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MIMOSAS

Jean Welz

T H E J E A N W E L Z E X H I B I T I O N

A N A P P R E C I A T I O N B Y J O H N F A S S L E R , B . A R C H .

The recent exhibition of the work of Jean Welz, held at the Henri Lidchi Gallery, Johannesburg, cannot pass without comment, for over-night as it were a new and important figure has been added to the South African world of Art. A few years ago I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Welz. He was then an architectural draughtsman employed in the firm of Emley and Williamson and engaged in carrying out the new central block then building at the University of the Witwatersrand. In the somewhat torrid atmosphere of a wood and iron hut that served as an office for the architectural staff, we discussed painting, sculpture and architecture whenever we met. It was apparent then from what passed that Mr. Welz had enjoyed an extensive contact in Paris with contemporary French artists, architects and structural engineers. Picasso, Le Corbusier and Fressinet were more than mere names to him. He knew them personally, and from a contact extending over a period of twelve years could follow with understanding what each was striving to achieve in his particular sphere. It is one thing to know artists through the medium of their work alone, but quite another to know them personally. The absence of personal contact sometimes has its advantages for who would not prefer to be spared the monumental snubs and unpleasantnesses of a Dr. Johnson. But to-day in a world where progressive artists and architects are regarded generally as charlatans, personal contact consolidates one's appreciation of their approach to their problems. It becomes unnecessary in other words to rely on the reports of unsympathetic intermediaries. Mr. Welz had a rich fund of memories concerning the Artist's Quarter of Paris. From his anecdotes it became possible to fill out the impressions of prominent personalities gleaned from various publications and reproductions of work. But Mr. Welz's appreciation then was not reserved for contemporary work alone. In common with true modern architects

he fully appreciated the cultural heritage man has accumulated during his 5,000 years of civilisation. Discussion would range freely over the vast canvas.

I remember very well the occasion of the Abstract Art Congress held by the Department of Architecture at the University in 1937. Dr. Martienssen had collected a large number of reproductions covering the whole field of modern painting. Mr. Welz was greatly excited by these and subsequently wrote a foreword to the programme entitled "Abstraction." Perusing this again after a lapse of years it is clear that Mr. Welz's outlook then forms the basis of his work to-day. Although much of his work cannot be classed as abstract, yet the penetrating manner in which he views the world is the touchstone of the vigour and freshness he brings to Art in South Africa. Here a quotation from the foreword will be valuable. Concerning abstraction he says:

"The attempt to realise the work of man in images and abstract forms forces the artist into a greater effort towards concentration and wholesome meditation. Wholesome in the sense that it obliges him to shun all routine, and that in the end it inevitably leads him towards the origin of things: the word. It is, in fact, of great importance to respect and realise the 'name' appertaining to a thing before undertaking the realisation of any of its forms or manifestations, or even showing some correlation between these things. Every object has a 'name' belonging to it, and whoever uses the 'name' carelessly effaces its contour day by day and loses the sense of its quality."

A few years later Mr. Welz was forced to abandon Architecture due to failing health and having a great deal of spare time, commenced to draw in earnest. He moved to a small farm on the border of the Karroo, and later settled near Worcester, Cape Province, where he lives and works to-day.

To see his work for the first time as an artist, having known him as an architect, was an amazing experience. Amazing because the maturity and sureness of the exhibits illustrated the rapidity of his development over a very short period. Mr. Welz is a fine craftsman and colourist. His pastel and pen and ink studies combine a bold technique with a sureness of touch. There is evidence of "concentration and wholesome meditation" in all his work, particularly discernable in the studies of "Tradow Pass," where pen and ink preliminaries become successively simpler to be synthesized in an interesting pastel study and line drawing. His rich French background influences his work considerably. There are glimpses of Van Gogh in "The Dam Maker," of the cubist in "Camp in

Stones," of Cezanne in his still lifes, and of Matisse in his line drawings. But nowhere does he follow slavishly the form of expression of any particular artist, always he attempts to discover the "origin of things." One has the impression that the South African scene inspires Mr. Welz, and he brings to its interpretation a sensitive mind capable of sorting out its complexity and presenting it in a manner which to me was an endless source of delight.

I shall follow Mr. Welz's career as an artist in the future with considerable interest. If his health permits and he can maintain the development shown by his first exhibition in Johannesburg, he will soon become one of South Africa's most important painters.

The Frontispiece illustrates one of Mr. Welz's earlier pen and ink studies: From the collection of P. S. ANECK-HAHN.

TRAINING ARCHITECTS FOR THE FUTURE

By LEOPOLD ARNAUD, Dean of the School of Architecture, Columbia University, and recently named Ware Professor of Architecture. He is head of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.

The profession of Architecture, as we have known it, no longer exists. But this qualified statement does not mean the profession is extinct, or that its future is sad or hopeless. The need for architecture and for those who produce it is as enduring as human society. This seemingly trite assertion is to-day not generally accepted, and it is my conviction that it must be stoutly defended. There will be changes in nomenclatures, problems, and conditions of practice. It is the role of the architect to be sufficiently clear-minded to recognise the changes, and sufficiently flexible to devise methods for coping with them. This is a challenging prospect; difficult but not discouraging.

The complete cessation of private practice that we are witnessing to-day is impressive, but not surprising. The history of society is the history of architecture, and for the past three decades it has been grotesque; war, boom, depression, war. This sequence of four varieties of chaos inevitably brought about the breakdown of existing systems. During the depression especially, it was obvious to the far-seeing that the day of patronage was done and that another system would take its place. The war has completed the transition with such rapidity and completeness that we are still shocked by the crack-up. But with increasing realisation of the accomplished change, we must speculate about the future to prepare for it and mould it insofar as possible.

It can be assumed that in the post-war era the architect will build for a community or group. Consequently, his client will not be an individual, and the architect will function as a member in a team of specialists. The problem will be highly complex, because a group of individuals or a large scale endeavour will be involved, and because technological

demands are developing continuously. These complexities will make the collaboration of specialists an absolute necessity.

Both the architect and the engineer will be among the members of the team, and they will have to learn that they must complement, not supplement, each other's work.

The role of engineer is to develop the methods of structure. (The details of his contribution cannot be explained in this short comment.) The role of the architect is to interpret the requirements of the problems in terms of space and mass and structure, to interpret materials in terms of form, to co-ordinate the functions of the various specialists, and, above all, to create a design that will fulfill all practical needs but that will at the same time mould utility and economy into an esthetic composition. To do this, the architect must have trained taste, and be endowed with sensitive perception and creative capacity. But he must also know the science of structure and the capacities of materials. He must have a good measure of the engineer's training which, however, would not be an overlapping, but rather a common basis for the concerted efforts of these two specialists.

What can the schools do to prepare professionals for this type of work?

We believe that the schools are already doing a great deal. A comparison with the past will prove it most dramatically.

Professional training should be based upon some general study; general studies must be required therefore as a preliminary, or included in the curriculum. The extra-professional work should include a serious preparation in the sciences (mathematics, physics, chemistry) and some history, economics, sociology. The student should be familiar with the world—both scientific and human.

Having in mind that the future architect will be primarily a planner and co-ordinator, he should be developed accordingly. Design in all its potentialities should be the nucleus of the training. While learning to design, the student must learn how to study the specific requirements, social or technological, of his problems, and he must be trained to collaborate not only with building specialists, but also with industrial technicians, sociologists, and a variety of civil authorities. The study of design must also be integrated with courses in construction so that the student will have a practical (though not a specialised) knowledge of structure, materials, and mechanical equipment.

The schools, while primarily for architects, should also provide for town planners, industrial designers, interior designers, landscape designers—specialists whose basic training is similar to that of the architects. By architects, I mean the men who will inherit and carry on our profession. But they may not be called by that name, as its continued use may be impracticable, implying to the layman an outmoded form of practice. The present situation is highly significant. While there is an urgent appeal for "architectural-engineers" and "construction-draftsmen," the men in government offices can-

not be made to understand that a large part of the war construction can best be done by the men who have architectural training and experience.

Whatever the name, the profession is indispensable, and it must have its disciples. We cannot foresee in detail under what conditions they will function, but the changes in store for the architects are perhaps no more drastic than those that will come to the doctor, the lawyer, or the business man. But this is a challenge, not a cause for regret or defeatism. The profession has before it a thrilling future.

Building activity will be tremendous in scope, and for the very reason that the changes will be drastic and general, it should be a period of great creative fecundity. New methods, new materials, new problems, new social and economic requirements; not only a new era, but also a new physical world!

Those in intimate contact with youth can sense, in spite of a certain inevitable amount of restlessness and confusion, that the young generation understands the possibilities of the future, and faces them expectantly.

The young are not afraid, but the schools must fit them for the task!

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TEMPLE "C" SELINUS

Reconstruction by JEAN HULOT





PYRAMIDS AT ABOUSIR

HIGH - LIGHTS FROM STUDENTS' ESSAYS

The Egyptian temples were sacred to each individual, unlike the Greek who congregated in masses to worship in the temples.

When the Egyptians used wood they covered it with duco.

After the monumental arch, for which they set the example, the greatest gift from the Egyptians was their system of decoration of all the sculptured types that they created.

The Egyptian nobles had statues of themselves carved out of the rock, but the poorer classes did not have statues of themselves owing to their belief in being less important.

Paints were applied by a method of distemperating.

Greek theatres, temples and public houses were their most important architectural achievements.

The temple and agora were the two places of activity in the Greek towns. The agora was a big open air theatre.

The three orders are distinguished mainly by their columns.

They usually chose the site on the top of a hill and built in such a way that all could see and yet the temple would not be in the way of traffic.

The approach to the Parthenon is lined by two sculptured lions facing each other.

The temples had a characteristic approach, called the paepylaeo.

When seen from a vertical position, the Greek temple has no walls.

The most important of the Greek Temples is the Accropolis.

The Greeks sculptured from volcanic rock or poros and the model was usually done by mental conception and was nude.

The Temenos, which also consisted of columns, the top of which was divided into three sections, the pediment, which was uppermost, in the middle came the metaphe and at the top of the columns but below the metaphe was the frieze, all these had their characteristic carvings on them.

From First-Year Essays on Greek and Egyptian Art



The Parthenon, seen
from the Propylaea
(English Photographic Co.,
Athens)

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

The Editors,
The South African Architectural Record,

11th July, 1942.

Sirs,

Two separate letters on Mr. Kantorowich's paper, "The Modern Theorists of Planning, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, etc.," have filled or largely filled the correspondence columns in two recent issues of your journal, and now I feel constrained to add my quota of words to the subject before it should be felt necessary to append an editorial footnote "This correspondence is now closed." A footnote of this description, although quite common in the daily press, would, I believe, be an innovation in your journal; yet the advisability of establishing such a precedent might arise out of the consideration of the proper subject-matter fitting to an architectural journal. To some readers, portions of Mr. Kantorowich's paper and letter might seem to be but remotely connected with architecture, but I am glad that the editorial blue-pencil has so far been sparingly used because I think that the matters raised by Mr. Kantorowich bear greatly on architecture. That is my reason for writing this letter, I react to what I consider to be Mr. Kantorowich's main contention; Mrs. Martienssen quite evidently reacted to another of his contentions. As her ensuing letter is not without vigour, expressing, according to Mr. Kantorowich, a "passionate and dogmatic attitude"; and as his reply is not, I think, always on "a level of non-personal objectivity," and as I claim no particular propensity for dispassionate writing, another reason might arise for the use of an editorial footnote. This letter will no doubt develop into a statement of my personal views, which, while expressing disagreement with Mr. Kantorowich's, will not always concur with those of Mrs. Martienssen.

It will be noticed that I have already introduced a personal note, and lacking the attributed guile of Mrs. Martienssen's "debating technique," I confess that I have done it deliberately; for it is on this ground—the validness of personality—that I wish to contend with Mr. Kantorowich. To look to the first paragraph of his paper, which contains his premise, "it is not the forms of man's consciousness that determine the forms of his social being, but on the contrary the forms of his social being that determine the forms of his consciousness." Without doubt Mr. Kantorowich stands by the expressed postulate, for he later gives it more succinctly in his paper; but I give an extract in which it is again recapitulated in his letter: "Man's consciousness is determined by his social being." What determines his social being? The productive forces of society, and the productive relationships engendered by them. Thus man is a social product, not a product of external consciousness. This is true of his ideas—even of his "great ideas." The postulate is of the utmost importance to Mr. Kantorowich's thesis, for if it is not a true statement of fact his whole philosophical position is undermined and at least one of his "ideals" only hinted at in his letter rendered unattainable on the course he would follow. The statement expresses less than a half-truth. However, as I have no wish to imply that his thought

runs in an unnecessarily narrow groove, I shall follow its development in two more extracts: "In the long run the development of society is determined not by the wishes of outstanding individuals, but by the development of the material conditions of existing society . . . Outstanding individuals may become nonentities if their ideas and wishes run counter to the economic development of society, to the needs of the foremost class"; and further on: "the character of an individual may become a factor in social development only where, when, and to the extent that social relations permit." These latter citations which are presumably given by Mr. Kantorowich to make clear "the materialist attitude," serve not only to qualify but also to modify the earlier dogmatic assertion. Yet even the last citation—from the authoritative if oft criticised theorist of Marxism, Plekhanov—contains no more than half the truth.

If Mr. Kantorowich were to study the teachings of those whom he calls the "great mystics," "Buddha, Jesus, Lao-tze . . ." and Gaddi Mohammed, and then to study objectively the subsequent history of Europe, Asia and Northern Africa, he might have cause to retract most of what he says or quotes. I think that Mr. Kantorowich will admit that scientific development has some bearing on productive forces, but for one so "scientific," he seems strangely unaware of the causes of great advances in science. Progress in science has been, and is, due to the advent of "outstanding individuals," such as Copernicus, Galileo, Newton and Einstein; their conceptive faculties have enabled science to rise from the troughs up on to the crests; have done what lesser men and "productive forces" could not do, lifted it out of the epicyclic states into which it has repeatedly fallen. To argue that they have not ultimately affected "social relationships" would be as absurd as to hold that they were not in turn dependent on the technical facilities of their respective ages. I credited Mr. Kantorowich with giving half the truth. As Mrs. Martienssen and Mr. Kantorowich seem to disagree on the measure of a particular man's greatness, I shall refer to a philosophical paper by William James, which is entitled "Great Men and their Environment," and in so doing give some illustration of another and more balanced point of view than that adopted by Mr. Kantorowich. A first quotation from the Everyman's edition of James' works: "Our problem is: What are the causes that make communities change from generation to generation . . . I shall reply to this problem." The difference is due to accumulated influences of individuals, of their examples, their initiatives and their decisions . . . Now James was also a shrewd and perceptive psychologist, though Mr. Kantorowich would probably refer to his work in the same derisive terms as he uses in reference to the more recent "gods" of "psycho-analysis," Freud, Adler and Jung. Nevertheless derision is often a poor yardstick, and so to give another extract: "The causes of production of great men lie in a sphere wholly inaccessible to the social philosopher. He must simply accept geniuses as data . . ." The Marxists also class James, together with Dewey—I am unacquainted with the works of the latter—as philosophers of "monopoly-capitalism" under the heading of "pragmatists." But a label is not always a good indication of the goods it

designates, and so to continue: "The fermentative influence of genius must be admitted as, at any rate, one factor in the changes that constitute social evolution. The community may evolve in many ways. The accidental presence of this or that ferment decides in which way it shall evolve." And: "Sporadic great men come everywhere. But for a community to get vibrating through and through with intensely active life, many geniuses coming together and in rapid succession are required. This is why great epochs are so rare—why the sudden bloom of Greece, an early Rome, a Renaissance, is such a mystery. Blow must follow blow so fast that no cooling can occur in the intervals. Then the mass of the nation grows incandescent, and may continue to glow by pure inertia long after the initiators of its internal movement have passed away." And: "Now, the important thing to notice is that what makes a certain genius now incompatible with his surroundings is usually the fact that some previous genius of a different strain has warped the community away from the sphere of his possible effectiveness. After Voltaire, no Peter the Hermit, after . . ." One might add that after Mr. Kantorowich had had his way, no men without blinkers, to stop them glancing from the "historical" road at other, higher or lower, possible paths. That is the meaning of Mr. Kantorowich's intolerant attitude to anything which is not "materialist."

It would seem that the matter is not as simple as Mr. Kantorowich would have; that, in fact, in the opinion of one philosopher, the individual has a determined effect on the course of social evolution. True "social relations" have a conditioning effect on the influence of "outstanding individuals," but the changes in "social relations" are "due to the accumulated influences of individuals." There is another inference to be drawn from James, and that is to be derived from, "The causes of the production of great men lie in a sphere wholly inaccessible to the social philosopher." The study of the "causes" might fall within the province of psychology, in which, together with "consciousness," the root causes are guessed at, but not known; they must at present be accepted as "data." My conclusion is that "social being" might condition, but does not determine "man's consciousness," and the extent of the conditioning depends on the man. Great men are apt to make their own laws, which is one reason why the average person is inclined to be suspicious of them.

"Sporadic great men come everywhere . . ." Mrs. Martienssen's contention that Le Corbusier "stands alone" might be correct. Has he been a "fermentative influence"? That is not denied by Mr. Kantorowich, who credits him with "undoubted genius." Disagreement arises on the extent of his influence—and it is as well to include Frank Lloyd Wright in such a consideration. If then Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright are men of varying degrees of greatness, it should be possible to trace their influence in the world of architecture. Mrs. Martienssen has ably defended Le Corbusier, and I shall only add that his influence may be seen without ever leaving Johannesburg. A drive round the suburbs too will leave no doubt as to the influence of Wright on our domestic architecture—and I am not thinking only of the more obvious derivations.

What the influence of larger windows or cleaner rooms has on the dwellers and ultimately on "social relations," I shall not attempt to trace

in this letter. Whether or not the "community" has been "warped" from "the sphere" of Le Corbusier or Wright; or whether or not they might respectively warp each other's field, I shall only ask? I have other points of issue with Mr. Kantorowich, which still have to be covered. It is sufficient to juxtapose two of Mr. Kantorowich's statements: "That is the 'tragedy.'" "Instead his life work must end in paper-architecture," and, "There is much in Le Corbusier's work that will be of inestimable value to the architecture of the future . . ." Can it not be concluded from the second statement that "the architecture of the future" will be different from what it might otherwise have been, because of Le Corbusier's "paper-architecture." Is the "tragedy" of Le Corbusier so great then, when he is paid a compliment that could not be paid to one in a thousand architects? In regard to Mr. Kantorowich's assertion that the genius of Le Corbusier has turned in on itself, it is necessary to juxtapose some more of Mr. Kantorowich's statements about Le Corbusier, and they are: He shows "a distinct trend to the Fascist camp," and, "latterly he has even retreated from paper-architecture to being a cloistered painter in his studio." Is a "cloistered painter" necessarily a Fascist, or has something occurred to stop the alleged "trend"? It is strange that "Le Corbusier (Charles Edouard Jeanneret)" has always signed his paintings, Jeanneret; in fact, I understand that he has painted all his life. The derogatory reference to "painter" is to be expected from one who looks on art as being "suprastructural" and not as an essential part of the structure of life. "The final step towards Fascism can clearly be recognised . . ." is Mr. Kantorowich's assertion in reference to Wright; "a distinct trend to the Fascist camp," his contention regarding Le Corbusier. Yet the former designs for the "Disappearing City," the latter designs the "super-city." Mr. Kantorowich, if not contradictory, is at least abstruse. Is Mr. Kantorowich's contention that all things are useful to a Fascist society; therefore anyone who designs anything of use to a Fascist society is a Fascist or a "Fascist in trend"?

The corollary, it would seem, is that anyone who designs anything that is accepted in Moscow is on the direct line of "social development," and on this point Mr. Kantorowich might seem equally abstruse: "Releasing him from these limitations, the Soviets expected a real flowering of Le Corbusier's great gifts . . ." Why did he reply with the Ville Radieuse plan, an abstract plan, which might have been presented for London, Paris, Buenos Aires, New York, Calcutta or Bloemfontein, or for nowhere in particular? Compare the above extract with this from his essay: "He has produced plans for numerous cities, for Paris, Algiers (there are three separate schemes for the latter), Barcelona, Moscow, Antwerp, Buenos Aires, to name only some of them . . ." and: "All exhibit Le Corbusier's immense creative imagination, although some of the schemes (notably Algiers, where homes are grouped in the viaduct of an elevated highway, and Buenos Aires, where the business centre floats in the Plate River bay) are as fantastic as they are undoubtedly ingenious." Le Corbusier, a man who went to the trouble of designing three separate schemes for one city, who—whatever the opinion on the "fantastic"—exercised his imagination to plan each particular city for its setting, for that is the meaning of the "vehicular viaduct" and "floating business centre"—we are assured replied with a "mechanical abstraction" for Moscow. One must conclude that either Le Corbusier does not possess "undoubted genius," or that Mrs. Martienssen's contention that Russia "had not reached the state to accept modern planning," is correct, or

that the Soviets were not as "broadminded" as Mr. Kantorowich would have us believe. The first possibility may or may not be correct, and I do not propose to discuss the other two, because I do not know enough about the circumstances to do so. Mrs. Martienssen, it seems to me, preserves a better sense of balance, for she does not disparage the Soviets. Mr. Kantorowich, in his anxiety to deride Le Corbusier, drags in Bloemfontein, a town of about 50,000 people, as a possible application for Ville Radieuse, designed for 3,000,000 inhabitants. In his penchant for exaggeration, he makes himself ridiculous, not Le Corbusier. I note, too, that both Mrs. Martienssen—admittedly so—and Mr. Kantorowich argue largely on supposition. The latter may not, but the reasons he gives for the Soviets' rejection of the "plan" are not documented. I propose, however, to devote a paragraph or two to supposition; to considering some more points that arise out of the "thesis," which Mr. Kantorowich has "drawn." "I have drawn a thesis from these two figures (Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright)," he states, "showing their unity of philosophical standpoint despite their antagonistic appearance in practice." It seems to me, after reading his paper and letter more than once, that "thesis" is too short a word, and that hypothesis would more aptly describe what has been "drawn." "Utopianism" may or may not be the "key" to the similarity between those two (Le Corbusier and Wright)," but surely "Utopianism" results from a "philosophical standpoint" and is not the standpoint itself; and according to Mr. Kantorowich Le Corbusier "adopted a 'geometrical' approach" and Wright "sees history" in terms of "cave dwellers and wandering tribes."

My own opinion, based not on Mr. Kantorowich's interpretation but on some reading of the works of Le Corbusier and Wright is that their "philosophical standpoints" differ considerably, despite a similar "bourgeois" background. The latter is in some respects almost Roman in his cult of the earth, his is a belief in the organic—and organic for him means natural with few, if any, philosophical trimmings. The former, on the other hand, is a modern European imbued with a strong intellectual bond to ancient Greece. Therefore the expression "organic architecture"—a term quite often seen in this journal—should be used with discrimination in relation to the respective works of Le Corbusier and Wright; in reference to the works of the former it might connote a quality of intellectual organisation, and to those of the latter a quality of looser organisation, in harmony—on Wright's theory—with the forms of Nature. Wright tends to subjugate architecture to Nature and Le Corbusier to complement architecture with Nature. It may be that Le Corbusier is imbued too little with the spirit of Nature, and Wright too much—both criticisms are implicit in Mr. Kantorowich's paper. The respective attitudes are not, however, the result of a common "philosophical standpoint," but are probably due to environmental, emotional and intellectual differences. I am surprised that Mr. Kantorowich, who is so obsessed with the material aspect of life, has not drawn attention to the differences in environment between the American Mid-West and Switzerland.

On the other hand, I agree with Mr. Kantorowich in his defence of Wright against the derogatory implication of Mrs. Martienssen's remark. He does hold an "esteemed place in the architectural profession"—as witness his reception in England in 1939, and his work is of significance;

yet I think that Le Corbusier is by far the greater architect. My reason for saying so is that while I accord to each an equal degree of intuition, it seems to me that Le Corbusier has the more brilliant brain. That is one reason why people find his cities disquieting; they are, whether liked or disliked, complete works of art, no addition or subtraction to or from a city of his could improve it. Consequently, if it is desired to criticise his work, the criticism must be directed not at the integration but at the embracement of his art. Mr. Kantorowich seems to realise this, and had he concentrated more on the work and less on the acquaintances of Le Corbusier, he might have been able to produce some valid criticism—for one who would derogate "consciousness" to the determination of "social relations," Mr. Kantorowich is surprisingly prone to argue in terms of personalities. It is to be noted that although he felt compelled to reply to Mrs. Martienssen's trenchant criticism of his paper, he largely confines his reply to the personal and political and ignores a pertinent passage, of which an extract reads: "He does not like Le Corbusier's praise of geometry, though he again offers no reason for his dislike . . . Yet when Le Corbusier explains any conclusion on humanitarian grounds, this provokes even more frenzy from Mr. Kantorowich. And all this time Mr. Kantorowich offers not one word of explanation of the respect in which Le Corbusier manifests his inhumanity . . ." The charge of inhumanity against Le Corbusier is of course bound up with the stress he lays upon geometry. If geometrical relations are not intrinsic in the structure of the universe and geometry is merely a useful means devised by man to establish some apparent order in the world, then an architecture which stresses the geometrical must in the nature of things tend to be inhuman, because it is based on the merest abstraction, on "misplaced concreteness"—to borrow a term from Whitehead. If, on the other hand, geometrical relations are a necessary condition of the existence of the universe, then there is nothing inhuman in man as an apperceptive being becoming increasingly aware of these relations. I wish to return to a further consideration of Wright, but before doing so would refer to two or three interesting chapters on geometry in Dr. A. N. Whitehead's book, "Process and Reality."

There is not, I think, in Wright's work—at least in the Broadacres scheme—that same sense of completion, which is to be found in the designs of Le Corbusier. Whether or not, either architect's conception of the city accords with the tenets of socialism or communism, I do not know. I have heard two conflicting views: Firstly, a lecturer—seemingly with a strong socialist bias—who argued most skilfully that only a socialist society could and would build a Le Corbusier city; he was taken to task at the same Town Planning Congress by a speaker—a learned Marxist, I was subsequently told—who argued that the big city was a product of capitalism and that the future lay in some such conception as the "unity of town and country" to which Mr. Kantorowich refers. As Mr. Kantorowich quite evidently follows the Marxist line, it might seem surprising that he does not pay more attention to the "decentralisation theories of Wright." It might be that he respects the dictum of Engels' contained in the "Housing Question," which warns against speculation on the exact forms of living in the future society. More probably he not only pays obeisance to Engels' dictum—part of the Marxist dogma, but also respects the theory which holds that the classless society is preceded by a period of socialism, which contains certain elements of capitalism and is strong in the organisation of the State. This transitional state therefore bears certain resemblances to a

capitalistic state—at higher level, it is held, hence Mr. Kantorowich's acceptance of the city and also his reference to Wright's remark that Moscow would become "the most beautiful city in the world." Wright in his "Sulgrave Manor Lectures," made much the same claim in regard to Chicago—an equivocal attitude towards ergatocracy and democracy and/or plutocracy, which might make Mr. Kantorowich feel that his attribution of a "crackpot theory" to Wright is justified. I note the possibly prophetic utterance in Mr. Kantorowich's letter to "one of your readers" and hope to see the Moscow scheme in print, for I do not doubt that a serious attempt to plan a better city would not be a great improvement on the city as it exists. But to revert to Wright, I cannot help feeling that he is unjustly maligned and perversely misunderstood by Mr. Kantorowich. Much play is had by Mr. Kantorowich with a "standardised privy" which is presumably a unit of a standardised house that has been suggested by Wright. Nevertheless the fact remains that a scheme in which pre-fabricated houses were assembled by the owners was adopted in Stockholm some years ago. In the light of Mr. Kantorowich's professed "ideals," I should not have thought that his "Criticism and Evaluation" would have been largely confined to the limits of a most necessary cubicle. There is, it is true, some implied criticism of Wright's economics, but it is disappointing from one who considers himself to be in the position to stigmatise a chapter by Le Corbusier on "Finance and Realisation," as a "pathetic apology." It is not possible that the "mystic verbiage" of Wright as well as the "geometry" of Le Corbusier might contain a "germ" of truth. Most theories on townplanning since the advent of Ebenezer Howard have attached much importance to parklands and playing fields within and without the town or city. Welwyn Garden City, which it directly derived from the theories of Howard apart from parkland, also embraces an agricultural belt, yet some agriculturists in Britain advocate the allocation of a green-belt round urban areas in order to protect the rural husbandry from the depredations of the townsman. As some modern industrial housing schemes have found it necessary to introduce housing managers or manageresses to educate the inhabitants to better modes of living, the farmers' contention must have some basis in fact. The admitted advantage of having housing managers is also an admission of degradation, which if not complete is at least incipient.

Mr. Kantorowich, as I suggested, has more than a mite of right in some of his contentions. But is he right in dismissing the theoretical and practical works of Frank Lloyd Wright so glibly. Wright's belief is that man should have contact with the soil; ordinary agriculture is part of the daily round at his Taliesin. In stressing the need of agriculture in a balanced life for man, he is not alone, and is, in fact, in the company of a writer of the distinction of H. J. Massingham. In combining theoretical training with practical farming, he can look to a precedent in the fourth century, if I remember rightly, when St. Benedict founded his order of monks. Surely Mr. Kantorowich is nodding when in referring to Wright's plan of Broadacres he writes of the "poor man's work" being "decentralised 10 miles off," and later applies the stigma of "subsistence farming" to the same scheme. To my mind the fault with the Broadacres plan is that it is not possible, at an acre per family, to place the worker within ten miles of his work under the contemporary need of industrial business or bureaucratic concentration. Criticism in regard to space must in South Africa be replaced by criticism in regard to the cost of running a car in this country.

Another criticism is the loss of community in such a scheme. Assuming that it is not possible to decentralise industry, business or bureaucracy, to the extent necessary for the fulfilment of Wright's plans, and that people continue to interpret good living standards in terms of manufactured goods, is there nothing to be gained from Wright? Is it possible that some good might be served by paying at least as much attention to his stress on agriculture as to his emphasis on eaves? Small plots are generally considered to be desirable amenities in housing schemes; and if vegetables, why not livestock? Could not some of the acres of parkland which are considered so desirable in "ideal" plans be used as farming land? Not every man is a Wordsworth or a Constable. It is probable that many men might prefer to have more than the interest of a landscape garden or an exercising paddock in the land about them. Were such a scheme possible, it might help to restore something of the lost balance to an industrial worker's life. In a co-operative hobby of this description there would be difficulties ranging from the equitable distribution of extra milk to the undivided share in a milch cow—yet the individual fancier might still be able to cross a strain in accordance with his own pet theory. There is also the consoling thought that many people prefer their milk bottled in the comparative quiet of an entirely urban setting.

In dwelling at some length on this problem of balanced living, I am not only suggesting that every man has not an artist's detachment or an athlete's application, but also that one of Wright's "crackpot theories" might touch the core of "man's consciousness." In making the same suggestion in regard to Le Corbusier's "geometrical" "abstractions," I am aware that the two suggestions might seem to be contradictory. In this letter I must be content to remark that I do not think that there is any real contradiction. And in case anyone should think that my words imply that the schemes of Le Corbusier and Wright could be combined to produce an "ideal" scheme, I hasten to add that conception, not combination, begets works of art—if the town be so considered. It has been said—to borrow Mr. Kantorowich's phraseology, but to substitute another quotation—that "prehensions are privately born but publicly displayed." Prehension is a coined word that can be taken to mean a grasping into unity. By introducing the fact of the individual's capacity to grasp the rough stuff of existence into unity, I am back on much the same ground as I was at the beginning of this letter; but that is where Mr. Kantorowich is near the end of the letter supplementing his paper. "Here at last we come to the fundamental difference between your correspondent's approach to the problem and mine," writes Mr. Kantorowich, "It is the difference between philosophical idealism and philosophical materialism." Mrs. Martienssen may be a philosophical idealist, but it is surely a masterly piece of deduction on the part of Mr. Kantorowich to come to the conclusion solely on the facts contained in her letter. Mrs. Martienssen may, on the other hand, like most of us, not be conscious of following any particular philosophical system, but her own common-sense, which seeks to refute unsubstantiated accusations. Nonetheless, like Lawrence's Arabs, Mr. Kantorowich sees things in black and white; he is a materialist, therefore Mrs. Martienssen is an idealist—and a philosophical idealist at that. (Footnote to his paper states: 'Idealism' is used throughout in the philosophical sense, i.e., as opposed to Materialism . . .") If the world is divided between materialists and idealists, it might be wise to examine his brief exposition of idealism, if only to find out where one is supposed to lie, if one does stand with

him. Before giving a relevant extract from Mr. Kantorowich's letter, I would observe that his neat exposition of Idealism might possibly be more apposite were it only concerned with Subjective Idealism. But here is Mr. Kantorowich's unqualified version: "The idealist attitude assumes that our consciousness is independent of our existence here—it comes from without and does not develop as we struggle with our material surroundings. It assumes the primacy of spirit to matter. Idealism has its reflection in all sorts of philosophical systems—all sorts of deism, solipsism, mathematical mysticism (à la Jeans), etc." I do not pretend to have much knowledge of philosophy, but I have always understood that philosophical idealism stressed the interdependence of subject and object, of mind and the world. It thus cannot be held to "deny" that "consciousness" develops "as we struggle with our material surroundings." Mr. Kantorowich then continues: "From this point of view, why should not a 'great' idea" influence human history. After all, if human history is dependent on the working out of man's consciousness, which is assumed to come from without this world, then a "great consciousness, giving birth to 'great idea' must be decisive!" Despite the exclamation mark, the passage lacks pertinence and is only of interest in so far as it throws light on Mr. Kantorowich's own system of thought, for if it is in a "great consciousness" that belief is held, it can be considered to be great enough to allow of human freedom. But Mr. Kantorowich prefers unmistakable decisiveness as he clearly shows in his next sentence: "Idealism is, however, completely non-scientific and mystical, admitting of no scientific proof." This is pragmatism at its worst; and Mr. Kantorowich, it seems to me, reveals as in no other single sentence, the paucity of his understanding of the purpose of philosophy—he would reduce philosophy to the status of a methodology. It is interesting to note Mr. Kantorowich's recurrent use of "mystical" or "mysticism" to imply vagueness in others; for himself the corresponding expression seems to be the less euphonious "etc." As he seems to be so attracted to mysticism, perhaps he ought to read the works of the late Evelyn Underhill. But to continue: "It has been proved to give no adequate interpretation of the world." That is admitted of philosophical idealism, and therein lies its virility. "In the last analysis it is a purely fatalistic and passive philosophy." If to take cognisance of the whole gamut of man's being, his sensory, emotional and spiritual experience, his powers of reasoning, intuition and imagination, is to be "fatalistic" and "passive"; then it complies with Mr. Kantorowich's estimate. It holds more promise for the human being than that: "A man's thoughts reflect to a greater or lesser degree of exactness this real material world." It considers "man's thoughts" to be something more than reflections and ascribes to man the faculty of conception and conceptualism—which is one root of the difference between idealism and materialism. There is another root and to dig down to that it might be advisable to plough through some of the "full subtleties," which I mentioned previously.

Mr. Kantorowich implies that the "subtleties" would be fully revealed if he wrote a paper on "Historical Materialism." I think a more usual nomenclature is Dialectical Materialism, but I believe that Bukharin (accused by many who believe in "Marx's greatness" of being a mechanist and of lapsing into idealism) wrote a book entitled "A Theory of Historic Materialism." I do not know what significance should be given to the suffix "-al," but no doubt enough to relieve Mr. Kantorowich of all taint of idealism. I therefore take it that it can be assumed that Historical and Dialectical Materialism are synonymous terms for the same

philosophy that springs from the eponymous Marx. The Marxist philosophy considers the whole of existence to be a process. This process is revealed in fundamental laws, of which, I believe, there are three, namely: quantity into quality and conversely quality into quantity, the unity of opposites, and the negation of the negation. An illustration of the first law which is cited in "A Textbook of Marxist Philosophy" is cited thus: "A simple mixture of hydrogen and oxygen is possible in any quantitative relation, but in the forming of a qualitatively new body—water—these two elements unite only in definite quantitative proportions. Thus between water and other combinations of oxygen and hydrogen—peroxide of hydrogen—there are no intermediate compounds whatever. Not any, but only, definite quantitative difference conditions the difference of any qualities, of leaps from one chemical combination to another." As a law such as this is widely applied to "social relations" it might be asked what relation there is to the affairs of men and women in the formation of H_2O —even if a woman be a bigamist? However, further down the same page appears the following passage: "Marx in his application of the law of quantity into quality cited in Capital these achievements of chemistry, thereby stressing the universal significance of dialectical laws." To note one application of a dialectical law of "universal significance" from the same book: "And at last that moment came when the quantity of socialist wheat exceeded the quantity of kulak wheat; that was the nodal point of the related measurements, that was the moment when it was possible to introduce a qualitative change of tactics. In order to introduce this at the right time it was necessary to determine rightly the measurement of relations of class forces. The Central Committee of our Party rightly determined this measurement and in 1929 initiated successfully the transition to the liquidation of kulaks as a class on the basis of all round collectivisation." The language of the extract is abstract; to see what "liquidation" means in terms of humanity I refer to a recent Penguin Special, entitled "Russia," By Bernard Pares: "Then, as the Government grimly put it, the peasants were faced with the choice." This was followed by an individual attack on all who were labelled kulaks—and the labelling was often fixed by local rivals or enemies. Thousands of Communists and Red Army soldiers were sent down to the villages; the local paupers pointed out the victims. The condemned and his wife were deprived of everything they had—house, stock, implements, and everything else—put into carts in what they stood up in, and carried away to concentration camps to work there as slaves of the Government. There follows a page and a half of description and then the statement: "The Government reckoned that there were as many as a million families on the list of the condemned, which in Russia, with an average of two parents and three children, is taken to amount to five million persons. This does not mean that they were all destroyed; sometimes they were simply moved to other and worse land, perhaps outside the neighbourhood, and later moved on further, as the new collectivisation spread over the country, but as 'kulaks' they were liquidated, that is, they ceased to exist as such." A law of "universal significance" that covers the behaviour of "the simple mixture of hydrogen and oxygen" and the fate of "five million people," "not all of whom were destroyed," must indeed have some significance. But before pointing out what is really significant, it is necessary to draw attention to another of the "subtleties" that is contained in the above illustration, and that is the "qualitative change in tactics." The peasant—that is the "kulak"—was allowed, in fact, so far as I can gather, encouraged to produce more in order to increase the productivity of the country—that was the short term tactic. The long term tactic was the "collectivisation" of the country, which necessitated the "liquidation" of the unsuspecting "kulaks." I surmise that these

tactics are part of the general strategy, which is the establishment of a classless society. The points of significance in this story of the kulaks are two: firstly, the moral aspect, and secondly, the sense of unquestioning rightness that is displayed in the extract referring to "Central Committee's" action. In regard to the first point, the question is not if the members of the "Central Committee" of the "Party" were vicious in deciding to liquidate five million people. Mr. Kantorowich's assertion that materialists have "ideals" must be accepted in good faith. To affirm that an action is immoral or unmoral is to predicate a moral code of action; and as there is no evidence in the "Textbook" from which I have quoted that the "Central Committee" or the authors of the "Textbook" were troubled with any feeling of doubt, the question arises as to whether or not they are completely amoral. If so, they would be incapable of feeling any doubt. There is much in Marxist literature of hate but little or nothing about ethics; the necessity of hatred is a strangely personal note but nevertheless part and parcel of an impersonal philosophy. Yet it does not rise out of an ethical strain in the philosophy. The consideration of ethics is confined to the idealist philosophies, and that is the difference between idealism and materialism that does not seem to have occurred to Mr. Kantorowich. To come to the second point which is the sense of unquestioning rightness, of absolute conviction, that is so apparent in the text which I have quoted. A "scientific analysis" of social change has been made on the basis of certain dialectical laws, and willy-nilly "a man must choose his road, otherwise it is chosen for him," for the historical process will take its course irrespective of the wishes of men. Is it to be doubted that followers of "Historical Materialism" have a sense of rightness that is only comparable to that held by devout adherents to a religious faith? If we bear in mind the idealising element, the fervour of class emotion, which arises out of the philosophy—though only embodied in it as an intellectual postulate, the philosophy, more correctly, ideology, might be held to have all the elements of a secular religion were it not for its amoral quality, which makes it comparable to paganism. I shall now pass on to Mr. Kantorowich's conception of "Utopianism."

"Webster," writes Mr. Kantorowich, "defines a Utopia as an 'impractical scheme of social regeneration,'" and after a column or so, states that: "We have yet to deal fully with the word 'impractical.'" Webster's definition is good, but it contains another word that Mr. Kantorowich might have "dealt fully with," and that is "regeneration." As definitions seem to be in order, I give from the Concise Oxford Dictionary: "regenerate . . ." "Invest with new and higher spiritual nature; improve moral condition of . . . Hence . . . regeneration"; and I supplement Webster's definition of Utopia with another from the Encyclopaedia Britannica "Utopia—an ideal commonwealth where inhabitants exist under perfect conditions. Hence Utopian is used to denote a visionary reform, which fails to recognise defects in human nature . . ." It is now possible to appreciate fully the meaning of Webster's succinct definition. Mr. Kantorowich has applied the epithet "Utopian" to Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright. Having drawn attention to the lack of moral content in Mr. Kantorowich's "philosophy," I will give "Utopian" wider application, and that is to Mr. Kantorowich himself. Earlier in this letter I stated that there was a hint of one of Mr. Kantorowich's "ideals" in his paper. It is contained in the statement: "There is the germ of a future unity of town and country, in which the gulf between the two, created essentially by the industrial revolution, will at last be

bridged." This "future unity" is the condition of planning that would exist under a classless society. As it is apparent both in Mr. Kantorowich's paper and letter that he adheres to "Historical Materialism" without any apparent qualification, one must assume that, in accordance with the tenets of that doctrine, his ultimate "ideal" is the establishment of a classless society. In the light of my reference to the ethical question and the reference to "defects in human nature" contained in the definition of "Utopia," the full meaning of Mr. Kantorowich's attack on idealism and his assertion that "Man's social being determines his consciousness" becomes evident. He cannot admit that "man's consciousness," let alone his conscience, could be determined or even partly determined in any other way; he cannot admit that "ideas" have any influence on the course of events; he cannot admit that man is capable of other than a peculiar form of volition in that "a man must choose"; he is, in fact, compelled to deny the full complexity and stature of man. On man being something less than man and a malleable thing moulded by inexorable dialectical laws that determine "social being," depends his "ideal" of the classless society.

Whatever good the "ideal" of a classless society might bring to man, it is obvious that it will not be freedom, for the ideology in which it is embodied denies that it is inherent in man to desire to be free. The ideology is thus a denial of the tradition of speculative thought that is the heritage of Western Europe; and the reader can properly estimate Mr. Kantorowich's glowing tribute, contained in the words: "The valuable and rich cultural background that the new society, now being born, will inherit from the old"—they have little meaning, for he would have the winged bird caged, and without enlivening and creative minds a "rich cultural background" becomes a dead back-cloth.

Criticism of the "philosophy" that Mr. Kantorowich follows does not imply that if a "classless society" be taken to mean a condition of true community, I am necessarily scornful of the "ideal." I am, however, not only sceptical of the key purported to be given by a "secular religion," but also highly critical—as might be clear—of its concepts, so far as they may be said to exist. There is one characteristic—amongst others—which should be found among adherents to a transcendental religion, and that is a certain humility; there is another which is sometimes found, and that is bigotry. I propose to examine a "secular religion" to see if it has these distinctive traits. In considering the second of the characteristics first, I would refer to Mr. Kantorowich's derogatory references to the psychologists, "Freud, Adler and Jung," and to the mathematician "Jeans." One wonders why? I have not been given to understand that psychology yet deserves to be called a developed science, for it is in its infancy and has not yet had its Pasteur. But psychologists are practical searchers after knowledge and, providing they are able to form valid concepts, will quite probably make a science of psychology one day. Perhaps it is the work of Jung that troubles Mr. Kantorowich? Were philosophy confined to mathematicians, or former mathematicians, I should plump for Whitehead in preference to Jeans. But Jeans is a scientist, and might it not be more fitting for Mr. Kantorowich to ask why he has become a "mathematical mysticist," rather than to perfunctorily condemn him as such? The position seems to be that Mr. Kantorowich's "scientific" philosophy does not derive any support from the findings of contemporary science. His question, a "Great Idea" from "heaven—knows where—," might with the substitution of one word for three be echoed by a contemporary physicist as "energy from

heaven—knows where"? The fact of the matter is that the "scientific" basis of Mr. Kantorowich's philosophy so far as it has "universal significance" lies in the nineteenth century. Lenin has since tried to rescue it from that position; nevertheless his theorising does not seem to have helped Mr. Kantorowich to rise to more than unsubstantiated belittlement of all who undermine his position. There are indeed, I think, signs of bigotry in Mr. Kantorowich's attitude. To examine the other possible characteristic of Mr. Kantorowich's "secular religion" I must recur to "A Textbook of Marxist Philosophy" and take from the text: "The qualitative uniqueness of a thing is given in a comprehensive account of its properties." There is no sign of arrogance here, and in so far as the text is applicable to man, one might be led to expect an almost humble attitude in regard to the unknown "properties" of man. To supplement the quotation from the same book: "In a word, the most essential qualities are those which a thing manifests in relation to 'its other,' to its opposite. Things that have little in common are for the most part 'indifferent' to each other. No one examines a mechanic by playing chess with him. Just as little will be revealed by testing him on an automatic machine. A mechanic will show his essential properties in relation to 'his own other,' to the machine which it is his job to work, especially if he is confronted with a difficult repair job in connection with it . . ." There is undoubtedly an inverted humility exemplified in a statement that equates the "essential properties" of a man with a machine. And this is the content of a philosophy that has been termed by the left writer, Mikel Gold, the greatest system of humanism yet invented by man—I speak from memory, but that is the sense of the assertion. Humanism seems to have lost its meaning in a machine age—or is this the codified thought of the nineteenth century "industrial revolution," the reverse face of the defamed capitalist coin? In writing this letter, I realise that implications will be drawn from it because Russia is an ally of ours—so, for that matter, is the U.S.A., including Frank Lloyd Wright and Henry Ford.

I understand that there is good in Russia, but my purpose has not been to examine conditions in Russia—for those interested there are several books and numerous booklets. No, my purpose has been to examine the "philosophy" of one who sees no other road to the future but his, who is so convinced of the rightness of his "philosophy" that from its standpoint he has seen fit to imply and apply respectively one of the most opprobrious epithets in his vocabulary to two well-known living architects—for connotations of "Fascism," read an occasional Left newspaper. His attack on "Idealism," including

as it does "all sorts of deism . . . etc.," is not only an attack on the freedom of thought that has characterised the European tradition at its best but also an attack on the religious influence in that tradition. In considering Mr. Kantorowich's philosophy it is necessary to ask in what way all aspects of our life would be affected? To point to the good or the bad among the Russians is not enough—their's is a different history. It is only necessary to examine the gospel of Christianity and to follow the different forms it has taken in the Greek Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, Protestantism and its numerous denominations, and for that matter the Coptic Church of Abyssinia, to realise that differing traditions and ambitions have a way of moulding a doctrine.

It is therefore necessary to consider Mr. Kantorowich's philosophy in the light of our own traditions, both European and African. I shall not attempt to do that, but pass on to my reasons for bothering to write such a long letter on a subject that, as I have said, might seem to be but remotely connected with architecture. They are: Firstly, as I have said before, I react to Mr. Kantorowich's contentions, and as this journal should reflect the views of all its members, I could not let them pass unchallenged. Secondly, I realise that: "A war is a true bifurcation of future possibilities." We cannot, even if we would, go back to the past; but must we go forward to a retrospective future? Must the incipient goodwill that seems to be rising in men be canalised into iron channels that were cast in the nineteenth century? Must man become "the other," the complement of the machine, to be entangled in "dialectical" chains of his own manufacture?—for that is the meaning of a "Central Committee" that "rightly" determines a "measurement." Or are we to go forward to a future more fitting to our "rich cultural" heritage and the true stature of man? Not if we allow ourselves to be unnecessarily dazzled by the colour of the herring drawn across the path by one who seems to be under the spell of the far Left. "Bifurcation" in my last quotation was not a happy word, it seems, for the choice does not lie between Communism and Fascism, as Mr. Kantorowich would have us believe. To recur to a previous quotation: "The community may evolve in many ways . . ." and the manner in which it will evolve depends in a large measure on ourselves; and involves not only some searching into our manner of living but also into our sense of living. Indeed, I conclude that an ideology that would claim the very soul of man does bear greatly on architecture.

Yours faithfully,

ANGUS STEWART.

The Editors,

S.A. Architectural Record,

22nd July, 1942.

Sirs,

May I congratulate the "Record" on the publication of the extremely interesting and illuminating essay by Mr. Roy Kantorowich, "The Modern Theorists of Planning; Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, etc." in its January issue of this year, and of his comprehensive reply called forth by Mrs. Martienssen's denunciatory criticism. The essay and the reply taken in conjunction with the latter criticism constitute a stimulating debate on matters of vital importance to architects, though the philosophical content of Mr. Kantorowich's contributions considerably widens the range of the discussion.

Before recording some thoughts on the issues raised in the correspondence, I should like to define my own standpoint. I have been a consistent, though not uncritical, admirer of the work and research of M. Le Corbusier. It is hardly necessary to emphasize that Le Corbusier's influence on architectural development has been world-wide, to which the work of our own schools and of our practitioners bears ample evidence. The energy and single-minded enthusiasm with which he has presented his case are the attributes of a creative and fertile mind, and as such are worthy of our respect, at least. His qualities, moreover, have inspired a large measure of enthusiastic support and even adulation. To the extent that such support is founded on the true social significance of his work, I pay unstinting tribute to the inspiration of Le Corbusier, man and artist. Where, however, less admirable qualities are discernible in his art and in his social attitude, support takes on the aspect of unthinking and unreasonable prejudice. To this limit I am personally not prepared to go. I can concede no greatness to an individual whose actions go contrary to the current of progress in his own time.

My criticism of Le Corbusier's architecture and particularly his town-planning is always based on the social relationships engendered or implied in his conception of both. That such a standpoint may be termed political, I find in no way frightening, so that I cannot be horrified, as Mrs. Martienssen appears to be, that "Mr. Kantorowich's stand is a political one." On the contrary, I maintain that an evaluation which does not take into account politico-social factors can only be incomplete and therefore misleading.

It is clear that Mrs. Martienssen is not unaware of the necessity of proving social value in the work of an artist, for her vigorous attack on Mr. Kantorowich's essay is to a great extent directed towards refuting the suggestion that the elements of reaction are visible in any of Le Corbusier's works, words or deeds. In doing so, she is undoubtedly accepting as valid the structure of Mr. Kantorowich's critique. And in fact, in that structure lies the great value of the original essay and of the somewhat overwhelming counter-attack. I am content to leave well alone all the personal factors apparent in Mrs. Martienssen's criticism and dealt with in Mr. Kantorowich's reply, and so am able to concentrate on the essentials of the argument put forward by Mr. Kantorowich. These are, as I see it:—

1. Social organisation springs from the material conditions and the means of production and distribution in a given society.
2. Ideas, legal forms, artistic expression take on, in one way or another, a superstructural relation to this socio-economic foundation.

3. The individual, artist or otherwise, is therefore decisively conditioned (in a general sense) by the social organisation of his time.

4. His creative rôle is dependent upon the extent to which he expresses the forces within the framework of society, and, particularly, the progressive forces.

5. If he does not link himself with the progressive forces, he tends inevitably, willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, to fall within the camp of social reaction.

The basis (1 and 2) of this logical sequence may not be accepted by everyone, but its validity will probably be apparent to many architects (their field of work being bound up with materialist considerations). I certainly accept these fundamentals, which are expounded by Mr. Kantorowich with a fine sense of historical materialism, founded, it is clear, on intensive study and thorough understanding. He endeavours, by these means, to establish the place of Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright among the philosophical idealists—that is, Utopians brought up-to-date—and by keeping this issue clear in his reply has been able to unravel the tangle of Mrs. Martienssen's spirited personal defence of Le Corbusier.

For I am unable to discern any effective weakening of the general case presented in Mr. Kantorowich's essay—and divergence of opinion centres, for the most part, around the subject of Le Corbusier and his work. How far, then, has Mr. Kantorowich been able to justify his strictures on Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright in terms of the principles set out above?

In the first instance, it is quite untrue to say that Mr. Kantorowich does not appreciate the positive achievements of both architects, and particularly of M. Le Corbusier, in modern town-planning development. Reference to his original essay and to his subsequent reply establishes that fact. He is, however, highly critical of the social attitude of both, and the social implications of their actual work. He names them both Idealists, and in doing so, strikes at the root of the discussion. For Idealism in the philosophical sense means a turning away from the realities of to-day's tragic struggle for the survival and betterment of mankind. Such a detachment might have been comparatively harmless in times of lesser social stress, but can it be named other than reactionary in the tense situation in which society is now placed? Le Corbusier, however, has been an active and creative artist over a long period, and has, in his make-up many of the contradictory elements so apparent in the society in which he produced. That means that, at moments, his approach had a materialist substratum, while at others it has veered off to the idealist extreme.

Productive methods in particular have been a fertile source of inspiration to Le Corbusier, and many of his early experiments in this direction have had a profound effect on architectural technique in both design and structure. The spatial possibilities released by this progressive attitude have been emphasized in his planning experiments. One cannot say, however, that the relation between such valuable research and the socio-economic foundations of our society has been realised or seriously taken into account by Le Corbusier, and in this he reveals his "Idealist" (what he calls non-political) standpoint, a self-imposed but severe limitation. He has had, too, in many of his early projects a keen sense of human needs, though inevitably the accent is never on the means by which these needs can be realised, other than the strictly architectural.

There again, detachment becomes Utopianism. When the scale of his projects is increased to the town-planning level, it cannot be said in the first instance that there has been a commensurate rise in his regard for human needs. It takes, rather, the form of simple multiplication of the "unit" solution, but in a way in which the cell is lost in the whole. I refer still to human needs. Ingenuity and even genius in tackling the superficial mechanical problems of our unwieldy unplanned towns must be generously conceded. But the solution in human terms—can one say that the machine has released man, is it not rather that man has been finally overcome?

Here one discerns the ideological link-up with the grim Fascist mentality—Anti-human, anti-social. I do not wish for a moment to attribute Fascist motives to Le Corbusier—I do not think it necessary for my purpose to do so. It is essential nevertheless to trace the devious routes through which the Utopian may be drawn into the reactionary camp, and to understand that the failure or inability of the artist (or any individual) to range his creative work on the side of the progressive social forces of his time may have tragic and unexpected results. Mr. Kantorowich is impatient of this slow and complex process. He sees clearly the implications in the town-planning trends under discussion, and forthwith denounces in uncompromising terms. I admire his unswerving fidelity to the principles he believes in, and I hold that plain speaking in the present world situation is amply justified. Actually, though, I do not think his case, so strong fundamentally, is materially affected by his insistence on pressing the Fascist brand on Le Corbusier—or on Frank Lloyd Wright. He has brought no "black and white" evidence as proof of his assertion, so that judgment on that score must inevitably be suspended in all fairness. It is true that he does no more than state a "trend," but the stigma of Fascism is so great that a trend can be read as utter condemnation.

Mrs. Martienssen obviously resents this unjustifiably brisk conclusion on Mr. Kantorowich's part, and I cannot help feeling that a great deal of her criticism springs from this resentment. She has, however, succeeded in provoking a comprehensive reply, the tone of which is more balanced and which rounds off many of the arguments lightly touched upon in the original essay. It was, in fact, her letter which has kept alive in the

Journal a discussion of the greatest importance to architects and to all serious students of architecture.

I am particularly grateful for the opportunity provided Mr. Kantorowich to make one of the most valuable statements of the whole correspondence—valuable because a positive lead is indicated for the present and for the hoped-for future. He says, "The architecture of the future will be born, is being born, in the crucible of man's struggle to build that future." In that, is expressed the essence of the materialist case. The struggle for making tolerable the material conditions of the lives of all of the people by the planned and equitable use of our human and material resources will be the mainspring, the vitalising factor, in our architectural future.

In that process the works of Le Corbusier will not be forgotten. He is, after all, but an individual in the great march of mankind. At moments, at his greatest, he has touched heights of generalisation of lasting significance. His influence is being felt and will be felt in the solution of many of our everyday architectural problems, which are, in essence, social problems. "Man's struggle," however, is of an enormously diverse and complex character. If we accept Mr. Kantorowich's premise that architecture is an expression or function of material conditions, it is clear that diversity and complexity will always colour the pattern of building. Le Corbusier's limitation lies in his oversimplification, which springs fundamentally from the deliberate restriction of his field of investigation in a subject, of all subjects, which cannot be thus isolated and treated "in vacuo." The weaknesses of philosophical idealism are here apparent. Mr. Kantorowich says he wishes "to judge (Le Corbusier), not in terms of absolute criteria, but within his particular historical setting." That setting is now more completely understood than during the peaceful times of the "Corbie" volumes, the appearance of each of which was an event among many sincere students. We cannot separate ourselves from the cataclysm. To Idealism we must, for self-preservation, oppose Realism—a realism that has its roots in just social organisation. Architecture, too, is in the struggle.

Yours truly,

NORMAN HANSON.

AN APPEAL RECEIVED FROM THE BOOKS FOR TROOPS COMMITTEE

The Transvaal Provincial Institute.

Dear Sirs,

We have received a urgent appeal from the Red Cross Society for books for our Prisoners of War. Books of all kinds are required, but particularly standard works on professional subjects. As you know many men abandoned their studies to answer the call to arms, and by providing the necessary books by which they can continue their studies, we shall be doing them an undoubted service.

We are, therefore, appealing to all professional societies to assist us in this matter, as we feel many of the established architects must have standard books which they no longer urgently need, and which would be of so great a help to our men now in prison camps.

I should assure you that the dispatch of books will not affect or restrict in any way the dispatch of parcels of com-

forts as this is a misapprehension entertained by several persons.

My Committee will be most grateful to you if, therefore, you could bring this request before the Society of Architects.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) NANCY GRANT.

The Hon. Secretary,

Books for Troops Committee,

(including S.A. Library Association, U.D.F.I., Y.M.C.A.,
Toc H.),

P.O. Box 1001.

All books to be sent to Public Library, Johannesburg.

This letter is published here in the hope that architects will be able to assist in this deserving cause.

Journal of the SA Architectural Institute

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