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MATERIALIZED IDEOLOGY

On liberal and marxist power analysis, westernness
and the car

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PREFACE

This paper is part of a forthcoming study within the Trends in Western Civilization (TWC) program - "Towards a new Historical Materialism". One of the TWC hobbyhorses has come to be the contention that the 'liberal' Euro-American and the Marxist modes of thought have more in common than hitherto recognized, indeed that they are two of several variants on a common theme. This basic identity is explored in "Liberalism and Marxism - Two Ways of Being Western" by Johan Galtung (TWC paper forthcoming). An analysis and definition of the Western meta-ideology, its historical roots and various manifestations is attempted in "Wetsrnness and Islam" by Håkon Stang (TWC no. 7, 1976). The present torso is a follow-up, a critique of what Marx once called "the poverty of philosophy" - or rather, of the poverty of liberal societal analysis (where power resources are counted) and the Marxist one (where property in terms of money is counted) - in search of a new historical materialism. As a suitable means of conveyance on the way I have chosen that ubiquitous product of modern industry, the car. A closer look at the car may give us a view not only of its ideological historicity, but also of that power which escapes both liberal and Marxist power analysis, the power of Western thought, of which liberalism, Marxism and the car itself are but three expressions.

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POWER AND ENVIRONMENT

Analysts of contemporary human relations are prone to define these as fundamentally a question of power, and to discuss power in terms of how an agent A influences an agent B. This holds good on all levels of analysis, from the inter-personal to the international. And there is - still - a monumental 'consensus' in interest orientation among social scientists, be they orthodox Marxists, 'liberal' game theoreticians, or what not: Their agents A and B, the rockbed irreducibles of their respective theories, are explicitly or implicitly taken to be human entities, individuals or collectivities.

Let us single out two groups who are singularly well entrenched and rather well definable, to wit the game or power theoreticians and the traditional Marxists. Euro-American students of game/power relationships are adept at constructing what might be termed option landscapes, more or less nuanced exposés of the alternatives facing two or more usually non-identified agents, in abstracto - as if describing chess scenarios, preferably unrelated to specific matches¹⁾

This total concentration on players A and B has as its obverse a complete disregard of their natural environment, except in terms of its being defined as resources to be exploited in the power game between A and B. By environment in this case is meant not only the physical setting of the 'game' - as perceived by the players - but also both the physical and the mental milieus that have produced and conditioned A and B before their encounter, providing each with a store of experience and a pre-set actional agility - and for that matter with preconceived notions as to the usefulness of playing such a game and conforming to certain rules and patterns at all.

This lack of concern with (and hence respect for) the integrity and overruling influence of the setting, the positing of two or more autonomous actors, may in itself be interpreted as the product of a special cultural setting, i.e. the Euro-American (or so-called Western) one. Other instances of the same fundamental approach, but in another field, would be Martin Buber's humanistic Ich-Du philosophy and J.P. Sartre's existentialism (viz. 'Being and Nothingness').²⁾

As a result of this very starting point a couple of basic quandaries beset power theories and theorists - that is, when they attempt to apply their structures (or strictures) to the factual world at hand.

Take the question of defining the actors at the apparently most complex level of power relations, that of international politics. If we do not a priori decide to single out a special relationship, say between two specific states, as constituting our theme of analysis, i.e. pre-decidé who the actors are, but instead start out from a given 'landscape' (which we term international politics) and try to analyse it in terms of actors, then we are in instant trouble.

Should we consider states as (the) basic units of action and power, ranging them from the Super-powers and other Great Powers and down the gradient to the absolute ministates as units approximating zero? What then about regional groupings, cartels of states: Is OPEC an actor on the international scene? And what of sub-national protagonists, the so-called multinationals, viz. the great oil companies ('Aramco is Saudi-Arabia' - or was), ITT (in Chile), Union Minière (in Katanga)? Where does one draw the line between those that act and those that supposedly are merely acted upon? Where do popular movements fit in, such as may threaten to upset an extant state structure, and in certain cases even to trigger off regional or world-wide conflagrations, viz. the PLO in the Middle East³⁾ What types of movements and organizations should we exclude? A number of permanent and ad hoc groupings within a state or group of states may modify and influence the behaviour of another state, sometimes radically - ranging from the Catholic Church across Amnesty International and the Nobel's Peace Committee to a handful of environmentalists obstructing Norwegian seal slaughter in the Arctic 1976. Why stop at organizations? Cannot 'autonomous' individuals (cfr the exiles of Trotskij, Peron, Solshenitsyn) have greater import on the world power scene than the governments of Liechtenstein and Nauru?

The point is: The possibilities of defining 'actors' are legio. The system is open-ended, without any indisputably clear-cut bounds, which goes to say there is no system. Now just like the question of actors can be pursued virtually ad infinitum, so too can that of their respective power bases (resources). There is no end of items we can adduce as relevant to defining the general power of, say, a state, from GNP, literacy and population structures to such points

as the (anticipated or observed) physico-mental tenacity of the population under diverse types of crisis, the suitability of the terrain for conventional or guerilla warfare, geographical location, proximity and reliability of allies, etc. Ability of a given national leadership to react quickly and decisively and to have decisions popularized, down to and obeyed by the population are vital assets. But of what use, or how reliable and operative, are such general power estimates? While the USA was able to fight Japan virtually alone and bear much of the brunt of the battle in Europe simultaneously in the Second World War, it was worsted by a destitute and divided little peasant nation through a 13-year jungle war. While a country's capability of fighting a conventional short-term (or nuclear) war may be immense, it may prove a giant on clay feet in other types of conflict. Now how does one quantify constitutional and psychological restraints, anti-war home agitation, social strife, biased intelligence reports, the role of the press, etc, in evaluating the US 'power base' visavis Vietnam? The only sane overall answer is: one doesn't. How do we square power with 'image'? When Kissinger personally and forcefully projects an image of power, is not this in itself a factor of power? If Kissinger is defined as an asset to the USA (and not as an 'actor' on the international scene), how do we quantify him?

How do we draw the line between power resources and situational factors (environment)? It is no answer to state simply that this is for the analyst to decide. Rather it would be for the protagonists, if anyone, to decide. But even if we decide a priori to state that we have a simple A-versus-B confrontation system, with other states on the sidelines as 'environment' - provided that this is not a purely theoretical exercise in words - then the very neutrality, or concrete variations of neutrality and partiality, of the sideliners will be counted as assets or drawbacks (positive or negative power resources) by A and B. Factual neutrality aside, both A and B will count in the resources of neighbouring states as potential resources of their own, to be had through military or political means if need be.

Not only will a dividing line between power resources and mere environment tend to show itself, in practical cases, a figment of the mind, but any attempt to list both power resources and situational factors relevant to a confrontation will in principle be open-ended also. (Of course, the question of defining actors, i.e. power units, and the question of defining their power bases are really the same.)

In addition, power analysts should beware of, and try to operationalize within their systems, two other fundamental moot points, closely related to each other (in fact, these too may be seen as two specifications of one problem). First: How good a survey do A and B have of their adversary's (tactical) intentions, (strategic) goals and overall resources (including ability to use these resources efficaciously) - and of their own? 'Knowledge is power' - the state of intelligence services being one thing; the tactical and strategical schooling, the general mental versatility and phantasy of (and even the relationship between) a handful of top executives who are to use information is another.⁴⁾ How much of an asset is that jocund Machiavellian Kissinger, with his historian's insight into power games, to a nation that has traditionally scorned such insight?

Second, power theorization, which is highly rationalistic, all too easily seems to assume that actors A and B themselves are basically rational, or rational in the same way. A basic problem in conflict analysis would seem to be that the protagonists often appear not to share a common intersubjective arena at all; the less so the more serious the conflict is. World history is replete with examples of actors who miss their cues, who could have succeeded but didn't. But this point concerns something more deepset, as instanced in the Vietnam war - where the USA, which prides itself on being a rational society, for years fought against World Communism. Through its own massive use of bombs and napalm, and its concomitant neglect of the local social and political roots of the insurgency, the USA strengthened the will of the local peasant guerillas to resist and to fight on - against 'US imperialism', 'US aggression and occupation'.⁵⁾ And what of the US dedication to fighting World Communism in neighbouring Laos, where the Rightists and Pathet Lao, led by two frequently embracing princely half-brothers, prudently preferred to shoot over each other's heads? East is East, and West is West, and often the twain will clash. Analyzing military hardware, troop figures and gross national products - when the contending parties are both economies and worlds apart - only testifies to the analyst's being a prisoner of one such cultural world.

The same basic quandaries are refound at any level of analysis, i.e. the intra-national and inter-personal too. Which persons or organizations hold power in society, what specific power, how good an appraisal do they have of the situation, how does their rationality (and morality) function? Even when the actors consist of a simple twosome, the 'framework' is open-ended.

Summing up: The contemporary power or game analyst is caught between the Scylla of 'pure' (and inoperative) theory and the Charybdis of innumerable empirical minutiae. If he contents himself with discussing power and actors as such, in phenomenological terms, without specifications as to time and place, he runs the danger of evolving a new scholasticism. If he steps outside this rarefied speculative atmosphere he is equally in trouble, bogging down in case-specific details.

This is not to question the usefulness of power analysis as a whole. Individual scholars may contribute engaging observations - and indeed often have. Yet the contention is that such observations are the result of the astuteness of these scholars as such, and of their detailed factual knowledge and scope of information from one or several fields of human interest, rather than the result of a particular scientific conceptional framework. Thus, international politics is certainly a field of general human interest, with lots of 'actors' that catch the popular eye. But attempts to reify it as a 'system' with claims to scholarly stringency are really a wild goose chase - albeit highly understandable.⁶

On the whole, this (largely US-dominated) tradition of power analysis is readily explainable as a scholarly overlay, or an attempted scholarization, of the Euro-American personal-actionist world outlook (meta-ideology), which will be examined further below. Suffice it to say that this attempted 'theory' on the evidence of the above never will be completed, nor will it ever contribute substantially and independently to our insight. This theorization cannot evolve a coherent, comprehensive theory because of its very starting point.

Instead of trying to isolate individual actors and to peel off and discard 'situational factors', we should perhaps attempt to define the overall settings first, of which any actor is a part. In thus going the other way about it, we would be in keeping with an Asiatic view of life, as typified by Hinduism and Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Instead of 'placing the world in epoche' (Edmund Husserl), instead of counting fish, and defining them as freefloating and contending species, let us look at the ocean. By describing fish we do not get to understand the ocean. By understanding more or less about the ocean, we may understand more or less about the fish.

Now is not this what Marxism does? While liberal-Western game and power analysis is open-ended, Marxism is not. Every individual, and every individual act, is caught up and defined within the context of a class. Thus the US-inspired power analysis tradition will be judged superficial, ahistorical and 'bourgeois' by the Marxist one. Marxists are quick to point out that while viewpoints may be ahistorical, they are never without history. So too with Marxism. It too was and is encased in European space and time. (Here Marxism proper is borne in mind, not the modern Asian offshoots.) This is attested to not only by Marx' paternalistic remarks on 'Asian despotism' and on the civilizing role of the British in India and the French in Algeria (and Engels' characteristic of for instance the Lapps as half-savages who would and should be swamped by Norwegian civilization).⁷ It is much more in evidence, but characteristically much less noted by European observers, in the very nature of the Marxist concept of matter and materialism.

Marx once complained that the jeweller of his time, like any producer within capitalist society, was without understanding 'of the peculiar beauty and peculiar nature of minerals', he lacked 'mineralogical feeling'.⁸ The same critique might be applied to, if not Marx himself, then many a latterday Marxist: What matters to analysts within this tradition is generally not the interaction of matter and consciousness; it is narrowed down to the interaction or conflict of work and capital, or wages and investments/profits.

The meaning and content of the material environment is for that matter reduced even more, to a question of property. Just like liberal-bourgeois game and power theory reduces the environment to appendages of, properties pertaining to, A and B, so too Marxist literature generally defines it in terms of property relations - in the most literal sense. What interests is, more precisely, the ownership of the means of production; just like in liberal power analysis, the control of power resources. Other elements are downgraded, again, to 'situational factors'. And the main thing is the power game between A and B - which here are defined a priori, as two collective actors, two universally extended classes, two blocs (with which other, intermediate classes will have to be aligned).

Roughly, Marxist 'matter' in a number of ways equates liberal-theory 'power'. And so-called historical materialism in its cruder expositions is reduced to an a priori definition of the actors A and B,

the nature and the name of the game, and its outcome. While the question of quantifying liberal-theory power is open-ended and unresolved, though economic indicators (e.g. GNP) are much relied on, in Marxism the quantification means, money, also is defined a priori. As discussed before, Marxism with its whole historical development scheme and eschatology projects itself as a neat and complete overlay over the common Western meta-ideology. (This relativization need not of course mean that the Marxist cosmology is 'wrong'.)

Now this does not do full justice to the teachings of all latterday self-professed Marxists, nor of Marx himself. The flippant remark that a basic flaw in Marxism is that Karl Marx lived a century ago, may have some merit: "Those within the bourgeois society who work acquire nothing, and those who acquire anything do not work," says the Communist Manifesto - and in 1848 this was no bad catchword assessment. Formal ownership was, in speaking of the economy, synonymous with real power. There was little point in roundabout discussions of 'material goods' and their distribution and impact on the population, because most of the population had just about none, and those that had access to them were (largely) those in control of the means of production. And there was little sense in lengthy discussions of the nature of such control, because it was quite synonymous with ownership. The intense concentration among present-day Marxists on precisely ownership of the means of production, and the accompanying insistence on classifying the inhabitants of both consumerist social-democratic Norway and starving Bangladesh as consisting of two lumps of people, capitalists and proletarians, may be considered a carry-over from the times of Marx - because of the persuasive force and intensity of his message.

It does not seem to have dawned yet on many a modern vulgar-Marxist that precisely the dominant aspect of 'old-fashioned' class struggle, i.e. the wage struggle, is what is needed to keep late capitalism going.⁹⁾ It is indeed the very key to the stability and overall smooth functioning of the advanced consumerist 'social-democrat' societies, which otherwise would be beset (worse than they are) by crises of over-production. Only a high general level of wages in the population - and a likewise purchase-strong, consumption-furthering state - along with a quick turn-over rate of goods consumed, meaning a high level of waste, can guarantee production, sales and profits to the captains of industry.

Marx himself sensed the beginnings of this development (stating at the end of his life that peaceful transition to socialism might be possible in precisely the most advanced capitalist countries); but only the beginnings, or some of them.¹⁰ It was left to Lenin to analyze 'imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism', to Trotsky to realize that the weakest, least developed links in the capitalist chain were liable to break first, to Mao Tse-tung to organize and demonstrate the feasibility of third world peasant revolutions. It is still left to give a convincing overall historical view of the rise of consumerist late capitalism, its internal and external contradictions and their eventual resolution. What sort of overall view, what theory? In the words of Lenin in 1917: "Theory, my friend, is gray, while green is the undying tree of life"¹¹

What are the roots of the tree of human life? Let us first look at the foliage. Without dismissing the Marxian distinction between labour and capital, without assailing the importance of understanding property relations, let us place this in abeyance, as questions that concern what goes on in the trunk of this tree. First, let us pick leaves. In practice: Let us look at and analyze the contents of everyday human life, the material environment of millions

Summing up again, while 'liberal-bourgeois' power analysis is something of a wild goose chase, at least as regards the possibilities of finding the theoretical goose that lays the golden eggs, such a chase does afford exercise, and one often enough may chance across rewarding details and observations along the course - if not overly preoccupied with the figment of the goose. And on the other side, in another simile, the theoretical but oh-so-solid house erected by Karl Marx a hundred years ago is still inhabitable (lots of theorists still live there), but perhaps needs new plumbing, a new roof, etc. It still can afford a sweeping view of a changing landscape outside (and the changes over a hundred years are there to be seen) - if one does not disdain to look out the windows. Marx himself put in these windows (and if necessary we can install new ones); one of them says: "Man stands in a relation of reciprocity to his environment. Man comes to perceive and find himself, to realize his nature, through remodelling (Bearbeitung) of external nature."¹²

Let us look at one dominant product, one dominant part of the not always so green foliage of the modern tree of life.

AUTOMOBILISM AS MATERIALIZED EUROPEAN IDEOLOGY

It will reassure you when you need it.
 It will help restore your confidence
 should it ever desert you.
 It will soothe and solace you
 after a hectic day.
 It will insulate you
 from the noise and chaos of the outside world.
 It will rebuild your morale; your ambitions.
 But most of all, it will remind you
 that your life has not been totally without success

runs the full-page spread for the Jaguar in the Observer 18/1-76. The letter types are those used ordinarily by the newspaper for top-priority events. They are superimposed on a landscape of grassy knolls and hazy valleys under a lofty sky. A narrow country road meanders forth, losing itself in the sunny, misty depths of the scenery. In the foreground, travelling into this futurity, the Jaguar, lithe, lissom, reflecting the same mellow light that envelops it all. Inside: one solitary man, silhouetted from behind. No houses are to be seen (let alone towns). No other cars. No other person.

Things still remain to be said about the 'loneliness of the long distance runner' in Western, or rather European, culture. On the one hand there is the long distance perspective inherent in all 'Western' ideologies as defined previously, the common development paradigm in regard to which not only the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but also the dominant modern, secularized ideologies of Marxism, Liberalism, Fascism and Ecologism, may be regarded as overlays - as different, indeed widely different ways of interpreting and spelling out a common theme. On the other hand, there is this specifically European, or rather West European/Euro-American 'loneliness'.

Not only has the mass use of cars changed the physical face of Europe and North America (and for that matter Japan). It is in itself consonant with the very ideal of change - as embedded in the underlying Western cosmology, or meta-ideology. The millenarian dream, the urge, couched in the form of a moral imperative, to

strive for something better beyond the confines of one's present time and place, braving great risks, daring all, chancing all, this Promethean rage and fury is the gist of our meta-ideology. "Why all this dashing about? Is this the way you conceive of catching happiness?" members of more quiescent cultures often ask. They have got a point, the most deep-set 'point' of Western culture; only they see it from outside, with the simplicitude that is natural to the stranger

This is not to intimate that there is some causal relationship, researchable and falsifiable or not, between the phenomenon of automobilism and the change-oriented cosmology of the 'Western' world (which is used here in a wider sense than in usual parlance, encompassing Islamic and East European Communist countries as well). The crux of it is simply that the phenomenon considered does not do violence to the cosmology and ideals of the societies in which it is flourishing the most - in contrast to what would be the case in cultures like the Chinese or the Hindu.

Within what is here termed the Western world, however, there are cleavages both in time (history) and space (geography), witness the number of contending ideologies mentioned above. Thus automobilism, while certainly on the rise in Islamic and East European countries, in its quality of a mass phenomenon is as yet geographically coterminous with the self-styled 'Free World'. Multiparty democracy with free and secret balloting, freedom of speech and of the press (or its editors), economic free enterprise as a cardinal principle (in theory if not in full practice, viz. the regulating, partly stimulating, partly constraining role of the state), in short capitalist democracies - these are the theatres of mass automobilism. Why?

The concept of individual liberty may be traced, so we are told at school, back to ancient Greece. Yet there is no historical causality between Athenian 'democracy' and its modern capitalist namesake. The Athenian ideal (unrelated to the fact that slaves, women and metoics, i.e. a goodly majority of the population, were excluded from the workings of 'democracy') has been and still is of prime ideological importance, though: While the modern European freedoms have their objective historical roots in the mediæval split between state and church, in feudalism with its vassal autonomy and ties of mutual dependence, and in the eventual ascendancy of a revolutionary bourgeoisie,

the idealized democracy of Athens was important inasmuch as it answered a deep psychological need. The revolutionary bourgeoisie that came to power, most conspicuously through the French revolution, was groping for a paragon, a historical metaphor with which to express their strivings. When we humans attempt something radically new, we only have recourse to what already has been in order to conceptualize and clarify what we are about. A new present tends to throw us back on a collective past, on the inter-subjective experience, traditions, ideas and ideals that might apply to and help to sum up the chaos of the present. Thus the 'culture grid' or historical paradigm that today dominates the Euro-American world is the ideal of the independent, discerning Athenian who after sober deliberation casts his decisive vote. (While, through a new twist of history, a dominant paradigm in Marxist minds, whether in Eastern or Western Europe, is that of the 1789 upheaval in France, 'the Mother of Revolutions' - which activated the Athenian paradigm.)

The bearing of 'democracy' upon automobilism in European and North American society has been given astoundingly little attention by intellectuals and scholars, largely content with ruminating on their traditional pastures. It is left to the people that control the commanding posts of economy, the captains of mass consumption, the profiteering strategians who shape the everyday material life of millions and millions, to drive the point home. Take the words of Robert Lutz, head of the Ford corporation in West Germany, in his opening speech at the gigantic International Car Show in Frankfurt 1975, presided over by the West German Bundeskanzler (who duly hailed the slogan 'Besser Leben mit dem Auto'):

The car is the most fascinating, the most interesting and universally craved industrial product in the history of mankind. Discussions about its place in society are fruitful so long as the car is not one-sidedly made the butt of ideologically and politically charged opposition, such as we have seen in recent years in Europe.

As one of the men in charge within this industry I see it as a democratic duty that I speak my mind. It is a fact that only 20% of person transport in West Germany is by collective means. Public local transport each year costs every single German taxpayer 400 D-Mark. In addition the motorists pay their own transport completely by themselves. Roads must be built, they are the cheapest communications arteries; free running traffic saves energy and is environmentally much to be preferred over arteries that are clogged and congested. Modern autoroutes are, today and in the future, a characteristic aspect of the modern industrial society - which makes welfare attainable for all. The car gives you freedom and social contact, free options as to place of work and habitation, it equalis-

es and nivellizes all differences between opportunities in the cities and in the countryside.

In a larger perspective the car is the basis of millions of jobs and a bulwark of social security. I must ask whether those who attack the car out of ideological considerations, without sober recognition of its outstanding technical, social and socio-economic political function, in reality are enemies of individual freedom.¹³⁾

It is all too easy for intellectuals to brush such talk haughtily aside as mere brazen demagoguery. This is an unworthy and immature approach, in keeping with the traditional seclusion of European scholars from the lives of the masses. The ideologically charged words of Herr Lutz are worth (or perhaps worthy of) a thousand dissertations on 'Western democracy'. There is no need to doubt his sincerity. Instead of saying (as critics of any and all Establishments are wont) that he exploits widespread ideals, we should perhaps contend that he - and automobilism itself - translates an abstract notion into material power; that he is mouthpiece, victim and tool of a widespread cast of mind. Indeed, that people are not manipulated and conditioned by Herr Lutz and the likes of him, but quite as much the opposite - that the words of such captains of industry are conditioned by the mental soil of society at large, that we are wrong to concentrate on the seeding of a landscape instead of noting that seeds are part of vegetation, and vegetation is the landscape.

What features dominate or structure the Euro-American landscape? First, most strikingly, a rampant individualism; and an attendant blindness to the consequences of this individualism that belies the much-hailed supreme rationality of European as against other cultures. A prime illustration is the advertisement first quoted, for a product that promises to insulate you 'from the noise and chaos of the outside world' - while few things contribute so massively to this noise and chaos as precisely such a product. The extreme egg-orientation of potential buyers is brought out in advertisements - and research - along two lines: a) Freedom from pollution for the inmates of the car (air filters are stressed), b) Optimal safety for the inmates of the car (safety belts, sturdy fenders or fenders that crumble on contact with meeting cars, pedestrians etc.) The interesting result being that the safer, more insulated you are made to feel, the higher the speed you are tempted to use - meaning that you pester and endanger your environment (and incidentally yourself) all the more. The greater the velocity and the external noise (of engine and tyres), the greater the noise insulation of the cabin

will become. The grotesque lengths to which even governments are prepared to go to ensure 'freedom' for the driver is evidenced by the official US program for development and installation of a 'safety balloon' in car dashboards - which is to be inflated instantly and automatically when heavy objects impinge upon the car, thus cushioning off the driver and front-seat passenger. This will allow for increased speed on what is characteristically called, in this 'land of the free and the brave', by an ideologically fetching and fundamentally correct name: freeways.

The theme of insulation or 'individualization' has already been touched upon in the discussion of automobilism as contemporary history.¹⁴⁾ This theme may be deepened and developed in a review of the phenomenon of alienation. Child psychologists thus are beginning to admonish parents not to drive their children long ways, preferably not to drive them at all, to day care or nursery homes - because only by walking or pramming will they be able to learn about the continuity of places and the basic security of geography.¹⁵⁾

In an enquete by a Norwegian agency on perceived advantages of the automobile¹⁶⁾ some 50% of the sample mentioned 'increased social contact'. This however pertains to leisure time visiting of more or less far-off friends. In pre-car days there was hardly less social contact, only it was geographically restricted, one largely had to choose company within a walking radius - which is the simple basis of small-town atmospheres, tightknit and gossipy. 'Increased contact' in the enquete means merely a radically widened radius of action - and probably less real intercourse: Neighbours have become strangers to each other, and quite possibly there is less commingling of people from different backgrounds and milieus as many now, with the freedom of the car, prefer the select company of their 'own kind'.¹⁷⁾ Yet this all concerns leisure time.

A direct antithesis between automobilism and social contact is vividly conspicuous in the seemingly endless rows of individual motorists that jam all thoroughfares in peak hours in each and every Euro-American city - behold the lonely crowd. Mean locomotion in many stretches within the precincts of Paris and London, New York and Los Angeles, Oslo or any other town is 10 km/hour or slightly above (in Tokyo 6 km/hour in places), i.e. considerably less than the speed of a bicycle. The problems of parking are a

daily trial for millions. Public conveyance is often just as fast, and generally much cheaper for the lone traveller. Yet one-man and (much more rarely) two-man motorism prevails, the preference is clear.

For the one thing motorism does impart is seclusion, privacy. A bus, tram or train is a microcosm of society at large, travelling towards a common destiny while individuals get on and off, a common setting within which exist all possibilities of human interaction. To the Euro-American, however, close physical (or physico-mental) contact with strangers, contact that is not willed and chosen, is something to be avoided. In a car (mobile private property, off bounds to others) one is securely ensconced - 'my car is my castle'. It is difficult to imagine a more massive material expression of inter-human alienation than these casings of steel and glass which people insist on wearing - in endless clogged rows.

These compact shells, each weighing about one ton (European standard new car 1970 885 kilo, US 1500 kilo)¹²⁾, of course isolate their human contents from more than just other humans. In the enquete mentioned above the largest number of respondents (53%) mentioned 'more access to nature' as the top advantage of having a car. Every Norwegian city and town, and just about every other Euro-American one, has adequate public facilities for reaching nature with relatively little loss of time as against car transport. But that is not the point. The point is that a car has a totally free radius of operation, you can choose any part of nature, preferably the as yet unpolluted, uninhabited parts of it, while trams, trains etc reach only the more domesticated, densely visited areas.

Or rather, that is the point of view of the individualist more-access-to-nature-enthusiast - who does not see that his easy access to nature, multiplied with that of countless other such individuals, is what in the long run destroys the inviolate character of nature; who does not realize that, but for the car, the city itself would or could have been much more a part of nature, The very craving of 'more access to nature' is indicative of the stress, noise and pollution of urbanized Euro-American life; and there is no more persistent and ubiquitous single source of stress, noise and pollution than the car. Yet this is a faceless mass phenomenon, and the individual motorist can easily convince himself, and quite rightly so, that he

is nearly free from guilt as to the total situation - and that a healthy reaction is to flee it once in a while. The spectacle of myriads fleeing the pollution and hectic din of urban life, and in the process producing exactly what they flee, is not merely singularly unedifying, but also singularly instructive of the dominant Euro-American mentality: extreme individualism and its correlative lack of respect for the integrity of one's natural environment.

The theme of apokatastasis pantón, or the inherent holiness and eventual redemption of all Creation, was and is present in the Eastern Christian churches, in Islam, and in many African, Asian and North American Indian religions. It is absent from the teachings of the Western Church fathers, and thoroughly absent from Protestantism. In this latter tradition man alone (and mark you, the individual subject) is Soul, while Nature is vitiated, soulless, pure object. If anything at all, Nature is a repository of sin, something to be conquered (the Wilderness of straying).

Pure individual soulfulness is the imperative goal of Christianity, most extremely so in its Protestant variety. And within the geographical seedbed of Protestantism latterday industrialization, of which the automobile is the supreme product (cfr Lutz), struck root. (When did we last hear a member of the clergy attack automobilism - instead of attacking juvenile car theft, a popular theme of opprobium in run-of-the-mill sermons?)

Complete unattachedness to 'this world', as idealized in Christianity, is there any more vividly material expression of this self-sequestration than this supreme product of our civilization? Of our five senses, hearing, smelling, feeling and tasting of the natural environment is ruled out for inmates of the car, and visual contact with nature is qualitatively greatly reduced. (Catholic mass benediction of cars and their drivers, and US drive-in sermons do not however signify any clerical appreciation of the 'other-worldliness' of the car.) Thus two great tendencies within Christian theology (and the affiliated modern secular ideologies of the Euro-American world), that of individualization and that of 'spiritualization' (or alienation) from Nature, have come to material fruition.

Ecologists should beware, though, of ascribing all that is amiss in modern urban life to the automobile.¹⁹⁾ It is more correct to view it as the pointed expression of long-term qualities. Witness the words of the chieftain of a small tribe of Indians in 1855, long before the advent of the car, in response to the demand of the Great White Father in Washington that the tribe sell its property to white development:

How can you buy or sell the heavens - the warmth from the earth? This thought is a stranger to us. We do not own the air's cleanness or the sparkling of the water. How then can you buy it from us? .. We know that the white man does not understand our way of life. One stretch of land is to him like another. For he is a stranger who comes at night and robs from the country all he needs. The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has pained it out, he moves on. He leaves his father's grave without compunction. He plunders the earth from his own children.. His greed will emaciate the earth and leave deserts in its wake. The sight of your cities is a pain unto the eyes of the red man. But maybe it is because the red man is a savage who does not understand.

There is no peace to be found in the white man's cities. No place where you can hear the leaves budding in the spring or the rustling of insect wings. But perhaps because I am a savage who does not understand - the din of the cities to me is an insult to the ear. The air is costly to the red man. For all that is alive breathes in the same air - the animals, the trees, man. It does not seem as if the white man cares about the air he breathes. Like a dying man he is mindless of the stench.²⁰⁾

This outsider view of white urban culture makes much of not only individualization ('the graves of the fathers and the rights of the children are forgotten' it says in one place) and alienation from nature ('he is a stranger..'), but also a third characteristic: restless mobility. We might also call it actionism, or perhaps Geschäftigkeit. When dashing about one not only gets things done, one also feels that one is getting things done. Driving a car is an epitome of activism, waiting for a tram or bus and being seated in it are passive situations; having to wait and obey schedules is in addition an infringement of individualist freedom. "The car represents a hitherto unknown degree of the individual right to self-determination, in respect of travelling possibilities and choice of travelling time," a Norwegian government survey of automobilism says, in language reminiscent of diverse Western constitutions.²¹⁾

The enquete previously mentioned has some 50% of the respondents mentioning 'freedom as to use of leisure time' (or 'free time' as the Norwegian expression goes) as the prime advantage of the car, versus 53% 'more access to nature', 45% 'more social contact', 13% 'easier shopping'. This intense focusing on leisure time, which all

three top scores reflect, is in itself indicative of how deeply the orientation towards individual unfetteredness runs (as against collectivity, e.g. working-place, orientation). In addition it shows up the dynamic, restive content of this freedom, which to a large extent is synonymous with 'getting places'.

The automobile is, in the dual sense of the German word, the Panzer of individualism; its Schutzwaffe and its Sturmwagen. The latter aspect is evidenced by the Volvo (1974) pasteup that shows a car thrusting headlong into thoroughly virgin forest, an intriguingly sexual bit of aggression, and the standard US advertisements with a speckless car in an expanse of prairie grass and a haughty smoking-clad couple toasting each other, as if in triumph. Witness also the testimony of World Racing Champion Emerson Fittipaldi to the effect that "outside my car I feel I am nothing; in it everything changes, and I feel the virile master of the world and of destiny."²²⁾

The spate of motoring magazines and 'car extras' in dailies and weeklies testify to the same ideological payload and mental-therapeutic function of the car. So does the interest in racing (and motocross) rallies. And so does the great number of often publicly supported 'youth motor centres', where young males in particular are busied with 'mecking' and talking car;²³⁾ in more sparsely populated and less 'welfare'-saturated areas there is the afternoon get-together of motorized youths at some petrol station or wayside kiosk. As the Norwegian government survey has it, "for some youth groups the car has become a centre of activity in life."²⁴⁾ Just about every man (and woman) in the Euro-American world knows that to revv up a car and careen about with it, to snarl along with abrupt accelerations and decelerations, is a signal of virility. The government survey underscores the function of not only such driving, but driving in general, as an expression of dominant cultural values:

One may postulate that the car appeals to more or less unconscious wishes connected with concepts such as speed, freedom, power, force etc. This is enhanced by advertising and car sports. In our society there are not so many daily situations where the individual has a chance to affirm these values. The car affords a good possibility for this. It is an instrument one has the feeling of having mastery over, and it can be used to express this visavis others. The very act in itself, driving a car, provides fulfilment of aspirations to live up to an active, action-oriented ideal. Together with suspense and speed this gives a feeling of satisfaction in the situation.²⁵⁾

As a philosophy this is summed up most succinctly in the French motorist slogan, emblazoned on so many rear windows: *En roulant - sur la rue - c'est la vie!* And a not uncommon attitude towards this instrument of gratification is one of gratitude, even love, expressed in nick-names of affection, in polishing and caressing, and in motor-ing editorials asserting that "all too many years now the car has been a scapegoat, its many generous offers notwithstanding, it has had to suffer for the sorrows it has brought us.. They are not the car's fault, but our fault.." ²⁶⁾ (italics added)..

Motorism is not merely expressive of certain values, or more precisely, of Euro-American ideology. It in itself generates feelings; it acerbates or hones out, strengthens and purifies the three meta-tendencies within Euro-American ideology, as mentioned above, towards individualization, 'spiritualization' from the natural environment, and aggressive actionism. The last point is noted in the aforesaid Norwegian state survey:

The role of the car driver in itself has a tendency to influence inter-human relations. The traffic situation is marked by competition. Many are strongly concerned with getting first, and take chances in overtaking others. The ruthlessness that often characterizes the traffic setting is seldom observable where people meet without the immunizing armour (panser) that the car represents - yet it is possible that something of it all the same lingers on. ²⁷⁾

It lingers on, the survey specifies, in transgressions against the law. In a sub-chapter on Criminality it is rather forcefully asserted:

Car driving entails so many danger factors that the authorities have had to pass a considerable number of laws and by-laws, and great efforts are being expended in surveillance. All the same it must be acknowledged that the number of infringements of traffic regulations is so vast that the police only can act in a fraction of the cases. This, it must be assumed, weakens respect for law and justice in general.. The quantity of serious infractions is increasing. The traffic police states that far too many do not seem to regard speeding as a violation of the law. The margins of violation are ever greater.. ²⁸⁾

In 1972 nearly 40% of the inmates of Norwegian prisons were doing time for intoxicated driving; the percentage is rising. In 1975 more than 40% of injured motorists registered at hospital had a dangerously high alcohol concentration in their blood. ²⁹⁾ Car thefts are a major problem for the police, as are diverse other crimes directly related to the use of cars, e.g. bank and post robberies.

Around 10% of the hospital beds in a number of 'Western' countries are taken up by motoring victims, while 30-35% of all deaths in the age bracket 15-35 are traffic accidents, according to 'World Health', organ of the World Health Organization.³⁰⁾ For every person killed some 10-15 are seriously maimed and 30-40 are more lightly injured. In Great Britain a survey 10 years ago concluded that more than half of all children who are born sooner or later will be injured in motor accidents, one in 50 fatally. 'World Health' editorializes:

More than 250000 deaths on the roads, year after year, is not a necessary price modern man has to pay for the luxury it is to have motorized transport. If traffic accidents are treated with methods akin to those that were used against the great epidemic diseases, the present wave of traffic deaths would be brought under control - like pest and smallpox once were. But this is only possible through a change in the fatalistic view that accidents are unavoidable. Our attitudes to traffic accidents today resembles our great grandparents view of contagious diseases at a time when they still were without any preventive or curative means. Ignorance of the real causes of traffic accidents is still widespread.³⁰⁾

The last sentence is monumentally true, perhaps more so than 'World Health' is aware of. Nobody could possibly object to bringing pests under control, but to reduce traffic accidents one must curtail and regulate traffic. Unhappily, there is little chance that the individual motorist can be made to see that by steaming around in a car he becomes the potential bearer of a deadly contagion. The fatalist view is voiced in the Norwegian government survey: "We must be willing to accept that to open a quarry, a warft, an oil well or a new road or air connection will cost human lives - in many cases we can compute beforehand how many will be killed. This is a price society tacitly accepts, since go-aheads are given. The individual accepts the risk because we are trained to and because we believe we ourselves will not be struck down by the accidents that will occur."³⁰⁾ Again, the individualist's world view. As the survey has it, "the strong increase in traffic accidents over the last decades is mainly due to increased total travel volume and the transference of travels from collective means of conveyance to private cars."³²⁾

A striking illustration of the actionist content of Euro-American 'liberty' is afforded by the Vietnam war protest wave in the USA. While Vietnamese only (or largely) were the victims, i.e. in the early (Kennedy) days and in the Vietnamization phase at the end, protests were rather muted and confined to the intellectual fringe

of society. When 'our American boys' were dying in great numbers, protests were violent and widespread. But throughout these years the number of Americans killed and maimed just as brutally, mostly in the prime of their youth, in car accidents back at home, was greater - greater than any Vietnam peak numbers. Very close to nobody reacted at all.

"Free citizens in a free country demand free speed" runs a Danish motoring slogan in rear auto windows and on stickers. In Germany a few years ago there was an uproar when the government wanted to enforce speed limits on the Autobahnen. Opposition politicians and a number of organizations protested that this would be undemocratic, a 'violation' of rights. (The firms manufacturing artificial limbs protested because this would lower demands and prejudice their market, in violation of the principle of a free economy.)

It is characteristic of Euro-American culture that the brutal daily killings and violence on the roads is not considered a violation of anything at all, while a speed limit of 110 kmph is. It is interesting that emission of body gases (flatulence) in the company of others is a taboo, because it serves no actionist purpose, while the much more noxious exhaust fumes from countless car stomachs are tolerated. Euro-American freedom is not primarily a freedom from (e.g. from polluted air, from noise), but a freedom to, a latitude to do what you will. In the words of the current Norwegian minister of transport (in an 'inaugural interview' on the radio): "I am still a railroad man. But I am an adherent and supporter of automobilism. We have no right to forget that the car has given people greater freedom and possibilities of action, activity and motion than ever before."³²) Contrast the reservations expressed in the forementioned state survey - from the same ministry - as to this freedom:

The percentage of bicyclists has decreased greatly. Undoubtedly increased traffic hazards have been a cause, especially with regard to biking on heavily trafficked roads in towns and rural areas.

As regards pedestrians, particularly handicapped persons, the elderly and housewives with small children get their freedom of movement hampered by heavy car traffic.

There is much that indicates that many categories of people today feel the traffic as more threatening than before. This especially concerns non-motorized trafficants, who are annoyed by heavy traffic in more ways than the fear of being run over. The stress and anxiety that modern traffic causes people who are exposed, particularly through noise and mental barrier building, can develop a general uneasiness and anxiety.³³

Insecurity hits the least robust the hardest, and for these groups entails an extra psychological burden. Worst hit are those who are least protected in the traffic - pedestrians - and especially children and the aged. Those who generally have the greatest personal responsibility for these groups, stay-at-home women, are also exposed to such strains. In many residential areas parents because of the traffic hazards cannot let their children out alone. When they themselves cannot accompany them, the children have to be kept indoors. This can be unlucky for both children and grownups.

Elderly people too have problems with managing in great traffic, in particular those who are not quick-legged. It is difficult to get across the street in time, and the feeling of only just having saved one's life each time one has reached across, gives rise to anxiety and uneasiness. Some prefer to stay at home rather than expose themselves to such strains. This means increased social isolation for a group that does not have so great possibilities of travelling, and for whom the local milieu is the basis of social contact.³⁹⁾

On the one hand, there is the bravado about freedom from a minister of transport - expressed in material terms in the US adage that the American is a creature on four wheels. On the other, the fact that 70% of the population of Los Angeles, one of the most thoroughly motorized and car-dominated cities on earth, is without access to a car.³⁸⁾

On the one side, there are the maimings and the carnage, totally arbitrary, to the proportions of a goodly-sized war - or civil war; the physical ailments, usually not registered in this context, viz. lead poisoning, throat illnesses, heart and other troubles resulting from bodily inaction, possibly an increase in certain types of cancer; the so-called photo-chemical fog (or smog) in particularly car-dense areas, which kills both plant life and pre-disposed humans; and the general depletion and waste of resources.

On the other side, the words of that greatest of all 20th century architects, le Corbusier, who praised the singular, classical beauty of the car,³⁷⁾ who called for 'the really gigantic artery through Paris'³⁷⁾ and any other town, saying: "The great autoroutes make the city bloom and blossom or wither away, depending on whether they run through it or are channelled around. In the great cities they decide the place where life is to unfold itself the strongest, where destiny every day plays its game with man." An accompanying sketch shows the two alternatives: The Road that Brings Life. The Road that Brings Death.³⁹⁾

So much for that foremost materialization of 'Western' ideology, the car. Ecologists who want to do something radical about it are in for a tough time. They will be touching the very heartroots of Euro-American civilization. Perhaps those heartroots need touching.

NOTES

1. The following critique of this type of power analysis was partly inspired by "Notes on the International Power Structure" by dr. Kjell Goldmann, Stockholm University and (head of research at) Swedish Institute of Internatl. Affairs, presented at GPCR Joint sessions of Workshops, Louvain 8 - 14 April and Symposium on Methods for Macro-Analysis of Social Change & Conflicts, Lund 27 - 29 April 1976.
2. "L'Être et le Néant", Engl. trsl. "Being and Nothingness", Citadel Press, N.Y. 1965, esp. pp. 328 - 330 (The Body) and pp. 337 - 388 (Concrete Relations with Others). Note also E. Husserl's "phenomenology", where primary and secondary attributes of phenomena are grasped by isolating each object in the mind, by extricating it from its context and 'putting the world in brackets' (époché).
3. Separatist movements (cfr. Biafra) are a question in point. The case of the FNL in Vietnam raises an even graver problem: Is not this ahistorical, shallow state-and-establishment-oriented approach intimately connected with, and in some measure even responsible for, the development of the Vietnam tragedy?
4. Cfr. the Normandy invasion - when German forces were immobilized because the German High Command did not dare wake their C-in-C (Hitler) to get fresh orders. Or, taking a question of knowledge/ intelligence-transmission that is too mundane to merit much attention by theorists, what about overbriefing? The day before the German invasion of Norway in 1940, Norwegian Foreign Minister Koht was subject to the usual bombardment of memos and reports about minutiae. He never had a chance to read the newspaper (Dagbladet) he was carrying in his pocket - which said German warships were reported on their way in the direction of Norway.
5. An even clearer example of the connection between American acts, officially intended to thwart Communism, and the rise of a Communist presence is afforded by the Middle East. From the decision by J. F. Dulles to brand Nasser's nationalism as quasi-Communism in 1954-55, because Nasser decried the Bagdad Pact, and up till ca. 1970, the Soviet Union enjoyed increasing political, military and economical power in the region - solely as a result of U. S. hostility to Arab nationalism and US dedication to 'fighting Communism'.
6. The tradition of reification (meaning the position that abstract concepts have objective, independent existence) is an ancient one - from Plato's ideal types via the scholasticists across Kant's Ding-an-sich to Husserl's phenomenology. For good measure one might add the categories and archetypes of Freud, C. Jung - and Karl Marx; but this requires some discussion. Our latterday power theorists could do well to note the late Middle Ages discussion of the nominalia-sunt-realia position. Their (attempted) reification of power'systems' is not, however, directly and demonstrably connected with such a historical tradition; rather it seems to be grounded in the US policy need of defining an ordered, operational "system" out of the chaotic world in which the USA suddenly found itself a super-power.
7. For an engaging study, see Gianni Sofri, "Über asiatische Produktionsweise", Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt 1972. Such attitudes were dominant among Communists and Socialists of Marx' and Engles' day and up towards the Russian revolution. (Cfr Karl Kautsky on "die Wilden", E. Bernstein on "kulturfeindliche und kulturunfähige Volkerschäften", which should be subjected).

8. Heinrich Popitz, Der entfremdete Mensch, Zeitkritik und Geschichts-philosophie des jungen Marx. Basel 1953, s.161.
9. At the time of writing, Italy is a striking illustration to what happens in a society of unadulterated capitalism, without a strong and united trade union movement (Italy has a Catholic one, a Socialist one, a Communist one etc.), without a strong social-democrat governing party and social-democrat egalizing machinery: the rich become richer, the poor become poorer, and the capitalist order of society is in danger. Today the Communist party of Italy is being drawn into this "social-democrat" political vacuum - and reforming itself into an appropriate posture of respectability (non-opposition to NATO, support of multiparty parliamentary democracy..). If the CPI gets to fill this vacuum, one of two things is liable to happen with Italy and the CPI.
10. Marx, A Worker's Inquiry, in: La Revue Socialiste, Paris 1880 (the Preface) - his last published work. Marx, Speech in Amsterdam 8/9 1872 - his last public address. And Engels, Preface to Das Kapital (on peaceful, legal tradition in the UK). Noted in Marx & Engels, Basic Writings, ed. L.S. Feuer, Fontana Books 1969, London-Glasgow.
11. E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-23, London 1954, I, p.24.
12. Marx/Engels, Gesamtausgabe, 1. Abteilung, bd.3
13. As reported in Aftenposten, Oslo 15/9-75 (and paraphrased in a panegyric next day).
14. "Automobilism as contemporary History" - which will be printed in the full "Towards a new Historical Materialism" study - concerns itself with the role of the car in a capitalist economy, the physical changes it wreaks, and the 4-5 person car as the expression of modern family and single consumerist ideals. E.g in Norway "Proletarians unite" is largely replaced by exhortations the (Aftenposten January 1976) type-- "Ski-motorists - spread out!" (map of parking lots affixed).
15. Thus, Benjamin Spock (The Child); Magne Raundalen, Tid for barn, Cappelen, Oslo 1976; Bernard Rudofsky, Streets for People, Anchor/Doubleday, Garden City N.Y. 1969.
16. Opplysningsrådet for biltrafikken, Oslo 1972; quoted in "Personbil, miljø og samfunn" (Private Car, Environment and Society), survey by Ministry of Transport, Oslo 1975 (NOU 39), p. 25. A somewhat similar enquête was done by the Asphalt Institute of America on attitudes towards roadbuilding (Asphalt Magazine, Spring 1976), but here the breakdown is not given.
17. Study by the social anthropologist Maj Vogt Reiter on satellite towns, pre-view in Aftenposten 18/6-76.
18. NOU 39, op. cit., p.46.

- 19. See Rudofsky, Streets for People, op.cit.
- 20. Letter from Chief Seathl 1855, Presidential Archives, Washington D.C.
- 21. NOU 39, op.cit., p. 63.
- 22. Motor-magasinet (Sweden) 1973.
- 23. A typical item in a publicly sponsored youth motoring programme (Oslo Youth Motor Centre, Spring 1976) runs: "Two new cars in Norway! COLT LANCIA and COLT JAGUAR: Film. We are allowed to touch and feel the wonderful beauty. Afterwards, real tough car talk!"
- 24. NOU 39, op.cit., p.45.
- 25. NOU 39, op.cit., p.45.
- 26. Editorial (motor pages). A tenposten 16/3-76.
- 27. NOU 39, op.cit., p.44.
- 28. NOU 39, op.cit., p.45.
- 29. dr. med. Olav Bø, Aftenposten 6/1-74.
- 30. World Health, march 76 (editorial, article by dr. Leo A. Kaprio).
- 31. NOU 39, op.cit., p.39.
- 32. NOU 39, op.cit., p.32.
- 33. Transcript in Aftenposten (motorpages) 23/3-76
- 34. NOU 39, op.cit., p.32.
- 35. NOU 39, op.cit., p.40.
- 36. "L.A. had an excellent and rapid city metro 30 years ago, but it had to give in under the growing pressure from private automobilism, and now functions no more. The bus network is limited and now operates with so long waits and so high fares that it is practically unusable, and L.A. today has fewer taxis than a European city with 1/4 of the inhabitants of L.A. In a recently concluded survey it turned out that - in spite of the great number of cars in LA (1 car per 2 persons) - 65% of the total population still were without any opportunity for mobility. These 65 % are doomed to sit home and watch TV. They can't go any places, because there are no longer any sidewalks. They can't go by bike, because it is mortally dangerous. They can't go shopping, because the shopping centres are too far away from the residential areas. - Architect Victor Green, LA, lecture to the Arkitektforeningen, Copenhagen 12/11-68.

- 37. Le Corbusier, Menneskenes bolig (La Maison des Hommes), Vinters forlag, Copenhagen 1965, Preface p. 5.
- 38. Same, p.27
- 39. Same, p.26

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