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Notes towards a Humane Environment: A Defense of History in Architecture
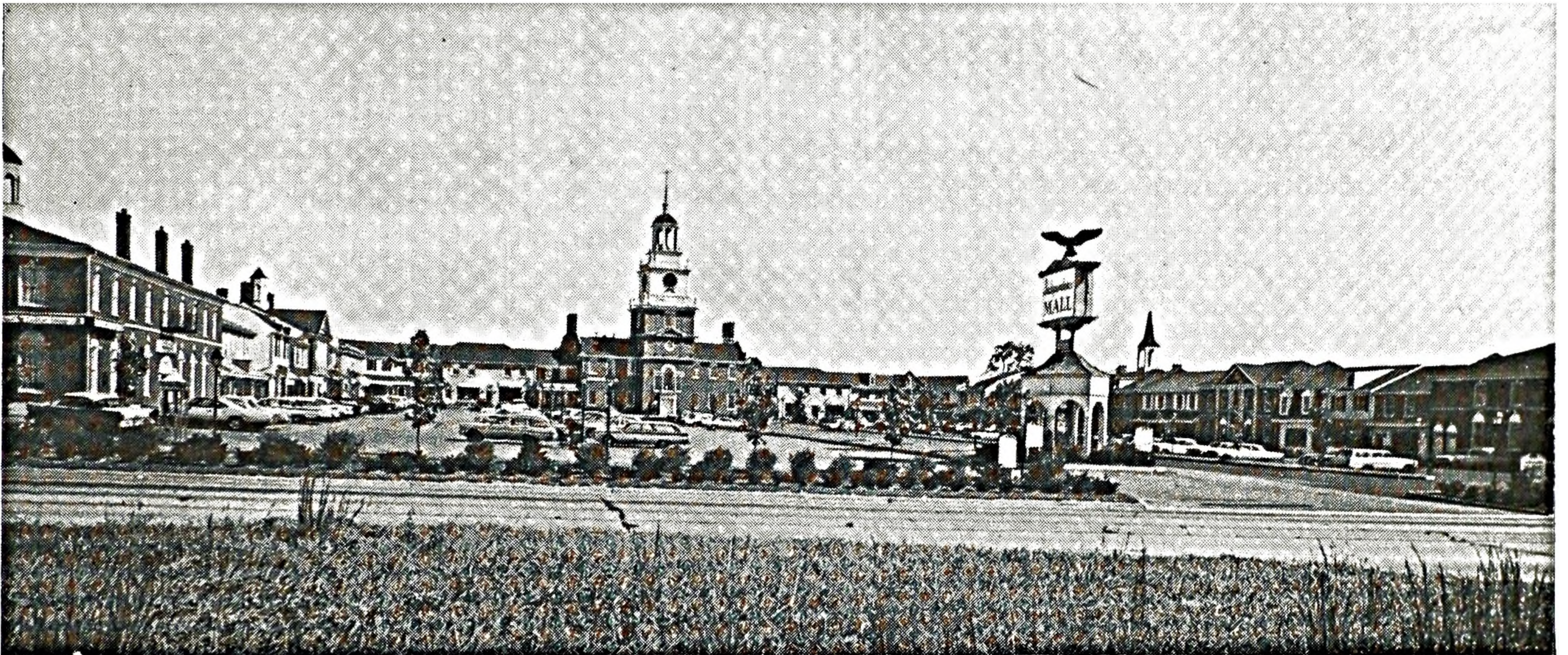
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Notes towards a Humane Environment:
A Defense of History in Architecture
I
Independence Hall and Independence Mall

INDEPENDENCE MALL SHOPPING CENTER. Concord Pike, Wilmington, Delaware.
*Designed by Emilio Capaldi in 1963 to provide the shopper (according to a 1963 **Philadelphia Inquirer** interview) "a stroll through 'historic Philadelphia' with its quaint shoppe fronts and colonial atmosphere... Independence Hall, Betsy Ross House, Library Hall, Letitia Penn House... all recreated from golden moments of the past to implement and serve the present." The erudite may detect echoes of such monumental axial designs as the 1893 Columbian Exposition at Chicago; Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia campus at Monticello; the original arrangement of colonial King Carter's church — even, possibly, the monumental mall approaching Independence Hall shrine itself.*

In the early 1960s the United States Government began a multi-million-dollar transformation of the Pennsylvania colonial assembly's simple 18th-century meeting-house into a monument to American national ideals. The project was justified on grounds that this was a building which for Americans everywhere had come to symbolize independence and liberty. And there was historical precedent — Independence Hall was possibly the first American building to be restored as a monument. Its tower and cupola, which in typical 18th century usage had set off the otherwise utilitarian structure as one having civic and ceremonial functions, had been repaired in deliberately Colonial style by William Strickland in 1827, and

self-consciously on several occasions thereafter as well. The 1960s project in effect consisted of putting this unpretentious and (in its own time) not particularly remarkable structure into a grandiose frame — an axial avenue down which proud citizens were to promenade with a gravity appropriate to monumental occasions.

On this reconstruction no end of distinguished scholars and architects laboured. And it would be fair to say, that, while there was considerable disagreement as to the setting, nobody disputed the principle of restoring the building as a shape meaningful to all Americans.

In these same early 1960s, one Emilio Capaldi began a series of shopping malls. Capaldi was a

contractor, who, as explained in a newspaper interview at the time, had risen from humble origins to become reasonably wealthy and civic-minded and accordingly chose for his shopping centres a shape which was for him a meaningful symbol of the government and economic system to which he owed his success: Independence Hall. The result: his series of "Independent Malls". Each consists of a U-shaped block centred on a replica of Independence Hall. Or more exactly, on an Independence Hall facade — for both the central feature and flanking Philadelphia-vicinity landmarks are facades only, attached to a red brick shell.

What scholars and experts engaged upon the Independence Hall project thought about Mr. Capaldi's "Independent Malls" — when they thought about them at all, which was little and seldom — has not been formally recorded.

But unofficially their amusement and contempt may be guessed. The idea that Mr. Capaldi was engaged in anything resembling the art of architecture was too ridiculous to consider even for a moment.

But perhaps the idea is worth considering? If a shape like Independence Hall's is meaningful enough to be enshrined as a national symbol for millions, why is it not meaningful enough to be reproduced in a life-and-work, setting also? Why is it "architecture" in one context and not in another?

The answer is, that between the time Independence Hall was constructed and the time of its restoration in the 1960s, a fundamental change has occurred in the basic definition of what architecture is. Nowadays, architecture is primarily concerned with evoking in spectators certain types of emotional and aesthetic reaction. In the *Inland Architect* a few years ago, Philip Johnson undertook to cite the six most important buildings of the 20th century. His criterion was simple — these were the six buildings which had given him the "greatest thrill" when he entered them. Whence we may derive a definition — a building may be called Great Architecture, when it gives a thrill to some Great Architect who enters it. So far, no problem. Now what is a Great Architect? Why, a Great Architect is a person who designs buildings which give a thrill to Great Architects who enter them. Somewhere, we seem to be going around in circles. Nor have we explained why is it a splendid project to restore Independence Hall as a meaningful symbolic shape, but a dreadful travesty to imitate Independence Hall in a shopping centre for exactly the same symbolic reasons. All we have

in fact said is, that most people educated in architectural schools do not consider Mr. Capaldi a Great Architect, thence the fact that he gets a thrill upon entering one of his shopping centres does not qualify it to be called Great Architecture. Could we but find someone to give either Mr. Capaldi or his shopping centres the necessary *imprimatur*, the whole situation would presumably be transformed. Furthermore — and this is a distressing, even alarming thought — should Mr. Johnson and his six great buildings of the 20th century somehow lose the *imprimatur* they presently have, they in their turn might come to seem as worthless as popular architecture does now.

Clearly, an unsatisfactory situation. What has gone wrong? The problem is, I submit, a basic definition of architecture. What we call architecture — the idea of architecture being defined as something evoking an emotional response — is a very different kind of activity from what defined the art of architecture in earlier, historic ages. Our present definition is purely subjective. It depends upon a contemporary climate of opinion, upon certain unspoken hopes of a better society, and associations therewith of certain forms and ways of handling materials — "brute" forms, for example, somehow evoking ideals of simple unspoiled life free of artificial restrictions, and so-forth. We need to go back to the beginning.

Let us begin with the proposition that architecture is not, and can never be, a private art. It is possible, though difficult, to think of painting or sculpture as something essentially private — a sort of communion between creators and their materials. The art of architecture cannot be so conceived. Architecture has to do with society — it is a collective enterprise. It therefore has to do in one way or another, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, with basic beliefs and values. It has to do with convictions, in the sense of presuppositions taken for granted, which necessarily underlie all the institutions of any society. Making metaphors of such presuppositions is in fact what the art of architecture was about from its beginnings down to the mid-19th century. This traditional concept of the art of architecture has been very well set forth by Norris K. Smith, architectural historian at Washington University in St. Louis:

"According to Nikolaus Pevsner, 'A bicycle shed is a building. Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture... The term architecture applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal.' Zevi disputes this, contending, rightly enough, that a bicycle shed may be designed

so as to be aesthetically appealing. But would this make it a work of architectural art? I think not, because it would still be unrelated to any area of institutional meaning. Palace, house, tomb, capitol, court, temple, church — these, mainly, are the buildings which stand for the institutionalized patterns of human relatedness which make possible the endurance of the city, or of society, or of the state: and these have provided almost all the occasions for meaningful architectural art for the past five thousand years. They bear upon realms of experience which have given rise to great quantities of painting and poetry; but one would be hard put to find either a painter or a poet who could make much out of the occasion or the experience of bicycle-parking. Nor can the architect endow it with significance...

To put it bluntly, architecture has always been the art of the Establishment. It has been bought and paid for exclusively by successful, prosperous, property-owning institutions with a stake in the preservation of the status quo. and it has generally exhibited its greatest power and originality at times when those institutions have been threatened and in need of support. Needless to say, the other arts have also been patronized by members of those institutions. The uniqueness of architecture lies in the fact that it is *about* the institutional establishment, as the other arts generally are not, though on occasion they may be..."

"A building may be said to be a work of architectural art, then insofar as it serves as a visual metaphor, declaring in its own form something (though never everything) about the size, permanence. strength. protectiveness. and organizational structure of the institution it stands for (but does not necessarily house.)"
[*Frank Lloyd Wright, A Study in Architectural Content*, pp. 8, 9, 10]

This is a definition of architecture in terms of social function — what buildings *do*, in an for society. And that is the way works of architectural art historically were always conceived and evaluated.

According to orthodox art-historical theory, the idea of architecture as meaningful visual metaphor began disappearing in the 18th century. By now, it has completely gone. Where now can you find a professional school of architecture or design that teaches any such approach to their art? True enough. But it is only the *théory* of traditional architecture that has disappeared. Look about — and you will find buildings like Independence Malls everywhere. All through popular and commercial building, the traditional concept of architecture as meaningful visual metaphor survives. This is what we can show as counterpart to the art of architecture as understood throughout most of history.

In terms of sheer numbers, this traditional art of architecture is thriving among us. According to surveys, at least 90% of all buildings belong in this commercial and popular category, erected without benefit of clergy — without, that is, contact with professionally-trained advice. Some say it may be as high as 95%.

Quality is another matter. Ours is an urban landscape by and large devoid of architectural graces — barren, banal, cheap. But what can you expect? If sensitive and skilled designers are being taught to ignore social function, then society's need for unifying visual metaphors must and will be served by others — people who, for lack of education or lack of native abilities or whyever, seem insensitive to proportion, massing, voids, texturing, and similar aesthetic qualities. If we are ever to create a living counterpart to the urban graciousness of ordinary 18th century building like Independence Hall, then somehow we need to put aesthetic expression and social function together again — as they were in earlier ages.

II
A Hole in the Ground
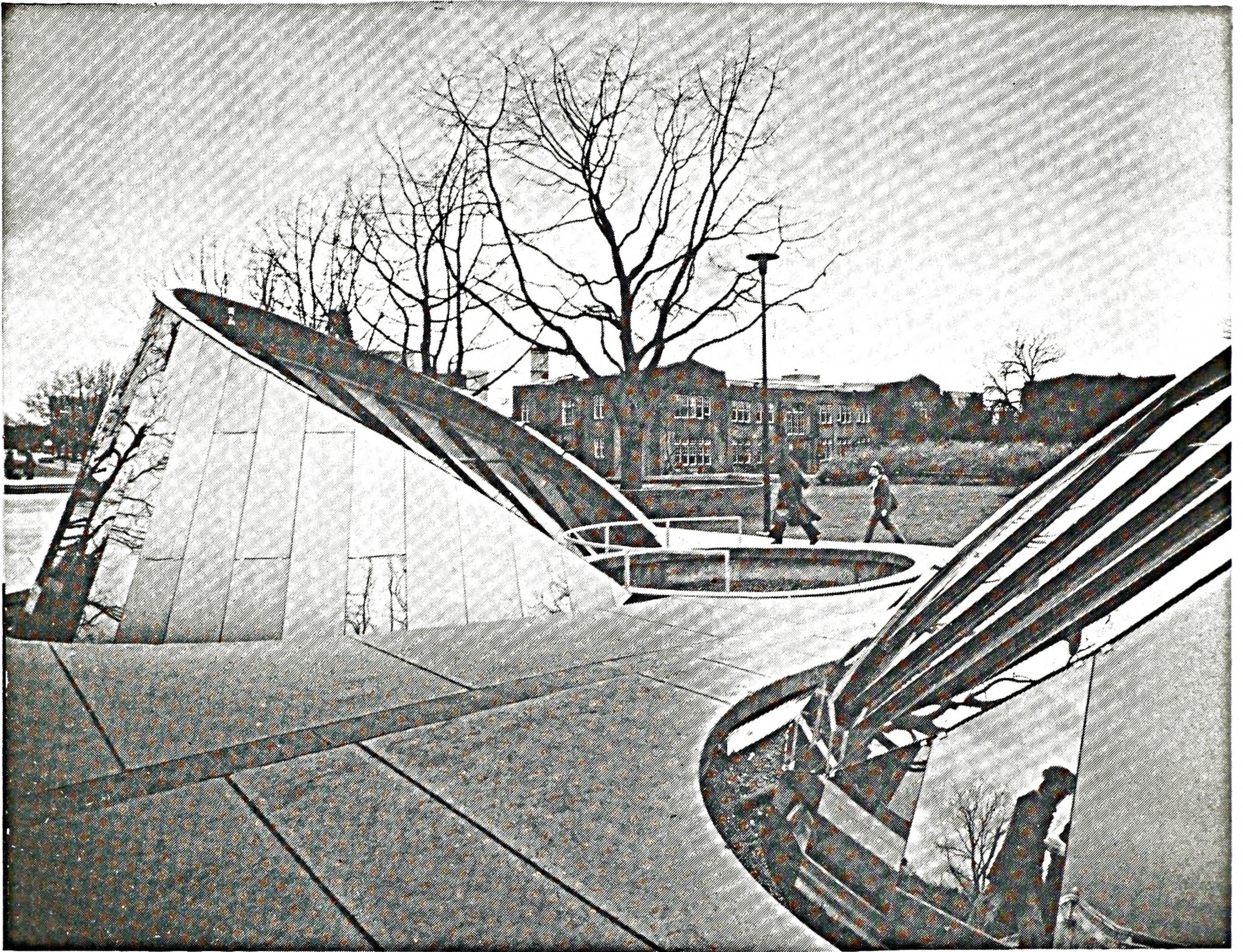
Sedgewick underground Library, University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Rhone & Iredale, Architects. Photo SELWYN PULLAN. It was built to fit between eight steel-sided "flower pots" or caissons which protect the roots of an oak tree. It may go too far to suggest that here is a visual metaphor of Louis Heller's Death of the American University (1972). But, when what has for 200 years and more been the central visual metaphor of university education (think of the Widener at Harvard, Jefferson's Rotunda at the University of Virginia; Oxford's Radcliffe and Boldleian: & c.) disappers, something of deep social significance may be happening — not just a "new architecture."

In popular architecture, what can best be called a romantic outlook survives — precisely the kind of outlook that has been most offensive to avant-garde sensibilites over the past fifty years. It would hardly be too strong to say that by avant-garde standards, all employment of old forms symbolic association is romantic; to be romantic is to be escapist; to be escapist is to be bad. "Good architecture" for half a century now has meant "realism." That has meant, architecture somehow "expressing modern life as it is." And that kind of "modern life" has in turn meant physical life — *bios,* (to use a convenient Greek distinction), the kind of life humans share with ants and frogs, with algae and apes and apricots; not *zoë,* what earlier generations called the timeless life of Eternity shared by humans with with angels and spirits, but which nowadays is more commonly euphemized under the rubric "humane values." The deep purpose of the avant-garde can be seen in retrospect as a kind of Nietzschean urge to create a world free of illusion — one that would force its inhabitants to face stark fact. The goal was to create an honest society, free of illusion. What resulted was something quite different. Not a more spacious, grander, joyful architecture, but pens — stockades, put up for every purpose, everywhere in the world. Endless blocks of flats in one and New Town looking exactly like the next. Opportunities to create living links with the past wasted, because of this fixed notion that meaningful inherited forms must be discounted and discarded as "romantic."

On what basis, precisely, was romanticism rejected? Certainly not on reasoned argument, There is not and never has been any proof that good architecture depends upon expressing materials and structure honestly. Neither is there any proof that good architecture cannot be constituted of shapes, with extrinsic meanings attaching to them. It follows that you cannot argue with any logic that shopping centres imitating Independance Han (say) are bad architecture because they do not express the materials and structure of modern technology as a modern airport does. You cannot equate entirely different types of complexes, visited by people for entirely different reasons, performing entired different functions in and for society. It is just as illogical to insist on all neighbourhood shopping centers using forms associated with scientific technology, speed, and power, as it would be to build hangars in the shape of colonial courthouses, or equip jet aircraft with candle sconces. For everything there is a season, says Ecclesiastes. And for every artifact an appropriate form — which may or may not be a shape with extrinsic meaning, which may or may not be an expression of modern technology; it depends on many things. Wisdom begins by assessing all factors to find the proper form.

Rejection of romanticism is an avant-garde dogma, going back to the anti-historical origins of the movement. It began with a false antithesis between "science" and "romanticism", which corresponded roughly in psychology and time to the equally false mid-19th-century "struggle between Science and Religion." To be scientific meant to be un-romantic. To be un-romantic was to be progressive. Progressives therefore felt bound to hate history on principle, because they thought (correctly) that "romantic" ideas of historical continuity, and visual metaphors of it in architecture and academic painting, were used to bolster "unprogressive" bourgeois constitutional governments. But, quite apart from considering whether everything bourgeois was necessarily unprogressive, they overlooked the fact that bourgeois constitutional governments were not the only ones to derive support from appeal to historical continuity. All social institutions in history have, and must. No human society at all can exist without some means of appeal to historical continuity, because this is the cement of all institutional relationships. No society can exist, therefore, without arts which establish and maintain historical continuity, that relate individual experiences to those of the nation, the race, makind. Ours least of all.

Architecture has traditionally been *the* art by which a society transmitted its values from one generation to another, and stabilized its institutions. If what any society calls its architecture does not do these things, then some kind of building must be undertaken which will. That is precisely what has happened with us. We have an avant-garde Establishment dedicated to the proposition that architecture consists of emotional experience evoked by a Creator and experienced by a beholder. Many great things have been done along this line. *C'est magnifique — mais ce n'est pas l'architecture.* Society needs more. Hence the fact recent surveys suggest more than 90% of all building going on in the 1960s ans 70s fell into the category of speculative and commercial, erected without benefit of architect. Between such a statistic and abandonment of architecture's traditional social function by the avant-garde Establishment, there may be a connection. A few moderns have been aware of and vocal about this problem — Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, for example; Stanislaus Von Moos; some others. But its implications for the practice of architecture remain to be explored. Few seem able to bring themselves to accept the implications of this situation and to re-evaluate the avant-garde position on romantic association of shapes and ideas accordingly.

Entirely typical is a lecture given to the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1972 by celebrated designer George Nelson. He called it "The End of Architecture." After observing, as Lewis Mumford had in 1968, that in the early 20th-century "struggle... between the establishment architects, who wanted to continue their eclectic way of designing buildings, and a younger group which insisted that honesty of design, in the sense of functional planning and the expressive use of modern materials and techniques, was long overdue," the "modernists" had won, he laments that the result was not a new golden age of building, but mechanization and standardization: "a flattening out of experience, a diminishing of life... Architecture... becomes progressively more bland, blank, mediocre, characterless. Thus the social critics cry out, not without reason, about the dehumanization of existence." (*Architecture Plus*, April 1973, pp. 45, 46). Nor does the future promise better. Cities covered in great domes, linear buildings constructed on rights-of-way with the highways on top: "do we have architecture here, or technological anthills? People like Yona Friedman in France and N.J. Habraken in the Netherlands seem to visualize ci-

ties as endless structural cages, filled in to suit whatever type occupancy is desired." (p. 47). Like other intelligent critics, Nelson offers no facile solution, no bogeyman whose abolition will solve everything. Industry has promoted standardization for profits, to be sure. But the real cause is deeper.

"A common basis for architecture in the past has been the existence of intelligible individual and social relationships. They may not have been humane or amiable, but they were there. When temples like Karnak were built, the cost in physical labor was enormous, but no one questioned the importance, even the necessity, of what he was doing. The kings, priests, satraps, emperors, and generals were real people who gave real orders to other real people. No matter how onerous the conditions, the relationships were human and universally understood. Even when things became intolerable and the people revolted, the changed relationships were still real.

We are a long way from these simple times... As we move up... to the so-called 'significant' buildings, large commercial complexes, religious edifices, government and other institutional structures, we run into another curious fact: nobody seems to believe, with much conviction, in any of the institutions." (*ibid.*, pp. 45, 46)

The logical conclusion is faced very honestly. Traditional architecture consisted of visual metaphors, meaningful shapes. The avant-garde cannot find any meaningful shapes. Therefore avant-garde architecture has come to an end. Or more exactly, to vary an inelegant metaphor, you cannot tell avant-garde buildings from holes in the ground. If they are not caves, they are mirrors. Either way, they disappear. Architecture disappears. It is, from the avant-garde point of view, all over.

What is the solution? "The real problem for the designer," says this typical spokesman, "is not only to find clients: *he must first* (and this is italicized in the article) *determine what a humane environment really is.* " Mumford had said the same, back in 1968: "Unless we retain human continuity, our technological accomplishments are not merely meaningless, but menacing." But this is easier said

than done. Mumford offered no solution. Nelson proclaims a vague faith in the "counterculture" with its "outspoken disapproval of war, organized bigness, power, and authority... respect for the individual and the natural environment... community, life-enhancing relationships and activities, commitment..." Unfortunately the counterculture is also based on Lucy Van Pelt's axiom: "Unless the world is perfect by the time I grow up, I refuse to join!" — a weak reed to lean upon, indeed.

The truth is, problem and solution alike are nonsense, having nothing to do with reality. Avant-garde Establishment apologists are like scholastic philosophers in the ecclesiastical Establishment of the late Middle Ages. They play games with verbal counters which they invented themselves, while the real world takes shape (quite literally) around them. Pied Pipers of Hamelin, they lead the kiddies into enchanted caves, whence there is no return, then expect the kiddies to get them out.

"And all the time — such is the tragi-comedy of our situation — we continue to clamour for those very qualities we are rendering impossible. You can hardly open a periodical without coming across the statement that what our civilization needs is more 'drive', or dynamism, or self-sacrifice, or 'creativity.' In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful."

This comes from another published lecture, by another speaker: C.S. Lewis's "Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools", given at the University of Durham and published in 1947 as *The Abolition of Man.* By a coincidence recalling the simultaneous appearance of two books on human destiny and Providence which so impressed Boswell — Johnson's *Rasselas* and Voltaire's *Candide* — *The Abolition of Man* was being thought out, and appeared, at the same time as Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four.* Both put the problem at a different level, where a solution is possible.

Education for a Humane Architectural Environment: Meditation upon a Cartoon
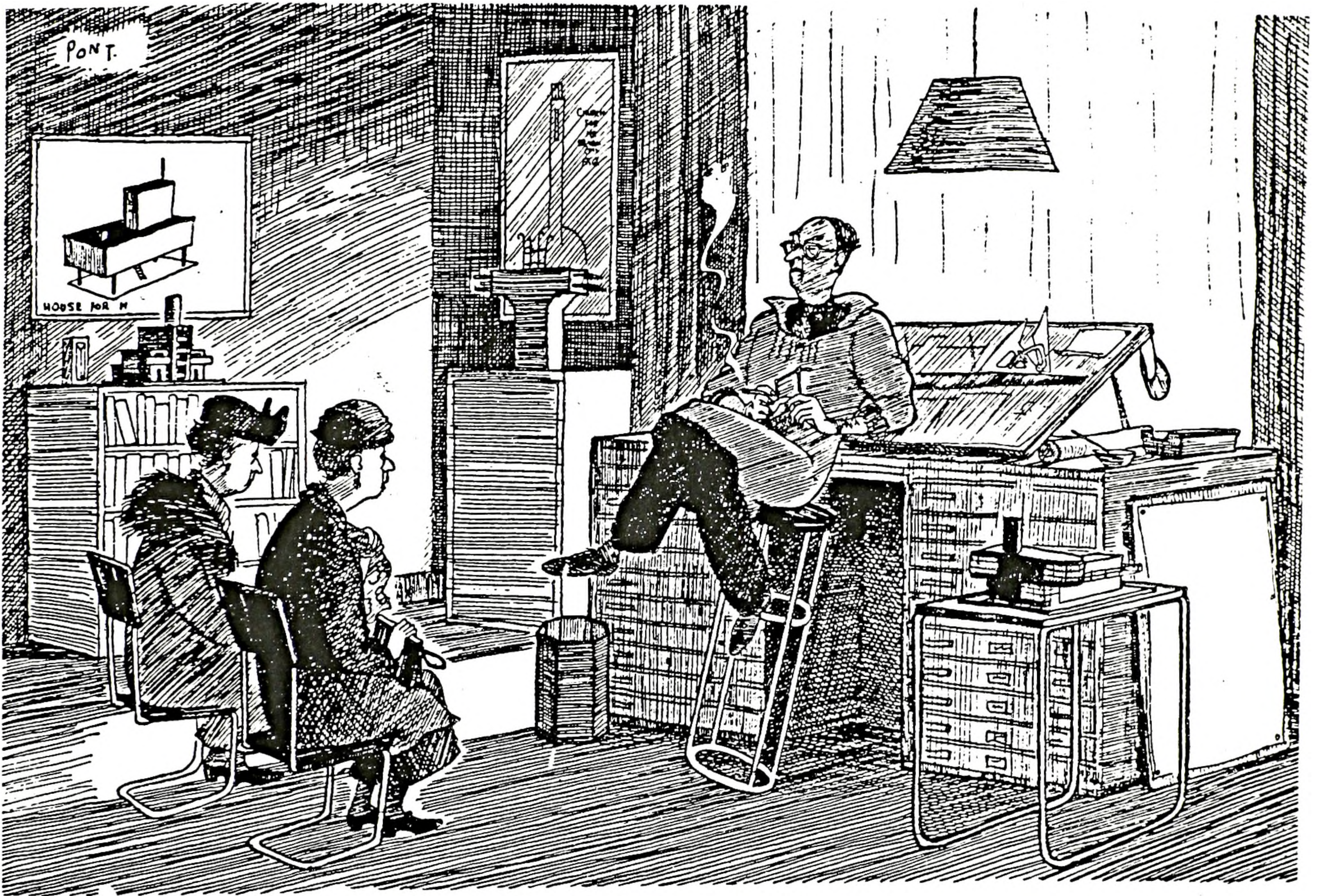
"DID I REALLY UNDERSTAND YOU, MISS WILSON, TO USE THE EXPRESSION, 'A COSY NOOK,' IN CONNECTION WITH THE HOUSE YOU WISH ME TO DESIGN FOR YOU?"

Cartoon by Pont in Punch for 5 February 1936 (p. 141) [C. Punch]. An almost exact illustration of passages from C.S. Lewis's Abolition of Man, like: "The Chest — Magnanimity — Sentiment — these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man. It may even be said that it is by this middle element that man is man — for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal. The operation of The Green Book and its kind is to produce what may be called Men without Chests. It is an outrage that they should commonly be spoken of as Intellectuals. This gives them the chance to say he who attacks them attacks Intelligence. It is not so... Not excess of thought, but defect of fertile and generous emotion... marks them out. Their heads are no bigger than the ordinary; it is the atrophy of the chest beneath that makes them seem so" (p. 16).

Creating a humane built environment begins with a return to first principles. That does *not* mean designing more efficient rabbit hutches. Precisely the opposite. What distinguishes humans from animals is that humans do not live from moment to moment, content if they can breed and feed at regular intervals, with some place to sleep and run about inbetween. Humans rise above that stream of time. This they do by their ability to make, recognize, and use symbols. And the way they create useful symbols is through association of shapes or sounds with ideas. This association cannot be arbitrary or haphazard, still less subjective, done by solitary pioneers of genius. It rests upon, and always has rested upon, an acknowledgement of objective value — the belief that certain attitu-

des and qualities really are true, and others really false, in relation to the nature of the whole universe and of all rational beings within it; and specifically, that certain responses are appropriate to given things, people, or situations, and certain others are not. Whether this belief, or attitude, or responses, are called romantic does not matter. The name is unimportant. What matters is that when avant-garde pioneers promoted "honesty" by attacking "romanticism", this whole concept of value itself — held from the beginning of human time — was in fact what they "debunked". What had been billed as a remodelling turned out to be a demolition, with no materials for rebuilding.

Instead of explaining why Late Victorian eclecticism was bad, it was much easier to denounce all eclecticism, all borrowings from the past, as febrile. By denouncing sentimentality and romanticism, architects could prove themselves tough, realistic, up-to-date — enlightened, objective, scientific. In fact it was cant, simplistic if-you're-not-part-of-the-solution-you're-part-of-the-problem cant, cant which at best has consistently obscured from the avant-garde the real nature of their problem in architecture, and at worst, translated into political jargon, has murdered untold millions of people in the name of progress and futurity.

If follows that the first step in restoring humane education must be to reconsider the assumption that all value is subjective. first step in creating a humane built environment, to reconsider avant-garde Establishment doctrine on romantic association of shapes with ideas.

But only as a beginning, of course. Otherwise we would merely get back to Late Victorian employment of historic styles to evoke aesthetic responses in beholders — an indefensible practice responsible for much of the avant-garde's early appeal. Next, the whole doctrine of architecture being primarily intended to create aesthetic and visceral sensation needs to be reconsidered. And ultimately, the whole system of belief about the nature of human beings. how they should be educated and for what purpose, discredited by the sterility and barrenness of the avant-garde Establishment which it has produced.

"We ought to provide our descendants with a humane built environment". Why? Because experience shows that criminals are bred in poor environments, so it is in the best interests of society as a whole to improve everyone's living conditions? But there is no conceivable way to get from "This action would do you (or me, or us) good (or harm, or whatever), to "You (or I, or we) ought to do this." Neither is there any way to prove by reason

that society ought to be preserved, or even that I (or you, or we) have any right to life, good or bad. These are axioms of Practical Reason; only after taking them for granted, having them for standards, can we then proceed to deduce what good or bad actions might be. Demands for a more humane environment, and arguments whether or not architects can or should provide it, alike rest upon this kind of axiom — a proposition which is beyond reason, a proposition taken for granted so that reasoning can begin. No moralist can escape it: Hegel, Marx, Engels, Stirner, Nietzsche, all "in order to comment on what would constitute qualitatively better arrangements (in society)... are forced to return to ethics, with its subjectivist foundations," as Habermas, Caroll, and assorted other sociologists and political analyists have pointed out. Least of all can architectural moralists escape basing their arguments on Practical Reason. Despite the claims of Avant-garde Founding Fathers to be bringing something historically unprecedented into being, in fact any validity. even any sense it may have, depends upon a system of values that goes back to the beginning of the world. The principal claim which has carried the avant-garde movement to acceptance and power has been that it worked for a more rational or "juster" society. That claim is meaningless without a working definition of justice, held as an axiom of Practical Reason, from which everything else can derive — something like the first premise of the Justinian Code of Roman Law: "Justice is the settled and permanent intention of rendering every person proper and natural rights (*constitutions* I, 1)"; or the Declaration of Independence's "Every person is endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights..."

And that concept goes back to the very beginnings of civilization everywhere — indeed, its discovery may well have *been* the beginning of civilization.

Already ancient in Old Kingdom Egypt was *ma'at,* a concept "variously translated as "truth", "justice", "righteousness", "order". Ma'at was the cosmic force of harmony... but no one English word is always applicable... There was something of the inchanging, eternal, and cosmic about ma'at. If we render it "order", it was the order of created things, physical and spiritual, established at the beginning and valid for all time. If we render it "justice", it was not simply justice in terms of legal administration; it was the just and proper relationship of cosmic phenomena. including the relationship of the rulers and the ruled. If we render it "truth", we

must remember that, to the ancient, things were true not because they were susceptible of testing and verification, but because they were recognized as being in their true and proper places in the order created and maintained by the gods. "[As an old Kingdom text says]" "Ma'at is great, and its effectiveness is lasting: it has not been disturbed since the time of him who made it... it is the right path before him who knows nothing." [John A. Wilson, *The Burden of Egypt*, pp. 48, 93]

It was this same kind of Law that Moses brought down from Sinai — something given, not made. And it was this same kind of Law — given, not made, — that Jefferson assumed in the Declaration. He probably took his idea from Hugo Grotius's classic definition in the 17th century A.D., a more secularized concept of Natural Law but recognizable as ancient Practical Reason just the same:

"Natural Law deals not only with things made by Nature herself, but also with things produced by the act of man, and is immutable — unchangeable even by God Himself. It is the law of God as disclosed by Nature to the reason of man. It is, in fact, *jus* properly and strictly so called. By this law things are obligatory or forbidden by their very nature, and man can by not means change their inherent characteristic. Its existence is proved, a priori, by showing the agreement or disagreement of anything with the rational and social nature of man, and a posteriori, when by certain or very probable accounts anything is found to be accepted as Natural Law among all nations, or at least among the more civilized. (W.S.M. Knight, *The Life and Works of Hugo Grotius* [London, 1925], pp. 211-212)

At the beginning of Chinese civilization was the Tao — the Way or Road of harmony with the universe, later expanded by Confucius into a rule of right conduct for happiness ("Men can enlarge the Way, but the Way does not [by itself] enlarge the man"), and still further by the Taoists into a "mystical concept standing for the primal stuff of the universe or the totality of all things." (Creel, *Chinese Thought*).

Aryan languages almost all preserve a common word for a concept of right, duty, virtue, agreement with the cosmic order, common to all Aryan peoples even before they separated: Hindu "Rta"; Greek "Ortho"; Latin "Rectus"; German "Recht"; English "Right"; Russian "Pravd"; Sanskrit "dharma".

And on this concept civilizations everywhere depend still. No social institutions can be built on anything else. That includes ours. If we cannot make architectural metaphors of the values on which our civilization and its social institutions rest, that is not because values are lacking, but because there is something wrong with our architectural thinking. We need to begin by reinstating the principle of subordinating and relating sensual and aesthetic experience to social function; then the principle that the social function of architecture is to make visual metaphors of social institutions and the values on which they rest. That is best demonstrated by practical examples — mass housing, to take the most obvious.

The most obvious visual metaphor of values underlying social institutions, which 20th-century architecture should be concerned to create, is that of the good future society — the end to which social functions work, or should work. Care for the future, in the practical form of begetting and rearing children, is an obvious duty of Practical Reason, enjoined by the ethics of every civilization; and concern for the future welfare of all humanity, as well as one's own kin and race, is a practical deduction from it. Now surely avant-garde architecture does in fact create such metaphors — not always consciously perhaps, and mixed up with other considerations often times, but indubitably enough — in its consistent emphasis on materials and structure using and derived from Applied Science? Science is looked to in our time by most of the population as the means whereby a beautiful, plentiful, carefree future is assured — and beautiful, affluent, gleaming steel, glass and concrete office buildings, housing projects, and factories create visual metaphors of that golden time to come. Here is an illustration, from the "Collective Housing" issue of that admirable little Swiss architectural magazine, *Architese:*
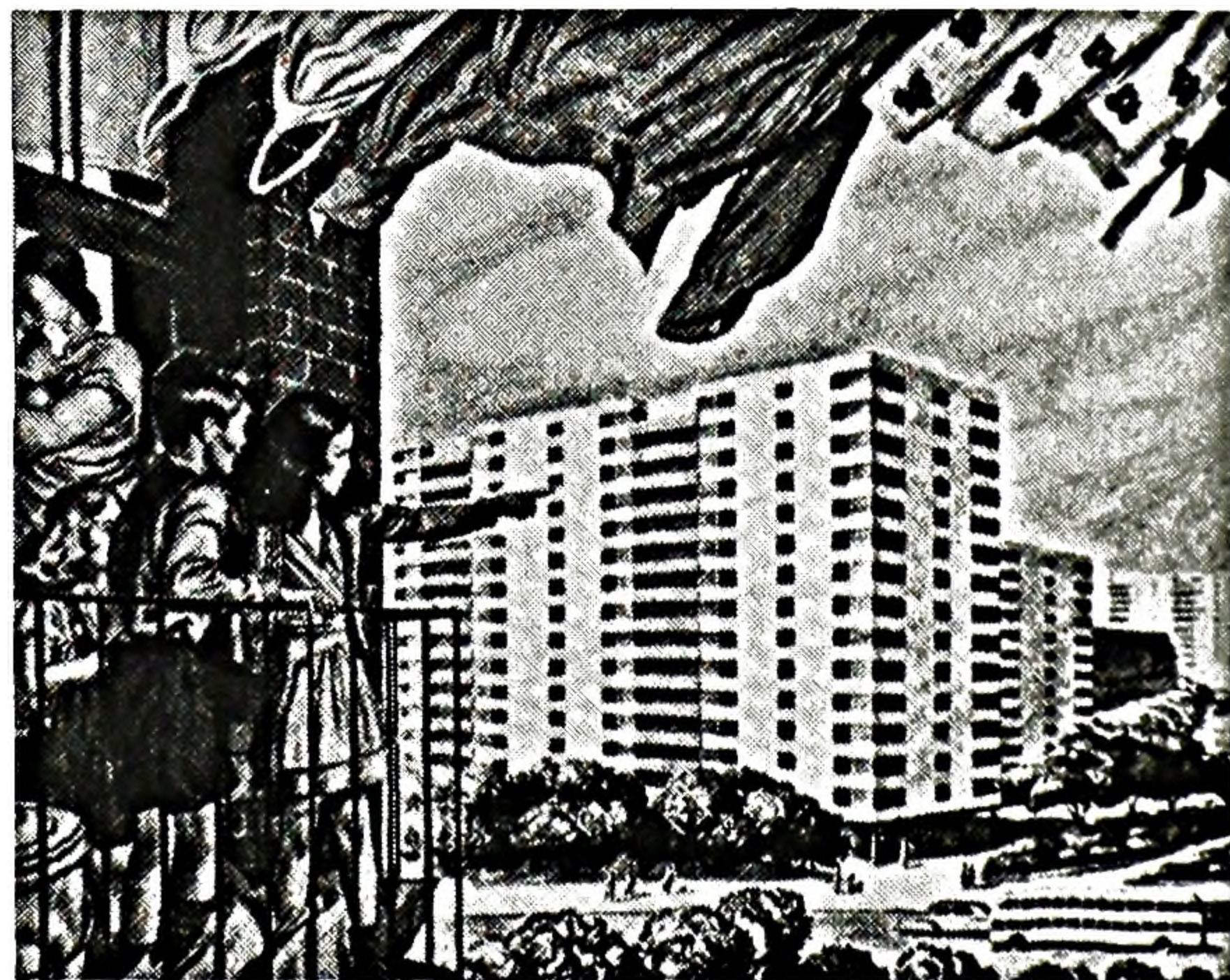
Vision for the Depressed:
Illustration from a series of pamphlets put out by the Revere Copper Company in 1943, showing a tenement family's hopes and

dreams of the shining new housing science will be provided "after the War" to lift them out of their present dingy and dreary state of life. Of course, the basic idea here derived from LeCorbusier's "Radiant City", and before that, from the Utopian cities of Tony Garnier, Fournier, and other avant-garde visionaries.

As for mass housing being symbolic of the glorious future, in Communist nations, "enchanted palaces" is the name regularly given it.

But alongside the duty Practical Reason enjoins on all humans to care for children and descendants, and inseparable from it — since both belong to the category of duty to humanity in general — is the duty of respect and care for parents, older people generally, and ancestors. This duty is frequently neglected, overlooked, derived even — by the very same radicals and progressives most volubly and visibly concerned for future welfare. Avant-garde architecture, so largely their product, is evidence of their attitude. It deliberately eschews all reference to the past. Accordingly. its metaphors of social value tend to be completely one-sided — having to do mostly with the future, a little with the present, nothing with the past. Lacking human continuity, they therefore seem curiously brittle and evanescent, by contrast with the great architecture of other ages. Popular architecture, by contrast, errs in the opposite direction. Its concern is too much for the present, so that it tends to use the past to propagandize the present, and ignores the future.

The conclusion is plain. Significant architecture must be created, and can only be created, by looking to the future while using past precedent. Only thus can it be connected to any objective value. Only thus can it escape being mere Works of Art by contemporary definition — by its own terms fickle, transient, and subjective.

"Unless we maintain human continuity," Lewis Mumford warned in a famous article in the Architectural Record for February 1968 on the occasion of his being awarded the AIA's Gold Medal for services to promotion of modern architecture, "our technological advances [in architecture] will be not only meaningless but menacing." Exactly how "human continuity" is to be maintained in architecture, he did not volunteer. The reason, I fear, is that over the past few millennia only one effective means of attaining that end has ever been found. That — unpalatable as it may be to contemporary tastes — is by some kind of eclectic style. Borrowing, and appropriating to new uses, forms from past architecture which are invested with suitable symbolic and associated meanings. Something, in short, like Emilo Capaldi's Independence Malls. The kind of traditional forms preserved in popular and commercial building. Only, let us hope, handled with and embodying the subtle awarenesses of spatial relationships, proportional patterns, textural effects, and dramatic uses of structure developed in the great avant-garde architecture of the past sixty-odd years. Such a combination of traditional meaningful metaphor and aesthetic effects is not impossible. In fact, all significant architecture in history displays it. In that direction a truly humane environment could be found.

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