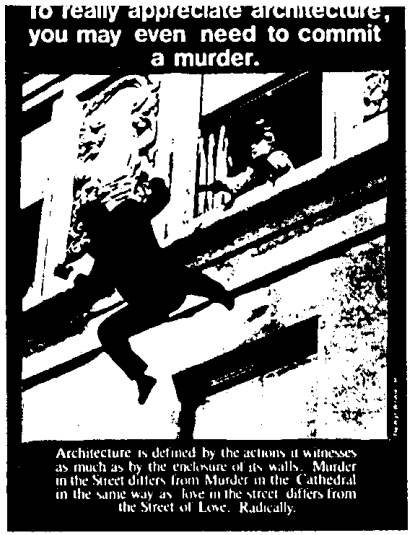
Images on this and subsequent pages throughout the book accompany the essay 'Index of Architecture' (pages 97-107) and are keyed into that text with bold numerals. The images are identified on page 109.



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THE ARCHITECTURAL PARADOX

The Pyramid and the Labyrinth

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1.

Most people concerned with architecture feel some sort of disillusion and dismay. None of the early utopian ideals of the twentieth century has materialized, none of its social aims has succeeded. Blurred by reality, the ideals have turned into re-development nightmares and the aims into bureaucratic policies. The split between social reality and utopian dream has been total; the gap between economic constraints and the illusion of all-solving techniques absolute. Pointed out by critics who knew the limits of architectural remedies, this historical split has now been bypassed by attempts to reformulate the concepts of architecture. And in the process, a new split has appeared. More complex, it is not the symptom of professional naïvety or economic ignorance, but the sign of a fundamental question which lies in the very nature of architecture and of its essential element: space. By focusing on itself, architecture has entered an unavoidable paradox: the impossibility of questioning the nature of space and at the same time experiencing a spatial praxis.

2.

I have no intention of reviewing architectural trends and their connection with the arts. My general emphasis on space rather than on disciplines (art, architecture, semiology, etc.) is not aimed particularly at negating academic categorization. The merging of disciplines is too worn a path to provide a stimulating itinerary. Instead I would like to focus attention on the present paradox of space and on the nature of its terms, trying to indicate how one might go beyond this self-contradiction, even if the answer should prove intolerable. I shall first recall the historical context of this paradox and will then examine first those trends which consider architecture as a thing of the mind, as a dematerialized or conceptual discipline, with its linguistic or morphological variations (the pyramid); second, empirical research that concentrates on the senses, on the experience of space as well as on the relationship between space and praxis (the labyrinth); and third, the contradictory nature of these two terms and the difference between the means of escaping the paradox by shifting the actual nature of the debate, as, for example, through politics, and the means that alter the paradox altogether (the pyramid and the labyrinth).

3.

Linguistically, 'to define space' means both 'to make space distinct' and 'to state the precise nature of space'. Much of the current confusion about space can be illustrated by this ambiguity. While art and architecture have been concerned essentially with the first sense, philosophy, mathematics and physics have tried through history to give interpretations to something variously described as 'a material thing in which all material things are located' or as 'something subjective with which the mind categorizes things'. Remember: with Descartes ended the Aristotelian tradition, according to which space and time were 'categories' that enabled the classification of 'sensory knowledge'. Space became absolute. Object before the subject, it dominated senses and bodies by containing them. Was space inherent to the totality of what exists? Such was the question of space for Spinoza and Leibniz. Returning to the old notion of category, Kant described space as neither matter nor the set of objective relations between things, but as an ideal internal structure, an *a priori* consciousness, an instrument of knowledge. Subsequent mathematical developments on non-Euclidean spaces and their topologies did not eliminate the philosophical discussions. These reappeared with the widening gap between abstract spaces and society. But space was generally accepted as a *cosa mentale*, a sort of all-embracing set with subsets such as literary space, ideological space and psychoanalytical space.

4.

Architecturally, to define space (to make space distinct) literally meant 'to determine boundaries'. Space had rarely been discussed by architects before the beginning of the twentieth century. But by 1915 there was the concept of *Raum*, with all its overtones of German aesthetics, and the notion of *Raumempfindung* or 'felt volume', while by 1923 the

idea of felt space had merged with the idea of composition to become a three-dimensional continuum, capable of metrical subdivision that could be related to academic rules. From then on, architectural space was consistently seen as a uniformly extended material to be modelled in various ways, and the history of architecture as the history of spatial concepts. From the Greek 'power of interacting volumes' to the Roman 'hollowed-out interior space', from the modern 'interaction between inner and outer space' to the concept of 'transparency', historians and theorists referred to space as a three-dimensional lump of matter.

To draw a parallel between the philosophies of a period and the spatial concepts of architecture is always tempting. And never was it done as obsessively as during the 1930s, when Giedion related Einstein's Theory of Relativity to Cubist painting, and Cubist planes were translated into architecture in Le Corbusier's Villa at Garches. But despite these space-time concepts, the notion of space remained that of a simplistic, amorphous matter to be defined by its physical boundaries.

By the late 1960s, freed from the technological determinants of the post-war period and aware of recent linguistic studies, architects talked about the square, the street and the arcade, wondering if these did not constitute a little-known code of space with its own syntax and meaning. Did language precede these socio-economic urban spaces, did it accompany them, or did it follow them? Was space a condition or a formulation? To say that language preceded these spaces was certainly not obvious: human activities leave traces that may precede language. So was there a relationship between space and language, could one 'read' a space? Was there a dialectic between social praxis and spatial forms?

5.

Yet the gap remained between ideal space (the product of mental processes) and real space (the product of social praxis). Although such a distinction is by no means ideologically neutral, we shall see that it is in the nature of

1.
For these issues, see the interpretation offered by Henri Lefèbvre in *La Production de l'Espace*, Editions Anthropos, Paris 1973 (untranslated), and the texts of Castells and Utopie. See also Bernard Tschumi, 'Flashback', on the politics of space, *Architectural Design*, October/November 1975.

2.
Hegel, *The Philosophy of Fine Art*, Vol.I, London 1928.

architecture. As a result, the only successful attempts to bridge this philosophical gap were those that introduced historical or political concepts such as 'production' in the wide sense it had in Marx's early texts. Much research in France and Italy opposed space 'as a pure form' to space 'as a social product', space 'as an intermediary' to space 'as a means of reproduction of the mode of production'.

This politico-philosophical critique had the advantage of giving an all-embracing approach to space, avoiding the previous dissociation between the 'particular' (fragmented social space), the 'general' (logico-mathematical or mental spaces), and the 'singular' (physical and delineated spaces). But by giving an overall priority to historical processes, it often reduced space to one of the many socio-economic products that were perpetuating a political status quo.

6.

Before proceeding to a detailed examination of the ambivalence of the definition of space, it is perhaps useful to consider briefly this particular expression of space in architecture. Its territory extends from an all-embracing 'everything is architecture' to Hegel's minimal definition. This latter interpretation describes a difficulty that is constitutive to architecture. When Hegel elaborated his Aesthetic Theory,[2] he conventionally distinguished five arts and gave them an order: architecture, sculpture, painting, music and poetry. He started with architecture because he thought it preceded all others in both conceptual and historical terms. Hegel's unease in these first pages is striking. His embarrassment did not really proceed from his conservative classification, but was caused by a question that had haunted architects for centuries: were the functional and technical characteristics of a house or a temple the means to an end that excluded those very characteristics? Where did the shed end and architecture begin? Was architectural discourse about whatever did not relate to the 'building' itself? Hegel concluded in the affirmative: architecture was whatever in a building did not point to utility. Architecture was a sort of

'artistic supplement' added to the simple building. But the difficulty of such an argument appears when one tries to conceive of a building that escapes the utility of space, a building which would have no other purpose but 'architecture'.
Although such a question may seem irrelevant, it finds a surprising echo in the present search for architectural autonomy. After more than half a century of scientific pretence, of system-theories that defined it as the intersection of industrialization, sociology, politics and ecology, architecture wonders if it can exist without having to find its meaning or its justification in some purposeful exterior need.

THE PYRAMID: Stating the Nature of Space (architecture dematerialized)

7.

Little concerned with Hegel's 'artistic supplement', architects have nevertheless not regarded the constructed building as the sole and inevitable aim of their activity. They have shown a renewed interest in the idea of playing an active role in fulfilling ideological and philosophical functions in respect to architecture. Just as Lissitzky and the Vesnin brothers sought to deny the importance of realizing a work and stressed an architectural attitude, so the avant-garde feels reasonably free to act within the realm of concepts. Comparable to the early conceptual artists' rejection of the art commodity market and its alienating effects, the architects' position seems justified by the very remote possibility they had of building anything other than a 'mere reflection of the prevalent mode of production'.
Moreover, historical precedents are there to give enough credibility to what could paradoxically be described either as a withdrawal from reality or as a take-over of new and unknown territories. 'What is architecture?' asked Boullée. 'Will I define it with Vitruvius as the art of building? No. This definition contains a crass error. Vitruvius takes the effect for the cause. One must conceive in order to make. Our forefathers only built their hut after they had conceived its image. This production of the mind, this creation is what

3.
Boullée, *Essais sur l'Art*, ed. Perouse de Montclos, Herman 1968
4.
On the ideological crisis of architecture and the emergence of radical architecture, see Germano Celant (quoted here) in *The New Italian Landscape*, Museum of Modern Art, New York 1972, p.320.
5.
Originated in Florence from 1963 to 1971 by groups such as Superstudio, Archizoom, UFO, etc., radical architecture explored the destruction of culture and its artefacts. 'The ultimate end of modern architecture is the elimination of architecture altogether.' (Archizoom Associates)
6.
One of the first and most significant events of rational architecture was the XV Milan Triennale, organized by Aldo Rossi, whose catalogue bore the title *Architettura Razionale* (ed. Franco Angeli, Milan 1973).

constitutes architecture, that which we now can define as the art to produce any building and bring it to perfection. The art of building is thus only a secondary art that it seems appropriate to call the scientific part of architecture.'[3] At a time when architectural memory rediscovers its role, architectural history, with its treatises and manifestos, has been conveniently confirming to architects that spatial concepts were made by the writings and drawings of space as much as by their built translations.
The questions 'is there any reason why one cannot proceed from design that can be constructed to design that concerns itself only with the ideology and concept of architecture?' and 'if architectural work consists of questioning the nature of architecture, what prevents us from making this questioning a work of architecture in itself?'[4] were already being asked rhetorically in 1972. The renewed importance given to conceptual aims in architecture quickly became established. The medium used for the communication of concepts became architecture; information was architecture; the attitude was architecture; the written programme or brief was architecture; gossip was architecture; production was architecture; and, inevitably, the architect was architecture. Escaping the predictable ideological compromises of building, the architect could finally achieve the sensual satisfaction that the making of material objects no longer provided.

8.

The dematerialization of architecture into the realm of concepts was more the characteristic of a period than of any particular avant-garde group. Thus it developed in various directions and struck movements as ideologically opposed as, for example, radical architecture[5] and rational architecture.[6] But the question it asked was fundamental: if everything was architecture, by virtue of the architect's decision, what then distinguished architecture from any other human activity? This quest for identity revealed that the architect's freedom did not necessarily coincide with the freedom of architecture. If architecture seemed to have gained freedom from the

socio-economic constraints of building processes, any radical counter-designs and manifestos were inevitably reinstated in the commercial circuits of galleries or magazines. Like conceptual art in the mid-1960s, architecture seemed to have gained autonomy by opposing the institutional framework. But in the process it had become an institutional opposition, thus growing into the very thing it tried to oppose.

Although some architects, following a political analysis we shall soon describe, were in favour of doing away with architecture altogether, the search for autonomy inevitably turned back towards architecture itself, as no other context would readily provide for it. The question became: 'is there an architectural essence, a being that transcends all social, political and economic systems?' This ontological bias injected some new blood into a concept which had already been well aired by art theorists. Investigations into Hegel's 'supplement' received the support of structural linguistic studies in France and Italy. Analogies with language appeared *en masse*, some useful, some particularly naïve and misleading. Among these linguistic analogies, two figure prominently.

9.

The first theory claims that the Hegelian 'supplement', added to the simple building and constitutive of architecture, is immediately struck by some semantic expansion which would force this architectural supplement to be less a piece of architecture than the representation of something else. Architecture is then nothing but the space of representation. As soon as it is distinguished from the simple building, it represents something other than itself: the social structure, the power of the king, the idea of God, etc.

The second theory questions an understanding of architecture as a language that refers to meanings outside itself. It refuses the interpretation of a three-dimensional translation of social values, for architecture would then be nothing other than the linguistic product of social determinants. It thus claims that the architectural object is pure language and that architecture is an endless manipulation of the grammar and syntax of the architectural sign. Rational architecture, for example, becomes a selected vocabulary of architectural elements of the past, with their oppositions, contrasts and redistributions. Not only does it refer to itself and to its own history, but function – the existential justification of the work – becomes virtual rather than real. So the language is closed in on itself and architecture becomes a truly autonomous organism. Forms do not follow functions, but refer to other forms, and functions relate to symbols. Ultimately architecture frees itself from reality altogether. Form does not need to call for external justifications. In a critical article in *Oppositions*, Manfredo Tafuri can thus describe Aldo Rossi's architecture as 'a universe of carefully selected signs, within which the law of exclusion dominates, and in fact is the controlling expression', and the trend it represents as 'l'architecture dans le boudoir' because the circle drawn around linguistic experimentation reveals a pregnant affinity with the obsessively rigorous writings of the Marquis de Sade.'

Freed from reality, independent of ideology, architectural values are striving towards a purity unattained since the Russian formalist criticism of the 1920s, when it was argued that the only valid object of literary criticism was the literary text. Here, the tautology of architecture – that is, an architecture that describes itself – becomes a syntax of empty signs, often derived from a selective historicism that concentrates on moments of history: the early Modern Movement, the Roman monument, the Renaissance palace, the castle. Transmitted through history, removed from the constraints of their time, can these signs, these diagrams of spaces, become the generative matrices of today's work?

10.

They might. Architectural theory shares with art theory a peculiar characteristic: it is prescriptive. So the series of signs and articulations that has just been described may undoubtedly prove a useful model for architects engaged in a perpetual search for new support disciplines, even if it is not clear whether systems of non-verbal signs, such as space,

7.

'The return to language is a proof of failure. It is necessary to examine to what degree such a failure is due to the intrinsic character of the architectural discipline and to what degree it is due to a still unresolved ambiguity.' Manfredo Tafuri, *Oppositions* 3, May 1974, where the author develops a historical critique of traditional approaches to theory and shifts from a central focus on the criticism of architecture to the criticism of ideology.

proceed from similar concepts to verbal systems. However, the real importance of this research lies in the question it asks about the nature of architecture, rather than in the making of architecture. This is not without recalling the perverse and hypothetical search for the very origins of architecture. Remember: at the outset, does architecture produce copies or models? If it cannot imitate an order, can it constitute one, whether it be the world or society? Must architecture create its own model, if it has no created model? Positive answers inevitably imply some archetype. But as this archetype cannot exist outside architecture, architecture must produce one itself. It thus becomes some sort of an essence that precedes existence. So the architect is once again 'the person who conceives the form of the building without manipulating materials'. The architect conceives the *pyramid*, this ultimate model of reason. Architecture becomes a *cosa mentale* and the forms conceived by the architect ensure the domination of the idea over matter.

THE LABYRINTH: Making Space Distinct (or the experience of space)

11.

. . . Should I intensify the quarantine in the chambers of the pyramid of reason? Shall I sink to depths where no one will be able to reach me and understand me, living among abstract connections expressed by inner monologues rather than by direct realities? Shall architecture, which started with the building of tombs, return to the tomb, to the eternal silence of finally transcended history? Shall architecture perform in the service of illusory functions and build virtual spaces? My voyage into the abstract realm of language, into the dematerialized world of concepts, meant the removal of architecture from its intricate and convoluted element: space. Removal from the exhilarating differences between the apse and the nave of Ely Cathedral, between Salisbury Plain and Stonehenge, between the street and my living-room. Space is real, for it seems to affect my senses long before my reason. The materiality of my body both coincides

with and struggles with the materiality of the space. My body carries in itself spatial properties and spatial determination: up, down, right, left, symmetry, dissymmetry. It hears as much as it sees. Unfolding against the projections of reason, against the absolute truth, against the pyramid, here is the sensory space, the labyrinth, the hole. Dislocated and dissociated by language or culture or economy into the specialized ghettos of sex and mind, Soho and Bloomsbury, 42nd Street and West 40th Street, here is where my body tries to rediscover its lost unity, its energies and impulses, its rhythms and its flux. . .

12.

This purely sensory approach has been a recurrent theme in this century's understanding and appreciation of space. It is not necessary to expand at length on the precedents witnessed by twentieth-century architecture. Suffice it to say that current conversation seems to fluctuate between the German aesthetic overtones of the *Raumempfindung* theory, wherein space is to be 'felt' as something affecting the inner nature of man by a symbolic *Einfühlung*, and an idea that echoes Schlemmer's work at the Bauhaus, wherein space was not only the medium of experience but also the materialization of theory. For example, the emphasis given to movement saw in dance the 'elemental means for the realization of space-creative impulses', for dance could articulate and order space. The parallel made between the dancers' movements and the more traditional means of defining and articulating space, such as walls or columns, is important. When Trisha Brown and Simone Forti re-introduced this spatial discussion in the mid-1960s, the relationship between theory and practice, reason and perception, had to take another turn, and the concept of theoretical praxis could not be simply indicative. There was no way in space to follow the art-language practice. If it could be argued that the discourse about art was art and thus could be exhibited as such, the theoretical discourse about space certainly was not space.

The attempt to trigger a new perception of space reopened a basic philosophical question. Remember: you are inside an enclosed space with equal height and width. Do your eyes instruct you about the cube, merely by noticing it, without giving any additional interpretation? No. You don't really see the cube. You may see a corner, or a side, or the ceiling, but never all defining surfaces at the same time. You touch a wall, you hear an echo. But how do you relate all these perceptions to a single object? Is it through an operation of reason?

13.

This operation of reason, which precedes the perception of the cube as a cube, was mirrored by the approach of concept-performance artists. While your eyes were giving instructions about successive parts of the cube, allowing you to form the concept of cube, the artist was giving instructions about the concept of cube, stimulating your senses through the intermediary of reason. This reversal, this mirror-image, was important, for the interplay between the new perception of 'performance' space and the rational means at the origin of the piece was typically one aspect of the architectural process: the mechanics of perception of a distinct space, that is the complete space of the performance, with the movements, the thoughts, the received instructions of the actors, as well as the social and physical context in which they performed. But the most interesting part of such performance was the underlying discussion on the 'nature of space' in general, as opposed to the shaping and perception of distinct spaces in particular.

It is in recent works that the recurring etymological distinction appears at its strongest. Reduced to the cold simplicity of six planes that define the boundaries of a more or less regular cube, the series of spaces designed by Nauman, Wheeler, Irwin or Asher do not play with elaborate spatial articulations. Their emphasis is elsewhere. By restricting visual and physical perception to the faintest of all stimulations, they turn the expected experience of the space into something altogether different. The almost totally removed sensory

definition inevitably throws the viewers back on themselves. In 'deprived space', to borrow the terminology of Germano Celant, the 'participants' can only find themselves as the subject, aware only of their fantasies and pulsations, able only to react to the signals of their own bodies. The materiality of the body coincides with the materiality of the space. By a series of exclusions that become significant only in opposition to the remote exterior space and social context, the subjects in 'deprived space' are able only to 'experience their own experience'.

14.

Whether such spaces might be seen as reminiscent of the behaviourist spaces of the beginning of the century, where reactions were hopefully triggered, or as the new echo of the *Raumempfindung* theory, now cleaned up of its moral and aesthetic overtones, is of little theoretical importance. What matters is their double content: for their way 'to make space distinct' (to define space in particular) is only there to throw one back on the interpretation of the 'nature of space' itself.

As opposed to the previously described pyramid of reason, the dark corners of experience are not unlike a labyrinth where all sensations, all feelings are enhanced, but where no overview is present to provide a clue about where to get out. Occasional consciousness is of little help, for perception in the labyrinth presupposes immediacy. Unlike Hegel's classical distinction between the moment of perception and the moment of experience (where one's consciousness makes a new object out of a perceived one), the metaphorical labyrinth implies that the first moment of perception carries the experience itself.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that there may be no way out of the labyrinth. Denis Hollier, in his book on Georges Bataille,[8] points out that from Bacon to Leibniz the labyrinth was linked with the desire to get out, and science was seen as the means to find an exit. Rejecting such an interpretation, Bataille suggested that its only effect was to transform the labyrinth into a banal prison. The traditional meaning of the

8.
Denis Hollier, *La Prise de la Concorde*, Gallimard, Paris 1974, the reading of which suggested the opposition between the labyrinth and the pyramid. See also Georges Bataille, *Eroticism*, Calder, London 1962 and 'L'Experience Interieure', in *Oeuvres Completes*, Gallimard, Paris 1971.

metaphor was reversed: one never knows whether one is inside or not, since one cannot grasp it in one look. Just as language gives us words that encircle us but which we use in order to break their surround, the labyrinth of experience was full of openings that did not tell whether they opened towards its outside or its inside.

THE PYRAMID AND THE LABYRINTH: the Paradox of Architecture

15.

To single out particular areas of concern, such as the rational play of language as opposed to the experience of the senses, would be a tedious game if it were to lead to a naïve confrontation between the mind and the body. The architectural avant-garde has fought often enough over alternatives which appeared as opposites: structure and chaos, ornament and purity, permanence and change, reason and intuition. And often enough it has been shown that such alternatives were in fact complementary: our analysis of a dematerialization of architecture in its ontological form (the pyramid) and of a sensual experience (the labyrinth) is no different. But if the existence of such an equation does not raise doubts over its 'complementarity', it certainly raises questions about how such equations can go beyond the vicious circle of terms that speak only of themselves.

The answer may lie in the context in which such an equation takes place. A common accusation of analyses, or even of works that concentrate on the specific nature of architecture, is that they are 'parallel', that is, that they fold and unfold in some Panglossian world where social and economic forces are conveniently absent. Not affecting the determining forces of production, they constitute harmless forms of private expression. We shall therefore briefly consider the ambiguous particularities of the relationships between architecture and politics.

16.

These have been well researched in the past few years. The role of architecture and planning has been analysed in terms

of a projection on the ground of the images of social institutions, as a faithful translation of the structures of society into buildings or cities. Such studies underline the difficulty architecture has in acting as a political instrument. Recalling the nostalgic and attenuated cry of the Russian revolutionary 'social condensers' of the 1920s, some advocated the use of space as a peaceful tool of social transformation, as a means of changing the relation between the individual and society by generating new life-styles. But the 'clubs' and community buildings proposed not only required an existing revolutionary society, but also a blind belief in an interpretation of behaviourism according to which individual behaviour could be influenced by the organization of space. Aware that because spatial organization may temporarily modify individual or group behaviour does not imply that it has the power to change the socio-economic structure of a reactionary society, architectural revolutionaries looked for better grounds. Their attempts to find a socially relevant, if not revolutionary role for architecture culminated in the years following the events of May '68 with 'guerrilla' buildings, whose symbolic and exemplary value lay in their seizure of urban space and not in the design of what was built.

On the cultural front, plans for a surrealistic destruction of established value systems were devised by Italian 'radical' designers. This nihilistic prerequisite to social and economic change was a desperate attempt to use the architects' mode of expression to denounce institutional trends by translating them into architectural terms, ironically 'verifying where the system was going' by designing the cities of a desperate future.

Not surprisingly, it was the question of the production system that finally led to more realistic proposals. Aimed at redistributing the capitalistic division of labour, a new understanding of the technicians' role in building was sought, in terms of a responsible partnership directly involved in the production cycle, thus shifting the concept of architecture towards the general organization of building processes.

17.

Yet it is the unreal (or unrealistic) position of the artist or architect that may be its very reality. Except for the last attitude, most political approaches suffered from the predictable isolation of schools of architecture that tried to offer their environmental knowledge to the Revolution. Hegel's 'supplement' did not seem to have the right revolutionary edge. Or did it? Does architecture, in its long-established isolation, contain more revolutionary power than its numerous transfers into the objective realities of the building industry and social housing? Does the social function of architecture lie in its very lack of function? In fact, architecture may have little other ground.

Just as the Surrealists could not find the right compromise between scandal and social acceptance, architecture seems to have little choice between autonomy and commitment, between the radical anachronism of Schiller's 'courage to talk of roses' and society. If the architectural piece renounces its autonomy by recognizing its latent ideological and financial dependency, it accepts the mechanisms of society. If it sanctuarizes itself as art for art's sake, it does not escape classification among exisiting ideological compartments.

So architecture seems to survive only when it saves its nature by negating the form that society expects of it. *I would therefore suggest that there has never been any reason to doubt the necessity of architecture, for the necessity of architecture is its non-necessity. It is useless, but radically so.* Its radicalism constitutes its very strength in a society where profit is prevalent. Rather than an obscure artistic supplement or a cultural justification for financial manipulations, architecture is not unlike fireworks, for these 'empirical apparitions', as Adorno puts it, 'produce a delight that cannot be sold or bought, that has no exchange value and cannot be integrated in the production cycle.'[9]

18.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the non-necessity of architecture, its necessary loneliness, throws it back on itself. If its role is not defined by society, architecture will have to

9
Bernard Tschumi, 'Fireworks', 1974, extract from *A Space. A Thousand Words*: 'Yes, just as all the erotic forces contained in your movement have been consumed for nothing, architecture must be conceived, erected and burned in vain. The greatest architecture of all is the fireworker's: it perfectly shows the gratuitous consumption of pleasure.'

define it alone. Until 1750, architectural space could rely on the paradigm of the ancient precedent. After that time, until well into the twentieth century, this classical source of unity progressively became the socially determined programme. In view of the present-day polarization of ontological discourse and sensual experience, I am well aware that any suggestion that they now form the inseparable but mutually exclusive terms of architecture requires some elucidation. This must begin with a description of the apparent impossibility of escaping from the paradox of the pyramid of concepts and the labyrinth of experience, of immaterial architecture as a concept and of material architecture as a presence.

To restate my point, the paradox is not about the impossibility of perceiving both architectural concept (the six faces of the cube) and real space at the same time, but about the impossibility of questioning the nature of space and at the same time making or experiencing a real space. Unless we search for an escape from architecture into the general organization of building processes, the paradox persists: architecture is made of two terms that are interdependent but mutually exclusive. Indeed, *architecture constitutes the reality of experience while this reality gets in the way of the overall vision. Architecture constitutes the abstraction of absolute truth, while this very truth gets in the way of feeling.* We cannot both experience and think that we experience. 'The concept of dog does not bark'; the concept of space is not in space.

In the same way, the achievement of architectural reality (building) defeats architectural theory while at the same time being a product of it. So theory and praxis may be dialectic to one another, but in space, the translation of the concept, the overcoming of the abstraction in reality, involves the dissolution of the dialectic and an incomplete statement. This means in effect that, perhaps for the first time in history, architecture can never be. The effect of the great battles of social progress is obliterated, and so is the security of archetypes. Defined by its questioning, architecture is always

the expression of a lack, a shortcoming, a non-completion. It always misses something, either reality or concept. Architecture is both being and non-being. The only alternative to the paradox is silence, a final nihilistic statement which might provide modern architectural history with its ultimate punchline, its self-annihilation.

19.

Before leaving this brief exploration of architecture as paradox, it is tempting to suggest a way of accepting the paradox, while refuting the silence it seems to imply. This conclusion may be intolerable to philosophers, in that it alters the 'subject' of architecture: you and I (and one knows logicians are never drunk). It may be intolerable to scientists who want to master the 'subject' of science. It may be intolerable to artists who want to objectify the 'subject'.

Let us first examine the labyrinth. In the course of this argument, it has been implied that the labyrinth shows itself as a slow history of space, but that a total revelation of the labyrinth is historically impossible because no point of transcendence in time is available. One can participate in and share the fundamentals of the labyrinth, but one's perception is only part of the labyrinth as it manifests itself. One can never see it in totality, nor can one express it. One is condemned to it and cannot go outside and see the whole. But remember: Icarus flew away, towards the sun. So after all does the way out of the labyrinth lie in the making of the pyramid, through a projection of the subject towards some transcendental objectivity? Unfortunately not. The labyrinth cannot be dominated. The top of the pyramid is an imaginary place, and Icarus fell down; the nature of the labyrinth is such that it entertains dreams which include the dream of the pyramid.

20.

But the real importance of the labyrinth and its spatial experience lies elsewhere. The pyramid, the analysis of the architectural object, the breaking down of its forms and elements, all cut away from the question of the subject. The

sensual architectural reality is not experienced as an abstract object already transformed by consciousness, but as an immediate and concrete human activity: as a praxis, with all its subjectivity. This importance of the subject is in clear opposition to all philosophical and historical attempts to objectify the immediate perception of reality, for example in the relations of production. To talk about the labyrinth and its praxis means to insist here on its subjective aspects: it is personal and requires an immediate experience. Opposed to Hegel's *Erfahrung* and close to Bataille's 'interior experience', this immediacy bridges sensory pleasure and reason. It introduces new articulations between the inside and the outside, between private and public spaces. It suggests new oppositions between dissociated terms and new relations between homogeneous spaces. This immediacy does not give precedence to the experiential term, however. *For it is only by recognising the architectural rule that the subject of space will reach the depth of experience and its sensuality. Like eroticism, architecture needs both system and excess.*

21.

This 'experience' may have repercussions that go far beyond man as its 'subject'. Torn between rationality and the demand for irrationality, our present society moves towards other attitudes. If system plus excess is one of its symptoms, we may soon have to consider architecture as the indispensable complement to this changing praxis. Architecture in the past gave linguistic metaphors (the castle, the labyrinth) to society. It may now provide the cultural model.

As long as social practice rejects the paradox of ideal and real space, imagination – interior experience – may be the only means to transcend it. By changing the prevalent attitudes towards space and its subject, the dream of the step beyond the paradox can even provide the conditions for renewed social attitudes. Just as eroticism is the pleasure of excess rather than the excess of pleasure, so the solution of the paradox is the imaginary blending of the architectural rule and the experience of pleasure.