

PATRON
1/21/2008

EISENMAN/ KRIER: TWO IDEOLOGIES

A CONFERENCE AT THE
YALE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

2004

THE MONACELLI PRESS

Between Utopias and Ideologies

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Everyone knows how, at an exhibition staged at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932, Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock eviscerated European modern architecture of its social and political content. Their aim was to repackage it for American consumption—to make it, as the housing reformer Catherine Bauer said at the time, “safe for millionaires,” or as the architectural historian Colin Rowe would put it later in his introduction to the book *Five Architects*, “safe for capitalism.” In the ensuing decades, modern architecture, now widely known as the International Style, and having become an American export rather than a European import, evolved into a mainstream aesthetic in which technological innovation and formal virtuosity trumped the earlier reformist aspirations. A new, Cold War ideology of “the end of ideology”—a slogan popularized by the American sociologist Daniel Bell in a 1960 book of that title—replaced the older Marxist and socialist allegiances while implicitly forwarding the objectives of capitalist modernization. For Rowe, modernist culture’s utopian program to bring about a more egalitarian and democratic society had proved illusory and, even worse, had revealed its authoritarian side. The only escape from the evil twins of totalitarian dictatorship and technocratically driven consumer culture now appeared to be architecture as art, or formalist aesthetics.

Celle-ci n'est pas une maison

This, crudely summarized, was the milieu in which the American architect Peter Eisenman was largely formed. A protégé of Rowe’s at Cambridge University in the early 1960s, he attracted the attention of the architecture world by the end of that decade with a series of abstract numbered houses. He also functioned as an important impresario, putting together a group of likewise formally inclined architects, the New York Five, and founding a think tank called the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York, through which the most important European architectural intellectuals, including Leon Krier, would pass during the next decade.

Eisenman's contribution to the discourse of late modernism was to radicalize it, especially through his own mostly unbuilt designs, and beyond anything Rowe himself would ultimately condone—or could have imagined when he initially guided Eisenman to the grail of Giuseppe Terragni's *Casa del Fascio* in Como. Banishing all lingering guilt for modern architecture's social vocation and immunizing himself against functionalist apologetics, Eisenman embarked on a process of design conceived as a sequence of autonomous and self-generated operations on the language, or more precisely the syntax, of architectural form. With House IV, designed for himself in 1970–71, and extensively elaborated in sketches, drawings, models, and texts both at the time and retrospectively, the series reached a climax with respect to the application of a logical and transformational system of rules. Eisenman's diagrammatic notations detailing the generation of architectural form out of an abstract cubic volume emphasized the oppositional nature of the moves: line versus plane, plane versus volume, symmetry versus asymmetry, end versus side, centrifugal space versus centripetal, exterior versus interior, center versus edge.

A much worked-over text about the house, shredded into horizontal strips and then pieced back together, reproduced in his book *Houses of Cards*, ends with the statement, "This is not a house in the traditional sense," its last four words crossed out. Eisenman was seeking to rule out anything extraneous or "extrinsic" in his search for some fundamental Chomskyan "deep structure" or conceptual essence of architecture—a definition that could once and for all distinguish the making of "architecture" from the programmatic of "building" (i.e., the banalities of domestic accommodation and keeping the rain out). This essentialist obsession would subsequently come up against poststructuralism's critique of metaphysics, by which Eisenman would be increasingly affected, especially after falling under the spell of Jacques Derrida. Yet already in the houses that succeeded House IV he began to move from the hyperrationalism of transformational grammar to a method he called "decomposition," acknowledging architecture's indeterminacy as a

language and opening himself to a more psychoanalytically inflected approach to the generation of form, or to a dialectic between these two processes.

Degrees of Separation

At the time Eisenman was performing these involuted operations on modernist form, the Luxembourg-born Leon Krier, half a generation his junior, entered the London architectural office of James Stirling, working there from 1968 to 1974. If Eisenman and Krier are invariably portrayed as polemical antagonists who represent polar ideologies with respect to architectural culture—a point to which we shall return—it is important to realize that, at least in terms of their personal itineraries, there exist two very short degrees of separation (or linkage) between them. These are embodied in the figures of Stirling and Rowe, who would both, by the early 1970s, make a full turn from modernism to postmodernism. One might also add, as a matrix for all four, Le Corbusier, the disparities of whose early and late work were differently registered by each.

Indeed, it may be argued that Stirling, with whom Rowe had an especially close relationship, and who articulated his sense of betrayal by the Corbu of Ronchamp and La Tourette in two articles written in the 1950s, undertook a deconstruction of architectural language in the 1960s analogous to Eisenman's. The difference is that while Eisenman concerned himself primarily with architectural syntax, Stirling was preoccupied with semantics. From Leicester Engineering Building (1959–63) through the History Faculty Library at Cambridge (1964–68) and Florey Building at Oxford (1967–71) to Derby Civic Centre (1970), Stirling trafficked in the brutalist and megastructural language of his day while making a travesty of it with technological exaggerations, formal distortions, and increasingly, jarring historical juxtapositions. Krier worked on the Derby scheme, and the incongruous relationship in the drawings between the big barrel-vaulted glass arcade and the classical facade of the existing assembly hall, used as a kind of prop for a portal, announces, as it were, his entry on the scene. Similarly, in Stirling's next project,

the Siemens headquarters near Munich (1967–73), the perspective drawings, also bearing the imprint of Krier's witty and cultivated draftsmanship, combine the industrial monumentality of Sant'Elia's Città Nuova with the neoclassicism of Ledoux's Saltworks at Chaux. In their hybrid imagery, Derby and Siemens point the way to the Neue Staatsgalerie at Stuttgart (1977–84), Stirling's postmodernist masterwork.

Absolute Urbanism

Meanwhile, the irascible young Krier, who undoubtedly influenced Stirling during these years at least as much as he was influenced by him, would, upon leaving his office, adopt as absolutist a stance as Eisenman's. If Eisenman defined the purview of architecture in strictly formal terms, Krier defined it strictly in relation to the preindustrial European city. Both thereby became self-appointed custodians of the high culture of architecture—avant-garde and antimodernist respectively—and both rejected as a path for architecture the pop sensibilities of consumer culture, the “vulgar debauch” (in Krier's words) of late-twentieth-century everyday life and the “delirium” (again, Krier's word, apparently used before Rem Koolhaas took possession of it) of its utilitarian urbanism. Inveighing against the aesthetics of fragmentation and historical pastiche that were becoming hallmarks of the new discourse of postmodernism, in the work not just of Stirling but of architects like Robert Venturi, Lucien Kroll, and others, Krier, together with Maurice Culot and his brother Rob Krier, called for a “total” reconstruction of the city along romantic-reactionary lines: the anticapitalism of Ruskin and Morris, European Social Democracy, and (contradictorily, given the previous two) Schinkel-style neoclassicism.

With respect to influence, the same would be true of Rowe as of Stirling: Krier would have a militant effect on Rowe's thinking and would reinforce his increasing hostility to modern architecture. Krier first met Rowe at Cornell in the mid-1970s, after leaving Stirling's office, having been invited to teach there by O. M. Ungers at the same time as Koolhaas. Just as Eisenman's vision of architecture had had a

major effect on Rowe fifteen years earlier, Krier now drew the British architectural historian into his own orbit. (Koolhaas, significantly, remained outside this seduction scene, and in fact repaired to the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, where he wrote *Delirious New York*, celebrating rather than condemning the savagery of the modern metropolis.) Rowe's feelings for Krier are expressed in a highly affectionate but not unqualified essay of 1984, “The Revolt of the Senses.”

In its extremism, Krier's position was, of course, intentionally shocking, and in this regard too it bears affinities to Eisenman's committed and perennial avant-gardism. That the desire to return to the preindustrial world of the eighteenth century was more Luddite than merely nostalgic only gave it greater notoriety, heightened by Krier's talents as both consummate promoter and skilled delineator of his own ideas. (With respect to nostalgia, the opposite is true of Aldo Rossi, whose Chirico-esque recourse to *architettura razionale* was a form of mourning for a past that the Italian architect acknowledged could no longer return.) Moreover, the Krier-Culot politics of “anti-industrial resistance” were (and remain) fundamentally ambiguous as to whether the basic issue is social or aesthetic, that is, whether the criterion for the return to classicism is closer to Loos and Tessenow or to Schinkel and Ledoux.

This same ambiguity regarding means and ends also characterizes Krier's “scandalous” efforts over the years to rehabilitate the Nazi architecture of Albert Speer. To read a piece titled “Vorwärts, Kameraden, Wir müssen Zurück” (Forward, Comrades, We Must Go Back), originally delivered as an evening lecture at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in 1980 and then published in the journal *Oppositions*, one would think that Hitler's most heinous crime was to accelerate the process of building the autobahn in Germany. (Truth in journalism: my own debut as an architecture critic was provoked by listening to this lecture and writing a somewhat outraged response to it in the same issue of *Oppositions*.) Yet almost as troubling as Krier's effort to uncouple architectural style from architectural culture has been his assumption that the classical idea of architecture is synonymous with

some universal and eternal ideal of beauty to which “we” all subscribe—as if to say a painting by Raphael is, objectively speaking, more “beautiful” than one by Mondrian—and related to this, the suggestion that classicism is “by nature” a harmonious, morally regenerative form of architecture that springs from the “citizens” rather than from the power, wealth, and privilege of those who—often brutally—command it to be built.

Such unpleasant realities seem less pressing, to be sure, in Krier’s Atlantis project of 1986–88 for the island of Tenerife in the Canaries, in which the humanistic and arcadian ideal of social harmony, ecological balance, and formal perfection receives charming and lyrical expression. Nary an elevator building nor a car nor a computer monitor nor a cell phone mars the long-ago-far-away dreamworld of this resort town on a hill. Commissioned by a German couple as a meeting place for visionary thinkers, artists, and scholars, the project offered Krier an occasion to elaborate his theories about multiuse zoning, pedestrian circulation, antisprawl boundaries, humane scale, Camillo Sitte-inspired vistas and winding streets, and public space. Yet for those who are not willing to jettison their cell phones, Atlantis, like all utopian images, begs to be taken not literally—*pace* Krier—but rather as an evocative reminder and counterimage to the lamentable way things actually are.

Flashforward

It remains necessary to ask why—beyond the historical interest and admitted pleasure of unarchiving two delectable sets of drawings and artifacts—it is worth revisiting these particular projects and polemics of the 1970s and 1980s today. Isn’t the confrontation between these two architects famous for their “dangerously” opposing positions *déjà vu*? Isn’t, furthermore, the juxtaposition of Eisenman and Krier in the same exhibition gallery a characteristic tactic of an eclectic architectural program, with the effect that one argument neutralizes the other, a little like pouring cold milk into hot coffee?

One suspects that the answer to both questions is partly affirmative. Yet for all this, these two figures remain fascinating and authentic products of the architectural culture of the last forty years. As already suggested and frequently pointed out, they share many similarities: their capacities as polemicists and masters of publicity, their guru relationship to other architects, the uncompromising nature of their positions. They also mirror each other in the inherent contradictions their work embodies. Krier’s town of Poundbury, for example, and his role as the pied piper of New Urbanism more generally, attests to the difficulties of reconciling an idealistic desire to construct a communitarian way of life on a global scale with the elitism of the singular and privileged enclave as actually realized. Meanwhile, Eisenman’s projects, from his reconstructed armory at the Wexner Center in Ohio to the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin to, most recently, his project for the World Trade Center in New York, reflect the burden on a formalist aesthetic to respond to the representational demands of a semantically loaded (and highly politicized) program; thus the post-Auschwitz poetics of silence have tended at times to be rather noisy.

But the phenomenon of Eisenman and Krier must finally be comprehended as a symptomatic manifestation of a single historical dialectic. Both men emerged out of the disenchantment of late modern architecture, out of the syndrome that Rowe characterizes in his essay on Krier as “the conservatives of Modernism.” They represent, in short, diametric responses to the trauma of late capitalist development. It is no small paradox that Krier’s urban proposals, despite their anachronistic dress, sustain the original reformist project of modernism more than do Eisenman’s aesthetic experiments; while Eisenman’s work continues to confront the void of a post–World War II world of form without utopia with the alternative utopia of form itself. So each in his way combats architecture’s irrelevance in a world of economic and technological determinism and conducts a critical, passionate, and still poignant battle for its soul.

Eisenman and Krier:

A Conversation

This conversation was originally published in the February 1983 issue of *Skyline*, issued by Rizzoli International Publications for the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies. The interview was edited by Margot Jacqz.

PETER EISENMAN I believe you are one of the few architects who possess what could be called an architectural theology. Could you explain the tenets of this theology? How would you describe it in terms of the moral position that you seem to hold in relation to society and to the role of the architect?

LEON KRIER Because of the astounding material progress of the last centuries, many people are convinced that mankind, while growing older and stronger, has also become more intelligent. One forgets too easily that while units of muscle power can be combined to make ever more powerful machines, units of gray matter cannot be accumulated to create anything more intelligent than an individual brain. Intelligence and moral courage are neither desirable nor expandable beyond certain limits.

Philosophy and theology are the sciences of those limits, and therefore, they are extremely useful crutches in times of confusion: they help us with what we strive to understand but cannot possibly ever understand.

As far as the universal aspects of architecture and other subjects are concerned, they tell us what architecture must be but cannot possibly be. By extension, then, we understand architecture's means and ends and what our duties and pleasures may be. Philosophy and theology—as is true of any theoretical reflections—are not goals but mere instruments that allow us to clearly distinguish *universal ideas* in a confusion of *particular phenomena*; to separate what is eternal and what is temporal; more superficially, to know what is a principle and what is a deception. In times of decadence, only rare individuals take on the task of thinking. That is what I believe I have to do.

EISENMAN You said that one goal of theology is to define the realm of human ability in terms of doing and

thinking. But man has traditionally defined himself in terms of God and nature—that is, within a triadic cosmology. In these terms, theocentrism proposed a hierarchy with God as the mediator between man and nature; anthropocentrism proposed man as the mediator between God and nature; finally, biocentrism proposed nature as mediator. Today, with the potential for complete nuclear destruction of civilization, there is an objective technocentrism in which external forces outside of man's control have assumed a position in the system. It is no longer possible to return to an anthropocentric cosmology. That is a nostalgia for a hopeful future. Our theology must respond to new limits.

This is a simple reality that we have to talk about—not in architectural terms but, first, in theological terms. With these new limitations, we now have what I would call a "futureless present." I would accuse you of refusing to accept—or of not addressing—the present definition of man's situation in this new cosmology.

KRIER We cannot talk of a new cosmology when we can find only fragmented conceptions of life.

EISENMAN That, however, implies anarchy, which is not order.

KRIER Yes, it is. The more individual conceptions differ, the more they are the same; they have their fragmentary nature in common.

EISENMAN But the intermingling of fragments is a different philosophy than the traditional hierarchical philosophy, which evolved from a hierarchical understanding of the universe.

KRIER If I break a cup, I am left with fragments. I can re-create the cup by gluing the pieces together again. You would probably say that that is going back. That is absolutely correct, and that is what I am doing with architecture.

EISENMAN Our only recourse is to glue the cup back together?

KRIER Yes, I believe Plato's conception of ideas is very useful: the human brain can only conceive of and work with a limited number of ideas. Architecture and the city are one set of ideas, but with this limited set one can fabricate an infinite number of real buildings. There can be no building, no culture worth speaking of, without constant reference to these fundamental and simple ideas.

Skeptics believe that there are no universal ideas, only a multitude of facts and phenomena; that there is no morality, only individual mores. That is an attitude that allows you to look at the past and consume whatever you can see and grasp. It certainly does not help you to create objects or even to have decent manners.

EISENMAN I do not want to disagree with that. My point was that nature, the third pole of the cosmological triad, has changed. **Man has unleashed nature—maybe accidentally—and can no longer necessarily control it.** Modernism reflected individual anxiety and the person alienated from society. But today we have a society of people born after 1945 who subconsciously feel that there has been a fundamental change—a collective anxiety. What can be done when people are in fear of not living out their natural lives? How do you accommodate that collective terror?

One could say my "theology" is based on the fact that **I do not believe in the historicist view of history as continuous, with the past willing the present and predicting the future. I believe history is marked by stops and starts, ruptures.** During the Renaissance, or the Enlightenment, for example, or during the period of modern architecture, something happened, something changed. We are now, without question, in a period after modernism—a period with changed sensibilities.

The cup cannot be glued back together if there is no glue. The changed condition of nature has taken the glue away. I do not deny that the cup is there, the fragments are there, and even your will to glue it back together is there. I would argue, however, that you no longer have the option of gluing the cup back together

because either there is no water to put in it or there is no glue. That is what I call a change in the cosmology. Leon, no glue, no water: fragments.

KRIER The trouble with the broken cup is not the lack of glue but the lack of will to glue it.

EISENMAN The will exists.

KRIER No, it does not. Otherwise we would mend the pieces.

EISENMAN How? You cannot glue a cup together with will.

KRIER Ideas do not actually break. They may be forgotten and rediscovered. They are by nature perfect and indestructible. In the world of things, however, there can be no perfection and everything is destructible.

EISENMAN That is a classical notion. In a classical mode of thought there are only unitary ideas. But now, because the elements of cosmology are no longer the same, we cannot return to the spirit that motivated the will to wholeness; we must still acknowledge the existence of the fracture.

KRIER You are addressing here the existential questions posed by the last few generations. I was born after 1945 and I have no problems with "going back." I am not proposing to revive old problems and injustices, but to use the most intelligent and best solutions of the past. Ideas have no past and no future; they are ever present. "Going back" is only a manner of speaking. I am talking about the memory of worthwhile experiences and ideas.

EISENMAN But why do you not admit in your theology that there has been a change in cosmology? Why do you exclude a nonhierarchical view of the world, or say it is not possible?

KRIER This change is in everybody's mind, but it does not allow anyone to fabricate a work of art, let alone to build a city or cultivate the countryside in a worthwhile manner. The new cosmology has not created anything

worth dreaming about. The purpose of architecture is to make beautiful, solid, and comfortable buildings.

I am neither a doctor nor an analyst, but an architect and a legislator—a planner of cities. That is a very conservative occupation, in the same way that language is conservative. But compared to classical architecture, classical languages have deteriorated very little.

Classical languages communicate a limited set of similar—but not identical—ideas and phenomena. Each has a classical form, that is, a *best form*. For that very quality they should be conserved. But if there is very little poetry to be found, there is certainly no shortage of prose.

EISENMAN That is something very different. One reads the morning newspaper for the meaning of the words, the news; one then throws the paper away. On the other hand, when one reads Shakespeare one already knows the narrative; the play is read for the pleasure of the sensual nature of the words, their resonance.

Your theology is acceptable only because you are able to transform words into poetry through your drawings. Others may agree with you, but may not even be able to draw. This is the issue. Alberti put the question quite clearly. Anyone can learn to pull a bow back, but unless you know where to shoot the arrow it does not matter. But you could also argue that although you may know where to shoot the arrow, unless you can pull the bow back, the arrow may not land where you want. Two people could espouse the same theology and each could make a building, yet the buildings would not necessarily be equal. For example, Quinlan Terry does not make good buildings even though his theology is the same as yours. The same is true of Maurice Culot. His theology is similar, but his architecture is uninteresting. So the question arises: as an architect, is it better to be a poet with no theology or is it better to be a theologian with no poetry?

KRIER Quinlan Terry and Maurice Culot are among a very small number of friends I can trust almost blindly, whatever our differences in taste. In times of confusion we may all be invalids, but looking at our wounds is no

cure. I do not overestimate the importance of philosophy, theology, or any kind of theoretical endeavor. They are useful crutches for invalids, but they are not goals in themselves.

A theory about eating is not necessary if you know how and what to eat. You would need such a theory only if one day people began to force food indiscriminately into any of their orifices.

EISENMAN I do not believe that Maurice Culot and Quinlan Terry are architects. They do nothing to transform material, that is, they do not transform language into any kind of art. Their work remains empty of poetics. They may be theologians, philosophers, social scientists, even cultural commentators—but they are not architects. Leon, what matters is that although you and Culot may say the same things, you can draw and he cannot.

KRIER No, Peter, and I do not see why you should want to applaud me at the expense of my friends. We are not talking here about subtleties, but about what is right and wrong. People must have a good command of language in order to speak properly; among those who do so, there are very few poets. Architects have first to learn the rules of their art before even thinking about being poets. The art of building is concerned with creating an environment that is pleasing to all our senses without being alienating to any one of them. Architecture is not about expressing existential anxiety or opinions of any kind.

EISENMAN But the history of great cities has always been about the expression of culture, not the making of "the good life." Architects of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not think of themselves as making pleasing buildings so much as expressing a condition of man—or in contemporary terms, the *zeitgeist*.

KRIER Let us not discuss the *zeitgeist*. It is not our concern. The *zeitgeist* is there despite us; the more clever we think we are in dealing with it, the more stupid we may one day appear.

EISENMAN You are right, the zeitgeist is none of our business. The difference between signification, representation, and replication is important. If one were to rebuild the Parthenon today in Charlottesville, it would be a replica of the Parthenon; it would not necessarily represent the spirit or the attitude of the Parthenon but merely reproduce the structure. If one were to build a building that was a transformation of the Parthenon but still contained recognizable symbolic imagery of the Parthenon, it would be an example of representation. One could also build a rectilinear building with formal characteristics integral to the Parthenon but without any representative qualities; it would signify something similar to that which the Parthenon signifies—that is, its inherent architectural relationships. Representation deals with expression and speaking, and signification deals with the innate structure of things that enables them to be spoken. I would like to argue that what Quinlan Terry does—at best—is represent, often replicate, and very rarely signify or concern himself with the nature of signification. An architect should take the classical, if you want, and then in some way transform it to address the problem of signification—because that is what architecture is about.

KRIER Your definitions make sense, but the issues you raise cannot be the obsessive concern of a classical architect who builds. Quinlan Terry, for example, is not involved with these questions, because he uses very accurately a language that had resolved all the problems of representation and signification long before he began to learn it.

EISENMAN Do you mean, therefore, that he is of no interest to theologians and vice versa?

KRIER For Quinlan Terry, the act of building has a symbolic dimension and a strong redeeming effect because even if he builds isolated structures, they are the bricks with which he is building a beautiful world. On top of that, he is using a system that has made its mark on cities and landscapes for two thousand years virtu-

ally without interruption. From that perspective, forty years of modern barbarism are a trifle. Indeed, there is no need to be as pessimistic as I am. My own maxim is "Everything or nothing, here and now and wherever I can see." That probably sounds rather fanatical—and it is. Nowadays I get extremely impatient with any kind of nonsense. I have to consider the city in its global cohesion, and if the legislation that rules the city is nonsensical, I feel that that is where I have to begin. Only in that way can the constant rebuilding, repairing, and rearranging of cities happen in an orderly and pleasing way.

But I would defend Quinlan Terry above and beyond all this, for he is virtually the only living architect in whose buildings I could live.

EISENMAN As a Jew and an "outsider," I have never felt a part of that "classical" world. I feel that modernism was the product of an alienated culture with no roots suddenly being brought into a bourgeois situation. In other words, modernists were suddenly out of the ghettos and in the cities. The philosophy that would abolish modernism proposes that if we return the world to the way it was before the alienated individuals took over, everything would be worked out. I am not convinced. When you say it is all worked out, I still feel like an outsider.

KRIER The problems of Jewish intellectuals are of no interest to architecture as a fine art.

EISENMAN Nevertheless, it is difficult for me to have a discussion with you when I hear you say it is all worked out.

KRIER Schinkel said that each epoch has its own expression in the fine arts. What is too often forgotten is what he went on to say, that progress had been so great in the fine arts in the past that it was virtually impossible to improve upon the system. Classical architecture as an artistic system has reached the typological and morphological perfection that the human species reached millions of years ago. Humanity continues to reproduce the same types of beings.

You will agree that however ancient that genetic system may be, it needs no improvement; any innovation in it is an aberration. At the same time, each human being is always a completely novel, unique, and irreducible individual.

Our purpose as artists and architects is to understand the universal system and order that allows us to create objects of fine art just as nature creates *individuals*. That is what defines classicism: it is the fundamental system that allows us to create objects of *timeless beauty*.

EISENMAN Classicism is the representation of the idea of purity found in the natural world. As I said before, it is not possible today to represent the classical idea of purity—the harmony of man and nature—because biological and physical forces unleashed by man have destroyed that ideal condition. One can no longer use classical means for representation because what they represent no longer exists. All one can do is replicate classical forms; but they are significant of nothing.

KRIER The bomb carried in the human mind is much more dangerous than an actual one. To forbid good architecture because we live in terrible times is absurd.

EISENMAN I think a beautiful building is a modern building.

KRIER That is a contradiction in terms.

EISENMAN Who is to judge?

KRIER You!

EISENMAN Then there are no judges?

KRIER One must be one's own judge because other judges are unreliable.

EISENMAN But you once said that people who design modern buildings will probably burn in hell. You then become their judge.

KRIER Yes. Rather, they force others to live in their hell.

EISENMAN How can you know that? Who puts you in touch with those facts?

KRIER I just observe how and where architects live; they rarely live in their own buildings or in new towns. That is only a fine point.

EISENMAN Why is architecture about living in buildings? Building concerns shelter, construction, defying the laws of gravity, providing accommodation. Building can solve many functions—whether it is a building as an ocean liner, a building as a castle, or a building as a log cabin. A work of architecture is necessarily a building, but in itself a building is not a significant condition to define architecture. That is, since a building is not architecture, architecture must be something more than building, in the same way that literature is more than journalism. But if we would agree that people do not *need* to live in architecture but in buildings, then what is architecture if it is not a necessary part of living?

KRIER It is, obviously, not enough to have fine houses; a city also needs temples and monuments. Architecture is not concerned with the private realm. It shapes the public domain, the common world.

EISENMAN Would you agree that if we built a "public" wall, anything could be clipped on behind it?

KRIER Even if it becomes a public enterprise, housing is not a subject for "architecture"; it is not monumental. Twisted minds wanted housing to be the "monument of the twentieth century." But housing is the sum of private functions that even in great number become no more interesting when put on public display. There is nothing grand, ceremonious, or important about housing. That is why its monumentalization is always painfully boring, meaningless, and false.

EISENMAN Why not make a public facade, like a colonnade, for those private functions? For example, you would probably agree that the Ludwigstrasse is a pretty good street. Do you care what goes on behind the facades of the Ludwigstrasse?

KRIER Yes, very much so. The Ludwigstrasse is a beautiful but deadly place. You cannot take only one detail of the classical world and dispense with all the rest. You cannot have just beautiful facades with industrial nonsense going on behind them. In the classical world, just as in the natural world, each idea, each object, each creature has a place that is both sufficient and necessary. That, of course, does not exclude accidents, catastrophes, and illness.

EISENMAN You said that housing in the public realm is not important. You were saying that since private functions cannot have a public face, they have been reduced to anonymity.

KRIER The artistic and material means for sheltering private and public functions must of necessity be different. All the individual parts must add up to a harmonious whole, which is the city. This does not mean that even a modest structure should not be beautiful in its own way.

Today's fragments unfortunately do not add up to anything but an assemblage of spare parts, as Jaquelin Robertson puts it. These parts may in some cases be beautiful, but if you dismember a beautiful *individual*, for example, you will have a dead body—however ravishing its pieces may still be.

EISENMAN Since the French Revolution there have been no "beautiful" cities. Before the French Revolution, in a hierarchical society, someone was responsible for the public well-being. Today that public domain is characterized merely by the accumulation of private well-being and has nothing to do with the *res publica*. How do you reconcile the fact that a social revolution—to which you subscribe—unwittingly was compelled to destroy the beauty and order that you so cherish?

KRIER Revolutions are events of violent change. I would not subscribe to any such enterprise.

EISENMAN You would support the results of that social revolution.

KRIER I don't really see what good came of it. It was the

start of two hundred years of industrial massacre of a moral and material kind. The grandeur of its moral ideas has faded terribly as a consequence. It is certainly pointless to regret the unavoidable, but then to applaud the inevitable is foolish and irresponsible.

It is interesting that authority has shifted from the universal and cultural to the material and industrial level. That shift has been lethal for the fine arts and for the moral foundations of artists' authority. Beyond that, artists have not only been bled of their authority but continue to sacrifice it whenever they can on the altars of industrial ideology. When architects gave up their historic role, their authority was absorbed by politicians and technicians. Those people have no interest and no capacity to promote architecture.

EISENMAN One of my primary concerns as an architect is to find out what architecture is. You at least seem certain of what architecture is—that its purpose is to create pleasurable environments. I would argue that that is the purpose of *building*. For me, architecture is the creation of significant environments that are more than merely pleasurable, more than what is necessary. In that way, the realm of architecture is totally useless in a utilitarian, industrial, and progressive sense. Then I would argue that representation and replication of these classical forms do not create significance. I would argue that since the role for the "Greek" temple no longer exists, the use of a classical order deriving from the Greek temple has nothing to do with signification and nothing to do with architecture. I would go so far as to say that it is the *only* thing that has nothing to do with architecture. Everything *except* what you stand for could be possible in architecture. Since your initial values—classical order—are associated with a function that no longer exists, you can only make a representation of that function. Until we find a system of signification related to the order of current symbolic needs, we will not have an architecture.

KRIER You are caught in art historical categories. The Greek temple is but one realization of the idea of the "temple."

EISENMAN It also refers to an idea of classical order.

KRIER Accumulation of capital is the highest purpose of industrial capitalism. All other human and natural values are subordinate to that role. Consequently, an abstract world is created full of abstract things, however paradoxical that may sound. However big that mountain of money may one day become, it will not, in fact, be more real but more and more abstract and valueless. In contrast, cultivation of the fine arts results in the accumulation of real and beautiful objects. Beautiful cities are literally concrete accumulations of human work inspired by moral ideas. Such beautiful objects and buildings are not only symbols and representations of values but are themselves moral values based on a universal plan.

EISENMAN Who is to say that a universal plan should take the form of the classical city? The Kantian idea of the thing in itself, the will to signify, has never had a preference for the classical. You will it to be so.

KRIER Again, you are using art historical qualifications. The classical idea does not belong to any one period. It is quite simply the idea of the *best possible*.

EISENMAN The best? It means a certain kind of order.

KRIER It means the *best possible*.

EISENMAN "Best" is not what we are talking about. Classical does not come with an *a priori* value judgment. Maybe good, maybe better, but not necessarily "best."

KRIER That is what it means. Classical is what belongs to the highest class, the highest form, the highest standard of excellence. There is no point in saying more.

EISENMAN There is also no best without worst; it is a relative term. The very nature of best means there must be disagreement about it. I am allowed, therefore, to disagree with the classical connotation of "best." If someone says to you that he is doing his best, although it may not be classical in a stylistic sense, and you say, "Well, I do not happen to like the style," then you are being the art historian.

KRIER Let me use an example. This object standing between us may fulfill the purpose of the table. It does not, however, withstand a critical glance for more than a second. Not only is it ugly, it is also quite uncomfortable: its edges, its surface, its legs are unpleasant to look at and to touch. A classical table, on the other hand, could be used and studied by a critical person for three thousand years without ever inspiring frustration as to its construction and appearance. Massimo Scolari has said that beautiful objects are the only friends that will never betray you. That is the best possible definition of the classical world.

EISENMAN He is one of the best architects I know. I think that you agree. Yet he does not do what you propose. His work, more than that of any other architect, seems to describe the new sensibility I am talking about. He is attempting to deal with the idea of imminent destruction. How do you feel about the seeming contradiction between your theology and his work?

KRIER Scolari's paintings are not projects of what he wants the world to be like. He is neither a monster nor a sadist, but as a poet he observes what could well be the unavoidable. His paintings are beautiful illustrations of a world in total disarray, beautiful and awe-inspiring illustrations of industrial devastation and exhaustion.

EISENMAN But I also think his paintings are architecture. They are images of the fact of an immanent present, that is, the future today—the present as end, not the future as end. As a statement his work comes closer to expressing what architecture is about—not *should be* about, but *is* about—than your work.

KRIER You may well be right, Peter, but so help us God.