

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

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

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

XII

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

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

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

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

XIII

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XIV

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

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

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

XV

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XVI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The trouble with this thesis³² is that it assumes the logical, epistemological and anthropological priority of language over space. By the same token, it puts prohibitions – among them that against incest – and not productive activity, at the origin of society. The pre-existence of an objective, neutral and empty space is simply taken as read, and only the space of speech (and writing) is dealt with as something that must be created. These assumptions obviously cannot become the basis for an adequate account of social/spatial practice. They apply only to an imaginary society, an ideal type or model of society which this ideology dreams up and then arbitrarily identifies with all ‘real’ societies. All the same, the existence within space of *phallic verticality*, which has a long history but which at present is becoming more prevalent, cries out for explanation. The same might be said apropos of the general fact that walls, enclosures and façades serve to define both a *scene* (where something takes place) and an *obscene* area to which everything that cannot or may not happen on the scene is relegated: whatever is inadmissible, be it malefic or forbidden, thus has its own hidden space on the near or the far side of a frontier. It is true that explaining everything in psychoanalytic terms, in terms of the unconscious, can only lead to an intolerable reductionism and dogmatism; the same goes for the overestimation of the ‘structural’. Yet structures do exist, and there is such a thing as the ‘unconscious’. Such little-understood aspects of consciousness would provide sufficient justification in themselves for research in this area. If it turned out, for instance, that every society, and particularly (for our purposes) the city, had an underground and repressed life, and hence an ‘unconscious’ of its own, there can be no doubt that interest in psychoanalysis, at present on the decline, would get a new lease on life.

XVII

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There have been societies – the Chavin of the Peruvian Andes are a case in point³³ – whose representation of space is attested to by the plans of their temples and palaces, while their representational space appears in their art works, writing-systems, fabrics, and so on. What would be the relationship between two such aspects of a particular period? A problem confronting us here is that we are endeavouring with conceptual means to reconstruct a connection which originally in no way resembled the application of a pre-existing knowledge to ‘reality’. Things become very difficult for us in that symbols which we can readily conceive and intuit are inaccessible as such to our abstract knowledge – a knowledge that is bodiless and timeless, sophisticated and efficacious, yet ‘unrealistic’ with respect to certain ‘realities’. The question is what intervenes, what occupies the interstices between representations of space and representational spaces. A culture, perhaps? Certainly – but the word has less content than it seems to have. The work of artistic creation? No doubt – but that leaves unanswered the queries ‘By whom?’ and ‘How?’ Imagination? Perhaps – but why? and for whom?

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

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

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