

I. Dwelling and existence

Being-in-the-world

To dwell implies the establishment of a meaningful relationship between man and a given environment. In the introduction we have suggested that this relationship consists in an act of identification, that is, in a sense of belonging to a certain place. Man, thus, finds himself when he *settles*, and his being-in-the-world is thereby determined. On the other hand, man is also a wanderer. As *homo viator*, he is always on the way, which implies a possibility of choice. He chooses his place, and hence a certain kind of fellowship with other men. This dialectic of departure and return, of path and goal, is the essence of that existential "spatiality" which is set into work by architecture.³

It is the profound poetical theme of Saint-Exupéry's *Citadelle*, where we read: "I am a builder of cities, I have stopped the caravan on its way. It was only a seed-corn in the wind. But I resist the wind and bury the seed in the earth, to make cedars grow to the honor of God."⁴

In Saint-Exupéry's book man's environment is presented as a desert, to emphasize that settling means to cultivate and take care of the earth. We could also say that human existence is qualified by the insoluble unity of life and place.

The four modes of dwelling

The *settlement* is the first place of dwelling which has to be discussed in our investigation. Evidently this implies a study of the given natural environment, since a settlement, can only be understood in relation to its surroundings. The settlement, therefore, is the stage where *natural dwelling* takes place.

It might be objected that it hardly happens today that human beings have the opportunity to settle in a virgin land,

and that the problem therefore is of mere historical interest. In our time we are from birth "thrown" into a pre-existing, man-made environment, to which we have to adapt, often without much possibility of choice. This is certainly true, but an already existing place also has to be understood as a settlement, that is, as an answer to the original problem of finding a foothold in a given world. And the construction of a new building within an old context is also, in a certain sense, an act of settling.

When settling is accomplished, other modes of dwelling which concern basic forms of human togetherness, come into play. The settlement functions as a place of encounter, where men may exchange products, ideas and sentiments. From ancient times *urban space* has been the stage where human meeting takes place. Meeting does not necessarily imply agreement; primarily it means that human beings come together in their diversities. Urban space, thus, is essentially a place of discovery, a "milieu of possibilities." In urban space man "dwells" in the sense of experiencing the richness of a world. We may call this mode *collective dwelling*, using the word "collective" in the original sense of gathering or assembly.

When choices are made within the milieu of possibilities, patterns of agreement are established, which represent a more structured kind of togetherness than the mere meeting. Agreement thus implies common interests or values, and forms the basis for a fellowship or society. An agreement also has to "take place," in the sense of possessing a forum where the common values are kept and expressed. Such a place is generally known as an *institution* or public building, and the mode of dwelling it serves we may

call *public dwelling*, using the word "public" to denote what is shared by the community. Since the public building embodies a set of beliefs or values, it ought to appear as an "explanation," which makes the common world visible.

Choices, however, are also of a more personal kind, and the life of each individual has its particular course. Dwelling therefore also comprises that withdrawal which is necessary to define and develop one's own identity. We may call this mode *private dwelling*, intending those actions which are secluded from the intrusion of others. It ought to be pointed out that seclusion here implies withdrawal rather than unusual actions, since private life also follows established, common patterns.

The stage where private dwelling takes place, is the *house* or home, which may be characterized as a "refuge" where man gathers and expresses those memories which make up his personal world.

Settlement, urban space, institution and house constitute the total environment, where natural, collective, public and private dwelling take place. Our investigation has to consider all these levels, taking the existential structures which determine the four modes of dwelling as the point of departure. The study thereby gets a human basis, although not in conventional psychological or sociological terms. The problem of dwelling, however, is not exhausted when the four modes and their related architectural levels have been studied. To arrive at a *general* understanding of dwelling, we also have to ask whether the modes have a common denominator. To answer this question, we have to return to our point of departure: the concept of identification.

4. "Project for a square" (A. Giacometti, 1950).

5. Figural quality: Calcata in Latium.

The two aspects of dwelling

In general, identification means to experience a "total" environment as meaningful. Within such a totality, however, certain things necessarily stand forth as particularly significant, or, in Gestalt terms, as "figures" on a less structured "ground."⁵ In the Vespa passages "forest" and "house" possess this quality. The objects of man's identification obviously are these things. At the same time he orientates among them, to be able to carry out his actions.⁶ We could also say that man's being-in-the-world comprises a *how* as well as a *where*. While identification intends the qualities of things, orientation grasps their spatial interrelationship. Obviously we may orientate among things without really identifying with them, and we may also identify with certain qualities without fully involving the function of orientation. It is therefore meaningful to distinguish between identification and orientation as aspects of dwelling, and although both are always present, one of them may, according to the situation, be stronger than the other. Together identification and orientation make up the general structure of dwelling and hence the common denominator of the four modes.

It follows from what has been said before, that identification is related to bodily form, whereas orientation apprehends spatial order. We could also say that they correspond to the architectural functions of "embodiment" and "admittance." Any environment, thus, *embodies* meanings, at the same time as it *admits* certain actions to take place.

We shall later discuss these functions in more detail, but first we have to take a close look at the two aspects which define our general approach to the analysis of dwelling.

