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A Eulogy to Michelangelo: A Preliminary Study of Le Corbusier

Tange Kenzō

Translated by Robin Thompson

First published in Japanese as "Michelangelo shō: Le Corbusier ron e no josetsu to shite," *Gendai kenchiku*, 1939, vol. 7.

Abstract

This essay, first written in Japanese and published in 1939 by the young Japanese architect Tange Kenzō, reflects on the work and creativity of two major figures in Western art. Drawing on the writings of nineteenth- and twentieth-century German philosophers, the author bridges the gaps between the historical time frames of Le Corbusier and Michelangelo and pays spirited tribute to the mission of artistic creation. Written at a time when Japan became increasingly isolated, Tange Kenzō's eulogy to two of the most important Western architects seems to affirm his claim to the heritage of world architecture.

KEYWORDS: Le Corbusier, modernism, architecture, Michelangelo, Renaissance art and architecture, classical tradition, Greek art

Introduction *by Jonathan Reynolds* (Columbia University, New York)

Tange Kenzō (1913–2005) was one of the most productive and widely recognized Japanese architects and urban planners of the twentieth century. His major designs include the Hiroshima Memorial (1955), a proposal for a city for 10,000,000 people to be built over Tokyo Harbor (1960), the Yoyogi Olympic Stadia (1964), and the master plan and plaza for Expo '70 in Osaka. As a professor at Tokyo University, he was also a mentor for a number of architectural stars, such as Kurokawa Kishō and Isozaki Arata. In the course of his career, Tange received an impressive array of international awards, including the Pritzker Prize (1987).

"A Eulogy to Michelangelo" was published in 1939, just one year after Tange graduated from the architecture program at the top-ranked Tokyo Imperial University. Although the erudition displayed in this essay was somewhat unusual, though not unprecedented, for architectural writing at the time, Tange's interest in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German literature and philosophy was representative of the graduates of elite universities for students of his generation. The essay appeared in the short-lived, but influential, journal Gendai kenchiku, *which was published by the Nihon Kōsaku Bunka Renmei (Japan Building Culture League), a group of modernist designers modeled on the Deutscher Werkbund.*

By 1939, Japan had been at war in China for two years, building materials were being rationed, and most civilian architectural activity had been suspended. Many leading members of the profession resorted to designing paper architecture, to abstract theorizing, and to the pursuit of historical studies. Although Tange had some real work experience during this period as a member of the architectural firm of Maekawa Kunio, he too focused much of his energy on architectural competitions (at which he was remarkably successful), and on graduate study. One suspects that Tange identified closely with Nietzsche, whom he describes as struggling with artistic questions as he waited out the Franco–Prussian war in the Alps. This abstract and speculative essay is not so much a concrete defense of specific architectural designs or methods as a spirited tribute to the great, heroic mission of artistic creation. Written at a time of increased political isolation and cultural parochialism, this eulogy can also be viewed as an effort by one young Japanese architect to affirm his claim to the heritage of world architecture.

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Tange Kenzō

At a moment during its tranquil passage through time, a flame at the vanguard of history blazed somewhere inside an awakened self, whereupon history moved one ultimate and precious step up onto a higher plane.

Although they may appear to be situated at opposite ends of the spectrum, the ascendant forms of Michelangelo and Le Corbusier converge through the lonely void of time.

Moreover, the name of Michelangelo has been brought up in discussions of Le Corbusier and of the historical significance of the new architecture at its current stage of development. But why Michelangelo rather than Phidias and Ictinos, architects of the Parthenon?

The residential architecture of Le Corbusier is surely located at a place of tension within the total design spectrum that has Phidias at one pole and Michelangelo at the other. But does this very assertion not mean that we are stranded at the outset? We are stranded indeed.

As he stood on the tranquil hill on which the Acropolis is located, the bold cry of the Parthenon resounded in Le Corbusier's heart. As if in shame, he speaks to us as he is summoned back to our own supremely tumultuous era.

> The people from northern lands who first embarked on the adventures of machine-age man gave themselves over to the enterprise with an agitated frenzy. Cleanliness! Everything must be cleaned up! This was a manifestation of almost religious zeal, of a unique religion characterized by denial, amorphousness, and mental abstraction . . . There is something else that I wish to say. Within the area stretching from Athens to Alicante in Spain, modern architecture is able to confront the bold cry of the Acropolis, and indeed it must do so. (From Le Corbusier, *Croisade*.)[1]

In the gap between the two time frames posited by Le Corbusier, the gap between the time of destruction and the time of ascendancy, what was done and what had to be done? Therein lies the historical mission that he took upon himself.

In his magnificent isolation, Le Corbusier continued to give form to the gap between these two time frames. Wherever he happened to be, the flame of the vanguard of history blazed constantly. But what was this elemental energy that motivated him? The name of Michelangelo shines afresh once again when we pose this question in all humility. Michelangelo took upon himself the burden of the whole of history, which

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he enhanced and deepened as his creative enterprise unfurled. What was it that Michelangelo had to say to Le Corbusier? We need to eavesdrop on the secret dialog between these two men.

1

It was an era of dark impulses when people strove to create on their own with recourse to their innate spiritual powers and when their creation became immersed time and time again in pristine chaos, an era of primitive aspiration when people were as yet unable to shape something that could last and, like the billowing sea, moved forward on the basis of premonitions in accordance with obscure and indistinct rules. It was in such an era, in the midst of the primordial condition of the human spirit when tribes collapsed and vanished leaving no record of their having ever existed, that geometry suddenly emerged and the majestic sense of time illuminated by the light of Apollo became conceptualized. Valéry described the creation of geometry by the Greeks as a "mad undertaking":

> It was a mad undertaking: we are still arguing about the *possibility* of such a folly.
>
> What did it take to bring about that fantastic creation? Consider that neither the Egyptians nor the Chinese nor the Chaldeans nor the Hindus managed it. Consider what a fascinating adventure it was, a conquest a thousand times richer and actually far more poetic than that of the Golden Fleece . . .
>
> This was an enterprise requiring gifts that, when found together, are usually the most incompatible. It required argonauts of the mind, tough pilots who refused to be either lost in their thoughts or distracted by their impressions. Neither the frailty of the premises that supported them, nor the infinite number and subtlety of the inferences they explored could dismay them . . .
>
> They accomplished the extremely delicate and improbable feat of adapting common speech to precise reasoning; they analyzed the most complex combinations of motor and visual functions, and found that these corresponded to certain linguistic and grammatical properties; they trusted in words to lead them through space like far-seeing blind men. (Paul Valéry, *Crisis of the Mind, First Letter*, 1919)

In this description of the Greek spirit, one already seems to sense the world-weariness of the Greek people, who were once so ebullient and blessed with God-given skills in the visual arts. We are surely justified in thinking that this highly discerning race converted geometry from something dominated by the eye into a linguistic and conceptual medium. This was once a poetic rendition of the opposition between

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the richness of the human eye and the world of phenomena. This was a time when the Greeks exhibited the boldness of their creative visual powers, so that they were able to confront the profundity of being without fear or despair and in a spirit of limitless longing.

Ownership of geometry among the Greeks thus passed from the eye to the conceptual mind, marking the onset of lethargy and decadence.

The Parthenon in all its magnificence was completed in that brief moment when a balance existed between the eye and the mind while this transition was under way. This was a moment of revelry bringing together the organic richness and fertility of elemental Greek geometry with the inorganic mettle of geometry about to embark on the path towards decay.

An incomparable range of theorems, axioms, definitions, and lemmata appeared in rapid succession, with the resulting geometrical awareness creating palaces of ice within space. Thus appropriated, frozen space shackled the imaginative powers of the Greeks.

Apollo reappeared before the Greeks as the god of order, the god of moderation in the Greek sense of the term. In the palace at Delphi where Apollo held sway as the god of ethics, Prometheus had to be fed to the vultures due to his demonic love for human beings. Once order had been securely established and once representation and symbols had prevailed, a process of disarmament began to unfurl in many areas, eventually extending as far as fundamental volition. The Greeks rested secure in such representation and symbolism and gradually moved in the direction of lethargy and decay. The pristine creative urge evident in the Greek visual arts was thus devoured by the very objects that the Greeks had created.

But some Greeks who had not yet been affected by geometrical afflictions made their way out into the Mediterranean with their basic creative spirit intact and surged forward. Some modeled themselves on the chaos of the Roman bazaar while others took their lead from the Roman trend towards uniformity in diversity.

Ever since people began to stand in front of the sanctuary to Apollo at Delphi, they followed two of the sayings inscribed high up on the door in front of the sanctuary: γνῶθι σεαυτόν (“Know thyself”) and μηδέν άγαν (“Nothing in excess”). Thereafter their basic creative spirit as manifest in the visual arts seemed to be incarcerated, hidden even from Prometheus. This eventually resulted in an excess of reflective consciousness. The vision of wizened rationalism converted geometry into concepts, and in this manner decadent geometry created the hustle and bustle of the bazaars of Rome. People would be amazed if this were now at last to lead to the emergence of an era of magnificent geometrical understanding featuring an efflorescence in which the wonderful flowers of geometrical brilliance come into prolific bloom. We would then think of the Quattrocento and of Florence with its flowers in bloom. We also think of Brunelleschi and Alberti.

In the eyes of people such as these, antiquity seemed to be an interplay of geometrical concepts. The whole of nature had no existence outside this play. Such warriors worked to gain enlightenment by overcoming the darkness of the medieval era while disparaging the barbaric and deriding the coarse tendencies of that era, and in their eyes everything was subordinate to the glacial structure of geometric awareness. Moreover, in their attempt to escape into the world of the *homo unico*, they had to set about propagating this structure. Rocks full of energy that had previously been exposed to the open sky were split up into sundry inorganic forms to accord with the principles of geometric rigor and standards. Rocks thus seem to be groaning under their subordination to the structures of human wisdom.

Leonardo was raised in this supremely detailed world of geometry, surrounded by miscellaneous forms revealed by geometry, propped up by the glacial sword of total awareness, as a fair-skinned individual who had succeeded in becoming a *homo universale*. By his side was another young man who emerged while excoriating him.

2

Imagine a vast rock bridging a deep pool.

One person might think of himself standing in front of the rock which strides over the pool like a bridge, while another might imagine himself growing wings and flying over the rock.

But yet another might gaze fixedly on the far side of the blackness of the pool and struggle wildly with the feelings that linger at the back of his consciousness. Imagine the magnificence of a scene in which, within the darkness into which he is staring, the smile of the sunlight suddenly comes flooding in to reveal a towering, craggy chalk mountain. The person feels something amounting to a physical vibrancy that stimulates him to cry, “I must extract a vast figure from out of this rock!”

Leonardo epitomizes the former individual, who confronts the rock with a conceptual approach in line with the method of Descartes. In contrast, the latter is epitomized by Michelangelo, who rejects all types of conceptual approach in favor of an image that seems to stand before us for all eternity.

Standing before him, we have no alternative but to abandon every method of conceptualization. A drama lies within. In the belief that there was a drama that welled up within him as he created, I shall attempt to get closer to him in the spirit of drama. Michelangelo’s eyes are unable to withstand such geometry for long. Our association of the Mediterranean with sunlight and blue sky means that it is extremely difficult for us to enrich this image any further. In the distant past the Greek Apollo shone resplendently under the same sun. As the light decayed, Apollo’s resplendent form was reflected in the inorganic ardor

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present in the final flash of light. Why did the splendor of the Greek Apollo shine so brilliantly in this way? Why does Apollo's smile continue to shrivel up now? Let us examine how his vision is brought to bear on these questions.

Before his vision, geometrical ice palaces of supreme resilience are forced to collapse heroically. Such representations and symbols capable of achieving such solidity gradually distance themselves from his vision. The city of Florence no doubt appeared to represent the twilight of the gods.

Imagine the form of an Italian night in which we think of those gods falling into the twilight as we await the arrival of new gods to emerge. Michelangelo descends alone into a world without representation and sleeps a deep sleep during a heavy night of unbearable longing passing from the unlimited to the limited. Taking the place of the night, this is how he would no doubt murmur:

> Dear to me is sleep: still more, being made of stone,
> While pain and guilt still linger here below,
> Blindness and numbness—these please me alone;
> Then do not wake me, keep your voices low.

Frequently awakened by the oppressive clamor of the everyday world, he may go so far as to criticize the night: "How feeble and unreliable it is, conveying no sense of joy. Even a single pitiful firefly is obliged to struggle." At other times, worn out and disgusted by everyday stimuli, he praises the night: "Oh dark yet lovely night! . . . you raise me in my dreams to stand in hoped-for heaven where my soul would climb . . ." (Figure 1).

But while far transcending such everyday, biographical experiences of Michelangelo, the night surreptitiously intrudes deep inside him.

In his essay *Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry*, Heidegger refers to this as "the time of the gods that have fled *and* of the god that is coming. It is time of *need*, because it he is under a double lack and a double Not: the No-more of the gods that have fled and the Not-yet of the god that is coming. [. . .] The time is needy and therefore its poet is extremely rich—so rich that he would often like to relax in thoughts of those that have been and in eager waiting for that which is coming and would like only to sleep in this apparent emptiness. But he holds his ground in the Nothing of this night. Whilst the poet remains thus by himself in the supreme isolation of his mission . . ."[2]

Despite the clamor and cries of the age, we can no longer awake Michelangelo from out of his deep sleep. He must awake from within himself. His self will awake anew when history kindles the flames of a new moment in time deep within him. We might take the initiative in referring to this moment as "resolution."

But we still have to confront two questions. In what sense can a night that represents "a time of need" be thought of as abundant?

Figure 1
Michelangelo Buonarroti, tomb of Giuliano de' Medici, detail of *Night*, Cappella Medici, Florence, 1520–33, marble. Alinari/The Bridgeman Art Library.

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And how will the notion of "resolution" that we have pre-empted be able to arise within such an impoverished moment in time?

We should be able to approach closer to an answer to this second question while responding to the first.

There is a great sense of pathos at the roots of creation. This pathos constitutes a hunger for essence. While itself being formless, it approaches our mode of thought in the form of night awaiting the emergence of light, holding within itself the intolerable demand for the limitless to change to the limited.

The essence of night is thus insufficiency, impoverishment, and longing. The origin of all things lies not so much in being as in the aspiration to and longing for being. Schelling discusses the forms of nature as it exists within God in his *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, in which he likens these forms to the laudable efforts of human beings to direct themselves wholeheartedly toward the light, that is to say the awareness of the darkness of night that he raises to the level of the font of actual existence:

> If we want to bring this way of being closer to us in human terms, we can say: it is the yearning the eternal One feels to give birth to itself. The yearning is not the One itself but is after all co-eternal with it. The yearning wants to give birth to God, that is, unfathomable unity, but in this respect there is not yet unity in the yearning itself. Hence, it is, considered for itself, also will; but will in which there is no understanding and, for that reason, also not independent and complete will, since the understanding is really the will in will.[3]

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The will to achieve such a dark revelation lurks within the beginnings of creation.

The most profound experience of creation is rooted in thirst and craving. It wells up precisely because it occurs at a moment of absence and, conversely, is all the richer because of its poverty. The initial unlimited formlessness acquires form without reliance on anything that can actually be understood, on individual things, or on any external representations that occur as a consequence of the constant pull of the will toward revelation, almost as if by magic.

This is why Schelling, in *On the Deities of Samothrace*, places Demeter in first place as the symbol of primeval nature signifying poverty and absence, craving and longing, followed by Persephone and Dionysus, the gods of magic. "We need to look, once we have removed each individual stone from the artistic structures of Apollonian culture, until we become able to see the foundations on which they stand." In this way, Nietzsche, in a corner of the Alps in the midst of the Franco–Prussian War, directed his thoughts to the elemental force that lurks at the roots of Greek culture. At such a moment of crisis for his fatherland, the young Nietzsche pinned the future of the German empire onto the solution of such artistic questions. He expanded on these questions in *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which he clarifies this Greek elemental force as represented by Dionysus, the god of ritual madness, ecstasy, and generation. He saw the pinnacle of Greek culture as lying in a state of fusion between Dionysus and Apollo and considered that the domination of the Apollonian approach lay at the heart of modern decadence.

Nietzsche thought of Apollo as the god of the plastic artist and of Dionysus as the god of musicians, and he believed that it was the fusion of these two elements that should be sought in Greek tragedy. It is when we reach this extreme point that we must bid farewell to Nietzsche. Apollo exists prior to the birth of the world of visual representation, and Dionysus must inevitably feel a basic sense of yearning and longing. In every aspect of creation, what appears first of all is an internalized, irrepressible impulse towards the finite which in itself is formless.

3

The soul of Michelangelo must now travel from its physical homeland to its true homeland of Rome, offering a subtle premonition of excitement. The Rome to which he is devoutly carrying his font of visual creativity is not the Rome of the unwashed masses who have come out to greet him with such enthusiasm. Nor is it the ancient Rome of reciprocal geometrical games.

Once Dionysus, erstwhile symbol of the recalcitrant passion inherent in the unbridled visual creativity of the Greeks, has been liberated and is boldly lording it over others with no sense of perturbation, the healthy

Greeks sent their forces to attack the Mediterranean, retaining within them as they did so a Dionysian passion that focused on but was never led astray by the glory of Apollo. They then proceeded to build temples anew in southern Italy (Figure 2).

Take a look at the temples of Paestum. Observe the organic geometric fecundity of these healthy Greeks. We see a presentiment of history based on an awareness of the infinite even in the appearance of the solar system, which was yet to emerge from its nebular state.

The Rome that Michelangelo visited was the heir to this Rome. He moved far away from the world of the rowdy homuncules crawling around busily at his feet and walked along his own unique and tranquil path. While demonstrating the magnificence of man, he goes so far as to trample on human beings. Before his eyes, solely the will to visual creation soars up in all its unadorned brilliance.

While sensing this indomitable will and while struggling against the presentiments of history, Michelangelo's solitary eyes shone radiantly. The Colosseum appeared in all its magnificence for the first time in front of his eyes. The basilica of Constantine and the baths of Caracalla represent the heights of this magnificence. Michelangelo himself belonged very much within a lineage of artists of strong creative will. His mission was to strengthen, to heighten, to deepen, and to transform

Figure 2
Temple of Neptune, Paestum, Italy. The Bridgeman Art Library.

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this will on the basis of even more elevated intentions in the process of attaining a new realm of creativity. Representation of the highest order needs to be applied to the will toward visual creation.

In Rome he saw even the reflected image of his own concept of the night. The temple of representation and the symbols of the Quattrocento which had once collapsed feebly before him returned to Michelangelo again in the form of an Apollonian semblance while assuming an important historical meaning for the Cinquecento. In between the infinite and the finite, in between form and background, the beams of mental representations shone brightly. Within an intensely faltering mood of Dionysian wistful longing, the vague representational ideas that had been dragging along at the back of the conscious realm now became visible through the mediation of Apollonian semblances in the manner of a symbolic dream.

At that moment Michelangelo's self comes into being under the strong impulse of his fundamental will, constituting something that, conversely, is not his own will. The following words of Schelling might be better understood in this context: "Human beings are born within time but are formed at the initial moment of creation."

> The desire of the hammer on the enduring stone is fulfilled and comes into being in the light.
>
> So resplendent, so beautiful, its essential infinitude not even impaired by time.

The tranquility of the experience of creation as recounted by Michelangelo can be understood only assuming that he stands at the genesis of creation. For this reason he experiences a sense of tranquility as if the realm of nature were not something that lies in the tranquil present without any horizontality linking past and future but were rather something being carried away by fate in the process of his own creation. This might be compared best to the shock of beauty as generated by the natural world as described by Schelling in his discussion of creation by the fundamental will. This is the beauty of the natural when a person strives to develop himself, is unable to give up before completing his endeavors despite the internal dynamic not moving ahead as hoped, and has no sensation of forcing himself too hard within this dynamic.

But might it not be possible to bear witness to this moment of tranquility using the words of a poet? In *Hyperion*, Hölderlin writes at the start of one section: "We find pleasure in flinging ourselves into the night of the unknown, into the cold foreign realm of some other world, and if it were possible, we would leave the domain of the sun, and plunge beyond the bounds of the comet. O! for man's wild breast, no home is possible; and as the ray of the sun scorches the very plants of the earth that it blooms, so man kills the sweet flowers that thrive in his breast, the joys of kinship and love."[4]

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Look closely at the dome of St Peter's (Figure 3), which continues to this day to reach boldly and severely into the sky. It conveys a sense of far transcending the biographical figure of Michelangelo.

The moment it was created Michelangelo proffered a smile of recognition. Had he been able to imagine what it would be like before beginning to work on it, he would have just taken it for granted and there would have been no need for him to display this smile of recognition. It was his humble wish that the secrets of the Creator of the world should be granted to him alone and to no one else. His smile of recognition was thus prompted by his vision of the secrets of the Creator revealed in something that the Creator himself had overlooked creating. He had to set himself up in opposition to the Other as a consequence. This was not because he had come into contact with something unknown, with something unaware of the process of generation. His self was reborn conversely through the agency of something other than the self, and his self assumed an appearance in the face of the Other. This experience no doubt transcended both his awareness and his understanding. His eyes remained dreaming and, while floating in tranquility above everything, he became like the gods the moment he began to create subconsciously in the manner described by Schelling.

A brief episode might help to explain this. On one occasion Vasari felt obliged to ask Michelangelo about his idea for a staircase at the Laurentian Library, which was yet to be realized. Michelangelo is reported to have replied as follows: "I searched just as I search within my heart in my dreams. But no matter how hard I looked, I was unable to find a staircase identical to the one that I had imagined."

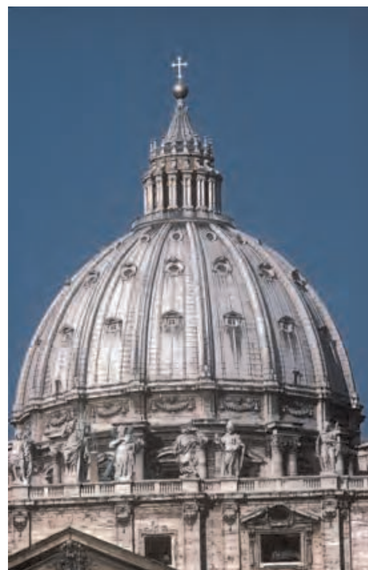

Figure 3
Michelangelo Buonarroti, view of the cupola of St Peter's, Vatican, Rome. Bildarchiv Steffens Ralph Rainer Steffens/The Bridgeman Art Library.

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But creation is not something that can be achieved by means of dreaming in the manner of a sleepwalker. Standing in front of a supremely robust geometrical ice palace, there is a need for a historical vision so vividly awake that it is obliged to collapse and disintegrate. Michelangelo reached the starting point of creation by means of "eternal austerities existing within the limits imposed by time" as referred to by Schelling, and to this extent he had to take on his shoulders the weight of the whole of history and, for this reason, to acquire mastery over the course of world history. And this while at the same time being driven forward by the irrepressible impulse of the world directed toward the hollow darkness of the future. It was thus that he was compelled to reach a decision by subsuming future and past into the single moment of the present. What has gone by in the past no longer exists, and that which is still to come is impoverished through its absence, meaning that he had to attain a mastery of the deep underlying trend of world history. The collapse of the foundations of the self conversely resulted in the birth of a new, more elevated self from out of something other than the self. Acceptance of the insecurity of birth will inevitably involve resolution.

In his essay *Von der Hinfälligkeit des Schönen und der Abenteuerlichkeit des Künstlers: Eine ontologische Untersuchung im ästhetischen Phänomenbereich* (On the Frailty of Beauty and the Riskiness of the Artist: An Ontological Investigation in the Field of Aesthetic Phenomenology, 1929), Oskar Becker refers to this moment of the spirit:

> The spirit as historical spirit is aware *that* it will be in the future, but in principle is unaware of *how* it will be. This uncertainty is, on the one hand, a kind of threat, while, on the other hand, it also constitutes a call for creative action. It simultaneously conditions both "anxiety" and "determination." Wherever the man of intellect is creative, he makes no attempt to predict the future. Rather, he confronts the necessity to create something new and "outrageous." It is journalists who get wind of the artistic style of tomorrow; but it is the artist who creates it! It is impossible to know in advance what the new will be and how it will be. This can be determined only (and exclusively) by the creative act executed *in freedom*. The creative act *rescues* the new form out of the *empty* darkness of the future in which nothing can be tied down or chained up. Nothing is able to remove the anxiety and tribulation of this birth from the spirit.
>
> The *tabula rasa* of the future in all its emptiness is the determining condition for the freedom of the spirit.

Should Michelangelo be dismissed as an isolated subjective artist? Is it not precisely because his self was so elevated and unique that, conversely, it can be heard issuing from the depths of being? Far from the clangor of destruction and the clamor of construction, at a time when history appeared to have come tranquilly to a halt, the flames of the vanguard of history were kindled and began to blaze, whereupon history attained

an ultimate peak, rising up one invaluable step higher. This self is not the same as the self of the experiential, actually existing human being. It is rather the unique self present at the foundation of being, and Michelangelo took it upon himself to construct a new form of existence in the image of this self.

Conclusion

Le Corbusier is now living within the same time frame as Michelangelo and he bears the same historical mission.

Anybody who looks at his recent paintings is likely to sense a dark shadow lurking within them.

Because of the extreme importance of his mission, he finds himself in a magnificent loneliness. Transforming and metamorphosing all alone, he seems to possess that dark despair that characterizes the creative individual, the person who is truly original.

But what exactly is this supreme mission?

In a warm atmosphere around an uneven hexagonal table, the architect Sakakura Junzō told us that Le Corbusier was in the process of creating modern classicism.

Italy is now frozen amid its decadent geometry while at the same time gradually becoming immersed in Dadaism, while in the north, despite the achievement of Alvar Aalto and others, artists stand on the abyss, on the verge of falling away from the principles of visual form in the manner that has previously threatened the art of the north. In the face of such conditions, Le Corbusier is tracing a solitary path in the field of public design while opening up a vista on the infinite.

Looking at works characterized by a mysterious union of clarity and shade, of sadness and sublimity, one senses in Le Corbusier that he is heir to the design concepts of the south. Looking at his solitary achievement, one is struck by the sheer pathos that underpins his ongoing visual creativity. Despite my own immaturity, I would like to write in more detail about Le Corbusier one day. But before doing so, I have penned this article as a preliminary introduction to the subject. Precisely because I have presented it in such a compressed form, my immaturity no doubt makes itself felt even more strongly between the lines.

Notes

1. [Ed. note] Tange's source is a quotation by Le Corbusier, *Croisade, ou le crépuscule des académies* (Paris: Editions G. Crès, 1933, p. 77), which Tange has abbreviated:

   Les gens du Nord, les premiers engagés dans l'aventure machiniste, avaient été saisis d'une rage dévastatrice: un nettoyage, il

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> faut nettoyer! Ce fut presque une religion, celle de la négation, celle du vide, celle du propre, celle de l'absence. C'était une attitude mentale, une noble intention morale. Sous de tels coups, chez ceux qui déjà en possédaient la substance, la force créatrice humaine, vraie, se levait et, ici et là, les œuvres de l'architecture contemporaine sont apparues.
>
> Je dis aujourd'hui, qu'après cet effort dont il faut remercier les gens du Nord, ceux du Sud, ceux dont la Méditerranée où le soleil vide, nettoie, épure mieux que les brumes, où le soleil dénude un bloc de pierre jusqu'à ne lui laisser d'autre valeur morale que celle même de la proportion, je dis que d'Athènes à Alicante, l'architecture moderne peut et doit affronter la clameur de l'acropole: le fer, la tôle, le ciment armé, la pierre, le bois, peuvent et doivent, en obéissant à leur loi profonde, contenir dans la tension de la grande économie, le verbe même de l'architecture qui est: "Qu'as-tu voulu me dire?"

This can be translated as:

> The people of the North, the first to engage in the adventure of the machine age, were seized by a devastating frenzy: of cleaning, of a compulsion to clean! It was almost a religion, a religion of negation, of the void, of purity, of absence. It was a mental state, a noble moral intention. From beneath such blows, in those who possessed the spirit, the human creative force arose and, here and there, the works of contemporary architecture appeared. I say today, that after this effort for which we have to thank the people of the North, those of the South, those from the Mediterranean where the sun empties, cleans, purifies better than the mist, where the sun strips a block of stone until it has no moral value left other than that of proportion, I say this: from Athens to Alicante, modern architecture can and must confront the cry of the Acropolis… [translation by Lauren Ashby]

2. [Trans. note] The quotation is taken from: Martin Heidegger, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," translated from the German by Douglas Scott, in *Heidegger, Existence and Being*, with an introduction by Werner Brock (London: Vision Press, 1968), pp. 313–14.
3. [Trans. note] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, translated by Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 28.
4. [Trans. note] From Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, trans. Ross Benjamin (New York: First Archipelago Edition, 2008), p. 23.