Le Poème de l’Angle Droit

Le Corbusier

Translated by Kenneth Hylton, June 1989
Men may
affirm this
beasts also
and the plants perhaps
And on this earth alone
which is ours
The sun master of our lives
far off indifferent
He is the visitor – an overlord
he enters our house.
In setting good evening he says
to this mossy earth (oh trees)
to these puddles everywhere
(oh seas) and to our lofty
wrinkles (Andes, Alps and
Himalayas). And the lamps
are lit up.
Punctual machine turning
since time immemorial
engenders every instant of the
twenty-four hours cycle the gradation
the nuance the imperceptible
almost providing
a rhythm. Yet brutally
he breaks it twice –
morning and evening. Continuity
is his but he
imposes an alternative –
night and day – these two phases
rule our destiny:
A sun rises
a sun sets
a sun rises anew.
A.2 ENVIRONMENT

The level is fixed where the waters stop flowing to the sea, the sea daughter of droplets and mother of vapours. And the horizontal regulates the capacity of liquid. Solar rays powdery mists condensation gaseous cloud variable masses rising and falling sliding over each other rubbing up against each other thrust vertically horizontally. Mobility has taken hold of the amorphous And from the Equator planetary hot-water bottle clouds fly up disperse, regroup drawn in lines meet and clash... the storm bursts. The heavens open water has fallen it runs collects it flows and spreads
A3 ENVIRONMENT

The universe of our eyes rests 
upon a plain edged with horizon 
Facing the sky 
let us consider the inconceivable space 
hitherto uncomprehended. 
Repose supine sleep 
— death 
With our backs on the ground... 
But I am standing straight! 
since you are erect 
you are also fit for action. 
Erect on the terrestrial plain 
of things knowable you 
sign a pact of solidarity 
with nature: this is the right angle 
Vertical facing the sea 
there you are on your feet.
Between bumps and in cracks
slipping on hard and sinking
in soft the crawling the
vermiculan the sinuant the
reptant have sketched the
first form of propulsion the worms
and snakes the worms hailing from
the potential of carrion.
The springs streams and
rivers do the same.
From a plane one sees them teeming
in families on the deltas and
estuaries of the Indus the
Magdalena or the margins of
California. Ideas too
grope their way tentative search in all
directions to the limit fix
the bounds to left and
right. They touch one bank
and then the other. Settle there?
Run aground! The truth is present
only in some spot where the current
always seeks out its bed! An
obstacle stands on the bank
will trigger the great cycle one
day begun. Meander will live
its adventure to its
absurd consequence moreover take
its time millennia
if necessary. The inextricable
bars the way the incredible! But
life must force a passage burst the dam
of vicissitude. It cuts through the
meander pierces the loops
sounding them out just where
licentious passage made them
meet. The current is straight
once again! And Savannah
and the virgin forests accumulate
countless stagnating
branches
The law of meander is
present in thought and
man's enterprise forms
renewed examples there
But the trajectory springs
from the mind is projected by
farsighted spirits beyond
confusion
A.5 ENVIRONMENT

Between poles reigns the tension
of fluids the scores
of opposites are settled an
d to the hatred of
irreconcilables is
proposed union ripens
the fruit of confrontation
The current pushes through and resolves
has pushed through and resolved.
I thought two hands
and their fingers entwined
might express the left and
right pitiless standing together
and so necessarily
be reconciled
Sole possibility of survival
that life has to offer
To place at the tips of one's fingers above all in one's head an agile instrument capable of swelling the harvest of invention clearing the path of thorns clearing the way will confer freedom on your freedom. Spark stolen from the flame the Gods nourished to make the world play...
Mathematics!
Here is a fact: the fortunate miraculous meeting perhaps of one among several numbers has furnished men with this tool. Appreciative the philosopher said, "Good shall be simple and evil difficult" its value resides in this: the human body has chosen number as its admissible vehicle.
...Whence proportion proportion which orders the relations with our surroundings.

Why not?
What matter the opinion of the whale, the rock eagle or the bee in this context.
B.3 MIND

Freer of fetters than
before the house of
man mistress of his forms
takes its place within nature
Whole in itself
coming to terms with the terrain
open to the four horizons
lends its roof
to the company of clouds
of azure or the stars
Informed watch the owl
has found its own way
here
without being called.
B.4 MIND

Just as the negroes of Harlem
are united by exactitude
not touching but
at distances that
vary every second
In the same way
the Earth and Sun dance
the dance of four seasons
the dance of the year
the dance of the
twenty-four hour day
the summit and chasm of
solstice
the plain of equinox
The solar clock and calendar have given
architecture the 'sun-breaker'
placed before the glass surfaces
of modern buildings. An
architectural symphony
composed with this title:
'The house, daughter of the sun'
... And Vignola – at last – has had his chips!
Thank you!
Victory!
C. I FLESH

Armed with devices inspired with precautions to pinpoint
seize stave in taste all
senses alert this is the hunt
armed to the teeth
muzzle nostril eye and
horn hair standing on end
and off to war
Beelzebub
Who is Beelzebub
in fact?

The elements of vision are summoned
together: The key is a
stump of dead wood and a pebble
both picked up in a
sunken Pyrenean lane: Ox
and plough passed
all day before my window.
Because I drew it and redrew it
the ox – pebble and root –
became a bull.
And to equip its force with scent
here is a dog, alert.
Thus eight years on
the memory took shape of “Brush”
(the name I gave to my dog)
he turned bad
without knowing and I had to
kill him.
C.2 FLESH

Woman always somewhere at crossroads proves that love is a question of fate of number and chance where the accidental even inexorable meeting of two roads is suddenly marked with amazing joy. One can be two and being two be unable to conjugate things it is essential to bring together each alas quite blind not seeing the ineffable something which he holds at arm’s length. Inert! Countless sleep in this way but others know how to open an eye. For home from home is in the great cavern of sleep that other side of life at night. How rich alive is night in the warehouses collections libraries museums of sleep! A woman passes. Oh! I was sleeping, forgive me! In the hope of seizing my chance I held out my hand Love is a word without frontiers. It is also it is moreover a human invention an attempt an adventure.
Tenderness! Seashell the Sea in us has never ceased to wash its wrecks of laughing harmony upon the shore. Hand kneading hand caressing hand brushing. The hand and the seashell love each other.

In what we are speaking of here an absolute sublime accomplishment intervenes it is the harmony of tense the penetration of forms proportion - the ineffable in the end precludes the control of reason carried beyond all diurnal reality admitted to the heart of an illumination God incarnate in the illusion the perception of truth perhaps indeed

Yet one must be down to earth alert to attend one's own wedding to be at home with one's bag of bones to go about one's business and give thanks to the Creator
C.4 FLESH

Men tell of
woman in their poems
and music
Their sides eternally rent
from top to
bottom. They are but
half, and feed
life but by half
And the second half comes
to them and binds
And good or evil come
to all those
who encounter each other!
C.5 FLESH

The vessel drifts on
with songs on board
How all becomes strange
and is changed
carried up
and reflected at
the level of elation
D.3 FUSION

Mistaking too many mediate causes
mistaking our lives
and the others are there
and everywhere we hear “No!”
And always fewer for
than against
Thus do not condemn those
who wish to take their share of
risks in life. Tolerate
the fusion of metals
the alchemies in
any case commit you
to nothing.
It is through the doors of
open eyes that looks
exchanged have led to
the flash of communion
“The blossoming great
silences...”
The sea has gone out the
tide at low ebb will
rise again in time
A new time has begun
a phase a limit a transition
And thus we shall not
have mistaken our lives.
E.2 CHARACTERS

A fish – crossings
(and vexations)
A horse – campaigns
(and battles)
the Amazons ready
Depart go return and
depart again and
fight struggle always
soldier
Amazons are youthful
do not age.
Categorical
right angle of character
the heart's spirit.
I gazed in the mirror of character
and found myself there
found in me
found
Looking ahead horizontal,
arrows
She is right she rules
and knows height
does not know it
Who made her thus where does she
come from?
She is rightness child of
limpid heart present on earth
close to me. Daily acts of
humility vouch for
her greatness.
E.4 CHARACTERS

I am a builder
of houses and of palaces
I live among men
amid their tangled web
of being.
To make architecture is
to make a creature. To be
full to fill oneself to have filled
oneself to burst exult
icy cold amid the
complexities become a happy
young dog.
Become order.
The modern cathedrals
will be built upon this
alignment of fish
of horses of Amazons
constancy rightness
patience waiting desire
and vigilance.
Will emerge I can feel it
the splendour of raw concrete
and the greatness that was
essential to imagine the marriage
of lines
weighing up the forms
Weighing up...
F. 3 OFFERING (THE OPEN HAND)

It is open because
all is present available
knowable
Open to receive
Open also that others
might come and take
The waters flow
the sun provides light
Complexities have woven
their fabric
the fluids are everywhere.
Tools in the hand
Caresses from the hand
Life is tasted through
the kneading of hands
eyesight resides in
palpitation

Full hand I received
full hand I now give
G.3 INSTRUMENT

With carbon
we have
traced the right angle
the sign
It is the answer and the guide
the fact
an answer
a choice
It is simple and naked
yet knowable
The savants will talk
of relativity and rigour
But conscience
makes it a sign
It is the answer and the guide
the fact
my answer
my choice.