1

Plan of the Present Work

I

Not so many years ago, the word 'space' had a strictly geometrical meaning: the idea it evoked was simply that of an empty area. In scholarly use it was generally accompanied by some such epithet as 'Euclidean', 'isotropic', or 'infinite', and the general feeling was that the concept of space was ultimately a mathematical one. To speak of 'social space', therefore, would have sounded strange.

Not that the long development of the concept of space had been forgotten, but it must be remembered that the history of philosophy also testified to the gradual emancipation of the sciences – and especially of mathematics – from their shared roots in traditional metaphysics. The thinking of Descartes was viewed as the decisive point in the working-out of the concept of space, and the key to its mature form. According to most historians of Western thought, Descartes had brought to an end the Aristotelian tradition which held that space and time were among those *categories* which facilitated the naming and classing of the evidence of the senses. The status of such categories had hitherto remained unclear, for they could be looked upon either as simple empirical tools for ordering sense data or, alternatively, as generalities in some way superior to the evidence supplied by the body's sensory organs. With the advent of Cartesian logic, however, space had entered the realm of the absolute. As Object opposed to Subject, as *res extensa* opposed to, and present to, *res cogitans*, space came to dominate, by containing them, all senses and all bodies. Was space therefore a divine attribute? Or was it an order immanent to the totality of what existed? Such were the terms in which the problem was couched for those philosophers who came in Descartes's wake – for Spinoza, for Leibniz,

for the Newtonians. Then Kant revived, and revised, the old notion of the category. Kantian space, albeit relative, albeit a tool of knowledge, a means of classifying phenomena, was yet quite clearly separated (along with time) from the empirical sphere: it belonged to the *a priori* realm of consciousness (i.e. of the 'subject'), and partook of that realm's internal, ideal – and hence transcendental and essentially ungraspable – structure.

These protracted debates marked the shift from the philosophy to the science of space. It would be mistaken to pronounce them outdated, however, for they have an import beyond that of moments or stages in the evolution of the Western Logos. So far from being confined within the abstractness with which that Logos in its decline endowed so-called pure philosophy, they raise precise and concrete issues, among them the questions of symmetry versus asymmetry, of symmetrical objects, and of the *objective* effects of reflections and mirrors. These are all questions to which I shall be returning because of their implications for the analysis of social space.

II

Mathematicians, in the modern sense of the word, emerged as the proprietors of a science (and of a claim to scientific status) quite clearly detached from philosophy – a science which considered itself both necessary and self-sufficient. Thus mathematicians appropriated space, and time, and made them part of their domain, yet they did so in a rather paradoxical way. They invented spaces – an 'indefinity', so to speak, of spaces: non-Euclidean spaces, curved spaces, x-dimensional spaces (even spaces with an infinity of dimensions), spaces of configuration, abstract spaces, spaces defined by deformation or transformation, by a topology, and so on. At once highly general and highly specialized, the language of mathematics set out to discriminate between and classify all these innumerable spaces as precisely as possible. (Apparently the *set* of spaces, or 'space of spaces', did not lend itself very readily to conceptualization.) But the relationship between mathematics and reality – physical or social reality – was not obvious, and indeed a deep rift had developed between these two realms. Those mathematicians who had opened up this 'problematic' subsequently abandoned it to the philosophers, who were only too happy to seize upon it as a means of making up a little of the ground they had lost. In this way space became – or, rather, once more became – the very thing which an earlier

philosophical tradition, namely Platonism, had proposed in opposition to the doctrine of categories: it became what Leonardo da Vinci had called a 'mental thing'. The proliferation of mathematical theories (topologies) thus aggravated the old 'problem of knowledge': how were transitions to be made from mathematical spaces (i.e. from the mental capacities of the human species, from logic) to nature in the first place, to practice in the second, and thence to the theory of social life – which also presumably must unfold in space?

III

From the tradition of thought just described – that is, from a philosophy of space revised and corrected by mathematics – the modern field of inquiry known as epistemology has inherited and adopted the notion that the status of space is that of a 'mental thing' or 'mental place'. At the same time, set theory, as the supposed logic of that place, has exercised a fascination not only upon philosophers but also upon writers and linguists. The result has been a broad proliferation of 'sets' (*ensembles*), some practical,[1] some historical,[2] but all inevitably accompanied by their appropriate 'logic'. None of these sets, or their 'logics', have anything in common with Cartesian philosophy.

No limits at all have been set on the generalization of the concept of *mental space*: no clear account of it is ever given and, depending on the author one happens to be reading, it may connote logical coherence, practical consistency, self-regulation and the relations of the parts to the whole, the engendering of like by like in a set of places, the logic of container *versus* contents, and so on. We are forever hearing about the space of this and/or the space of that: about literary space,[3] ideological spaces, the space of the dream, psychoanalytic topologies, and so on and so forth. Conspicuous by its absence from supposedly fundamental epistemological studies is not only the idea of 'man' but also that of space – the fact that 'space' is mentioned on every page notwithstanding.[4] Thus Michel Foucault can calmly assert that 'knowledge [*savoir*] is also the

[1] See J.-P. Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique*, I: *Théorie des ensembles pratiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960).

[2] See Michel Clouscard, *L'être et le code: procès de production d'un ensemble précapitaliste* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972).

[3] See Maurice Blanchot, *L'espace littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955).

[4] This is the least of the faults of an anthology entitled *Panorama des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).

space in which the subject may take up a position and speak of the objects with which he deals in his discourse'.[5] Foucault never explains what space it is that he is referring to, nor how it bridges the gap between the theoretical (epistemological) realm and the practical one, between mental and social, between the space of the philosophers and the space of people who deal with material things. The scientific attitude, understood as the application of 'epistemological' thinking to acquired knowledge, is assumed to be 'structurally' linked to the spatial sphere. This connection, presumed to be self-evident from the point of view of scientific discourse, is never conceptualized. Blithely indifferent to the charge of circular thinking, that discourse sets up an opposition between the status of space and the status of the 'subject', between the thinking 'I' and the object thought about. It thus rejoins the positions of the Cartesian/Western Logos, which some of its exponents indeed claim to have 'closed'.[6] Epistemological thought, in concert with the linguists' theoretical efforts, has reached a curious conclusion. It has eliminated the 'collective subject', the people as creator of a particular language, as carrier of specific etymological sequences. It has set aside the concrete subject, that subject which took over from a name-giving god. It has promoted the impersonal pronoun 'one' as creator of language in general, as creator of the system. It has failed, however, to eliminate the need for a subject of some kind. Hence the re-emergence of the abstract subject, the *cogito* of the philosophers. Hence the new lease on life of traditional philosophy in 'neo-' forms: neo-Hegelian, neo-Kantian, neo-Cartesian. This revival has profited much from the help of Husserl, whose none-too-scrupulous postulation of a (quasi-tautologous) identity of knowing Subject and conceived Essence – an identity inherent to a 'flux' (of lived experience) – underpins an almost 'pure' identity of formal and practical knowledge.[7] Nor should we be surprised to find the eminent linguist Noam Chomsky reinstating the Cartesian *cogito* or subject,[8] especially in view of the fact that he has posited the existence

[5] *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 238. Elsewhere in the same work, Foucault speaks of 'the trajectory of a meaning' (*le parcours d'un sens*) (p. 196), of 'space of dissensions' (p. 200), etc. Eng. tr. by A. M. Sheridan Smith: *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1972), pp. 182, 150, 152 respectively.

[6] See Jacques Derrida, *Le vivre et le phénomène* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967).

[7] See Michel Clouscard's critical remarks in the introduction to his *L'être et le code*. Lenin resolved this problem by brutally suppressing it: in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, he argues that the thought of space reflects objective space, like a copy or photograph.

[8] See his *Cartesian Linguistics: A Chapter in the History of Rationalist Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

of a linguistic level at which 'it will not be the case that each sentence is represented simply as a finite sequence of elements of some sort, generated from left to right by some simple device'; instead, argues Chomsky, we should expect to find 'a *finite* set of levels ordered from high to low'.[9] The fact is that Chomsky unhesitatingly postulates a mental space endowed with specific properties – with orientations and symmetries. He completely ignores the yawning gap that separates this linguistic mental space from that social space wherein language becomes practice. Similarly, J. M. Rey writes that 'Meaning presents itself as the legal authority to interchange signified elements along a single horizontal chain, within the confines [*l'espace*] of a coherent system regulated and calculated in advance.'[10] These authors, and many others, for all that they lay claim to absolute logical rigour, commit what is in fact, from the logico-mathematical point of view, the perfect paralogism: they leap over an entire area, ignoring the need for any logical links, and justify this in the vaguest possible manner by invoking, as the need arises, some such notion as *coupure* or rupture or break. They thus interrupt the continuity of their argument in the name of a discontinuity which their own methodology ought logically to prohibit. The width of the gap created in this way, and the extent of its impact, may of course vary from one author to another, or from one area of specialization to another. My criticism certainly applies in full force, however, to Julia Kristeva's σημειωτική, to Jacques Derrida's 'grammatology', and to Roland Barthes's general semiology.[11] This school, whose growing renown may have something to do with its growing dogmatism, is forever promoting the basic sophistry whereby the philosophico-epistemological notion of space is fetishized and the mental realm comes to envelop the social and physical ones. Although a few of these authors suspect the existence of, or the need of, some mediation,[12] most of them

[9] Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton, 1957), pp. 24–5.

[10] J. M. Rey, *L'enjeu des signes* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), p. 13.

[11] And it extends to others, whether on their own account or via those mentioned here. Thus Barthes on Jacques Lacan: 'His topology does not concern *within* and *without*, even less *above* and *below*; it concerns, rather, a reverse and an obverse in constant motion – a front and back forever changing places as they revolve around something which is in the process of transformation, and which indeed, to begin with, *is not*' – *Critique et vérité* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p. 27.

[12] This is certainly not true of Claude Lévi-Strauss, the whole of whose work implies that from the earliest manifestations of social life mental and social were conflated by virtue of the nomenclature of the relationships of exchange. By contrast, when Derrida gives precedence to the 'graphic' over the 'phonic', to writing over speech, or when Kristeva brings the body to the fore, clearly some search is being made for a transition or articulation between, on the one hand, the mental space previously posited (i.e. presupposed) by these authors, and, on the other hand, physical/social space.

spring without the slightest hesitation from mental to social.

What is happening here is that a powerful ideological tendency, one much attached to its own would-be scientific credentials, is expressing, in an admirably unconscious manner, those dominant ideas which are perforce the ideas of the dominant class. To some degree, perhaps, these ideas are deformed or diverted in the process, but the net result is that a particular 'theoretical practice' produces a *mental space* which is apparently, but only apparently, extra-ideological. In an inevitably circular manner, this mental space then becomes the locus of a 'theoretical practice' which is separated from social practice and which sets itself up as the axis, pivot or central reference point of Knowledge.[13] The established 'culture' reaps a double benefit from this manoeuvre: in the first place, the impression is given that the truth is tolerated, or even promoted, by that 'culture'; secondly, a multitude of small events occur within this mental space which can be exploited for useful or polemical ends. I shall return later to the peculiar kinship between this mental space and the one inhabited by the technocrats in their silent offices.[14] As for Knowledge thus defined on the basis of epistemology, and more or less clearly distinguished from ideology or from evolving science, is it not directly descended from the union between the Hegelian Concept and that scion of the great Cartesian family known as Subjectivity?

The quasi-logical presupposition of an identity between mental space (the space of the philosophers and epistemologists) and real space creates an abyss between the mental sphere on one side and the physical and social spheres on the other. From time to time some intrepid funambulist will set off to cross the void, giving a great show and sending a delightful shudder through the onlookers. By and large, however, so-called philosophical thinking recoils at the mere suggestion of any such *salto mortale*. If they still see the abyss at all, the professional philosophers avert their gaze. No matter how relevant, the problem of knowledge and the 'theory of knowledge' have been abandoned in favour of a reductionistic return to an absolute – or supposedly absolute – knowledge, namely the knowledge of the history of philosophy and the history of science. Such a knowledge can only be conceived of as separate from both ideology and non-knowledge (i.e. from lived experience). Although any separation of that kind is in fact impossible, to evoke one poses no threat to – and indeed tends to reinforce – a banal 'consensus'. After

[13] This pretension is to be met with in every single chapter of the *Panorama des sciences humaines* (above, note 4).

[14] See also my *Vers le cybernanthrope* (Paris: Denoël-Gonthier, 1971).

all, who is going to take issue with the True? By contrast, we all know, or think we know, where discussions of truth, illusion, lies, and appearance-*versus*-reality are liable to lead.

IV

Epistemologico-philosophical thinking has failed to furnish the basis for a science which has been struggling to emerge for a very long time, as witness an immense accumulation of research and publication. That science is – or would be – a *science of space*. To date, work in this area has produced either mere descriptions which never achieve analytical, much less theoretical, status, or else fragments and cross-sections of space. There are plenty of reasons for thinking that descriptions and cross-sections of this kind, though they may well supply inventories of what *exists in* space, or even generate a *discourse on* space, cannot ever give rise to a *knowledge of* space. And, without such a knowledge, we are bound to transfer onto the level of discourse, of language *per se* – i.e. the level of mental space – a large portion of the attributes and 'properties' of what is actually social space.

Semiology raises difficult questions precisely because it is an incomplete body of knowledge which is expanding without any sense of its own limitations; its very dynamism creates a need for such limits to be set, as difficult as that may be. When codes worked up from literary texts are applied to spaces – to urban spaces, say – we remain, as may easily be shown, on the purely descriptive level. Any attempt to use such codes as a means of deciphering social space must surely reduce that space itself to the status of a *message*, and the inhabiting of it to the status of a *reading*. This is to evade both history and practice. Yet did there not at one time, between the sixteenth century (the Renaissance – and the Renaissance city) and the nineteenth century, exist a code at once architectural, urbanistic and political, constituting a language common to country people and townspeople, to the authorities and to artists – a code which allowed space not only to be 'read' but also to be constructed? If indeed there was such a code, how did it come into being? And when, how and why did it disappear? These are all questions that I hope to answer in what follows.

As for the above-mentioned sections and fragments, they range from the ill-defined to the undefined – and thence, for that matter, to the undefinable. Indeed, talk of cross-sectioning, suggesting as it does a scientific technique (or 'theoretical practice') designed to help clarify

and distinguish 'elements' within the chaotic flux of phenomena, merely adds to the muddle. Leaving aside for the moment the application of mathematical topologies to other realms, consider how fond the cognoscenti are of talk of pictural space, Picasso's space, the space of *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* or the space of *Guernica*. Elsewhere we are forever hearing of architectural, plastic or literary 'spaces'; the term is used much as one might speak of a particular writer's or artist's 'world'. Specialized works keep their audience abreast of all sorts of equally specialized spaces: leisure, work, play, transportation, public facilities – all are spoken of in spatial terms.[15] Even illness and madness are supposed by some specialists to have their own peculiar space. We are thus confronted by an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global. Not to mention nature's (physical) space, the space of (energy) flows, and so on.

Before any specific and detailed attempt is made to refute one or other of these approaches, along with whatever claim it may have to scientific status, it should be pointed out that the very multiplicity of these descriptions and sectionings makes them suspect. The fact is that all these efforts exemplify a very strong – perhaps even the dominant – tendency within present-day society and its mode of production. Under this mode of production, intellectual labour, like material labour, is subject to endless division. In addition, spatial practice consists in a projection onto a (spatial) field of all aspects, elements and moments of social practice. In the process these are separated from one another, though this does not mean that overall control is relinquished even for a moment: society as a whole continues in subjection to political practice – that is, to state power. This praxis implies and aggravates more than one contradiction, and I shall be dealing with them later. Suffice it to say at this juncture that if my analysis turns out to be correct it will be possible to claim of the sought-for 'science of space' that

1 it represents the political (in the case of the West, the 'neocapitalist') use of knowledge. Remember that knowledge under this system is integrated in a more or less 'immediate'

[15] [English-speaking experts tend perhaps not to use the word 'space' with quite the same facility as their French-speaking counterparts use the word *espace*, but they do have a corresponding fondness for such spatial terms as 'sector' and 'sphere' – *Translator*.]

way into the forces of production, and in a 'mediate' way into the social relations of production.

2 it implies an ideology designed to conceal that use, along with the conflicts intrinsic to the highly interested employment of a supposedly disinterested knowledge. This ideology carries no flag, and for those who accept the practice of which it is a part it is indistinguishable from knowledge.

3 it embodies at best a technological utopia, a sort of computer simulation of the future, or of the possible, within the framework of the real – the framework of the existing mode of production. The starting-point here is a knowledge which is at once integrated into, and integrative with respect to, the mode of production. The technological utopia in question is a common feature not just of many science-fiction novels, but also of all kinds of projects concerned with space, be they those of architecture, urbanism or social planning.

The above propositions need, of course, to be expounded, supported by logical arguments and shown to be true. But, if they can indeed be verified, it will be in the first place because there is a *truth of space*, an overall truth generated by analysis-followed-by-exposition, and not because a *true space* can be constituted or constructed, whether a general space as the epistemologists and philosophers believe, or a particular one as proposed by specialists in some scientific discipline or other which has a concern with space. In the second place, confirmation of these theses will imply the necessity of reversing the dominant trend towards fragmentation, separation and disintegration, a trend subordinated to a centre or to a centralized power and advanced by a knowledge which works as power's proxy. Such a reversal could not be effected without great difficulty; nor would it suffice, in order to carry it through, to replace local or 'punctual' concerns by global ones. One must assume that it would require the mobilization of a great many forces, and that in the actual course of its execution there would be a continuing need, stage by stage, for motivation and orientation.

V

Few people today would reject the idea that capital and capitalism 'influence' practical matters relating to space, from the construction of buildings to the distribution of investments and the worldwide division

of labour. But it is not so clear what is meant exactly by 'capitalism' and 'influence'. What some have in mind is 'money' and its powers of intervention, or commercial exchange, the commodity and its generalization, in that 'everything' can be bought and sold. Others are concerned rather with the actors in these dramas: companies national and multinational, banks, financiers, government agencies, and so on. In either case both the unity and the diversity – and hence the contradictions – of capitalism are put in brackets. It is seen either as a mere aggregate of separate activities or else as an already constituted and closed system which derives its coherence from the fact that it endures – and solely from that fact. Actually capitalism has many facets: landed capital, commercial capital, finance capital – all play a part in practice according to their varying capabilities, and as opportunity affords; conflicts between capitalists of the same kind, or of different kinds, are an inevitable part of the process. These diverse breeds of capital, and of capitalists, along with a variety of overlapping markets – commodities, labour, knowledge, capital itself, land – are what together constitute capitalism.

Many people are inclined to forget that capitalism has yet another aspect, one which is certainly bound up with the functioning of money, with the various markets, and with the social relations of production, but which is distinct from these precisely because it is dominant. This aspect is the *hegemony* of one class. The concept of hegemony was introduced by Gramsci in order to describe the future role of the working class in the building of a new society, but it is also useful for analysing the action of the bourgeoisie, especially in relation to space. The notion is a refinement of the somewhat cruder concept of the 'dictatorship' first of the bourgeoisie and then of the proletariat. Hegemony implies more than an influence, more even than the permanent use of repressive violence. It is exercised over society as a whole, culture and knowledge included, and generally via human mediation: policies, political leaders, parties, as also a good many intellectuals and experts. It is exercised, therefore, over both institutions and ideas. The ruling class seeks to maintain its hegemony by all available means, and knowledge is one such means. The connection between knowledge (*savoir*) and power is thus made manifest, although this in no way interdicts a critical and subversive form of knowledge (*connaissance*); on the contrary, it points up the antagonism between a knowledge which serves power and a form of knowing which refuses to acknowledge power.[16]

[16] This is an antagonistic and hence *differentiating* distinction, a fact which Michel Foucault evades in his *Archéologie du savoir* by distinguishing between *savoir* and *con-*

Is it conceivable that the exercise of hegemony might leave space untouched? Could space be nothing more than the passive locus of social relations, the milieu in which their combination takes on body, or the aggregate of the procedures employed in their removal? The answer must be no. Later on I shall demonstrate the active – the operational or instrumental – role of space, as knowledge and action, in the existing mode of production. I shall show how space serves, and how hegemony makes use of it, in the establishment, on the basis of an underlying logic and with the help of knowledge and technical expertise, of a 'system'. Does this imply the coming into being of a clearly defined space – a capitalist space (the world market) thoroughly purged of contradictions? Once again, the answer is no. Otherwise, the 'system' would have a legitimate claim to immortality. Some over-systematic thinkers oscillate between loud denunciations of capitalism and the bourgeoisie and their repressive institutions on the one hand, and fascination and unrestrained admiration on the other. They make society into the 'object' of a systematization which must be 'closed' to be complete; they thus bestow a cohesiveness it utterly lacks upon a totality which is in fact decidedly open – so open, indeed, that it must rely on violence to endure. The position of these systematizers is in any case self-contradictory: even if their claims had some validity they would be reduced to nonsense by the fact that the terms and concepts used to define the system must necessarily be mere tools of that system itself.

VI

The theory we need, which fails to come together because the necessary critical moment does not occur, and which therefore falls back into the state of mere bits and pieces of knowledge, might well be called, by analogy, a 'unitary theory': the aim is to discover or construct a theoretical unity between 'fields' which are apprehended separately, just as molecular, electromagnetic and gravitational forces are in physics. The fields we are concerned with are, first, the *physical* – nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the *mental*, including logical and formal abstractions; and, thirdly, the *social*. In other words, we are concerned with logico-epis-

---

naissance only within the context of an *espace du jeu* or 'space of interplay' (Fr. edn, p. 241; Eng. tr., p. 185), and on the basis of chronology or 'distribution in time' (Fr. edn, p. 244; Eng. tr., p. 187). [The *savoir/connaissance* distinction cannot be conveniently expressed in English. Its significance should be clear from the discussion here; see also below pp. 367–8. Wherever the needs of clarity seemed to call for it, I have indicated in parentheses whether 'knowledge' renders *savoir* or *connaissance* – *Translator.*]

temological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias.

The need for unity may be expressed in other ways too, ways that serve to underscore its importance. Reflection sometimes conflates and sometimes draws distinctions between those 'levels' which social practice establishes, in the process raising the question of their interrelationships. Thus housing, habitation – the human 'habitat', so to speak – are the concern of architecture. Towns, cities – urban space – are the bailiwick of the discipline of urbanism. As for larger, territorial spaces, regional, national, continental or worldwide, these are the responsibility of planners and economists. At times these 'specializations' are telescoped into one another under the auspices of that privileged actor, the politician. At other times their respective domains fail to overlap at all, so that neither common projects nor theoretical continuity are possible.

This state of affairs, of which the foregoing remarks do not claim to be a full critical analysis, would be brought to an end if a truly unitary theory were to be developed.

Our knowledge of the material world is based on concepts defined in terms of the broadest generality and the greatest scientific (i.e. having a content) abstraction. Even if the links between these concepts and the physical realities to which they correspond are not always clearly established, we do know that such links exist, and that the concepts or theories they imply – energy, space, time – can be neither conflated nor separated from one another. What common parlance refers to as 'matter', 'nature' or 'physical reality' – that reality within which even the crudest analysis must discern and separate different moments – has thus obviously achieved a certain unity. The 'substance' (to use the old vocabulary of philosophy) of this cosmos or 'world', to which humanity with its consciousness belongs, has properties that can be adequately summed up by means of the three terms mentioned above. When we evoke 'energy', we must immediately note that energy has to be deployed within a space. When we evoke 'space', we must immediately indicate what occupies that space and how it does so: the deployment of energy in relation to 'points' and within a time frame. When we evoke 'time', we must immediately say what it is that moves or changes therein. Space considered in isolation is an empty abstraction; likewise energy and time. Although in one sense this 'substance' is hard to conceive of, most of all at the cosmic level, it is also true to say that evidence of its existence stares us in the face: our senses and our thoughts apprehend nothing else.

Might it not be possible, then, to found our knowledge of social practice, and the general science of so-called human reality, on a model borrowed from physics? Unfortunately not. For one thing, this kind of approach has always failed in the past.[17] Secondly, following the physical model would prevent a theory of societies from using a number of useful procedures, notably the separation of levels, domains and regions. Physical theory's search for unity puts all the emphasis on the bringing-together of disparate elements. It might therefore serve as a guardrail, but never as a paradigm.

The search for a unitary theory in no way rules out conflicts within knowledge itself, and controversy and polemics are inevitable. This goes for physics, and mathematics too, for that matter; sciences that philosophers deem 'pure' precisely because they have purged them of dialectical moments are not thereby immunized against internal conflicts.

It seems to be well established that physical space has no 'reality' without the energy that is deployed within it. The modalities of this deployment, however, along with the physical relationships between central points, nuclei or condensations on the one hand and peripheries on the other are still matters for conjecture. A simple expanding-universe theory assumes an original dense core of matter and a primordial explosion. This notion of an original unity of the cosmos has given rise to many objections by reason of its quasi-theological or theogonic character. In opposition to it, Fred Hoyle has proposed a much more complex theory, according to which energy, whether at the level of the ultra-small or at that of the ultra-large, travels in every direction. On this view a single centre of the universe, whether original or final, is inconceivable. Energy/space–time condenses at an indefinite number of points (local space–times).[18]

To the extent that the theory of supposedly human space can be linked at all to a physical theory, perhaps Hoyle's is the one which best fits the bill. Hoyle looks upon space as the product of energy. Energy cannot therefore be compared to a content filling an empty container. Causalism and teleology, inevitably shot through with metaphysical abstraction, are both ruled out. The universe is seen as offering a multiplicity of particular spaces, yet this diversity is accounted for by a unitary theory, namely cosmology.

This analogy has its limits, however. There is no reason to assume an

[17] Including Claude Lévi-Strauss's attempts to draw for models on Mendeleev's classification of the elements and on general combinatorial mathematics.

[18] See Fred Hoyle, *Frontiers of Astronomy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955).

isomorphism between social energies and physical energies, or between 'human' and physical fields of force. This is one form of reductionism among others which I shall have occasion explicitly to reject. All the same, human societies, like living organisms human or extra-human, cannot be conceived of independently of the universe (or of the 'world'); nor may cosmology, which cannot annex knowledge of those societies, leave them out of its picture altogether, like a state within the state.

VII

What term should be used to describe the division which keeps the various types of space away from each other, so that physical space, mental space and social space do not overlap? Distortion? Disjunction? Schism? Break? As a matter of fact the term used is far less important than the distance that separates 'ideal' space, which has to do with mental (logico-mathematical) categories, from 'real' space, which is the space of social practice. In actuality each of these two kinds of space involves, underpins and presupposes the other.

What should be the starting-point for any theoretical attempt to account for this situation and transcend it in the process? Not philosophy, certainly, for philosophy is an active and interested party in the matter. Philosophers have themselves helped bring about the schism with which we are concerned by developing abstract (metaphysical) representations of space, among them the Cartesian notion of space as absolute, infinite *res extensa*, a divine property which may be grasped in a single act of intuition because of its homogeneous (isotropic) character. This is all the more regrettable in view of the fact that the beginnings of philosophy were closely bound up with the 'real' space of the Greek city. This connection was severed later in philosophy's development. Not that we can have no recourse to philosophy, to its concepts or conceptions. But it cannot be our point of departure. What about literature? Clearly literary authors have written much of relevance, especially descriptions of places and sites. But what criteria would make certain texts more relevant than others? Céline uses everyday language to great effect to evoke the space of Paris, of the Parisian *banlieue*, or of Africa. Plato, in the *Critias* and elsewhere, offers marvellous descriptions of cosmic space, and of the space of the city as a reflection of the Cosmos. The inspired De Quincey pursuing the shadow of the woman of his dreams through the streets of London, or Baudelaire in his *Tableaux parisiens*, offer us accounts of urban space rivalling those of

Victor Hugo and Lautréamont. The problem is that any search for space in literary texts will find it everywhere and in every guise: enclosed, described, projected, dreamt of, speculated about. What texts can be considered special enough to provide the basis for a 'textual' analysis? Inasmuch as they deal with socially 'real' space, one might suppose on first consideration that architecture and texts relating to architecture would be a better choice than literary texts proper. Unfortunately, any definition of architecture itself requires a prior analysis and exposition of the concept of space.

Another possibility would be to take *general* scientific notions as a basis, notions as general as that of text, like those of information and communication, of message and code, and of sets of signs – all notions which are still being developed. The danger here is that the analysis of space might become enclosed within a single area of specialization, which, so far from helping us account for the dissociations mentioned above, would merely exacerbate them. This leaves only *universal* notions, which seemingly belong to philosophy but not to any particular specialization. Do such notions exist? Does what Hegel called the concrete universal still have any meaning? I hope to show that it does. What can be said without further ado is that the concepts of *production* and of the *act of producing* do have a certain abstract universality. Though developed by philosophers, these concepts extend beyond philosophy. They were taken over in the past, admittedly, by specialized disciplines, especially by political economy; yet they have survived that annexation. By retrieving something of the broad sense that they had in certain of Marx's writings, they have shed a good deal of the illusory precision with which the economists had endowed them. This is not to say that it will be easy to recover these concepts and put them back to work. To speak of 'producing space' sounds bizarre, so great is the sway still held by the idea that empty space is prior to whatever ends up filling it. Questions immediately arise here: what spaces? and what does it mean to speak of 'producing space'? We are confronted by the problem of how to bring concepts that have already been worked out and formalized into conjunction with this new content without falling back on mere illustration and example – notorious occasions for sophistry. What is called for, therefore, is a thoroughgoing exposition of these concepts, and of their relations, on the one hand with the extreme formal abstraction of logico-mathematical space, and on the other hand with the practico-sensory realm of social space. To proceed otherwise would result in a new fragmentation of the concrete universal into its original Hegelian moments: the *particular* (in this case descriptions or

cross-sections of social space); the *general* (logical and mathematical); and the *singular* (i.e. 'places' considered as natural, in their merely physical or sensory reality).

VIII

Everyone knows what is meant when we speak of a 'room' in an apartment, the 'corner' of the street, a 'marketplace', a shopping or cultural 'centre', a public 'place', and so on. These terms of everyday discourse serve to distinguish, but not to isolate, particular spaces, and in general to describe a social space. They correspond to a specific use of that space, and hence to a spatial practice that they express and constitute. Their interrelationships are ordered in a specific way. Might it not be a good idea, therefore, first to make an inventory of them,[19] and then to try and ascertain what paradigm gives them their meaning, what syntax governs their organization?

There are two possibilities here: either these words make up an unrecognized code which we can reconstitute and explain by means of thought; alternatively, reflection will enable us, on the basis of the words themselves and the operations that are performed upon them, to construct a *spatial code*. In either event, the result of our thinking would be the construction of a 'system of space'. Now, we know from precise scientific experiments that a system of this kind is applicable only indirectly to its 'object', and indeed that it really only applies to a *discourse* on that object. The project I am outlining, however, does not aim to produce a (or *the*) discourse on space, but rather to expose the actual production of space by bringing the various kinds of space and the modalities of their genesis together within a single theory.

These brief remarks can only hint at a solution to a problem that we shall have to examine carefully later on in order to determine whether it is a *bona fide* issue or merely the expression of an obscure question about origins. This problem is: does language – logically, epistemologically or genetically speaking – precede, accompany or follow social space? Is it a precondition of social space or merely a formulation of it? The priority-of-language thesis has certainly not been established. Indeed, a good case can be made for according logical and epistemological precedence over highly articulated languages with strict rules to those

[19] Cf. Georges Matoré, *L'espace humain* (Paris: La Colombe, 1962), including the lexicographical index.

activities which mark the earth, leaving traces and organizing gestures and work performed in common. Perhaps what have to be uncovered are as-yet concealed relations between space and language: perhaps the 'logicalness' intrinsic to articulated language operated from the start as a spatiality capable of bringing order to the qualitative chaos (the practico-sensory realm) presented by the perception of things.

To what extent may *a* space be read or decoded? A satisfactory answer to this question is certainly not just around the corner. As I noted earlier, without as yet adducing supporting arguments or proof, the notions of message, code, information and so on cannot help us trace the genesis of a space; the fact remains, however, that an already produced space can be decoded, can be *read*. Such a space implies a process of signification. And even if there is no general code of space, inherent to language or to all languages, there may have existed specific codes, established at specific historical periods and varying in their effects. If so, interested 'subjects', as members of a particular society, would have acceded by this means at once to *their* space and to their status as 'subjects' acting within that space and (in the broadest sense of the word) comprehending it.

If, roughly from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth, a coded language may be said to have existed on the practical basis of a specific relationship between town, country and political territory, a language founded on classical perspective and Euclidean space, why and how did this coded system collapse? Should an attempt be made to reconstruct that language, which was common to the various groups making up the society – to users and inhabitants, to the authorities and to the technicians (architects, urbanists, planners)?

A theory can only take form, and be formulated, at the level of a 'supercode'. Knowledge cannot rightly be assimilated to a 'well-designed' language, because it operates at the conceptual level. It is thus not a privileged language, nor a metalanguage, even if these notions may be appropriate for the 'science of language' as such. Knowledge of space cannot be limited from the outset by categories of this kind. Are we looking, then, for a 'code of codes'? Perhaps so, but this 'meta' function of theory does not in itself explain a great deal. If indeed spatial codes have existed, each characterizing a particular spatial/social practice, and if these codifications have been *produced* along with the space corresponding to them, then the job of theory is to elucidate their rise, their role, and their demise. The shift I am proposing in analytic orientation relative to the work of specialists in this area ought by now to be clear: instead of emphasizing the rigorously formal aspect of codes,

I shall instead be putting the stress on their dialectical character. Codes will be seen as part of a practical relationship, as part of an interaction between 'subjects' and their space and surroundings. I shall attempt to trace the coming-into-being and disappearance of codings/decodings. My aim will be to highlight *contents* – i.e. the social (spatial) practices inherent to the forms under consideration.

IX

Surrealism appears quite otherwise today than it did half a century ago. A number of its pretensions have faded away, among them the substitution of poetry for politics, the politicization of poetry and the search for a transcendent revelation. All the same, though a literary movement, it cannot be reduced to the level of mere literature (which surrealism initially despised), and hence to the status of a literary event, bound up with the exploration of the unconscious (automatic writing), which had a subversive character to begin with but which was subsequently co-opted by every means available – glosses, exegeses, commentaries, fame, publicity, and so on.

The leading surrealists sought to decode inner space and illuminate the nature of the transition from this subjective space to the material realm of the body and the outside world, and thence to social life. Consequently surrealism has a theoretical import which was not originally recognized. The surrealists' effort to find a unity of this kind initiated a search which later went astray. It is discernible, for example, in André Breton's *L'amour fou*, where the introduction of imaginary and magical elements, though perhaps strange, detracts in no way from the annunciatory value of the work:

> Sometimes, for example, wishing for the visit of a particular woman, I have found myself opening a door, then shutting it, then opening it again; if this device proved inadequate to the task, I might slip the blade of a knife randomly between the pages of a book, having previously decided that a certain line on the left-hand or right-hand page would inform me more or less indirectly as to her inclinations and tell me whether to expect her soon or not at all; then I would start moving things around once more,

scrutinizing their positions relative to each other and rearranging them in unusual ways.[20]

Still, the scale of the failure of surrealism's poetic project should also be pointed out. Not that surrealist poetry lacked an accompanying conceptual apparatus designed to explain its orientation; indeed, so numerous are the movement's theoretical texts – manifestoes and others – that one might well ask what would remain of surrealism were they left out of consideration. The intrinsic shortcomings of the poetry run deeper, however: it prefers the *visual* to the act of seeing, rarely adopts a 'listening' posture, and curiously neglects the musical both in its mode of expression and, even more, in its central 'vision'. 'It was as though the deep night of human existence had suddenly been pierced', writes Breton, 'as though natural necessity had consented to become one with logical necessity and so plunged all things into a state of total transparency.'[21]

As Breton himself acknowledges,[22] a project of Hegelian derivation was to be pursued solely via an affective, and hence subjective, overburdening of the (loved) 'object' by means of a hyper-exaltation of symbols. Thus the surrealists, proclaiming – though none too loudly and certainly without any supporting evidence – that the Hegelian 'end of history' lay within, and would be advanced by, their poetry, succeeded only in producing a lyrical metalanguage of history, an illusory fusing of subject with object in a transcendental metabolism. Their purely verbal metamorphosis, anamorphosis or anaphorization of the relationship between 'subjects' (people) and things (the realm of everyday life) overloaded meaning – and changed nothing. There was simply no way, by virtue of language alone, to make the leap from *exchange* (of goods) to *use*.

Like that of the surrealists, the work of Georges Bataille now has a meaning somewhat different from the one it had originally. Bataille too sought (among other things) a junction between the space of inner experience on the one hand, and, on the other, the space of physical nature (below the level of consciousness: tree, sex, acephal) and social space (communication, speech). Like the surrealists – though not, like them, on the trail of an imagined synthesis – Bataille left his mark everywhere between real, infra-real and supra-real. His way was Nietzsche's – eruptive and disruptive. He accentuates divisions and widens

[20] André Breton, *L'amour fou* (Paris: Gallimard, 1937), p. 23. The same might be said, despite the passing of so many years, of much of Eluard's poetry.
[21] Ibid., p. 6.
[22] Ibid., p. 61.

gulfs rather than filling them, until that moment when the lightning flash of intuition/intention leaps from one side to the other, from earth to sun, from night to day, from life to death; and likewise from the logical to the heterological, from the normal to the heteronomic (which is at once far beyond and far short of the anomic). In Bataille the entirety of space – mental, physical, social – is apprehended *tragically*. To the extent that centre and periphery are distinguished, the centre has its own tragic reality – a reality of sacrifice, violence, explosion. So too has the periphery – after its fashion.

In diametrical opposition to Bataille and the surrealists, though contemporary with them, a theorist of technology named Jacques Lafitte also glimpsed the possibility of a unitary theory of space. Lafitte, a writer too often forgotten, proposed what he called a 'mechanology' as a general science of technical devices and systems, and made this science responsible for exploring material reality, knowledge and social space.[23] Lafitte was following up certain writings of Marx, an account of which has since been given by Kostas Axelos.[24] He did not have all the essential elements and concepts at his disposal, because he knew nothing of information science and cybernetics, and consequently of the distinction between information-based machines and machines calling for massive energy sources; but he did give effective form to the unitary hypothesis. To this project he brought all the 'rigour' of technocratic–functionalist–structuralist ideology; characteristically enough, this led him to the most outrageous propositions, and to conceptual links worthy of science fiction. In short, Lafitte produced a technocratic utopia. He sought, for example, to explain history by comparing 'passive' (and hence static) machines to architecture and to the vegetable kingdom, and 'active' machines, deemed more dynamic, more 'reflex', to animals. Basing himself on such notions, Lafitte worked out evolutionary series occupying space, and boldly schematized the genesis of nature, of knowledge and of society 'via the harmonious development of these three great segments, series at once convergent and complementary'.[25]

Lafitte's hypothesis was the forerunner of many others of a similar stamp. Such reflexive technocratic thinking emphasizes the explicit and avowed – not just the rational but also the intellectual – and completely

[23] See Jacques Lafitte, *Réflexions sur la science des machines* (1932), republished in 1972 (Paris: Vrin) with a preface by J. Guillerme.

[24] See Kostas Axelos, *Marx penseur de la technique* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1961). Eng. tr. by Robert Bruzina: *Alienation, Praxis and Techne in the Thought of Karl Marx* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976).

[25] Lafitte, *Réflexions*, pp. 92ff.

eschews the lateral and heterological realms which lie concealed in praxis; rejected too, on the same basis, is the kind of thinking that uncovers what is thus concealed. It is as though everything, in the space of thought and in social space, could be reduced to a frontal, 'face-to-face' mode.

X

If the search for a unitary theory of physical, mental and social space was adumbrated several decades ago, why and how was it abandoned? Did it cover too vast a field – a veritable chaos of ideas, some of them poetic, subjective or speculative, while others bore the stamp of technical positivity? Or was it simply that this line of inquiry turned out to be sterile?

In order to understand exactly what happened, it is necessary to go back to Hegel, who is a sort of Place de l'Etoile with a monument to politics and philosophy at its centre. According to Hegelianism, historical time gives birth to that space which the state occupies and rules over. History does not realize the archetype of the reasonable being in the individual, but rather in a coherent ensemble comprised of partial institutions, groups and systems (law, morality, family, city, trade, etc.). Time is thus solidified and fixed within the rationality immanent to space. The Hegelian end of history does not imply the disappearance of the product of historicity. On the contrary, this product of a process of production which is animated by knowledge (the concept) and oriented by consciousness (language, the Logos) – this necessary product – asserts its own self-sufficiency. It persists in being through its own strength. What disappears is history, which is transformed from action to memory, from production to contemplation. As for time, dominated by repetition and circularity, overwhelmed by the establishment of an immobile space which is the locus and environment of realized Reason, it loses all meaning.

In the wake of this fetishization of space in the service of the state, philosophy and practical activity were bound to seek a restoration of time.[26] Hence Marx's vigorous reinstatement of historical time as revolutionary time. Hence also Bergson's more nuanced (though abstract and uncertain because specialized) evocation of mental duration and the

[26] See my *La fin de l'histoire* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1970); also Alexandre Kojève's work on Hegel and Hegelianism.

immediacy of consciousness; hence Husserlian phenomenology with its 'Heraclitean' flux of phenomena and subjectivity of the ego; and hence, later, a whole philosophical tradition.[27]

In Georg Lukács's anti-Hegelian Hegelianism, space serves to define reification, as also false consciousness. Rediscovered time, under the direction of a class consciousness elevated to the sublime level at which it can survey history's twists and turns at a glance, breaks the primacy of the spatial.[28]

Only Nietzsche, since Hegel, has maintained the primordiality of space and concerned himself with the spatial problematic – with the repetitiveness, the circularity, the simultaneity of that which seems diverse in the temporal context and which arises at different times. In the realm of becoming, but standing against the flux of time, every defined form, whether physical, mental or social, struggles to establish and maintain itself. Yet Nietzschean space preserves not a single feature of the Hegelian view of space as product and residue of historical time. 'I believe in absolute space as the substratum of force: the latter limits and forms', writes Nietzsche.[29] Cosmic space contains energy, contains forces, and proceeds from them. The same goes for terrestrial and social space: 'Where there is space there is being.' The relationships between force (energy), time and space are problematical. For example, one can neither conceive of a beginning (an origin) nor yet do without such an idea. As soon as that (albeit essential) activity which discerns and marks distinctions is removed from the picture, 'The interrupted and the successive are concordant.' An energy or force can only be identified by means of its effects in space, even if forces 'in themselves' are distinct from their effects (and how can any 'reality' – energy, space or time – be grasped 'in itself' by intellectual analysis?). Just as Nietzschean space has nothing in common with Hegelian space, so Nietzschean time, as theatre of universal tragedy, as the cyclical, repetitious space–time of death and of life, has nothing in common with Marxist time – that is, historicity driven forward by the forces of production and adequately

[27] A tradition to which both Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gilles Deleuze belong. Cf. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L'anti-Oedipe*, rev. edn (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1973), p. 114.

[28] See Jean Gabel, *La fausse conscience* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1962), pp. 193ff. Eng. tr. by M. A. and K. A. Thompson: *False Consciousness* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 253 ff. Also, of course, Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*, tr. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971).

[29] See the collection entitled – mistakenly – *The Will to Power*, fragment 545. Eng. edn, ed. and tr. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 293.

(to be optimistic) oriented by industrial, proletarian and revolutionary rationality.

This is perhaps a convenient moment to consider what has been happening in the second half of the twentieth century, the period to which 'we' are witnesses.

1 The state is consolidating on a world scale. It weighs down on society (on all societies) in full force; it plans and organizes society 'rationally', with the help of knowledge and technology, imposing analogous, if not homologous, measures irrespective of political ideology, historical background, or the class origins of those in power. The state crushes time by reducing differences to repetitions or circularities) dubbed 'equilibrium', 'feedback', 'self-regulation', and so on). Space in its Hegelian form comes back into its own. This modern state promotes and imposes itself as the stable centre – definitively – of (national) societies and spaces. As both the end and the meaning of history – just as Hegel had forecast – it flattens the social and 'cultural' spheres. It enforces a logic that puts an end to conflicts and contradictions. It neutralizes whatever resists it by castration or crushing. Is this social entropy? Or is it a monstrous excrescence transformed into normality? Whatever the answer, the results lie before us.

2 In this same space there are, however, other forces on the boil, because the rationality of the state, of its techniques, plans and programmes, provokes opposition. The violence of power is answered by the violence of subversion. With its wars and revolutions, defeats and victories, confrontation and turbulence, the modern world corresponds precisely to Nietzsche's tragic vision. State-imposed normality makes permanent transgression inevitable. As for time and negativity, whenever they re-emerge, as they must, they do so explosively. This is a new negativity, a tragic negativity which manifests itself as incessant violence. These seething forces are still capable of rattling the lid of the cauldron of the state and its space, for differences can never be totally quieted. Though defeated, they live on, and from time to time they begin fighting ferociously to reassert themselves and transform themselves through struggle.

3 Nor has the working class said its last word. It continues on its way, sometimes underground, sometimes in the light of day. It is not an easy matter to get rid of the class struggle, which has taken myriad forms not accounted for by the impoverished schema usually so referred to – a schema which is nowhere to be found in Marx even if its devotees

claim to be Marxists. It may be that a fatal balance of power has now been reached which will prevent the working class's opposition to the bourgeoisie from ever becoming an open antagonism, so that society totters while the state rots in place or reasserts itself in convulsive fashion. It may be that world revolution will break out after a period of latency. Or perhaps world war will circle the planet in the wake of the world market. At all events, everything suggests at present that the workers in the industrialized countries are opting neither for indefinite growth and accumulation nor for violent revolution leading to the disappearance of the state, but rather for the withering away of work itself. Merely to consider the possibilities is to realize that Marxist thought has not disappeared, and indeed that it cannot disappear.

Confrontation of the theses and hypotheses of Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche is just beginning – and only with great difficulty at that. As for philosophical thought and thought about space and time, it is split. On the one hand we have the philosophy of time, of duration, itself broken up into partial considerations and emphases: historical time, social time, mental time, and so on. On the other hand we have epistemological thought, which constructs an abstract space and cogitates about abstract (logico-mathematical) spaces. Most if not all authors ensconce themselves comfortably enough within the terms of mental (and therefore neo-Kantian or neo-Cartesian) space, thereby demonstrating that 'theoretical practice' is already nothing more than the egocentric thinking of specialized Western intellectuals – and indeed may soon be nothing more than an entirely separated, schizoid consciousness.

The aim of this book is to detonate this state of affairs. More specifically, apropos of space, it aims to foster confrontation between those ideas and propositions which illuminate the modern world even if they do not govern it, treating them not as isolated theses or hypotheses, as 'thoughts' to be put under the microscope, but rather as prefigurations lying at the threshold of modernity.[30]

[30] Here, without further ado – and I hope without too much irony – are some of the sources I have in mind: the works of Charles Dodgson / Lewis Carroll (but with the emphasis on the author of *Symbolic Logic* and *Logic without Tears* rather than on the author of the Alice books); Hermann Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel* (1943), tr. by Mervyn Savill as *Magister Ludi* (London: Aldus, 1949 and New York: Henry Holt, 1949) and by Richard and Clara Winston as *The Glass Bead Game* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), especially the passage on the theory of the game and its relationship with language and with space – the space of the game itself and the space in which the game is played, namely Castalia; Hermann Weyl's *Symmetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1952); and Nietzsche – especially, in *Das Philosophenbuch/Le Livre du philosophe* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1969), the fragments on language and the 'theoreti-

XI

This aim does not imply the elaboration of a *critical theory* of existing space designed as a substitute for the descriptions and cross-sections that accept that space or for other critical theories that deal with society in general, with political economy, with culture, and so on. The substitution of a negative and critical utopia of space (or of 'man' or 'society') for the dominant technological utopia is no longer sufficient. Critical theory, after being driven into practical opposition – and even into the most radical form of it, whether 'punctual' (i.e. attacking particularly vulnerable points) or global – has had its day.

It might be supposed that our first priority should be the methodical destruction of the *codes* relating to space. Nothing could be further from the case, however, because the codes inherent to knowledge and social practice have been in dissolution for a very long time already. All that remains of them are relics: words, images, metaphors. This is the outcome of an epoch-making event so generally ignored that we have to be reminded of it at every moment. The fact is that around 1910 a certain space was shattered. It was the space of common sense, of knowledge (*savoir*), of social practice, of political power, a space thitherto enshrined in everyday discourse, just as in abstract thought, as the environment of and channel for communications; the space, too, of classical perspective and geometry, developed from the Renaissance onwards on the basis of the Greek tradition (Euclid, logic) and bodied forth in Western art and philosophy, as in the form of the city and town. Such were the shocks and onslaughts suffered by this space that today it retains but a feeble pedagogical reality, and then only with great difficulty, within a conservative educational system. Euclidean and perspectivist space have disappeared as systems of reference, along with other former 'commonplaces' such as the town, history, paternity, the tonal system in music, traditional morality, and so forth. This was truly a crucial moment. Naturally, 'common-sense' space, Euclidean space and perspectivist space did not disappear in a puff of smoke without leaving any trace in our consciousness, knowledge or educational methods; they could no more have done so than elementary algebra and

---

cal introduction on truth and lies'.

It should be borne in mind that the works cited here, like those mentioned elsewhere in this book, are meant to be placed in the context of our discussion – in the context of spatial practice and its levels (planning, 'urbanism', architecture).

arithmetic, or grammar, or Newtonian physics. The fact remains that it is too late for destroying codes in the name of a critical theory; our task, rather, is to describe their already completed destruction, to measure its effects, and (perhaps) to construct a new code by means of theoretical 'supercoding'.

It must be stressed that what is needed is not a replacement for the dominant tendency, however desirable that may once have been, but instead a reversal of that tendency. As I shall attempt at some length to show, even if absolute proof is impossible, such a reversal or inversion would consist, as in Marx's time, in a movement from *products* (whether studied in general or in particular, described or enumerated) to *production*.

This reversal of tendency and of meaning has nothing to do with the conversion of signified elements into signifiers, as practised under the banner of an intellectualizing concern for 'pure' theory. The elimination of the signified element, the putting-in-brackets of the 'expressive', the exclusive appeal to formal signifiers – these operations *precede* the reversal of tendency which leads from products to productive activity; they merely simulate that reversal by reducing it to a sequence of abstract interventions performed upon language (and essentially upon literature).

XII

(Social) space is a (social) product. This proposition might appear to border on the tautologous, and hence on the obvious. There is good reason, however, to examine it carefully, to consider its implications and consequences before accepting it. Many people will find it hard to endorse the notion that space has taken on, within the present mode of production, within society as it actually is, a sort of reality of its own, a reality clearly distinct from, yet much like, those assumed in the same global process by commodities, money and capital. Many people, finding this claim paradoxical, will want proof. The more so in view of the further claim that the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power; yet that, as such, it escapes in part from those who would make use of it. The social and political (state) forces which engendered this space now seek, but fail, to master it completely; the very agency that has forced spatial reality towards a sort of uncontrollable autonomy now strives to run it into the ground, then shackle and enslave it. Is this space an

abstract one? Yes, but it is also 'real' in the sense in which concrete abstractions such as commodities and money are real. Is it then concrete? Yes, though not in the sense that an object or product is concrete. Is it instrumental? Undoubtedly, but, like knowledge, it extends beyond instrumentality. Can it be reduced to a projection – to an 'objectification' of knowledge? Yes and no: knowledge objectified in a product is no longer coextensive with knowledge in its theoretical state. If space embodies social relationships, how and why does it do so? And what relationships are they?

It is because of all these questions that a thoroughgoing analysis and a full overall exposition are called for. This must involve the introduction of new ideas – in the first place the idea of a diversity or multiplicity of spaces quite distinct from that multiplicity which results from segmenting and cross-sectioning space *ad infinitum*. Such new ideas must then be inserted into the context of what is generally known as 'history', which will consequently itself emerge in a new light.

Social space will be revealed in its particularity to the extent that it ceases to be indistinguishable from mental space (as defined by the philosophers and mathematicians) on the one hand, and physical space (as defined by practico-sensory activity and the perception of 'nature') on the other. What I shall be seeking to demonstrate is that such a social space is constituted neither by a collection of things or an aggregate of (sensory) data, nor by a void packed like a parcel with various contents, and that it is irreducible to a 'form' imposed upon phenomena, upon things, upon physical materiality. If I am successful, the social character of space, here posited as a preliminary hypothesis, will be confirmed as we go along.

XIII

If it is true that (social) space is a (social) product, how is this fact concealed? The answer is: by a double illusion, each side of which refers back to the other, reinforces the other, and hides behind the other. These two aspects are the illusion of transparency on the one hand and the illusion of opacity, or 'realistic' illusion, on the other.

1 *The illusion of transparency* Here space appears as luminous, as intelligible, as giving action free rein. What happens in space lends a miraculous quality to thought, which becomes incarnate by means of a *design* (in both senses of the word). The design serves as a mediator –

itself of great fidelity – between mental activity (invention) and social activity (realization); and it is deployed in space. The illusion of transparency goes hand in hand with a view of space as innocent, as free of traps or secret places. Anything hidden or dissimulated – and hence dangerous – is antagonistic to transparency, under whose reign everything can be taken in by a single glance from that mental eye which illuminates whatever it contemplates. Comprehension is thus supposed, without meeting any insurmountable obstacles, to conduct what is perceived, i.e. its object, from the shadows into the light; it is supposed to effect this displacement of the object either by piercing it with a ray or by converting it, after certain precautions have been taken, from a murky to a luminous state. Hence a rough coincidence is assumed to exist between social space on the one hand and mental space – the (topological) space of thoughts and utterances – on the other. By what path, and by means of what magic, is this thought to come about? The presumption is that an encrypted reality becomes readily decipherable thanks to the intervention first of speech and then of writing. It is said, and believed, that this decipherment is effected solely through transposition and through the illumination that such a strictly topological change brings about.

What justification is there for thus claiming that within the spatial realm the known and the transparent are one and the same thing? The fact is that this claim is a basic postulate of a diffuse ideology which dates back to classical philosophy. Closely bound up with Western 'culture', this ideology stresses speech, and overemphasizes the written word, to the detriment of a social practice which it is indeed designed to conceal. The fetishism of the spoken word, or ideology of speech, is reinforced by the fetishism and ideology of writing. For some, whether explicitly or implicitly, speech achieves a total clarity of communication, flushing out whatever is obscure and either forcing it to reveal itself or destroying it by sheer force of anathema. Others feel that speech alone does not suffice, and that the test and action of the written word, as agent of both malediction and sanctification, must also be brought into play. The act of writing is supposed, beyond its immediate effects, to imply a discipline that facilitates the grasping of the 'object' by the writing and speaking 'subject'. In any event, the spoken and written word are taken for (social) practice; it is assumed that absurdity and obscurity, which are treated as aspects of the same thing, may be dissipated without any corresponding disappearance of the 'object'. Thus communication brings the non-communicated into the realm of the communicated – the *incommunicable* having no existence beyond that

of an ever-pursued residue. Such are the assumptions of an ideology which, in positing the transparency of space, identifies knowledge, information and communication. It was on the basis of this ideology that people believed for quite a time that a revolutionary social transformation could be brought about by means of communication alone. 'Everything must be said! No time limit on speech! Everything must be written! Writing transforms language, therefore writing transforms society! Writing is a signifying practice!' Such agendas succeed only in conflating revolution and transparency.

The illusion of transparency turns out (to revert for a moment to the old terminology of the philosophers) to be a transcendental illusion: a trap, operating on the basis of its own quasi-magical power, but by the same token referring back immediately to other traps – traps which are its alibis, its masks.

2 *The realistic illusion* This is the illusion of natural simplicity – the product of a naïve attitude long ago rejected by philosophers and theorists of language, on various grounds and under various names, but chiefly because of its appeal to naturalness, to substantiality. According to the philosophers of the good old idealist school, the credulity peculiar to common sense leads to the mistaken belief that 'things' have more of an existence than the 'subject', his thought and his desires. To reject this illusion thus implies an adherence to 'pure' thought, to Mind or Desire. Which amounts to abandoning the realistic illusion only to fall back into the embrace of the illusion of transparency.

Among linguists, semanticists and semiologists one encounters a primary (and indeed an ultimate) naïvety which asserts that language, rather than being defined by its form, enjoys a 'substantial reality'. On this view language resembles a 'bag of words' from which the proper and adequate word for each thing or 'object' may be picked. In the course of any reading, the imaginary and the symbolic dimensions, the landscape and the horizon which line the reader's path, are all taken as 'real', because the *true* characteristics of the text – its signifying form as much as its symbolic content – are a blank page to the *naïf* in his unconsciousness. (It is worth noting *en passant* that his illusions provide the *naïf* with pleasures which knowledge is bound to abolish along with those illusions themselves. Science, moreover, though it may replace the innocent delights of naturalness with more refined and sophisticated pleasures, can in no wise guarantee that these will be any more delectable.)

The illusion of substantiality, naturalness and spatial opacity nurtures its own mythology. One thinks of the space-oriented artist, at work in a hard or dense reality delivered direct from the domain of Mother Nature. More likely a sculptor than a painter, an architect sooner than a musician or poet, such an artist tends to work with materials that resist or evade his efforts. When space is not being overseen by the geometer, it is liable to take on the physical qualities and properties of the earth.

The illusion of transparency has a kinship with philosophical idealism; the realistic illusion is closer to (naturalistic and mechanistic) materialism. Yet these two illusions do not enter into antagonism with each other after the fashion of philosophical systems, which armour themselves like battleships and seek to destroy one another. On the contrary, each illusion embodies and nourishes the other. The shifting back and forth between the two, and the flickering or oscillatory effect that it produces, are thus just as important as either of the illusions considered in isolation. Symbolisms deriving from nature can obscure the rational lucidity which the West has inherited from its history and from its successful domination of nature. The apparent translucency taken on by obscure historical and political forces in decline (the state, nationalism) can enlist images having their source in the earth or in nature, in paternity or in maternity. The rational is thus naturalized, while nature cloaks itself in nostalgias which supplant rationality.

XIV

As a programmatic foretaste of the topics I shall be dealing with later, I shall now review some of the implications and consequences of our initial proposition – namely, that (social) space is a (social) product.

The first implication is that (physical) natural space is disappearing. Granted, natural space was – and it remains – the common point of departure: the origin, and the original model, of the social process – perhaps even the basis of all 'originality'. Granted, too, that natural space has not vanished purely and simply from the scene. It is still the background of the picture; as decor, and more than decor, it persists everywhere, and every natural detail, every natural object is valued even more as it takes on symbolic weight (the most insignificant animal, trees, grass, and so on). As source and as resource, nature obsesses us, as do childhood and spontaneity, via the filter of memory. Everyone wants to protect and save nature; nobody wants to stand in the way of an attempt

to retrieve its authenticity. Yet at the same time everything conspires to harm it. The fact is that natural space will soon be lost to view. Anyone so inclined may look over their shoulder and see it sinking below the horizon behind us. Nature is also becoming lost to *thought*. For what is nature? How can we form a picture of it as it was before the intervention of humans with their ravaging tools? Even the powerful myth of nature is being transformed into a mere fiction, a negative utopia: nature is now seen as merely the raw material out of which the productive forces of a variety of social systems have forged their particular spaces. True, nature is resistant, and infinite in its depth, but it has been defeated, and now waits only for its ultimate voidance and destruction.

XV

A second implication is that every society – and hence every mode of production with its subvariants (i.e. all those societies which exemplify the general concept – produces a space, its own space. The city of the ancient world cannot be understood as a collection of people and things in space; nor can it be visualized solely on the basis of a number of texts and treatises on the subject of space, even though some of these, as for example Plato's *Critias* and *Timaeus* or Aristotle's *Metaphysics A*, may be irreplaceable sources of knowledge. For the ancient city had its own spatial practice: it forged its own – *appropriated* – space. Whence the need for a study of that space which is able to apprehend it as such, in its genesis and its form, with its own specific time or times (the rhythm of daily life), and its particular centres and polycentrism (agora, temple, stadium, etc.).

The Greek city is cited here only as an example – as one step along the way. Schematically speaking, each society offers up its own peculiar space, as it were, as an 'object' for analysis and overall theoretical explication. I say each society, but it would be more accurate to say each mode of production, along with its specific relations of production; any such mode of production may subsume significant variant forms, and this makes for a number of theoretical difficulties, many of which we shall run into later in the shape of inconsistencies, gaps and blanks in our general picture. How much can we really learn, for instance, confined as we are to Western conceptual tools, about the Asiatic mode of production, its space, its towns, or the relationship it embodies

between town and country – a relationship reputedly represented figuratively or ideographically by the Chinese characters?

More generally, the very notion of social space resists analysis because of its novelty and because of the real and formal complexity that it connotes. Social space contains – and assigns (more or less) appropriate places to – (1) the *social relations of reproduction*, i.e. the bio-physiological relations between the sexes and between age groups, along with the specific organization of the family; and (2) the *relations of production*, i.e. the division of labour and its organization in the form of hierarchical social functions. These two sets of relations, production and reproduction, are inextricably bound up with one another: the division of labour has repercussions upon the family and is of a piece with it; conversely, the organization of the family interferes with the division of labour. Yet social space must discriminate between the two – not always successfully, be it said – in order to 'localize' them.

To refine this scheme somewhat, it should be pointed out that in precapitalist societies the two interlocking levels of biological reproduction and socio-economic production together constituted social reproduction – that is to say, the reproduction of society as it perpetuated itself generation after generation, conflict, feud, strife, crisis and war notwithstanding. That a decisive part is played by space in this continuity is something I shall be attempting to demonstrate below.

The advent of capitalism, and more particularly 'modern' neocapitalism, has rendered this state of affairs considerably more complex. Here *three* interrelated levels must be taken into account: (1) *biological reproduction* (the family); (2) the *reproduction of labour power* (the working class *per se*); and (3) the *reproduction of the social relations of production* – that is, of those relations which are constitutive of capitalism and which are increasingly (and increasingly effectively) sought and imposed as such. The role of space in this tripartite ordering of things will need to be examined in its specificity.

To make things even more complicated, social space also contains specific representations of this double or triple interaction between the social relations of production and reproduction. Symbolic representation serves to maintain these social relations in a state of coexistence and cohesion. It displays them while displacing them – and thus concealing them in symbolic fashion – with the help of, and onto the backdrop of, nature. Representations of the relations of reproduction are sexual symbols, symbols of male and female, sometimes accompanied, sometimes not, by symbols of age – of youth and of old age. This is a symbolism which conceals more than it reveals, the more so since the

relations of reproduction are divided into frontal, public, overt – and hence coded – relations on the one hand, and, on the other, covert, clandestine and repressed relations which, precisely because they are repressed, characterize transgressions related not so much to sex *per se* as to sexual pleasure, its preconditions and consequences.

Thus space may be said to embrace a multitude of intersections, each with its assigned location. As for representations of the relations of production, which subsume power relations, these too occur in space: space contains them in the form of buildings, monuments and works of art. Such frontal (and hence brutal) expressions of these relations do not completely crowd out their more clandestine or underground aspects; all power must have its accomplices – and its police.

A conceptual triad has now emerged from our discussion, a triad to which we shall be returning over and over again.

1 *Spatial practice*, which embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society's relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of *competence* and a specific level of *performance*.[31]
2 *Representations of space*, which are tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations.
3 *Representational spaces*, embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art (which may come eventually to be defined less as a code of space than as a code of representational spaces).

XVI

In reality, social space 'incorporates' social actions, the actions of subjects both individual and collective who are born and who die, who suffer and who act. From the point of view of these subjects, the

[31] These terms are borrowed from Noam Chomsky, but this should not be taken as implying any subordination of the theory of space to linguistics.

behaviour of their space is at once vital and mortal: within it they develop, give expression to themselves, and encounter prohibitions; then they perish, and that same space contains their graves. From the point of view of knowing (*connaissance*), social space works (along with its concept) as a tool for the analysis of society. To accept this much is at once to eliminate the simplistic model of a one-to-one or 'punctual' correspondence between social actions and social locations, between spatial functions and spatial forms. Precisely because of its crudeness, however, this 'structural' schema continues to haunt our consciousness and knowledge (*savoir*).

It is not the work of a moment for a society to generate (produce) an appropriated social space in which it can achieve a form by means of self-presentation and self-representation – a social space to which that society is not identical, and which indeed is its tomb as well as its cradle. This act of creation is, in fact, a *process*. For it to occur, it is necessary (and this necessity is precisely what has to be explained) for the society's practical capabilities and sovereign powers to have at their disposal special places: religious and political sites. In the case of precapitalist societies, more readily comprehensible to anthropology, ethnology and sociology than to political economy, such sites are needed for symbolic sexual unions and murders, as places where the principle of fertility (the Mother) may undergo renewal and where fathers, chiefs, kings, priests and sometimes gods may be put to death. Thus space emerges consecrated – yet at the same time protected from the forces of good and evil: it retains the aspect of those forces which facilitates social continuity, but bears no trace of their other, dangerous side.

A further necessity is that space – natural and social, practical and symbolic – should come into being inhabited by a (signifying and signified) higher 'reality'. By Light, for instance – the light of sun, moon or stars as opposed to the shadows, the night, and hence death; light identified with the True, with life, and hence with thought and knowledge and, ultimately, by virtue of mediations not immediately apparent, with established authority. So much is intimated by myths, whether Western or Oriental, but it is only actualized in and through (religio-political) space. Like all social practice, spatial practice is lived directly before it is conceptualized; but the speculative primacy of the conceived over the lived causes practice to disappear along with life, and so does very little justice to the 'unconscious' level of lived experience *per se*.

Yet another requirement is that the family (long very large, but never unlimited in size) be rejected as sole centre or focus of social practice, for such a state of affairs would entail the dissolution of society; but at

the same time that it be retained and maintained as the 'basis' of personal and direct relationships which are bound to nature, to the earth, to procreation, and thus to reproduction.

Lastly, death must be both represented and rejected. Death too has a 'location', but that location lies below or above appropriated social space; death is relegated to the infinite realm so as to disenthral (or purify) the finiteness in which social practice occurs, in which the law that that practice has established holds sway. Social space thus remains the space of society, of social life. Man does not live by words alone; all 'subjects' are situated in a space in which they must either recognize themselves or lose themselves, a space which they may both enjoy and modify. In order to accede to this space, individuals (children, adolescents) who are, paradoxically, already within it, must pass tests. This has the effect of setting up reserved spaces, such as places of initiation, within social space. All holy or cursed places, places characterized by the presence or absence of gods, associated with the death of gods, or with hidden powers and their exorcism – all such places qualify as special preserves. Hence in absolute space the absolute has no place, for otherwise it would be a 'non-place'; and religio-political space has a rather strange composition, being made up of areas set apart, reserved – and so mysterious.

As for magic and sorcery, they too have their own spaces, opposed to (but presupposing) religio-political space; also set apart and reserved, such spaces are cursed rather than blessed and beneficent. By contrast, certain ludic spaces, devoted for their part to religious dances, music, and so on, were always felt to be beneficent rather than baleful.

Some would doubtless argue that the ultimate foundation of social space is *prohibition*, adducing in support of this thesis the unsaid in communication between the members of a society; the gulf between them, their bodies and consciousnesses, and the difficulties of social intercourse; the dislocation of their most immediate relationships (such as the child's with its mother), and even the dislocation of their bodily integrity; and, lastly, the never fully achieved restoration of these relations in an 'environment' made up of a series of zones defined by interdictions and bans.

Along the same lines, one might go so far as to explain social space in terms of a dual prohibition: the prohibition which separates the (male) child from his mother because incest is forbidden, and the prohibition which separates the child from its body because language in constituting consciousness breaks down the unmediated unity of the body – because, in other words, the (male) child suffers symbolic cas-

tration and his own phallus is objectified for him as part of outside reality. Hence the Mother, her sex and her blood, are relegated to the realm of the cursed and the sacred – along with sexual pleasure, which is thus rendered both fascinating and inaccessible.

The trouble with this thesis [32] is that it assumes the logical, epistemological and anthropological priority of language over space. By the same token, it puts prohibitions – among them that against incest – and not productive activity, at the origin of society. The pre-existence of an objective, neutral and empty space is simply taken as read, and only the space of speech (and writing) is dealt with as something that must be created. These assumptions obviously cannot become the basis for an adequate account of social/spatial practice. They apply only to an imaginary society, an ideal type or model of society which this ideology dreams up and then arbitrarily identifies with all 'real' societies. All the same, the existence within space of *phallic verticality*, which has a long history but which at present is becoming more prevalent, cries out for explanation. The same might be said apropos of the general fact that walls, enclosures and façades serve to define both a *scene* (where something takes place) and an *obscene* area to which everything that cannot or may not happen on the scene is relegated: whatever is inadmissible, be it malefic or forbidden, thus has its own hidden space on the near or the far side of a frontier. It is true that explaining everything in psychoanalytic terms, in terms of the unconscious, can only lead to an intolerable reductionism and dogmatism; the same goes for the overestimation of the 'structural'. Yet structures do exist, and there is such a thing as the 'unconscious'. Such little-understood aspects of consciousness would provide sufficient justification in themselves for research in this area. If it turned out, for instance, that every society, and particularly (for our purposes) the city, had an underground and repressed life, and hence an 'unconscious' of its own, there can be no doubt that interest in psychoanalysis, at present on the decline, would get a new lease on life.

XVII

The third implication of our initial hypothesis will take an even greater effort to elaborate on. If space is a product, our knowledge of it must be expected to reproduce and expound the process of production. The

[32] A thesis basic to the approach of Jacques Lacan and his followers.

'object' of interest must be expected to shift from *things in space* to the actual *production of space*, but this formulation itself calls for much additional explanation. Both partial products located *in space* – that is, things – and discourse *on space* can henceforth do no more than supply clues to, and testimony about, this productive process – a process which subsumes signifying processes without being reducible to them. It is no longer a matter of the space of this or the space of that: rather, it is space in its totality or global aspect that needs not only to be subjected to analytic scrutiny (a procedure which is liable to furnish merely an infinite series of fragments and cross-sections subordinate to the analytic project), but also to be *engendered* by and within theoretical understanding. Theory *reproduces* the generative process – by means of a concatenation of concepts, to be sure, but in a very strong sense of the word: from within, not just from without (descriptively), and globally – that is, moving continually back and forth between past and present. The historical and its consequences, the 'diachronic', the 'etymology' of locations in the sense of what happened at a particular spot or place and thereby changed it – all of this becomes inscribed in space. The past leaves its traces; time has its own script. Yet this space is always, now and formerly, a *present* space, given as an immediate whole, complete with its associations and connections in their actuality. Thus production process and product present themselves as two inseparable aspects, not as two separable ideas.

It might be objected that at such and such a period, in such and such a society (ancient/slave, medieval/feudal, etc.), the active groups did not 'produce' space in the sense in which a vase, a piece of furniture, a house, or a fruit tree is 'produced'. So how exactly did those groups contrive to produce their space? The question is a highly pertinent one and covers all 'fields' under consideration. Even neocapitalism or 'organized' capitalism, even technocratic planners and programmers, cannot produce a space with a perfectly clear understanding of cause and effect, motive and implication.

Specialists in a number of 'disciplines' might answer or try to answer the question. Ecologists, for example, would very likely take natural ecosystems as a point of departure. They would show how the actions of human groups upset the balance of these systems, and how in most cases, where 'pre-technological' or 'archaeo-technological' societies are concerned, the balance is subsequently restored. They would then examine the development of the relationship between town and country, the perturbing effects of the town, and the possibility or impossibility of a new balance being established. Then, from their point of view, they

would adequately have clarified and even explained the genesis of modern social space. Historians, for their part, would doubtless take a different approach, or rather a number of different approaches according to the individual's method or orientation. Those who concern themselves chiefly with events might be inclined to establish a chronology of decisions affecting the relations between cities and their territorial dependencies, or to study the construction of monumental buildings. Others might seek to reconstitute the rise and fall of the institutions which underwrote those monuments. Still others would lean toward an economic study of exchange between city and territory, town and town, state and town, and so on.

To follow this up further, let us return to the three concepts introduced earlier.

1 *Spatial practice* The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. From the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space.

What is spatial practice under neocapitalism? It embodies a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure). This association is a paradoxical one, because it includes the most extreme separation between the places it links together. The specific spatial competence and performance of every society member can only be evaluated empirically. 'Modern' spatial practice might thus be defined – to take an extreme but significant case – by the daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project. Which should not be taken to mean that motorways or the politics of air transport can be left out of the picture. A spatial practice must have a certain cohesiveness, but this does not imply that it is coherent (in the sense of intellectually worked out or logically conceived).

2 *Representations of space*: conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived. (Arcane speculation about Numbers, with its talk of the golden number, moduli and 'canons', tends to perpetuate this view of matters.) This is the

dominant space in any society (or mode of production). Conceptions of space tend, with certain exceptions to which I shall return, towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs.

3 *Representational spaces*: space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users', but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who *describe* and aspire to do no more than describe. This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Thus representational spaces may be said, though again with certain exceptions, to tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs.

The (relative) autonomy achieved by space *qua* 'reality' during a long process which has occurred especially under capitalism or neocapitalism has brought new contradictions into play. The contradictions within space itself will be explored later. For the moment I merely wish to point up the dialectical relationship which exists within the triad of the perceived, the conceived, and the lived.

A triad: that is, three elements and not two. Relations with two elements boil down to oppositions, contrasts or antagonisms. They are defined by significant effects: echoes, repercussions, mirror effects. Philosophy has found it very difficult to get beyond such dualisms as subject and object, Descartes's *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, and the Ego and non-Ego of the Kantians, post-Kantians and neo-Kantians. 'Binary' theories of this sort no longer have anything whatsoever in common with the Manichaean conception of a bitter struggle between two cosmic principles; their dualism is entirely mental, and strips everything which makes for living activity from life, thought and society (i.e. from the physical, mental and social, as from the lived, perceived and conceived). After the titanic effects of Hegel and Marx to free it from this straitjacket, philosophy reverted to supposedly 'relevant' dualities, drawing with it – or perhaps being drawn by – several specialized sciences, and proceeding, in the name of transparency, to define intelligibility in terms of opposites and systems of opposites. Such a system can have neither materiality nor loose ends: it is a 'perfect' system whose rationality is supposed, when subjected to mental scrutiny, to be self-evident. This paradigm apparently has the magic power to turn obscurity into transparency and to move the 'object' out of the shadows into the light

merely by articulating it. In short, it has the power to *decrypt*. Thus knowledge (*savoir*), with a remarkable absence of consciousness, put itself in thrall to power, suppressing all resistance, all obscurity, in its very being.

In seeking to understand the three moments of social space, it may help to consider the *body*. All the more so inasmuch as the relationship to space of a 'subject' who is a member of a group or society implies his relationship to his own body and vice versa. Considered overall, social practice presupposes the use of the body: the use of the hands, members and sensory organs, and the gestures of work as of activity unrelated to work. This is the realm of the *perceived* (the practical basis of the perception of the outside world, to put it in psychology's terms). As for *representations of the body*, they derive from accumulated scientific knowledge, disseminated with an admixture of ideology: from knowledge of anatomy, of physiology, of sickness and its cure, and of the body's relations with nature and with its surroundings or 'milieu'. Bodily *lived* experience, for its part, maybe both highly complex and quite peculiar, because 'culture' intervenes here, with its illusory immediacy, via symbolisms and via the long Judaeo-Christian tradition, certain aspects of which are uncovered by psychoanalysis. The 'heart' as *lived* is strangely different from the heart as *thought* and *perceived*. The same holds *a fortiori* for the sexual organs. Localizations can absolutely not be taken for granted where the lived experience of the body is concerned: under the pressure of morality, it is even possible to achieve the strange result of a body without organs – a body chastised, as it were, to the point of being castrated.

The perceived–conceived–lived triad (in spatial terms: spatial practice, representations of space, representational spaces) loses all force if it is treated as an abstract 'model'. If it cannot grasp the concrete (as distinct from the 'immediate'), then its import is severely limited, amounting to no more than that of one ideological mediation among others.

That the lived, conceived and perceived realms should be interconnected, so that the 'subject', the individual member of a given social group, may move from one to another without confusion – so much is a logical necessity. Whether they constitute a coherent whole is another matter. They probably do so only in favourable circumstances, when a common language, a consensus and a code can be established. It is reasonable to assume that the Western town, from the Italian Renaissance to the nineteenth century, was fortunate enough to enjoy such auspicious conditions. During this period the representation of space tended to dominate and subordinate a representational space, of religious

origin, which was now reduced to symbolic figures, to images of Heaven and Hell, of the Devil and the angels, and so on. Tuscan painters, architects and theorists developed a representation of space – perspective – on the basis of a social practice which was itself, as we shall see, the result of a historic change in the relationship between town and country. Common sense meanwhile, though more or less reduced to silence, was still preserving virtually intact a representational space, inherited from the Etruscans, which had survived all the centuries of Roman and Christian dominance. The vanishing line, the vanishing-point and the meeting of parallel lines 'at infinity' were the determinants of a representation, at once intellectual and visual, which promoted the primacy of the gaze in a kind of 'logic of visualization'. This representation, which had been in the making for centuries, now became enshrined in architectural and urbanistic practice as the *code* of linear perspective.

For the present investigation to be brought to a satisfactory conclusion, for the theory I am proposing to be confirmed as far as is possible, the distinctions drawn above would have to be generalized in their application to cover all societies, all periods, all 'modes of production'. That is too tall an order for now, however, and I shall at this point merely advance a number of preliminary arguments. I would argue, for example, that representations of space are shot through with a knowledge (*savoir*) – i.e. a mixture of understanding (*connaissance*) and ideology – which is always relative and in the process of change. Such representations are thus objective, though subject to revision. Are they then true or false? The question does not always have a clear meaning: what does it mean, for example, to ask whether perspective is true or false? Representations of space are certainly abstract, but they also play a part in social and political practice: established relations between objects and people in represented space are subordinate to a logic which will sooner or later break them up because of their lack of consistency. Representational spaces, on the other hand, need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness. Redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements, they have their source in history – in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people. Ethnologists, anthropologists and psychoanalysts are students of such representational spaces, whether they are aware of it or not, but they nearly always forget to set them alongside those representations of space which coexist, concord or interfere with them; they even more frequently ignore social practice. By contrast, these experts have no difficulty discerning those aspects of representational spaces which interest them: childhood memories, dreams, or uterine images and symbols

(holes, passages, labyrinths). Representational space is alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time. Consequently it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic.

If this distinction were generally applied, we should have to look at history itself in a new light. We should have to study not only the history of space, but also the history of representations, along with that of their relationships – with each other, with practice, and with ideology. History would have to take in not only the genesis of these spaces but also, and especially, their interconnections, distortions, displacements, mutual interactions, and their links with the spatial practice of the particular society or mode of production under consideration.

We may be sure that representations of space have a practical impact, that they intervene in and modify spatial *textures* which are informed by effective knowledge and ideology. Representations of space must therefore have a substantial role and a specific influence in the production of space. Their intervention occurs by way of construction – in other words, by way of architecture, conceived of not as the building of a particular structure, palace or monument, but rather as a project embedded in a spatial context and a texture which call for 'representations' that will not vanish into the symbolic or imaginary realms.

By contrast, the only products of representational spaces are symbolic works. These are often unique; sometimes they set in train 'aesthetic' trends and, after a time, having provoked a series of manifestations and incursions into the imaginary, run out of steam.

This distinction must, however, be handled with considerable caution. For one thing, there is a danger of its introducing divisions and so defeating the object of the exercise, which is to rediscover the unity of the productive process. Furthermore, it is not at all clear *a priori* that it can legitimately be generalized. Whether the East, specifically China, has experienced a contrast between representations of space and representational spaces is doubtful in the extreme. It is indeed quite possible that the Chinese characters combine two functions in an inextricable way, that on the one hand they convey the order of the world (space–time), while on the other hand they lay hold of that concrete (practical and social) space–time wherein symbolisms hold sway, where works of art are created, and where buildings, palaces and temples are built. I shall return to this question later – although, lacking adequate knowledge of the Orient, I shall offer no definite answer to it. On the

other hand, apropos of the West, and of Western practice from ancient Greece and Rome onwards, I shall be seeking to show the development of this distinction, its import and meaning. Not, be it said right away, that the distinction has necessarily remained unchanged in the West right up until the modern period, or that there have never been role reversals (representational spaces becoming responsible for productive activity, for example).

There have been societies – the Chavin of the Peruvian Andes are a case in point[33] – whose representation of space is attested to by the plans of their temples and palaces, while their representational space appears in their art works, writing-systems, fabrics, and so on. What would be the relationship between two such aspects of a particular period? A problem confronting us here is that we are endeavouring with conceptual means to reconstruct a connection which originally in no way resembled the application of a pre-existing knowledge to 'reality'. Things become very difficult for us in that symbols which we can readily conceive and intuit are inaccessible as such to our abstract knowledge – a knowledge that is bodiless and timeless, sophisticated and efficacious, yet 'unrealistic' with respect to certain 'realities'. The question is what intervenes, what occupies the interstices between representations of space and representational spaces. A culture, perhaps? Certainly – but the word has less content than it seems to have. The work of artistic creation? No doubt – but that leaves unanswered the queries 'By whom?' and 'How?' Imagination? Perhaps – but why? and for whom?

The distinction would be even more useful if it could be shown that today's theoreticians and practitioners worked either for one side of it or the other, some developing representational spaces and the remainder working out representations of space. It is arguable, for instance, that Frank Lloyd Wright endorsed a communitarian representational space deriving from a biblical and Protestant tradition, whereas Le Corbusier was working towards a technicist, scientific and intellectualized representation of space.

Perhaps we shall have to go further, and conclude that the producers of space have always acted in accordance with a representation, while the 'users' passively experienced whatever was imposed upon them inasmuch as it was more or less thoroughly inserted into, or justified

[33] See François Hébert-Stevens, *L'art de l'Amérique du Sud* (Paris: Arthaud, 1973), pp. 55ff. For a sense of medieval space – both the representation of space and representational space – see *Le Grand et le Petit Albert* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1972), particularly 'Le traité des influences astrales'. Another edn: *Le Grand et le Petit Albert: les secrets de la magie* (Paris: Belfond, 1972).

by, their representational space. How such manipulation might occur is a matter for our analysis to determine. If architects (and urban planners) do indeed have a representation of space, whence does it derive? Whose interests are served when it becomes 'operational'? As to whether or not 'inhabitants' possess a representational space, if we arrive at an affirmative answer, we shall be well on the way to dispelling a curious misunderstanding (which is not to say that this misunderstanding will disappear in social and political practice).

The fact is that the long-obsolescent notion of ideology is now truly on its last legs, even if critical theory still holds it to be necessary. At no time has this concept been clear. It has been much abused by evocations of Marxist, bourgeois, proletarian, revolutionary or socialist ideology; and by incongruous distinctions between ideology in general and specific ideologies, between 'ideological apparatuses' and institutions of knowledge, and so forth.

What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies? What would remain of a religious ideology – the Judaeo-Christian one, say – if it were not based on places and their names: church, confessional, altar, sanctuary, tabernacle? What would remain of the Church if there were no churches? The Christian ideology, carrier of a recognizable if disregarded Judaism (God the Father, etc.), has created the spaces which guarantee that it endures. More generally speaking, what we call ideology only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and in its production, and by thus taking on body therein. Ideology *per se* might well be said to consist primarily in a discourse upon social space.

According to a well-known formulation of Marx's, knowledge (*connaissance*) becomes a productive force immediately, and no longer through any mediation, as soon as the capitalist mode of production takes over.[34] If so, a definite change in the relationship between ideology and knowledge must occur: knowledge must replace ideology. Ideology, to the extent that it remains distinct from knowledge, is characterized by rhetoric, by metalanguage, hence by verbiage and lucubration (and no longer by philosophico-metaphysical systematizing, by 'culture' and 'values'). Ideology and logic may even become indistinguishable – at least to the extent that a stubborn demand for coherence and cohesion

[34] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, tr. Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth, Middx: Penguin, 1973).

manages to erase countervailing factors proceeding either from above (information and knowledge [*savoir*]) or from below (the space of daily life).

Representations of space have at times combined ideology and knowledge within a (social-spatial) practice. Classical perspective is the perfect illustration of this. The space of today's planners, whose system of localization assigns an exact spot to each activity, is another case in point.

The area where ideology and knowledge are barely distinguishable is subsumed under the broader notion of *representation*, which thus supplants the concept of ideology and becomes a serviceable (operational) tool for the analysis of spaces, as of those societies which have given rise to them and recognized themselves in them.

In the Middle Ages, spatial practice embraced not only the network of local roads close to peasant communities, monasteries and castles, but also the main roads between towns and the great pilgrims' and crusaders' ways. As for representations of space, these were borrowed from Aristotelian and Ptolemaic conceptions, as modified by Christianity: the Earth, the underground 'world', and the luminous Cosmos, Heaven of the just and of the angels, inhabited by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. A fixed sphere within a finite space, diametrically bisected by the surface of the Earth; below this surface, the fires of Hell; above it, in the upper half of the sphere, the Firmament – a cupola bearing the fixed stars and the circling planets – and a space criss-crossed by divine messages and messengers and filled by the radiant Glory of the Trinity. Such is the conception of space found in Thomas Aquinas and in the *Divine Comedy*. Representational spaces, for their part, determined the foci of a vicinity: the village church, graveyard, hall and fields, or the square and the belfry. Such spaces were interpretations, sometimes marvellously successful ones, of cosmological representations. Thus the road to Santiago de Compostela was the equivalent, on the earth's surface, of the Way that led from Cancer to Capricorn on the vault of the heavens, a route otherwise known as the Milky Way – a trail of divine sperm where souls are born before following its downward trajectory and falling to earth, there to seek as best they may the path of redemption – namely, the pilgrimage that will bring them to Compostela ('the field of stars'). The body too, unsurprisingly, had a role in the interplay between representations relating to space. 'Taurus rules over the neck', wrote Albertus Magnus, 'Gemini over the shoulders; Cancer over the hands and arms; Leo over the breast, the heart and the

diaphragm; Virgo over the stomach; Libra takes care of the second part of the back; Scorpio is responsible for those parts that belong to lust. . . .'

It is reasonable to assume that spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces contribute in different ways to the production of space according to their qualities and attributes, according to the society or mode of production in question, and according to the historical period. Relations between the three moments of the perceived, the conceived and the lived are never either simple or stable, nor are they 'positive' in the sense in which this term might be opposed to 'negative', to the indecipherable, the unsaid, the prohibited, or the unconscious. Are these moments and their interconnections in fact conscious? Yes – but at the same time they are disregarded or misconstrued. Can they be described as 'unconscious'? Yes again, because they are generally unknown, and because analysis is able – though not always without error – to rescue them from obscurity. The fact is, however, that these relationships have always had to be given utterance, which is not the same thing as being known – even 'unconsciously'.

XVIII

If space is produced, if there is a productive process, then we are dealing with *history*; here we have the fourth implication of our hypothesis. The history of space, of its production *qua* 'reality', and of its forms and representations, is not to be confused either with the causal chain of 'historical' (i.e. dated) events, or with a sequence, whether teleological or not, of customs and laws, ideals and ideology, and socio-economic structures or institutions (superstructures). But we may be sure that the forces of production (nature; labour and the organization of labour; technology and knowledge) and, naturally, the relations of production play a part – though we have not yet defined it – in the production of space.

It should be clear from the above that the passage from one mode of production to another is of the highest theoretical importance for our purposes, for it results from contradictions in the social relations of production which cannot fail to leave their mark on space and indeed to revolutionize it. Since, *ex hypothesi*, each mode of production has its own particular space, the shift from one mode to another must entail the production of a new space. Some people claim a special status for the mode of production, which they conceive of as a finished whole

or closed system; the type of thinking which is forever searching for transparency or substantiality, or both, has a natural predilection for an 'object' of this kind. Contrary to this view of matters, however, examination of the transitions between modes of production will reveal that a fresh space is indeed generated during such changes, a space which is planned and organized subsequently. Take for example the Renaissance town, the dissolution of the feudal system and the rise of merchant capitalism. This was the period during which the code already referred to above was constituted; the analysis of this code – with the accent on its paradigmatic aspects – will take up a good few pages later in the present discussion. It began forming in antiquity, in the Greek and Roman cities, as also in the works of Vitruvius and the philosophers; later it would become the language of the writer. It corresponded to spatial practice, and doubtless to the representation of space rather than to representational spaces still permeated by magic and religion. What the establishment of this code meant was that 'people' – inhabitants, builders, politicians – stopped going from urban messages to the code in order to decipher reality, to decode town and country, and began instead to go from code to messages, so as to produce a discourse and a reality adequate to the code. This code thus has a history, a history determined, in the West, by the entire history of cities. Eventually it would allow the organization of the cities, which had been several times overturned, to become knowledge and power – to become, in other words, an *institution*. This development heralded the decline and fall of the autonomy of the towns and urban systems in their historical reality. The state was built on the back of the old cities, and their structure and code were shattered in the process. Notice that a code of this kind is a superstructure, which is not true of the town itself, its space, or the 'town–country' relationship within that space. The code served to fix the alphabet and language of the town, its primary signs, their paradigm and their syntagmatic relations. To put it in less abstract terms, façades were harmonized to create perspectives; entrances and exits, doors and windows, were subordinated to façades – and hence also to perspectives; streets and squares were arranged in concord with the public buildings and palaces of political leaders and institutions (with municipal authorities still predominating). At all levels, from family dwellings to monumental edifices, from 'private' areas to the territory as a whole, the elements of this space were disposed and composed in a manner at once familiar and surprising which even in the late twentieth century has not lost its charm. It is clear, therefore, that a spatial code is not simply a means of reading or interpreting space: rather it is a means of living in that

space, of understanding it, and of producing it. As such it brings together verbal signs (words and sentences, along with the meaning invested in them by a signifying process) and non-verbal signs (music, sounds, evocations, architectural constructions).

The history of space cannot be limited to the study of the special moments constituted by the formation, establishment, decline and dissolution of a given code. It must deal also with the global aspect – with modes of production as generalities covering specific societies with their particular histories and institutions. Furthermore, the history of space may be expected to periodize the development of the productive process in a way that does not correspond exactly to widely accepted periodizations.

Absolute space was made up of fragments of nature located at sites which were chosen for their intrinsic qualities (cave, mountaintop, spring, river), but whose very consecration ended up by stripping them of their natural characteristics and uniqueness. Thus natural space was soon populated by political forces. Typically, architecture picked a site in nature and transferred it to the political realm by means of a symbolic mediation; one thinks, for example, of the statues of local gods or goddesses in Greek temples, or of the Shintoist's sanctuary, empty or else containing nothing but a mirror. A sanctified inwardness set itself up in opposition to the outwardness in nature, yet at the same time it echoed and restored that outwardness. The absolute space where rites and ceremonies were performed retained a number of aspects of nature, albeit in a form modified by ceremonial requirements: age, sex, genitality (fertility) – all still had a part to play. At once civil and religious, absolute space thus preserved and incorporated bloodlines, family, unmediated relationships – but it transposed them to the city, to the political state founded on the town. The socio-political forces which occupied this space also had their administrative and military extensions: scribes and armies were very much part of the picture. Those who produced space (peasants or artisans) were not the same people as managed it, as used it to organize social production and reproduction; it was the priests, warriors, scribes and princes who possessed what others had produced, who appropriated space and became its fully entitled owners.

Absolute space, religious and political in character, was a product of the bonds of consanguinity, soil and language, but out of it evolved a space which was relativized and *historical*. Not that absolute space disappeared in the process; rather it survived as the bedrock of historical space and the basis of representational spaces (religious, magical and political symbolisms). Quickened by an internal dialectic which urged

it on towards its demise though simultaneously prolonging its life, absolute space embodied an antagonism between full and empty. After the fashion of a cathedral's 'nave' or 'ship', the invisible fullness of political space (the space of the town–state's nucleus or 'city') set up its rule in the emptiness of a natural space confiscated from nature. Then the forces of history smashed naturalness forever and upon its ruins established the space of accumulation (the accumulation of all wealth and resources: knowledge, technology, money, precious objects, works of art and symbols). For the theory of this accumulation, and particularly of its primitive stage, in which the respective roles of nature and history are still hard to distinguish, we are indebted to Marx; but, inasmuch as Marx's theory is incomplete, I shall have occasion to discuss this further below. One 'subject' dominated this period: the historical town of the West, along with the countryside under its control. It was during this time that productive activity (labour) became no longer one with the process of reproduction which perpetuated social life; but, in becoming independent of that process, labour fell prey to abstraction, whence abstract social labour – and *abstract space.*

This abstract space took over from historical space, which nevertheless lived on, though gradually losing its force, as substratum or underpinning of representational spaces. Abstract space functions 'objectally', as a set of things/signs and their formal relationships: glass and stone, concrete and steel, angles and curves, full and empty. Formal and quantitative, it erases distinctions, as much those which derive from nature and (historical) time as those which originate in the body (age, sex, ethnicity). The signification of this ensemble refers back to a sort of super-signification which escapes meaning's net: the functioning of capitalism, which contrives to be blatant and covert at one and the same time. The dominant form of space, that of the centres of wealth and power, endeavours to mould the spaces it dominates (i.e. peripheral spaces), and it seeks, often by violent means, to reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters there. Differences, for their part, are forced into the symbolic forms of an art that is itself abstract. A symbolism derived from that mis-taking of sensory, sensual and sexual which is intrinsic to the things/signs of abstract space finds objective expression in derivative ways: monuments have a phallic aspect, towers exude arrogance, and the bureaucratic and political authoritarianism immanent to a repressive space is everywhere. All of which calls, of course, for thorough analysis. A characteristic contradiction of abstract space consists in the fact that, although it denies the sensual and the sexual, its only immediate point of reference is genitality: the family unit, the

type of dwelling (apartment, bungalow, cottage, etc.), fatherhood and motherhood, and the assumption that fertility and fulfilment are identical. The reproduction of social relations is thus crudely conflated with biological reproduction, which is itself conceived of in the crudest and most simplistic way imaginable. In *spatial practice*, the reproduction of social relations is predominant. The *representation of space*, in thrall to both knowledge and power, leaves only the narrowest leeway to *representational spaces*, which are limited to works, images and memories whose content, whether sensory, sensual or sexual, is so far displaced that it barely achieves symbolic force. Perhaps young children can live in a space of this kind, with its indifference to age and sex (and even to time itself), but adolescence perforce suffers from it, for it cannot discern its own reality therein: it furnishes no male or female images nor any images of possible pleasure. Inasmuch as adolescents are unable to challenge either the dominant system's imperious architecture or its deployment of signs, it is only by way of revolt that they have any prospect of recovering the world of differences – the natural, the sensory/sensual, sexuality and pleasure.

Abstract space is not defined only by the disappearance of trees, or by the receding of nature; nor merely by the great empty spaces of the state and the military – plazas that resemble parade grounds; nor even by commercial centres packed tight with commodities, money and cars. It is not in fact defined on the basis of what is perceived. Its abstraction has nothing simple about it: it is not transparent and cannot be reduced either to a logic or to a strategy. Coinciding neither with the abstraction of the sign, nor with that of the concept, it operates *negatively*. Abstract space relates negatively to that which perceives and underpins it – namely, the historical and religio-political spheres. It also relates negatively to something which it carries within itself and which seeks to emerge from it: a differential space–time. It has nothing of a 'subject' about it, yet it acts like a subject in that it transports and maintains specific social relations, dissolves others and stands opposed to yet others. It functions *positively* vis-à-vis its own implications: technology, applied sciences, and knowledge bound to power. Abstract space may even be described as at once, and inseparably, the locus, medium and tool of this 'positivity'. How is this possible? Does it mean that this space could be defined in terms of a reifying alienation, on the assumption that the milieu of the commodity has itself become a commodity to be sold wholesale and retail? Perhaps so, yet the 'negativity' of abstract space is not negligible, and its abstraction cannot be reduced to an 'absolute thing'. A safer assumption would seem to be that the status of abstract

space must henceforward be considered a highly complex one. It is true that it dissolves and incorporates such former 'subjects' as the village and the town; it is also true that it replaces them. It sets itself up as the space of power, which will (or at any rate may) eventually lead to its own dissolution on account of conflicts (contradictions) arising within it. What we seem to have, then, is an apparent subject, an impersonal pseudo-subject, the abstract 'one' of modern social space, and – hidden within it, concealed by its illusory transparency – the real 'subject', namely state (political) power. Within this space, and on the subject of this space, everything is openly declared: everything is said or written. Save for the fact that there is very little to be said – and even less to be 'lived', for lived experience is crushed, vanquished by what is 'conceived of'. History is experienced as nostalgia, and nature as regret – as a horizon fast disappearing behind us. This may explain why affectivity, which, along with the sensory/sensual realm, cannot accede to abstract space and so informs no symbolism, is referred to by a term that denotes both a subject and that subject's denial by the absurd rationality of space: that term is 'the unconscious'.

In connection with abstract space, a space which is also instrumental (i.e. manipulated by all kinds of 'authorities' of which it is the locus and milieu), a question arises whose full import will become apparent only later. It concerns the silence of the 'users' of this space. Why do they allow themselves to be manipulated in ways so damaging to their spaces and their daily life without embarking on massive revolts? Why is protest left to 'enlightened', and hence elite, groups who are in any case largely exempt from these manipulations? Such elite circles, at the margins of political life, are highly vocal, but being mere wordmills, they have little to show for it. How is it that protest is never taken up by supposedly left-wing political parties? And why do the more honest politicians pay such a high price for displaying a bare minimum of straightforwardness?[35] Has bureaucracy already achieved such power that no political force can successfully resist it? There must be many reasons for such a startlingly strong – and worldwide – trend. It is difficult to see how so odd an indifference could be maintained without diverting the attention and interest of the 'users' elsewhere, without throwing sops to them in response to their demands and proposals, or without supplying replacement fulfilments for their (albeit vital) objec-

[35] I am thinking, for instance, of the Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU) and its leader Michel Rocard, defeated in the French elections of 1973, or of George McGovern's defeat in the US presidential election of 1971.

tives. Perhaps it would be true to say that the place of social space as a whole has been usurped by a part of that space endowed with an illusory special status – namely, the part which is concerned with writing and imagery, underpinned by the written text (journalism, literature), and broadcast by the media; a part, in short, that amounts to abstraction wielding awesome reductionistic force vis-à-vis 'lived' experience.

Given that abstract space is buttressed by non-critical (positive) knowledge, backed up by a frightening capacity for violence, and maintained by a bureaucracy which has laid hold of the gains of capitalism in the ascendent and turned them to its own profit, must we conclude that this space will last forever? If so, we should have to deem it the locus and milieu of the ultimate abjection, of that final stability forecast by Hegel, the end result of social entropy. To such a state of affairs our only possible response would be the spasms of what Georges Bataille calls the acephal. Whatever traces of vitality remained would have a wasteland as their only refuge.

From a less pessimistic standpoint, it can be shown that abstract space harbours specific contradictions. Such spatial contradictions derive in part from the old contradictions thrown up by historical time. These have undergone modifications, however: some are aggravated, others blunted. Amongst them, too, completely fresh contradictions have come into being which are liable eventually to precipitate the downfall of abstract space. The reproduction of the social relations of production within this space inevitably obeys two tendencies: the dissolution of old relations on the one hand and the generation of new relations on the other. Thus, despite – or rather because of – its negativity, abstract space carries within itself the seeds of a new kind of space. I shall call that new space 'differential space', because, inasmuch as abstract space tends towards homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities, a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences. It will also restore unity to what abstract space breaks up – to the functions, elements and moments of social practice. It will put an end to those localizations which shatter the integrity of the individual body, the social body, the corpus of human needs, and the corpus of knowledge. By contrast, it will distinguish what abstract space tends to identify – for example, social reproduction and genitality, gratification and biological fertility, social relationships and family relationships. (The persistence of abstract space notwithstanding, the pressure for these distinctions to be drawn is constantly on the increase; the space of gratification, for instance, if indeed it is ever produced, will have nothing whatsoever to do with functional spaces in general, and

in particular with the space of genitality as expressed in the family cell and its insertion into the piled-up boxes of 'modern' buildings, tower blocks, 'urban complexes', and what-have-you.)

XIX

If indeed every society produces a space, its own space, this will have other consequences in addition to those we have already considered. Any 'social existence' aspiring or claiming to be 'real', but failing to produce its own space, would be a strange entity, a very peculiar kind of abstraction unable to escape from the ideological or even the 'cultural' realm. It would fall to the level of folklore and sooner or later disappear altogether, thereby immediately losing its identity, its denomination and its feeble degree of reality. This suggests a possible criterion for distinguishing between ideology and practice as well as between ideology and knowledge (or, otherwise stated, for distinguishing between the *lived* on the one hand and the *perceived* and the *conceived* on the other, and for discerning their interrelationship, their oppositions and dispositions, and what they reveal *versus* what they conceal).

There is no doubt that medieval society – that is, the feudal mode of production, with its variants and local peculiarities – created its own space. Medieval space built upon the space constituted in the preceding period, and preserved that space as a substrate and prop for its symbols; it survives in an analogous fashion itself today. Manors, monasteries, cathedrals – these were the strong points anchoring the network of lanes and main roads to a landscape transformed by peasant communities. This space was the take-off point for Western European capital accumulation, the original source and cradle of which were the towns.

Capitalism and neocapitalism have produced abstract space, which includes the 'world of commodities', its 'logic' and its worldwide strategies, as well as the power of money and that of the political state. This space is founded on the vast network of banks, business centres and major productive entities, as also on motorways, airports and information lattices. Within this space the town – once the forcing-house of accumulation, fountainhead of wealth and centre of historical space – has disintegrated.

What of socialism – or, rather, what of what is today so confusedly referred to as socialism? There is no 'communist society' in existence, and the very concept of communism has become obscure inasmuch as the notion serves chiefly to sustain two opposing yet complementary

myths, the myth of anti-communism on the one hand and the myth that a communist revolution has been carried through somewhere on the other. To rephrase the question therefore: has state socialism produced a space of its own?

The question is not unimportant. A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses. A social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and on space – though its impact need not occur at the same rate, or with equal force, in each of these areas.

Which having been said, there is no easy or quick answer to the question of 'socialism's' space; much careful thought is called for here. It may be that the revolutionary period, the period of intense change, merely establishes the preconditions for a new space, and that the realization of that space calls for a rather longer period – for a period of calm. The prodigious creative ferment in Soviet Russia between 1920 and 1930 was halted even more dramatically in the fields of architecture and urbanism than it was in other areas; and those fertile years were followed by years of sterility. What is the significance of this sterile outcome? Where can an architectural production be found today that might be described as 'socialist' – or even as *new* when contrasted with the corresponding efforts of capitalist planning? In the former Stalinallee, East Berlin – now renamed Karl-Marx-Allee? In Cuba, Moscow or Peking? Just how wide by now is the rift between the 'real' society rightly or wrongly referred to as socialist and Marx and Engels' project for a new society? How is the total space of a 'socialist' society to be conceived of? How is it appropriated? In short, what do we find when we apply the yardstick of space – or, more precisely, the yardstick of spatial practice – to societies with a 'socialist' mode of production? To phrase the question even more precisely, what is the relationship between, on the one hand, the entirety of that space which falls under the sway of 'socialist' relations of production and, on the other hand, the world market, generated by the capitalist mode of production, which weighs down so heavily upon the whole planet, imposing its division of labour on a worldwide scale and so governing the specific configurations of space, of the forces of production within that space, of sources of wealth and of economic fluctuations?

So many questions to which it is difficult at the present time, for lack of information or comprehension, to give satisfactory answers. One

cannot help but wonder, however, whether it is legitimate to speak of socialism where no architectural innovation has occurred, where no specific space has been created; would it not be more appropriate in that case to speak of a failed transition?

As I hope to make clear later on, there are two possible ways forward for 'socialism'. The first of these would opt for accelerating growth, whatever the costs, whether for reasons of competition, prestige or power. According to this scenario, state socialism would aim to do no more than perfect capitalist strategies of growth, relying entirely on the proven strengths of large-scale enterprise and large cities, the latter constituting at once great centres of production and great centres of political power. The inevitable consequences of this approach – namely, the aggravation of inequalities in development and the abandonment of whole regions and whole sectors of the population – are seen from this viewpoint as of negligible importance. The second strategy would be founded on small and medium-sized businesses and on towns of a size compatible with that emphasis. It would seek to carry the whole territory and the whole population forward together in a process which would not separate growth from development. The inevitable urbanization of society would not take place at the expense of whole sectors, nor would it exacerbate unevenness in growth or development; it would successfully transcend the opposition between town and country instead of degrading both by turning them into an undifferentiated mass.

As for the class struggle, its role in the production of space is a cardinal one in that this production is performed solely by classes, fractions of classes and groups representative of classes. Today more than ever, the class struggle is inscribed in space. Indeed, it is that struggle alone which prevents abstract space from taking over the whole planet and papering over all differences. Only the class struggle has the capacity to differentiate, to generate differences which are not intrinsic to economic growth *qua* strategy, 'logic' or 'system' – that is to say, differences which are neither induced by nor acceptable to that growth. The forms of the class struggle are now far more varied than formerly. Naturally, they include the political action of minorities.

During the first half of the twentieth century, agrarian reforms and peasant revolutions reshaped the surface of the planet. A large portion of these changes served the ends of abstract space, because they smoothed out and in a sense automatized the previously existing space of historic peoples and cities. In more recent times, urban guerrilla actions and the intervention of the 'masses' even in urban areas have extended this movement, particularly in Latin America. The events of

May 1968 in France, when students occupied and took charge of their own space, and the working class immediately followed suit, marked a new departure. The halting of this reappropriation of space, though doubtless only temporary, has given rise to a despairing attitude. It is argued that only bulldozers or Molotov cocktails can change the dominant organization of space, that destruction must come before reconstruction. Fair enough, but it is legitimate to ask what 'reconstruction' entails. Are the same means of production to be used to produce the same products? Or must those means be destroyed also? The problem with this posture is that it minimizes the contradictions in society and space as they actually are; although there are no good grounds for doing so, it attributes a hermetic or finished quality to the 'system'; and, in the very process of heaping invective upon this system, it comes in a sense under its spell and succeeds only in glorifying its power beyond all reasonable bounds. Schizophrenic 'leftism' of this kind secretes its own, 'unconscious', contradictions. Its appeal to an absolute spontaneity in destruction and construction necessarily implies the destruction of thought, of knowledge, and of all creative capacities, on the spurious grounds that they stand in the way of an immediate and total revolution – a revolution, incidentally, which is never defined.

All the same, there is no getting around the fact that the bourgeoisie still has the initiative in its struggle for (and in) space. Which brings us back to the question of the passivity and silence of the 'users' of space.

Abstract space works in a highly complex way. It has something of a dialogue about it, in that it implies a tacit agreement, a non-aggression pact, a contract, as it were, of non-violence. It imposes reciprocity, and a communality of use. In the street, each individual is supposed not to attack those he meets; anyone who transgresses this law is deemed guilty of a criminal act. A space of this kind presupposes the existence of a 'spatial economy' closely allied, though not identical, to the verbal economy. This economy valorizes certain relationships between people in particular places (shops, cafés, cinemas, etc.), and thus gives rise to connotative discourses concerning these places; these in turn generate 'consensuses' or conventions according to which, for example, such and such a place is supposed to be trouble-free, a quiet area where people go peacefully to have a good time, and so forth. As for denotative (i.e. descriptive) discourses in this context, they have a quasi-legal aspect which also works for consensus: there is to be no fighting over who should occupy a particular spot; spaces are to be left free, and wherever possible allowance is to be made for 'proxemics' – for the maintenance of 'respectful' distances. This attitude entails in its turn a logic and a

strategy of property in space: 'places and things belonging to you do not belong to me'. The fact remains, however, that communal or shared spaces, the possession or consumption of which cannot be entirely privatized, continue to exist. Cafés, squares and monuments are cases in point. The spatial consensus I have just described in brief constitutes part of civilization much as do prohibitions against acts considered vulgar or offensive to children, women, old people or the public in general. Naturally enough, its response to class struggle, as to other forms of violence, amounts to a formal and categorical rejection.

Every space is already in place before the appearance in it of actors; these actors are collective as well as individual subjects inasmuch as the individuals are always members of groups or classes seeking to appropriate the space in question. This pre-existence of space conditions the subject's presence, action and discourse, his competence and performance; yet the subject's presence, action and discourse, at the same time as they presuppose this space, also negate it. The subject experiences space as an obstacle, as a resistant 'objectality' at times as implacably hard as a concrete wall, being not only extremely difficult to modify in any way but also hedged about by Draconian rules prohibiting any attempt at such modification. Thus the *texture* of space affords opportunities not only to social acts with no particular place in it and no particular link with it, but also to a spatial practice that it does indeed determine, namely its collective and individual use: a sequence of acts which embody a signifying practice even if they cannot be reduced to such a practice. Life and death are not merely conceptualized, simulated or given expression by these acts; rather, it is in and through them that life and death actually have their being. It is within space that time consumes or devours living beings, thus giving reality to sacrifice, pleasure and pain. Abstract space, the space of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism, bound up as it is with exchange (of goods and commodities, as of written and spoken words, etc.) depends on consensus more than any space before it. It hardly seems necessary to add that within this space violence does not always remain latent or hidden. One of its contradictions is that between the appearance of security and the constant threat, and indeed the occasional eruption, of violence.

The old class struggle between bourgeoisie and aristocracy produced a space where the signs of that struggle are still manifest. Innumerable historic towns were transformed by that conflict, whose traces and results may easily be seen. After its political triumph in France, for example, the bourgeoisie smashed the aristocratic space of the Marais district in the centre of Paris, pressing it into the service of material

production and installing workshops, shops and apartments in the luxurious mansions of the area. This space was thus both uglified and enlivened, in characteristically bourgeois fashion, through a process of 'popularization'. Today, a second phase of bourgeoisification is proceeding apace in the Marais, as it is reclaimed for residential purposes by the elite. This is a good example of how the bourgeoisie can retain its initiative in a great historic city. It also keeps the initiative on a much wider scale, of course. Consider, for instance, the way in which 'polluting' industries are beginning to be exported to less developed countries – to Brazil in the case of America, or to Spain in the European context. It is worth noting that such trends bring about differentiation *within* a given mode of production.

A remarkable instance of the production of space on the basis of a difference internal to the dominant mode of production is supplied by the current transformation of the perimeter of the Mediterranean into a leisure-oriented space for industrialized Europe. As such, and even in a sense as a 'non-work' space (set aside not just for vacations but also for convalescence, rest, retirement, and so on), this area has acquired a specific role in the social division of labour. Economically and socially, architecturally and urbanistically, it has been subjected to a sort of neocolonization. At times this space even seems to transcend the constraints imposed by the neocapitalism which governs it: the use to which it has been put calls for 'ecological' virtues such as an immediate access to sun and sea and a close juxtaposition of urban centres and temporary accommodation (hotels, villas, etc.). It has thus attained a certain qualitative distinctiveness as compared with the major industrial agglomerations, where a pure culture of the quantitative reigns supreme. If, by abandoning all our critical faculties, we were to accept this 'distinctiveness' at face value, we would get a mental picture of a space given over completely to unproductive expense, to a vast wastefulness, to an intense and gigantic potlatch of surplus objects, symbols and energies, with the accent on sports, love and reinvigoration rather than on rest and relaxation. The quasi-cultist focus of localities based on leisure would thus form a striking contrast to the productive focus of North European cities. The waste and expense, meanwhile, would appear as the end-point of a temporal sequence starting in the workplace, in production-based space, and leading to the consumption of space, sun and sea, and of spontaneous or induced eroticism, in a great 'vacationland festival'. Waste and expense, then, instead of occurring at the beginning, as inaugurating events, would come at the end of the sequence, giving it meaning and justification. What a travesty such a

picture would be, however, enshrining as it does both the illusion of transparency and the illusion of naturalness. The truth is that all this seemingly non-productive expense is planned with the greatest care: centralized, organized, hierarchized, symbolized and programmed to the *n*th degree, it serves the interests of the tour-operators, bankers and entrepreneurs of places such as London and Hamburg. To be more precise, and to use the terminology introduced earlier: in the spatial practice of neocapitalism (complete with air transport), representations of space facilitate the manipulation of representational spaces (sun, sea, festival, waste, expense).

There are two reasons for bringing these considerations up at this point: to make the notion of the production of space as concrete as possible right away, and to show how the class struggle is waged under the hegemony of the bourgeoisie.

XX

'Change life!' 'Change society!' These precepts mean nothing without the production of an appropriate space. A lesson to be learned from the Soviet constructivists of 1920–30, and from their failure, is that new social relationships call for a new space, and vice versa. This proposition, which is a corollary of our initial one, will need to be discussed at some length. The injunction to change life originated with the poets and philosophers, in the context of a negative utopianism, but it has recently fallen into the public (i.e. the political) domain. In the process it has degenerated into political slogans – 'Live better!', 'Live differently!', 'the quality of life', 'lifestyle' – whence it is but a short step to talk of pollution, of respect for nature and for the environment, and so forth. The pressure of the world market, the transformation of the planet, the production of a new space – all these have thus disappeared into thin air. What we are left with, so far from implying the creation, whether gradual or sudden, of a different spatial practice, is simply the return of an idea to an ideal state. So long as everyday life remains in thrall to abstract space, with its very concrete constraints; so long as the only improvements to occur are technical improvements of detail (for example, the frequency and speed of transportation, or relatively better amenities); so long, in short, as the only connection between work spaces, leisure spaces and living spaces is supplied by the agencies of political power and by their mechanisms of control – so long must the project of 'changing life' remain no more than a political rallying-cry to

be taken up or abandoned according to the mood of the moment.

Such are the circumstances under which theoretical thought must labour as it attempts to negotiate the obstacles in its path. To one side, it perceives the abyss of negative utopias, the vanity of a critical theory which works only at the level of words and ideas (i.e. at the ideological level). Turning in the opposite direction, it confronts highly positive technological utopias: the realm of 'prospectivism', of social engineering and programming. Here it must of necessity take note of the application to space – and hence to existing social relationships – of cybernetics, electronics and information science, if only in order to draw lessons from these developments.

The path I shall be outlining here is thus bound up with a strategic hypothesis – that is to say, with a long-range theoretical and practical project. Are we talking about a political project? Yes and no. It certainly embodies a politics of space, but at the same time goes beyond politics inasmuch as it presupposes a critical analysis of all spatial politics as of all politics in general. By seeking to point the way towards a different space, towards the space of a different (social) life and of a different mode of production, this project straddles the breach between science and utopia, reality and ideality, conceived and lived. It aspires to surmount these oppositions by exploring the dialectical relationship between 'possible' and 'impossible', and this both objectively and subjectively.

The role of strategic hypotheses in the construction of knowledge is well established. A hypothesis of this kind serves to centre knowledge around a particular focal point, a kernel, a concept or a group of concepts. The strategy involved may succeed or fail; in any case it will last for a finite length of time, long or short, before dissolving or splitting. Thus, no matter how long it may continue to govern tactical operations in the fields of knowledge and action, it must remain essentially temporary – and hence subject to revision. It demands commitment, yet appeals to no eternal truths. Sooner or later, the basis of even the most successful strategy must crumble. At which point, the concomitant removal of the centre will topple whatever has been set in place around it.

In recent times, a series of tactical and strategic operations have been undertaken with a view to the establishment (the word is apt) of a sort of impregnable fortress of knowledge. With a curious blend of naïvety and cunning, the learned promoters of such movements always express the conviction that their claims are of an irrefutably scientific nature, while at the same time ignoring the questions raised by all such claims

to scientific status, and especially the question of the justification for assigning priority to what is *known* or *seen* over what is *lived*. The most recent strategic operation of this kind has sought to centre knowledge on linguistics and its ancillary disciplines: semantics, semiology, semiotics. (Earlier efforts had given a comparable centrality to political economy, history, sociology, and so on.)

This most recent hypothesis has given rise to a great mass of research and publication. Some of this work is of great importance; some of it is no doubt over- or underestimated. Naturally all such judgements, having nothing eternal about them, are subject to revision. But, inasmuch as the hypothesis itself is based on the shaky assumption that a definite (and definitive) centre can be established, it is likely to collapse. Indeed, it is already threatened with destruction from within and from without. Internally, it raises questions that it cannot answer. The question of the subject is a case in point. The systematic study of language, and/or the study of language as a system, have eliminated the 'subject' in every sense of the term. This is the sort of situation where reflective thinking must pick up the pieces of its broken mirror. Lacking a 'subject' of its own, it seizes on the old 'subjects' of the philosophers. Thus we find Chomsky readopting Descartes's *cogito* and its unique characteristics: the unicity of the deep structures of discourse and the generality of the field of consciousness. Witness also the reappearance of the Husserlian Ego, a modernized version of the *cogito*, but one which cannot maintain its philosophical (or meta-physical) substantiality – especially in face of that unconscious which was indeed invented as a way of escaping from it.

Which brings us back to an earlier part of our discussion, for what this hypothesis does is cheerfully commandeer social space and physical space and reduce them to an epistemological (mental) space – the space of discourse and of the Cartesian *cogito*. It is conveniently forgotten that the practical 'I', which is inseparably individual and social, is in a space where it must either recognize itself or lose itself. This unconsidered leap from the mental to the social and back again effectively transfers the properties of space proper onto the level of discourse – and particularly onto the level of discourse upon space. It is true that this approach seeks to supply some mediation between mental and social by evoking the body (voice, gestures, etc.). But one may wonder what connection exists between this abstract body, understood simply as a mediation between 'subject' and 'object', and a practical and fleshy body conceived of as a totality complete with spatial qualities (symmetries, asymmetries) and energetic properties (discharges, economies, waste). In

fact, as I shall show later, the moment the body is envisioned as a practico-sensory totality, a decentring and recentring of knowledge occurs.

The strategy of centring knowledge on discourse avoids the particularly scabrous topic of the relationship between knowledge and power. It is also incapable of supplying reflective thought with a satisfactory answer to a theoretical question that it raises itself: do sets of non-verbal signs and symbols, whether coded or not, systematized or not, fall into the same category as verbal sets, or are they rather irreducible to them? Among non-verbal signifying sets must be included music, painting, sculpture, architecture, and certainly theatre, which in addition to a text or pretext embraces gesture, masks, costume, a stage, a *mise-en-scène* – in short, a space. Non-verbal sets are thus characterized by a spatiality which is in fact irreducible to the mental realm. There is even a sense in which landscapes, both rural and urban, fall under this head. To underestimate, ignore and diminish space amounts to the overestimation of texts, written matter, and writing systems, along with the readable and the visible, to the point of assigning to these a monopoly on intelligibility.

Simply stated, the strategic hypothesis proposed here runs as follows.

> Theoretical and practical questions relating to space are becoming more and more important. These questions, though they do not suppress them, tend to resituate concepts and problems having to do with biological reproduction, and with the production both of the means of production themselves and of consumer goods.

A given mode of production does not disappear, according to Marx, until it has liberated the forces of production and realized its full potential. This assertion may be viewed either as a statement of the obvious or as a striking paradox. When the forces of production make a leap forward, but the capitalist relations of production remain intact, the production of space itself replaces – or, rather, is superimposed upon – the production of things in space. In a number of observable and analysable instances, at any rate, such a production of space itself is entailed by the pressure of the world market and the reproduction of the capitalist relations of production. Through their manipulation of abstract space, the bourgeoisie's enlightened despotism and the capitalist system have successfully established partial control over the commodity market. They have found it harder – witness their 'monetary' problems – to establish control over the capital market itself. The combined result

of a very strong political hegemony, a surge in the forces of production, and an inadequate control of markets, is a spatial chaos experienced at the most parochial level just as on a worldwide scale. The bourgeoisie and the capitalist system thus experience great difficulty in mastering what is at once their product and the tool of their mastery, namely space. They find themselves unable to reduce practice (the practico-sensory realm, the body, social-spatial practice) to their abstract space, and hence new, spatial, contradictions arise and make themselves felt. Might not the spatial chaos engendered by capitalism, despite the power and rationality of the state, turn out to be the system's Achilles' heel?

The question naturally arises whether this strategic hypothesis can in any way influence or supplant such generally accepted political strategies as world revolution carried through politically by a single party, in a single country, under the guidance of a single doctrine, through the efforts of a single class – in a word, from a single *centre*. The crisis of all such 'monocentric' strategies cleared the way not so long ago, it will be recalled, for another strategic hypothesis, one based on the idea of a social transformation accomplished by the 'third world'.

In actuality, it cannot be a matter merely of dogmatically substituting one of these hypotheses for another, nor simply of transcending the opposition between 'monocentric' and 'polycentric'. The earthshaking transformation hallowed in common parlance by the term 'revolution' has turned out to be truly earthshaking in that it is worldwide,[36] and hence also, necessarily, manifold and multiform. It advances on the theoretical as well as the political plane, for in it theory is immanent to politics. It progresses hand in hand with technology just as with knowledge and practice. In some situations peasants will remain, as they have long been, the principal factor, active and/or passive. In others, that factor may be supplied by marginal social elements or by an advanced sector of the working class now disposing of an unprecedented range of options. There are places where the transformation of the world may take on a violent and precipitate character, while in others it will progress in subterranean fashion, way below an apparently tranquil or pacified surface. A particular ruling class may succeed in presiding over changes capable of utterly destroying its opposite numbers elsewhere.

The strategic hypothesis based on space excludes neither the role of the so-called 'underdeveloped' countries nor that of the industrialized nations and their working classes. To the contrary, its basic principle and

[36] This is not to say that it is reducible to what Kostas Axelos, in his long philosophical meditation in the Heraclitean mould, refers to as the 'game of the world'.

objective is the bringing-together of dissociated aspects, the unification of disparate tendencies and factors. Inasmuch as it tries to take the planetary experiment in which humanity is engaged for what it is – that is to say, a series of separate and distinct assays of the world's space – this hypothesis sets itself up in clear opposition to the homogenizing efforts of the state, of political power, of the world market, and of the commodity world – tendencies which find their practical expression through and in abstract space. It implies the mobilization of differences in a single movement (including differences of natural origin, each of which ecology tends to emphasize in isolation): differences of regime, country, location, ethnic group, natural resources, and so on.

One might suppose that little argument would be required to establish that the 'right to be different' can only have meaning when it is based on actual struggles to establish differences and that the differences generated through such theoretical and practical struggles must themselves differ both from natural distinguishing characteristics and from differentiations induced within existing abstract space. The fact remains that the differences which concern us, those differences upon whose future strength theory and action may count, can only be effectively demonstrated by dint of laborious analysis.

The reconstruction of a spatial 'code' – that is, of a language common to practice and theory, as also to inhabitants, architects and scientists – may be considered from the practical point of view to be an immediate task. The first thing such a code would do is recapture the unity of dissociated elements, breaking down such barriers as that between private and public, and identifying both confluences and oppositions in space that are at present indiscernible. It would thus bring together levels and terms which are isolated by existing spatial practice and by the ideologies underpinning it: the 'micro' or architectural level and the 'macro' level currently treated as the province of urbanists, politicians and planners; the everyday realm and the urban realm; inside and outside; work and non-work (festival); the durable and the ephemeral; and so forth. The code would therefore comprise significant oppositions (i.e. paradigmatic elements) to be found amidst seemingly disparate terms, and links (syntagmatic elements) retrieved from the seemingly homogeneous mass of politically controlled space. In this sense the code might be said to contribute to the reversal of the dominant tendency and thus to play a role in the overall project. It is vital, however, that the code itself not be mistaken for a practice. The search for a language must therefore in no circumstances be permitted to become detached

from practice or from the changes wrought by practice (i.e. from the worldwide process of transformation).

The working-out of the code calls itself for an effort to stay within the paradigmatic sphere: that is, the sphere of essential, hidden, implicit and unstated oppositions – oppositions susceptible of orienting a social practice – as opposed to the sphere of explicit relations, the sphere of the operational links between terms; in short, the syntagmatic sphere of language, ordinary discourse, writing, reading, literature, and so on.

A code of this kind must be correlated with a system of knowledge. It brings an alphabet, a lexicon and a grammar together within an overall framework; and it situates itself – though not in such a way as to exclude it – vis-à-vis non-knowledge (ignorance or misunderstanding); in other words, vis-à-vis the *lived* and the *perceived*. Such a knowledge is conscious of its own approximativeness: it is at once certain and uncertain. It announces its own relativity at each step, undertaking (or at least seeking to undertake) self-criticism, yet never allowing itself to become dissipated in apologias for non-knowledge, absolute spontaneity or 'pure' violence. This knowledge must find a middle path between dogmatism on the one hand and the abdication of understanding on the other.

XXI

The approach taken here may be described as 'regressive–progressive'. It takes as its starting-point the realities of the present: the forward leap of productive forces, and the new technical and scientific capacity to transform natural space so radically that it threatens nature itself. The effects of this destructive and constructive power are to be felt on all sides; they enter into combinations, often in alarming ways, with the pressures of the world market. Within this global framework, as might be expected, the Leninist principle of uneven development applies in full force: some countries are still in the earliest stages of the production of things (goods) in space, and only the most industrialized and urbanized ones can exploit to the full the new possibilities opened up by technology and knowledge. The production of space, having attained the conceptual and linguistic level, acts retroactively upon the past, disclosing aspects and moments of it hitherto uncomprehended. The past appears in a different light, and hence the process whereby that past becomes the present also takes on another aspect.

This *modus operandi* is also the one which Marx proposed in his chief 'methodological' text. The categories (concepts) which express social relationships in the most advanced society, namely bourgeois society, writes Marx, also allow 'insights into the structure and the relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements [bourgeois society] built itself up, whose partly still unconquered remnants are carried along with it, whose mere nuances have developed explicit significance within it'.[37]

Though it may seem paradoxical at first sight, this method appears on closer inspection to be fairly sensible. For how *could* we come to understand a genesis, the genesis of the present, along with the preconditions and processes involved, other than by starting from that present, working our way back to the past and then retracing our steps? Surely this must be the method adopted by any historian, economist or sociologist – assuming, of course, that such specialists aspire to any methodology at all.

Though perfectly clear in its formulation and application, Marx's approach does have its problems, and they become apparent as soon as he applies his method to the concept and reality of *labour*. The main difficulty arises from the fact that the 'regressive' and the 'progressive' movements become intertwined both in the exposition and in the research procedure itself. There is a constant risk of the regressive phase telescoping into the progressive one, so interrupting or obscuring it. The beginning might then appear at the end, and the outcome might emerge at the outset. All of which serves to add an extra level of complexity to the uncovering of those contradictions which drive every historical process forward – and thus (according to Marx) towards its end.

This is indeed the very problem which confronts us in the present context. A new concept, that of the production of space, appears at the start; it must 'operate' or 'work' in such a way as to shed light on processes from which it cannot separate itself because it is a product of them. Our task, therefore, is to employ this concept by giving it free rein without for all that according it, after the fashion of the Hegelians,

[37] Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 105. This is an appropriate moment to point out a serious blunder in *Panorama des sciences sociales* (see above, note 4), where the method here discussed is attributed to Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's own discussion of method, however, explicitly cites Henri Lefebvre, 'Perspectives', *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* (1953) – an article reprinted in my *Du rural à l'urbain* (Paris: Anthropos, 1970); see Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), pp. 41 and 42, and *Panorama*, pp. 89ff. *Panorama* is thus wrong on two counts, for what is involved here is actually the trajectory of Marxist thought itself.

a life and strength of its own *qua* concept – without, in other words, according an autonomous reality to knowledge. Ultimately, once it has illuminated and thereby validated its own coming-into-being, the production of space (as theoretical concept and practical reality in indissoluble conjunction) will become clear, and our demonstration will be over: we shall have arrived at a truth 'in itself and for itself', complete and yet relative.

In this way the method can become progressively more dialectical without posing a threat to logic and consistency. Not that there is no danger of falling into obscurity or, especially, into repetitiousness. Marx certainly failed to avoid such risks completely. And he was very aware of them: witness the fact that the exposition in *Capital* by no means follows exactly the method set forth in the *Grundrisse*; Marx's great doctrinal dissertation starts off from a form, that of exchange value, and not from the concepts brought to the fore in the earlier work, namely production and labour. On the other hand, the approach adumbrated in the *Grundrisse* is taken up again apropos of the accumulation of capital: in England, studying the most advanced form of capitalism in order to understand the system in other countries and the process of its actual growth, Marx cleaved firmly to his initial methodological precepts.