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"Why the House of Colour in Sao Paulo"

Those among you who were present at my conference of yesterday will remember that I described two reasons that led me to engage myself in this project. Yesterday I spoke of the motive "colour" and therefore my exposition was mostly epistemological and esthetical. Today I would like to face the second challenge, that is, to build a house in a new meaning of the word in a city called Sao Paulo. So that today the colouring of my exposition will be more or less political.

I will start from the considerations of my friend Jean Digne, but naturally my reasoning, my conclumions will be different, or slightly different from his. I'll propose to you the following daring hypothesis, and I hope contested, in the discussion to follow my words. The hypothesis is this one: the cultural crisis we are going through and which arose during several of the expositions that preceded mine, this crisis is very radical. We are at the end of a development of human history, which began during the late neolithical era, this is when culture gradually changed into civilization. I believe that the civilized epoch of the history of humanity is coming to an end and that we are penetrating a culture with an absolutely new

structure. This decadence of the civilization, this decadence of the city and the state that results from the city and above all the shape that the state has taken over, that is the national bourgeois state built up in the 18th. century, this decadence will establish the climate of my conference and I will try to justify my hypothesis.

I will, therefore, begin with a fast overview of this majestic historical era which starts more or less 3500 years B.C. or an overview of the last 5500 years.

In the late Neolithic the cultivated life occured in villages. By what we know today these villages were made up of a street with two or more houses on each side and each side of the street represented a totem. The order that ruled the village was matrilinear, that is when a woman married the man moved into the woman's house and the ruling of the children was taken over by the woman's brother, by the uncle. I am talking of a clay situation, a situation of mud along the large rivers such as the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Nile, the mouth of the Danube or the Hindus. I don't know if the same thing happened in China but probably yes. It was verified that at the end of the Neolithic it became necessary to deliver the distribution of the harvest to one man alone - the Big Man - whom we can call the chief. reason for this, lets call it an embrionic government, was twofold. The first reason was to avoid that a part of the Village lives in poverty and anoter wealthily; to keep the social balance of the village. And the second reason was the attempt to balance the years of poor harvests with the years of rich harvests. Around 3500 B.C. a fateful event occured. The big man left the village and climbed a hill of refuse close to the village. This mound of refuse, as you know, in Mesopotamia is

called "Tell". The reason for this climb of the Big Man on the tell was the following: first, as the Big Man had the storage rooms it was necessary to protect these from the floods. second reason was that from the hill the Big Man had a view over the plains and could rule the works of canalization of the water which began in that epoch. And the third reason is that the voice of the Big Man carried further if he spoke from the top of the hill. This rise to the transcendency of the Big Man, first on top of the refuse mound, which speedily turned into an artificial mound, that is a tower or pyramid, had an effect on the Big Man. He first turned into a priest, then into king and finally into God. And on the plains the effect was the following: several villages, independent till now, approached the mound so as to have an easier access to the stores and to be able to hear the voice of the king and thereby participate in the emission of informations, With this emerged three spaces: the sacred space on the hill, on the Acropolis in which lived the God/king, an empty square close to the hill and several streets that disgorged into the square. We can call the streets economic spaces, the square that emerged the political space and the hill the sacred or theoretical space. This union of the three spaces constitutes the city. Probably in all humanity that reached this development in the late Neolithic it is clearly at the base of our culture. Now, civilized life, life in the city is articulated by the rythm among these three spaces. Economic life, political life, theoretical/sacred life and the oscillation among the three spaces beats the rythm of civilized life, his republic, tries to establish a hierarchy of values among these three types of spaces. The economic life which is dedicated to production and consumption and has therefore a circular

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structure (produce to consume and consume to produce). This circular and absurd life, Plato called the idiotic life and considered that it could only be justified to sustain the political We must imagine the political life in the following manner: the house, inhabited by slaves, women and children and dedicated to production and consumption as well as a certain production excess to be consumed by the owner of the house. of the house, therefore, need not engage himself economically. He disposes of leisure, and this leisure he spends imposing ideas on objects and people. Folitical life is the applying of ideas on the apparent world. These products political man, the owner of the house, exhibits in front of the door on the public square to exchange them for other products For example, he manufactures some clay pots, displays them in front of the door and the neighbour displays a pair of shoes front of his door. In the public square wander unoccupied people and these people compare the displayed products to establish a value for each product. They are capable of establishing the value because their sight is directed towards the hill, towards the temple, where the eternal ideas that the political men apply are kept. Thanks to this theoretical sight these insouciant men are capable of comparing the manufactured pot with the idealized pot on the hill, the manufactured shoes with the idealized shoes on the hill and thanks to this comparison, regulate the exchange of the products. Regulate is "kybernan", or as we say presently, "govern". Plato called these insouciant men "philosophoi" (those that love knowledge) so that the city justifies itself thus: the economy sustains the politics - this is the justification of the economy -, politics sustain philosophy and this is the justification of the politics, and the kings of the city are the

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philosophers. This platonic model increased by the model of Jerusalem which is the city of God, and I'm not going to analyse their difference nor the similarity between the platonic view and the one of Isaiah. This idea, passed through the screen of the roman republic, forms the occidental city and therefore the occidental life up to the Renaissance. He who governs the city is the bishop who has access to the eternal ideas be it by examinating sacred books, be it directly through the intuition of the faith. He emerges through the door of the cathedral. of the cathedral there is a square into which disgorge the streets of the medieval city. From each street the products are carried forth to be displayed on the public square. Beyond this the city, surrounded by walls opens its gates every morning of the week, except on Sunday and lets in the products of the fields; the products of vilainy, of paganism. These products are exhibited on the other side of the square and the bishop, this owner, king and philosopher of the city crosses the square and establishes the price of each prodect- pretium justum. It is impossible to doubt this art critic, this critic who imposes the value of each prodect because he detains the authority, H receives his information from the author, from the world. He is delegated by God, to speak jewishly or by the "Demiourgos" to speak platonically. He is authorized to establish values. is valid for all and is the basis of catholicism and it is impossible to doubt this because he who wants to curb the bishop's criteria provokes the possibility of a civil war; between the streets of the city and the city and the country. In my oppinion I have described to you the structure of the western civilized society. It suffered, at the beginning of the Renaissance and of Humanism, at the beginning of the 14th, century, a revolution in

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two or three distinct places such as the north of Italy, Flandres and possibly in some of the Hansa cities. By virtue of this apolitical revolution, the bourgeois, the craftsman, artist assumed the power and deposed the bishop. That most important impact, in my view, of this bourgeois revolution is the dislocation of the theory. Up till now the theory was the view of the philosopher towards the eternal ideas and this vision, the theory, to be used afterwards as a criteria to judge the activity of the apolitical city. From then on the theory was placed at the services of politics. Theory was no longer the contemplation of ideas but became invention of new ideas to serve the manufacture of new products. One no longer believed that an eternal idea of the shoe exists - a "shoeness" in heaven - but one believed that one could make, invent continuously new ideas, new models of shoes and that these models could be used in That the theoretician, therefore, was a servant an "praxis". employee of the political man, the bourgeois. That displacement of the theory had, as a result, that theory was submitted to observation. The theoretical man no longer looked at the heaven but had to look at what was happening in the shoemaker's laboratory. So that at one side emerged a dialectic of observation and on the other side, once the model was figured out, theoretician had to observe what type of model was going to Then emerged the second dialectic between theory and surface. experience. Given these two dialectics the theory became fundament of what we call modern science and then the tecnology then the industrial revolution which is responsible for the form of life which we, for the time being, are still living in the underdeveloped countries and also in a great part of the developed countries. However much one speaks of post-industrial, however

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much one speaks of post-modernity a great part of our life continues to be ruled by this way of life. If we have gathered here it's because we are fed up with this way of life. The crisis of the industrial world, the crisis of the national state that resulted from it. Because the national state is an ideology invented by the middle class in function of the industrial production, in function of the market division and which makes us believe that the nation is a political, economical and cultural entity. Which is obviously untrue as we can verify in Europe, in the 1st. and 2nd. world in general. This structure is obviously in crisis.

But the State, who is decomposing together with the city does not decompose itself according to the forecast of Marx. The State decomposes in two directions. On the one hand it abandons more and more its sovereignity to supra-statal organizations, such as the European Common Market, the Soviet Union and on the other hand emerge true cultural units that had been suffocated, the national middle class state. Cultural entities that form an authentic intersubjective relation such as Unification of the Basques, the Catalans, the Alsacians, the Bretons. The fabric of the national state is decomposing itself downwards creating more human units, with a more dialogical size on the one hand and creating colossal superstructures such as the ECM, and things like the Pan-arabism, Pan-islamism, etc.

This is the diagnosis of the situation. And now I would like to enter a little into its analysis. Why is the city decomposing itself? Bon't we need the city any longer? Why is the city not only unnecessary but is an obstacle to cultured life? To analyse the crumbling of the city, which is due to the communicological revolution we are going through, I am going to

give you a fundamental, occidental but perhaps human description of what is meant by "house".

Now "house" is a space surrounded by four walls that separates private life from public life. At the same time protects the citizen from politics and protects politics from the invasion of the citizen. These 4 walls have two types of holes: Through the door it is possible exit the doors and windows. private and enter the public. To conquer the world and return from the world into the house with the obtained conquests. cording to Hegel's analysis of the conscience and intensified by in his "Dialectique de la Conscience", the door is the true structure of the unhappy conscience - which is the conscience in short - and which can be resumed in the following phrase: when I go out into the world I loose myself return from the world to find myself I lose the world. dialectic of the consience is what, at least, the carries. I don't want to project this onto other cultures but I doubt it to be very different in other cultures. another type of hole in the wall called window and this hole has for a proposal, to permit the theoretical vision of the world without exposing oneself to the involvement with the world. Sartre shows that the window is an instrument of the bastard "(salop)" because I can see what is happening in the world without getting wet should it rain. These two types of holes, inserted into the four walls, characterize civilized life. Civilized man is a subject that takes refuge from politics in privacy and engages himself with the public leaving privacy with the information he elaborated. All our admiration of the geniuses of humanity, which is typically middle class, this benjaminian aura through which we idolatrate authors, is due to the fact that we think that to create is something that one does in a corner of the house. After having invented an information one emerges through the door and displays the idea on the public square. We have lost the platonic shame that says that all applied idea is a betrayed idea. This, after the platonic revolution was forgotten.

Now, this rythm of the conscience has become entirely impossible for the last 20 or 30 years. In the first place because for me to inform myself about the world, for me to conquer the world I must not leave the house. Contrarily I must stay at home. Because the informations reach me in the house. When I leave the house I lose the information. The president of the republic, apparently a public man, enters my kitchen through television without being invited and if I want to hear what he has to say I have to stay in the kitchen. The moment I go out to the public square, I lose what this public man has to tell me. This is the first thing. This already produces a profound mistrust, contempt for the public thing.

The second reason is that the public square, that was deemed empty as a meeting place of private citizens exposing ideas and exchanging them biologically to govern the city, no longer exists. It is covered by visible and invisible cables which carry informations from private places to private places. So that, there being no distinction between the private square and public square any longer, there no longer existing the distinction between economy and politics, there is no longer any sense in speaking of the house in the manner I described it.

The house, and yesterday I had the great surprise to see this confirmed by Jean Mouvel, the new architects are seeing the house the same way I see it, from a communicological point of



view. Four walls and a roof have no sense any longer - no existentialist sense. Therefore, the House of Colour - Casa da Cor which we are proposing to build MUST NOT have four walls, must not have a roof as I see it. Now, HOW do I imagine the new house? I believe this to be in agreement with the analyses of. for example a Virillio, a Habermas or of an Eco. all those who think of this post-industrial, post-modern idea, within which with many reserves and criticisms I also place myself. I prefer to call this position post-historical. now analyse why such a house has to be built in Sao Faulo and not in more accessible places for the majority interested in the The reason is the following: colonial cities in general and particularly Sao Paulo are truncated cities because they did not emerge organically from the Neolithic as the historical cities have done. They are not an authentic emergence of the three spaces I spoke of. I would like to distinguish between three types of colonial cities. I will disconsider the colonial cities of Antiquity. I will not compare Marseille, for example, with a greek city that submerged or Cologne with Rome that submerged. I will restrict myself to cities founded as of the discoveries of the navigators.

The navigators that set out from cities in crisis, because I mentioned that the Renaissance city is a city where the middle class is revolutionizing its structure, they set out from marginal places. The first discoveries are made at the edge of Western society, and above all, leave from the Iberic peninsula. Marginality explains a lot. In the first place it is a marginality because these countries don't participe of the Mediter-ranean but face a sea with open horizons who invites to launch oneself in its waters. In the second place they are marginals



because they have just emerged from the fight against the Moors, that have another project of civilization. And in the third place they are marginals because they are threatened by a power trying to re-install the medieval order, by the Inquisition. These refugee adventurers advance over the waves (this duplicity is very important to keep in mind. I'm doing a genealogy of the city of Sao Paulo from my point of view) propelled partially by the deathly fear of being caught by the Inquisition and partially because they are inspired by the spirit of adventure which the middle class opened up in the rest of Europe. And they can reach three types of coast. In one coast they hit upon another type of city. As this encounter is part of imperialism it does not interest us here. The second possibility is that they reach ground which sustains a culture that has not yet reached the stage of civilization. For example, the case of Brazil. I will also ignore the third alternative which is to get lost, because we must imagine that many people lost their lives in these enterprises, Now, what happens when these marginal citizens, half refugees, half vanguard of western culture, disembark into neolithical situations that already possess culture but not civilization? Obviously they try to reconstitute the city they abandoned. the founding project of this type of colonial city such as Paulo or Assuncion or Bogota, or even Buenos Aires; this type of city is an attempt to reconstitute in a more ample scale maybe a little more open the abandoned city in Europe. And maybe exempt of the tragedy that the city suffers in the Renaissance, although not entirely. Compare this type of project with the Dutch or English navigations 120 or 130 years later. time the middle class revolution already bore its first fruit. The first adventures of scientific discoveries were emerging, a



religious and philosophic revolution had taken place. The arts went through various changes. And this transformation of the city made part of the city contest the new situation. contesters (an example is the Mayflower), these navigators are no longer refugees or adventurers like the ones of the first discoveries. They are, on the contrary, politically engaged, trying to build an alternative of the abandoned city. I suggest this to you as an explanation between Latin America and the Anglo-Saxon America. Latin America is an attempt to reconstitute a situation. The word Renaissance is perfect here. Europe "reborn" elsewhere, whilst New England and the south of Canada are attempts to reform (and the word "Reformation" is very well applied in this case) the western culture. It is clear that both projects fail like all human project has to fail. attempt to reform the city in North America there are many mimetic elements. New York has many aspects of York although it is an attempt to make an anti-York, to speak greekly, an "Antipolis". Naturally Sao Paulo that tries to imitate a portuguese city has many poetic elements. We should not contrast the two projects too strongly, because all human projects are imperfect but fundamentally, I believe, if we want to explain the relative success of the Anglo-Saxon America if compared to Latin America we must look for the root, not in climatic, ethnological or economical elements, but in this element of fundamental What, therefore, characterizes this city created by the middle class, sheltered in Sao Paulo, although centered on a jesuit college, who are after all forcibly baptised jews, though this is the centre of the city this is not the soul of the As a friend of mine writes to me, the city cannot have a soul or a theoretical centre. Because the proposition of the

city is economical. The proposition of the city is to produce for consumption and consume for production. It is enough for you to look at this colossus that Sao Paulo is today. If you compare the structure I proposed to you, you will see in what measure the economic space characterizes the city of Sao Paulo. Now the city is dispoliticized. I will soon speak about the extremely curious situation in which the theory is located in Sao Paulo. Perhaps I don't need to accentuate the lack of political space in Sao Paulo. All you need is to compare a street in Sao Paulo with a street in Europe or even in Africa or Asia, where everybody steps on the grass, where everybody throws waste paper about, the total contempt for public things, that characterizes the "paulista" citizen. Now, I will not make a platonic criticism of this because it would be inadequate.

I will say a few words about the theoretical space in Paulo. Sao Paulo has produced, or attracted a series of intellectuals of the first order. It is important to note that when one speaks of underdevelopment one does not have the elite class in mind. The "paulistan" elite, like the elite of the colonial cities all over the world is on the same level of the rest of the world's elite. For the simple reason that it is in dialogue with the rest of the world. What always horrors me is when a "paulistan" intellectual assumes the position of spokesman for the underdevelopment when in reality he participates in body and soul, with what is the most developed in western culture. I feel a profound lack of sincerity in these statements. highly developed intellect that inhabits this city public square, entirely dedicated to the economy has an extremely curious structure. Each intellectual is, as I said, in constant dialogue with his equals in Europe, the United States, Japan or

the Soviet Union. These are his true partners. But he is isolated from his neighbour. There is a type of archipelago of secludad islands subterraneanly connected with the western, and perhaps universal reflection and without communication among themselves. I said at the beginning that I believe the city to have ended. It no longer has an existential function. need to go to town to do my shopping. I digit on my"Minitel"and the merchandise is delivered at my house. I don't have to go to town to vote, I simply digit some keys and my vote is counted in a computer. I don't have to send my children to school as, soon, there will be a programmed teaching reaching my house. If I want a really productive dialogue with my neighbour, I will take hold of an ambivalent PC. It is much easier for me to play chess in Australia than with my neighbour because I can concentrate myself much better in front of the PC. In short, the city is losing its Sao Paulo, whilst a truncated city, suddenly presents an enormous advantage. It can jump one step. It need not pass through this alienating inhumanity that the bourgeois city produced It need not pass through that stage which Rousseau said, that a city with more than 20,000 inhabitants is inhuman. Because it is so inhuman, so unlivable that it doesn't go through this stage of unlivability which cities like Paris or Rome or London had to pass. This city can be a springboard for a post civilized society. A society which, if you want to give this beast a name, I would call a communicological society. it is in this city that descends from the sky, like from the "Topos uranicos", the project of the Casa da Cor.

I will now mention how I imagine "house" in the project of the Casa da Cor. A house no longer being space. A house that no longer is topologically defined, to become instrument to be



defined functionally or, as one says presently, ecologically. must stop thinking topologically. A house in the sense of a knot. In the intersubjective texture. An immaterial house that collects informations related to colours from all horizons. Therefore assuming the national decadence, the decadence of the state as a fact and accept the emergence of what Mc'Luhan called with a word, to me somewhat unhappy, "the cosmic village", gathers these informations, that memorizes them. that makes use of instruments to memorize these informations in several codes. In word code, image code, sound code and later on in the very That once these informations have been stored, it colour code. processes them. That it builds laboratories, schools, centres of That it sets up meetings like this one. sets up exhibitions. In short, that it processes these informations which can result in new informations. That it publishes immediately these informations either materially or immaterially. That is, on paper support, videotape, film or diskette. this propagation be made to provoke a spontaneous feedback of the That this feedback be once again gathered, whole world. memorized and processed. In suma, I want to see the thing ecologically. That there emerges, floating vaguely above this monster that is Sao Paulo a type of vacuum that sucks tions to transform itself into one of the emerging civilizational centres. It is obvious that I have just described an utopia.

But if it weren't utopic why engage oneself? If our proposal were to build another little museum... and museums died ten or fifteen years ago whem multiples substituted originals and thereby have no sense any longer. The only possible museum form is the imaginary museum such as the Pompidou. If it were a type of museum, a type of centre one travels to, that should have four

walls, to be located in any old street, this is not worth while. Simply to continue this brutality that surrounds us here.

But if, on the contrary, simply because it resides fundamentally in people, it were possible to gather a group of people sufficiently motivated to visualize such a new form of house, which I have just described somewhat pittilessly, then I believe we are engaged in an adventure which I think is worthwhile. I thank the organizers of this Cycle of Debates to, in the first place, invite me to be able to expose my vision of these things and secondly to concede me the concluding words. Thank you".

QUESTION: "You said one no longer will need to take the children to school because one will have an educational centre at home. I will no longer have to go to vote because I'll have a voting centre at home. You said yesterday that we might have computerized glasses to see colours. But then one no longer needs to see colours, one will have a computer that sees them".

V.F.: "The computer doesn't see. It is an instrument for seeing"...

QUESTION: "...So, if it is an instrument for seeing, it is an instrument for teaching. So I no longer need to teach my children because the computer will. I no longer need to see colours because the computer will"...

V.F.: "Don't reason on 8 or 80 (brazilian expression meaning extremes). Education consists of various phases. One is the distribution of the information, the other is the storage of this

information. The third is the capacity of manipulating this. computer will do the first two tasks. It will supply you with informations and will store these, this liberates you of the necessity to keep these in your memory. This series of relations that you must keep in the computer because the capacity of your brain is insufficient for the mass of information at ones disposal. It frees you to manipulate these informations. this, one will develop a whole series of disciplines, which are already being developed. For example: instead of the boy having to learn the multiplication table he will learn the theory of the conjuncts. Now, this is a perfectly mechanizable task and therefore perfectly executable by the computer. But there is another side to education which is to process infomation. And I believe this to be a human task. But I would like to give you a warning. Don't despise the computer or any other machine. It is human because it contains in itself intelligence of your partners. was not created by God. It was created by human intelligence. If you analyse a computer you will find behind it another man. It is simply that the computer is an in-between teacher pupil. But the teacher is there, he is the one that programmed the computer.

What I was interested in, was not to stress the role of the computer, but to stress the fact that I no longer need physical presence to receive informations. That I can have it through telepresence. Now the problem of telepresence is extremely complex. I don't want to approach it. No doubt telepresence is, in certain cases much weaker than the physical presence. In other senses much more violent. The experiences it provokes can be much bigger than the physical presence, but some aspects are evidently missing. But that was not the theme. The theme I



wanted to deal with was not telematization. The problem I wanted to handle was the superation of the city and the nation...and the state in a sense not foreseen by Marx. The simple uselessness of the city and the state. It is no longer useful for us to have a government, a parliament. All this has no use at all anymore. All this can be done much better with the method of communication. This was the theme. Your theme is an allied but slightly different theme".

QUESTION: "I would like to know if this is not the most modern form of making art".

V.F.: "One of my thesises is that the difference between art and science is disappearing. Science is realizing its esthetic dimension more and more and art is realizing more and more that it is a fountain of knowledge. So that I foresee, in a not very far future, the impossibility to distinguish between art and science. I give you an obvious example: a synthetic image, made by a computer which simulates, let's say, nuclear processes, is an artwork. It is undescribably beautiful. It shows the beauty of pure reasoning, however it is made by scientists. I usually make the following wordplay: the artists say that the heart has its reasons that reason ignores. It now becomes necessary to add that reason has a heart that the heart ignores".

QUESTION: "Will the violence of Sao Paulo's urbane organization produce the emergence of a new society or will we walk towards a state of destruction of individuality as a strengthening of the power of the state? And what will have to be the attitude of each one of us in face of this situation?"



V.F.: "I can't answer you because I don't have recepies. would like to say that in my view your problem is put in terms of the old theories. The modern political problematic oscilateds between two poles: on one side you have society and on the other side you have man. The so called right says one has to humanize society and the position of the so called left is that one has to socialize man. Now this position is false because there is no society without man neither man without society. Society as well as man as an individual are pure abstractions. Concrete is intersubjective relationship. If you want to modify the social situation you have to act on the social tissue. presently, because we are crawling towards this direction, has only two methods: on one side technocracy which programs the cial tissue and considers itself non-political and on the other side terrorism which tries to disprogram the social tissue. challenge of our situation is to figure out methods which avoid these two extremes. It is necessary to oscilate dialectically between technocracy and terrorism. This is an ecological interpretation of the problem because what the ecological vision of the world teaches us is the following: that there are systems that interpose themselves, that cross one another, that form gray zones and if you disturb the balance in one of the zones it will have effects on all the others. You kill the birds in China and won't have any wheat. And the same is valid for society which is an ecosystem placed within other ecosystems. You change a local situation by making a law, a constitution and this will have totally unforeseen effects in very far off places. We must stop thinking topologically and must start thinking relationally. I'm



saying this knowing that it is easy to say but difficult to do".

QUESTION: "You spoke about a new imagination. Does this new imagination not require an education on a philosophical level?"

V.F.: "There is a necessity of a very strong discipline but I can't say if one can say philosophy is for the moment tied to a verbal code. But there is no doubt that the youth in Sao Paulo is more free and launching itself with more enthusiasm into the new codes of the computer than the youth in Europe and the USA, exactly because it does not have to carry the problems of the codes of their ancestors. It may be that here emerges a new man. Here and in comparable places. Because we must abandon the historical reasoning. That tragedy is that whilst the developed coutries try desperatelly to get out of history to enter into another level of conscience the underdeveloped countries are making a tremendous effort to enter history.

This, yes, is tragi-comic".

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