Line and Surface

Surfaces are becoming ever more important in our surroundings. For instance, TV screens, posters, the pages of illustrated magazines. In the past, these surfaces were rarer. Photographs, paintings, carpets, *vitreaux,* cave paintings surrounded men in the past, but these surfaces did not offer themselves either in the quantity or with the degree of importance of the surfaces that now surround us. Therefore, it was formerly not so urgent as it is today to try to understand the role surfaces play in human life. In the past, there existed another problem of far greater significance: to try to understand what lines meant. Ever since the "invention" of alphabetical writing (that is, ever since Western thought began to articulate itself), written lines surrounded men in a way that demanded explanation. It was clear: these lines meant the three-dimensional world in which we live, act, and suffer. But how did they mean it?

We know the answers that have been given to this question, the most decisive for modern civilization being the Cartesian one. This affirms that lines are discourses of points, and that each point is a symbol of something out there in the world (a "concept"). Therefore, the lines represent the world by projecting it as a series of successions, in the form of a process. Western thought is "historical" in the sense that it conceives the world in lines, therefore as process. It can be no accident that historical feeling was first articulated by the Jews—the people of the book, that is, of linear writing. But let us not exaggerate: only a very few knew how to read and write, and the illiterate masses distrusted (and *pour cause*) the linear historicity of the scribes and clerks who manipulated the civilization. The invention of the printing press vulgarized the alphabet, however, and it

may be said that during the last hundred years or so the linear historical consciousness of Western man has formed the climate of our civilization.

This has now ceased to be the case. Written lines, although appearing even more frequently than before, are becoming less important than surfaces to the mass of people. (We need no prophets to tell us that the "one-dimensional man" is disappearing.) Now, what do these surfaces mean? That is the question. Of course, we may say that they mean the world, just as the lines do. But *how* do they mean it? Are they adequate to the world, and if so, how? And do they mean the "same" world that is conveyed by the written lines? The problem is to find out what adequation there is between the surfaces and the world on the one hand, and between the surface and the lines on the other. It is no longer just a question of the adequation of thought to thing, but of thought expressed in surfaces on the one hand, and thought expressed in lines on the other.

There are various difficulties to be encountered in merely stating the problem. One difficulty has to do with the fact that the problem can only be stated by writing it out in lines—in a way, therefore, that begs the question. Another difficulty has to do with the fact that although thought that is expressed in surfaces now predominates in the world, this kind of thought is not quite so much aware of its own structure as is thought expressed in lines. (We do not have a two-dimensional logic comparable in rigor and elaboration to linear Aristotelian logic.) And there are other difficulties that we cannot evade by saying, for instance, that thought expressed in surfaces is "synoptic" or "syncretic." Let us admit the difficulties, but let us try, nonetheless, to think about the problem.

Adequation of "Surface Thought" to "Line Thought"

To begin, we might pose the following question: What is the difference between reading written lines and reading a picture? The answer is apparently quite simple: we follow the text of a line from left to right; we jump from line to line from above to below; we turn the pages from left to right. We look at a picture, instead, by passing our eyes over its surface in pathways vaguely suggested by the structure of the picture. The difference seems to be that in reading lines we follow a structure imposed upon us, whereas in reading pictures we move rather freely within a structure that has been proposed to us.

This is not a very good answer to our question, however. It suggests that both readings are linear (because paths are lines), and that the difference between the two has something to do with freedom. If we think about this more closely, we realize that this is not so. We may in fact read

pictures in the way described, but we need not necessarily do so. We may seize the totality of the picture at a glance, so to speak, and then proceed to analyze it by means of the above-mentioned pathways. (And that, as a rule, is what happens.) In fact, this double method—synthesis followed by analysis (a process that may be repeated several times in the course of a single reading)—is what characterizes the reading of pictures. This gives us the following difference between reading written lines and pictures: we must follow the written text if we want to get at its message, but in pictures we may get the message first, and then try to decompose it. And this points to the difference between the one-dimensional line and the two-dimensional surface: the one aims at getting somewhere; the other is there already, but may reveal how it got there. This difference is one of temporality, and involves the present, the past, and the future.

It is obvious that both types of reading involve time—but is it the "same" time? It is so apparently, because we can measure the time involved in both readings in terms of minutes. But this simple fact makes us pause. How can we explain that the reading of written texts usually takes many more minutes than does the reading of pictures? Is the reading of pictures more tiresome, so that we have to stop sooner? Or are the messages transmitted by pictures themselves usually "shorter"? On the other hand, would it not be more sensible to say that the times involved in the two processes are different, and that their measurement in minutes fails to reveal this difference? If we accept this last statement, we may say that the reading of pictures takes less time because the moment in which their messages are received is denser; it is more compacted. It also opens up more quickly.

If, then, we call the time involved in reading written lines "historical time," we ought to call the time involved in reading pictures by a different name, because "history" has the sense of going somewhere, whereas, while reading pictures, we need go nowhere. The proof of this is simple: it takes many more minutes to describe what one has seen in a picture than it does to see it.

This difference between the two types of temporality becomes even more virulent if, instead of comparing the reading of written lines to the reading of pictures, we compare it to viewing movies. We all know that a film is a linear sequence of pictures, but while reading or viewing a film, we forget this fact. Indeed, we *have* to forget it if we want to read the film. How, then, do we read it? This question has been asked by a number of sciences, and is eliciting detailed physiological, psychological, and sociological answers. (This is important, because knowing these answers

enables film and TV producers to change films and filmmaking, and thereby to change the behavior of those who watch them, i.e., humankind.) But the scientific answers, by being "objective," fail to show the existential aspect of reading films, which is the one that matters in considerations like these.

It may be said that films are read as if they were a series of pictures. But these pictures are not identical with the pictures of which the film is physically composed, with the photographs that compose its ribbon. They are more like moving pictures of scenes in a play, and this is the reason why the reading of films is often compared to the reading of staged drama, rather than to the reading of pictures. But this is an error, because the stage has three dimensions and we can walk into it, while the screen is a two-dimensional projection and we can never penetrate it. The theater represents the world of things through *things,* and the film represents the world of things through *projections of things*; the reading of films goes on in a plane, like the reading of pictures (although it is a reading of "talking pictures," a problem we will return to later).

How we read films can best be described by trying to enumerate the various levels of time in which the reading goes on. There is the linear time in which the pictures of scenes follow one another. There is the time in which each picture itself moves. There is the time it takes for us to read each picture (which is similar to, though shorter than, the time involved in reading paintings). There is the time that is meant by the story the film is telling. And, very probably, there are other, even more complex, time levels.

Now, it is easy to simplify all this, and say that the reading of films is similar to the reading of written lines, because it also follows a text (the first time level). Such a simplification is true in the sense that in films, as in written texts, we get the message only at the end of our reading. But it is false in the sense that in films (unlike written texts, but like paintings) we can first grasp each scene, and then analyze it. This discloses a central difference: the reading of films goes on in the same "historical time" in which the reading of written lines occurs, but the "historical time" itself occurs, within the reading of films, on a new and different level. We can easily visualize this difference. In reading written lines, we are following "historically" given points (concepts). In reading films, we are following "historically" given surfaces (images). The written line is a project toward the first dimension (an unfoldment from point to line). The film is a project that starts from the second dimension. Now, if by *history* we mean a project toward something, it becomes obvious that "history" as embod-

ied in reading written texts means something quite different from what it means in reading films.

This radical change in the meaning of the word *history* has not yet become obvious, for a simple reason: we have not yet learned how to read films and TV programs. We still read them as if they were written lines, and fail to grasp their inherent surface quality. But this situation will change in the very near future. It is even now technically possible to project films and TV programs that allow the reader to control and manipulate the sequence of the pictures, and to superimpose other pictures upon them. Videoscopes and multimedia shows point clearly to this possibility. In consequence, the "history" of a film will be something that is partly devised or manipulated by the reader. It will even become partially reversible. Now, these developments imply a radically new meaning of the term *historical freedom.* For those who think in written lines, the term means the possibility of acting upon history from *within* history. For those who think in films, however, it will mean the possibility of acting upon history from *without.* This is so because those who think in written lines stand within history, and those who think in films look at it from without.

The preceding considerations have not taken into account the fact that films are "talking" pictures. But this is a problem. Visually, films are surfaces, but to the ear they are spatial. We are merged in the ocean of sound and it penetrates us; we are opposed to the world of images, and it merely surrounds us. The term *audiovisual* obscures this distinction. (It seems that Ortega, like many others, has ignored this difference when speaking of our *circunstancia.* Visionaries certainly live in a different world from those who hear voices.) We can physically feel how sound in stereophonic films adds a third dimension to the surface. (This has nothing whatever to do with possible future three-dimensional films, because they will not introduce the third dimension, they will "project" it, just as paintings do through the use of perspective.) This third dimension, which drives a wedge into the surface reading of films, is a challenge to those who think in surfaces; only the future can show what will come of this.

Let us recapitulate what we have tried to say in the preceding paragraphs. Until very recently, official Western thought has expressed itself much more in written lines than in surfaces. This fact is important. Written lines impose a specific structure on thought, in that they represent the world by means of a point sequence. This implies a "historical" being-in-the-world of those who write and read written lines. But, in addition, surfaces have always existed, and these also have represented the

world. They impose a very different structure on thought in that they represent the world by means of static images. This implies an "unhistorical" being-in-the-world of those who make and read these surface images. Very recently, new channels for the articulation of thought have come about (e.g., films and TV), and official Western thought is taking increasing advantage of them. They impose a radically new structure on thought in that they represent the world by means of moving images. This implies a posthistorical being-in-the-world of those who make and read these moving images. In a sense, it may be said that these new channels incorporate the temporality of the written line into the picture, by lifting the linear historical time of written lines onto the level of the surface.

Now, if this is true, it means that "surface thought" is absorbing "linear thought," or is at least beginning to learn how to do so. And this implies a radical change in the climate, the behavior patterns, and the whole structure of our civilization. This change in the structure of our thinking is an important aspect of the present crisis.

Adequation of "Surface Thought" to "Things"

Let us now ask a quite different sort of question. We can take a stone as an example. How is that stone out there (which makes me stumble) related to a photograph of it, and how is it related to its mineralogical explanation? The answer *seems* to be easy. The photograph represents the stone in the form of an image; the explanation represents it in the form of a linear discourse. This means that I can *imagine* the stone if I read the photograph, and *conceive* it if I read the written lines of the explanation. Photograph and explanation are mediations between me and the stone; they put themselves between the stone and myself, and they introduce me to it. But I can also walk directly toward the stone and stumble over it.

So far so good, but we all know that the matter is not so easy. The best we can do is to try to forget all we were told at school about such matters, for the following reasons: Western epistemology is based on the Cartesian premise that to think means to follow the written line, and it does not give the photograph its due as a way of thinking. Let us therefore try to forget that, according to our school's tradition, to adequate thought to thing means to adequate concept to extension (point to body). The whole problem of truth and falsehood, of fiction and reality, must now be reformulated in the light of the mass media if we are to avoid the barrenness of academicism.

However, the stone we have offered as an example is not really typical of our present situation. We can walk right up to a stone, but we can do

nothing of the sort with most of the things that determine us at present—either the things that occur in explanations or the things that occur in images. The genetic information or the Vietnam War, or alpha particles, or Miss Bardot's breasts are all examples. We may have no immediate experience of any of these kinds of things, but we are nonetheless determined by them. With such things, there is no point in asking how the explanation or the image is adequate to them. Where we can have no immediate experience, it is the media themselves that are the things for us. To "know" is to learn how to read the media in such cases. It does not matter at all whether the "stone" (namely, the alpha particle or Miss Bardot's breasts) is "really" somewhere out there, or whether it merely appears in the media; such "stones" are real in that they determine our lives. We can state this even more strongly: we know that some of the things that determine us are deliberately produced by the media, such as speeches of presidents, the Olympic Games, and important weddings. Is there any sense in asking whether the media are adequate to these things?

Nonetheless, we can go back to the stone as an extreme, though nontypical, example. Because, after all, we still have some immediate experience left, even though it is diminishing. (We live in an expanding universe: the media offer us more and more things of which we can have no immediate experience, and take away, one by one, the things with which we can communicate directly.) Now, if we still cling desperately to the stone, we may venture the following statement: we live, roughly speaking, in three realms—the realm of immediate experience (stone out there), the realm of images (photograph), and the realm of concepts (explanation). (There may be other realms we live in, but let us disregard them here.) For the purpose of convenience, we may call the first realm "the world of given facts," and the other two "the world of fiction." Now our initial question can be stated thus: How does fiction relate to fact in our present situation?

One thing is obvious: fiction pretends, very often, to represent facts by substituting for them or pointing at them. (This is the case of the stone, its photograph, and its explanation.) How can fiction do this? Through symbols. Symbols are things that have by convention been appointed as representatives of other things (be that convention implicit and unconscious, or explicit and conscious). The things that symbols represent are their meaning. We must therefore ask how the various symbols of the world of fiction relate to their meanings. This shifts our problem to the structure of the media. If we take advantage of what was said in the first paragraph, we may answer the question as follows: Written lines relate

their symbols to their meanings point by point (they "conceive" the facts they mean), while surfaces relate their symbols to their meanings by two-dimensional contexts (they "imagine" the facts they mean—if they truly mean facts and are not empty symbols). Thus, our situation provides us with two sorts of fiction: the conceptual and the imaginal; their relation to fact depends on the structure of the medium.

If we try to read a film, we must assume a point of view that the screen imposes upon us; if we do not do this, we can read nothing. The point of view is from a chair in the cinema. If we sit on the chair, we can read what the film means. If we refuse to take the chair, and approach the screen, we see only meaningless light spots. On the other hand, if we try to read a newspaper, we need not assume a point of view imposed on us. If we know what the symbol "a" means, it does not matter how we look at it—it always means itself. But we cannot read the newspaper unless we have learned the meaning of its symbols. This reveals the difference between the structure of conceptual and imaginal codes and their respective means of decodification. Imaginal codes (like films) depend on predetermined viewpoints; they are subjective. And they are based on conventions that need not be consciously learned; they are unconscious. Conceptual codes (like alphabets) depend on predetermined viewpoints; they are objective. And they are based on conventions that must be consciously learned and accepted; they are conscious. Therefore, imaginal fiction relates to fact in a subjective and unconscious way, while conceptual fiction relates to fact in an objective and conscious way.

This may lead us to the following interpretations: Conceptual fiction ("line thought") is superior and posterior to imaginal fiction ("surface thought") in that it makes facts and events objective and conscious. Indeed, this kind of interpretation has dominated our civilization until recently, and it still explains our spiteful attitude toward the mass media. But it is wrong, for the following reason: when we translate image into concept, we decompose the image—we analyze it. We throw, so to speak, a conceptual point-net over the image, and capture only such meaning as did not escape through the meshes of the net. Therefore, the meaning of conceptual fiction is much narrower than the meaning of imaginal fiction, although it is far more clear and distinct. Facts are represented more *fully* by imaginal thought, more *clearly* by conceptual thought. The messages of imaginal media are richer, and the messages of conceptual media are sharper.

Now we can better understand our present situation, so far as fact and fiction are concerned. Our civilization puts two types of media at our

disposal: those of linear fiction (e.g., books, scientific publications, and computer printouts) and those of surface fiction (e.g., films, TV pictures, and illustrations). The first type may mediate between ourselves and facts in a clear, objective, conscious, or conceptual way, but it is relatively restricted in its message. The second type may mediate between ourselves and facts in an ambivalent, subjective, unconscious, or imaginative way, but it is relatively rich in its message. We can all participate in both types of media, but participation in the second type requires that we first learn how to use its techniques. This explains the division of our civilization into a mass culture (those who participate almost exclusively in surface fiction) and an elite culture (those who participate almost exclusively in linear fiction).

For both of these groups, getting at the facts is a problem, but it differs for each. For the elite, the problem is that the more objective and clearer the linear fiction becomes, the more it is impoverished, because it tends to lose contact with the facts it wants to represent (all meaning). Therefore, the messages of linear fiction can no longer be made satisfactorily adequate to the immediate experience we still have of the world. For the mass culture, the problem is that the more technically perfect the images become, the richer they become and the more completely they substitute themselves for the facts they may have originally represented. Therefore, the facts are no longer needed; the images can stand for themselves, and thus lose all their original meaning. They no longer need to be made adequate to the immediate experience of the world; that experience is thus abandoned. In other words, the world of linear fiction, the world of the elite, is more and more disclosing its merely conceptual, fictitious character—and the world of surface fiction, the world of the masses, is masking its fictitious character ever more successfully. We can no longer pass from conceptual thought to fact for lack of adequation, and we can no longer pass from imaginal thought to fact for lack of a criterion that enables us to distinguish between fact and image. In both instances, we have lost our sense of "reality," and thus we have become alienated. (For instance, we can no longer say whether the alpha particle is a fact, or whether Miss Bardot's breasts are real, but we can now say that both questions have very little meaning.)

But it may well be that this alienation of ours is nothing but a symptom of a passing crisis. It may be that what is happening at present is the attempt to incorporate linear thought into surface thought, concept into image, elite media into mass media. (This is what the first paragraph tried to argue.) If that should turn out to be the case, imaginal thought

could become objective, conscious, and clear, while remaining rich, and could therefore mediate between ourselves and the facts in a far more effective way than has so far been possible. How might this take place?

This development involves a problem of translation. So far, the situation has been approximately thus: Imaginal thought was a translation of fact into image, and conceptual thought was a translation of image into concept. (First there was the stone, then the image of the stone, then the explanation of that image.) In the future, the situation may become thus: Imaginal thought will be a translation from concept into image, and conceptual thought a translation from image to concept. In such a feedback situation, an adequate model can finally be elaborated. First there will be an image of something, then there will be an explanation of that image, and then there will be an image of that explanation. This will result in a model of something (this something having been, originally, a concept). And this model may fit a stone (or some other fact, or nothing). Thus a fact, or the absence of a fact, will have been disclosed. There would once more exist a criterion of distinction between fact and fiction (fit and unfit models), and a sense of reality would have been recovered.

What has just been said is not an epistemological or ontological speculation. (As such, it is very problematical.) It is, rather, an observation of tendencies at work in the present situation. The sciences, and other articulations of linear thought such as poetry, literature, and music, are having increasing recourse to imaginal surface thinking; they are able to do so because of the technical advance of surface media. And, in a similar way, these surface media, including painting, graphics, and posters, are having increasing recourse to linear thought, and they can do so because their own technical advance permits it. Although what has been said may be theoretically problematic, therefore, it has already begun to be realized in practice.

Fundamentally, this means that *imaginal thought is becoming capable of thinking about concepts.* It can transform a concept into its "object," and can therefore become a metathought of conceptual thinking. So far, concepts have been thinkable only in terms of other concepts, by reflection. Reflective thought was the metathought of conceptual thinking, and was itself conceptual. Now, imaginal thought can begin thinking about concepts in the form of surface models.

No doubt this is all far too schematic. The actual situation of our civilization is far more complex. For instance, there are tendencies toward thinking in the round, in the third dimension. Of course, such three-dimensional media have always existed, as proved by Paleolithic sculp-

ture. But what is happening now is very different. An audiovisual TV program that can be smelled and that provokes bodily sensations is no sculpture. It is one of the advances of thought toward representing facts bodily, the results of which cannot yet even be suspected. It will no doubt enable us to think about facts that are presently unthinkable. Certainly, there are also other tendencies within our civilization that have not been taken into account in the foregoing schema. But we hope it will serve its present purpose: to show an aspect of our crisis, and one of the possibilities that might enable us to overcome it.

To return to our argument, at present we dispose of two media between ourselves and the facts—the linear and the surface. The linear are becoming more and more abstract, and are losing all meaning. The considerations before us indicate that they may be conjoined in a creative relationship. A new kind of medium may thus emerge, permitting us to rediscover a sense of "reality"; in this way, we may be able to open up fields for a new type of thinking, with its own logic and its own kind of codified symbols. In short, the synthesis of linear and surface media may result in a new civilization.

Toward a Posthistorical Future

Let us now ask ourselves what appearance this new kind of civilization might have. If we examine the present civilization from a historical point of view, it initially appears as a development of thought from imagination toward concept. (First there were the wall paintings and the Venuses of Willendorf, and then there were the alphabets and other linear modes, ultimately like Fortran.) But such a simple historical view at some point begins to fail us. Our present imaginal media (films, etc.) are obviously developments from conceptual thought; for one thing, they result from science and technology, which are conceptual. And, in addition, they are developments from conceptual thought in that they advance along linear discursive lines, which are conceptual. (A Venus of Willendorf may tell a story, but a film tells its story differently; it tells it historically, along a line.) Thus we must rectify our explanation: the present civilization does not look like the result of a linear development from image to concept, but rather like the result of a sort of spiral movement from image through concept to image.

We may state this as follows: When man assumed himself subject of the world, when he stepped back from the world to think about it—when he became man—he did so mainly thanks to his curious capacity to imagine the world. Thus, he created a world of images to mediate between

himself and the world of facts with which, because of this distance-taking process, he was beginning to lose contact. Later, he learned how to handle his imaginal world, thanks to another human capacity—the capacity to conceive. Through thinking in concepts, he became not only subject to an objectified world of facts, but also subject to an objectified world of images. Now, however, by again having recourse to his imaginal capacity, he is beginning to learn how to handle his conceptual world. Through imagination, he is now beginning to objectify his concepts and thus to free himself from them. In the first position, he stands in the midst of static images (in myth); in the second position, he stands in the midst of linear progressive concepts (in history); in the third position he stands in the midst of images that order concepts (in "structures"). But this third position implies a being-in-the-world so radically new that its manifold impacts are difficult to grasp.

Let us therefore use a metaphor—the theater. The mythical position would correspond to that assumed by a dancer enacting a sacred scene. The historical position is represented by the role assumed by an actor in a play. The structuralist position then might correspond to that assumed by the author of the play. The dancer knows that he is acting the ritual; he knows that the symbolic mode is demanded by the reality he is to represent. If he were to act differently, it would be a betrayal of reality, a sin; his only freedom therein is to sin. The actor also knows that he is acting; he knows that the symbolic quality of his performance is a theatrical convention. He may therefore interpret this convention in various ways, and thereby change or modify the convention; herein lies his freedom, which is, strictly speaking, historical. The author of the play knows that he is proposing a convention within limits imposed upon him by the theatrical medium, and he tries to give meaning to his convention; his freedom is structural. Seen from the point of view of the dancer, the actor is a sinner and the author is a devil. Seen from the point of view of the actor, the dancer is an unconscious actor, and the author is an authority. Seen from the point of view of the author, the dancer is a puppet, and the actor is a conscious tool from which he (the author) continuously learns.

The example of the theater is, however, not a very good one. It does not adequately display the third position, because this does not truly exist in the theater as yet; it is too recent. Let us therefore try another example, which may reveal the third position more clearly: the future role of a TV spectator. Such a spectator will have at his disposal a video theater, including a magnetic tape library of various programs. He will be able to mix them in many ways, and thus compose his own programs. But he

will be able to do more: film his own program, include himself and others, register this on a tape, and then project it on his TV screen. He will thus see himself in his program. This means that the spectator will control the beginning, middle, and end of the program (within the limitations of his video theater), and that he will be able to play any role in the program he desires.

This sketch reveals more clearly the difference between the historical and the structural being-in-the-world. The spectator is still determined by history (by the video theater) and he still acts within history (by appearing on the screen himself). But he is beyond history in the sense that he composes a historical process, and in the sense that he may assume any role he desires in the historical process. This may be stated even more forcefully: although he acts in history and is determined by history, he is no longer interested in history as such, but in the possibility of combining various histories. This means that history for him is not a drama (as it is for the historical position); it is a game.

This difference is, basically, a difference in the temporality of the two positions. The historical position stands in historical time, *in* the process. The structural position stands in that sort of time wherein *processes are seen as forms.* For the historical position, processes are the method by which things become; for the structural position, processes are the way things appear. Another perspective on things from the structural position is to view processes as parameters or dimensions that determine things. The historical method decomposes things into phases; it is diachronical. The structural method joins phases into forms; it is synchronical. For this method, whether processes are facts or not depends on one's perspective.

Furthermore, those things that stand in opposition for the historical position (matter-energy, entropy-negentropy, positive-negative, and so on) are complementary for the structural position. This means that historical conflict, including wars and revolutions, does not look like conflict at all from the structural position, but like sets of complementary moves in a game. This is why the structural position is often called inhuman by those who see things from a historical point of view. It *is* inhuman, indeed, in the sense that it is characteristic of a new type of man who is not as yet recognized as such by members of the older type.

Herein lies a problem. All that has been said concerning the third position has been composed into written lines, and is therefore a product of conceptual thinking. But if the argument is even partly correct, the third position cannot be conceptualized; it must be imagined with the kind of imagination that is now being formed. Therefore, this essay can only be

suggestive. On the other hand, unless we try to incorporate concept into image, we shall fall victim to a new form of barbarism: confused imagination. This fact may offer a kind of justification, *quand même,* for this essay. For it is a present truth that the third position is now being assumed, whether we can conceive it or not, and it will certainly overcome the historical position as time goes on.

Let us, then, recapitulate our argument, in order to try to suggest what form the new civilization might take. We have two alternatives before us. First, there is the possibility that imaginal thinking will not succeed in incorporating conceptual thinking. This could lead to a generalized depoliticization, deactivation, and alienation of humankind, to the victory of the consumer society, and to the totalitarianism of the mass media. Such a development would look very much like the present mass culture, but in more exaggerated or gross form. The culture of the elite would disappear for good, thus bringing history to an end in any meaningful sense of that term. The second possibility is that imaginal thinking will succeed in incorporating conceptual thinking. This would lead to new types of communication in which man consciously assumes the structural position. Science would then be no longer merely discursive and conceptual, but would have recourse to imaginal models. Art would no longer work at things ("oeuvres"), but would propose models. Politics would no longer fight for the realizations of values, but would elaborate manipulable hierarchies of models of behavior. All this would mean, in short, that a new sense of reality would articulate itself, within the existential climate of a new religiosity.

All this is utopian. But it is not fantastic. Whoever looks at the scene can find everything already there, in the form of lines and surfaces already working. It depends very much on each one of us which sort of posthistorical future there will be.

(1973)