rented accommodations - a sort of legalized blackmail, reaping an irrational profit, which was the compensation for no work and no significant additional investment.

Similarly, experience is not considered a precious possession to be passed from one generation to another, but is used as an economic weapon by the older generations both to protect themselves and to exploit the new generations as long as possible. Therefore just as in design, there is an interest
in keeping "the market" as a mysterious notion, despite the
fact that it is indeed a vague and volatile body. Consumism
was, in fact, an economic notion masking plain egoism; it
is particularly unfortunate that under the false pretenses of
rapidly and cheaply accommodating growing needs a large part
of urban North America was built and designed for rapid decay.
This trend seems to be even emphasized by newly framed rental
and condominium units.

It has been noted that the fathers tend to create
an environment which is intolerable to the next generation. As
architect R. Mann observed "when father trades in real estate
in a sellers' market, he is artificially creating prices
which his own son will never be able to match. It's like
cannibalism. We've created this market and now our own
children are not going to have a place to live in the city."(8)

Two of the most damaging aspects of the artificial
low density of North American cities produced by the establish­
ment of the single family dwelling as the desirable form of
living are the wild land speculation, especially at the
outskirts, and the economic ruin of the municipalities at the
core of the modern metropolis. The major burden of the expendi­
tures for public facilities is borne by the cities at the core,
which receive none of the suburban homeowners' house taxes, but
only their business taxes (if they own a business downtown)
which must be maintained at a reasonably low level to entice
businesses to retain a downtown location. This is one of the
factors in a system that fosters the eventual bankruptcy of the urban municipalities, as, for example, New York, where the city is in a desperate financial position while outer municipalities prosper.

The cost of the suburban sprawl is seldom publicly acknowledged: impossibility of constructing an efficient (in terms of cost, return on investment, accessibility to the average member of the public and speed) public transportation system, the road network, the need for at least two cars per household, the maintenance of the properties, the sanitary and storm sewers, water, gas, telephone, and electrical lines, the land held for speculative purposes in the middle of the gigantic sprawl (increasing even more the distances,) the divisions, the quarrels and the independent development of the municipalities spread over a large area. To justify all this in terms of what "the market" wants, one would have to be blind to the fact that the market is created by arbitrary values, and that these values can be subjected to scrutiny and can be changed.

It is beginning to be noticed, however, that "the market" is pricing out of the suburban dream the vast majority of the new generations, who will not be able to afford the single family dwelling because of skyrocketing land values. The ultimate result of this kind of inflationary land market, where trading in real estate has been a traditional way of both beating and causing inflation, will be that of forcing a change of life style.
It appears that the land market has normally exploited population growth more than industrial growth. This would not be surprising in consideration of the fact that industrial and technological improvements have had only a minor influence on the bulk of low rise framed dwellings. Homer Hoyt, in his study of Chicago land booms in the century ending in the nineteen thirties, showed that land and real estate booms occurred almost in direct relationship with the real or expected population growth, which until now has not been placed under control, while they are somewhat independent from the fluctuations in industrial growth.

Other factors pushing up land values are new transportation routes, new directions of expansion and rumors of expected developments. But the most general factor pushing up the values of real estate is inflation and the availability of large amounts of cash. It is curious that the new trend toward a no growth policy is causing an even greater increase of real estate values in the urban areas, but that ultimately only zero population growth would make no urban growth feasible: once a limit is placed on expansion both horizontally and vertically, there is no way for the city to go. However, it would soon be found that even zero population growth would not be enough to stop development: the people will never be satisfied with just what they have. It is this drive for an impossible dream which actually is at the roots of
"the market". But the fact that no growth is proposed is an ultimate evidence of the deeply rooted isolation and egoism of the remedies advanced by the romantic generations. A necessary concluding observation must be that the subdivision of the suburban house and garden is not rational and it is not the dictate of a free market. Something else would be truer in terms of economy.
APPENDIX

Note A

In March 1972, in my paper The Suburban Ideal and the City, I wrote of the towers which complement the fabric of the contemporary suburban-oriented metropolis of detached buildings: "They are considered examples of efficiency and economy, which may be true if they are considered in isolation, yet the economic argument collapses when the expensive towers are observed in the global economy and plan of the city and of its suburbs. In addition the present economic cycles of the existing urban situations seem to show that booms in the construction of high rise buildings are repeatedly followed by a rapid and substantial increase of the vacancy rate. The production of towers can flood the market of an average city in a matter of a few years, and has a size, a speed and an inertia that makes it difficult to gauge even to developers."

On August 5, 1974, "Barron's" magazine published the article Shaky skyscrapers. A Nationwide Glut in Office Space Has Hit, by D.L. Thomas, where we read: "The situation is equally grim in many cities around the U.S., ranging from Los Angeles and Tulsa to Atlanta and Miami. In some areas, there is a glut of office space that will take four or more years to absorb. The downtown financial district of Los Angeles has been hit particularly hard: buildings erected six years ago
are still 25% vacant. Moreover, the picture is even worse than it appears. Besides existing unrented space, numerous buildings are still in the construction stage. Since it takes three or four years to plan and build a skyscraper, developers can't stop quickly when rentals dry up. They are forced to complete them and add to the surplus."

This is one among the many factors of a compelling evidence that would indicate that a continuous horizontal development of medium density, which can be stopped or started without major financial commitments, makes much more economic sense. The true reasons for which isolated skyscrapers are preferred and have been continuously growing for almost a century must be found in motives that have nothing to do with the field of strict economic convenience.

A compendium on the other problems related with skyscrapers may be read in *The Uncertain Future of The American Skyscraper*, published on November 20, 1972, by "U.S. News & World Report". In the article we read this observation by Lewis Mumford: "There's nothing revolutionary about the World Trade Centre. Tall buildings are outmoded concepts - this is Victorian thinking. Skyscrapers have always been put up for reasons of advertisement and publicity. They are not economically sound or efficient - in fact they are ridiculously unprofitable - and the Trade Centre's fate is to be ripped down as nonsensical."
CHAPTER 6

(1) RICHARD MANN, from "The Vancouver Sun", June 23, 1973, p. 35.

(2) JOHN LOCKE: Concerning Civil Government, Second Essay, Chapter V, Section 25.


(5) From a leaflet issued by the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association in 1916, in CHARLES M. ROBINSON, City Planning, New York, 1916.

(6) P. NUTTGENS, The Landscape of Ideas, London, 1972, Figure 2 & 3.

(7) "National Geographic", February 1968, p. 220 & 221.

(8) RICHARD MANN, from "The Vancouver Sun, June 23, 1973, p. 35.

(9) HOMER HOYT: One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago, Chicago 1933.
It was at the beginning of this century that the intellectual stage was ready, in North America, for a codification into law of the urban pattern than had been developed. "The view was expressed that if the new subways produced only increased congestions of living and business conditions they would be a doubtful benefit to the city. Under the leadership of Mr. McAneny the Board of Estimate and Apportionment appointed a commission in 1913 to study and propose regulations for limiting the height and size of buildings."[1]

This was taking place in New York City. In the cultural background, high Density and disorder had been established for a long time as the enemies of the North American and puritanical way of life. They were seen to be as much a threat to civilized man as alcohol. Cities were growing rapidly with a large inflow of immigrants, both from overseas and from the countryside, and with a sporadic rise to great wealth. The law of the jungle—considered according to nature - emphasized by the social and economic theories commonly held at the turn of the century, was having generally upsetting results both in business and in real estate ownership.
"No landowner in any part of the city could erect a building of any sort with assurance that in ten or twenty years the building would not be obsolete by reason of an unnecessary and undesirable change in the character of the neighbourhood... It also became evident that improper uses caused injury to homogeneous areas and were especially productive of premature depreciation of settled localities. One-family, detached-home districts, possessing trees and lawns, were invaded by apartment houses occupying nearly their entire lots... Localities of one-family detached homes and apartment houses were invaded by sporadic stores that sought to short-circuit the neighbourhoods by utilizing eligible corners among the residences... Stores were built with windows on the property line, thus cutting off the continuation of front yards on the remainder of the street."(2)

The established taste according to which the North American cities had been built was clearly threatened. "The flood gates are open. The bars are down. The sally-ports are unguarded. The dam is washed away. The sewer is choked...The scum of immigration is viscerating upon our shores. The horde of $9.90 steerage slime is being siphoned upon us from Continental mud tanks."(3) Awful tides of immigrants and uncontrollable speculation were creating upsetting and disappointing episodes at the same time that revivalism and the beautification societies were trying to bring the cities closer to the romantic ideals.
"Then it was zoned single-family high-rise..."
High density at the heart of the city was creating a reaction. At the same time that the Woolworth Building was going up "the safety and health of the community" \cite{5} began being studied by a specially appointed Commission. "The Commission recommended in its report that not only height should be regulated, but that area and use were also in need of regulation \textit{in the interest of public health and safety}. It was proposed that different regulations should be established for height, area, and use, according to the varying needs of the districts." \cite{6}

A bill which "amended the city charter by introducing districting provision, and gave the Board of Estimate and Apportionment the power to appoint a districting commission to prepare a resolution and a map" \cite{7} was passed. It is important to note that the principal concern explicitly expressed is only the interest of public health and safety. There was also a general complaint of chaotic conditions. But such an important step as that of dividing the city into districts, with stringent regulations defining their plan and character, was taken without any explicit study and choice made regarding the cultural values, implicit in the plan that was going to be crystallized into law.

One may well suspect that the law was prepared with the purpose of defending the system of values embodied in the existing plan, and of making them even clearer. One may observe, also, that from the beginning the principal tool for "districting" (later called zoning) was immediately identified with "the map".
It is hard to forget that during the same years that zoning spread across North America and was more and more perfected, a painter like Mondrian, as we noted in the first chapter, developed his taste for perfectly flat compositions of pure lines and colours. The clear separations imposed by the new zoning maps were not necessary. They were responding rather to the new rising attitude of regulating people's lives, an attitude reflected in the laws curbing immigration and establishing the prohibition era. It was also an attitude that reflected fear: the laws limiting immigration were openly designed to defend the Anglo-Saxon numerical superiority.

"The Commission that framed the New York city charter amendment and the building zone resolution made a careful study of building regulations in European countries, sending investigators abroad for this purpose... The result was that investigators expecting to find laws and maps controlling zoning in the cities visited found instead that the building departments, under general authority to make regulations, had made different regulations for different areas. Much of this zoning work was excellently done, after systematic and broad-gauge study. But it was soon discovered that the European examples were not of material aid in this country, where courts could declare void the doings of state or municipal legislatures that imposed unreasonable regulations on private property." (8)
The preservation and imposition of romantic ideals through the law created complicated legal problems. Many lawyers could see an infringement on the rights of private property. In order to make the new legislation capable of standing a challenge in the courts, it had to be done under the police power of the cities and to be made so general and uniform that no one could present an obviously legitimate complaint of being victim of injustice or discrimination.

The European distribution of authority did not present the same problems, which were typically North American. In the European situations officials had greater discretion and their decisions could be made on the merits of different cases without being obliged to follow an absolutely uniform and egalitarian policy. In addition European cities in general had a rather different history and plan, and were not suitable for a strict subdivision into districts. Their character and style of life was more mixed, the ownership more irregular and fragmented, the interior of the fabric of the city in most cases radically different. In many European buildings the same undifferentiated facade conceals an expensive luxury dwelling, some middle income apartments, some offices, and maybe even some shops.
Inside there may be a court or a garden, a landscaped penthouse on top, and outside a busy commercial street with pedestrians, cars, streetcars, perhaps a subway, or a wide and treed boulevard. Originally many light industries were concealed by neutral facades in many parts of European cities. This, in the North American mind even today tends to be considered disorderly and chaotic - just a mess, a bazaar.

Fire districts in several cities, a use regulation in Los Angeles, and a height regulation in Boston had preceded the division of New York into well defined districts, but it was only after the comprehensive laws prepared by New York that the other cities started adopting complete zoning regulations. "Noise, vehicles, fire hazard, litter, and street congestion", the "canyons" of the streets among skyscrapers, "light and air" among them, were aspects of the city that were subjected to regulations. Only a decade afterwards zoning by-laws reached Vancouver, through an American consultant from St. Louis (Missouri), Harland Bartholomew.

It was a need for law and order in the urban confusion that was quickly spreading across the continent. "Law and order" had been established as the opposing ideal counter-balancing the romantic pioneer ideals of the frontier men, of the aggressive free entrepreneurs, of social darwinism and of those who wanted a state of nature in which the stronger and the best are supposed to win.
In the first decades of the century the blacks had begun spreading into the northern and western cities of the continent, immigrants from non-Anglo-Saxon regions were flooding the cities and criminal organization were beginning to rise. The vote to women granted in 1917 in New York state undoubtedly produced another conservative tide, in which "manners", romantic prejudices and law and order came all together. The desire to make people's lives better is manifested by the northern and Protestant law prohibiting alcoholic beverages in the United States. For the veterans of the World War a sober world had been prepared. Those who had succeeded when freedom and abuse were not separated were obviously feeling that it was not the case of running the risk of maintaining such an opportunity for abuse for the future generations, or for the newcomers.

The fact that a moral attitude toward order was behind the new legislation toward zoning the cities, would explain why the cultural and social implications of the new laws, defending an already rather old and established system, were not sufficiently debated, What kind of order to establish was not felt as an issue. The existing and established ideals were considered good enough.
"Safety and health" were the concerns that would have been emphasized more and more as an excuse to regulate people's lives according to the accepted prejudices. The same streets of New York city that forty years later Jane Jacobs will find to be the exciting part of the urban fabric, were branded "canyons" and seen as dangerous examples not to be continued. "Zoning began by applying regulations to a building on a lot in a block - the traditional pattern of urban development" (10) in North America.

These regulations had to be stringent, uniform, and appealing to common values and prejudices in order to stand up as laws. Individuality had to be framed into a common, standard uniform pattern. This was a kind of scientific and idealistic dream. The same romantics who enacted these laws went to live in residential suburban lots where man "is not only master in his own house, but creator of his own world." (11) Individualism there tried to make full use of the liberty that seemed to be provided for it. It is in the suburb that "each man can see his own handiwork. It may be only a rockery he has built or a tree of his own planting which he can see overtopping the hedge as he turns the corner of the road on his return from the city in the evening, but to some extent he can feel responsible for his environment and thus get a sense of controlling his destiny.
Here we have a clue to much that is puzzling in the suburban scene, and particularly to the origins of suburban architectural taste". (12) This expression of individualism in "styles" applied to the individual residential building on individual lots, however, had a parallel in commercial buildings too.

In the 1929 issue of *A Plan For The City of Vancouver*, British Columbia we read: "Primarily the purpose of zoning is to give stability and character to property so as to encourage development consistent with the highest community service which such property can render. A zoning by-law provides three kinds of regulations which affect the uses of property and buildings, the height of buildings and the size and arrangements of buildings upon lots and of open spaces about such buildings. A zoning by-law will encourage like types of structures within districts to be determined in accordance with their natural fitness." "Safety and health" required that zoning by-laws be accompanied by building by-laws. This sum total of laws became more and more detailed and stringent to the point where a reaction was bound to manifest itself.

This reaction was characterized by criticism of the very existence of by-laws or the content or the effects of the by-laws. Those against by-laws were for the pure theories of "laissez-faire" and of freedom of enterprise, and those criticising the content or the effects of the by-laws were fighting for more
variety, a greater mix of activities, a better role for imagination and art in the cities. The by-laws have not been analysised and discussed as being the codification of one cultural tradition. People became involved with the criticism of details because they did not seem to be able to recognize that these were the symptoms of a cultural tradition. Perhaps the true question to ask is on what culture are these laws based? Is it still important or good for us? The criticism was weak because no one recognized the essential question to be presented. The dream of the future city was not spelled out, confronted with alternatives, analysed and worked on in a critical and conscious manner.

It is interesting to note the illusion of those who see a form of progress through the existing legal system of by-laws. In 1954 Hugh Pomeroy stated optimistically that "while zoning must still deal with the traditional lot, block, and street pattern, as it finds it, it must be adapted to large-scale area design concepts in community development, with a different approach to the application of regulations. Considerable progress is being made in that direction. Building design also is undergoing great change. It is departing from the meaningless traditional in architecture and is approaching a form that is appropriate to the culture and the technology of our own day.*

*Pomeroy seems to be confusing facades with architecture.
While there are persons whose culture is tied to the past and who are a bit uncomfortable in any move away from what was the honest expression of the technology and culture of several centuries ago, nevertheless we should not immure our zoning in that kind of anachronistic situation, but should adapt our zoning methods to the conditions of the day in which we live."(13) The fact is that in these twenty years the pattern established by the legal framework, on the contrary, has become more and more stringent. Zoning has not adapted.

"When first zoning laws were passed during World War 1, they were hailed as a way to assure orderly change in urban areas and safeguard property values. Today, critics say the reverse is happening. Zoning catches much of the blame for suburban sprawl, inflated housing costs and speculation in land."(14) Sylvan Kamm, land use expert of the American Urban Land Institute, "says the obstacles to better land use are zoning, subdivision rules, sanitary, health and building codes."(15)

This should be confronted with the statement contained in the Plan for Vancouver of 1929 in the chapter headed "Zoning". "Vancouver's experience in respect to the value of zoning is such that a reversion to the conditions obtaining before zoning restrictions were imposed would be unthinkable. The good that came out of the interim zoning by-law only increased the desire to put into effect a comprehensive by-law".
The interim zoning by-law had been in force for only two years. When "the good that came out" of the by-laws began to be factually questioned by a large number of people (by 1925 it had already been seriously questioned authoritatively in the eastern United States), planners discovered "public participation". "Planning began with a civic motivation and found its way into government. Shall it then be left entirely in the hands of bureaucrats - like me, for instance?" - says Pomeroy - "Not at all. I do not trust myself to make decisions for the community." (16) The law and the grassroot movements are supposed to come together to produce something somehow better. And yet the existing by-laws are already in some ways an expression of the will of the people.

This is why decades of public participation and of democratic planning are not changing them in any substantial manner. The people seem to be caught partially in the vicious circle of the fact that by-laws must be stringent, uniform and general in order to be compatible with the equalitarian principles of democracy as it is presently understood and established, and that stringent, uniform and general by-laws, strictly enforced, have for the individual an effect that takes away much of the liberty for which democracy is established, loved and defended. Yet planning through a system of by-laws is felt as more democratic and flexible than planning through a complete master design produced by an aristocratic elite of experts. "The fact is that planning as a separate governmental function adds nothing whatsoever to the powers of government. The regulation of individuals and their property rights results from policy decisions formulated
and executed by those who exercise the political power. Planning, properly conceived, served only as an arm to these political representatives to aid them in gathering, evaluating, and interpreting essential data to serve as a basis for making intelligent policy decisions. Under this concept, the planning function is compatible with the policy making responsibilities of either democratic or nondemocratic societies." The differences "arise in the aims, objectives and processes". (17)

The problem is that when a plan is enforced through comprehensive by-laws the system becomes so complicated, crystallized and uniformly defined, that over as many as forty years only minor items are changed. The law is one of the slowest things to change. Mayors, aldermen, prejudices, even bureaucrats, in time, change, but laws do not. However, the fear of delegating excessive authority to human beings, even if elected, and often called to public scrutiny, makes people more inclined to live under regulations issued in the form of laws and printed on an open book. What happens is that the prejudices of a generation are often written in such a book and transmitted in an inflexible manner over a number of generations until when a formidable reaction develops and causes a radical and total change. Planning through legislation seems to become inhuman. Writing everything into law produces a manual attitude served by a large impersonal bureaucracy. One can reason and develop an understanding with a man, but not with a book of laws.
When the zoning by-laws were first introduced, the need for "light and air", the "safety" of buildings, especially with consideration to the danger of fire, and concern for "health", especially in relation to the dangers due to overcrowding, were emphasized. Even if these concerns were sufficient to justify the kind of legislation that followed, it is amazing to see that the tremendous scientific and technological advancements of the last fifty years have not been given a chance to prove the viability of other urban arrangements, and that what technology has undoubtedly made possible with respect to light, air, safety and health (almost any arrangement of environmental conditions) is not recognized in any positive manner by the law, still today.

Zones dedicated to "comprehensive development" are simply a space left blank on the planner's map, where a specific arrangement can be agreed with by the city. But a "single family dwelling" (an institution in itself, not less sacred than the Parliament) in the city of Vancouver has to be set back at least twenty-four feet, today as in the nineteen twenties, for example. In the suburban municipalities these limitations were increased. It is interesting to note that after almost a half century since the introduction of zoning by-laws in the City of Vancouver, and while yards are defended all around the buildings and high density is still considered as a dangerous disease, you can still read provisions for the keeping of "horses, cows, goats, or sheep"(18). The law has not bothered to recognize views such as those of Jane Jacobs:
"Things have changed since the days when Ebenezer Howard looked at the slums of London and concluded that to save the people, city life must be abandoned. Advances in fields less moribund than city planning and housing reform, fields such as medicine, sanitation and epidemiology, nutrition and labor legislation, have profoundly revolutionized dangerous and degrading conditions that were once inseparable from high-density city life."(19)

The principles and philosophy that must, today, inspire the by-laws are established in the Municipal Act of British Columbia, at section 702:

Zoning. 702.(1) The Council may by by-law (hereinafter referred to as a "zoning by-law")

(a) divide the whole or a portion of the area of the municipality into zones and define each zone either by map, plan, or description, or any combination thereof;

Regulating(b) regulate the use of land, buildings, and structures, including the surface of water, within such zones, and the regulations may be different for different zones and for different uses within a zone, and for the purposes of this clause the power to regulate includes the power to prohibit any particular use or uses in any specified zone or zones;
(c) regulate the size, shape, and siting of buildings and structures within such zones, and the regulations may be different for different zones and with respect to different uses within a zone;

(d) require the owners or occupiers of any building in any zone to provide off-street parking and loading space for such building, and may classify buildings and differentiate and discriminate between classes with respect to the amount of space to be provided, and may exempt any class of building or any building existing at the time of adoption of the by-law from any of the requirements of this clause.

Further regulations concerning the public.

In making regulations under this section, the Council shall have due regard to the following considerations:

(a) The promotion of health, safety, convenience, and welfare of the public;

(b) The prevention of the overcrowding of land, and the preservation of the amenities peculiar to any zone;

(c) The securing of adequate light, air and access:

(d) The value of the land and the nature of its present and prospective use and occupancy;
(e) The character of each zone, the character of the buildings already erected, and the peculiar suitability of the zone for particular uses;

(f) The conservation of property values. 1957, c. 42, s. 699; 1958, c. 32, s. 306; 1961, c. 43, s. 41.

We note here that all the regulatory power of the cities has to be used through written law and that such law must be comprehensive enough to "regulate the size, shape, and siting of buildings" and to "regulate the use of land, buildings, and structures", and to establish "off-street parking and loading space". This amounts to an almost complete determination of the form of the city in its essential features. The framework is established without individual creative contribution, all at once, by law. In addition what is established is not a frame of the urban form only, but of the urban style of life as well. The tool to be used is defined as a "map, plan, or description". Such a word as "design" is carefully avoided; the terms have to sound coolly technical and legal. The philosophy that is imposed is equally important to be noted. Things to be considered are "health, safety, overcrowding of land, light, air, character, conservation of property values." They are the same things that concerned the planners in New York City at the beginning of the century.
In addition to the municipal by-laws there are a number of other legal influences over the creation of the urban environment. First among them is the federal lending agency. The agency not only promotes home ownership, especially of single-family dwellings, but establishes the most detailed rules of design and construction, rigidly enforced by armies of inspectors and runs tests on materials and performance of components of buildings of all sorts. The agency prescribes specifications, contracts and even design patterns. It also advises on design and it publishes a large number of publications, including standard house plans to be chosen by the public, and it promotes studies and design ideas that it judges worthy of interest.

Private lending authorities normally follow the same path as the federal agency in every respect, thus making universal any trend or decision established by federal authorities. Where there is any doubt that the social, economic, political and legal system would still leave openings to upsetting developments, covenants and deed restrictions regulate the use of the land. The principles followed by the federal and private authorities are normally identical with those stated by the Municipal Act mentioned, and in particular the "conservation of property values, health, and safety". How these judgements of values and conditions are reached is not, normally, a subject of concern or of debate.
Professor Charles M. Haar, introducing the papers of a comparative study of the legal control of land use in England and the United States, noted: "One of the seminar's functions was to delineate the similarities and differences between the British and the American systems. When all the papers had been submitted, it became clear (with some surprise) that a considerable area of similarity exists. True, as with all comparative law studies, there are dangers in glossing over differences and being trapped into thinking that use of the same terms - or as Whitehead put it, use of a common language - means a similarity in approach. Yet there is an emergency of truly common principles, not only in respect to the two nations, but within the United States as well: despite the fifty state laboratories, there is a more or less standardized product of American planning and zoning.

That the legal resemblances are many seems even more remarkable in view of the divergencies of physical conditions and experiences of Great Britain and the United States." (20) When cultural trends, especially if tied with racial and religious phenomena, are absorbed without analysis and criticism, their effect can be sweeping and can manifest itself in a large number of areas and in the entire family of countries participating in the same movement of ideas. The Anglo-Saxon countries seem to hold the key to the origins of the English garden trend and of the garden city movement, as part of a particular interest in nature.

In the next chapters we will explore aspects of the origins of these interests.
CHAPTER 7

(1) E.M. BASSET: *Zoning*, New York 1936, p. 11

(2) E.M. BASSET: *Zoning*, New York 1936, p. 25


(4) "The Vancouver Sun", April 11, 1974, p.4


(7) E.M. BASSET: *Zoning*, New York 1936, p. 20

(8) E.M. BASSET: *Zoning*, New York 1936, p. 21

(9) E.M. BASSET: *Zoning*, New York 1936, p. 25

(10) H. POMEROY: in *An Approach to Urban Planning*,
    by BREESE & WHITEMAN, Princeton 1953, p. 24


(13) H. POMEROY: in *An Approach to Urban Planning*,
    by BREESE & WHITEMAN, Princeton 1953, p. 24

(14) "U.S. News and World Report", March 6, 1972:
    *Fight Over Zoning Heats Up*

(15) "U.S. News and World Report", March 6, 1972:
    *Fight Over Zoning Heats Up*

(16) H. POMEROY: In *An Approach to Urban Planning*,
    by BREEZE & WHITEMAN, Princeton 1953, p. 24

(18) Vancouver Zoning and Development By-Law No. 3575, 1969, (22/3/66-4234)


(21) Tribune Tower Competition, Chicago 1923.
This chapter, going from the rural plan of "voids" made by William Penn to the development of the garden city, is divided in two parts: the first examines the development of a rural and idealistic tradition of planning and of thinking from the early North American civilization. This tradition is paralleled by a related literary tradition.

The second part examines the development of modern planning concepts and the conscious North American effort to promote a suburban type of metropolis since the middle of the eighteenth century.

I.

It will be useful to begin with an observation that is typical among those who dream of a better and more artistic city, and who do not seem to examine the reasons why we cannot have something different: "A city plan is the expression of the collective purpose of the people who live in it, or it is nothing". (1) For Henry Churchill, the author of this statement, the plan of most contemporary cities tends to be nothing, for he continues that "The practice of city planning consists of lines on paper and tables from calculating machines. It is adopted if it is mediocre enough." Yet his
outcry for more "art" in the design of cities is contradictory: like many other similar pleas for a more beautiful city, the practice that he condemns seems to be an actual part of the collective purpose of the people, and may be shown to have more profound roots and effects than he realizes. As a rather typical example of many similar superficialities one cannot fail to note the picture beside the title of Churchill's book: a painting of Toledo, Spain, of dramatic and picturesque effect, but quite unrelated to the historical reality of the North American city, and obviously insufficient to give an understanding of the true urban reality of the town of Toledo. (Figure 1) (2).

The tradition of "lines on paper" in North America has distant roots and may be seen at its origins in William Penn's gridiron plan for Philadelphia. (Figure 2)(3). It is a plan that seems to be in the Hippodamic tradition, but closer study would indicate that its inspiration comes more directly from the abstract, geometrical, neoplatonic and Cartesian mood of the Renaissance.
The former classical interest in the concrete arrangement of a layout of objects, the individual buildings, is very remote, here, even more remote than in the Italian ideal cities of the Renaissance. In Penn's scheme the lines are an abstract geometric scheme superimposed on an empty virgin land to indicate voids: boundaries of rectangular fields subdivided in a certain number of smaller rectangular fields. They are merely fields arranged according to an ideal order of geometry. In the classical system it was the opposite: the lines meant the common space of the streets dividing blocks of urban dwellings, whether new or preexisting. The plan was full, and full of urban objects.

Penn's system is important because the same system that he followed was continued and superimposed on most of the entire North American continent taken as void. Instead of taking a limited number of objects and organizing them according to an idea with a defined relationship, a pure, perfect, abstract ideal with deep political and religious connotations was cast as an infinite model to an infinite land. It is important to understand that this rational and geometric idealism remained strong and alive during the romantic period, and that its infinite and almost mystical perfection appealed to engineers and to city designers (such as the founder of Salt Lake City) alike in later times.
In Penn's layout there is another factor that will become of primary importance in the later romantic period. This is the rural aspect of the plan. We have seen that his City is a plan of fields, on which a sparse arrangement of buildings can be built, rather than a plan of a fabric of buildings, which might or might not contain gardens or open spaces.

This rural character is also recognizable in the early plan of New Amsterdam, in the seventeenth century (figure 3) \(^{(4)}\), but it can also be traced back to European examples such as Londonderry, Ireland, of 1622, (figure 4) \(^{(5)}\), or Delft, Holland of 1582, (figure 5) \(^{(6)}\). These are towns that are almost a tight and walled conglomerate of farms, with an urban aspect on the side that looks over the field. However, streets, churches and castles here define clearly identifiable built up urban environments. In Penn's layout this aspect is eliminated. It seems to be a total puritanical rejection of the evil city. The chosen model is a development of sparsely and equally laid isolated farms, such as the view of Bethlehem (Pennsylvania) of 1798 would suggest (figure 6) \(^{(7)}\). (One should compare this with Le Corbusier's sketch seen in chapter two).

We must contrast this utopian, rationalistic and rural planning with Christopher Wren's plan for Rebuilding London after the Fire of 1666 (Figure 7) \(^{(8)}\): this is a product of European baroque thinking, urban and concrete. Here the closed line of the buildings define the streets and therefore the circulation
between the solid blocks or the urban fabric. The same could be said of many other baroque plans, beginning with Rome, of cities less related to the early bulk of the puritan North American migration. We may note instead, a substantial difference from the "baroque" plan brought to Washington by L'Enfant. Although the circulation and the arterial lines of the grand avenues connecting the principal urban episodes (the functions of the civil government, in the baroque tradition) are all there, the voids of the rural type of planning for a long time have masked and confused the possibility of a truly urban baroque situation (such as that of Paris, for instance), because there was no feeling for it and it was not really built. People remained content with the voids and even there they introduced the North American metropolitan pattern that we described in the first two chapters.

The views of Santa Fe (New Mexico) in 1848 (Figure 8)(9) and of Savannah (Georgia) in 1955 (figure 9 and figure 10)(10) add to the picture of the general rural trend in the plan of North American cities. Density is what transforms the farms into cramped arrangements of villas in a growing urban settlement. Ultimately these villas may become high rise buildings, which probably will be treated just like small buildings, that is units in the middle of a landscaped lot.
We may relate the Utopian rural planning of the early North American colonization with a sort of pre-romantic tradition that saw nature as pure, clean and uncorrupt, and that saw man prone to corrupt himself and the environment. Man-made objects were considered intrinsically inferior to natural products. Some of Andrew Marvell's verses illustrate this attitude:

"What but a soul could have the wit
To build me up for sin to fit?
So architects do square and hew
Green trees that in the forest grew".[11]

One can see here a distant source of the faith in organicism and of the dislike for the machine that are so pervasive in Lewis Mumford.

The rural character of the early North American civilization was emphasized by the fact that the migrants not only attached a moral value to farming, but had come to North America to own land. A walled city with a house and no land would have been inconceivable for them as a new place in which to settle. In fact the idea of settling in one place and of owning land were practically considered the same. This is why even today the man who owns a house and garden is generally considered more settled than the man who lives in an apartment, even if the latter owns it.

The attitude of the free artisan in the medieval Italian "comune" here was reversed: liberty was now coming from the land.
that one could own and farm, not from the political independence of the community of the city. The security and pleasures of the walled cities were forgotten and damned with the memory of vice and tyranny. For the migrants who were leaving behind a condition not too different from that of slave labourers the ability to own land became identified with a sort of citizenship. And for the Calvinist immigrants the ownership of land was not only a proof of liberty and equality of citizens, but also of goodness. It was a source of happiness: "The instant I enter my own land, the bright ideas of property, of exclusive right, of independence exalt my mind. Precious soil, I say to myself, by what singular custom of law is it that thou wast made to constitute the riches of the freeholder? What should we American farmers be without the distinct possession of that soil? It feeds, it clothes us, from it we draw even a great exuberancy, our best meat, our richest drink, the very honey of our bees comes from this privileged spot. No wonder we should cherish its possession, no wonder that so many Europeans who have never been able to say that such portion of land was theirs, cross the Atlantic to realize that happiness. This formerly rude soil has been converted by my father into a pleasant farm, and in return it has established all our rights, on it is founded our rank, our freedom, our power, as citizens, our importance as inhabitants of such a district. These images I must confess I always behold with pleasure, and extend them as far as my imagination can reach." (12) The American Revolution was not only a logical conclusion of this trend, but also an important strengthening factor of the rural, equalitarian and Calvinistic morality. George Washington and
Thomas Jefferson were farmers. Cincinnatus was high in the minds of the classical revivalists.

At the time of the American Revolution the Romantic Age, the age that really made North America, was at its birth. We have seen that since the beginning of North American colonization a geometric and abstract dream and a rural and religious dream were simultaneously present and strongly operative. There was a rational intellectual ideal associated with urban geometry and there was an emotional non-geometric attachment to nature. Romanticism transformed these dreams into opposing elements of a struggle, sometimes an internal struggle within one's soul. Idealism often emphasized the rational and scientific aspects of life, while the trend toward a return to Nature tended to condemn geometric order in favour of variety and sentiment. The opposing ideals of the romantic struggle, however, were chosen differently from time to time. What is characteristic of the romantic feeling is the struggle of emotions between opposing motifs. This is one of the reasons why eclecticism became part of the romantic taste.

In the plan of Hygeia, a model town drawn by J.B. Papworth in England in 1827 - to be built in Kentucky across the Ohio river from Cincinnati - we can see one of the first examples of an eclectic plan, where both the ideals of geometric order and of natural variety would be served. In this plan (figure 11) there are very well organized geometric blocks and paths with an accentuated and almost crazy curvilinear pattern in the area
of the parks. Organic nature and geometric order are somehow both served.

Figure 11
Before considering further developments during the Romantic age, let us go back again to the historical influence of people and ideas that immigrated to North America and contributed to the construction of our cities, and to the early foundations of North American society.

Dominating English speaking North America is the White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant ethnic group. It began with a group of refugees with mixed feelings about Britain; they had been oppressed and exploited by cruel and false justice, by hypocritical religion, by economic despair, by an aristocratic culture. Yet they shared essential aspects of justice, religion and culture with the motherland, especially in the south, where there was a caste of aristocratic emigrants established over a mass of slaves.

"From the beginning" - says Van Wyck Brooks in *America's Coming-of-Age* - we find two main currents in the American mind running side by side but rarely mingling - a current of overtones and a current of undertones - and *both equally unsocial*: on the one hand, the current of Transcendentalism, originating in the piety of the Puritans, becoming a philosophy in Jonathan Edwards, passing through Emerson, producing the fastidious refinement and aloofness of the chief American writers, and, as the coherent ideals and beliefs of Transcendentalism gradually faded out, resulting in the final unreality of most contemporary American culture; and on the other hand the current catchpenny opportunism, originating in the practical shifts of Puritan life, becoming a
philosophy in Franklin, passing through the American humorists, and resulting in the atmosphere of contemporary business life."(14)

These two main currents represented the two most common poles of romantic contrast in the debates and in the intellectual development that slowly formed the dream at the basis of the contemporary North American metropolis.

On the side of Transcendentalism and of idealism there was an interest for infinity that prepared a fertile ground for the romantic notion of the sublime: "I know not how to express better what my sins appear to me to be, than by heaping infinite upon infinite, and multiplying infinite by infinite. Very often, for these many years, these expressions are in my mind and in my mouth 'Infinite upon infinite - Infinite upon infinite!'"(15) (Jonathan Edwards).

We had noted an interest in an infinite system and in open spaces in William Penn's planning. With Jonathan Edwards our attention may be drawn also to aspects of northern, Anglo-Saxon, puritanical anguish: "The wrath of God is like waters that are dammed for the present". (16)

"As Jean Paul Sartre did not fail to notice, the cowboy was the first existential hero: the stranger, the outsider, living by an absurdist code that - though his fiancee pleads with him - could only end in death. For his ambition to master
the earth, his need to snap the promordial bonds of family and community, his identification of freedom with the restless itch to 'move on', spring from his secret love for the infinite, which finite earth cannot contain. The lover of the Infinite must inevitably be killed. Implied in the American dream of mastery is the ominous imagination of disaster" (17). And disaster is associated with the growth of the city, which is a non-infinite and confined space and a place of damnation. Wentworth Eldredge pointed out that "we 'Anglo-Saxons' must 'love that city'. Morton and Lucia White have shown that American intellectuals don't, and a similar survey of British intellectuals makes clear that this antipathetic stream has a source higher in the hills." (18)

Among American intellectuals, Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose Essay on Farming was in part reprinted by Frank Lloyd Wright as an appendix to his Broadacre City, described Thoreau in this manner:

"No truer American existed than Thoreau, his preference of his country and condition was genuine, and his aversion from English and European manners and tastes almost reached contempt... The men were all imitating each other, and on a small mold. Why can they not live as far apart as possible, and each be a man by himself? What he sought was the most energetic nature; and he wished to go to Oregon, not to London... He interrogated every custom, and wished to settle all his practice on an ideal foundation. He was protestant 'a l'outrance', and few lives contain so many renunciations. He was bred to no profession..." (19)
Benjamin Franklin was an intellectual and a moralist too, but more inclined to sciences, economics and politics and to a settled, peaceful, sober urban existence; an insight into his attitude toward the city may come from reading his proposal to the Parisians in order that they stop wasting money with candles by going to bed and rising late: "I say it is impossible that so sensible a people, under such circumstances, should have lived so long by smokey, unwholesome, and enormously expensive light of candles, if they had really known, that they might have had as much pure light of the sun for nothing." (20) One might wonder why at the beginning North American cities were built at all, at least after the war of Independence.

We have noticed that Mysticism, Solitude, the love of Nature, of Liberty, of Equality, of Idealism, most of the components of the rise of the romantic movement, were already present since the origins of the development of North America and of its cities. We must also note that the original bulk of population of the United States and of British America was made up of a majority of Protestant puritanical farmers and of a minority of scientist-engineers with deep moral interests. There was a very limited literary production in the tradition of the Mathers or of a sentimental kind, with a distant memory of the Elizabethan period. It was a new world determined to be new, pure and practical. The new North American cities did not gather craftsmen and artists and did
not promote intellectual pursuits. Culture was religion and science. Art was an embellishment that could be imported by the rich. The City at best was a place of business transactions. This is why the traditional alternative views in North America about the city are those of the tradition of engineers and of the tradition of the lovers of nature, and of sentimental and moral values. Beauty came as an offspring of sentimental values, at a later time. A different sort of intellectual, not concerned with science or with morality, was considered morally wrong, and could exist only in Europe. In the European world, and even earlier in Greece and Rome, the cities were the centres of political life. The "polis" was what mattered. On the contrary in North America the trend was to gather representatives (not of cities, but of states or of regions) in a small specialized centre away from the larger urban centres. The American representative was designated by his land or state, rather than by his city.

This is a very important new trend of urban life, because on the old continent, since late medieval times the city had become a magnet of elegant leisure, of crafts and arts, of the most diverse intellectual exchanges and pursuits - even wasteful or morally neutral - of pleasures of all kinds. Even the concept of liberty in the late medieval cities was different. Rather than being related to property and land, it was related to belonging to a community capable of shaping its independent destiny among the other communities. On the contrary, "the heart of WASP culture is the property relation. Upon property, the
most easily rationalized of relations, WASP notions of freedom are founded. Even when the English pirate sailed under the banner of mysticism, adventure, and sheer exuberance, the rationalization was rather practical. The central WASP words are not being or doing. The central WASP words are having and controlling. From Locke through Hume until today, the outlook is functional. The dominant WASP ethic is based upon 'utility'.[21]

We may remember, however, that continental Europe did contribute to the foundations of the North American "WASP" mentality. The rural trend was encouraged by no less than the French Kings and an Austrian emperor. Louis the XIV, as we have already mentioned, started a new tradition by moving outside the walls of Paris to Versailles, Marie Antoinette was an arcadian, and Emperor Joseph II set the good example of putting his hands to the plow. Eighteenth century classical romanticism occupied itself with all sorts of examples to idealize the nobility of rural man. There were even classical reminiscences of the good old Romans of the republic similar to those that Jefferson would have had.
Let us now examine some aspects of the development of North American cities, in the last century, when the tide of romanticism, of immigration and of the industrial revolution grew larger and larger. The grid system was expanded from New York and Philadelphia to San Francisco, from Toronto to Vancouver. The American Civil War gave the final absolute predominance to the group of puritanical and calvinistic farmers of the north, turned into industrialists, over the more aristocratic and nostalgic settlers of the slavist states. Industrial exploitation, land speculation and improvised dwellings quickly transformed the panorama of the open fields of the cities, jeopardizing the treasured rural dream. The land of infinite resources had to be sought further and
further west, while the eastern cities began experiencing the transformation of urban blocks into slums.

"In the middle of the 19th century Frederick Law Olmsted joined a politically powerful group of eastern philanthropists, social reformers, writers and Protest ministers who set out to introduce the virtues of rural America among the huddled urban masses. Their thesis, common enough at the time, was that what the cities needed was big public parks. When Olmsted put the reformers' ideals into practice by planting a huge village green in the middle of Manhattan, he automatically became the cutting edge of the whole movement.

Olmsted was more than equal to the task. Though he personally responded to landscapes with the eye of an artist, he was also an intensely practical man. He never failed to impress on city officials that his parks and parkways would raise surrounding land values and tax revenues."(22)

"While Olmsted accepted as inevitable the fact that the city grew at the expense of the countryside, he was pained to see it replacing the village as a dominant way of life."(23)

"Olmsted had no professional education to sustain his deep attachment to nature",(24) and in fact he was rather anti-intellectual; in his letters he seems to be even prone to misspell a large percentage of words including the names of his favourite
authors. However "he had picked up all he knew from reading, from running the Staten Island farm his rich merchant father had given him, and from examining England's great parks during a walking trip abroad" (25). The tour extended also to France and Germany, and changed the focus of his interests from farming to urban life, in part because of the impressive statistics that he gathered on the growth of urban centers. "Olmsted found many ideas in his independent studies of English and American literature. From the work of such English landscape theorists as Uvedale Price (in An Essay on the Picturesque Price argued for a formal landscape art which was natural and picturesque, as opposed to the formal landscaping then in vogue) and William Gilpin (in Upon Prints - 1768 - Gilpin established the principle that a scene or picture has beauty if it conforms to the rules of painting) he drew both an esthetic theory and a set of techniques for the development of a natural, romantic landscape. He derived inspiration from the cultural 'flowering of New England', notably the essays and poetry of contemporaries such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Russel Lowell, and William Cullen Bryant. The theme of nature was the dominant synthesizing idea in the cultural and intellectual life of New England while he was maturing. Yet his closest identification with nature derived from memories of childhood." (26)

Olmsted brought the romantic picturesque reaction against the prevailing ideal geometric grid to the North American cities. We see the outcry for nature and curves against the development
of the original semirural grid of city blocks. We find the romantic struggle of sentiment against ideal reason, interpreted as greenery and irregular curves, as organic growth and variety against building blocks and geometry, man made development and uniformity. The contrast is violent, abrupt and shocking: the perpendicular streets of Manhattan suddenly end, the buildings stop and one goes across meandering paths, trees and grass, lakes, and then again one is in the urban grid. It is not just picturesque, it is sublime.

And yet the same Olmsted who was fighting the growth of the industrial city by spreading parks, shrubs and serpentines across North America, had been a member of the utopian community of Red Bank, New Jersey, the most famous town in North America modeled after the theories of Charles Fourier. Fourier in France had been preaching a harmony of people, nature and industry in his communities for industrial labourers. Olmsted thought by separating the various activities of the cities and by creating suburban residential villages, he would achieve harmony of activities and would provide the advantages of the life of the village to future generations.

Olmsted wished "to contain the destructive influence of the commercial sections of the city. This was feasible, he felt, since 'commerce does not require the same conditions to be maintained in all parts of a town'. It was undoubtedly Olmsted's rural background which led him to emphasize
the introduction of 'natural' elements in reforming the urban environment. But it would be inaccurate to characterize his point of view as either rural or antiurban. Rather, he hoped to fuse the best qualities of both country and city into a new physical and social unit: the suburb. As he expressed it, 'No broad question of country life in comparison with city life is involved; it is confessedly a question of delicate adjustment.' The 'adjustment' could best be achieved in governmentally designed communities distinct from, but connected to, the older commercial city, creating a new form for the metropolis. These suburbs were not intended to be (as are suburbs now in existence) far removed from the heart of the city. The idea - recurrent in present day urban planning literature - was to develop communities within easy reach of the city center, inhabited by 'urban villagers'. Olmsted believed that the many varieties of the light carriage (which had come into use in the nineteenth century) and the steam railway would facilitate rapid and easy transportation between home and work. The city he looked forward to was an organic one in which its many parts, like the various rooms of a house, would have separate functions.**(27)**

As we see here, both the suburban style and zoning had been clearly conceptually developed in the middle of the nineteenth century, from romantic notions and as two necessary aspects of the same cultural and urban trend.
Olmsted's view of means of transporation (light carriages and the steam railway) for suburban dwellers proves once again that the concepts of urban and civil developments precede rather than follow the technological advances that make them possible and viable. While the concept of the modern suburban development was clearly advanced, the automobile was just as clearly outside the realm of Olmsted's imagination.

We will have to remark that Calvert Vaux (Olmsted's partner) "like Olmsted, considered spaces to be more significant than solids in planning cities" and that he was brought from England to North America by Andrew Jackson Downing, the important American horticulturist and propagandist for naturalism in architectural and landscape design. Vaux brought with him a romantic tradition with which Olmsted had only a superficial acquaintance. Olmsted and Vaux worked together for twenty-four years, trying to avoid "an unhealthy density of population" and propagandizing and developing "suburban neighborhoods where each family abode stands fifty or a hundred feet or more apart from all others, and at some distance from the public road."*

"It is to Andrew Jackson Downing and his brilliant associates, Calvert Vaux and Frederick Low Olmsted, Jr., that

*We may recollect the earlier quote about Thoreau's tastes.
we owe the curvilinear street pattern and studied informality of the contemporary suburban development.\(^{(30)}\) For Olmsted the suburb could be described as "the most attractive, the most refined and the most soundly wholesome forms of domestic life, and the best application of the arts of civilization to which mankind has yet attained."\(^{(31)}\)

From the first opening of part of Central Park in New York in 1858 to the setting of the 1893 Chicago Exposition, Olmsted and Vaux showed the pattern of the North American romantic urban philosophy and development. Sinuous roads among elegant strictly residential suburbs (in Europe the suburbs were mostly a mixture of industries, commerce, and lower class apartments, close to the boulevards and the parks of the former city walls), an initial form of zoning, metropolitan governments, meandering paths through English gardens, beside lakes and through forests of huge parks, were among their legacy to our cities.

They were contrasted by the perennial foe of the naturalist romantics: the ruthless "catchpenny" (to use again the expression of Van Wyck Brooks) developer, the successful supporter of Social Darwinism. This presented another side of romanticism, the romanticism of the industrial revolution, the practical and scientific dream as opposed to the sentimental and naturalistic dream. Developers and lovers of nature confronted each other with the dialectic opposition
and with the obstacle that is necessary to produce the romantic struggle and anguish of a true romantic. In this sense the love of nature and the industrial revolution have always been complementary. The developers were appealing to Nature too, but in another manner: the Social Darwinists "glorified ruthless individual enterprise and disdained all forms of social planning. Public taste in urban beauty shifted from rustic scenery to impressive buildings (another form of the sublime) - a change brought on, ironically, by the success of the Chicago Columbian Exposition whose setting Olmsted had designed."(32) The skyscraper had arrived as the alternative and the opposite (in terms of density and size only) to the suburban dwelling.

The new monumentalism that the forces of the industrial revolution brought forward had deep revivalist roots. The industrialists, the developers, and the scientists sided in most cases with those who read the universe as written in geometric and mathematical language: for them Nature was revered and admired as a fascinating and beautiful machine. Their line of thought had illustrious precedents going as far back as Leonardo (or even Pythagoras), through Descartes and Galileo. They were opposed by those who interpreted Nature rather as an animal or as a vegetal being, than as a machine: an organic nature that would abhor from geometric impositions. The natural forms in these cases would be
mostly the irregular and round shapes of bodies and trees, rather than those produced at the drafting table. Only a few eclectic "geniuses", such as Frank Lloyd Wright, would try to reconcile the two interpretations most of the time.

While North America was developing under the influence of the Chicago Columbian Exposition, in the old continent Camillo Sitte and Ebenezer Howard were laying the foundations of modern city planning. And yet it would seem that the substance of their thoughts was already present and partly theorized in the new continent at the turn of the century. Ebenezer Howard himself maintained that he drew his inspiration and formed the bulk of his ideas during his stay and thanks to the atmosphere of America. And a book such as Modern Civic Art or The City Made Beautiful by Charles Mulford Robinson, of 1903, is very significant as an example of the ideas that had been circulating in North America.

Robinson comes so close to Sitte's thinking or feeling in some of his pages that he would appear almost to be quoting him: "vast areas of regularly plotted streets became dreadfully monotonous ... Then arose the wish to beautify cities, to bring stateliness into the business district (note the distinction of zones) and the soft touch of nature into the regions where the homes were. The opportunities of the square for this were perceived and sized ... And the square afforded an excellent location for civic sculpture ... The open spaces of the city are, or should be, its ornaments."
At the same time Robinson endorsed the idea of suburban housing with a lot of greenery and went at great length defending "the well-proved charm of the curving street." He even quoted Professor William James, the psychologist, as saying ... "that the daily sight of the curve of Scott Street added much to the pleasure of living in his house -- or, indeed, the neighbourhood." He had little to learn from Ebenezer Howard in terms of garden cities except from the political and administrative point of view which would have not been easily applicable to North America. And he shared some of Howard's discontent with modern industrial cities: "As when heavens rolled away and St. John beheld the new Jerusalem, so a vision of a new London, a new Washington, Chicago or New York breaks with the morning's sunshine upon the degradation, discomfort, and baseness of modern city life."

The movement toward suburbia and the vision of a new and monumental city gained momentum at the same time; while the cities were more and more clearly divided into separate districts and the commercial centres increased in density, the suburbs grew. By 1925 a comprehensive social study and criticism of suburbia, The Suburban Trend had been published, and Le Corbusier by 1931 had commented on "the vast, romantic amphitheater that is now the gateway to America's immensity: Manhattan," that "the skyscraper has petrified the cities" and that is was not "Cartesian", it was irrational.
But the forces behind zoning and the suburban trend were older than the American revolution and more rooted than the principles of American democracy. By 1929 a definitive zoning plan had reached even Vancouver, and in the thirties Clarence Stein and Henry Wright were developing garden cities in the English fashion, with federal aid. The 1929 "Plan for Vancouver" had illustrations with comments such as "A store intrusion in the West End" and "There are Many Attractive Homes and Gardens in the South Vancouver Area."

The term garden, and particularly "garden city" had had a magic spell in North America for quite some time. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Chicago, a city where Ebenezer Howard resided from 1971 to 1976, had adopted the name of Garden City and placed it on the coat of arms, as a sign of pride for its many gardens and parks. In 1869 Alexander T. Stewart described a model town for Long Island, New York, as a "garden city". In 1906, eight years after the appearance of Howard's book and the same years when the first "garden city", Letchworth, was opened in England, the Garden City Association of America was founded. A former senator, the head of the Long Island Railroad, an Episcopal bishop, a university professor and a banker were among its officers and members (all of the single Anglo-Saxon ethnic group). The association published for more than fifteen years "The Village."
In North America Howard's theories had a tremendous success, but it was soon clear, that "communal ownership" of real estate cut against a very tough American grain" (39) and that the political schemes proposed by Howard could not be accepted as readily as his aesthetic urban views. The ideal was instead that "millions of workers may own homes with gardens". "The American plan is to train and develop the individual in the capacity and ambition to own his own decent home." (40) President Hoover stated: "To own one's own home is a physical expression of individualism, of enterprise, of independence, and of freedom of spirit." (41) Hoover even proposed the Home Loan Bank System to encourage universal single home ownership. The Depression came to cut into this dream and brought Radburn, the suburban jewel designed by Henry Wright and Clarence Stein, into bankruptcy. Radburn was already incorporating the latest thinking in terms of modern planning: everything was clean and separated as much as possible, "the houses facing away from the street toward interior parks", and "all pedestrian and vehicular traffic was separated - the walkways often running through the interior parks and crossing roads through underpasses." (42)

It was up to the new president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, to give a new interpretation to the traditional dreams. Roosevelt thought that the "breaking down of artificial and unnecessary barriers between the rural and urban communities"
was important, and saw "a definite place for an intermediate type between the urban and rural, namely a rural-industrial group". Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt had been a board member of the company that built Radburn, N.J., and the president had other relatives that had been in contact with Garden City groups. It was his administration that founded the Resettlement Administration and permitted the successful construction of Greenbelt, Greenhills and Greendale, towns closer to the British theory in terms of financing and administration. These towns remained the most famous examples of socially and architecturally progressive suburbia; the most generous and planned attempt, probably, to bring everybody out in contact with redeeming nature in a semi-rural community. They died later, while the "hardness and selfishness beyond belief" of the other suburbs spread across the continent with the booming economy.

In the context of the origins of North American cities outlined thus far nothing seems to me more in line with the North American tradition than Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City. It is even amazing that actually John Lansill and the Resettlement Administration did not take seriously his proposal, even if it implied a budget three times larger than the one available. More tragic is the case of Edgar Chambless, who proposed Roadtown, "a line of city through the country", and who committed suicide after finding his proposal repeatedly refused.
The growth and development of the zoned cities, with a green belt of suburban residential housing, with suburban villages and a high density commercial core has become the sign of modern and contemporary times in North America. It has become so "modern" that it is being exported and imitated as a symbol and as a system all over the world. The North American city is in fact that most overall total product of romanticism, and as such it cannot fail to appear as a model to the rest of the world, during these last stages of romanticism. It has become a stereotype: in 1958 a volume such as "Urbanistica, Storia e Tecnica", could publish side by side the plans of suburban residential developments in Stockholm, Turin and Palermo. While Victor Gruen dreams of his old native Vienna and plans a "counterattack" with beautifications and pedestrian malls in the heart of the cities, proposing himself as a new Camillo Sitte, the entire world seems to be rushing to adopt the lethal pattern that is keeping North American urbanism buried.

"Are Cities Un-American?" William White had to ask himself. (45) "In a striking failure to apply marketing principles and an even more striking failure of esthetics, the cities are freezing on a design for living ideally calculated to keep everybody in suburbia."

The suburban trend continued across the continent at a phenomenal pace. At the same time, New York city opened again
the tallest skyscraper of the world, in the middle of a recession, and all the commercial metropolitan centres saw the last surge of high-rise office buildings. Urban discussions still revolve around matters of money and matters of style as they did fifty and a hundred years ago; only now even more than before "romantics" and "rationalists" work together in the same "set of specializations with a geographical basis."(46)
CHAPTER 8

(1) H. CHURCHILL, The City is the People, New York 1945, p.186

(2) Ibidem

(3) J. W. Reps, The Making of Urban America, Princeton 1965, fig. 97

(4) Ibidem, fig. 90

(5) Ibidem, fig. 7

(6) Ibidem, fig. 12

(7) Ibidem, fig. 262

(8) Ibidem, fig. 8

(9) Ibidem, fig. 25

(10) Ibidem, fig. 118 & 120

(11) ANDREW MARVELL, A Dialogue Between the Soul and the Body, from "The Great Masters" by M. CIARAMELLA, Rome 1958, p. 198.

(12) JOHN HECTOR ST. JOHN DE CREVECOEUR, Letters from an American Farmer, from M. PRAZ, Antologia, Milan 1959, p.528

(13) F. CHOAY, The Modern City, New York 1969, fig. 48

(14) VAN WYCK BROOKS, America's Coming-of-Age, from M. PRAZ, Antologia, Milan 1959, p.626

(15) JONATHAN EDWARDS, Personal Narrative from M. PRAZ, Antologia, Milan 1959, p.527

(16) JONATHAN EDWARDS, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, from M. CIARAMELLA, The Great Masters, Rome 1958, p.570

(17) M. NOVAK: The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics, New York 1972, p.95

(18) H. T. ELDREDGE, Taming Megalopolis, New York 1967

(19) R. W. EMERSON, Lectures and Biographical Sketches, from M. PRAZ, Antologia, Milan 1959, p.530

(20) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, To the Authors of the Journal of Paris, from M. PRAZ, Antologia, Milan 1959, p.532

(22) "Life", December 8, 1972, p. 87, article by E. Kern.

(23) A. FEIN: *Landscape into Cityscape*, Cornell 1968, p. 3


(25) "Life", December 8, 1972, p. 84, article by E. KERN

(26) A. FEIN: *Landscape into Cityscape*, Cornell 1968, p. 6

(27) Ibidem, p. 37

(28) Ibidem, p. 43

(29) Ibidem, p. 38

(30) A. ARNOLD, *The New Deal in the Suburbs*, Ohio State University Press 1971, p. 4

(31) A. FEIN: *Landscape into Cityscape*, Cornell 1968, p. 38

(32) "Life", December 8, 1972, p. 84

(33) C.M. ROBINSON, *Modern Civic Art of The City Made Beautiful*, New York 1903

(34) Ibidem, p. 287

(35) Ibidem, p. 196

(36) Ibidem, p. 4


(38) LE CORBUSIER, *The Radiant City*, Paris 1933, p. 127


(40) Ibidem, p. 38, quoting Albert Shaw

(41) Ibidem, p. 38

(42) Ibidem, p. 16

(43) Ibidem, p. 41


ARCHITECTURAL TRENDS AND CREEDS RELATED WITH ROMANTICISM

The return to Nature and the rise of new sciences, are intellectual motifs which acquired a new light and emphasis with the romantic age. However, they were not entirely new. The interest in Nature and the Sciences dates from the Renaissance and can be traced back to Arab sources.

It took over two centuries for the romantic notions to develop fully. It is in the Renaissance that Nature is presented as a cathartic phenomenon; it is pure and it is the neoplatonic ladder to or from God, when it is not God itself. Nature shines with divinity and goodness; the princes open their courts to the contact with Nature. Spinoza elaborates the philosophy of "Deus sive Natura" (God is Nature). A past golden primitive contact with Nature is cherished. Arcadia is formed a little later. Even horse riding in the forest may acquire a mystical significance. Yet there is a great anguish of sinfulness; human nature is bad and corrupt and the entire natural world can be a violent enemy, as explorers and new settlers discover. Nature is also a punishing agent, a wild beast that has to be tamed and converted. Human nature has to be tamed and converted too. This is done with the exercise of virtue, and peace is obtained as a painstaking craft. The farmer is seen as a man in a privileged position: he is in close contact with Nature, and gains with virtuous labour the fruit of Nature for mankind. The farmer is the one who brings Nature to Man in its most benign
form; he is finally seen as a kind of Natural missionary who is and must be revered by the urban man.

A vivid example of this tradition of thought in its final fruition can be found in the passages from the "Essay on Farming" by Ralph Waldo Emerson added by Frank Lloyd Wright as an appendix to his "Broadacre City."(1)

It is in this essay that Emerson asks: "Who are the farmer's servants? Not the Irish, not the coolies, but Geology and Chemistry..." and it is in this same publication by Frank Lloyd Wright that we find a passage from such a neo-platonist natural scientist as Paracelsus.

Since the renaissance the emotional and mystical attachment to nature is balanced by an idealistic attachment to the sciences. There is a new enthusiasm for geometry, for mathematics, for physics, for chemistry, for the precision and perfection of human endeavours in the field of science. There is only a hundred years between the classification of knowledge in the first Encyclopaedia and the classification of the elements of Mendelejeff in 1869, at the time of the open development of romanticism and of the industrial revolution.

One may see as symbolic the fact that, at the dawn of the Romantic age, Louis the XVI had mechanical locking devices as a hobby and Marie Antoinette that of playing a shepherdess. It was the time of such a hero as Robinson Crusoe and of the
writings of Isaac Newton, in England, and of the devotion and passion for Nature of Rousseau and of the scientific enthusiasm of the Encyclopaedia in France. We see this mixed trend of sentiment and science, of nature and ideal geometry, or, in one romantic expression, of a sublime contrast, in the daring designs of Boullee and Ledoux. The romantic feeling and anguish comes from the sentiment of a contrast between two opposing tendencies, between the desire of something and its denial; to dwell in this mood and to emphasize the sentiment of an impossible or an infinite or a divided desire became the fashion of the new age.

A first example of the sublime achieved as a contrast of bucolic ruralism and of geometric idealism may be seen in the project of a spherical "house for rural guards" by Ledoux: (2) (figure 1) a perfect sphere is shining in the middle of the trees, of the grass and of the cattle of a farm in the country; no other building is in sight. There is only the mystery of this absolutely perfect man-made object, alone and detached, in the middle of Nature, in sublime contrast. The monumentality of isolated, grandiose and pure geometrical forms is even more exploited by Boullee in his project for a cenotaph to Newton, (3) (figure 2) where an immense sphere rises to the clouds in a setting sun, surrounded only by three perfect rings of slender cypresses. The romantic awa and immenseness of this design reminds one of Wagner and of the taste of the National Socialist World. We must note that human beings are like ants in the scale of Boullee's drawings. Romantic idealism undoubtedly preceded the technical achievements that later permitted many
Maison des Gardes Agricoles.

Vue Perspectique.

Elévation.
Figure 2
of its dreams on paper: for example, the spherical house by Ledoux is truly a design for reinforced concrete construction, of which Ledoux had no knowledge. The dream seems always to precede the technology that is necessary to attain it. In this respect, architects like Ledoux and Boullee are for modern architecture what Kant and Hume are for modern philosophy. The "Copernican revolution" that is attributed to them in philosophy has a sort of a parallel in architecture. While in philosophy everything begins to be seen as a projection and a construction of the human mind, in architecture the projections of man, geometry and worshipped nature, make man almost disappear.

"Arcisse de Caumont, under the influence of English archeological studies and of Linneaus's Species Plantarum, decided to classify the medieval buildings of Normandy as if they were botanical specimens....

The copy books were harmless to antiquaries who regarded architecture as an aspect of the social life of the past. But to the architectural profession, these publications had the unfortunate effects of giving excessive importance to skill in draftsmanship, and of placing undue emphasis on the value of chronology. Before 1750, the chronology of antique monuments was of no interests to architects, whilst detailing had been largely left to craftsmen who, recognizing that their first obligation was to become familiar with the traditional mouldings and ornaments of the Five Orders, could be relied upon to execute details without having large scale drawings supplied.
But with the advent of the Gothic Revival, all this changed. Now, unfamiliar with the tectonic vocabulary they were asked to employ, the craftsmen had to be supplied with exact delineations of every profile and crocket...”(4)

This is one of the reasons, incidentally, for which most revivalist architecture looks so cold in comparison with the originals it tried to imitate: every detail had to be drawn in advance on the drafting table, and was repeated according to exact geometrical constructions. In order to accomplish this often details had to be simplified. On the construction site craftsmen executed the details as if they were the hands of a machine.

From this time to our day, regardless of style or of ornamentation or of surface treatment, basic simple geometric forms are the essence of architecture. Drafting tools become more and more perfected and take an increased part in the design process. It is the age of the Ecole Polytechnique, founded by Napoleon, and of all the other schools of the world producing architects-engineers. The industrial revolution provides better and better tools to capture the dream. From the designs by Ledoux and his contemporaries, to Paxton's Crystal Palace, to the Reliance Building in Chicago, to the buildings designed by LeCorbusier and Mies Van der Rohe, and most contemporary architecture there is an undeniable continuity, in which we see more and more in three dimensions the dreams on the drafting tables of yesterday. The successful industrial maecenases took
pride in financing those architectural dreams made possible by the advent of new technologies.

It must be noted that the romantic nostalgia for other ages and places that spread repeatedly during the last two centuries always remained a very superficial phenomenon, and it has been highly overrated. Our grandfathers stole an eclectic mass of decorative symbols from ages and places in which they had a necessarily superficial interest. Their entire mode of thinking was completely foreign even to the symbols that they were employing, for which they had developed new and temporary keys. Therefore, the fact that American governments and banking institutions seemed to be more inclined toward neoclassicism, whereas Canadian governments seemed to have a slight preference for neogothic, for example, is of minor significance. The revival movements were not much different from the love for cemeteries of early romanticism and from the rise of archaeology as a kind of science.

It was a love for beautiful forms of corpses; a love not disjoined from the nostalgia of something irremediably lost and from the new sense of death and of the passing of things.

The romantic age was intrinsically revolutionary and destructive of continuity; although the romantics looked to the past with nostalgia and with the reverie of ideal times, with the anguish of a past golden age, intellectually they had nothing to share with it. The interest and the nostalgia was exclusively for what the forms appeared to be, not for the mode
of life and of thinking and of the totality of actual human interests and efforts that had produced and had been part of those forms.

This detached concept of forms, so related to the monumentalism of the romantic age and to the concept of art for art's sake, led to the love not only of isolated majestic ruins, but also of perfect, detached, free standing forms, abstracted even from meaning if it were possible. The object flung crazily into the middle of the landscape somewhere with no reason or meaning, to produce a certain astonishing or monumental effect is a romantic ideal that one can see as very strong since the early dreams of Boullee and Ledoux: "Astonishment is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree"\(^{(5)}\). Ruins were even artificially produced, such as those remains that we see today of the exhibition of San Francisco. The proposal to group the population of a city into a mile-high skyscraper in the middle of the open land is not surprising as something new or extravagant, in the light of these romantic trends. In fact a drawing of a project of a tower by Boullee (figure 3)\(^{(6)}\) seems to anticipate such an idea. Another interesting comparison can be made between the expectations shown by a design by Ledoux (figure 4)\(^{(7)}\) and the Sear's Pacific Coast Headquarters (figure 5)\(^{(8)}\) of contemporary design. The question that one has to make is what kind of a city is envisaged when these designs of sublime isolated monuments are made. One should think that the desert should be the most suitable environment. However, this building is a perfect accomplishment in terms of geometric form:
Figure 3
Figure 4
not only it is a perfect cube, perfectly free, standing, but also it succeeds in concealing completely its contents, use and construction thanks to a perfect reflection that transforms it into a shiny magic box, as if it were one solid piece dropped by a giant.

We mentioned before that the romantic movement was intrinsically revolutionary and destructive of continuity. This also developed an awe of destruction, death and catastrophies. Initially, cemeteries and death were the subject of considerable curiosity and speculation by literary writers as well as by designers. Frailty and sickness became fashionable and often feigned; ladies would make themselves look pale. Even food was a preoccupation for Malthus. Poe made terror and catastrophe a main literary ingredient, and a sense of catastrophe that might come was in the mood of the age, together with the enthusiasm for the industrial revolution and the bourgeois progress.

The rebelliousness connected with romantic individualism also led to seeing innovation more and more in a revolutionary sense, as substitution of something with something else, rather than as a gradual improvement. Fear and suspicion became a fact of life among the different generations: it had become part of the mode of thinking that each generation had as a kind of natural instinct or duty to undo most of what had been done to start anew. Fashions consequently started to be much more frequent and to change much more rapidly. The word tradition acquired a new meaning, signifying mostly just the
style of the previous generation, rather than a certain patrimony of ideas and practices growing continuously with an uninterrupted sequence of generations. In particular it became a common notion and attitude that the new generations had to grab the positions held by the older generations to change things and that the older generations had to keep things as they are, to defend their positions and to impose continuity through the exercise of power. For example a board of directors may decide to build a skyscraper as a new headquarters of a company to leave a monument of their age and to impose such a monument on new generations in order to provide themselves with a form of immortality. The Ladner tower recently donated to the University of British Columbia is a small but obvious example of this kind of philosophy.

Romanticism made it a custom for fathers and sons to take opposing sides, a common theme in dramas of the period. The romantic individual is still the son of the "Sturm and Drang": he is alone in solitary struggle, waiting to become "handsome with fame and misfortune"(9) and a new kind of Ulysses. In fact romanticism is destructive of bonds of continuity not only among the generations, from past to future (the romantic man fears a catastrophe for the future and is not even interested in procreating) but also among the people of the same generation. "Do you own thing". In this respect, too, romantic conservatives and revolutionaries share the same basic ideas: even in the modern world of ants that they seem involuntarily to shape, they see themselves as isolated monuments. The modern masses are made of people who see themselves as
isolated and alienated individuals. The individual longing for infinity, perfection and happiness is balanced by a sense of collective doom. "Can Our Cities Survive?", asks J.L. Sert from Boston in 1947. The question is already a century old but it will keep coming back, with always stronger arguments.

The isolated sons of the industrial revolution and of "consumism" seem to be afraid of the Frankenstein that they have imagined they have created. The lost sense of continuity creates a disorientation. The new bourgeois class that emerged to dominance during the romantic age dedicated itself to a great extent to the pursuit of individual egoistic dreams, but it always lacked the sense of security of the previous aristocratic establishment to feel comfortable. The economic theories of Adam Smith, Ricardo and Malthus did not contribute to a sense of economic security, and in general, change was desired but tensely feared at the same time.

We have spoken of innovation seen as substitution of something with something else, of the imposition of continuity through the exercise of power, of the isolation of the man of the romantic age, of his fear of destruction and of his desire of infinity... These are all aspects of a philosophy and of a psychology of romanticism that explains the deep roots of the trend to monumentalism in romantic architecture. It is the isolation of the romantic individual, whether free entrepreneur or revolutionary, that one may see at the roots of the monumentalism of the romantic age, both in the small and the large scale.
It is a mistake to associate monumentalism with the styles of the revival periods. The monumental trend was already strong at the time of the designs for the cenotaph for Newton, and always remained strong. In North America there was not even an alternative to this trend, because it developed contemporarily with its birth. But in Europe the trend developed slowly and deeply, showing even more the sources of its character. An interesting sketch by Le Corbusier (figure 6) shows how even buildings that were designed with a completely different concept, and which were old, were "monumentalized" by transforming them into isolated, free standing structures, to be seen from the outside rather than from inside (just as majestic ruins of the past age ought to be seen and cherished in an open field). The example is Notre Dame, in Paris. It is worth mentioning here that romanticism was a phenomenon which developed as a kind of northern version of the Renaissance and which always had very strong cultural ties with the northern European countries. This is an important fact in relation to the ethnic composition of the North American countries in their first two centuries. Camillo Sitte remarked that the placement of churches and of other buildings as detached structures in the middle of squares was a northern and a nineteenth century phenomenon, while in the Italian squares, and particularly in Rome, churches had never been free standing. It is also interesting to see that despite the acute observation that Le Corbusier made regarding the development of the square around Notre Dame, he turned out to propose for his visionary city a perfectly monumental set of isolated geometric pieces (figure 7) that was in perfect accordance with Ledoux' dreams, and that he
La démolition et reconstruction de Notre-Dame.

En 1750.

En 1850.

Notre-Dame a été dégagée, toute l'île démolie et reconstruite.
Figure 7

Une ville contemporaine. Les parcs au pied des gratte-ciel. À droite les résidences. À gauche et au fond, les édifices en gradins des restaurants.
followed the same monumental tradition in most of his projects.

In this light, Le Corbusier's professed cartesianism is even more interesting; it would once more show how strongly monumentalism and the love of pure geometry have become attached. The city has become a group of geometric blocks, as if they were placed by gigantic children playing in a miniature countryside. Gulliver's experience is becoming true. Even for the box housing the United Nations in New York City the site chosen allowed a dramatic open space all around it, thanks to the Hudson River. The geometric character of the monumental architecture of the romantic age should not be missed even if revivalism or other architectural interests confused the surfaces or if the composition is not pure and simple. The composition of monumental pieces of architecture, exploiting "the sublime meaning of correlation"(13) has become the urban game, regardless of particular period, trend, use.

The little detached houses have become little monuments too, beautiful as little things can be, not sublime, as Burke and Kant could explain. "The sublime must always be great; the beautiful can also be small. The sublime must be simple; the beautiful can be adorned and ornamented."(14) Beauty here comes from the same sources that nourished the fairy tales of romanticism. The romantic detached single family dwelling must be seen also as the bourgeois little monument. The bourgeois remembers the castle of the princes but is not at ease there. He wants a little love nest for the family, reminiscent of some romantic
tales. He is interested in history and "periods", and has a middle class informal formality. The precedent of Fonthill Abbey is downgraded socially and economically, brought a little closer to the town and to practical needs, and mass produced. The two by four in North America becomes the main component of the production line of the little, miniaturized beautiful castles. Romanticism is balancing the love for the sublime with the daily use of little beautiful things and down to earth bourgeois "common sense". The sublime and the beautiful are two simultaneous aspects of romanticism in the manner of two extremes, such as large and small, awesome and attractive, for example. The opposite extremes of the compositions of Richard Wagner and of the rise of caricature are contemporary in the development of romanticism. This is why monumentalism and the love for the isolated cottage, the pretty little house of the fairy tales developed contemporarily.

Nature and the agricultural man praised and admired by the romantics are at the origins of "common sense". And "common sense" is at the foundations of those sound prejudices that are transmitted from generation to generation and form the bulk of conservative knowledge, according to Burke. It is a non-rational bulk of knowledge that becomes like an instinct and should be respected as such. Reason cannot question it, but can only respect it and follow it as a guide. This is an attitude that penetrated the romantic generations together with the romantic tenets, tastes, principles and ideas and made them even more
pervasive and stubbornly strong, even after two centuries since their development.

The perception of the sublime according to Burke is one of those non-rational sentiments that is carried almost as an instinct from generation to generation. The romantic generations at least proved him right. From the end of the eighteenth century the design of gardens was modified and nature was rearranged to produce the feeling of the natural sublimity. Instead of the clearly architectural design of the Italian and French gardens, where vegetal objects were arranged and tended as physical extensions of the buildings in the open air, with a sensuous relation with the colours, the smell, the shadows and lights of the garden, which was a clearly man-made object, the new gardens are "natural". They are designed to produce an idyll with nature, as if it had been found that way - untouched, pure, immaculate, not profaned by human hands.

It is the new fashion: the English garden. It will form nature across the continents for two centuries. The new English gardens will allow Goethe and artists of all sorts and countries to find their sublime relationship and idyll with Nature, in a state of awe and wonder. These gardens are the next thing after Arcadia, and in their naturalness they would mate very well with a ruin or with another ideal sublime object, maybe a lone monument. They are built in gentle hills with sparse trees and a carpet of grass. A stream and a little lake bring variety and the life of Nature. A few willow trees reflect
in the clear waters. A casual meandering path leads through a
small forest on the side of the lake. The whole scenery is
designed to be as "picturesque" as a painter might wish it to be
for an inspiring natural scene of a sublime landscape. The
dream of Nature endures the reorganizing of nature so that it
looks natural and original. Nature must be recreated, purified.
This notion spread like a fever to North America, where huge
areas were recreated or set aside for contemplating the picturesque
and the sublime. The immaculate aspect of western North America
fascinated as a dream the romantic travellers, painters and
writers; even that, however, was modified here and there into
more natural, picturesque, tamed, idyllic settings. "Youth" in
"The Voyage of Life" by Thomas Cole is a painting that well
synthesizes the favourite natural themes. It is believed that
Olmsted won the assignment of the project of Central Park thanks
to very picturesque watercolors of the natural scenes which he
submitted. In the English garden Nature is brought back to man
as an Eden, as a morally regenerating factor. The English
garden satisfies the desire of perfect naturalness, of things
unspoiled by the sinful human hand (as they must have been in a
primeval state), of natural order and cleanliness (a shirt for­
gotten there would be a crime), and of infinity. While the
perspective of a path of a baroque garden would have a clear axial
direction, would normally be stopped by a statue or a fountain
at the focal point and the view would normally end against a
hedge or a stone wall with a wrought iron fence behind it, in
the English garden wherever possible the path leads to points of
infinite open vistas (which would not exist in Italy except over
the sea) of serene and bucolic landscapes. When there is a
statue or some building this is a true dramatic monument: it is
set in an infinite landscape, with nothing around or behind it.
It has to be sublime.

Another important feature of an English garden is that
it cannot merge with a different fabric such as a building; in
this respect the garden itself becomes a monument, in that it
sets itself in a world apart and it is detached from the other
objects, in the romantic fashion. It participates in the romantic
destruction of continuity and love for isolation. It is also a
place of noble melancholy and of quiet wonder: "deep loneliness
is sublime"\(^{(15)}\). As such the romantic garden can be contrasted
only with something abruptly different and equally sublime, unless
it is set in an unlimited view of countryside. This is why the
simple geometric forms that contrast it in North American cities
are so fitting and participate so well of the romantic sublime
atmosphere; a successful example is Central Park in New York
City. This example shows quite clearly how rigid the sublime
formulas can be.

We have opened this chapter by observing that the
return to Nature and the rise of new sciences, technologies and
industries are among the important themes of the romantic age.
Their importance is even greater because the romantic creeds
produced a kind of symbiotic necessity and growth of the two
themes. The romantics loved the dialectic struggle of opposing
trends and forces, the opposite limitations of contrasting forces,
and tended to believe that an overwhelming synthesis, sublime or picturesque or tragic, could or had to be achieved. **Industry and Nature, Science and Spontaneity, Law and Freedom, Technique and Intuition, Reason and Sentiment, etc.** provided some of the dual motifs on which the romantics dwell to serve their creative anguish or synthesis, even to our day.

For two centuries we have had proposals of all sorts to bring together these themes perceived as opposing poles of human attitudes. At the origins of the architectural synthesis of these same centuries one may see particularly the concepts of the sublime and of the beautiful that were developed in the eighteenth century. These concepts were extremely well suited to provide the aesthetic key with which to solve the romantic contrasts.

In the description of the sublime written by Burke we can find most of the motives of the modern architectural blocks; for him "visual objects of great dimensions are sublime"(16), "everything great by its quantity must necessarily be one, simple and entire"(17), and "a species of greatness arises from the artificial infinite", which "consists of a uniform succession of great parts". (18) What must be obtained is "not pleasure, but a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquility tinged with terror; which as it belongs to self-preservation, is one of the strongest of all the passions. Its object is the sublime. Its highest degree I call astonishment; the subordinate degrees are awe, reverence, and respect, ..."(19). "All general priva-
tions are great, because they are all terrible; Vacuity, Darkness, Solitude, and Silence." (20) "Another source of the sublime is infinity; if it does not rather belong to the last. Infinity has a tendency to fill the mind with that sort of delightful horror, which is the most genuine effect and truer test of the sublime." (21) "INFINITY, though of another kind, causes much of our pleasure in agreeable, as well as of our delight in sublime, images. The spring is the pleasantest of the seasons; ...In unfinished sketches of drawing, I have often seen something which pleased me beyond the best finishing:..." "Another source of greatness is Difficulty. When any work seems to have required immense force and labour to effect it, the idea is great" (22) "Magnificence" is likewise a source of the sublime." "...such a light as that of the sun, immediately exerted on the eye, as it overpowers the sense, is a very great idea... A quick transition from light to darkness, or from darkness to light, has yet a greater effect. But darkness is more productive of sublime ideas than light." Burke continues with a revealing comment to a verse written by Milton, his favourite poet:

"'Dark with excessive light thy skirts appear'. Here is an idea not only poetical in a high degree, but strictly and philosophically just. Extreme light, by overcoming the organs of sight, obliterates all objects, so as in its effect exactly to resemble darkness. After looking for some time at the sun, two black spots, the impression which it leaves, seem to dance before our eyes. Thus are two ideas as opposite as can be imagined reconciled in the extremes of both; and both, in spite
of their opposite nature, brought to concur in producing the sublime. And this is not the only instance wherein the opposite extremes operate equally in favour of the sublime, which in all things abhors mediocrity."

The sublime was proposed and loved before engineering made it possible in its most grandiose modern manifestations; undoubtedly a shiny white shell of concrete rising eight hundred feet above a deep alpine valley, or the view of the earth from a spaceship, or the skyscrapers facing the sea, would have impressed Edmund Burke as overwhelming examples of the sublime. The isolated skyscraper or other free-standing monumental building, especially when facing a park or other wide open space, is probably the most common example of the influence of the sublime in architecture. But engineers and architects alike have gone very far in the dream and in the exploitation of the sublime in many ways, particularly at the exhibitions, from Eiffel's tower in Paris to the Space Needle in Seattle.

By distinguishing the sublime from the beautiful, Burke laid down also the foundations for the theory of the picturesque, which Knight and Price expanded from concepts mainly related to the beautiful. Beauty does not depend upon proportion and perfection, as it used to in the Renaissance, but from pleasing qualities, mostly opposite to those of the sublime, such as smallness, smoothness, variety, lack of sharp angles, "a delicate frame", "colors clear and bright, but not very strong and glaring"
Beauty has feminine qualities, and it is something that is more according to the nature of Italians and Frenchmen. (25)

This is an important racial observation that is repeated and explained at great length by Kant, and which would indicate that the original ruling class in North America saw in the sublime also a reason of ethnic superiority. This would also give a partial explanation of the fact that most of the picturesque views of villages are taken from mediterranean villages, and in general, apart from pure views of picturesque rural landscapes, the picturesque, especially in North America, has been more often associated with images of villages from mediterranean or latin cultures. "The Italian appears to have a feeling mixed from that of a Spaniard and that of a Frenchman, more feeling for the beautiful than the former and more for the sublime than the latter. In this way, as I think, the remaining traits of his moral character can be explained."*

Despite the romantic claim for a disinterested art, an art for art's sake, originating from Kant himself, the attitude toward the sublime, the beautiful, the picturesque and even such general notions as taste were closely associated to moral, religious and racial considerations. "The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling. Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has

*Thomas De Quincy translated into English the section on national characters from Kant's Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime in 1824.
shown talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality, even though among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color. The religion of fetishes that is so widespread among them is perhaps a sort of idolatry that sinks as deeply into the trifling as appears to be possible to human nature.\(^{(27)}\)

It would be a mistake to believe that when Kant arose from his "dogmatic sleep" and wrote the three critiques he repudiated his former trends. It was rather an excellent exercise of rationalization of those same trends, and undoubtedly Kant laid the most profound rational basis not only for romantic idealism, but also for the strong relationship that the romantics seemed to feel between aesthetic and moral, religious and metaphysical attitudes. The sublime was thus introduced as the most superior aesthetic feeling, and the one in which the Anglo-Saxon race and its morality excelled.

The aesthetics of the sublime became associated with dominance, with progress, and with the expression of the superior
people and nations.* "I know of nothing sublime, which is not some modification of power" (28). Ruskin put the Lamp of Power among his Seven Lamps of Architecture. The sublime was what brought together sentiment, science, nature and sometimes even God in one vision. This is the synthesis in which Emerson, for instance, in the most typical North American tradition, sees Nature and Science coming together, with poetic inspiration.

It is important to understand that the notion of the sublime was associated with an obscure, intuitive and sketchy feeling, even if overwhelming, in most cases. "A clear idea is therefore another name for a little idea." (29) Clarity belongs rather to the small, the beautiful, the well-crafted things. This is why intuition normally leads reason in the romantic way to the sublime. The sublime is sudden, overwhelming, revealing. It is genius, talent or inspiration, rather than understanding, that leads to the sublime. The artist therefore is a "gifted" man. He participates in the sublime mysteries. He is the high priest that might also dispense the beautiful, but who leads to the sublime intuitions. However the "clear ideas" dear to Descartes are not entirely forgotten or opposed. Nor only is a clear idea "another name for a little idea", but is is also the contrasting element or part of the succession of the "artificial infinite" which allows the fearful contact with the sublime intuition or vision. In fact a group of "clear ideas", such as those of the sciences, can produce an idealized, highly romantic, sublime and frightening vision, and become a sketchy, obscure and

*The skyscraper became associated with power and superior development, in a unique combination.
overwhelming grandiose intuition. Le Corbusier seems to have been one among such romantic Cartesians.

Giedion makes an interesting comparison between the towers of Asinelli and Garisenda\(^{(30)}\) and the Rockefeller Centre: apart from other considerations that would indicate other aspects of their remarkable difference, the "leaning towers of two noble families of Bologna are private patrician fortresses of great height which can yet be embraced in a single view"

(These fortresses normally were not designed to be free standing except for their upper part). Instead, "expressions of the new urban scale like Rockefeller Center are forcefully conceived in space-time and cannot be embraced in a single view." To obtain a feeling for their interrelations the eye must function as in the high speed photographs of Edgerton. The sublime here comes from a sketchy and overwhelming intuition. The comparison with speed photography of motion is not very strong and accurate. Instead, the harmony, smoothness and elegance of the golfer shown in the example would induce one to believe that speed photography simply produces beautiful images, that one might follow as sublime awesome intuitions only when they are related to the cosmic scale of modern science. This intuition, however, would be an act of personal imagination and could not be compared with the confused overwhelming effect of the skyscraper, as in the case shown.

Kant makes important observations relating the use of flowers with the "morally beautiful": "If we examine the relation
of the sexes in these parts of the world, we find that the European alone has found the secret of decorating with so many flowers the sensual charm of a mighty inclination and of interlacing it with so much morality that he has not only extremely elevated its agreeableness but also made it very decorous." (31) In the "Critique of Judgement" Kant notes that "gardening might be considered as a kind of painting". (32) In the romantic tradition the love of flowers and of gardens became related not only with aesthetic beauty, but also with the morally beautiful. The gentle person must love flowers; and the person who loves flowers is generally recognized as a better person. It became a fashion to know the names, properties and features of the various trees, shrubs and flowers. Those who cut trees and walk on flowers are not only philistines, but maybe ever future criminals. Southern Europeans are condemned for their disregard of gardens and of flowers; a sense of moral dirtiness and courseness is cast upon them for this. It is not surprising, therefore, that not a few among the southern European immigrants in North America will make a point of showing their grounds among the best kept when they reach the wealthy suburbs. The garden became a necessary part of the little cottage ideal. It was the gentle crown of the little bourgeois love-nest. It was the symbol of the clean and well bred family. It was the place where the individual feeling for the picturesque and for beauty could be demonstrated by anyone. The garden became another little compounded artistic and moral statement. The chalet with geranium pots, a little beautiful garden and maybe even shutters with a sculptured heart has become an arthitectural symbol of refinement, gentleness,
moral order and northern simplicity and cleanliness. It has become a synthesis and an archetype of the beautiful.
NOTE:

As a curiosity, we may compare this drawing by Frank Lloyd Wright\(^{(33)}\) with the drawing of figure 1, by Ledoux:

Those who visited the American Pavilion at Expo '67 in Montreal -- Buckminster Fuller's "ball" -- may compare it with Boullee's project shown in figure 2 of this chapter.
CHAPTER 9

(1) R.W. EMERSON, Essay on Farming, from Appendix to Broadacre City by F.L. WRIGHT, Chicago 1945

(2) D. DE MENIL, Visionary Architects, Houston 1968, p. 93

(3) Ibidem p. 27

(4) P. COLLINS, Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, Montreal 1967, p. 103

(5) E. BURKE, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, London 1889, p. 40

(6) D. DE MENIL, Visionary Architects, Houston 1968, p. 37

(7) Ibidem p. 147

(8) "U.S. News & World Report", April 12, 1973, advertisement

(9) U. FOSCOLO, A Zacinto, my translation of sonnet verse

(10) J.L. SERT: Can Our Cities Survive? Boston 1947

(11) LE CORBUSIER: The Radiant City, Paris 1933

(12) Ibidem p. 232


(14) I. KANT, Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime, University of California, 1965, p. 48

(15) Ibidem

(16) E. BURKE, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, London 1889, p. 101

(17) E. BURKE, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, London 1889, p. 103

(18) Ibidem

(19) Ibidem p. 101
(20) Ibidem p. 51
(21) Ibidem p. 53
(22) Ibidem p. 56
(23) Ibidem p. 57
(24) Ibidem p. 88
(25) Ibidem p. 84
(27) Ibidem p. 111
(29) Ibidem p. 45
(31) I. KANT: *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, University of California, 1965, p. 112
(32) I. KANT: *Critique of Judgement*, Part I, Sec. 1 Book II
Voltaire concluded "Candide" saying: "We must cultivate our garden", and advised: "Let us work without reasoning, it is the only way to make life tolerable." Voltaire of old was indeed not only a suburbanite, but an eager gardener himself. And Rousseau concluded his "Discourse On The Origin of Inequality" with this invitation: "O you, who have never heard the voice of heaven, who think man destined only to live this little life and die in peace; you, who can resign in the midst of populous cities your fatal acquisitions, your restless spirits, your corrupt hearts and endless desires; resume, since it depends entirely on ourselves, your ancient and primitive innocence: retire to the woods, there to lose the sight and remembrance of the crimes of your contemporaries; and be not apprehensive of degrading your species, by renouncing its advances in order to renounce its vices." Amazan, the hero of "La Princesse de Babylone" (Voltaire), is a hero of primitive innocence, whose strength and greatness spring from similar concepts.

The debates about the "law of nature" as something different or opposed to the "law of man" induced many to write in favour of rural life.

Rousseau inspired Michel Guillaume Jean de Crevecoeur, one among his many followers, to write his famous "Letters from an American Farmer", in praise of rural life and early American farming ideals, which penetrated deeply into the American con-
science, and were shared in many ways by such later thinkers as Emerson. Later the Rossettis, with some help from William Morris, in England, published "The Germ", joining the field of those advocating a return to nature, to simple-hearted realism and to primitive forms of art. John Ruskin saw industry as evil, depriving man of beauty.

What we may now examine is how the new romantic concepts of nature and of aesthetics were arrived at, and what inherent dualistic conflicts they implied. The importance of philosophical ideas is that they are originated by strong personalities who can gain large numbers of conscious and unconscious followers. This is particularly true of romantic ideas, which were originally developed by a number of exceptional thinkers. These ideas were then carried further and further across the world by large numbers of what we may call believers, giving rise to the equivalent of intellectual religious sects, with a large number of axioms and tenets whose origins have long been forgotten, and whose acceptability has become even less questionable. In fact these axioms may have become stronger than religious dogmas and may have a more profound effect on our practical life than we realize. We may find here forgotten reasons for our uncritical acceptance of what may be outworn ideals; reasons for which we follow Voltaire's advice and not only cultivate our garden, but also work without reasoning in order "to make life tolerable". Incidentally, Voltaire was among the first European liberals to be admired in the Anglo-Saxon world and, in turn, to consider superior the Anglo-Saxon way of living.
It was during his lifetime that the romantic concepts of nature, of reason, and of beauty were evolved, and the conflicts between these concepts were firmly established. That life had to be a struggle of isolated men was symbolized by such heros as Robinson Crusoe and those who dominate the dramas of the "Sturm und Drang". But more profound and metaphysical reasons for a permanent struggle were laid by the major philosophers.

Nature began to be classified strictly as what is not the human mind and not modified or created by the work of man. Within man too a conflict was more clearly defined between nature and reason. Sentiment and reason were finally established as independent and often opposing forces. Baumgarten coined the word "Aesthetics" and for the first time tied beauty strictly with perception and feeling rather than with understanding. Hume demolished the knowledge of anything that was not a temporary hypothesis. Nature was seen as something not only outside of man, but also beyond the powers of knowledge of man. At the same time the morality of Protestantism was emphasizing man as corrupt and nature as a kind of biblical manifestation of God. For Spinoza it was God himself. In fact nature acquired two meanings: human nature, a corrupt and divided nature in which the forces of reason and of sentiment were struggling, and exterior nature, proper nature, the incorrupt neutral, unknown outside world. The outside world too was seen in two ways: as a mysterious force, even a punishing one, which could be violent and dangerous and which had to be controlled and subdued, and as the incorrupt harmony to which we must adapt as to the ultimate
wisdom even if we cannot rationally wholly comprehend it, and which we must obey.

It is Kant who first organized these contradictions in a complete and supposedly coherent system, opening the way to most of the romantic philosophies. Kant analyzed reason and established the laws of reason in such a way as to prove that it cannot know the exterior world; the only way reason sees the outside world is by a projection of itself. The existence itself of nature as other than ourselves cannot be known; it has to be postulated. By definition nature, the "noumenon" is an unknown postulated entity.

For the first time human reason is completely isolated and its laws are seen as something completely independent from anything else. The world, the universe in its entirety, is completely split in to two parts: the world of reason, which can know with certitude and accuracy only what is subject to "a priori" judgements, in the manner of the sciences, and the exterior world, which can only be known by postulating its existence and its features according to the exigences of our moral and intuitive faculties.

Science and nature, reason and intuition, are independent fields; for many romantics they became opposing fields. Furthermore, reason becomes a rather negative and dry faculty: at best it can further strictly abstract scientific knowledge, while the non-rational human faculties acquire nobility, leading
man into the fields of morality and aesthetics. This is one of the reasons for which design later tended to become an occult science. It is Kant who gave origins to the romantic notions of a disinterested morality and of a disinterested art ("art for art's sake").

In morality the power of the will is emphasized. It becomes a driving and creative force, with no end or interest, obedient only to the "categorical imperative", an innate source of judgment, even if man is recognized as having a "propensity to evil." (3)

The power of the will was later to create the myth of the romantic hero gifted with an "iron will". (Alfieri's history of his life: "volli, sempre volli, fortissimamente volli").* Great men were supposed to be men of strong will. The motif of lack of self interest in virtuous pursuits later seemed to influence the professional associations and the codes of professional ethics. Architects, for example, are not supposed to be contractors and businessmen and cannot criticize other architects. They are supposed to be purely disinterested professional consultants and designers acting for a client at a fixed and equal fee. In art, Kant's view that art should be created only for art's sake, with pure intention and no other interest, led to the theory that art should have complete independence from other fields of knowledge and of activity. Beauty, however, in Kant's view, ultimately leads to the morally good.

* "I willed, I always willed, I most strongly willing"
It is also in the Romantic period that the notion of genius is for the first time detached from any premise or intellectualist limit. In opposition to philosophers such as Meier, Baumgarten and Lessing for whom genius is always somehow limited to rational capacities, J. C. Hamann is the first to define genius as "Urkraft", that is as a natural and originary creativity, as a mysterious revelation of God. With Hamann the "Sturm und Drang" period is announced and his intuition will be developed and cherished in the Romantic thought of the Genie-period. But already with Kant the romantic notion of genius finds its first definition: "Genius is the talent (natural endowment) which gives the rule to art. Since talent, as an innate productive faculty of the artist, belongs itself to nature, we may put it this way: Genius is the innate mental aptitude (ingenium) through which nature gives the rule to art... Genius may also be defined as the faculty of aesthetic ideas. This serves at the same time to point out the reason why it is nature (the nature of the individual) and not a set purpose, that in the products of genius gives the rule to art (as the production of the beautiful)." (4)

This means that its products do not derive from any sort of tradition or imitation but are the original models which have to be used as criteria of judgement. Therefore, the genius cannot know and does not know how to reach whence he took his intuitions. Ultimately the romantics will propose a genius who is beyond all laws and all possible criticism, and who creates his own laws each time that he acts. In politics, planning and architecture this is a difficulty. The genius can work best alone.
Although he is necessarily bound to nature and to human events, yet the genius rises above daily vicissitudes and practical interests in a region out of time where there is no place for the becoming of history. Psychologically the genial artist of romantic tradition is characterized by a deep melancholy which makes him unhappy and restless, by a desire for loneliness which isolates him from the laity (or from common people), and by a naive simplicity which makes him like a child. We find many examples of this kind of man in Romantic literature, from A. DeVigny's Chatterton and Moise to Baudelaire's Albatros.

The view that the universe is a projection of the mind soon led the genial romantic architects to feel the need of drawing their designs to minute details:* every design also had to be original and unique. There was no room left for the tradesman to interpret the more sketchy drawings used in earlier centuries and to contribute craft and skill developed on the construction site. While Kant goes to great length to establish such notions as "The Dynamically Sublime in Nature", he does not realize that he reinforced the trend established by Baumgarten, and followed later almost to our day, of trying to relate the notion of beauty with perception and intuition rather than with understanding. Thus we have another romantic contradiction, that of reason which projects itself over the entire universe and yet cannot be related.

* We noted this attitude in the previous chapter for additional reasons.
directly with the pleasure arising from the appreciation of aesthetic qualities. Reason and art enter into conflict. In art individual expression is emphasized more than communication. Ultimately such an impalpable quality as that of being a genius allows one to reach the perfect aesthetic expression. Design had to become an occult science, where a few high priests could decide who was inspired, and everybody else had to follow and understand. A rational enquiry into the field of design was supposed to be a contradiction of terms.

Struggle was in the nature of romanticism, as we said before. It was in the recognition of opposing trends and forces that the romantic reached his dramatic tension, anguish and drama. It was Hegel who finally gave a coherent shape to the romantic dialectic dualism and explained it through a universal reason manifesting itself as a synthesis of opposing forces and thus creating the universe. In this view conflicts are nothing but the expression of this reason in its process of self-determination through opposing aspects. The power of the will was emphasized by the romantics, particularly beginning with Kant. It was to the will that the power of overcoming difficulties and opposing forces was attributed, and the strong will was seen as an expression of the universal reason, in fact as allowing the universal reason to materialize itself in a human being, in a more perfect manner.

The romantic man of ambition welcomed struggle and difficulties to overcome; he actually needed those difficulties
to overcome to realize his destiny. Success and true will were identified. If something were not obtained or achieved it was only because it had not been the object of enough true will. From this emerged a new concept of failure; it could no longer be a calamity that could oppress the frail nature of a human being without a fault of his own and despite all his good will. It no longer deserved a charitable understanding. Failure to the romantic eye was the proof of lack of strong will, and as such it deserved only moral condemnation and disgust. Not to succeed was in fact proof of ill character and a social evil. Suicide was a particularly romantic disease, and many artists and designers died of it.

True will and race and nation began being identified too; beginning with Fichte destiny is attributed not only to individuals but also to nations and races. The concept of a leading race was thus prepared, and it had a tremendous success with the Anglo-Saxons. The Anglo-Saxon taste began to be identified as the best and as civilization itself. Thus, what in the eighteenth century was only a romantic feeling in taste, particularly in England, later began to be identified with civilization itself by those who had inherited it.

We mentioned in the previous chapter that the romantic interest in nature is paralleled by an equal interest in sepulchres, in death, in dark and gloomy things and in mysteries. One of the many aspects of romantic dualism is that of wishing at the same time both death and immortality, annihilation and greatness.
Romanticism originated both the desire for colossal structures, and for buildings that would disappear into the ground and the pattern of nature. Melting away into nature was almost as strong a desire as that of rising to infinite greatness and perfection. On one side there was the mysterious unknown, the "other" (to use Sartre's expression) from ourselves, and on the other side the infinite power and extension of reason.

As we mentioned, the two worlds had no compatible contacts according to post-Kantian philosophy: the mind, abstract reason, has come out of "the dogmatic sleep" and recognized that it has no true knowledge of anything that is not an abstract projection of the intellect itself. Nature has to be postulated but it cannot be known in itself: it is the "noumenon", the unknown by definition. Despite the fact that Hegel thought of solving the dilemma by considering the entire universe and nature as a creation of reason, through its dialectic becoming, most of the less prepared romantics actually fell into a gross materialistic dualism, dividing the universe in two physical parts, self and nature, excluding human nature from nature proper, and considering the unknown, with typical human optimism, as the better part.

Thus we find people who believe they become part of a better and mysterious cycle by gardening, watching the shrubs and flowers grow and blossom, and worrying about the weather and the seasons. Gardening and reading horoscopes may sometimes be pursued with a similar intellectual background. It is the concept
of nature outside of you and mysteriously influencing you. Yet on examination pollution would be seen to be as natural as the stars, landslides, or influenza, while cutting the grass would be a less natural act, quite unecological. (In fact Le Corbusier avoided it in his landscaping; instead of putting cultivated lawns around his buildings, he left the grass to grow naturally, so that it only needs to be cut once a year, in the manner of a farmer cutting hay.)

The old concept was that of nature as a planned creation of which man was an integral part. Mythology or religion would explain what was man's place on earth. In the romantic concept, with or without a religious context, man and nature are separate and watching each other as two entities without a common language, but with a great need to interact.

A popular misconception about the nature of romanticism is that it was opposed by classicism, or by rationalism. Peter Collins says: "Romanticism was by no means universally accepted, and the words Romantic and Classical were still used to express the basic antithesis between two fundamentally antagonistic ideals. This was because they corresponded to two aspects of human nature from which all problems of morality ultimately spring, and thus they meant not only the difference between Greek and Gothic, but the difference between emotional and rational, between sensual and intellectual, between sentiment and judgement, and between freedom and the rule of the law. Most moderate architects of the time, like most moderate men, managed to achieve some harmony
and balance, or at least a compromise, between these conflicting forces." (5)

The mistake here is to fail to see that the conflict was necessary and that it was the persisting conflict between opposing trends that was the nature of romanticism. Greek and Gothic, emotional and rational, sensual and intellectual, sentiment and judgement, freedom and legalism are the opposing poles of the romantic dual representation of the world.

The conflict between Romantic and Classical was a fictitious conflict of opposing styles within the one trend of revivalism. "The Greek and the Gothic were both, in the minds of the serious aestheticians and artists, the salvation from eighteenth century flippancy."(6) The struggle "to achieve some harmony and balance, or at least a compromise, between these conflicting forces" of sentiment and judgement is the nature of romanticism. The romantic anguish and sense of greatness thrives on these conflicts, which may be totally imaginary. It is an introvert world which is ruled by the dialectic of opposing trends in continuous need of a unifying solution.

It is typically romantic to see a conflict between emotional and rational, for example, and to have to opt for one or the other. In fact the choice is made in order to foment a struggle that creates a feeling of greatness. In this respect romanticism is an intellectual drug. The man who pretends to be only rational or the man who pretends to be only emotional in some ways is not
different from the whole man who pretends to walk on one leg only. The libraries are full of dubious problems created by the romantic age in its urge to debate great conflicts, mainly created by splitting observations and by taking sides. The romantic urge for contrasts had dawned in the drawings of Piranesi, where, interestingly, the buildings grow out of proportion with respect to the scale of people. They become isolated and contoured by the odd shrub and tree.

But it is especially Boullee who reflects in his drawings what Kant called the "Copernican revolution of thought". The perfect rational object drawn by Boullee contrasts with a mysterious and desert nature. Men are like ants between reason and nature. The two worlds of the rational object and of nature are designed in absolute contrast: it is as if the object drawn by Boullee had fallen from another world. This will become a feature of romantic aesthetics. It is in accord with the new view, introduced by Kant, of incommensurability between the world of pure reason and the world of nature, the "noumenon". The two cannot communicate. The man made object is made to drop from another world. "The inventions of Lequeu show an unexpected facet of French architecture around 1800. They belong to another world, a world pervaded by dreams and eccentricities. Lequeu's universe is crowded with details and marginalia, but it is nonetheless empty: alcoves are deserted; temples have no devotees; roads no traffic. The question becomes inevitable: Was Lequeu ever addressing anyone but himself?"(7)
The concept of having to touch the feeling rather than the understanding of man is part of the new aesthetics. Instead of intellectual symbolism therefore we have emotionally impressive and massive forms. The only symbolism intended is keyed to the past. Rather than a new symbolism a code of sentiments and emotions is developed, and many systems are proposed to stimulate these feelings. The stimuli are mostly created through contrasts and the objective is to produce the feeling of the beautiful or of the sublime. We may recall that John Ruskin made an intricate study of the stimuli in his "Seven Lamps of Architecture", although it was Burke who remains the spiritual father of most of the literature on the subject.

We mentioned earlier the dualist nature of romanticism, and several aspects of this dualism. Two other important systems of polarization are what we may call the idealist movement and the pragmatist movement. It is to the idealist movement that we may attribute most of the contemporary aesthetic notions, the monumentalism of our buildings and their isolation. Each building was the embodiment of an idea, a form, a design. This idea was to be communicated through the image, the intuition, and the feeling stimulated by the building. "Art is an intuition or an image." (Croce) (8). The aesthetic relationship between ideas and feelings was the object of complicated investigations and of many debates, but it originated a mysterious and mystical aestheticism which most of the times ended on metaphysical grounds, according to a process similar to the one followed by Kant in its Critique of Judgement, where from aesthetics he finally stepped into theology,
the theology which he had previously proven rationally impossible in his *Critique of Pure Reason*.

So the arcane monumental object, prophesized by Boullee and made real by many isolated skyscrapers, among the others, is not only a sublime product of modern engineering and of the industrial revolution, but it is also the admired object of a kind of aesthetic cult. The government centre in Brasilia and the City Hall in Toronto seem to share in this aestheticism to a considerable extent. These monumental buildings are the cathedrals, or dedicated buildings, of romanticism. And like a religion, romantic aestheticism tended to be an object of faith and rather esoteric. It used to be, and it still is impossible to argue about aesthetic matters; such things as personal intuitions and feelings are hard to relate to more simple, common and communicable forms of understanding.

On the other end of the spectrum there are the pragmatists, with whom it would be equally hard to discuss aesthetic matters because they claim no specific interest in ideas and intuitions except as related to their usefulness for a certain period of time. Pragmatists normally would give the greatest consideration to the economic aspect of the matter, and see the buildings as part of the play of the market. But "the market", as we noted in chapter 6, may be a very difficult entity to study. Ultimately,

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* A spectrum somehow identified by Van Wyck Brooks, in the quote introduced in chapter 8, as ranging from "overtones" to "undertones".
it may appear to be another esoteric notion, a mysterious and all-encompassing reason that is supposed to explain human choices.

It happened therefore that despite the great idealism of many romantics and their claimed interest in ideas, ideas as applied to design could not be discussed in one way or another. This is why the romantic prejudices in terms of design could become so strong and deep and go unchallenged for a long period of time.

In fact they were placed beyond the realm of any reasonable debate.
CHAPTER 10


A blind force seems to be driving North America in its attitude and philosophy of urbanization. Its nature has not been the subject of many analyses and discussions. And this force seems to be quite irrational. Its origins are rooted in the romantic spirit of early generations of settlers which influenced an unquestioned pervasive background of our times. Speculations of what appear now as distant thinkers have penetrated the consciousness of generations of immigrants in the form of unquestionable axioms which seem to blindly lead the public system of values against the needs and the logic of our times and of our evolving culture.

We have seen that the ideas and values of thinkers whose names our legislators may not even recollect have been transferred into the philosophy of the laws which rule the development of our cities. At a time when the "American dream" is rapidly fading and we are beginning to understand such a notion as that of a possible shortage of energy, the gigantic waste produced by our irrational cities is becoming more and more apparent. We seem to be slowly approaching the full circle of the tautologies of the romantic dreams; for example we are encouraged to lower the thermostats in our suburban homes or urban office towers and be uncomfortable so that enough oil can be refined for our cars taking us to work to the city; we want power, the progress of sciences, and to live close to untouched, unpolluted nature, but we do not want to flood the valleys to
obtain the necessary energy. We want to produce cars to foster the industrial economy, but we do not want to or cannot pay the bill in terms of energy consumption and pollution controls.

In a time of rapid change, conservation has become an oddly magic concept: conservation of nature, conservation of resources, conservation of energy, conservation of buildings, conservation of life-styles, conservation of trees, of little old churches, of rows of specialty shops, of beaches or old houses. The same romantic impulse that drives people to cherish what they have leads them also to rebel, to change, to destroy and renew. Frozen conservation and destructive change: it is another aspect of the extreme dualistic, contradictory impulse of romanticism that may be related, as we noted earlier, to a feeling of anguish and importance. The problem of this age in North America is that it is so blind to true self criticism; it is as if the urban "system" were taken as something in which nothing could be seen as basically wrong. Our libraries and cities are growing with repetitive work, just like the ever expanding suburban subdivisions and condominiums. Attitudes and procedures inherited from generations of the nineteenth century rule our daily urban pursuits in the form of written and unwritten laws. Our cities make us part of an irrational army under the rule of unknown generals who disappeared a long time ago. The system has become so intricate and complicated that we may find that we have no time and energy left to question it. Much time is lost lining up for a romantic paradise which we are supposed to desire and from which the crowd ahead seems
always to separate us. We are rushing toward a nature which we will never find and which we cannot define for ourselves.

There has been a colossal amount of literature produced on the problems of cities in recent years; a few years ago senator Abraham Ribicoff noted in Washington: "Since we are dealing with people, since we must understand the forces at work in the city and our society, then we must look at the people, not the houses - at the individual, not the group - at what a man wants, not what someone else tells him he needs."(1) Yet in his speech as well as in the vast amount of literature available, the fundamental question about what kind of city, what kind of dreams, and what kind of cultural values we want to see reflected or admitted in our cities, has been avoided, as if it could be taken for granted, or it had been already fully answered. Instead the dreams that we have established and that we are following are no longer of true value to us.

Historically, this has developed as the contemporary trend in North America, and perhaps in the world; the cultural content of the architecture of our cities is considered a solved problem, about which no debate is open. Unfortunately, from what we have seen it would appear that this is not the result of a free and rational choice. And there is a certain degree of consensus regarding this. "Suburban sprawl and urban decay have not come about solely because people have made a free choice in a free enterprise market. That choice has been influenced by federal housing subsidies, which, purporting to
be neutral, have in fact subsidized low-density middle-income living in the suburbs and have thereby financed the flight of white population from the city. Another factor affecting this dispersal has been our segregation practices within the city.

The lack of public discussion about the influence of housing segregation and federal housing subsidies upon urban growth patterns has been a barrier to understanding the problems of the city and suburbs and has created a feeling of hopelessness about the future of America's cities.\(^{(2)}\)

"The individuality of the suburban cottage, now expressing itself in painful excrescences of 'original' ornament, or again in no less painful imitation of historic styles - this 'individuality' was in effect a confession that the proud philistines of the period had neither the intellectual penetration to analyze their condition nor the courage and the imagination to transform it. The suburb was a pharisaic way of passing by on the other side: leaving the civic organism itself in the gutter.\(^{(3)}\)

Yet "acceptance of low-density regional growth implies, of course, a curtailment of mass transportation, for mass transportation works well only in highly concentrated areas where trip origins and destinations are clustered rather than widely dispersed. Conversely, the automobile, which functions so efficiently for decentralized traffic, becomes highly inefficient under conditions of intense demand. Suburban sprawl will thus
bring about a further decline in mass transportation, as increasing reliance on the automobile brings further congestion to central business districts."(4) In fact the entire North American economy in the last half century has been geared to sustain the development of a suburban-designed world; the North American "standard of living" and the industry would face a period of painful transformation if such suburban design had to be drastically and suddenly revised. It is amazing that a single-purpose industry, that of the production of chiefly suburban-designed motor cars, has become the most indicative and crucial industry. The time, the money and the energy that has been dedicated to create the suburban society is beyond rational understanding. Yet even now that the resources necessary to fulfill the romantic dream on a national scale are beginning to dwindle, people are shutting their eyes and waiting for the political or technical miracle that will allow the achievement of the romantic paradise on earth.

Weissbourd said: "If we know what kind of urban environment we want, the power and the tools to create it are at our disposal."(5) The problem is that we do not know and do not seem to want to know what kind of environment we want. The design was evolved a long time ago and we would rather not bother to discuss it; we prefer to follow blindly at an unknown cost a crystallized ideal that has been given to us as the only possible ideal. The bourgeoisie has made up its mind a long time ago; now it merely wants to defend its ideals. This seems to be the feature of a decaying, not of a growing culture.
At the beginning of this century, within the main romantic trend of the age some new ideas for a possible alternative vision of the city seemed to blossom. Sant'Elia, to note a famous example, designed in a few bold drawings an urban model which might have brought us beyond the mere crystallization of the romantic schemes. The ideal of megalopolis for a while seemed to contrast the ideal garden city. But this opportunity seems to have faded away. The desire to emphasize and allow only different variations and extreme examples of the same ideas about romantic nature and the city seem to be prevailing. So even after man has been walking on the moon, according to the wild dream of Jules Verne a century ago, the individual skyscraper and the colonial or Tudor or Spanish cottage, separated by a handful of decaying buildings and empty lots, are the main items of our urban lexicon. The urban tower and the suburban villa are creatures established by culture and art since the middle ages and the renaissance, respectively. Romanticism transformed them into complex and elaborate symbols, but even old age alone should tend to indicate that we are approaching the end of the life of these architectural trends.

From a cultural viewpoint the indication would be even more clear: the stubborn imposition of trite and irrational intellectual fashions meets sooner or later with a sudden reaction and violent death, as many historical examples would indicate. There are economic, social and political tensions which keep manifesting themselves with very indicative signs, be they
urban riots or gasoline rationing. It would be a terrible mistake to continue to approach these signs as practical problems to be pragmatically solved only with skilful day to day administrative decisions, buying a little more oil from the Arabs or increasing the efficiency of the police forces. In fact the 'problems' will simply shift continuously from one area to another and compound themselves, until they will erupt with dramatic and conclusive force.
CHAPTER 11

(1) HADDEN, MASOTTI, LARSON: Metropolis in Crisis, Itasca, Illinois 1967, p. 16.

(2) B. WEISSBOURD: Are Cities Obsolete? from Metropolis in Crisis, by same as (1) p. 17.


(4) B. WEISSBOURD: Are Cities Obsolete? from Metropolis in Crisis, by same as (1) p. 18.
There are many streets in the geographic heart of the city which were laid out as if they were country roads, with the houses well set back as if they were individual farms. We may note the openness of the area and the rows of telephone and electric poles for the lines above ground in the fashion of the open country. It is day time and there is no sign of life in the streets. One may wonder whether the building on the right is a stable or a garage.
We may note the rural character of this house in the city. There is a man attending to his vegetable garden and not too far away a garage that looks like a separate farm building.
The suburban house in the city. Note the setback and the lawn separating the house from the sidewalk, the shrubs and the vegetable garden in the back. The garage is also a free standing separate building, in the purest tradition. Note the proportion of the land taken up by the grass alone, in comparison with the buildings. Extending the eye further around one may see that the new residences, the apartments, follow the identical scheme. They are all detached buildings with grass and shrubs surrounding them as far as possible and made to look just like larger suburban houses. In fact they try to maintain a continuity of rural setting.
This is a suburban street where we may note the intentional loss of oneself in the landscape, the pervasiveness of nature, and the meandering gardens.
The cottages in the woods
The deliberate choice of a curvilinear path, as a purely geometrical negation of the rectilinear character of the street.

The wish to live in a castle. A formidable feeling.
The eclecticism of the romantic castle

The social status symbol
The cottage in full view of the street. Note the exhibition of rockery and shrubs in front, which do not provide any privacy to the house.

Even if it is not a castle the individual house is one occasion of individual expression. Another aspect of romantic thought.
The earlier style, with a turret

Isolation of romantic dwellings
The complement of suburbia
The revolt against the car
The abuse of open space. Land between suburbia and the city. The telephone poles dominate the landscape. Cars surround the little houses, in an area where public transportation is missing.
Larger apartment buildings make a desperate attempt to maintain the symbolism of the single family dwellings, the suburban cottage, in their surface treatment. Note the blending of bricks, roof tiles, stucco and exposed timbers, with reminiscences which include the colonial Mansard, the Spanish suburban and the Tudor. Note also the shrubs and the grass all around where possible, and the attempt to provide a garden on the side of the alley. The forest in the background is in fact a fully developed portion of North Vancouver.
Compare the style of the suburban house and the apartment building. Note the oddity of the apartment building with the kind of false Tudor Mansard. It may remind one of those New York skyscrapers that had gothic or greek revival toppings. We can see here the struggle between romantic suburban styles and increasing urban necessities.
Note the separation of the sidewalk in two parts; one is running between two strips of well maintained grass, the other, giving access to the shops, is out of the way, separated by shrubs, a fence and ornamental lamp-posts, and has an access at right angle from the main sidewalk, on the side of an entrance to underground parking. (Traffic separation? Cars to the right, pedestrians to the left). The shops are set well back from the street. We see a deliberate attempt to provide a garden even at the cost of making a diversion.
Note here not only the shrubs but the purely decorative arcade which goes around the isolated towers but fails to meet the pedestrians on the street and to cover them from one building to the other. The isolation of the buildings produces an isolation of the arcades: their function is negated and they become a simply stylistic motif.
The magic box emerging in isolation.
An apartment tower in the middle of undeveloped land. Vertical development for the sake of the prestige the tower in isolation and of monumentality.
Ultimate romantic monumentality: the geometric object standing alone in absolute contrast with nature. An expression of the sublime. We may note the perfectly sublime picture that has been chosen as a symbol of the University of British Columbia.
same concept in a developer's version.
Perfect geometric object in a park setting. Sublime contrast of the isolated view of the building against the large trees. Note how tiny the two men appear against the full view of the naked mass of the building; it reminds one of many romantic renderings of buildings, starting with Piranesi.
A crowd of isolated buildings. The paradox.
The typical romantic setting of high rise residential towers, not unlike that of the suburban houses laid out a century before. Isolation here brings a more dramatic effect.
The romantic ideal at its best: the black box at sunset in the empty space, as if it had been dropped from another world. Ledoux would think he had designed it.

In fact, the building is conceived as if it were floating in space, anchored to the ground like a balloon. It is not intended to have any relation to a city around it; in fact, the other structures seem to disappear in relation to it.
Another object of the same tradition in Vancouver; the shiny box strives toward formal perfection and pure geometry; the separation between floors and windows is concealed by reflection, and the box is made to appear as if it were fully detached not only from the rest of the world but even from the ground. The entrance is so inconspicuous that someone may wonder how to get up there. Noise and disorder may well reign below; the upper space is pure and uncontaminated (and protected by a single entry encased in reinforced concrete. You could not reach it with a stone.)
There is a whole series of examples of sublime towers.
This suggests an ethereal paper box with no content. Almost doesn't look structural. There is a sort of enjoyment or of pride in producing a box which doesn't show people in it. One has to note the contrast with the older building on the right which still shows every window.
The free standing revivalist monument of early manticism. Landscaping is provided in front to further plate the building and make it stand out more strongly.
The ultimate geometric monument takes advantage of the same isolation. If the glass were just a little more reflective this would be the perfect monument. Many people in Vancouver were disappointed by the failure of the glass to provide total reflection, and thus create a perfectly even surface to the almost perfect parallel piped.
The two towers of the Toronto Dominion Centre, situated to allow the maximum separation between them, and with an open space in the fashion of a pedestrian plaza in front of them. The proportions are such that one might think of the towers of La Garisenda and of Gli Asinelli, but the dramatic effect is much greater, also because of the dark reflective material, which makes the buildings stand out more strongly against the sky. It is remarkable that there is no other communication between the street and the towers but two entrances. The inside and the outside are very strongly separated.
The theme of the box and of the perfect surfaces is carried on by the low, wider box used for the Eaton's store on the side, strikingly white. Here again the inside is strongly separated from the outside.
The box is a facade only. The monumentalism is intended for outside, not inside. The style changes with the activity.
The romantic contrast. Low buildings and a parking lot enhance the sublimity of the high rise building.
As a final note, we may observe that the campus of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver is an example of romantic setting. It is a self-contained village, separated from the city by a forest and situated on the western tip of a peninsula. The buildings are detached in the fashion of isolated monuments, and are separated by landscaping and parks. A good deal of money is spent on a large quantity of beautiful flowers. While the theme of nature dominates the University of British Columbia, where the buildings are spread over a large expanse of land, the sheer massiveness of the single monumental central building dominates Simon Fraser University. This university, in the geographic heart of metropolitan Vancouver, stands in sublime isolation at the top of a mountain, producing the effect of an academic acropolis in bare concrete. Its isolation is emphasized by the park that surrounds it. The concrete mass of the gigantic building rises in direct contrast against the greenery of the mountain.
A general uniformity of pattern of developments exists in contemporary cities, particularly in the recent developments and subdivisions. It is a pattern of growth typical of North America, corresponding to moral and aesthetic ideals fostered by romantic trends. Love for separation and ideal order play a great part in the growth of this pattern. The pattern of the eighteenth century towns of Quebec and Nouvelle Orleans, compact, mixed, introvert and European, remained essentially foreign to this continent. The isolation of buildings and of uses, the exterior lawns and gardens, are among the essential traits of the North American system, where landscaped open spaces are emphasized and the buildings are free standing, if density and cost allow it.

The suburban dwelling and the skyscraper are the most typical North American buildings. The first corresponds to the romantic notion of the beautiful, *The Call of the Wild*, the worship of Nature, the morality of rural life. The second corresponds to the romantic notion of the monument and of the sublime. As a summary of modern North American architecture The World Trade Centre (figure 1) is most typical. Its sublime design is emphasized by the model shown, where no other complex of buildings is present, and where the composition stops with a few trees. The purity of the twin towers and the contrast with the low rise composition at their feet could not be greater. Comparing it with the drawing of a tower by Boullee (p.253) we may note that the
THE WORLD TRADE CENTER, scheduled for completion by 1972, will have the world's tallest buildings, two 110-story towers, surrounded by four low-lying Plaza buildings—a 16-acre complex. Owner, The Port of New York Authority; Architects, Minoru Yamasaki and Associates—and Emery Roth and Sons; Consulting Mechanical Engineer, Jaros, Baum & Bolles; General Contractor, Tishman Realty & Construction Co. Inc.; Electric Engineers, Joseph R. Loring & Associates; Mechanical Contractor, H. Sand & Co. Inc.
scale and the proportion between the people shown and the towers is about the same. Even the building at the base is almost in the same proportion.

Design has become a rather occult science. The public expects magical shapes of striking purity from the architect, a genius of intuitive and innate abilities. The love for the sublime is balanced by the love for the beautiful suburban house and garden, just as the love for science and technology is balanced by an equal love for Nature. These trends may produce some of the romantic dilemmas. The suburban romantic man discovers conflicts between technological advances and such a sentimental value as nature. The suburban North American likes to follow the dream of capturing the moon, but cannot stand the city of commuters, the pollution and impracticality of the car as an urban vehicle. Intuitive values and technological products are seen in conflict, often without a reasonable solution in sight, except suffering and dreaming.

An economic rationality is supposed to exist behind the present North American urban system, because it would appear that the market has responded to it with evident favour. However, we noted that people tend to buy happiness and that romantic values influence the dream that is supposed to correspond to it. We noted that "the market" is a vague notion and that it is not really as free as it may be thought. In fact, the market acts in such a confusing and irrational manner that people are asking for controls and have attributed to it a sort of "cannibalism".
The market is already acting under a substantial amount of controls, provided by old legal constraints, such as city by-laws and property lines, in which a romantic view of the city has already been imposed. Geometry according to an ideal order, separations of buildings and of uses, and almost compulsory landscaping protect a pattern and a taste well defined at the beginning of the century.

This situation has led us to forget the intellectual origins of the present system. It is a system which has built-in contrasts, because romanticism idealized contrasts in a dialectic vision of the world, where aesthetic and spiritual satisfaction is derived by an intuition of opposing factors, by a sentiment of struggle and an unending love for an unattainable infinite.

Thoughts developed by Burke and by Kant, and in general the pre-romantic culture, can explain to us the deep origin and the essential features of basic romantic trends, which may be undetected or misunderstood in the rapid turnover of more superficial fashions. It is to Burke that we owe the definition and the popularity of the concepts of the beautiful and of the sublime, the sublime deriving from great and overwhelming contrasts and the beautiful from small and picturesque contrasts. To Kant we owe especially the definition of pure reason and of its realm. It is to him and to Hume that we owe the notion that we cannot know the nature of things and the exterior world in its reality. Kant investigated also the realm of intuitive knowledge and we
inherited as developments of his philosophy most of the romantic notions, from that of a mysterious and desirable Nature, embodying the law of God but separate from us, to that of the artist as an inspired genius and of art for art's sake. We noted as the most crucial aspect for us in his philosophy that of the separation between nature and reason and between intuition and reason. The romantics made this separation their own, even if in ways that Kant could not foresee.

Anglo-Saxons became most inspired by the romantic tendencies and soon began seeing themselves as custodians of the treasure of the romantic tradition. They saw themselves not only as the leaders of North America and of the world, but also as entrusted with the mission of a superior race as defenders of Nature, of morality and of sublime and beautiful values in a corrupt, decaying and even perverse world.

Unfortunately the city became a victim of this crusade, and without even a chance for a fair trial. The discussion of romantic values was made impossible by the very essence of these values: the return to Nature is an intuitive, mystical value, superior to reason, for romantics. In fact, for those romantics who like the word reason, Nature and Reason are the same thing. For those who do not like it, reason is relegated to the world of science and technology, where it cannot debate values - as a consequence health and safety become the only domains of rational debate regarding the city.
The problems of the North American cities are becoming more and more obvious, while the present pattern is expanding at a phenomenal pace. The libraries are becoming filled with studies showing the symptoms of the disease, and often repeating platitudes. The concern with the city is widespread and growing. But the values, the cultural content of the present North American urban form, a form that is defended by the law and by an invincible complex of practices and prejudices, are taken for granted and not debated. Emotionalism does not even allow clear and frank explanations of the cultural and racial origin of the present trend. The split between the emotional and the rational world does not allow reason to work over emotions on essential matters.

The romantic contrasts are becoming absurd and impossible dilemmas. Nature and the city, the suburban style and the car, are producing a conflict that can only grow in magnitude. We noted in the introduction that the implications of the fact that a city like Rome seems to be a paradise when it is devoid of cars, while a city like Washington would be hell without cars, have yet to be fully realized. What is happening in the North American system is that we are borrowing from future generations, until the costs will become impossible. There are many ways in which a romantic urban system may be seen as being excessively individualistic and anti-social. The difference of the European urban system is quite remarkable: there mixed and integrated uses and introverted buildings allow a great degree of flexibility and of adaptation to different needs and styles, even to new ones, while here the inflexible pattern of zoned districts and
of the suburban style transform into a problem even the needs caused by a small change of situation.

In conclusion, we have traced the sources of a style and of attitudes that seem to have the force and the total control of an unalterable destiny. It was, however, a destiny which was originally consciously chosen, and as such it should be possible to change it in time. It is only by understanding the origins of such a choice that its true nature can be understood and appraised, and a correction or a change can be made.

This study is not altogether new. The elements of understanding presented are all available in an impressive amount of literature, and the scattered observations made by most of the authors would even indicate a sort of general consensus on most of the points raised.

What we believe is new is the connection made between so many different works available in order to form a fairly complete picture of the essential cultural elements at the roots of the large tree of confusing and upsetting contemporary urban trends. These cultural elements have yet to be openly discussed.

Once the understanding of the essential elements of choice is gained one could start speculating about what should or could be done in order to make changes in the present urban system. A study of a complete proposal would be in itself a major new work, but a few ideas may be sketched briefly. For
example, a sector of the city could be placed under a new authority with different ideas and some discretionary powers. An introverted, mixed and linear urban system may then be implemented as an alternative form of life in the present North American system. In this way a truly new urban architecture might arise in North America.

Another area of speculation: what would the people do if they were told the whole truth about the present urban system, its implicit values and especially its uncalculated costs? One may speculate that if comparative studies could be made the suburban romantic metropolis would be shown as by far the most expensive and wasteful system, possible only in North America, because of its immense original natural wealth in terms of land and energy. This wealth need not be lost.

To propose discussions about basic values of established traditions and even more about their possible changes may turn out to be almost as difficult in a democracy as under a dictatorship. Problems of authority and of communications become immediately apparent. First of all, who has the right to manipulate values in a democracy? And, secondly, how is it possible to provide the people truly with all the necessary information? Yet people do decide with their votes and with their purchases according to already limited information and governments do decide about matters of cultural values. Everything happens slowly and through many compromises and imperfections; however, it must be possible to debate and even to start changes in
matters which involve values. Otherwise, the essence of freedom can be lost.

To preserve a democracy governments must be flexible toward change and they have a duty to inform and to educate the public. Nobody ever has all the information, and the growth of information and understanding among the general public is a very slow process. However speculative work does have an educational impact and in time it becomes shared information. The work done at universities ultimately affects teaching, which in turn provides numbers of people with ideas and information that are discussed at home, in the office, in government and in the public forum.
CHAPTER 13

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