Foreword

Neil Smith

This translation into English of Henri Lefebvre's classic if contested text is long overdue. *La Révolution urbaine* first appeared in 1970, in the aftermath of the May 1968 uprising in Paris. Cities around the world from Detroit to Tokyo, Prague to Mexico City, were the scene of major revolts, connected less through any organizational affiliation than through political empathy linking highly diverse struggles, and as the 1960s culminated in worldwide challenges to capitalism, war, racism, patriarchy, imperialism, and the alienation of modern urban life, the book was inevitably received as a political testament to the possibilities for fundamental political and social change. Although the "revolution" of 1968, as it has come to be seen, ultimately failed, the appeal to urban revolution captured the aspirations of the period, and nowhere more than in Paris; it was as realistic as it was anticipatory, and the book became a pivotal if controversial intellectual text on the European and Latin American left. Along with some of Lefebvre's earlier work, it put the urban on the agenda as an explicit locus and target of political organizing.

Most surprising, perhaps, is that despite the turbulent

circumstances of its writing and publication, and especially despite Lefebvre's direct involvement in the events of the time, *La Révolution urbaine* is remarkably sober, politically if not always philosophically, avoiding both the wild effervescence of "the moment," as Lefebvre would have put it, and the suicidal agony of defeat. It expresses an inveterate hopefulness and openness toward the future that has often been hard to sustain in the three decades since its publication but which characterizes Lefebvre's philosophically induced intellectual and political optimism. At the same time, as an examination of this careful translation attests, this is no mere historical document. In some ways even more than when it was first published, it bears a strong sense of political immediacy and contemporary relevance. Lefebvre was seeing things at the end of the 1960s that many of us, often with his help, came to see clearly only in more recent years and now are still discovering. It is worth highlighting some of these issues by way of providing a few signposts to the text.

But first some biographical context. Born at the turn of the twentieth century in a small Pyrenean village in southern France, Henri Lefebvre came to political consciousness amid the horrors of World War I and the promises of the Russian Revolution. In the early 1920s he moved to Paris to study at the Sorbonne and became engulfed in an extraordinary creative, political, cultural, and intellectual ferment that mixed avant-garde artists with communists and a new breed of young radical philosophers. The eclectic range of influences on Lefebvre's political and intellectual development derived first and foremost from this period as he devoured Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, among others, as well as the emerging work of Heidegger. He joined the Communist Party in 1928, combining political activism with intense writing that, across the span of his ninety years, would eventually yield an astonishing string of book-length philosophical, political, and sociological studies. An emerging intellectual figure by the eve of World War II, he was forced from Paris and from his university post following the Nazi invasion and he lived out the war as a Resistance fighter in southern France.

Despite becoming one of its most heralded intellectuals, Lefebvre's relationship with the Communist Party was testy at best, and, as the party's Stalinism retrenched with the cold war closing in, he chafed more and more at the lines it took. As with so many others, his end came after the 1956 Khrushchev report unveiled the authoritarian violence and corruption of Stalin's regime; after an unsuccessful attempt to reform a recalcitrant party he was expelled in 1958. Over the next few years he published two books on Marx and two selections of Marx's work, but he also turned his attention to a series of questions that interested him deeply but on which the Communist Party leadership had often frowned. Via the themes of ideology, alienation, and everyday life, he returned to a long-standing concern with rural sociology and also picked up an earlier, broader, critical analysis of the quotidian in an effort to explore the political fabric and fabrication of the everyday. Although the rural focus continued, by the mid-1960s he turned his attention to the urban everyday, announced by *Le Droit à la ville* (The right to the city), still untranslated in its entirety into English. Between 1966 and 1974 he produced, in addition to several other titles, no fewer than eight books devoted to understanding the urban and, more broadly, the production of space (as he put it). "From Heraclitus to Hegel to Marx," Lefebvre once observed, "dialectical thinking has been bound up with time," and although his effort was most focused in this period, a central theme of Lefebvre's lifework involved the attempt to rethink the dialectic in terms of space. If, as Foucault once commented, the nineteenth-century obsession with history brought a "menacing glaciation of the world," Lefebvre sought to reinvigorate our grasp of modern capitalism by squeezing it through the neglected sieve of space. Along with

La Production de l'espace (1974; English translation, 1991), *The Urban Revolution* stands as the most enduring exploration from this period. It was and remains *the* pathbreaking analytical work connecting urban research not just with marxist theory but with social theory and philosophy, broadly conceived.

To appreciate the novelty of what Lefebvre was trying to do it is important to recall that urban research in the 1960s was dramatically undertheorized. Throughout the social sciences and especially in sociology, urban analysis was largely descriptive. Where it aspired to theory, most notably in the work of the Chicago school, which remained influential into the 1960s, or in the case of social ecology, urban research relied more on empirical generalizations than on theory per se. Innovations in social theory that helped codify the social sciences after World War I (the work of Max Weber, Freud, Malinowski, the Frankfurt school) largely avoided an explicit concern with the urban, even if the earlier theoretical work of Durkheim and certainly Simmel did help to frame a generally untheoretical urban sociology. Louis Wirth, for example, writing about "urbanism as a way of life," applied Durkheim's social positivism to advance the themes of the Chicago school. Questions of housing, industrial organization, segregation, or community development certainly arose in the social sciences but were generally framed in technocratic fashion according to the impress of liberal policy requirements. Marxist theory, constrained by no such injunction, provided little alternative: many marxists rejected the notion that the urban represented a specific social realm, and the postwar Stalinism of the communist parties was openly hostile to the proposal of an identifiable urban regime, arguing instead that the urban represented a superstructural appurtenance rooted in the basal social and economic forces and relations of production. This was Lefebvre's primary target. By focusing on what he identified as the urban revolution,

he sought to turn this state of affairs on its head. As late as the 1960s it was a novel proposition that the urban had to be theorized: "The expression 'urban society,'" he says, "meets a theoretical need." At the same time he insisted that when it came to processes of urbanization, it made little sense to separate the experiences of capitalism and "socialism," as found "on the ground." In this sense, more than a decade after he disavowed party membership, *The Urban Revolution* represents a forceful rebuttal of the closed-mindedness of the cold war French communist party.

By "urban revolution," Lefebvre sought to connote a far more profound change in social organization than that symbolized by the momentary urban revolts of the 1960s, much as these were symptomatic of this larger picture. "Urban revolution" identifies a long historical shift, from an agricultural to an industrial to an urban world, according to Lefebvre's account, but it also captures a shift in the internal territorial form of the city, from the originary political city through the mercantile, then industrial, city to the present "critical phase," the harbinger of a certain globalization of the urban. Integral with these shifts, the image of the city also transforms, as do the concept of the urban and the ideology of urbanism. Long before the notion of "postindustrial society" became popularized in the 1970s, Lefebvre is rightly critical of the intent of such a label, yet at the same time his central argument is that the problematic of industrialization, which has dominated capitalist societies for more than two centuries, is increasingly superseded by the urban: "the urban problematic becomes predominant." The political crisis of 1968, he suggests, was more profoundly a crisis of urban society than a crisis of capitalist industrialism.

For English-language readers, one of the remarkable aspects of this book is Lefebvre's engagements with a broad range of social theorists whose work during the 1960s subsequently became influential in Anglo-American circles. Not

all of these encounters are obvious or well referenced, but all are implicitly if not explicitly critical. Somewhat elliptically, Lefebvre appropriates Althusser's notion of "continents" of knowledge but immediately launches into a critical discussion of ideological "blind fields," before then using this topographic metaphor to frame the temporal transition from agrarian to industrial to urban worlds. His discussion of heterotopy clearly engages Foucault. Where Foucault's heterotopias are evoked almost randomly in relation to time and space—cemeteries, malls, rugs, brothels, colonies, gardens—Lefebvre envisaged heterotopias in a more critical register, rooting them in a sense of political and historical deviance from social norms. The archetypal heterotopias for Lefebvre are the places of renegade commercial exchange, politically and geographically independent from the early political city: caravansaries, fairgrounds, suburbs. Less successfully, in an oblique effort to distinguish scales of sociospatial reality, Lefebvre differentiates between the "global," "mixed," and "private" levels, and draws on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (but with Heidegger clearly hovering over the text) to designate the private as the "level of habiting." In the process he insists on a distinction between the place and process of habiting: "habiting" takes precedence over habitat or habitus. His discussion of the "blind field" of ideology, together with references to revolution in the streets, continues a long-term dialogue with the Situationists, particularly engaging Guy Debord's *Society and the Spectacle,* published a year earlier. Blind fields for Lefebvre are places cum practices that obscure constitutive sociospatial relations.

Much as *The Urban Revolution* expresses the rich intellectual and political ferment of Paris in the period, it also represents the unfolding of Lefebvre's own thinking. Many of the formulations in this text can be seen as precursors to arguments that are more fully developed and explored in *The Production of Space,* published six years later, and more

familiar to English-speaking audiences. The discussion of heterotopy fades but not that of utopia, while the concern with "habiting" broadens into a much denser exploration of spatial practice and form. The concern with urbanism as an ideological blind field is likewise broadened into an interrogation of spatial ideologies; urban practice becomes a subset of spatial practice. And there is a clear continuity between the evolution from a political to a commercial to an industrial urbanity on the one hand and on the other the historical transition posited in *The Production of Space,* from absolute space to historical, abstract, and ultimately differential space. The continuities between these texts are real, but so too are the discontinuities. A political immediacy in particular marks *The Urban Revolution* as a quite different text from the more abstract and more expansive work of a few years later.

Whereas space came alive in early-twentieth-century art, physics, and mathematics, in social theory and philosophy it was a quite different story. Space there was more often synonymous with rigidity, immobility, stasis; space itself had become a blind field. For Lefebvre, by contrast, space holds the promise of liberation: liberation from the tyranny of time apart from anything else, but also from social repression and exploitation, from self-imprisoning categories—liberation *into* desire. Space is radically open for Lefebvre; he refuses precisely the closure of space that so dominated western thinking and in some circles continues to do so. Only when we pause to reflect on the radical closure of space represented by contemporary financial capitalists' visions of globalization, or left-wing parodies of the same, does the genius of Lefebvre's spatial insistence become clear. When *The Urban Revolution* was originally written, the world was certainly more open to change, but it was far less open to seeing political change in spatial terms. The very shift in political thinking to embrace a spatialized view of the world,

in significant part due to Lefebvre's work, makes it difficult today to see how genuinely iconoclastic this position was. *The Urban Revolution* is a paean to the space of the city and to the possibilities of revolutionary social change that comes from the streets.

But this radical openness comes with costs attached. Whereas Lefebvre is unrivaled in the analysis of the circulation of signs, capital, meanings, and ideas into and out of urban space and exploring the possibilities for political change that result, he is less adept at ferreting out how certain social meanings become fixed, however temporarily, in and as space and place. In the present text he makes a synchronic distinction between "global," "mixed," and "private" levels of society, which are roughly equated with the state, the urban, and "habiting," respectively. In contemporary parlance this represents a halting effort at what might now be called a "politics of scale," but Lefebvre's reluctance, in deference to the openness of space, to allow this production of "levels" to crystallize into anything approaching coherent spatial entities forecloses our understanding of the political processes by which social assumptions are written into the scaled cartography of everyday places. In *The Production of Space,* intent on a unified science of space, he tackled this issue again, but backed away from the discussion of levels. Instead he proposed, as part of a well-known conceptual triad, the notion of "representational spaces." Although "differential space" becomes Lefebvre's spatial code for socialism, the future, always coiled in the belly of the capitalist beast, his philosophical insistence on the openness of space allows little hint at all about how that differentiation of space is made and remade. Yet the architectonics of scale, as he might have put it, become the most vibrant technology of spatial differentiation: the spatial arbiters of what gets empowered and what gets contained.

Lefebvre's treatment of nature is nowhere near as central

to his argument, but it does work as a kind of counterpoint to his sense of space. In the context of the late 1960s, Lefebvre was well ahead of his time in his willingness not only to take environmental questions seriously but also to theorize nature while criticizing the emerging environmental movement. Quite unlike the radical openness that characterizes his treatment of space, the treatment of nature is less nuanced. For Lefebvre the transition from agriculture to industry brings a fetishism of nature at the same time that nature is subjected to unprecedented ravages. The transition to urbanization brings a further shrinkage of nature, while the signs of nature, by contrast, proliferate; the steady, violent death of nature is matched by an obsessive "ideological naturalization" of society and the parodic reproduction of nature as denatured "open spaces," parks, gardens, images of femininity. In clear contradistinction to his treatment of space, nature for Lefebvre seems radically closed as a venue for political change. Whether this closure of nature drew from his early and enduring experience with the southern French peasantry and the steady erosion of peasant life or whether it simply continued a prejudice of certain narrow readings of marxism is not clear, but this putative connection would seem to cry out for an engagement with some of the contemporaneous work of Raymond Williams. In any case, the making of nature, unlike space, represents a cause for lament, even as he criticizes various romanticisms of the environmental movement. Space in the end retains an optimistic Hegelian a priorism vis-à-vis nature. Philosophically, the (unfulfilled) promise of Einstein's relativity theory, namely a recombination of space and matter in favor of the philosophical primacy of the latter, remains unglimpsed.

But it would be a regrettable mistake if *The Urban Revolution* were to be read simply through the lenses of Lefebvre's later work, which adopts the rubric of space more explicitly. The book's initial reception predated that work. Indeed, it

might be suggested that in the English-language world *The Urban Revolution* has suffered insofar as several widely read critiques quickly saw the light of day in the 1970s, more than a quarter century before the book was finally translated, and these have established a certain pattern of response. By the same token, the prominence of these critiques has also heightened the anticipation for this English translation. With greater or lesser amounts of respect, Lefebvre's provocative thesis that the "urban problematic" not only globalizes itself but also supplants industrialization as the motive force of historical change was quickly critiqued by two other of the most prominent urbanists of the twentieth century. A student of Lefebvre and a witness to the Paris spring of 1968, Manuel Castells responded immediately to *La Révolution urbaine,* and his critique was triple-barreled. In the first place he identified a certain romanticism in Lefebvre's sense that urban propinquity created a unique quotidian environment available for future reconstructions of sociability and desire. A philosophical utopianism, he suggested, undergirds the enterprise. Second, more generally and more decisively, Castells challenged the very presumption that "the urban" represented any kind of coherent scientific object available for study; the urban, for Castells, was at best an ideological construction, requiring desquamation rather than exaltation. Third, and most viscerally, Castells objected to the fact that Lefebvre's announcement of the urban revolution displaced marxist analyses of history, politics, and economics: implicitly reinstating the party line about base and superstructure (an argument often erroneously attributed to Marx), Castells complained that Lefebvre moves from a marxist analysis of the urban to an urbanist analysis of marxism (*La Question urbaine,* 1972; English translation, 1977).

The second critique came not from Paris but from Baltimore. Completing a book that affected English-language urban social science much as *La Révolution urbaine* did in

France and elsewhere, David Harvey, recognizing both the importance of Lefebvre's text and the critical convergence with his own work, engages Lefebvre in the conclusion to *Social Justice and the City* (1973). For Harvey, despite the broad commonality of effort with Lefebvre, it was simply unrealistic that the contradictions between urbanism and industrial capitalism are now resolved in favor of the urban. Where Castells deployed a structuralist critique fashioned over a blueprint of marxism, Harvey came at Lefebvre with a political economic critique of the sort that typified (not least because of Harvey's own efforts) Anglo-American marxism after the 1960s. Harvey was certainly sympathetic to Lefebvre's assault on party dogma, but for him industrial capitalism continues to create the conditions for urbanization, rather than the other way around, and the surplus value produced by capital accumulation, and especially its mode of circulation, is the raw material out of which urban change crystallizes. Urbanization here is the excrescence of the circulation of capital. The global spread of urbanism, he concedes, is real, but the circuit of industrial capitalism still predominates over that of property capital devoted to urbanization.

The present translation comes at a time when Lefebvre is gone and both Castells and Harvey have significantly developed their ideas, but these critiques remain relevant both vis-à-vis the text itself and as regards our understanding of twenty-first-century capitalism. Castells has long since moved on from the structuralism that drove his early critique, and Harvey has engaged critically and decisively with the critiques of structuralism that were hatching in Lefebvre's work, as well as with postmodernism, with which neither he nor Lefebvre had much sympathy.

Castells's accusation of utopianism is, as readers will find out, precisely aimed yet, especially in the present context, off target. One of the strengths of Lefebvre, especially when

viewed with the benefit of three decades of hindsight and in the context of a would-be twenty-first-century American imperium, is his indefatigable optimism that a different world is possible. This book stands as a thoroughly contemporary antidote to the sense that "there is no alternative" to capitalism, a notion popularized in the grim 1980s by British prime minister Margaret Thatcher and globalized in brutal form in the early twenty-first-century "war on terrorism" that, outside the blind field, is in actuality an endgame to the globalization of ruling-class U.S. power. That Lefebvre's political optimism appears to spring directly from his philosophy and from his social theory rather than from a detached, facile political ebullience is even more remarkable. As for the question whether the urban constitutes a real object of social science inquiry, the conditions of this critique seem to have been set by a strange convergence between a positivist social science that insists on an "object" of analysis and a structuralist reformulation of official marxism that embraces much the same presumption. To that end, Castells's critique mobilizes Louis Althusser against Lefebvre, yet even by the time of the English translation of *The Urban Question* in 1977, Castells was coming to see the formalism of this critique as excessive. On the other hand, the language of base and superstructure, which also appears in Lefebvre's text, seems by the beginning of the twenty-first century to be thankfully obsolete.

The remaining critique, that industrial capitalism still provides the framework for urbanization rather than the reverse, as Lefebvre claims, needs to be taken more seriously. If in quite different tones, Castells and Harvey in the early 1970s effectively agreed in their critique: urbanization, powerful as it was, in no way supplanted industrialization as the motor of capital accumulation. This insistence might be written off as merely a defense of marxist political economy: certainly Lefebvre's argument would seem to challenge the

theory of surplus value or at the very least to suggest that the historical development of capitalism increasingly circumscribes the validity of the theory in favor of something else. But that something else is never theorized. If Lefebvre is correct, it would presumably be important to know how the political economic transition from industrialization to urbanization operates. That is neither a rhetorical point nor is it a question that Lefebvre himself addresses in any systematic manner. His answer is oblique and incomplete. Thus by the time he wrote *The Production of Space* he had reconstructed the orthodox teleology of modes of production—primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism—into his evolution of space: absolute, historical, abstract, and differential spaces. Although it might seem like an obvious overture to argue that the supersession of industrialization by urbanization marks the transitional moment from abstract to differential space, in the language of the later work, Lefebvre resists this move. Instead, by the time he writes the four volume *De l'état* in the mid-1970s, he is barely concerned with urbanization and theorizes instead about (among other things) the globalization of the state. It is not at all clear how we are to fit together the victory of urbanization over industrialization, the production of space, and the globalization of the state.

Yet on several levels there is something empirically very appealing about Lefebvre's argument. First, purely in quantitative terms: As Lefebvre was writing *The Urban Revolution*, just over a third of the world's population was urbanized, according to United Nations statistics. By 2002 the figure was almost 50 percent. The most explosive growth has been in countries that in the 1960s would have been considered "Third World" but that have now undergone perhaps the most rapid industrialization and urbanization in history. Between 1970 and 2000 Mexico City grew from a population of 8.8 million to 18.1 million. Similarly, São Paulo went from

8.3 million to 18 million. Both have superseded New York City. Bombay (Mumbai) grew in the same period from 6.2 million to 16.1 million, and is projected to supersede the New York metropolitan area by 2005. Only Tokyo/Yokohama is larger than these three rapidly growing metropolises. The language of world cities and global cities emerged in the 1980s, but already in 1968, prior to most of this explosive urban growth, we find Lefebvre talking explicitly about "world cities" (in fact, he attributes the concept to Mao). But there is more than simply a quantitative aspect to the dominance of the urban, and here the relationship with industrialization is intense. The true global cities of the twenty-first century may well be those large metropolises that are simultaneously emerging as production motors not of national economies but of the global economy. Industrialization and urbanization are more, not less, interwoven, and the cities of most intense population growth are also those of greatest industrial expansion. In any case, as this language of world cities indicates, the transformation of urbanization is tied to transformations at the global scale captured, however ideologically, in the language of globalization: as Lefebvre sensed, the evident quantitative growth of urban areas does indeed express a much more complex shift.

Most urban growth has taken place at the periphery of the world's larger cities, whether as functionally integrated suburban development, industrial expansion, or burgeoning squatter settlements and favelas. But something symptomatic is happening in urban centers at the same time. Lefebvre remarks on the gentrification ("embourgeoisement") of urban centers, but that process, too, has changed dramatically since the 1960s. There are of course significant large-scale precursors, such as Hausmann in Paris in the nineteenth century, but the contemporary experience of gentrification dates to the post–World War II period and is usually associated with small-scale renovation of neighborhoods that

had experienced major economic disinvestment. Since the 1980s, gentrification has become increasingly generalized as a strategy of global urban expansion. Central urban reconstruction increasingly integrates residential with all other kinds of land uses—offices, retail, recreation, transport—and is also increasingly integrated into not just the overall urban economy but into the global economy. A highly mobile global capital increasingly descends to and aspires to the remake of urban centers. At the same time there is a more seamless collaboration among property capital, the state, retail capital, and financial capital than at any previous time. This process has probably gone farthest in Europe, where neoliberal "urban regeneration" (a label Lefebvre would have abhorred as patently ideological) has become official urban policy in the European Union and in individual states as well as cities. The massive reconstruction along the Thames in London exemplifies the way in which gentrification generalized has become a highly significant part of the city's productive economy. Nor is this process restricted any longer to cities in Europe, North America, or Oceania. From Shanghai to Beirut, Kuala Lumpur to Bogotá, the reconstruction of urban centers has become the means of embedding the logics, threads, and assumptions of capital accumulation more deeply than ever in the urban landscape. One can see here a glimmering of the conceptual inversion Lefebvre poses between the industrial and the urban.

It is a deliberate part of Lefebvre's style to pose exaggerated opposites in order to force the dialectic forward. It is of course a style he shares with Hegel and Marx and many others. Different readers will surely interpret differently the argument that urbanization supplants industrialization and conclude differently about the veracity or usefulness of the argument. It may well be that in this stark form the argument is less useful than when seen as part of a larger tendency, a logical as much as historical movement with uncertain end.

Certainly this is how Lefebvre interpreted his own notion of "the complete urbanization of the world." The point was not that the planet was already fully urbanized and rurality forever gone but that the tendency toward that end was very powerful. The distinction between urbanization and industrialization may well be more important as a means to get us to recognize this point rather than as an enduring reality.

Finally, a word about Lefebvre's style. Evoking the diminutive name of the small genera of birds (titmice) and the exquisiteness of their gemlike eggs, the Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid once explained his own lifework: "My job, as I see it, has never been to lay a tit's egg, but to erupt like a volcano, emitting not only flame but a lot of rubbish." Without in any way indicting the quality of Lefebvre's work, I think, judging by the sixty-six books that pepper his life's work, that this French poet of social theory and philosophy must have approached his work in a similar fashion. At times, especially to English-speaking audiences, his writing can come across as a stream of philosophical consciousness that mixes coherent analytical agendas with fascinating diversions, apparently casual or completely intended, that might double back or end abruptly, before picking up the thread of the argument again—or stretching for a related thread that the reader must struggle to connect. Lefebvre is always suggestive, reaching, pushing his argument farther than he would later want to go in order to get a point out, less than direct, retracing steps, electing a different path. He always embraces a tension between rigor and fantasy, hard-nosed critique and political desire, which is why he is so exciting to read. He embodies the magic of a marxism liberated from dogma, yet this philosophical adventurousness also makes it fairly easy to find apparent paradoxes in his work. Recognizing that he rarely if ever provides a linear argument, these nonetheless have to be taken seriously, but there is a larger picture. Lefebvre actually gives us the braided complexity of the tit's

nest, paradoxical interweaving and all, together with a clutch of delicate eggs laid along the way. This present text has its share of diversions but it is also well directed. His dearest desire in this book is that the eggs laid would hatch and that the "urban problematic" would give way again to a new generation of urban revolutionaries and urban revolutions. But why, Lefebvre wants to know, have the eggs of urban revolution not hatched before?

The aftermath of 1968 tested Lefebvre's optimism. As with so many others, not just in Paris but around the world, he had thought that revolutionary change was at hand, and, defeated as they were, they were only half wrong. In the conclusion to this text Lefebvre makes a wistful comparison between Paris in 1968 and the extraordinary political, cultural, and social transformations that took place in Russia in the 1920s while the revolutionary moment remained alive. Such leaps of optimism are precisely what makes this text not simply contemporary but forward-looking. The tremendous creativity of Russia in this period has had to be destroyed and forgotten by those enforcing the "blind field"—before 1989 but especially afterward—in order to justify the global consummation of capitalism. But the globalization of everything, as Lefebvre might have put it, cannot possibly succeed. An antiglobalization movement that wants to build a new anticapitalist internationalism can take a lot of inspiration from the ferment in Russia in its pre-Stalinist days, but it can also learn a lot from Lefebvre's insistence on urban revolution and the prospect of a globalized creativity, urban and otherwise, delinked from the effects of a ubiquitous economic and ideological slavery that Lefebvre understood as so deadening, but which he knew could never win.

1 || From the City to Urban Society

I'll begin with the following hypothesis: Society has been completely urbanized. This hypothesis implies a definition: An *urban society* is a society that results from a process of complete urbanization. This urbanization is virtual today, but will become real in the future.

The above definition resolves any ambiguity in the use of our terms. The words "urban society" are often used to refer to any city or urban agglomeration: the Greek polis, the oriental or medieval city, commercial and industrial cities, small cities, the megalopolis. As a result of the confusion, we have forgotten or overlooked the social relationships (primarily relationships of production) with which each urban type is associated. These so-called urban societies are often compared with one another, even though they have nothing in common. Such a move serves the underlying ideologies of *organicism* (every urban society, viewed on its own, is seen as an organic "whole"), *continuism* (there is a sense of historical continuity or permanence associated with urban society), and *evolutionism* (urban society is characterized by different

periods, by the transformation of social relations that fade away or disappear).

Here, I use the term "urban society" to refer to the society that results from industrialization, which is a process of domination that absorbs agricultural production. This urban society cannot take shape conceptually until the end of a process during which the old urban forms, the end result of a series of *discontinuous* transformations, burst apart. An important aspect of the theoretical problem is the ability to situate the discontinuities and continuities with respect to one another. How could any absolute discontinuities exist without an underlying continuity, without support, without some inherent process? Conversely, how can we have continuity without crises, without the appearance of new elements or relationships?

The specialized sciences (sociology, political economy, history, human geography) have proposed a number of ways to characterize "our" society, its reality and deep-seated trends, its actuality and virtuality. Terms such as "industrial and postindustrial society," "the technological society," "the society of abundance," "the leisure society," "consumer society," and so on have been used. Each of these names contains an element of empirical or conceptual truth, as well as an element of exaggeration and extrapolation. Instead of the term "postindustrial society"—the society that is born of industrialization and succeeds it—I will use "urban society," a term that refers to tendencies, orientations, and virtualities, rather than any preordained reality. Such usage in no way precludes a critical examination of contemporary reality, such as the analysis of the "bureaucratic society of controlled consumption."

Science is certainly justified in formulating such theoretical hypotheses and using them as a point of departure. Not only is such a procedure current among the sciences, it is necessary. There can be no science without theoretical hypotheses. My hypothesis, which involves the so-called social sciences, is based on an epistemological and methodological approach. Knowledge is not necessarily a copy or reflection, a simulacrum or simulation of an object that is *already* real. Nor does it necessarily construct its object for the sake of a theory that predates knowledge, a theory of the object or its "models." In my approach, the object is included in the hypothesis; the hypothesis comprehends the object. Even though this "object" is located outside any (empirical) fact, it is not fictional. We can assume the existence of a *virtual object*, urban society; that is, a *possible object*, whose growth and development can be analyzed in relation to a process and a praxis (practical activity). Needless to say, such a hypothesis must be validated. There is, however, no shortage of arguments and proofs to sustain it, from the simplest to the most complex.

For example, agricultural production has lost all its autonomy in the major industrialized nations and as part of a global economy. It is no longer the principal sector of the economy, nor even a sector characterized by any distinctive features (aside from underdevelopment). Even though local and regional features from the time when agricultural production dominated haven't entirely disappeared, it has been changed into a form of industrial production, having become subordinate to its demands, subject to its constraints. Economic growth and industrialization have become self-legitimating, extending their effects to entire territories, regions, nations, and continents. As a result, the traditional unit typical of peasant life, namely the village, has been transformed. Absorbed or obliterated by larger units, it has become an integral part of industrial production and consumption. The concentration of the population goes hand in hand with that of the mode of production. The *urban fabric* grows, extends its borders, corrodes the residue of agrarian life. This expression, "urban fabric," does not narrowly define

the built world of cities but all manifestations of the dominance of the city over the country. In this sense, a vacation home, a highway, a supermarket in the countryside are all part of the urban fabric. Of varying density, thickness, and activity, the only regions untouched by it are those that are stagnant or dying, those that are given over to "nature." With the decline of the village life of days gone by, agricultural producers, "farmers," are confronted with the *agricultural town.* Promised by Khrushchev to the Soviet peasants, agricultural towns have appeared in various places around the world. In the United States, aside from certain parts of the South, peasants have virtually disappeared, and we find islands of farm poverty alongside islands of urban poverty. As this global process of industrialization and urbanization was taking place, the large cities exploded, giving rise to growths of dubious value: suburbs, residential conglomerations and industrial complexes, satellite cities that differed little from urbanized towns. Small and midsize cities became dependencies, partial colonies of the metropolis. In this way my hypothesis serves both as a point of arrival for existing knowledge and a point of departure for a new study and new projects: complete urbanization. The hypothesis is anticipatory. It prolongs the fundamental tendency of the present. Urban society is gestating in and through the "bureaucratic society of controlled consumption."

A negative argument, proof by the absurd: No other hypothesis will work, no other hypothesis can cover the entire range of problems. Postindustrial society? Then what happens after industrialization? Leisure society? This addresses only part of the question, since we limit our examination of trends and virtualities to "infrastructure," a realist attitude that in no way circumvents the demagoguery inherent in this definition. The indefinite growth of mass consumption? Here, we measure current indices and extrapolate from them, thereby running the risk of reducing reality and virtuality to only one of their aspects. And so on.

The expression "urban society" meets a theoretical need. It is more than simply a literary or pedagogical device, or even the expression of some form of acquired knowledge; it is an elaboration, a search, a conceptual formulation. A movement of thought toward a certain *concrete,* and perhaps toward *the* concrete, assumes shape and detail. This movement, if it proves to be true, will lead to a practice, *urban practice,* that is finally or newly comprehended. Needless to say, a threshold will have to be crossed before entering the concrete, that is, social practice as understood by theory. But there is no empirical recipe for fabricating this product, this urban reality. Isn't this what we so often expect from "urbanism" and what "urbanists" so often promise? Unlike a fact-filled empiricism with its risky extrapolations and fragments of indigestible knowledge, we can build a *theory* from a *theoretical hypothesis.* The development of such a theory is associated with a *methodology.* For example, research involving a virtual object, which attempts to define and realize that object as part of an ongoing project, already has a name: *transduction.* The term reflects an intellectual approach toward a possible object, which we can employ alongside the more conventional activities of deduction and induction. The concept of an urban society, which I introduced above, thus implies a hypothesis and a definition.

Similarly, by "urban revolution" I refer to the transformations that affect contemporary society, ranging from the period when questions of growth and industrialization predominate (models, plans, programs) to the period when the urban problematic becomes predominant, when the search for solutions and modalities unique to urban society are foremost. Some of these transformations are sudden; others are gradual, planned, determined. But which ones? This is a legitimate question. It is by no means certain in advance that the answer will be clear, intellectually satisfying, or unambiguous. The words "urban revolution" do not in themselves refer to actions that are violent. Nor do they exclude them.

But how do we discriminate between the outcome of violent action and the product of rational action before their occurrence? Isn't violence characterized by its ability to spin out of control? Isn't thought characterized by the effort to reduce violence, beginning with the effort to destroy the chains that bind our thought?

There are two aspects of urbanism that we will need to address:

1. For years scholars have viewed urbanism as a social practice that is fundamentally scientific and technical in nature. In this case, theory can and should address this practice by raising it to a conceptual level and, more specifically, to the level of *epistemology*. However, the absence of any such urban epistemology is striking. Is it worth developing such an epistemology, then? No. In fact, its absence is highly significant. For the *institutional* and *ideological* nature of what is referred to as urbanism has—until a new order comes into being—taken precedence over its scientific nature. If we assume that this procedure can be generalized and that understanding always involves epistemology, then it is clear that it plays no role in contemporary urbanism. It is important to understand why and how.
2. As it currently exists, that is, as a policy (having institutional and ideological components), urbanism can be criticized both from the right and the left. The critique from the right, which is well known, is focused on the past and is frequently humanist. It subsumes and justifies a neoliberal ideology of "free enterprise," directly or indirectly. It opens a path for the various "private" initiatives of capitalists and capital. The critique from the left, frequently overlooked, is not associated with any so-called leftist group, club, party, apparatus, or ideology. Rather, it attempts to open a path to the possible, to explore and delineate a landscape that is not merely part of the "real," the accomplished, occupied by existing social, political, and economic forces. It is a *utopian* critique because it steps back from the real without, however, losing sight of it.

We can draw an axis as follows:

0 ——————————— 100%

The axis runs from the complete absence of urbanization ("pure nature," the earth abandoned to the elements) on the left to the completion of the process on the right. A signifier for this signified—the *urban* (the urban reality)—this axis is both spatial and temporal: spatial because the process extends through space, which it modifies; temporal because it develops over time. Temporality, initially of secondary importance, eventually becomes the predominant aspect of practice and history. This schema presents no more than an aspect of this history, a division of time that is both abstract and arbitrary and gives rise to operations (periodizations) that have no absolute privilege but are as necessary (relative) as other divisions.

I'd like to plant a few signposts along this path delineated by the "urban phenomenon" (the urban, in short). Initially there were populations that had been identified by anthropology and ethnology. Around this initial zero, the first human groups (gatherers, fishers, hunters, possibly herders) marked out and named space; they explored it while marking it. They indicated place-names, fundamental topoi. It was a topology and spatial grid that peasants, attached to the soil, later perfected and refined without upsetting the overall fabric. What is important is that in many places around the world, and most certainly any place with a history, the existence of the city has accompanied or followed that of

the village. The representation according to which cultivated land, the village, and farm civilization slowly secreted urban reality reflects an ideology. It generalizes from what took place in Europe during the breakdown of the Roman Empire and following the reconstruction of the medieval city. It's just as easy to maintain the contrary position, however. Agriculture was little more than gathering, and was only formalized through pressure (authoritarian) from the urban centers, generally occupied by skillful conquerors who had become protectors, exploiters, and oppressors, that is, administrators, the founders of a state, or the rudiments of a state. The *political city* accompanies or closely follows the establishment of organized social life, agriculture, and the village.

It goes without saying that such an assumption is meaningless when it involves endless spaces characterized by a seminomadic existence, an impoverished itinerant agriculture. It is obviously based primarily on studies and documents concerning "Asian modes of production," the ancient civilizations that created both urban and agricultural life (Mesopotamia, Egypt, and so on).[1] The general question of the relationship between the city and the countryside is far from being resolved, however.

I'm going to take the risk of locating the *political city* at the point of origin on the space-time axis. The political city was populated primarily by priests, warriors, princes, "nobles," and military leaders, but administrators and scribes were also present. The political city is inconceivable without writing: documents, laws, inventories, tax collection. It is completely given over to orders and decrees, to power. Yet it also implies the existence of exchange to procure the materials essential to warfare and power (metal, leather, and so on), and of artisanship to fashion and maintain them. Thus, such a city also comprises artisans and workers. The political city administers, protects, and exploits a territory that is often

vast. It manages large-scale agricultural projects such as drainage, irrigation, the construction of dams, the clearing of land. It rules over a number of villages. Ownership of the land becomes the eminent right of a monarch, the symbol of order and action. Nonetheless, peasants and communities retain effective possession through the payment of tribute.

In such an environment, exchange and trade can only expand. Initially confined to suspicious individuals, to "strangers," they become *functionally* integrated into the life of the city. Those places given over to exchange and trade are initially strongly marked by the signs of *heterotopy*. Like the people who are responsible for and inhabit them, these places are at the outset excluded from the political city: caravansaries, fairgrounds, suburbs. This process of integrating markets and merchandise (people and things) in the city can last for centuries. Exchange and trade, which are essential to the survival of life, bring wealth and movement. The political city resists this with all the power at its disposal, all its cohesiveness; it feels, knows, that it is threatened by markets, merchandise, and traders, by their form of ownership (money, a form of personal property, being movable by definition). There is ample evidence that Athens, a political city, coexisted with Piraeus, a commercial city, and that attempts to ban the presence of merchandise in the agora, a free space and political meeting place, were unsuccessful. When Christ chased the merchants from the temple, the ban was similar, had the same meaning. In China and Japan, merchants were for years an urban underclass, relegated to a "special" (heterotopic) part of the city. In truth, it is only in the European West, at the end of the Middle Ages, that merchandise, the market, and merchants were able to successfully penetrate the city. Prior to this, itinerant merchants—part warrior, part thief—deliberately chose to remain in the fortified remains of ancient (Roman) cities to facilitate their struggle against the territorial lords. Based on this assumption, the renewed

political city would have served as a frame for the action that was to transform it. During this (class) struggle against the overlords, who were the owners and rulers of the territory, a prodigiously fecund struggle in the West that helped create not only a history but history itself, the marketplace became centralized. It replaced and supplanted the place of assembly (the agora, the forum). Around the market, which had now become an essential part of the city, were grouped the church and town hall (occupied by a merchant oligarchy), with its belfry or campanile, the symbol of liberty. Architecture follows and translates the new conception of the city. Urban space becomes the meeting place for goods and people, for exchange. It bears the signs of this conquered liberty, which is perceived as Liberty—a grandiose but hopeless struggle. In this sense, it is legitimate to assign a symbolic value to the *bastides,* or walled towns, of southwest France, the first cities to take shape around the local marketplace. History is filled with irony. The fetishism associated with merchandise appeared along with the rise of merchandise, its logic and ideology, its language and world. In the fourteenth century it was believed that it was sufficient to establish a market and build stores, gateways, and galleries around a central square to promote the growth of goods and buyers. In this way, both the nobility and the bourgeoisie built merchant cities in areas that were undeveloped, practically desert, and still crisscrossed by herds and migratory, seminomadic tribes. These cities of the French southwest, although they bear the names of some of our great and wealthy cities (Barcelona, Bologna, Plaisance, Florence, Grenada, and so on), were failures. The *merchant city* succeeded the political city. At this time (approximately the fourteenth century in western Europe), commercial exchange became an urban *function,* which was embodied in a *form* (or forms, both architectural and urban). This in turn gave urban space a new *structure.* The changes that took place in Paris illustrate this complex

interaction among the three essential aspects of function, form, and structure. Market towns and suburbs, which were initially commercial and artisanal—Beaubourg, Saint-Antoine, Saint-Honoré—grew in importance and began to struggle with centers of political power (institutions) for influence, prestige, and space, forcing them to compromise, entering with them in the construction of a powerful urban unity.

At one moment in the history of the European West, an event of great importance occurred, but one that remained latent because it went unnoticed. The importance of the city for the social whole became such that the whole seemed to shift. In the relationship between town and country, the emphasis was still on the countryside: real property wealth, the products of the soil, attachment to the land (owners of fiefs or noble titles). Compared with the countryside, the town retained its heterotopic character, marked by its ramparts as well as the transition to suburban areas. At a given moment, these various relationships were reversed; the situation changed. The moment when this shift occurred, this reversal of heterotopy, should be marked along our axis. From this moment on, the city would no longer appear as an urban island in a rural ocean, it would no longer seem a paradox, a monster, a hell or heaven that contrasted sharply with village or country life in a natural environment. It entered people's awareness and understanding as one of the terms in the opposition between town and country. Country? It is now no more than—nothing more than—the town's "environment," its horizon, its limit. Villagers? As far as they were concerned, they no longer worked for the territorial lords, they produced for the city, for the urban market. And even though they realized that the wheat and wood merchants exploited them, they understood that the path to freedom crossed the marketplace.

So what is happening around this crucial moment in history? Thoughtful people no longer see themselves reflected

in nature, a shadowy world subject to mysterious forces. Between them and nature, between their home (the focal point of thought, existence) and the world, lies the urban reality, an essential mediating factor. From this moment on society no longer coincides with the countryside. It no longer coincides with the city, either. The state encompasses them both, joins them in its hegemony by making use of their rivalry. Yet, at the time, the majesty of the state was veiled to its contemporaries. Of whom or what was Reason an attribute? Royalty? Divine right? The individual? Yet this is what led to the reform of the city after the destruction of Athens and Rome, after the most important products of those civilizations, logic and law, were lost from view. The logos was reborn, but its rebirth was not attributed to the renaissance of the urban world but to transcendent reason. The rationalism that culminated in Descartes accompanied the reversal that replaced the primacy of the peasantry with the priority of urban life. Although the peasantry didn't see it as such. However, during this period, the *image of the city* came into being.

The city had writing; it had secrets and powers, and clarified the opposition between urbanity (cultured) and rusticity (naive and brutal). After a certain point in time, the city developed its own form of writing: the map or *plan,* the science of *planimetry.* During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when this reversal of meaning took place, maps of European cities began to appear, including the first maps of the city of Paris. These are not yet abstract maps, projections of urban space onto geometric coordinates. A cross between vision and concept, works of art and science, they displayed the city from top to bottom, in perspective, painted, depicted, and geometrically described. This perspective, simultaneously idealist and realist—the perspective of thought and power—was situated in the vertical dimension, the dimension of knowledge and reason, and dominated and constituted a totality: the city. This shift of social reality toward the urban, this (relative) discontinuity, can be easily indicated on a space-time axis, whose continuity can be used to situate and date any (relative) breaks. All that is needed is to draw a line between the zero point and the terminal point (which I'll assume to be one hundred).

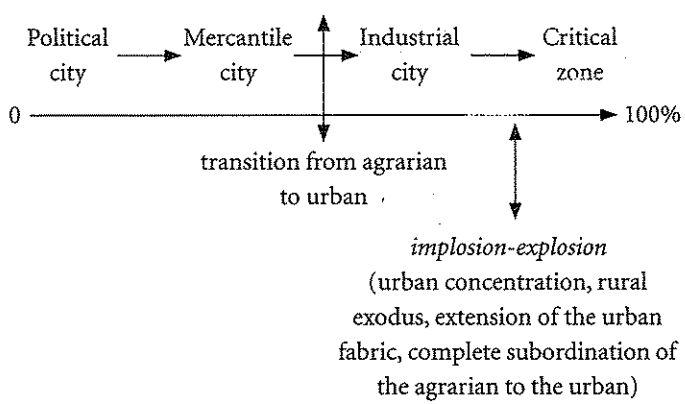
This reversal of meaning can't be dissociated from the growth of commercial capital and the existence of the market. It was the rise of the mercantile city, which was grafted onto the political city but promoted its own ascendancy, that was primarily responsible. This was soon followed by the appearance of industrial capital and, consequently, the *industrial city.* This requires further explanation. Was industry associated with the city? One would assume it to be associated with the *non-city,* the absence or rupture of urban reality. We know that industry initially developed near the sources of energy (coal and water), raw materials (metals, textiles), and manpower reserves. Industry gradually made its way into the city in search of capital and capitalists, markets, and an abundant supply of low-cost labor. It could locate itself anywhere, therefore, but sooner or later made its way into existing cities or created new cities, although it was prepared to move elsewhere if there was an economic advantage in doing so. Just as the political city resisted the conquest—half-pacific, half-violent—of the merchants, exchange, and money, similarly the political and mercantile city defended itself from being taken over by a nascent industry, industrial capital, and capital itself. But how did it do this? Through corporatism, by establishing relationships. Historical continuity and evolution mask the effects and ruptures associated with such transitions. Yet something strange and wonderful was also taking place, which helped renew dialectical thought: the non-city and the anti-city would conquer the city, penetrate it, break it apart, and in so doing extend it immeasurably, bringing about the urbanization of society and the growth of

the urban fabric that covered what was left of the city prior to the arrival of industry. This extraordinary movement has escaped our attention and has been described in piecemeal fashion because ideologues have tried to eliminate dialectical thought and the analysis of contradictions in favor of logical thought—that is, the identification of coherence and nothing but coherence. Urban reality, simultaneously amplified and exploded, thus loses the features it inherited from the previous period: organic totality, belonging, an uplifting image, a sense of space that was measured and dominated by monumental splendor. It was populated with signs of the urban within the dissolution of urbanity; it became stipulative, repressive, marked by signals, summary codes for circulation (routes), and signage. It was sometimes read as a rough draft, sometimes as an authoritarian message. It was imperious. But none of these descriptive terms completely describes the historical process of implosion-explosion (a metaphor borrowed from nuclear physics) that occurred: the tremendous concentration (of people, activities, wealth, goods, objects, instruments, means, and thought) of urban reality and the immense explosion, the projection of numerous, disjunct fragments (peripheries, suburbs, vacation homes, satellite towns) into space.

The *industrial city* (often a shapeless town, a barely urban agglomeration, a conglomerate, or conurbation like the Ruhr Valley) serves as a prelude to a *critical zone.* At this moment, the effects of implosion-explosion are most fully felt. The increase in industrial production is superimposed on the growth of commercial exchange and multiplies the number of such exchanges. This growth extends from simple barter to the global market, from the simple exchange between two individuals all the way to the exchange of products, works of art, ideas, and human beings. Buying and selling, merchandise and market, money and capital appear to sweep away all obstacles. During this period of generalization, the effect of

the process—namely the urban reality—becomes both cause and reason. Induced factors become dominant (inductors). The *urban problematic* becomes a global phenomenon. Can urban reality be defined as a "superstructure" on the surface of the economic structure, whether capitalist or socialist? The simple result of growth and productive forces? Simply a modest marginal reality compared with production? Not at all. Urban reality modifies the relations of production without being sufficient to transform them. It becomes a productive force, like science. Space and the politics of space "express" social relationships but react against them. Obviously, if an urban reality manifests itself and becomes dominant, it does so only through the urban problematic. What can be done to change this? How can we build cities or "something" that replaces what was formerly the City? How can we reconceptualize the urban phenomenon? How can we formulate, classify, and order the innumerable questions that arise, questions that move, although not without considerable resistance, to the forefront of our awareness? Can we achieve significant progress in theory and practice so that our consciousness can comprehend a reality that overflows it and a possible that flees before its grasp?

We can represent this process as follows:



What occurs during the *critical phase?* This book is an attempt to answer that question, which situates the urban problematic within the overall process. Are the theoretical assumptions that enable us to draw an axis such as the one shown above, introduce directed time, and make sense of the critical zone sufficient to help us understand what is taking place? Possibly. In any event, there are several assumptions we can make now. Lacking any proof to the contrary, we can postulate that a second transition occurs, a second reversal of direction and situation. Industrialization, the dominant power and limiting factor, becomes a dominated reality during periods of profound crisis. This results in tremendous confusion, during which the past and the possible, the best and the worst, become intertwined.

In spite of this theoretical hypothesis concerning the possible and its relation to the actual (the "real"), we should not overlook the fact that the onset of urban society and the modalities of urbanization depend on the characteristics of society as it existed during the course of industrialization (neocapitalist or socialist, full economic growth or intense automation). The onset of urban society at different times, the implications and consequences of these initial differences, are part of the problematic associated with the urban phenomenon, or simply the "urban." These terms are preferable to the word "city," which appears to designate a clearly defined, definitive *object,* a scientific object and the immediate goal of action, whereas the theoretical approach requires a critique of this "object" and a more complex notion of the virtual or possible object. Within this perspective there is no science of the city (such as urban sociology or urban economy), but an emerging understanding of the overall process, as well as its term (goal and direction).

The urban (an abbreviated form of urban society) can therefore be defined not as an accomplished reality, situated behind the actual in time, but, on the contrary, as a horizon,

an illuminating virtuality. It is the possible, defined by a direction, that moves toward the urban as the culmination of its journey. To reach it—in other words, to realize it—we must first overcome or break through the obstacles that currently make it *impossible.* Can theoretical knowledge treat this virtual object, the goal of action, as an abstraction? No. From this point on, it is abstract only in the sense that it is a *scientific,* and therefore legitimate, abstraction. Theoretical knowledge can and must reveal the terrain, the foundation on which it resides: an ongoing social practice, an urban practice in the process of formation. It is an aspect of the critical phase that this practice is currently veiled and disjointed, that it possesses only fragments of a reality and a science that are still in the future. It is our job to demonstrate that such an approach has an outcome, that there are solutions to the current problematic. The *virtual object* is nothing but planetary society and the "global city," and it stands outside the global and planetary crisis of reality and thought, outside the old borders that had been drawn when agriculture was dominant and that were maintained during the growth of exchange and industrial production. Nevertheless, the urban problematic can't absorb every problem. There are problems that are unique to agriculture and industry, even though the urban reality modifies them. Moreover, the urban problematic requires that we exercise considerable caution when exploring the realm of the possible. It is the analyst's responsibility to identify and describe the various forms of urbanization and explain what happens to the forms, functions, and urban structures that are transformed by the breakup of the ancient city and the process of generalized urbanization. Until now the critical phase was perceived as a kind of black box. We know what enters the box, and sometimes we see what comes out, but we don't know what goes on inside. This makes conventional procedures of forecasting and projection useless, since they extrapolate from

the actual, from a set of facts. Projections and forecasts have a determined basis only in the fragmentary sciences: demography, for example, or political economy. But what is at stake here, "objectively," is a totality.

To illustrate the depth of the crisis, the uncertainty and perplexity that accompany the critical phase, an element of contrast may be useful. Is this merely a question of style? Yes, but not entirely. Here, I would like to introduce the pros and cons of streets and monuments. I'll leave other issues—nature, the city, urbanism, the urban—for later.

For the street. The street is more than just a place for movement and circulation. The invasion of the automobile and the pressure of the automobile lobby have turned the car into a key object, parking into an obsession, traffic into a priority, harmful to urban and social life. The day is approaching when we will be forced to limit the rights and powers of the automobile. Naturally, this won't be easy, and the fallout will be considerable. What about the street, however? It serves as a meeting place (topos), for without it no other designated encounters are possible (cafés, theaters, halls). These places animate the street and are served by its animation, or they cease to exist. In the street, a form of spontaneous theater, I become spectacle and spectator, and sometimes an actor. The street is where movement takes place, the interaction without which urban life would not exist, leaving only separation, a forced and fixed segregation. And there are consequences to eliminating the street (ever since Le Corbusier and his *nouveaux ensembles*): the extinction of life, the reduction of the city to a dormitory, the aberrant functionalization of existence. The street contains functions that were overlooked by Le Corbusier: the informative function, the symbolic function, the ludic function. The street is a place to play and learn. The street is disorder. All the elements of urban life, which are fixed and redundant elsewhere, are free to fill the streets and through the streets flow

to the centers, where they meet and interact, torn from their fixed abode. This disorder is alive. It informs. It surprises. The work of Jane Jacobs has shown that, in the United States, the street (highly trafficked, busy) provides the only security possible against criminal violence (theft, rape, aggression). Wherever streets disappeared, criminality increased, became organized. In the street and through the space it offered, a group (the city itself) took shape, appeared, appropriated places, realized an appropriated space-time. This appropriation demonstrates that use and use value can dominate exchange and exchange value.

Revolutionary events generally take place in the street. Doesn't this show that the disorder of the street engenders another kind of order? The urban space of the street is a place for talk, given over as much to the exchange of words and signs as it is to the exchange of things. A place where speech becomes writing. A place where speech can become "savage" and, by escaping rules and institutions, inscribe itself on walls.

Against the street. A meeting place? Maybe, but such meetings are superficial. In the street, we merely brush shoulders with others, we don't interact with them. It's the "we" that is important. The street prevents the constitution of a group, a subject; it is populated by a congeries of people in search of . . . of what exactly? The world of merchandise is deployed in the street. The merchandise that didn't make it into specialized locales or markets (marketplaces, halls) has invaded the entire city. In antiquity the streets were merely extensions of places with specialized functions: the temple, the stadium, the agora, the garden. During the Middle Ages, artisans occupied the streets. The artisan was both producer and seller. The artisans were followed by merchants, who, although only merchants, soon became masters. The street became a display, a corridor flanked by stores of various kinds. Merchandise became spectacle (provocative, attractive) and

transformed the individual into a spectacle for others. Here, more than elsewhere, exchange and exchange value take precedence over use, reducing it to a residue. Therefore, the critique of the street must be more incisive: the street becomes the focus of a form of repression that was made possible by the "real"—that is, weak, alienated, and alienating—character of the relationships that are formed there. Movement in the street, a communications space, is both obligatory and repressed. Whenever threatened, the first thing power restricts is the ability to linger or assemble in the street. Although the street may have once had the meaning of a meeting place, it has since lost it, and could only have lost it, by reducing itself, through a process of necessary reduction, to nothing more than a passageway, by splitting itself into a place for the passage of pedestrians (hunted) and automobiles (privileged). The street became a network organized for and by consumption. The rate of pedestrian circulation, although still tolerated, was determined and measured by the ability to perceive store windows and buy the objects displayed in them. Time became "merchandise time" (time for buying and selling, time bought and sold). The street regulated time outside of work; it subjected it to the same system, the system of yield and profit. It was nothing more than the necessary transition between forced labor, programmed leisure, and habitation as a place of consumption.

In the street, the neocapitalist organization of consumption is demonstrated by its power, which is not restricted to political power or repression (overt or covert). The street, a series of displays, an exhibition of objects for sale, illustrates just how the logic of merchandise is accompanied by a form of (passive) contemplation that assumes the appearance and significance of an aesthetics and an ethics. The accumulation of objects accompanies the growth of population and capital; it is transformed into an ideology, which, dissimulated beneath the traits of the legible and visible, comes to seem

self-evident. In this sense we can speak of a *colonization* of the urban space, which takes place in the street through the image, through publicity, through the spectacle of objects—a "system of objects" that has become symbol and spectacle. Through the uniformization of the grid, visible in the modernization of old streets, objects (merchandise) take on the effects of color and form that make them attractive. The parades, masquerades, balls, and folklore festivals authorized by a power structure caricaturize the appropriation and reappropriation of space. The true appropriation characteristic of effective "demonstrations" is challenged by the forces of repression, which demand silence and forgetfulness.

Against the monument. The monument is essentially repressive. It is the seat of an institution (the church, the state, the university). Any space that is organized around the monument is colonized and oppressed. The great monuments have been raised to glorify conquerors and the powerful. Occasionally they glorify the dead or the beauty of death (the Taj Mahal) in palaces and tombs. The misfortune of architecture is that it wanted to construct monuments, but the idea of *habiting* them was either conceived in terms of those monuments or neglected entirely.[2] The extension of monumental space to habiting is always catastrophic, and for the most part hidden from those who are subject to it. Monumental splendor is formal. And although the monument is always laden with symbols, it presents them to social awareness and contemplation (passive) just when those symbols, already outdated, are beginning to lose their meaning, such as the symbols of the revolution on the Napoleonic Arc de Triomphe.

For the monument. It is the only conceivable or imaginable site of collective (social) life. It controls people, yes, but does so to bring them together. Beauty and monumentality go hand in hand. The great monuments were transfunctional (cathedrals) and even transcultural (tombs). This is what

gave them their ethical and aesthetic power. Monuments project onto the land a conception of the world, whereas the city projected (and continues to project) social life (globality). In their very essence, and sometimes at the very heart of a space in which the characteristics of a society are most recognizable and commonplace, monuments embody a sense of transcendence, a sense of being *elsewhere*. They have always been u-topic. Throughout their height and depth, along a dimension that was alien to urban trajectories, they proclaimed duty, power, knowledge, joy, hope.

2 || Blind Field

In this book I have not, for the most part, followed the historical method as it is generally understood. Superficially it may appear that I have been describing and analyzing the genesis of the city as object and its modifications and transformations. But my initial concern has been with a virtual object, which I have used to describe a space-time axis. The future illuminates the past, the virtual allows us to examine and situate the realized. The breakdown of the preindustrialist and precapitalist city caused by the impact of industry and capitalism helps us understand the conditions and antecedents of the industrial city. Its predecessor, the mercantile city, in turn enables us to comprehend the political city on which it was superimposed. Marx believed that adulthood comprises the child as subject (awareness) and enables us to understand its point of departure, the rough form that may be richer and more complex than the adult, as a real object. And it is bourgeois society, however complex and opaque it might be, that allows us to understand the most transparent societies, ancient and medieval society. Not the opposite. With the arrival of time and historicity, our awareness is

able to grasp two opposing movements: *regressive* (from the virtual to the actual, the actual to the past) and *progressive* (from the obsolete and completed to the movement that anticipates that completeness, that presages and brings into being something new).

Historical time can be broken down (periodized) by mode of production: Asiatic, slave, feudal, capitalist, socialist. This breakdown has certain advantages and certain disadvantages. When pushed too far, when we emphasize the divisions, the internal character of each mode of production, the consistency of each mode as a totality, the transition between them becomes unintelligible at the very moment when their individual intelligibility becomes most evident. Moreover, each mode of production has "produced" (not in the sense of any ordinary thing but as a privileged work) a type of city, which "expresses" it in a way that is immediately visible and legible on the environment, by making the most abstract relationships—legal, political, ideological—tangible. This discontinuous aspect of time cannot be pushed so far as to make continuity unintelligible. A relatively continuous cumulative process is also at work in the city: the accumulation of knowledge, technologies, things, people, wealth, money, and capital. The city is where this accumulation occurs, even though capital may arise from wealth that has been created in the countryside and even though industrial investment may be detrimental to the city.

The Marxist theory of surplus value distinguishes the formation of surplus value from its realization and distribution. Surplus value is initially formed in the countryside. This formation is shifted to the city to the extent that it becomes the center of production, craft activities, and industry. In contrast, the commercial and banking system found in cities has always been an organ for the realization of surplus value. In distributing wealth, those who controlled the city have also attempted to retain the majority of this surplus value

(greater than the average profit from their investments). For these three aspects of surplus value, the urban center plays an increasingly important role, an aspect of urban centrality that is essential yet misunderstood (unnoticed) within the mode of capitalist production. This contradicts the belief that the city of old and the contemporary urban center were no more than superstructures and had no relation to productive forces and the mode of production.

The space-time axis can be used to situate both certain relationships between city and country and their transformations. It neither reflects nor contains all of them. For example, it contains neither the conditions nor the elements of concepts associated with those relationships: nature (physis) and logos (reason). It fails to reveal the genealogy of the idea of Nature and its development. The diagram in chapter 1 indicates a reversal within European history at a moment that is currently referred to as the Renaissance. What happened exactly to the concepts and representations designated by the terms "nature" and "reason" during this critical phase? Because the relationship between city and country was profoundly altered, was there any correspondence or distortion between these alterations and the alteration of the associated concepts? Can the unique polysemy of "nature" and "reason" be analyzed and explained on the basis of history given above? Possibly. Why did the fetishism of nature occur at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century? What did it mean? Wasn't there a twofold negation of nature, as something prior to thought and "human" action, a twofold negation by the city and by industry, which once again exposed and mirrored nature? From this moment on, the City appeared as a second nature of stone and metal, built on an initial, fundamental nature made of earth, air, water, and fire. This second nature acquired its paradigm, its system of pertinent oppositions—light and dark, water and stone, tree and metal, monstrous and paradisiac, rough and

polished, savage and artificial—in and through the poets (Hugo, Baudelaire). This in turn refers us back to the myths of the city, which I'll discuss below. But what becomes of the attempt, inherent in urban space, to reunite the spontaneous and the artificial, nature and culture? There is no city, no urban space without a garden or park, without the simulation of nature, without labyrinths, the evocation of the ocean or forest, without trees tormented into strange human and inhuman shapes. What can be said, then, about the gardens and parks that are just as responsible for the quality of urban life in Paris, London, Tokyo, and New York as their squares and network of streets? Are these spaces the site of a term-for-term correspondence, or nearly so, between the city and the country? Could they be the visible re-presentation of an *elsewhere,* the utopia of nature? Do they provide an essential reference point against which urban reality can situate and perceive itself? Or are they only a neutral element of the urban agglomeration? What happens to these functions (multifunctional or transfunctional realities) in these "open spaces"? Wasn't the problem resolved, arbitrarily and without awareness, by this neutralization of unbuilt space, with its illusory devotion to a fictive nature, to "open space"?

These aspects of the urban problematic (which are not minor and are more insightful than the commonplace images of the "environment" because they imply an analysis of some sort) do not appear in the diagram. However, they are part of the critical phase, which contains them. Depending on the metaphor used, we can say that this phase is a *blank* (a void) or a dark moment (a "black box"), or that it designates a *blind field.* During the critical phase, nature appears as one of the key problems. Industrialization and urbanization, together or in competition, ravage nature. Water, earth, air, fire—the elements—are threatened with destruction. By the year 2000, whether or not there has been nuclear war, our water and air will be so polluted that life on earth will be difficult to maintain. It is now possible to conceive of a form of

"socialism" that differs considerably from what is commonly understood by the word or from what Marx defined. Goods that were once scarce are now abundant, such as bread and food in general (which are still scarce in a large, poorly developed, part of the world, but superabundant in the developed part). In contrast, goods that were once abundant have become scarce: space, time, desire, water, earth, light. Unless we intend to produce or re-produce everything that was "nature," we will have to collectively manage new types of scarcity.

The partial problematic concerning "nature" can be determined in this way. Theoretically, nature is shrinking, but the signs of nature and the natural are multiplying, replacing and supplanting real "nature." These signs are mass-produced and sold. A tree, a flower, a branch, a scent, or a word can become signs of absence: of an illusory and fictive presence. At the same time, ideological naturalization becomes obsessive. There is a continuous reference to nature in advertising, whether it be for food or textile products, housing or vacations. To provide meaning and content (illusory), the re-presentation of nature is accompanied by the full range of "floating signifiers" employed by rhetoric. What no longer has a meaning is given one through the mediation of a fetishistic world of nature. Undiscoverable, fugitive, ravaged, the residue of urbanization and industrialization, nature can be found everywhere, from femininity to the most mundane object. Parks and open spaces, the last word in good intentions and bad urban representation, are simply a poor substitute for nature, the degraded simulacrum of the open space characteristic of encounters, games, parks, gardens, and public squares. This space, which has been neutralized by a degrading form of democratization, has as its symbol the square. The urbanist passively obeys the pressures of number and least cost; the functionality he thinks he has created is reduced to an absence of "real" functions, to a function of passive observation.

Critical phase. Black box. The architect and the urbanist,

sometimes confused as partners in an ambiguous duo, sometimes as twins or warring siblings, as distant colleagues and rivals, examine the black box. They know what goes in, are amazed at what comes out, but have no idea what takes place inside. My schema won't help them. For it assumes that the city (the urban center) has been a place for creation and not simply a result, the simple spatial effect of a creative act that occurred elsewhere, in the Mind, or the Intellect. It stipulates that the urban can become "objective," that is, creation and creator, meaning and goal.

There are three layers. Three periods. Three "fields." These are not simply social phenomena but sensations and perceptions, spaces and times, images and concepts, language and rationality, theories and social practices:

- the rural (peasant)
- the industrial
- the urban

They are accompanied by emergences and interferences, shifts, advances and delays, various inequalities of development. There are painful transitions, critical phases. The space-time axis reveals a number of highlights or divisions, so many theoretical assumptions in need of verification. But what happens between two periods, at the point of transition between two periods, within the break or fold (today, between the industrial and the urban)? Verbal layers, detached floating signifiers whose signified (industry, rationality, and practice) is no longer sufficient, even though it is necessary. These verbal layers, wandering about their native soil, are unable to attach themselves to a "philosophical subject" or a "privileged object" or a "historical totalization." We can look at them the way we look at various cloud layers from an airplane. Here, high above the earth, floating lightly, is the cirrus of ancient philosophy, the nimbus of rationality,

and the heavy cumulus of scientism. They are languages, or metalanguages, halfway between the real and the fictive, between the realized and the possible. They float freely, escaping the incantations of sorcerer philosophers.

Between fields, which are regions of force and conflict, there are *blind fields*. These are not merely dark and uncertain, poorly explored, but blind in the sense that there is a blind spot on the retina, the center—and negation—of vision. A paradox. The eye doesn't see; it needs a mirror. The center of vision doesn't see and doesn't know it is blind. Do these paradoxes extend to thought, to awareness, to knowledge? In the past there was a field between the rural and the industrial—just as there is today between the industrial and the urban—that was invisible to us.

What does our blindness look like? We focus attentively on the new field, the urban, but we see it with eyes, with concepts, that were shaped by the practices and theories of industrialization, with a fragmentary analytic tool that was designed during the industrial period and is therefore *reductive* of the emerging reality. We no longer see that reality; we resist it, turn away from it, struggle against it, prevent its birth and development.

The urban (urban space, urban landscape) remains unseen. *We* still don't see it. Is it simply that our eye has been shaped (misshaped) by the earlier landscape so it can no longer see a new space? Is it that our way of seeing has been cultivated by village spaces, by the bulk of factories, by the monuments of past eras? Yes, but there's more to it than that. It's not just a question of lack of education, but of occlusion. We see things incompletely. How many people perceive "perspective," angles and contours, volumes, straight and curved lines, but are unable to perceive or conceive multiple paths, complex spaces? They are unable to leap over the quotidian, manufactured according to the constraints of industrial production and the consumption of industrial products,

to the urban, which has shaken off those determinisms and constraints. They are unable to construct a landscape, composing and proposing a specifically urban idea of ugliness and beauty. The urban reality, even before its inception and affirmation, is reduced by the rural (garden suburbs, so-called open spaces) and by the industrial quotidian (functional units of habitation, neighborhoods, relations, monotonous but required routes), an *everydayness* that is subject to the requirements of the enterprise and treated in accordance with corporate rationality. This involves a reduction that is both social and mental, toward trivialization and toward specialization. In a word, the urban is reduced to the industrial. Blindness, our not-seeing and not-knowing, implies an ideology. These blind fields embed themselves in re-presentation. Initially, we are faced with a *presentation* of the facts and groups of facts, a way of perceiving and grouping. This is followed by a *re-presentation,* an interpretation of the facts. Between these two moments and in each of them, there are misrepresentations, misunderstandings. The blinding (assumptions we accept dogmatically) and the blinded (the misunderstood) are complementary aspects of our blindness.

The notion of a blind field is neither a literary image nor a metaphor, in spite of the paradox of combining a subjective term "blind" and an objective term "field" (which, moreover, is always thought of as being illuminated). There are several ways to elucidate the concept, which can be approached both philosophically and scientifically; that is, as a result of philosophical analysis and through the understanding.[1] This concept has nothing to do with the trivial distinction between shadow and light, even if we add to this the fact that intellectual "illumination" has its limits, pushes aside or ignores some things, projects itself in certain places and not others, brackets certain pieces of information and highlights others. In addition, there are things we don't know and things we are unable to explain.

What we find in a blind field is insignificant, but given meaning through research. Was sex significant before Freud? Yes. Sin and shame were part of Western (Judeo-Christian) culture. As were ideal patterns in poetry, for certain poets at least. Giving these things a meaning was an act. Before Freud, sex was isolated, torn apart, reduced, rejected (repressed). It passed through a blind field, populated with shadows and phantoms, driven back from any concrete identity under unrelenting pressure, some fundamental alienation. Nothing was better suited to a "mystical chiaroscuro."

Is the unconscious the substance or essence of a blind field? Remember, these are fields and open to exploration: for the understanding they are virtuality, for action they are possibility. How and why are they blind? Bad faith, misunderstanding, and a failure of recognition (false awareness and possibly false consciousness) play a role. It would be more accurate therefore to speak of the unrecognized than the unconscious. However, these terms are unsatisfactory. Why do "I" (or "we") refuse to see, perceive, or conceive something? Why do we pretend not to see? How do we arrive at that point? There are undeveloped regions (unappropriated) of the body, including sex. However, these blind fields are both mental and social. To understand them, we must take into account the power of ideology (which illuminates other fields or brings fictional fields into view) and the power of language. There are "blind fields" whenever language fails us, whenever there is surfeit or redundancy in a metalanguage (discourse about discourse, signifiers floating far from their signifieds).

This brings us back to the contrast between the blinding and the blinded. The blinding is the luminous source (knowledge or ideology) that projects a beam of light, that illuminates *elsewhere.* The blinded is our dazed stare, as well as the region left in shadow. On the one hand a path is opened to exploration; on the other there is an enclosure to break out of, a consecration to transgress.

Three fields or domains. We can express this as the discovery, emergence, and constitution, or historic creation, of three continents: the agrarian, industrial, and urban. This is analogous to the discovery of mathematics, followed by physics, followed by history and society in the process of understanding, a succession acknowledged by epistemology. However, within this succession, there are no "ruptures" as contemporary epistemology understands the term. Not only are there simultaneities, interactions, or inequalities of development through which these moments (these "continents") can coexist, not only would such a notion of "rupture" cast into darkness relations of class and production, but so-called underdeveloped countries are now characterized by the fact that they undergo the rural, the industrial, and the urban simultaneously. They accumulate problems without accumulating wealth. We can also say that these moments correspond to the tripartite division that is found, although with a slightly different emphasis, in every social practice: need, work, enjoyment. *Need* would correspond to the agrarian period, one of limited production, subject to "nature" and interspersed with catastrophe and famine, a domain of scarcity. *Work* would correspond to the industrial period, one of fetishized productivity and the destruction of nature, including the nature that lives or survives in a human being. Would *enjoyment* correspond to urban society? It remains to be seen.

Three fields. These do not reflect a given historical, economic, or sociological approach, but a (doubly) global concept: a succession of periods and those periods taken individually. The term "field" does not refer only to successive or superimposed layers of facts or phenomena, but also to modes of thought, action, and life.

The "rural-peasant" field, for example, comprises a representation of space or, another way of putting it, a spatial grid that implies orientation, marking, and the ability to

grasp sites and name places (place-names, topoi in defined spaces that are attached to particularities of "nature"). It assumes a form of spontaneity that is highly constrained by the incessant action of a community. This cannot occur without mental and social particularities, without an originality that results from a group's origin (ethnicity, climate, geographical framework, "natural" production modified by agricultural activities, etc.). The particularities of such groups find their primary expression in the confluence of two activities that are distinct yet tendentiously opposite: magic and religion. They require priests and sorcerers. Through their joint operation, the simple cycles and rhythms (days, seasons, years) take place within the great cosmic cycles. An immediate thought, which is also a thought of the immediate (that which takes place here and now, what needs to be done today or tomorrow), is integrated within a much more expansive way of thinking that encompasses entire lifetimes and the events in those lifetimes—births, marriages, deaths, funerals—as well as the succession of generations. Sorcerers dispose of the immediate; priests take care of the world at large. The rural-peasant, although primordial and a dominant field for centuries, only took shape after being acted upon by its conquerors, by administrators in the political city. Such cities can have only a political existence, dominating a rural world whose rivers bathe, nourish, and occasionally submerge it. The political city is not yet urban. It is barely a presentiment. Still, even though the political city is as well established as the peasant communities and is strongly marked by that environment, the (fundamental) division of labor between the two fragments of society has already taken shape. The distinction between the city and the country becomes associated with other oppositions that will develop in time: material and intellectual labor, production and trade, agriculture and industry. These oppositions are initially complementary, then virtually contradictory, then

conflicting. The countryside corresponds to forms of land ownership (real property) that are tribal and later feudal. The city corresponds to other types of property: movable (initially hardly distinct from real property), artisanal, then capitalist. During this prehistory, elements and forms come together that will later become history, breaking apart and combating one another.

The industrial field replaces natural, or presumably natural, particularities with a methodically and systematically imposed homogeneity. This is done in the name of reason, law, authority, technology, the state, the class that holds hegemonic power. All the elements are in place to legitimize and establish a general order that follows the logic of commodities, the "world" of commodities realized on a global scale by capitalism and the bourgeoisie. It has sometimes been asked whether socialism can circumvent the reign of political economy. This project of generalized rationality literally creates a void before it. It destroys mentally before it destroys through its efficiency. It creates a blind field because it is barren. Just what does this *project* for universal rationality consist in? It extends to all activities what began as an experiment, namely, the industrial division of labor. Within the enterprise, labor is divided up and organized so it can be completed without the products of that labor or the labor itself passing through the marketplace. The greatest challenge to the industrial era, a project that has been undertaken repeatedly but never accomplished, has been to extend the efficiency of industrial division to the social division of labor. The social division of labor has been intensified (without, however, ever being rationally organized) until it is nothing more than the dusty remains of separate activities. This applies to both materially productive labor and unproductive but socially necessary labor (intellectual, scientific). Analytic fragmentation becomes so intense that the unity (synthesis) supposedly supplied by a dominant religion, philosophy,

state, or science is artificially superimposed on the dust of "disciplines," laws, and facts. The general, that is spatio-temporal, organization of social practice has the appearance of being completely rational because it is constructed from order and constraint. The homogeneous space-time that practice attempts to realize and totalize is filled with the dust of objects, fragmented activities, situations, and people in situations, a congeries whose coherence is only apparent, especially since such appearance makes use of imperious systematization.

There is indeed something suspect in the "industrial city." Does it exist? In this sense, yes. In another sense, no. It is a phantom, a shadow of urban reality, a spectral analysis of dispersed and external elements that have been reunited through constraint. Several *logics* meet head-on and sometimes clash: the logic of commodities (stretched so far as to attempt to organize production on the basis of consumption), the logic of the state and the law, the organization of space (town and country planning and urbanism), the logic of the object, of daily life, language, information, communication. Because each logic wants to be restrictive and complete, eliminating anything that is felt to be unsuitable, claiming to govern the remainder of the world, it becomes an empty tautology. In this way, communication only transmits the communicable. But all these logics and all these tautologies confront one another at some point. They share a common space: the logic of surplus value. The city, or what remains of it or what it will become, is better suited than it has ever been for the accumulation of capital; that is, the accumulation, realization, and distribution of surplus value. However, these logics and tautologies deny nature. There is nothing abstract about this negation, nothing speculative. By rejecting particularity, industrial rationality simply ravages nature and everything associated with "naturalism." This results in obsession, a second state of awareness, thought, and language.

Analytic thought, which claims to be a form of integral rationality (integrating and integrated), requires an intermediary to perform effectively. The reign of rational finality, therefore, changes in importance with the nature of the intermediary. In fact, this rationality follows from a misguided application of organizational processes and operations appropriate to the enterprise. It confides partial tasks to social auxiliaries, who struggle to achieve autonomy: bureaucrats, merchants, publicists, advertisers. Since generalized dislocation and separation are common, a general malaise accompanies the satisfaction obtained from ideology, consumption, and the predominance of the rational. Everything becomes calculable and predictable, quantifiable and transferable. Everything must be part of an order (apparent and fictional) enhanced by constraints—everything except a residue of disorder and freedom, which is sometimes tolerated, sometimes hunted down with overwhelming repressive force. It is during this period that "history" accelerates its course, strips off any particularities, lops off whatever was characterized by privilege or distinction, whether works of art or people. It is a period of warfare and revolution, which abort as soon as they appear to realize themselves in the cult of the state and the fetishism of production, which is itself the realization of the fetishism of money and commodities.

These events are succeeded by the *urban*. I will try to show that this is a new field, still unknown and poorly understood. During this new period, what once passed as absolute has become relativized: reason, history, the state, mankind. We express this by saying that those entities, those fetishes, have died. There is something true in this claim, but fetishes do not all die the same death. The death of "man" affects only our philosophers. The end of the state is always tragic, as is the end of morality and the family. Reflective thought allows itself to be captivated by these dramas and turns its gaze from the field before it, which remains blind. To explore

this field, to see it, change is necessary, the abandonment of earlier viewpoints and perspectives. During this new period, *differences* are known and recognized, mastered, conceived, and signified. These mental and social, spatial and temporal differences, detached from nature, are resolved on a much higher plane, a plane of thought that can grasp all the elements. Urban thought (not urbanism), that is, the reflection of urban society, gathers the data that was established and separated by history. Its source, its origin, its stronghold, is no longer within the enterprise. It cannot prevent itself from assuming the point of view of the encounter, of simultaneity, of assembly, the specific features of *urban form*. In this way it rediscovers the community and the city, but at a higher level, on a different scale, and after their fragmentation (negation). It recovers the key concepts of a prior reality and restores them in an enlarged context: forms, functions, urban structures. It is constituted by a renewed space-time, a topology that is distinct from agrarian (cyclic and juxtaposing local particularities) and industrial (tending toward homogeneity, toward a rational and planned unity of constraints) space-time. Urban space-time, as soon as we stop defining it in terms of industrial rationality—its project of homogenization—appears as a *differential*, each place and each moment existing only within a whole, through the contrasts and oppositions that connect it to, and distinguish it from, other places and moments. This space-time is defined by *unitary* (global: constitutive of wholes, of groups formed around a *center*, of diverse and specific centralities) as well as *dualistic* properties. For example, the street can be considered an *incision-suture*. We should also learn to distinguish, without separating them, location and exchange, the transfer of information and the transport of material goods. To define these properties of urban differential space (time-space), we need to introduce new concepts, such as *isotopy, heterotopy,* and *utopia*. An isotopy is a place (topos) and everything that

surrounds it (neighborhood, immediate environment),[2] that is, everything that makes a place the *same place.* If there is a homologous or analogous place somewhere else, it is part of that isotopy. However, alongside this "very place" there is a *different place,* an *other place.*

What is it that makes such a place different? Its *heterotopy:* a difference that marks it by situating it (situating itself) with respect to the initial place. This difference can extend from a highly marked contrast all the way to conflict, to the extent that the occupants of a place are taken into consideration. These places are relative to one another in the urban complex. This assumes the existence of a neutral element, which can consist of the incision-suture of juxtaposed places: street, square, intersection (intersection of streets and paths), garden, park. Now, there is also an elsewhere, the non-place that has no place and seeks a place of its own. Verticality, a height erected anywhere on a horizontal plane, can become the dimension of elsewhereness, a place characterized by the presence-absence: of the divine, of power, of the half-fictional half-real, of sublime thought. Similarly, subterranean depth is a reversed verticality. Obviously, the u-topic in this sense has nothing in common with an abstract imaginary. It is real. It is at the very heart of the real, the urban reality that can't exist without this ferment. Within urban space, elsewhere is everywhere and nowhere. It has been this way ever since there have been cities, and ever since, alongside objects and actions, there have been situations, especially those involving people (individuals and groups) associated with divinity, power, or the imaginary. This is a paradoxical space where paradox becomes the opposite of the everyday. *Monumentality* is diffused, radiates, becomes condensed, concentrated. A monument extends far beyond itself, beyond its facade (assuming it has one), its internal space. Height and depth are generally part of monumentality, the fullness of a space that overflows its material boundaries. In the cities of the ancient

world, nothing escaped this monumentality because it was plural (plurality: sacred buildings, political buildings, palaces, theatricalized meeting places, stadiums, etc.). So what had no place to speak of—divinity, majesty, royalty, justice, liberty, thought—was at home everywhere. Not without contradictions, of course.

This urban space *is* concrete contradiction. The study of its logic and formal properties leads to a dialectical analysis of its contradictions. The urban center fills to saturation; it decays or explodes. From time to time, it reverses direction and surrounds itself with emptiness and scarcity. More often, it assumes and proposes the concentration of *everything* there is in the world, in nature, in the cosmos: the fruits of the earth, the products of industry, human works, objects and instruments, acts and situations, signs and symbols. These can be embodied anywhere. Anything can become a home, a place of convergence, a privileged site, to the extent that every urban space bears within it this possible-impossible, its own negation—to the extent that every urban space was, is, and will be concentrated and poly(multi)centric. The shape of the urban space evokes and provokes this process of concentration and dispersion: crowds, colossal accumulation, evacuation, sudden ejection. The urban is defined as the place where people walk around, find themselves standing before and inside piles of objects, experience the intertwining of the threads of their activities until they become unrecognizable, entangle situations in such a way that they engender unexpected situations. The definition of this space contains a null vector (virtually); the cancellation of distance haunts the occupants of urban space. It is their dream, their symbolized imaginary, represented in a multiplicity of ways—on maps, in the frenzy of encounters and meetings, in the enjoyment of speed "even in the city." This is utopia (real, concrete). The result is the transcendence of the closed and the open, the immediate and the mediate, near and far

orders, within a *differential reality* in which these terms are no longer separated but become immanent differences. A thought that is moving toward concrete unity (selectively) reuses particularities that have been raised to the level of difference: local, regional, national, ethnic, linguistic, ethical, aesthetic. In spite of any efforts at homogenization through technology, in spite of the constitution of arbitrary isotopies, that is, separation and segregation, no urban place is identical to another. My analysis may seem somewhat formal. In fact, it applies to New York and Tokyo as much as it does to Paris. It is a way of illuminating an urban society, with its immanent dialectic, which extends past and future along a new plane. Perhaps, through this unitary and differential thought, we will enter a period that is no longer part of history, a time when particularities confronted one another, when uniformity struggled with heterogeneity. Gatherings, encounters, and meetings (although not without their specific conflicts) would supplant the struggle between separate and now antinomic elements. In this sense, it would be *posthistoric.*

Therefore, the urban considered as a field is not simply an empty space filled with objects. If there is blindness, it does not arise simply because we can't see these objects and the space appears empty. No, the urban is a highly complex field of tensions, a virtuality, a possible-impossible that attracts the accomplished, an ever-renewed and always demanding presence-absence. Blindness consists in the fact that we cannot see the shape of the urban, the vectors and tensions inherent in this field, its logic and dialectic movement, its immanent demands. We see only things, operations, objects (functional and/or signifying in a fully accomplished way). With respect to the urban, there is a twofold blindness, whose emptiness and virtuality are masked by plenitude. The fact that this plenitude is called urbanism only serves to more cruelly illuminate the blind. Moreover, this plenitude

borrows the objects and products, the industrial operations and technologies of the previous epoch of industrialization. The urban is veiled; it flees thought, which blinds itself, and becomes fixated only on a clarity that is in retreat from the actual.

The (relative) discontinuities between the industrial and the urban are masked and misleadingly smoothed over (as they were and often still are between the rural and the industrial). If this blindness toward industry, its possibilities and demands, had not existed, would we have allowed it to invade the world, ravage nature, sow the planet with horror and ugliness throughout the course of a blood-soaked history? Would we have placed our limitless confidence in its rationality? Such considerations may seem utopian—and they are! And yet both Saint-Simon and, later, Marx believed, projected, that we could control and guide the process of industrialization. They weren't satisfied with understanding a blind process by leaving it in darkness or even simply illuminating it. Today, the urban reality itself, with its problematic and practice, is hidden, replaced by representations (ideological and institutional) that bear the name "urbanism." The name plugs the hole, fills the in-between. I'll return to this later.[3]

The confusion between the industrial (practice and theory, whether capitalist or socialist) and the urban ends up by subordinating one to the other in a hierarchy of actions, considering the urban as an effect, a result, or a means. This confusion has serious consequences, for it leads to the production of a pseudoconcept of the urban, namely, *urbanism,* the application of industrial rationality, and the evacuation of urban rationality.

The (difficult) transition is methodological and theoretical as much as, if not more than, it is empirical.

Every era has its own forms of authoritarianism, reformism, and revolution. We could also say that every period,

every era, every sphere has its own forms of alienation and disalienation, which conflict in ways that are unique to themselves. In the first field, the agricultural sphere, historically the family and patriarchal society grow and flourish (and slavery can seem like a positive development). This is followed by the growing importance of family life and the social relations of feudalism (at least in Europe, where feudalism is established on a territorial basis, the seigneur being "eminent" master of a fief, the head of one or more villages). Since agrarian structures generally shift toward a concentration of property, history retains the signs of countless revolutionary movements: local or generalized revolts, jacqueries, brigandage, vigilante groups motivated by varying ideologies, frequently mystical. Finally, the concentration of property in the hands of allied or rival feudal lords, followed by a bourgeoisie that itself joined forces with or fought those feudal lords, resulted in *agrarian reform* projects. The widespread demand for land and the transfer of vast amounts of property provided the impetus for revolutionary movements that would transform the entire society: the French revolution of 1789, the Russian revolution of 1917, the Chinese and Cuban revolutions.

The period of industrialization gave rise to the well-known paternalism of the company owner or boss. At times, and even now, patriarchalism (peasant) and paternalism (industrial) became superimposed and strengthened one another, giving rise to an ideal head of state. Because industrialization makes considerable demands (capital accumulation, the use of all of a country's resources, a form of planned organization that extends corporate rationality to every aspect of a country's life), it has contradictory political consequences: revolution and authoritarianism, with both processes interacting in so-called socialist countries. These reforms and revolutions, the result of the process of industrialization, have become intertwined, a phenomenon that characterizes the period that has just ended.

The symptoms of the transition to the urban period are already beginning to manifest themselves. Urban paternalism is rampant, although masked by the figures of previous ages. The urban "notables" who exercise authority share in the prestige of the Father and the Captain of industry. Urban reform, which would clear the soil of the servitude that results from private property (and consequently from speculation), already has a revolutionary component. Entire continents are making the transition from earlier forms of revolutionary action to urban guerrilla warfare, to political objectives that affect urban life and organization (without being able to omit or resolve the problems of industrial and agricultural organization superimposed on this). The period of urban revolutions has begun.

This confirms the assumption of three successive fields throughout historical time. I should add that the most recent, the one that is currently emerging, acts simultaneously as a catalyst and analyst of the field, or rather of preexisting fields (agrarian and industrial). It focuses and precipitates characteristics that were vague and confused. It clarifies unresolved conflicts and contradictions by reactivating them (for example, in South America). Thus, the rise of industrialization, along with the new relations of production (capitalist), revealed the characteristics of peasant (and feudal) society, relations that were veiled within a turbid transparency for those who "lived" them without understanding them.

The hierarchy of this society (experienced as family and neighborhood relationships), the exploitation (experienced as a protective relation, as subordination of the community to the seigneur as "judge"), appeared for what they were. Similarly, today, the urban reveals the industrial, which appears as a hierarchy that is paired with a highly refined form of exploitation. Decision-making centers (urban) help us read these complex relationships in situ. They project them onto the soil, visibly contrasting the organizational activity

of the "decision makers," supported by those who own and administer the means of production, with the passivity of the "subjects" who accept this domination. Moreover (although this is not the place to develop the idea fully), societies that did not experience a crisis during industrialization will undoubtedly do so during urbanization, since these two orders of causes or reasons can be superimposed, combined, or offset. Using these concepts, we can study the current situation in the United States, South America, nonsocialist Asia, and so on.

During this vast process of transformation, space reveals its true nature as (1) a political space, the site and object of various strategies, and (2) a projection of time, reacting against and enabling us to dominate time, and consequently to exploit it to death, as it does today—which presages the liberation of time-space.

3 || The Urban Phenomenon

From this point on I will no longer refer to the city but to the urban. Having introduced the concept of the urban and its virtual nature in chapter 2, I would now like to analyze the phenomenon in the context of the "real" (the quotes around the world "real" reflect the fact that the possible is also part of the real and gives it a sense of direction, an orientation, a clear path to the horizon).

Today, the urban phenomenon astonishes us by its scale; its complexity surpasses the tools of our understanding and the instruments of practical activity. It serves as a constant reminder of the theory of *complexification*, according to which social phenomena acquire increasingly greater complexity. The theory originated in the so-called natural sciences and the general theory of information, but has shifted toward social reality and our understanding of it. Social relations have never been simple, even in archaic society. The Cartesian schema of primitive simplicity and the complication obtained by combining simple elements must be abandoned. The theory of complexification may seem to be philosophical and even idealistic (ideological), but is in fact based on