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Despite all the differences that immediately come to mind when natural and artificial landscapes are compared, we tend to believe that they are or should be similarly whole and entire, that each is best when characterized by unity. The same is true for individual buildings: each should be all-of-a-piece. Obvious differences in size are neglected in this comparison, viewed instead are analogies in composition or make-up. Yet, wholeness in these cases is not simple, for it involves not only completeness (a full inventory of all the parts that are necessary for the ensemble's "operations") but also mutuality that constituent elements cooperatively complement one another because everything discordant or divergent has been eliminated. Unity in the first sense is achieved when nothing that could be named as related is lacking.

In the second case performance is at is-sue, the functional or mechanical operations of an arrangement. Such a configuration is whole and entire when it works as it should. The actual existence of urban, natural, or architectural unity can never really be known, however, for it is impos-

sible to actually perceive all the parts that make up a land- or cityscape. One reason for this is practical and concrete, cities and unbuilt terrains are so widely expansive that they always extend beyond one's powers of observation, beyond the capacity of any single vantage to include more than a limited part of the whole. Another reason, less practical than ontological or constitutive, is that the elements that can be observed within any stretch of terrain always conceal other less obvious aspects, recessive ones that are no less important because less apparent. Matching their outward extent, then, is an inward depth of topographies, a reserve or latent dimension that they keep within or for themselves to favor their own continuance. I will say more about this below, but at the outset want to observe that this inexplicit depth tends to escape the attention of architects. This may be because an architect's normal concern is with the outwardly apparent aspects of objects or entities, the ones that give evidence of design intention. Yet, to the degree that this focus allows the recondite dimension of topographies to be neglected, the differences between perceptual faith and cognitive certainty will be confused, as will be the different ways that natural and artificial topographies act as architecture's primary horizon of stability and reference.

Viewing topography as if it were like architecture, as if it were architecture "writ large," has ample and honorable precedent in architectural theory, for many architects have proposed that large and small configurations have analogous structures. Of the many authors one could cite on this commonplace, Aldo van Eyck may be the most helpful twentieth century proponent. Although he repeated himself on this point with some frequency, the version put forth at the Otterlo CIAM conference may be his sharpest statement of the principle: "We must stop splitting the making of a habitat into two disciplines—architecture and urbanism. Why? That's a long story. A house must be like a small city if it's to be a real house; a city like a large house if it's to be a real city…The thought processes in planning cannot be divided on the basis of part–whole; small–large; few–many; i.e. into architecture and urbanism."[1] That the matter is not so simple becomes apparent as soon as the antecedents for the principle are studied. Van Eyck's recent biographer, Francis Strauven, proposed that Van Eyck arrived at the analogy "independently of Alberti," but acknowledged, just the same, that there were both Renaissance and ancient antecedents for the comparison, Alberti and Palladio in the first case, Plato and Aristotle in the second.[2] Similarities there are, but also differences.

In *de Re Aedeficatoria* Alberti wrote as follows: "If (as the philosophers maintain) the city is like some large house, and the house is in turn like

some small city, cannot the various parts of the house—atria, xysti, dining rooms, porticoes, and so on—be considered miniature buildings? Could anything be omitted from any of these, through inattention and neglect, without detracting from the dignity and worth of the work?"[3] Alberti's list suggests unity meant completeness, but elsewhere in the text he stressed mutuality—functional interdependency—just as strongly. Nevertheless, while this version of the analogy seems identical to Van Eyck's, the reflexivity of big and small is slightly imperfect, for Alberti's elaboration exemplified the composite character of the house only, the compression and encameration of city-like situations within the domestic realm, not the expansion of domestic types into the city, or as the city. This asymmetry is important because it preserves the non-reflexivity of ancient versions of the analogy, an imbalance we ignore when we think of towns, neighborhoods, or urban blocks as "big architecture" and deploy techniques of the latter in the design and projection of the former: thus the legacy of much twentieth century design, fantastically rich houses and miserably poor cities.

For Aristotle the bonds that bind male to female, or those that join the members of a family together are analogous to the ties between members of a community. So, too, for assemblies that are still larger, states. In each of these cases union assumes the concord of "those who cannot exist without each other."[4] Although dependency at each scale has slightly different purposes, a two-part cause of mutuality is apparent in each case: desire for self-sufficiency and for a good life— an ethically oriented functionality. Questions about the nature of a good or just life were also on Plato's mind when he formulated the analogy. In the most famous of his three inquiries into the nature of a just state, *The Republic*, Plato had Socrates propose a method of detecting the qualities of something small (man) in something large (the city):

The inquiry we are undertaking is no easy one but calls for keen vision…

Since we are not clever persons, I think we should employ the method of search that we should use if we… were bidden to read small letters from a distance and then someone observed that these same letters exist somewhere larger and on a larger surface…

There is a justice of one man, we say, and I suppose, also of an entire city? Is not the city larger than the man… Then, perhaps, there would be more justice in the larger object and more easy to apprehend. If it please you, then, let us first look for its quality in states, and then only examine it also in the individual, looking for the likeness of the greater in the form of the less.[5]
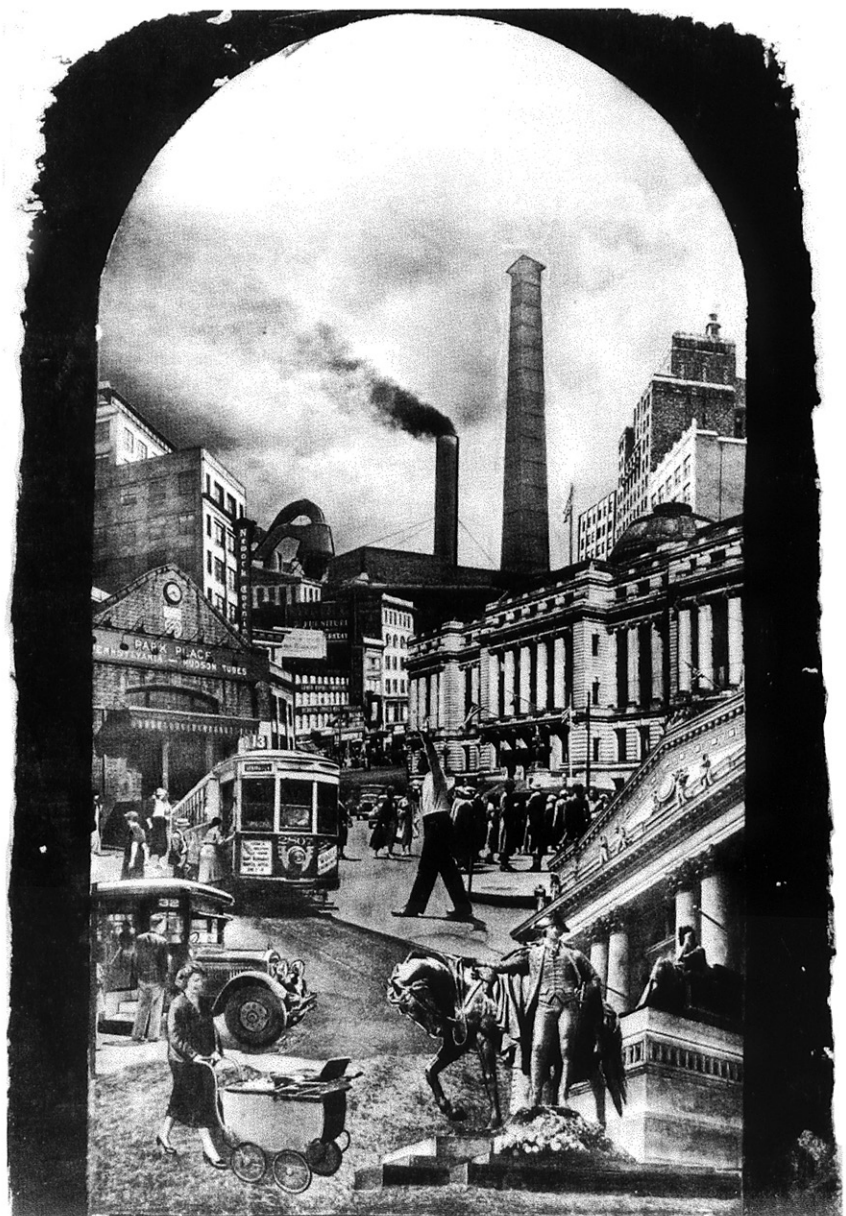
Alexander Alland, Newark of the Present, *1936. Estate of Alexander Alland, Sr.*

| *Robert Rauschenberg,* Nightshift (Urban Bourbon)*, 1995. Collection of the Artist.*

To see or understand justice in the individual it is best to look for it where it can be more easily apprehended, in the city, at least as a first step. This is the methodological correlate to the on-tological non-reflexivity I mentioned. Once this procedure is adopted the question then becomes: what makes a city just? Because the whole of Plato's great dialogue attempts an answer to this question it would be silly to offer a short answer here. But one part of the answer can be noted, for it re-introduces the parallelism between large and small configurations: a city is just when the majority pattern their lives after the conduct of the one whose soul has been shaped in conformity with an exemplary or divine pattern. Good cities result from a double mimesis: the philosopher/king imitates the gods, and citizens imitate the phil-osopher/king. For modern readers, particularly architects, this looks as if the small will be the key to the big (the statesman key to the state). But for that to be true one would have to overlook Plato's reference to the gods and reduce the double to a single mimesis.

Let me quote Plato once again in order to restate the analogy: "Must we not agree that in each of us there are the same forms and habits as in the polis?"[6] Eric Voegelin has introduced the term "anthropological principle" to describe this comparison. In explanation he observed that for Plato "the [human] psyche is a society of forces, and soci-ety is the differentiated manifold of psychic elements."[7] Plato, like the architects I've mentioned, extended the analogy to architecture and cities: "if men must have a wall of sorts, they should construct their own dwellings from the outset in such a fashion that the whole town forms one unbroken wall, every dwelling house being rendered readily defensible. . . Such a town, with its resemblance to one great house, would be no unpleasing spectacle."[8] When we casually add to these passages the well-known com-monplace from Protagoras—man is the measure of all things—we arrive at a statement of principle for archi-tecture: the building is the measure of the city. Stated instrumentally: to design a city, or one of its districts, is to make a really big building. The continuum from small to medium to large and extra large is thus unbroken, and a wide spectrum of opportunity opens before the designer.

The problem with this conclusion is that Plato emphatically opposed the Protagorean dictum, he did not think the individual person is the measure of all things. We are not the measure but the gods. This extra-mundane reference is apparent in much dis-cussed and often criticized parts of his philosophy—his theory of ideas and his struggle with the poets (who make copies of copies)—but also pres-ent in topics that are often neglected, such as the nature of friendship and the causes of good health. Plato's

understanding of the analogy between the city and the human soul assumed that the order of the second was a configuration of "forces" that had its model in the archetype of the highest good.[9] I've already noted that Aristotle, too, believed that communities were bound together in approximation of what was right for the majority. In both cases order was believed to have its foundation in a pattern that is above or beyond the nature of this or that individual. This premise is assumed in Plato's summary statement about the formation of cities:

good cities arise when citizens imitate individuals (rulers) who themselves imitate the gods, for only when the ruler's mind is truly fixed on eternal realities [and] has no leisure to turn his eyes downward upon the petty affairs of men…[only when he] endeavors to fashion himself in their likeness and assimilate himself to them. . . [only then will] the lover of wisdom associating with the divine order become orderly and divine in the measure permitted to man. . . [If, then,] some compulsion is laid upon him to practice stamping on the plastic matter of human nature in public and private the patterns that he visions there. . . [we will see that] no city could ever be blessed unless its lineaments were traced by artists who used the heavenly model.[10]

Again, a double mimesis. The second phrase of this quotation contains an important and difficult phrase: "to fashion himself in their likeness and assimilate himself to them." That the two—forming a likeness and assimilating—are not the same is clear later in the text when Plato develops differences between imitation and participation, mimesis and methexis. Imitation assumes parallel or analogous structures in the part and the whole, as do most architects when they seek to apply the analogy between buildings and cities. Participation, however, indicates approximation, a movement toward or involvement with that remains incomplete, the way the day, for example, participates in the light of the sun, achieving only some of its brightness, according to its limited measure. The point I want to stress, however, is not as subtle as the distinction between imitation and participation, it concerns only their extra-mundane referent: the city and the building, like the polis and the citizen, will be homologous if they take as their pattern something that transcends them—not something that is easy to grasp, because nearby or outwardly apparent, but something that keeps itself remote, something distant, or withdrawing, as I described it above. From this observation and argument I want to take neither ontology nor theology, but an insight into the kind of knowledge—faith (in architecture it will be perceptual faith)—one can have of phenomena that keep themselves distant, I mean the phenomena of topography, whether urban or rural.

Topography extends towards the horizon. "The horizon," explains the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, "is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point."[11] The vision to which he refers is certainly perceptual, but not exactly perspectival, insofar as it is not oriented toward aesthetic objects, as perspective often is. Gadamer's sense of horizonal vision is best thought of as "situational," he describes a vision that operates in service of concrete involvements or for practical purposes. The word circumstances may be a helpful parallel, for it literally indicates the arcing surround of a given standpoint. Within a town, typical configurations—streets, buildings, gardens, and open lots—modulate and measure the extension of both vision and topography toward the horizon. When they are densely configured these configurations conceal the horizon we take to be natural—the line where sky meets earth. From this a substitution follows: the ring of urban ensembles around a given vantage or situation takes the place of this more distant limit and is seen to confer orientation and position, as the natural limit would have done. One obvious difference between the two is dimensional, the radius of the first has decreased in dimension to form that of the second, meaning the edge has come closer to the center, the point where we are standing. But this substitution is not the only one that is possible, for the distance to the horizon can be reduced

to such a degree that a single building can be understood as a person's (proper or true) milieu. This means, again, the house is like the city. This nearer edge would not be a horizon of natural or urban but of domestic life. According to this premise, each person is most secure when at home. Richard Sennett has shown that this sentiment, now widely shared, took two centuries to develop as a massive transformation and impoverishment of the public realm.[12] With this in mind, it seems to me that we should not presume equivalence between these three measures (the compass of the domestic, urban, and natural horizons), for reduced distance also means "narrowing" one's horizon, and that means diminishing one's world.

Each of these radii, these distances, can be seen as parts of one horizon if the term is not taken to mean a line at the edge of one's visual field but the field itself. Accordingly, the horizon is not the mid-line of a picture in front of me but the (horizontal) plane on which I stand or move.[13] This conception still allows the former to have importance, for the "horizon of horizons" will always be the distant limit of the plane of existence—where land or sea meets sky. Edmund Husserl, who introduced the term just quoted, identified this ultimate "frame of reference" with earth and discussed it in a paper on the spatiality of "nature."[14] The chief merit of the "horizontal horizon" (of thinking the horizon as the ground

on which we stand and move, or the milieu of that movement) is that it allows for connections between the closer and more distant frames of reference: the house, city, and nature. Because connections (and disconnections) between them structure topographical continuity, because they make the world seem to be entire and all of a piece, they are the essential subject matter of architectural design. Architectural work does not involve the making of discrete objects but of relationships between settings of different dimension and degrees of permanence—furnishings, rooms, buildings, courts, gardens, and streets within even wider territories.

Does this mean architecture has the task of designing the horizon on which we stand and within which we move? Is the city that surrounds us a really big building? Is topography architecture "writ large?" Lastly, does topography so conceived include both built and unbuilt terrain—gardens and landscape? The whole matter, it seems to me, hinges on how one understands the horizon's remote or withdrawing characteristic—its distance (by which in this instance I do not mean something metric).

The most obvious, and not entirely unhelpful way to think about topographical distance is to recall the figure-ground structure of perception: that figures achieve prominence over and against their ground when the latter "passes" beneath or behind them and remains marginal to one's interest. Certainly the elements that make up this ground cannot be understood as figures while they render this service, for that would destroy the layering of the configuration, and thus its sense. But a change of interest on your part or mine—looking at the leaves not the tree, the door not the façade—can convert the relationship or invert the ranking and draw recessive figures out of the background, giving latent status to those that were prominent.

This means, however, that the relationship between figure and ground is not among objects. An even more important point can be concluded from this last one: the ground, so-called, is not a collection or configuration of objects at all; nor of elements, figures, or parts. Likewise, the terrain, town, or topography is not the sum of the objects that can be observed within it. A collection of buildings, no matter how great, no matter how well categorized or analyzed, is not a city, still less something natural. This—the non-object-like character of topography—is the most difficult point to grasp.

Seen topographically the city is not a collection of buildings, let alone one big one, if by buildings one thinks of figures with permanently prominent status. The horizon is not what is seen but what withdraws in favor of what is seen. Earlier I described its conduct as a form of service, now of favor. In what, then, does this service consist? The answer to for architecture will begin to appear in analogy with the relationship between the individual person and his or her horizon.

Václav Havel, well before he became president of the Czech Republic, and before he achieved wide recognition as a playwright, considered the subject of "man's horizon" in a few of the many letters he wrote to his wife Olga from prison, where he was confined for over four years as a result of his participation in the human rights movement known as Charter 77. Writing in 1980 he observed that "in everything he does, man… relates to something outside himself… All his actions take place against the background of this horizon, which gives meaning to these actions, somewhat in the way the heavens make the stars what they are."[15] To exemplify what his horizon "gave" he explained that his simple act of drinking tea every afternoon was not an act undertaken for himself alone—for the sake of

keeping his nerves intact during his confinement—but also for his wife, who would want him sane when he was finally released, for those near to him (friends and acquaintances) for the same reason; his community, and even for the "public" (which was waiting on his next play); in short, he sat alone in his corner drinking his little cup of tea for a world. "I do it for my world, or simply, for the world." Relatedness is what the horizon gives, it favors reference. This is not unimportant, Havel said, life that was lacking in relationships would not be worth living, would be meaningless. This becomes especially clear in consideration of what Havel called the horizon's "several layers."

First there is the horizon that is nearby, in his case the stonewalls imprisoning his vision but not imagination. The prison is an extreme instance of confinement. Such a physical horizon could equally well be the comforting or secure limits of a house or apartment. These kinds of edges, however, conceal another horizon, one Havel had to imagine: "the infinitely more important real horizon of my existence—though it be distant." The landscape he had in mind consisted of his memories, hopes, aspirations, fears, and so on—a psychological horizon. But even this one was not the limit of his "field of reference," for there was a third layer, the horizon "as such," the one that "abides." This one, he observed, was even more hidden, more distant than the second. Yet, the "horizon of horizons"—the one he took to be "natural"—was not only the most difficult to grasp or the most concealed, but also the most certain and lasting. Seen together these three horizons favor interrelatedness by remaining increasingly more distant and withdrawn.

For both architecture and the city to be whole and entire they must participate in this withdrawing interrelatedness (of topography). The modes of this participation for urban architecture

will be less figurative than operational, for just as connectedness assumes mutuality, mutuality involves dependency—elements "in service" of one another. I believe this mutuality is asymmetrical however, the implied reflexivity is imperfect. Whereas analogical thinking discerns symmetrical structures (ratios) in the small and large, the principle of methexis or participation suggests irreversible directionality: the building takes its share of urban order and the city seeks to appropriate the structures of the natural horizon. If described as a double mimesis, this approximation needs to be seen as a task that in principle cannot be completed, for that is the only way the remote or distant character of the natural world can be preserved. Each of these three ensembles is a horizon, I've said, but the operations of the first and second (the building and city) are always subtended by the prevenient and abundant givenness of the third (the horizon of horizons). I've said we tend to assume that the building is part of the city. No statement could be more obvious and more misleading. If the withdrawing character, the distance, of the horizon the city approximates—nature—is kept in mind, the differences between architecture and the city will be seen to be stronger than their similarity, or just as strong. I'm sure it is right that buildings are taken to be more prominent, more noticeable than their urban and natural horizons, but their participation in what remains distant should not be forgotten, nor should the extended be modeled on the local.

Notes

1. Aldo Van Eyck, "Is Architecture Going to Reconcile Basic Values," in *New Frontiers in Architecture CIAM '59 in Otterlo*, ed. Oscar Newman (New York: Universe Books, 1961), pp. 28–29.

2. Francis Strauven, *Aldo Van Eyck The Shape of Relativity* (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 1998), p. 298.

3. Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), p. 23 (Book 1, section 9). He exemplified the comparison later in the treatise (Book 5, chapter 2): "The atrium, salon, and so on should relate in the same way to the house as do the forum and public square to the city. . ."

4. Aristotle, *Politica*, Book 1, section 1252, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), pp. 1127 ff.

5. Plato, *Republic*, Book 2, section 368, in *Plato The Collected Dialogues* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 615.

6. ibid., 435e.

7. Eric Voegelin, *Plato and Aristotle*, volume 3 of *Order and History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), p. 125.

8. Plato, *Laws*, Book 6, section 779, in Plato, op. cit., p. 1355.

9. On this point see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986).

10. Plato, *Republic*, ibid., Book 6, section p. 500.

11. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1975), p. 269.

12. Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge, 1974).

13. I make this distinction more fully in *Uncommon Ground: architecture, technology, and topography* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000), pp. 170–3.

14. Edmund Husserl, "Foundational Investigations of the Phenomenological Origin of the Spatiality of Nature," in *Husserl Shorter Works*, P. McCormick and F. Elliston, editors (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), pp. 222–234.

15. Václav Havel, *Letters to Olga* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), pp. 120–4.

Paul Letarouilly, Temple, Town, Monastery, and Basilica at St. Peter's, Rome.