

of the spectator of the race and he sees in one eternal instant the start of the race, the race itself and the end— all in one glance.»

The inventor of the fable enjoys, with his imagination, one splendid, eternal instant, a giddy instant that is eternity.

The artist possesses this eternity and, through his imagination, develops it in time.

Reflecting on dreams can illustrate even more this transforming «mission» of time. It is difficult to analyse dreams since we only possess the memory of them. Filled with simultaneous images, they do not remain in their original form when we wake. We are accustomed to our sequential life and our imagination arranges the images and presents us with a narrative. But while we are sleeping, we possess what Borges calls «our little personal eternity which lets us see our past and present side by side».

We see that time appears once again as inevitably responsible for the narrative. In this context the idea of our waking being a dream seems highly suggestive, the artist as the possessor of the dream (or waking state?), capable with his imagination of arranging it as a narrative, without losing its eternity. Possible too, since, to paraphrase Shakespeare, «we are made of the same stuff as our dreams».

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## LANGUAGE AND WORDS

PERE RIERA

«Words designate things, but without a language that will globally give them meaning, they are nothing. Language comes before words because without it we wouldn't even know what words are. Identity stems not from having names but from belonging to the world. Thus, christening is not purely an act of classification but an initiation rite, a rite of belonging to a meaningful whole, outside of which there is only the repeated and incomprehensible sound of a name». L.C.

### PART ONE: ON HOW INVERSIONS GENERATE NEW VERSIONS

«When my client begins filling my head with his little necessities, I accept only to a certain degree, until I say no, impossible! Because at that point I am outside the rules of my own game, the game I have chosen to play: the game of this house, of this combination, the rule from which it has emerged in the moment of creation, that has developed, become firm and is now the master. Everything inside the rule! Nothing outside of it! Otherwise, there is no reason for my existence. Here lies the key. A reason to exist: play the game. To participate, though in a human way; that is, within a certain order, a pure order. But first one must have looked, seen, observed». (Fragment from L.C.'s last text, written soon before his death)

Charles was one of those very wealthy «honest men» who peopled the French cultural circles. Like Voisin or Frugés they were all partly authors, composers, musicians and painters. Beistegui, who was captivated by the beauty of the castles owned by Luis II of Baviera, was a great admirer of views against the light, of nighttime and of all the supraréality that fantasy can invent.

He enjoyed surrounding himself with precious forms of baroque, Luis XIV<sup>th</sup> or Gothic style, and a crowd of venerable carrions. Beistegui was a retrospective ragman who dared to theorize about the aesthetics of «piling things up» as the only element capable of creating an atmosphere.

«Big windows like the ones in aquariums, bare white walls are alright for hospitals and airports, but in a private house they offer a very limited choice of elements for creating an atmosphere» said Beistegui, who was considered the arbitrator of decorative elegance in Paris: Charli, as he was called by his friends —had «le grand goût» as did Luis XIV.

But above Beistegui and his friends, the Arabian Nights were the natural element of an elite of evident orientalism, sumptuous parties in Biarritz, Paris, Venice, Saint Moritz and Rome, enlivened with songs by Josephine Baker who would walk arm in arm with her friend L.C. through the Botanical Garden in Rio de Janeiro; meanwhile Zizi Jeamarie rode his camel through the rooms of the Grand Hotel in Biarritz, waving to Henri Sauvage, Pierre Patout, Louis Süe, Charly Sicls, Jena Charles Moreux, Forestier, Rob Mallet Stevens, Raymond Roussel, L.C., Ozenfant, Picasso, Gertrude Stein, Gabrielle de Monzie, Anatole de Monzie, Minister of Public Works, and more, many more beloved friends: sons of an era of exaltation in which the contrast between the old and the new produced a style of life and culture which, though already beginning to recede, had filled the better part of the twentieth century.

In the past century, Baudelaire made us love «la foule», the crowds, industrial cities, the gaslight that domesticated darkness in the urban night, the streets, alive and passionate; the elites of the 20's invented the culture of attics. Subversion from the summit. The solitude of those who are usually in good company. Far from the «clochards» and the productive cars, the top floors of the buildings began to fill up with amusing, wealthy

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and refined inhabitants who were rediscovering the advantages of flat roofs and terraces. This ancestral rite carried out in countries of the south Mediterranean, which had always been disdained by the cultured and powerful people of Paris, was the precursor in the use of a flat top which has become one of the symbols of modern architecture.

According to them, in order to flee the city one must move upwards, towards the sky, far away from traffic and be able to see everything down below, shining in the distance. In order to move out of buildings one must move out to the terraces and fill them with new and amusing gadgets.

This was how Charles de Beistegui's apartment on 136 Avenue des Champs Elysées was designed. Indeed, Beistegui's apartment: a domestic version of the box of miracles: by pressing an electric button, the green door, the hedge would open up and Paris appeared in the background. In the evening you have dinner and dance under the sky of Paris, while cars circulate below at the foot of the building. The Eiffel Tower lights up. The Arch of Triumph appears and becomes part of the picture.

At the very top, after a little staircase, the stone door turns on its electric hinges and silently closes behind us. A solarium? No, an open room, our host points out, an apartment out in the open. My work is surrealist. Along this false path, a clock with a pendulum and a few small candlesticks. A mirror reflects the sun. The objects that we usually see under a certain light acquire a new and surprising effect under this new light.

The result is a profound geometric inversion of objects and words which will inevitably alter the meaning of the language. Having conveniently altered the «normal» order of the same words, fireplace and wall, the meaning of the language has been broken, leaving an open wound from which fresh new blood flows, offering the possibility of new interpretations.

Reality is only one of the possible languages of appearance, though we know, as O. Paz says, that *words and things bleed from the same wound*.

Cosmic dance never ceases. Time and space devour each other eternally, as does the race for knowledge about the unknown and mysterious. Nothing ever follows a straight path and thus always offers artists all the possibilities; that is, to those who feel obliged to give names to unexplored territories, those who go in search of all possible languages, even when they suffer with the knowledge that the world is more plural and complex than any language that seeks to represent it.

I must confess that I was so impressed with this image of Beistegui's attic that I still haven't ceased to reflect on it and feel enraptured.

But how could a purist and radical innovator like L.C. give Beistegui an answer?

To begin with, I conceive this open room as a space for contact between Charles and L.C.. A marvellous meeting space for two people from very different worlds, where L.C. had the chance of proving his skill and producing one of the most paradigmatic spaces in modern architecture. No doubt Charles and his world had much to do with it.

The architectural response is inevitably conditioned by the client by way of a subtle intermingling of reciprocal influences which are not easy to unravel. And this is alright. The young architect usually sees his client as the deathly enemy of his architecture and considers his own proposal unquestionable and of unique value. In time, one learns that there is always a good reason behind foolishness and that people don't talk just for the sake of doing so; although sometimes it is very difficult, our attitude in relation to our proposal achieves a certain degree of flexibility which allows for enrichment and adjustment that is not degrading, but rather improves the efficiency of the proposal. But if this is to happen we must let ourselves be surprised constantly and not tire too soon.

Let us finally enter the open room, the «*boîte à miracles*», the origin from which L.C.'s architectural idea stems.

A few days ago our students at the Escola del Vallés and ourselves, the teachers, had the exceptional opportunity of spending a few days with one of the few professors we still have in Spain: Alejandro de la Sota. I still remember his words clearly:

«Man crystallizes in the diedrical system». As opposed to dreams and the mechanisms of visual perception (where the former crystallize along the length of an infinite space supported by instantaneous time, and the latter by a spherical system), the bodily experience of our surroundings (which is the first point of reference that human experience has of the world), crystallizes in a front and back, an above and a below, one side

and another. That is, it crystallizes in a geometric framework supported by the diedrical system as a step which is previous to other perhaps more phenomenological considerations.

In this way, the wall, roof and floor appear as elements that architecture has produced as an answer to the needs of human life. In this case, L.C. satisfies the requests of his clients and at the same time he ritually commemorates (let us remember that rite is that which something becomes depending on its origin) the founding act of Architecture; he erects a monument, first to the wall and then to the courtyard, and establishes a set of spatial relationships which can, in all their purity, potentially harbour the widespread possibilities of life.

L.C. defines the best possible scenery for everyday existence and simultaneously relates it to the overall of that which is essential. In other words, he blends the individual adventure with the amplitude of the collective effort of the human species.

In order to understand this, we must hypothetically move over the infinite surface of a desert. Suddenly, a wall appears between us and the horizon and everything is organized in a new way. A front and back have been created. A sunny area and a shady area. A piece of horizon has been covered up and our eyes rest on a landmark that is nearer.

If this wall calls on another, set at a right angle, a corner is created. The creation of an incipient receptacle has begun and completing the operation with four walls, a courtyard is founded; an interior room constructed with a roof and a hole to be able to enter it, the embryo of what will be the mediterranean house.

A house visually open to the sky and closed to the horizon. A house firmly planted on the ground; which does not set bounds to the vertical dimension but clearly limits movement and vision in the four horizontal directions.

But what happens in this courtyard?

We easily understand the architectural operation of defining the courtyard, but there is one element that makes the meaning of the whole unsteady, on the one hand, but stabilizes it from an existential point of view, on the other : the fireplace.

It is unsteady because it is an interior element (with a roof). Because it shouldn't be where it is. It is an interior element but it is exposed, it is «out of place». Thus it finds a meaningful way out, breaking the objectivity of a shared language and spontaneously creating new ones.

It is not a courtyard or a terrace. It is the perfect room that serves as the paradigm of the sublimation of matter. You cannot give more with less. The ground has no flooring, no separations, no embossing. The wall is white. The sky is the roof par excellence. Everything is pure, abstract. Newborn. With no original stain or blemish.

L.C. is driven to the limit of his capacities in order to satisfy his sophisticated and capricious clients and, at the same time, remain within the rule of architecture: order.

But all this is still not enough.

In his book «*What is literature?*», Jean Paul Sartre says that thought hides man, and that man is what we are really interested in. Although one thought can do away with the shameful of tears, the passionate origin of these lessens the aggressiveness of thought. This is what «true», «pure» literature is like: subjectivity which moves freely inside objective forms.

Human appropriation of space is supported by mediating objects that alter the original geometric neutrality of space and *direct* it. Without direction, space remains a prisoner to concept and is not suitable for living in. As when drawing a picture, there is always a point of view.

In Beistegui's attic, L.C. does a double somersault. He directs space in an anticlassical way: rejecting a centre in the middle of the floor (the wall is the main universal support) and rejecting the axial type of composition. Instead he directs it with an object which is useless in practice, but is symbolically full of strength: an exposed fireplace. Thus he happily unites Architecture and everyday life in such a way that it is profitable for both.

This fireplace has no chimney. But the remembrance and the smoke of dreams and vision complete the figure of vertical smoke, which is the counterpoint to the horizontality of the wall. It is, in fact, a metaphysical window through which the dreams of the users escape.

This fireplace indicates a centre, but a centre that is shifted towards the wall.

Without it, space would be a pure concept. Hard and infinite. With no point of reference. Only understood as a geometric possibility.

**PART TWO: A FEW AFTERTHOUGHTS. THE QUESTION IS; SHOULD THE PERPENDICULAR PLANE BE LIMITED TO THE SENSE OF VISION AND MOVEMENT OR SHOULD IT BE LIMITED TO THE FORCE OF GRAVITY WHICH HIDES THE SKY, OR BOTH AT THE SAME TIME?**

What's important is how the floor is treated and how the landmarks and vertical elements are arranged on it. The rhythmic treatment of open spaces.

The perpendicular plane must be limited to the sense of vision and movement. Spaces for rest, for concentration, for privacy. A spatial sensation that must be restored in modern architecture. Homage to Barragán.

The perpendicular plane must be limited to the force of gravity. Spaces for action and participation. Domesticity becomes more social, privacy more universal. Definitely, modern architecture can do without the opaque solid wall.

Architecture is the wise, correct and magnificent combination of volumes under the light...

I am very interested in the course taken by L.C. after Beisteguis apartment and which leads him to build Ronchamp. An incredibly seductive, tender and wise L.C. who seems to enjoy contradicting himself but never loses the necessary strength. His vigour and courage led him to write these beautiful words soon before his death.

*«Sure enough, only thought can be transmitted, the noble fruit of labour. This thought may or may not prevail over destiny, beyond death, and can take on a different and unpredictable dimension.*

*It is necessary to reencounter man. We must rediscover the straight line that joins the axis of fundamental laws: biology, nature, cosmos. A straight line as indistortable as the horizon of the ocean.*

*The professional, also as indistortable as the horizon of the ocean, must be a measuring point, a standard that serves as a guideline in the midst of that which is fluctuating and in movement. This is his social role. This role is what makes him more farsighted than the rest. His disciples have established the orthogonal in their spirit. Morality: laugh off honours, trust ones own strength, act according to ones own conscience. it is not by following in the steps of heroes that one can act, undertake something and carry it out.*

*All this is thought out, formulated and brought forth during a fleeting lifetime of frenzy which will come to an end before we know it».*

# SPACE AS A THOUGHT, SPACE AS A FIGURE AND SPACE AS LIFE

NELLY SCHNAITH

Space is a dimension of fundamental significance in any culture although the importance given to it has not always been constant throughout history, nor is it conceded the same pre-eminence by different cultures. I propose to examine this question briefly by taking as a guideline the two following key questions:

How has the problem of space been dealt with in our tradition?

Where exactly can this problem be situated within the context of western cultures?

Space is an axial dimension of human life. Its coordinates determine, at any period of time and within the specific features of different societies, the way man understands himself. This does not mean that space should always be assigned a privileged function when attempting to interpret the human problems that each different culture creates for or imposes on its members. For a long time, in our case, that particular function was allocated to time. Today, problems deriving from spatiality pervade all contemporary man's attempts to come to terms with himself, either through art, reflection or even daily praxis.

«A contemporary space exists». This quotation by Georges Matoré heads an important article titled «Space and Language» to be found in Gerard Genette's book *Figures*. The author himself comments on this thesis by establishing the two or three hypotheses which are implicit: «Above all, language, thought and contemporary art are *spatialised* or at least manifest an increase in the importance given to space; secondly, space is one, that is, it tends to be reduced to a unit in spite of diversifying differences in register and interpretative contrasts. Finally this unit is founded evidently on certain specific features which distinguish our space, or at least our notion of it from that of our immediate predecessors or their forefathers.

Genette adds a psychosocial explanation to these three descriptive hypotheses: Man today senses that his life is an «anguish» and his inner feelings an obsession. Victim of this absurdity and cast adrift, he attempts to reassert himself by constructing planes and figures which take their stability and firmness from the space of geometry.

The author goes on to say that this «space-refuge» offers man relative, provisional hospitality in that science and modern philosophy do what they can to bewilder him by changing the accepted reference points of this «geometry of common sense» and by inventing a disconcerting topology, a space-time, a space-curve, a fourth dimension, a non Euclidean face to the universe made up of an awesome space-vertigo within which present day artists and writers construct their labyrinths.

Space emerges as attractive and frightening, favourable and malevolent. Matoré's book analyses many of the spatial metaphors of our time: the party line; future perspective; internal distance; the divine plan. Space creates metaphors, it is a means by which other things are understood and made clear. In this sense space offers a wide range of conceptual metaphors to the field of notions and enables man to understand himself: domain, region, register, level, zone, plane, field, threshold, etc.

Apart from the plastic arts which engender a space constructed from the work itself, we find that both literature and thought express themselves today in terms of space. All these *figures* (title of three important books by Genette: Figures I, II, III) make up the system of images with which contemporary man interprets himself. Contemporary space as expressed by Matoré is that system of images which in semiotic terms *signifies* man. However, this reflection on space has to be understood, if its real