A GENEROUS USE OF BODIES: FORM, BEHAVIOUR AND SPATIAL EXPERIENCE

Jacob Voorthuis

"To destroy transcendence there has to be laughter."
Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche*

Biography
Jacob Voorthuis, (Leiden, 22 January 1960) studied art history at the university of Leiden and received his doctorate there in 1996 for an interdisciplinary project exploring architectural theory and philosophy with a thesis that focussed on a critique of the societal role of architectural design. He currently teaches architecture and philosophy at the Technical University of Eindhoven and the Academy of Architecture of Rotterdam and has lectured widely in The Netherlands, England and the Caribbean. He works as a critic and architectural consultant at the concept stage of the design process.

Abstract
This paper sets out to explore the concept of use in relation to the body and its space by weaving together a number of themes. Starting from the concepts of behaviour and form as put forward by Bergson and Merleau-Ponty it looks at how use can be related to both. Following that, it explores the possibility of a conceptual continuity between the utilitarian and the poetic through an analysis of indeterminacy, contiguity and the proces of objectification in the continual renegotiation of the boundaries between the body and the environment. The essay ends by proposing an attitude to architecture as "a morphological practicing of society" in both the experiencing and the design of architecture, requiring a key socio-spatial quality for both, namely the generous.

A bigger picture
Strolling through the National Gallery in London years ago, I gradually stopped looking at the paintings by themselves and started including the people looking at the paintings. There seemed to be a rhetorical continuity between the paintings, the people looking at the paintings and the space of their meeting. Everything appeared to work together in a quiet sort of way. In the rooms with the grander, nation-building paintings of England and France, the pictures were large, of large subjects (wars, heroes, God, wealth etc.) and they were hung in grand halls, spatially differentiated through their use of ornament, gold leaf and colour. The paintings, themselves grand surveys of the works of God and man, were "surveyed" in their turn. The visitors invariably stood as straight as they could and at some distance from the objects they were contemplating. Of course the people more or less *had* to stand like that: the paintings were large and hung in large spaces, giving people the space to stand back. The spatial and situational conditions *afforded* such a pose.[1] The Dutch collection was housed in a different set of rooms. The ceilings were lower, the ornament reduced to a few profiles and the paintings, hung at a height relative to the eyes of the average body, were generally smaller and so appeared lower. The subject matter was intimate, contemplative and melancholic: homely interiors, showing the small triumphs and tragedies of the everyday, still-lives showing the

vanity of all desire. The world to be inspected was one of reflection, divine detail, subtle light and small space. The virtual spaces, though full of symbolism, did not thrust that symbolism forward. As objects of the everyday they appeared to provide the conditions for a certain kind of mood to dwell in.[2] What was wonderful to see therefore, was that as soon as visitors to the gallery would enter these rooms, their bodies would fold forward and become smaller. Their faces would be stretched back from the nose and they would hunch to *inspect* rather than *survey* the wealth of detail and the careful modulations of light.

A wider view

This paper sets out to explore some of the philosophical issues of *use* in relation to the body and its kinesphere, the space through which it moves its limbs and the relationship that the partial objects and surfaces of its surroundings build up with that moving body.[3] Its ultimate goal is to arrive at a concept of the generous in architecture. In more general terms, my research is concerned with the question of how to arrive at an ontology of use. Ontology is a discipline that explores the existence of a thing by attempting to describe it as a part-of-the-world. My secret agenda is a phenomenology of the pragmatic: a way of describing the pragmatist view so that it slots in easily with the phenomenological existentialism in which I feel at home. My purpose is to come to a description of the concept *use* in the arena of our doing, thinking and making as bodies in our environment and to then mobilise this description in the construction of an *aesthetics of use*.

      Use pervades every aspect of our being through its relation to activities such as possession, enjoyment displacement and arrangement as well as the objectification and territorialisation of our environment.[4] A renegotiation of the idea of use can, I believe, place the relationship between the useful, the utlilitarian and the poetic back at the centre of the discussion concerning design and aesthetics and place man firmly in his environment as an active and conscious participant in something larger than himself. Above all, it can make that relationship *immanent*, released from having to invoke a separate *other*. The question is whether, and how the concept of use can be seen as central to an understanding of that relationship. A solution might lead to a concept of *the complex body*, the body as a dynamic assemblage, constantly reterritorialising its environment, constantly renegotiating the always *political* boundaries of taste.[5] With this we could explore the fundamental role architecture plays as 'a morphological practicing of society', resituating our attitude to design to incorporate a key spatial and social quality, namely the generous.[6]

Form-behaviour

Early in his oeuvre Merleau-Ponty posited that "behaviour is a form"[7] The intimacy of the relationship between the two however, appears to be such that they verge on becoming interchangeable. If behaviour *is* a form, can we also turn these words around without violating the sensitivities of the syllogism? Is *a form* behaviour? A little later in the text he would appear to lay the basis for such an inversion: "The world, inasmuch as it harbours living beings, ceases to be a material plenum consisting of juxtaposed parts; it opens up at the place where behaviour appears." That is not to say that there is a localised *emptying* of that plenum where it opens, but that through the interplay of behaviour and the senses, layers of the plenum differentiate, some helping the process by reducing themselves to silence, to allow the message of that which is further away to be conducted to the senses through the medium of air, that is the opening.

Behaviour "a kinetic melody gifted with meaning" is the *forming* of the environment, a *spatialising* of the world.[8] Form is the differentiation of the foreground with regard to the background in the process of identifying things within the pregnant tableau presented to our gaze. Our ability to recognise *styles* of form is intimately meshed with our ability to know what to do with them and how to place our bodies relative to them.[9] Form is in fact *the world described with reference to use.* Through description by the mind space is *prepared* for behaviour. The relationship between a thing and a bodily intention relative to that thing as expressed in *the decision* to allocate meaning and unleash action is, I would argue, always a form of *using.*[10] Use is where the indeterminate relationship between thing and significance is clenched and determined in attitude and action. A form therefore is a form on the condition of behaviour. A form is behaviour in that form is *a-description-in-use* of things in the surrounding space expressing itself in movement, orientation and posture. A *thing* becomes *a form* when it is described with reference to its use to us.[11] Form is the difference between a thing in its indeterminacy and an object as described relative to a perspective. Form and behaviour are the two directions that relate a body with its environment: behaviour is the centrifugal term and form the centripetal term of the contiguity that use presupposes in any relationship. An echo of that relationship resides in the word perform.

A good meeting of faces

"place Illustration 1 here"

Fig. 1: Chapterhouse in Wells Cathedral built between 1290 and1300.

"The Room is the place of the mind. In a small room one does not say what one would in a large room". Louis Kahn[12]

Take *the form* of the Chapterhouse in Wells Cathedral. It is surely one of the great emblems of (social) space. The architecture per*forms* the superb magic of form-behaviour.[13] Such a space is a set of relations, expressed in use, between a body and the partial objects of its environment through the visually "silent" medium of air, whereby form and behaviour unfold in the practice of the space. The central column of the chapterhouse is the start of a kinetic melody of lines which reach to the ceiling, do a glorious thing with ribs, fans and vaults, and then come down again, fitting their way around the lacy windows and the arcade of niches, all the way back to the silent ground. The architecture begins and ends with a seat. A centrifugal seat at the centre sprouts the matter of space to be confronted with a centripetal seat on the other side of an apparent emptiness, the pregnant air, the ground, silent as all messengers should be after they have delivered their message. It is the grand setting of an epic confrontation between faces. An interfacial space.[14] It affords a kind of activity and makes that activity special. It does not so much *symbolise* or represent that activity. A symbolism is always *a speaking about* an activity, and in the speaking about it, symbolism always prevents people getting on with the activity itself. That is what is wrong with a symbolism that becomes too emphatic, too heavy: it never stops talking about what it could be doing. This space is different. It affords the activity of the meeting of faces and makes that activity special. That is all.

use it in silence

Space, as Bergson puts it in *Matter and Memory*, is an arrangement privileging the body in the intentional analysis of its environment.[15] Space in architectural terms is an event, whereby body and environment find a fit in appropriate behaviour, that is, an interaction of the body and what it faces. "Perception," Bergson says, "is the master of space".[16] It is master because it is good at what it does within its own frame of reference and it is master in that perception *commands* space as a general does his army. It works with what its got and focuses strategically on what is important but cannot ever control everything all of the time. Perception is a political activity: it prioritizes the given towards a goal. And perception does this through description, that is finding possibilities or forms with regard to use. The physiology of perception decides what it selects from the multiplicity, what it focuses on and so perception is a way of determining direction through space and one's behaviour in space. The more one practices one's perception, the more one is able to take on board, making one's journey through space more exciting, better grounded and more fluid. The use of space in this sense is a machinic assemblage of aggregates: perception and form-behaviour. But what is use exactly?

  Whenever people use words such as *utilitarian*, *pragmatic* and *useless* in a derogatory way they are, perhaps understandably, expressing their disgust with what they perceive as an ungenerous event in society, a selfish and opportunistic approach to a situation or a turning away from something which doesn't suit someone's immediate purposes.[17] Similarly *a pragmatic* approach denotes a willingness to compromise cherished principles in the adoption of unsavoury means to whatever end. In common parlance the word *use* is, like the air and the ground creating the possibility of architectural space, either silent and unquestioned, slipping by in any sentence without properly allowing itself to be taken account of, or it takes the foreground in righteous indignation with phrases such as: "I feel used" and "you are using me" or "this thing is useless". Use thus becomes emphatic where a particular activity or contiguity becomes problematic. When use is silent we may perhaps assume *a health*, like a body without pain; when use itself becomes the focus of attention, there is discomfort.[18]

  Our *being* can be said to be *a form of using*, that is an interacting with the environment for the specific purposes of self-preservation, self-maintenance, self-exploration and self-fulfilment. The omnifarious applications of the word *use* all refer to some sort of affirmed relation between the body and the environment of which it is a part. In fact, I cannot find an example where this is not the case. Perhaps it would help if we were to restrict the idea of *use* exclusively to *conscious use*, so that only conscious beings are allowed to *use* things. That would certainly restrict our application of the word use, and make it less generic, but we would soon get into an awful muddle, partly because we find it difficult to explain consciousness and partly because, the further we get in that process of explanation, the more consciousness reveals itself to be a product of the physics and chemistry of a Spinozist *Deus sive natura*, which refuses to posit a dualism. Confining the idea of use to consciousness would inevitably lead to such a dualism and I do not want to go there. It is not for nothing that scientists, in my view completely legitimately, speak of the "behaviour of particles" etc. And where there is behaviour, there is form and use.

contiguity and non-difference
The relationship between the body and its environment that is expressed in use *always* reduces to a contiguity. This is immediately obvious in cases where I am *using a hammer* or *a saw*, where the body, the saw, the material sawn and the idea

of purpose form an intimate tautological network with, perhaps, a finished table as its projectile; but use can apparently also traverse vast tracts of time and space in instants: I can *use Plato as an example*. If we investigate the nature of this apparent instant traversal of time and space, we could also argue that I am simply violating the plateaus of logical typing by allowing Plato as the-name-of-an-ancient-Greek-male-who-wrote-brilliant-things to stand for a much more precise but cumbersome concept which could start off something like: some-of-the-writings-of-Plato-as-translated-by-***-and-interpreted-by-me-at-this-time-of-my-life-which-is-significant-because-etc. The precision to be achieved is potentially infinite and the further we go, the more direct and immediate the contiguity of between "Plato" and me. The more precisely one defines the terms of use, the more *use* becomes a concept which engages the body with its environment through contiguity, as a kinesphere, either spatially, temporally or ideationally/mentally. In that sense use is an aspect of a machinic causality rhizome. When discussing space that contiguity is simply effected through the conductive nature of a visually silent but experientially pregnant air. All use, including the spatial presupposes a contiguity between the body and its environment. In other words use essentially covers the territory that form-behaviour covers.

That is what we might term the plane of consistency that unites the centrifugality of behaviour and the centripetality of form in use. If every interaction, between the body and its environment can be characterised as a form of use through the dynamic contiguity between body and environment there is a fundamental non-difference at the root of all our doing, our being, requiring no dualism. Every aspect of our being-in-the-world can be reduced to the topology of use. We only need one substance and within that substance the contiguity of attributes offering use. So the question becomes: what do I do when I am being utilitarian, and what do I do when I am being poetic? What is the difference between those two activities? And if we can overcome the difference, does it improve our attitude to the design task or indeed our ability to experience spaces well and creatively? If being utilitarian and being poetic constitute the same kind of activity with different intentions and in differing contexts, might it not be possible to see the poetic of the utilitarian and vice verse? And might we then not reduce the whole problem of beauty to one of attitude and context in use: a politics of beauty, whereby beauty is that what a person brings to a thing? Is being human not the relationship we maintain *between* our body and the environment? Does not *the human* in fact reside in that *relationship*, rather than in the body by itself, if such a thing could be imagined? Does it then help us to be able to *humanise our environment* by putting that relationship at the centre of our concern and make it more consciously part of ourselves? And how would you do that without becoming ridiculous and affectatious or mystical? Would this allow us to find beauty everywhere without having to become offensive or, indeed without violating the plateaus of logical typing in a "logically violent" romantic idealism?[19]

uses of silence
Earlier I mentioned that space was a silent medium. Gregory Bateson, came up with a notion that I rather enjoy.[20] He posited that *non-communication* or silence lies at the basis of a number of crucial aspects of evolution, learning, ethics and aesthetics. Non-communication in particular fields is *healthy*. In evolution, for example, he convincingly argued that we do not *want* every acquired characteristic to become hard-wired in our DNA in a Lamarckian way, for that would sacrifice an individual's flexibility to cope with changes in his environment. On the contrary, it is more likely that any strict Lamarckian mechanism was hard-wired *out* of the system at some

point during the history of life on earth as the products of such a hard wiring would simply not survive. Only in the dynamics of populations does the much slower Darwinian *selection* of characteristics work to change individuals. In daily life we do not *want* to know the process of perception for we might very well no longer trust our senses and that would be cumbersome. In social life we do not *want* to know what everyone is thinking, as we are human and sensitive. Social life would become impossible as we would not be able to transcend the selfish and egotistical. Our primary reactions to everything would have to count and we would never be given the chance of developing a better tactic to deal with a difficult person. Faith, to take another example, quite apart from all the other things it might be, is also *a healthy* way for people to jump complexity and the unknown so as to be able to get on with the washing up while maintaining their relationship to the world.

Non-communication in use is *that use* in which consciousness *does not need* to play a part. The idea of purpose becomes involved in the argument here. However, its network of linkages can be extremely convoluted. One may be conscious of doing something, but the exact way one might be using all sorts of things in the drive to get that something done, can remain silent, saving consciousness for more immediate concerns. But to thereby claim, for example, that one isn't *using* the-floor-to-rest-the-trestles-on-which-to-rest-the-wood-to-be-sawn-in-half, is to be pedantic. *Of course* one is using the floor! But one doesn't need to make a point of it. It can be taken for granted, surely, its use can remain silent. But something happens in this silence. A simple activity engages an awful lot of instances of use but the gratitude of the conscious mind has little or no time for the floor or the constellation of things needed to saw a piece of wood; the floor has been such a trustworthy servant for so long, it needs no gratitude…. The gratitude of consciousness after a job well done, goes out instead to the sharp teeth of the saw, the strong yet flexible blade perhaps and the well-formed handle, making it a "good" saw as well as quietly expressing (self-)satisfaction at the easy, fluid motions of the sawing body. The ground is silent. This notion of non-communication or silence in use, just as air is to the concept of space, can be explored in a slightly wider context and made relevant in a socio-spatial sense.

making objects of people through silence
Jamaica is a country with a considerable population of poor people. There are men with just one tool: a saw or a hammer. They wander around with that single tool in the tenacious hope that someone will call out to them from the pleasant shadows of a veranda or from a gap in the endless wall of rusty corrugated iron to have them do a job. Their name at that moment is derived from the tool they visibly carry with them: " Ey 'ammerman, com 'ere nuh?" of "Eeh! Sawman! Com an 'elp me..." Arriving on the veranda it is perfectly possible that they will not need that particular tool to perform the task that has been proposed to them but that is beside the point. The tool performs an important function: on the one hand it is an instrument that can legitimately be used by the man who is attached to it; on the other it is a nomadic bill-board.[21]

Of course the "sawman" or the "hammerman" is much more than just a machine that can perform the trick of hammering or sawing. That fact is crucial. He is also *a man*, with everything that this implies. In fact, he is a man caught in a network of social and natural relations. He is a *man-in-the-world*. Our dealing with others, that is, other subject-bodies, requires strategies whereby the extremely complex, is simplified without objectifying them. To reduce hammerman to his hammer or his

saw, denies him his multiplicity, his manifold. That mistake has been made over and over again in the past and is still being made. It was made during slavery and before the full emancipation of the woman; social processes we are still struggling with.[22] Hammerman's potential *use* takes priority over the rest of his many abilities and gives him his name as he walks there. But during the evening, when he's earned his money, he is no doubt "lover-bwuoy" or something even more glorious such as "dancehall king" To achieve these names he has exchanged his hard-earned cash for some bling-bling attributes in order to be able to make the right impression. He *becomes* what he *uses* his body for, and this he communicates to the world and to himself through the relevant and most effective attributes. That these attributes do not always have the desired or intended effect makes the operative territory of use more interesting, less predictable, but no less fundamental to his being. Not only is he *adaptable* from his own perspective on the world around him, but also from the point of view of the network of relations that he is part of within his environment. The use of his body by him and by others, intentional or contingent, gives him his *substance* in the form of a direction, that is, his emergent being in terms of a name. It is important to emphasize that use is extremely unstable. Descriptions, such as names always narrow a thing and thereby give it a direction, just as a corridor suggests a clear direction by virtue of its narrowness. His body is constantly being territorialized.[23] That is, it is constantly being de-territorialised by uses that have abandoned the body, or been abandoned by it and it is constantly reterritorialised by uses which it accepts or which are being forced on to it; uses which master his body and his name. Many uses deploy themselves simultaneously, are master over the body in a coordinated and concerted way, others need to wait their turn for full effect. It is this multiplicity whereby man transcends the status of object to make him into a human being and determines the care we take in approaching him as a human being, observing the right codes of conduct. I imagine this goes some way to what Buber meant with the *I-you*.[24] It is certainly something that plays an important part in the formulation of generosity.

What is equally important is that the body does not receive these functions passively. It is subject to evolution and involution. It reacts to uses. The gestures, movements and postures of the body change. A *hammerman* does not walk like a *dance-hall king*. In the long term the response can be even more radical. The body changes itself. It can change through involution, which essentially means that it learns to do something increasingly well, effectively and efficiently.[25] And the body changes through evolution: the hand that began as a foot, or vice verse. What applies to the *body as object* also applies to every other kind of *object*: an object as distinguished from its background by our consciousness is much more than the narrowing it has undergone to become that object in our curious gaze.

useless objects
To return to our earlier point, perhaps we can say that the difference between the utilitarian and the poetic, is that aspect of univocality implied in the objectification of a thing and its silence with regard to its manifold: its virtual uses. Objectification privileges a particular description of a thing and everything that is not said, is ignored, is turned away from, as if it were *useless*. Reducing an aggregate as complex as a person, a self, to a single use while keeping his/her multiplicity silent is an act of objectification and objects are partial descriptions of things in the world reduced to an immediate use.[26] *Conscious use* privileges and narrows simultaneously. That is its glory *and* its tragedy. *A description-in-use* is always both an act of creation, in that it

sets the condition for the thing's being as an object in relation to the using body and an act of destruction in that it *narrows* the thing to that object. In its thingliness it is indeterminate; as an object it has been brought into a relation with us, it is being used as a whatever. We must allow things to escape their objectity, to be freed from their univocal use, just as Man Ray set objects free by denying their designed use through a carefully aimed destruction of purpose. In this way the object is reterritorialised as a work of art. And every work of art is a beginning of a wonderful journey of interpretation and silence.

"place Illustration 2 here"

Fig. 2: Man Ray, Cadeau, 1921

an endless beginning: design vs experience
At this time we should return to the point made earlier about the seeming paradox that the more one practices one's perception, the more one is able to shed *and* take on board, making one's journey through space more exciting *and* more fluid. Apart from making us more skilled in negotiating a certain space, perception would surely also appear to suggest the possibility of habituation, increasing the univalence of a space. A silencing of the manifold. A spatial habituation in such a glorious room as the chapter house in Wells would be a tragedy. At the same time the silence or self-evidence of the spatial setting of the paintings in the National Gallery is wonderful. Therefore we would do well to institute a bifocal approach. A complementary practice. On the one hand we practice space morphologically and fit our movements and gestures to it. On the other, we practice our looking critically through the constant undoing of habituated uses, our addiction to the familiar, through improved looking, searching for the wild growth of possible other uses, whereby even the search itself becomes useful, if only to escape habituation. Bergson gives us one half of the formula: "is not the growing richness of (..) perception likely to symbolize the wider range of indetermination left to the choice of the living being in its conduct with regard to things?"[27] As one practices perception things can be made to loosen their programmed purpose; practiced perception introduces the virtual and the indeterminate in one's looking. That is art: the offer of a constant beginning in the renegotiation of the body's boundaries.

Here might lie one of the central dilemma's of architecture. As one becomes better at looking, so one becomes better at reading and enjoying one's environment, which might appear at first to lessen the need to provide "good" architecture. After all, if we are able to not just adapt ourselves to all spaces but even learn to tease out their wealth of perceptual possibilities, what is the point of all this sophistication in design?

Thankfully this argument is fallacious on two points. Firstly there is already more than enough of the apparently mundane and the supposedly ugly to practice our skills of experiential transformation, the skill that makes value from nothingness and waste and secondly, more surprising architecture can tease us to new heights of critical looking which in turn will enliven our way of re-evaluating the whole. Good architecture is the offer of a beginning: the co-evolution of good design *and* good looking or experience. There are no limits to the evolution that is possible. And it need never collapse. Even when we can no longer bring up the energy to think creatively, the wealth will simply relapse into silence. At the same time, the gap that is formed between people willing to practice and inform their looking and those who

have other concerns stands at the basis of important processes of social differentiation and could be the subject of social concern. But that is another story.

Recently I arrived to present a lecture at the Academy of Architecture in Rotterdam. On arrival the floor was strewn with garbage. A group of students was happily occupied with a workshop given by the self-styled garbage architect Denis Oudendijk from Refunct. He was busy measuring the size of hamburger cartons in relation to a series of chair frames welded together and turned upside down. We got talking and it quickly appeared we share an interest in the concept of waste. He said that the object of the workshop was to explore the use of things for a purpose for which they had decidedly not been designed. It was then that one could see how behaviour and form are logically identical. These hybrid Frankenstein structures emerging from a reprocessing of configurations and settling into their new life as the mundane objects of the everyday, chairs made of sawn through baths etc, carried with them the traces of previous territorialisation. *That* made them so resonant in their new function. Their reterritorialisation was partial and therefore to some extent potentially tragic or heroic. And it is precisely the indeterminacy of in the concept of "raw material" to which waste products have once more descended that interested us. Garbage is what has become useless in a particular way. It carries the spores of its use, it has been *used up* in a Heideggerian sense and it is worn out with reference to that particular use and as such it is returning to the ground trying to recover its indeterminacy. The perceptually rich, i.e. *those who can see possibilities* by inhabiting the virtual, do not respect the conventions of use, the univocality or indeed the mono-functional exhaustion of objects. They are omnivorous monsters. They are able to abstract the objects of the environment, whose purpose has been cast, and re-territorialise them to their own purpose. One of the most beautiful descriptions of this act of de- and reterritorialisation of the object in use, is given in Baudrillard's classic *The System of Objects*, he quotes Gilbert Simondon's account of the pertrol engine.[28] I will not quote the story in full, but it recounts how the cylinder first received fins to aid the cooling process of the engine. These ribs, like the ribs in gothic architecture, suggested that they might be used structurally as well so as to lessen the necessary material needed to keep the cylinder working effectively. A similar if inverted version of the story could be told of the co-evolution of gothic structure and ornament. Such stories of co-evolution are precious emblems of Bergson's indeterminacy, working to fold uses into the space that is form-behaviour just as Alvar Aalto was often able to fold various uses into his architecture: $1 + 1 = n^n$.

generosity
In the beautiful essay on Hume, Deleuze makes a crucial point. His analysis of Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, (1779), starts with the anchoring of belief as the fundamental existential act upon which all our doing and knowing is based and ends by a series of steps with the idea that the passions and inclinations that rule our spheres of concern need to expand from the family to the expanded sphere of society, that modern society's challenge in fact, is to invent, maintain and reform *artifices* in the form of institutions and social spaces.

"The problem is not how to limit egotisms, [i.e. encouraging repressed behaviour in order to make society possible] and the corresponding natural rights but how to go beyond partialities, how to pass from a "limited sympathy" to an "extended generosity," how to stretch passions and give them an extension they don't have on their own. Society is thus seen no longer as a system of legal and contractual

limitations but as a system of institutional inventions: how can we invent artifices, how can we create institutions that force passions to go beyond their partialities and form moral, judicial, political sentiments (for example the feeling of justice)? (…) Thus the entire question of man is displaced […] it is no longer, as with knowledge, a matter of the complex relation between fiction and human nature; it is rather, a matter of the relations between human nature and artifice."[29]

This is a central text to my project. The reason is twofold. On the one hand it reformulates society not as a repression of the self, but as a project engaged in the extension of familial partialities to include society as a whole, making generosity the fundamental mechanism in the creation of a healthy society. Selfishness is not just the privileging of the self, for there is nothing wrong with that. Just as there is nothing wrong with using things. Selfishness is the privileging of a self that cannot see very far or very well, beyond immediate desires. It keeps the manifold out of view. It can only see immediate uses, few possibilities, few opportunities, no indeterminacy. The utilitarian as used in common parlance, (which has nothing to do with utilitarian philosophy) is a mechanism of the self that is simply not useful to the self-in-society. It is too narrow and ultimately self-destructive. The utilitarian is a case of ressentiment: a force that turns back on itself. The selfish attitude could only work successfully if it eliminates even the other in the self.[30] Selfishness in society destroys not just society but it turns against the itself-in-society. To broaden the self to include society is important to the self's own survival, especially as society becomes increasingly dense and numerous and the environment increasingly *used up* in a Heideggerian sense. Selfishness is *self*-destructive in every situation wherever the I is related to a you. Even in a reflective solitude, selfishness can destroy. In order to avoid the problem of narrowing that objectification necessarily entails, and in order to stretch our egotism to include our being-in-the-world and give everyone a place and to find more uses we need generosity. We need *artifice* to broaden the self to become part of the world in use. We need a complex self. To create a better self-machine, a self machine called society of which the individual self is a working part without being absorbed and nullified, an artificial creation, we need generosity.

Now architecture is fundamentally and profoundly a social machine, offering a beginning for every situation. But how would generosity work within the discipline of architecture which configures social space? What is a generous architecture?

One way to be generous, could mean that, despite a clear prioritisation of use for which one is prepared to accept responsibility and acknowledge a gratitude explicitly, one makes a conscious effort not to lose sight of the (silent) whole.[31] That is, one places one's use of something in the context of its indeterminate manifold. To be generous in that way means that during the prioritisation of aesthetic, that is, desirable qualities, one does not go too far in pursuing a seclusion and *cleansing* of values by treating them as exclusive.[32] In fact the qualities that one is pursuing can only flourish in an inclusive context, in which they take up their position as priority and are not asked to subsist in an environment in which they appear vacuum-packed. This requires an undermining of the traditional subject-object dualism that still persists in practical philosophy. Every discourse between a body and its environment should be a negotiation between two subjects. Or rather the subject is the relationship between the body and its environment. The behaviour subject and the form subject. I think this is what both Buber and Heidegger were saying in their own way. To reduce something to an object is useful *and* full of risk. The discourse

of design would benefit if it were to, somewhat in the spirit of Louis Kahn and Team 10, approach every *thing*, not as an object but as a body-subject. Essentially this entails treating the design task of, say, a house, as the projection of the human beings-in-the-world that use it. In this way a house is approached not as an object but as the centripetal form of the centrifugally behaving body-subject. The boundaries of the complex body do not end at the surface of the skin, but where its relationships with the environment peter out. A house can then, through its many users be asked in Kahn's terms "what it wants to be". And the answer is given by taking account of *all* the users and as many uses as can be summoned. This is what makes architecture so complex and such a political art. Nevertheless it is this humanising of matter through the users that in fact constitutes the architect's task. And he must forget no-one, especially not his own self in relation to the task.

An observatory
So how does that work in concrete terms? What does a generous space look like? A generous space is a space that, in its morphological configuration and in its situational configuration, affords what Buber called "a good meeting". There is of course the generous gaze which approaches the experience of every space sympathetically and there is generous design, whereby the architect performs the complex dance of a well thought through *politics of use*, a careful prioritisation of uses. There is an infinite number of such spaces possible, they depend on attitude and context, intention and situation. But I want to describe one that might take us back to the beginning of this essay which was about observing people who are observing things. André Dekker, an artist and friend, works with a small group of artists calling itself Observatorium. They make "observatories". One of them was the so called bookcase house, or house for seclusion, a wooden structure proportioned according to the mathematical system devised by the monk-architect Dom Hans van der Laan. The bookcase house, a temporary structure, was made of made of thin plywood, structured so that the walls formed a series of 29 empty bookcases giving a notional thickness to the sides. The bookcases remained empty apart from a few paintings placed on the shelf with their "face" turned against the wall. Indeterminacy ruled. People were invited to inhabit the bookcase house for a while and asked to fill out a questionnaire. I was introduced to my friend after the project had ended. I have never actually been in the house. I have just been able to enjoy it from photographs and drawings. On the photographs one occasionally sees people in the process of wandering about or sitting quietly. Perhaps the observatory or bookcase house was a machine to observe the surrounding country-side in which it was placed. Perhaps it was an auto-observatory, whereby people *in* the structure and *around* it were invited to observe its changing spaces as they quietly walked about. Perhaps it was an observatory of the self. As one dwelt inside the emptiness of the house, one was, after all, confronted with the self in a very penetrating way. Perhaps it was an observatory of the imagination. I let my mind roam through the pictures I was shown. Perhaps it was all of these. There are many possibilities.

Jacob Voorthuis, Eindhoven, 22.03.2007

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[1] For the concept of *affordance* see: J.J. Gibson, The ecological approach to visual perception. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979)
[2] See David Summers, Real Spaces, World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism, (London: Phaidon Press, 2003)

[3] Wim Nijenhuis, "De ruimte van de val, over dans, architectuur en lichaamsperspektief." (The space of the fall, about dance, architecture and the bodily perspective), consulted at http://home.hccnet.nl/j.w.nijenhuis, 2004, last consulted on 19.03.2007.

[4] Although this specific point belongs to a different part of the project, it might be worth mentioning that Posession is best defined in terms of having the use of something as any other definition would likely provoke the beautiful and damning lines of the Dutch poet of emaciated poems Jan Arends, who rightly wrote that "no one on this earth has ever owned even a single grain of sand." (original poem in Dutch) Jan Arends, Vrijgezel op kamers: Verzameld werk, (Amsterdam : De Bezige 2003) In the same way, it is hard to see the investment of joy in any activity that does not at the basis of it presuppose a use even if that use is the process of enjoyment itself.

[5] I use the word political in its Ruskinian sense painted with the brush of Bataille, namely the activity of prioritising activities within a budget of "energy" (a word I dislike). John Ruskin, The Seven Lamps of Architecture, (1849) preface and George Bataille, On Nietzsche, (London: Continuum, 2004) p. 30.

[6] Gilles Deleuze, Pure Immanence, Essays on a Life, (New York: Zone Books, 2001) pp. 48-49.

[7] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Structure of Behaviour, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967) pp. 124-8.

[8] Merleau-Ponty, The Structure of Behaviour, p. 130.

[9] On this aspect of style see especially. Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, (Evanston, Norhtwestern University Press, 1968) p. 13, pp. 132-9, p. 179.

[10] On the nature of the decision as an emotionally informed rupture of a possible infinite series of logical injunctions and connections see Antonio Damasio, Descartes Error, Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain, (New York: Harper Collins, 2000) pp. 165-169.

11 This distinction between object and thing differs markedly from Heidegger whose thingliness remains attached to use as seen from the aspects of care. For a discussion on Heidegger's distinction between object and thing see: Jeff Malpas, Heidegger's Topology, Being, Place, World, (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2006) pp. 230-251.

[12] Louis Kahn on a Drawing entitled "A Room" The source for this drawing I have not been able to relocate..

[13] R.G. Collingwood, The Principles of Art, (Oxford: Oxford Univ Press 1938) p. 66

[14] Peter Sloterdijk, Sferen, (Amsterdam: Boom, 2003) pp. 107-157.

[15] Bergson, Matter and Memory, (New York: Zone Books, 1991) p. 39

[16] Bergson, Matter and Memory, p. 32

[17] With regard to my earlier interest in the concepts of generosity in relation to architecture see my The Necessity of Architecture, a study of Edward Lacy Garbett's Theory of Architecture (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Leiden University, 1996) accessible on www.voorthuis.net/Garbett

[18] See on this point, Arthur Schopenhauer, Essays and Aphorisms, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1985) p.41

[19] Gregory Bateson was very, if rather unfashonably fond of Russel and Whitehead's notion of logical typing as dealt with in their Principia Mathematica, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910-13) 3 vols. Despite my scepsis for categories of thought, or perhaps because of that scepsis, I have become very charmed with this way of explaining the proces of thought.

[20] Gregory Bateson, & Mary Cathering Bateson, Angel's Fear, Towards an Epistemology of the Sacred, (New York: Macmillan, 1987) pp. 69-81.

[21] http://www.voorthuis.net/Caribbean2/Name.htm

[22] The Caribbean philosopher Frantz Fanon argued in 1956 that the truly awful aspect of slavery was that the slave owner objectified the slave-person to an object with a univocal use. Frantz Fanon, "Racism and Culture" in Fred Lee Hord, ed., I Am Because We Are, readings in Black Philosophy, (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1995) pp. 172-181.

[23] Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, Anti-oedipus, capitalism and schizophrenia, (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1983) see especially "The Process" and "The Territorial Machine; see also Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia, (Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1987) especially "1837, Of the Refrain"

[24] Martin Buber, Ik en Jij, (Utrecht, Erven J. Bijleveld, 1998)

[25] Involution is the word that stands for the increasing sophistication of our movements as we grow, mature and practice our movements.

[26] Bergson, Matter and Memory, p. 93.

[27] Bergson, Matter and Memory, p. 31.

[28] Jean Baudrillard, The System of Objects, (London: Verso, 2005), p.3.

[29] Deleuze, Pure Immanence, p. 49.

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[30] Gilles Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, (London: Continuum Books, 1986) pp. 104-111.

[31] Compare the admirable definition of democracy which is a system of government which expressly avoids the temptation to become a dictatorship of the majority, as this would inevitably lead to an antidemocratic system, but pursues a form of government in which the power of the majority is explicitly geared to protecting the rights and duties of the minorities it is entrusted with. That is in fact the only condition in which a democracy is possible at all.

[32] I use her C.S. Peirce's definition of the aesthetic, which is a discipline concerned with defininig and describing qualities that are either desirable or undesirable. Charles Sanders Peirce, "Lectures," The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, Vol. 5. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1931-58)