

Extracts from
WRITINGS ON CITIES

Henri Lefebvre

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PHILOSOPHY AND THE CITY

Having contextualized the ‘cavalier’ attitude mentioned at the beginning, particular aspects and problems concerning the urban can now be emphasized. In order to take up a radically critical analysis and to deepen the urban problematic, philosophy will be the starting point. This will come as a surprise. And yet, has not frequent reference to philosophy been made in the preceding pages? The purpose is not to present a *philosophy of the city*, but on the contrary, to refute such an approach by giving back to the whole of philosophy its place in history: that of a *project* of synthesis and totality which philosophy as such cannot accomplish. After which the *analytical* will be examined, that is, the ways fragmentary sciences have highlighted or partitioned urban reality. The rejection of the synthetic propositions of these specialized, fragmentary, and particular sciences will enable us – to pose better – in *political* terms – the problem of synthesis. During the course of this progress one will find again features and problems which will reappear more clearly. In particular, the opposition between *use value* (the city and urban life) and *exchange value* (spaces bought and sold, the consumption of products, goods, places and signs) will be highlighted.

For philosophical meditation aiming at a totality through speculative systematization, that is, classical philosophy from Plato to Hegel, the city was much more than a secondary theme, an object among others. The links between philosophical thought and urban life appear clearly upon reflection, although they need to be made explicit. The city and the town were not for philosophers and philosophy a simple objective condition, a sociological context, an exterior element. Philosophers have thought the city: they have brought to language and concept urban life.

Let us leave aside questions posed by the oriental city, the Asiatic mode of

production, 'town and country' relations in this mode of production, and lastly the formation of ideologies (philosophies) on this base. Only the Greek and Roman antique city from which are derived societies and civilizations known as 'Western' will be considered. This city is generally the outcome of a *synoecism*, the coming together of several villages and tribes established on this territory. This unit allows the development of division of labour and landed property (money) without however destroying the collective, or rather 'communal' property of the land. In this way a community is constituted at the heart of which is a minority of free citizens who exercise power over other members of the city: women, children, slaves, foreigners. The city links its elements associated with the form of the communal property ('common private property', or 'privatized appropriation') of the active citizens, who are in opposition to the slaves. This form of association constitutes a democracy, the elements, of which are strictly hierarchical and submitted to the demands of the oneness of the city itself. It is the democracy of non-freedom (Marx). During the course of the history of the antique city, private property pure and simple (of money, land and slaves) hardens, concentrates, without abolishing the rights of the city over its territory.

The separation between town and country takes place among the first and fundamental divisions of labour, with the distribution of tasks according to age and sex (the biological division of labour), with the organization of labour according to tools and skills (technical division). The social division of labour between town and country corresponds to the separation between material and intellectual labour, and consequently, between the natural and the spiritual. Intellectual labour is incumbent upon the city: functions of organization and direction, political and military activities, elaboration of theoretical knowledge (philosophy and sciences). The whole divides itself, separations are established, including the separation between the *Physics* and the *Logos*, between theory and practice, and in practice, the separations between *praxis* (action on human groups), *poiesis* (creation of 'oeuvres'), *techne* (activities endowed with techniques and directed towards product). The countryside, both practical reality and representation, will carry images of nature, of being, of the innate. The city will carry images of effort, of will, of subjectivity, of contemplation, without these representations becoming disjointed from real activities. From these images confronted against each other great symbolisms will emerge. Around the Greek city, above it, there is the *cosmos*, luminous and ordered spaces, the apogee of place. The city has as centre a hole which is sacred and damned, inhabited by the forces of death and life, times dark with effort and ordeals, the *world*. The Apollonian spirit triumphs in the Greek city, although not without struggle, as the luminous symbol of reason which regulates, while in the Etruscan-Roman city what governs is the demonic side of the urban. But the philosopher and philosophy attempt to reclaim or create totality. The philosopher does not acknowledge separation, he does not conceive that the

world, life, society, the cosmos (and later, history) can no longer make a Whole.

Philosophy is thus born from the city, with its division of labour and multiple modalities. It becomes itself a specialized activity in its own right. But it does not become fragmentary, for otherwise it would blend with science and the sciences, themselves in a process of emerging. Just as philosophy refuses to engage in the opinions of craftsmen, soldiers and politicians, it refutes the reasons and arguments of specialists. It has totality as fundamental interest for its own sake, which is recovered or created by the system, that is, the oneness of thought and being, of discourse and act, of nature and contemplation, of the world (or the cosmos) and human reality. This does not exclude but includes meditation on *differences* (between Being and thought, between what comes from nature and what comes from the city, etc.). As Heidegger expressed it, the logos (element, context, mediation and end for philosophers and urban life) was simultaneously the following: to put forward, gather together and collect, then to recollect and collect oneself, speak and say, disclose. This gathering is the harvest and even its conclusion. 'One goes to collect things and brings them back. Here sheltering dominates and with it in turn dominates the wish to preserve . . . The harvest is in itself a choice of what needs a shelter.' Thus, the harvest is already *thought out*. That which is gathered is put in reserve. To say is the act of collection which gathers together. This assumes the presence of 'somebody' before which, for whom and by whom is expressed the being of what is thus successful. This presence is produced with clarity (or as Heidegger says, with 'non-mystery'). The city linked to philosophy thus gathers by and in its logos the wealth of the territory, dispersed activities and people, the spoken and the written (of which each assumes already its collection and recollection). It makes *simultaneous* what in the countryside and according to nature takes place and passes, and is distributed according to cycles and rhythms. It grasps and defends 'everything'. If philosophy and the city are thus associated in the dawning logos (reason), it is not within a subjectivity akin to the Cartesian '*cogito*'. If they constitute a system, it is not in the usual way and in the current meaning of the term.

To the organization of the city itself can be linked the primordial whole of urban form and its content, of philosophical form and its meaning: a privileged centre, the core of a political space, the seat of the logos governed by the logos before which citizens are 'equal', the regions and distributions of space having a rationality justified before the logos (for it and by it).

The logos of the Greek city cannot be separated from the philosophical logos. The *œuvre* of the city continues and is focused in the work of philosophers, who gather opinions and viewpoints, various *œuvres*, and think them simultaneously and collect differences into a totality: urban places in the cosmos, times and rhythms of the city and that of the world (and inversely). It is therefore only for a superficial historicity that philosophy brings to language and concept urban life, that of the city. In truth, the city

as emergence, language, meditation comes to theoretical light by means of the philosopher and philosophy.

After this first interpretation of the internal link between the city and philosophy, let us go to the European Middle Ages. *It begins from the countryside.* The Roman city and the Empire have been destroyed by Germanic tribes which are both primitive communities and military organizations. The feudal property of land is the outcome of the dissolution of this sovereignty (city, property, relations of production). Serfs replace slaves. With the rebirth of cities there is on the one hand the feudal organization of property and possession of land (peasant communities having a customary possession and lords having an 'eminent' domain as it will later be called), and on the other hand, a corporate organization of crafts and urban property. Although at the beginning seigniorial tenure of land dominates it, this double hierarchy contains the demise of this form of property and the supremacy of wealth in urban property from which arises a deep conflict, basic to medieval society. 'The necessity to ally themselves against the plunderer lords associated themselves together; the need for common market halls at a time when industry was craft, when serfs in breach of their bondage and in competition with each other were flooding to the increasingly rich cities, the whole of feudal organization was giving birth to the corporations (or guilds). Small capitals, slowly saved by isolated craftsmen, their numbers stable in the middle of a growing population, developed a system of journeymen and apprentices which established in the cities a hierarchy similar to that of the countryside' (Marx). In these conditions theology subordinates philosophy. The latter no longer meditates on the city. The philosopher (the theologian) deliberates upon the *double hierarchy*. He gives it shape, with or without taking conflicts into account. The symbols and notions relative to the *cosmos* (spaces, the hierarchy of matter in that space) and to the *world* (the actualization of finished matter, hierarchies in time, descent or fall, ascension and redemption) erase the consciousness of the city. From the moment when there are not two but three hierarchies (feudal landed property, guild organization, the king and his State apparatus), thought takes again a critical dimension. The philosopher and philosophy find themselves again, no longer having to choose between the Devil and the Lord. Philosophy will not however recognize its link to the city, although the rise of rationalism accompanies the rise of capitalism (commercial and banking, then industrial), and the development of cities. This rationalism is attached either to the State or to the individual.

For Hegel, at the height of speculative, systematic and contemplative philosophy, the unity between the perfect Thing, that is, the Greek city, and the Idea, which animates society and the State, this admirable whole, has been irremediably broken by historic becoming. In modern society, the State subordinates these elements and materials, including the city. The latter, however remains as a sort of subsystem in the total philosophico-political

system, with the system of needs, that of rights and obligations, and that of the family and estates (crafts and guilds), that of art and aesthetics, etc.

For Hegel, philosophy and the 'real' (practical and social) are not, or rather, are no longer external to each other. Separations disappear. Philosophy is not satisfied to meditate upon the real, to attempt the link up of the real and the ideal: it fulfills itself by achieving the ideal: the rational. The real is not satisfied with giving excuse to reflection, to knowledge, to consciousness. During a history which has a meaning – which has this meaning – it becomes rational. Thus the real and the rational tend towards each other; each from their own side moves towards an identity thus acknowledged. The rational is basically philosophy, the philosophical system. The real is society and law and the State which cements the edifice by crowning it. Consequently, in the modern State, the philosophical system, becomes real: in Hegel's philosophy, the real acknowledge the rational. The system has a double side, philosophical and political. Hegel discovers the historical moment of this shift from the rational into the real and vice versa. He brings to light identity at the moment when history produces it. *Philosophy achieves itself*. There is for Hegel, as Marx will articulate it, at one and the same time a becoming of a philosophy of the world and a becoming of the world of philosophy. An initial repercussion: there can no longer be a divide between philosophy and reality (historical, social, political). A second repercussion: the philosopher no longer has independence: he accomplishes a public function, as do other officials. Philosophy and the philosopher integrate themselves (by mediation of the body of civil servants and the middle class) in this rational reality of the State – no longer in the city, which was only a thing (perfect, it is true, but only thing), denied by a higher and more inclusive rationality.

One knows that Marx neither refuted nor refused the essential Hegelian affirmation: *Philosophy achieves itself*. The philosopher no longer has a right to independence *vis-à-vis* social practice. Philosophy inserts itself into it. There is indeed a simultaneous becoming-philosophy of the world and a becoming-world of philosophy, and therefore a tendency towards wholeness (knowledge and acknowledgement of non-separation). And yet Marx thrusts Hegelianism aside. History does not achieve itself. Wholeness is not reached, nor are contradictions resolved. It is not by and in the State, with bureaucracy as social support, that philosophy can be realized. The proletariat has this historic mission: only it can put an end to separations (alienations). Its mission has a double facet: to destroy bourgeois society by building another society – abolish philosophical speculation and abstraction, the alienating contemplation and systematization, to accomplish the philosophical project of the human being. It is from industry, from industrial production, from its relation with productive forces and labour, not from a moral or philosophical judgement, that the working class gets its possibilities. One must turn this world upside down: the meeting of the rational and the real will happen in another society.

The history of philosophy in relation to the city is far from being accomplished within this perspective. Indeed, this history would also suggest the analysis of themes whose emergence are linked to the representation of nature and the earth, to agriculture, to the sacralization of the land (and to its desacralization). Such themes, once born, are displaced and represented sometimes far from their starting points in time and space. The points of imputation and impact, conditions, implications, consequences do not coincide. The themes are enunciated and inserted into social contexts and categories different from those which distinguish their emergence, inasmuch as one can speak of 'categories'. The urban problematic, for example that which refers to the destiny of the Greek city, used to disengage itself or hide itself, cosmic themes anterior or exterior to this city; the visions of a cyclical becoming or of the hidden immobility of the human being. The purpose of these remarks is to show that the relation considered has yet to receive an explicit formulation.

What relation is there today between philosophy and the city? An ambiguous one. The most eminent contemporary philosophers do not borrow their themes from the city. Bachelard has left wonderful pages on the house. Heidegger has meditated on the Greek city and the logos, and on the Greek temple. Nevertheless the metaphors which resume Heideggerian thought do not come from the city but from a primary and earlier life: the 'shepherds of being', the 'forest paths'. It seems that it is from the Dwelling and the opposition between *Dwelling* and *Wandering* that Heidegger borrows his themes. As for so-called 'existential' thought, it is based on individual consciousness, on the subject and the ordeals of subjectivity, rather than on a practical, historical and social reality.

However, it is not proven that philosophy has said its last word on the city. For example, one can perfectly conceive of a *phenomenological* description of urban life. Or construct a *semiology* of urban reality which would correspond for the present city to what was the logos in the Greek city. Only philosophy and the philosopher propose a *totality*, the search for a global conception or vision. To consider 'the city' is it not already to extend philosophy, to reintroduce philosophy into the city or the city into philosophy? It is true that the concept of *totality* is in danger of remaining empty if it is only philosophical. Thus is formulated a problematic which does not reduce itself to the city but which concerns the world, history, 'man'.

Moreover, a certain number of contemporary thinkers have pondered on the city. They see themselves, more or less clearly, as philosophers of the city. For this reason these thinkers want to inspire architects and planners, and make the link between urban preoccupations and the old humanism. But these philosophers lack breadth. The philosophers who claim to think the city and put forward a philosophy of the city by extending traditional philosophy, discourse on the 'essence' of the city or on the city as 'spirit', as 'life' or 'life force', as being or 'organic whole'. In brief, sometime as subject,

sometime as abstract system. This leads to nothing, thus a double conclusion. Firstly, the history of philosophical thought can and must reclaim itself from its relation with the city (the condition and content of this thought). It is a way of putting this history into perspective. Secondly, this articulation figures in the problematic of philosophy and the city (knowledge, the formulation of the urban problematic, a notion of this context, a strategy to envisage). Philosophical concepts are not operative and yet they situate the city and the urban – and the whole of society – as a totality, over and above analytical fragmentations. What is proclaimed here of philosophy and its history could equally be asserted for art and its history.

THE URBAN IN QUESTION

Société Française: In your book *La révolution urbaine*, written twenty years ago, you announced the coming of an urban society. This remains today a virtuality and you said recently that the concept of the urban itself remains uncertain. What changes have taken place over the last few years?

Henri Lefebvre: I have the impression that architectural and urbanistic interventions have not matched the transformations of the city. I have lived in the centre of Paris for the past thirty years and have seen it transformed. Only a few years ago the centre was virtually abandoned, then reoccupied in an elitist fashion. Why? This phenomenon is also observable in other large cities. The extension of cities occurred for peripheries and centres, originally centres of decision-making, and which have been somewhat left behind for peripheries which have been places of production, business and residence. Then after a time it was as if there was a return to the centre. This is a movement fairly characteristic of Paris where the centre is now hyperfrequented by French and foreign tourists, students and businessmen. People come to see the museums, the monuments, but also the recently constructed buildings. It is this that gives it a lively appearance. But is it lively in urbanistic terms? I wouldn't know what to say! This liveliness is due mostly to passers-by who are in transit. The permanent population, its inhabitants, have changed a lot. In my building behind the Pompidou Centre, the old people have for the most part died and apartments are occupied by offices. They also want to push me out to have my apartment. I have the feeling that the centre is becoming 'museumfied' and managerial. Not politically, but financially managerial. The metamorphoses of the city and the urban continue.

S.F.: You have often stressed the increasing rupture between the conceived and the lived. One could say in some ways that this is due to an accentuation of the social division of labour leading to more and more specialization. And yet today the desired efficiency is reaching its limits. That is to say that there is the need for the rigorous constitution of general and specifically urban

knowledge and *savoir faire* to be grasped at different scales. At the same time, there is a demand for greater and greater intervention by people themselves.

H.L.: Despite urban struggles which on the whole developed only slightly in the 1970s, the passivity of people has often intrigued me: the city is changing around them and they accept it, internalize it and bear the consequences. In some ten years many people have been thrown out of the centre of cities towards the suburbs to make way for the financial sector. But recently, this passivity seems to have lessened and reactions have been more frequently forthcoming and better informed. In my neighbourhood for example, it seems that people are saying that they can do something. But the essential movement is after all the purchase of property. This attraction to property as a specific security signifies a certain alteration in the relationship of the population to space. On the one hand, there is a greater attention and watchfulness, but on the other, there is only simply the place one owns to which one is almost irrevocably attached, but that doesn't resolve the problems of the appropriation of space. It evolves in a very contradictory fashion. One notices in discussions between friends, in meetings of associations and even during elections, that one speaks more often than before of the neighbourhood. It seems that there is a renewed interest in the urban. But I don't know to what extent this state of affairs is generalized nor whether it will last. I don't know either whether it will be really effective, for it is the private ownership of land and property which remains by far the dominant power and which will continue to grow more powerful.

S.F.: Often when one tries to get people to participate in the planning process, one comes up against a dichotomy between a fragmented, one could almost say divided, daily reality, on the one hand, and on the other, more global scales, totalities, that are not consciously lived, but which nevertheless exert an effect. How in concrete terms can we give inhabitants the means to intervene effectively?

H.L.: This question of people's capacity to participate is crucial. People have been exhorted to participate. They mobilized themselves a little, but the means and the results are not enormous. The property system has not changed, and neither has the relation with the hierarchy of powers. There is a contradiction between the need to organize space according to the demands of society and private property which is increasingly in conflict with collective interests. It is around the resolution of this crucial problem that we should mobilize, whilst urbanization continues to extend world-wide. For even if it is necessary to keep land for agricultural production, and in spite of futuristic solutions (dwellings at the bottom of the seas), when the population of the planet will have reached ten billion, we shall require urban solutions.

Work on the urban cannot limit itself merely to recording what has been produced. We must also look ahead and propose things. However today the city is above all considered according to a historicist model and there are masses of studies on the origins of the evolution of cities. But studies looking into the future are rather few and tentative. This is a serious error. It is how we are surprised about the things which are happening. I have tried to steer urban studies towards possibilities, eventualities, the future, but there is a resistance to it. Even architects are more interested in what has been built than in the future of the city, the form of the city itself and the relations between buildings and monuments. It is difficult to determine exactly the question of urban form which depends on a multitude of factors, from the local configuration of the site, to social relations, and today the global.

S.F.: These urban historical studies, beyond the evolution, the idea and the practice of the city have had the merit to show the reality of the city as a place of interaction of different historical times. In revealing the existence of permanences, these studies have enabled us at the same time better to grasp changes so as to avoid applying any old abstract model to the city.

H.L.: These studies have had the merit of clearly showing the lines of evolution of such and such a city, their axes and types of development, etc. But these studies do not look to the future. What will happen in the next century? As far as the urban is concerned, we are always in a phase of transition. This affects not only the work of architects and urbanists, but all those concerned with the city: sociologists, economists and geographers . . . One must be predictive. It is true that predictive work, because it includes an element of speculation and uncertainty, does not pay, whilst there is more budget for studies of what has been accomplished. It also shows that urban thinking is at its beginning. It is still a thinking attached to the land, to the logic of agricultural production which leaves traces, outlines. One continues to think in forms shaped by this social base: the land and not the city. One may still need decades to change the way, the method and style of thinking.

S.F.: Does not this refusal to project into the future fit in the general context of a societal crisis, whereby confronted by the uncertainty of the future, one tries to bring the past into a present endlessly extended and lived in its immediacy? Isn't this a bit what the so-called postmodernist discourse is about?

H.L.: This is also a crisis of practice, thought and social philosophy. But we cannot just state this, we have to explore the possibilities. This seems to me both a necessity dictated by the crisis and a way out of this very crisis, which though disastrous, at the same time pushes out, engenders and gives rise to new research and developments. I believe that through all sorts of convulsions

and contradictions, we shall see the emergence of new ideas, especially in urbanistic thinking, which seems to me to be a field of creation and exploration. Besides, the urban as a concept designates a reality in crisis. Because if there is a crisis of representation, we should not forget that it is also that which is represented which is in crisis, in transformation, changing. What will be the city of tomorrow? That is a huge question. Let us take the question of centrality. Will we witness the maintenance of a very hierarchical system, or on the contrary, are we moving towards a dispersal of centres, towards their multiplication? And who decides what? If one takes the case of France, conflicts between mayors, general councils, the regions and the State remain strong.

What will be the room for manoeuvre of these centres? Our society is changing more rapidly and profoundly than we generally think, and urban problems, with those of financial production or globalization, are part of the most basic problems.

S.F.: The crisis of the city has forced us to question the simplistic association of the city with certain concepts borrowed from the modern movement and subsequently generalized: the mass production of housing, circulatory logic or zoning. We have rediscovered the complexity of the city as a key place of interactions through a certain hierarchy of urban space, of monumentality, and especially of public space.

H.L.: Of course! It's extraordinary. It was especially the ideological domination of the bourgeoisie. When it dominated, property was its major preoccupation. It was the owner of land and spaces and this was expressed in its ideology. Now we have noticed that society exists and cannot be reduced to aspects of property. The city has an autonomous reality. It has a life, an existence which cannot be reduced to the distribution of land or space, the street, the square, meeting places, *fêtes*; all this urban life which we could call traditional, has been rediscovered in the past few years. It is coming back but with difficulty, for these traditions have been broken. But we must not hold on to tradition, we must invent. And of course this does not happen in a day. It took centuries and centuries to build ancient Rome! One cannot deny, or push aside urban life. All the more so because we generally only follow the flow, we take account of facts once they have made their mark on space through the built environment. This still shows the necessity to have a thinking that projects into the future.

S.F.: Today architects and urbanists are increasingly in their projects only the conveyors of an iconic message. They render an image which depending on the situation tries to be of historical, technological or conceptual inspiration. And unfortunately, demand, including the public sector's, follows this fashion. This 'illusionism', this 'derealization' of spatial practices, does not contribute much to the invention of a kind of urban life of which you spoke.

H.L.: It is fairly recently that there have been practitioners of space. It is a knowledge, a practice which isn't so developed, especially if one considers it from a world-wide point of view. Consider the European, Chinese or American city, they have different features. Los Angeles is not developing in the same way as Rome. The science of the city is in the process of consolidation and its action is still slight. I fervently hope that it becomes more and more important and that political, administrative and financial authorities learn from this knowledge of the city rather than doing whatever, however and wherever. I am caricaturing, but it is a little like that. Look at the mess in the suburbs: it is our society which has gone overboard. On the one hand centrality, on the other, disorder. It is a contradiction which has not yet been sufficiently highlighted. One is beginning to speak of contradictions of society, but not sufficiently of urban contradictions.

S.F.: Nevertheless contradiction is an integral part of the urban, its constitutive elements are contradictory. Take for example suburban roads; they are often at the same time departmental and national routes and streets. In not taking into account the contradiction street/route, current planning in attempting to get rid of or elude part of the problem and not respond to the richness of urban life, rigidifies it.

H.L.: I have tried to shed light on the complexities and richness of urban life. One knew them, but vaguely and especially through historic events which unfolded in them (the ancient city: Paris under the Ancien Régime or the Revolution). I especially wanted to show the breadth of the everyday richness of the city. I don't know whether I managed to do so, it's a considerable task. That is part of a decentering-recentering of thought which must conquer new domains, new methods of deduction and construction.

S.F.: Including working on old problematics like time?

H.L.: Yes. There one finds again the problems of the ancient or Greek city which didn't have the same conception of time as we have. Our conception is that of industry, which is especially located around cities. If our cities simply become refuges for the retired, for tourists and intellectuals occupied with abstractions, that would be a disaster. What threatens the city today is the departure of production. What then remains is the central question of the use of free time in cities. That is for each person to invent. One cannot draw up a range of possible uses of time. They are ceaselessly multiplied in a social practice. It is an essential domain of liberty. There is much talk of liberty, but that remains abstract. Liberty is also the maximum of possibilities for each citizen in the city and not in an isolated place. We must find the link between the mode of production and what is called free time. Besides, free time can be

fully productive in the widest sense, of art, of knowledge, of the lived. It is a delicate question which supposes the mastery by each person of their time, with a multiplicity of possibilities. This disjunction which we make between 'productive time' and 'free time' is very symptomatic.

S.F.: What are the problems which you see particularly in the constitution of knowledge and *savoir faire* of the city?

H.L.: On the whole I am constantly surprised by the little importance given to urban questions in the university. The number of chairs of urbanism are rather limited, a few in Paris and even fewer in the provinces. In contrast to traditional teaching, it's nothing. Yet it's about a more important question. It isn't just a question of culture, of activity, of productivity, of adaptation and of understanding of the modern world. I tried when I was in the university to introduce urban questions into teaching. I was usually told that it was a matter for schools of architecture. On the other hand, courses in sociology and history which leave aside urban questions seem ludicrous, it's like taking away their very substance.

Unfortunately it hasn't changed very much and the resources for urban research are really minimal in relation to the task. It is as if in traditional circles knowledge is little open to the future. It is a question which relates to the very orientation of society, of civilization, conscience and knowledge; it's either traditional or else an exploration of the future.