

ARC 232 THEORY EXCERPTS

Le Corbusier: *Vers une Architecture* (1923)

Trans. Frederick Etchells, *Towards a New Architecture* (1927) New York: Dover Publications, 1986.

Mass-Production Houses

A great epoch has begun.

There exists a new spirit.

Industry, overwhelming us like a flood which rolls on toward its destined ends, has furnished us with new tools adapted to this new epoch, animated by the new spirit.

Economic law inevitably governs our acts and our thoughts.

The problem of the house is a problem of the epoch. The equilibrium of society to-day depends upon it.

Architecture has for its first duty, in this period of renewal, that of bringing about a revision of values, a revision of the constituent elements of the house.

Mass-production is based on analysis and experiment.

Industry on the grand scale must occupy itself with building and establish the elements of the house on a mass-production basis.

We must create the mass-production spirit.

The spirit of constructing mass-production houses.

The spirit of living in mass-production house.

The spirit of conceiving mass-production houses.

If we eliminate from our hearts and minds all dead concepts in regard to the house, and look at the question from a critical and objective point of view, we shall arrive at the "House-machine," the mass-production house, healthy (and morally so too) and beautiful in the same way that working tools and instruments which accompany our existence are beautiful.

Airplanes

The airplane is indubitably one of the products of the most intense selection in the range of modern industry.

The war was an insatiable "client," never satisfied, always demanding better. The orders were to succeed at all costs and death followed a mistake remorselessly. We may then affirm that the airplane mobilized invention, intelligence and daring: *imagination* and *cold reason*. It is the same spirit that built the Parthenon.

Let us look at things from the point of view of architecture, but in the state of mind of the inventor of airplanes.

The lesson of the airplane is not primarily in the forms it has created, and above all we must learn to see in an airplane not a bird or a dragon-fly, but a machine for flying. The lesson of the airplane lies

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in the logic which governed the enunciation of the problem and which led to its successful realization. When a problem is properly stated, in our epoch, it inevitably finds its solution.

The problem of the house has not yet been stated.

Engineers have been busy with barges, with bridges, with Atlantic liners, with mines, with railways.
Architects have been asleep.

The airplane shows us that a problem well stated finds its solution. To wish to fly like a bird is to state the problem badly.... to invent a flying machine having in mind nothing alien to pure mechanics, that is to say, to search for a means of suspension in the air and a means of propulsion, was to put the problem properly: in less than ten years the whole world could fly.