

CITIES OF GOD: Graham Ward

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City culture as Symbolic creation

Connection between the ancient City and writing.

Sumerians first city builders also invented text 3000BC

City is writing *par excellence*.

There is no ideologically 'free-zone'. We are *homo symbolicus*

Christian theology till late middle ages was analogical, and that could be again.

We know now that all explanations are interpretations. Object/Subject.

Chapter One: Cities of Eternal Aspiration

Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. 1927 Berlin. Robotic Maria. Film is urban art form.

Old Testament describes the small provincial capital Jerusalem as security/peace.

Metropolis = mother city, capital.

Christians move towards 'another city' Hebrews 11.16

1. Renaissance Period. Venice – relationships contractual Merchants, bankers
2. Industrial Capitalism City. Hierarchical production. Crystal Palace 1851 sublime; no object was priced – new way of determining 'value'.
3. Corporate-Monopoly Capitalist City. City core has less production.

City usurps God's place

Thomas More's *Utopia* 1516. Bacon's *Atlantis* 1627 a realised eschatology.

Ebenezzer Howard 1904. Le Corbusier 1920-70s. Secular fulfilment of all desire.

John S Dunne: *The Cities of the Gods* 1965

Cities as attempt to divinise and immortalise society. Living out Death of God.

Harvey Cox: *The Secular City* 1965

Desacralisation of values and cosmos. Anonymity means relationships now chosen.

End of cultural hegemony. City is symbol of coming of Kingdom when delivered from mythology (Bultmann) His new optimistic values are capitalism.

But civil riots in Birmingham in 1963!?

Doxiadis: *Ekistics* 1968

The science of human settlements. Happiness and balanced.

Jacques Ellul: *Meaning of the City* tr 1970

Cities founded on Cain's refusal of God. Expression of human desire to design own destiny. City is cursed so we must keep separate. Babylon. "like a vampire.. the city devours men." p150-1. Jesus refused to spend a night in a city. New city is transcendent.

Now Mad Max, Wterworld.

Faith in the City 1985: CofE expresses a settled harmonious social order but bemoaning the new disarray.

Chapter 2: Cities of Endless Desire

Cities as Theme Park. Sites of Consumption.

Cities of Eternal Aspiration – culture attempts to imitate Nature

Cities of Endless Desire – Culture imitates Culture

1. Economic Reorganisation

Demise of Old industrial locations.

Erosion of Keynesian welfare

Growth of multinational Corps

Migration of Labour pools

Fordism to Flexible accumulation. – the Full Monty.

Masculine conquest, penetration and domination – phallic.

2. Changes in Urban Geographies

Enterprise Zones in 1980s. Land Tax, Property Tax, Corporation & income tax.

Star Trek SS Enterprise.

Drained resources from other regions. Polarisation and social atomism.

Urban policy now revolves around business, state initiated and supervised.

Polarisation is political, economic and cultural.

Global = 1st, 2nd, 3rd World no longer so neat compartments, so also in cities these three now all discernible in one city with resultant tensions. (Sassen)

Urban Development is now like Theatre, attractions and entertainment for investors.

Post-modern city myth = Sports, festivals, commodification of city's past, china town, theme bars. Therefore -

3. The Order of Simulacra

Aesthetics now therefore is criterion. Empathy, ecstasy, emotional tribes.

Transparency and accountability is introduced to hide its essential vacuity.

What is human and what virtual is a real question. – 'Matrix'

Las Vegas 1995

Parodying hyperbole which exalts kitsch. Ruthless consumption.

Los Angeles 1992

1960-70s de-industrialisation, followed by Free Enterprise Zones under Reagan and 3rd world migration. Centre of global banking & finance.

Also fragmentation and segregation, so a fortress citadel. Increasingly ungovernable.

Towers reflect like cops' sun-glasses.

Riots 1992: 68% damage done to retail property.

New City opposite to American Dream of neighbourliness & boundaries. (Jencks 93)

Personal satisfaction in competition in gated communities.

The Christian Response

In Los Angeles:

1..Renaissance of conservative RC

2..Spanish-language evangelicalism

3..American Fundamentalism. High-pitched Pentecostal emotionalism in post-modern cities like Los Angeles, Sao Paulo, Singapore, Cape Town.

These are Two-Kingdom theologies:
Despite investments in tele-communications, anti-modern counter-cultures.
They are neo-tribal faiths, generating virtual realities of their own.
But we are part of secular world. They do not redeem secular, no healing.

But Liberal response now not credible:

1. Suspicious of hidden ideologies, idealisms and vested interests.
2. Incarnation not a myth or metaphor. "Dissolving the singularities of the given into empty signs, collapsing the distinction between facts and values, events and meanings, is exactly what happens within Las Vegas and Los Angeles cultures... fails to grasp how profoundly developed is today's social atomism, founded upon the rampant individualism of the I am, I want, and I will."

We must listen to the many voices, risk encounter and speak, criticising structural injustice.

Reason gives way to persuasion: theology is talk about what is most believable and adequate with respect to the situation we inhabit.

Everyone is into persuasion that their truth is best for you – cf. BT advert.

Belief demands surety but there is only circulations of information and interpretations.

We have to rely on our prior believing.

So stories and the endless traffic of signs.

Theology no longer trying to colonise but engage.

God is not there to fulfil human demands, as in the market place.

Chapter Six: The Church as the Erotic Community

Each fragment of the wafer is the whole body of Christ. Many locations.

We are one body is plural subject.

Participation is a doctrine of the Spirit.

Chapter Nine: Cities of the Good

Manchester

Has more venture capital providers than any other European city 2.56 mill, GDP £18b

Largest student population in Europe. Polarisation in real estate and earnings.

Under-funding of public utilities. Profit maximising strategies.

Exponentially developing polarisation maps onto class, gender, ethnic and racial divisions. (Sassen, 94 Cities in a World Economy)

The uncomfortable question is whether the sudden growth in homelessness...the growth of poverty generally, the growth of low-wage employment without any fringe benefits, and the growth of sweatshops and industrial homework are all linked to the growth of an industrial complex orientated to the world market and significantly less dependent on local factors. (Sassen, The Global City: London, New York and Tokyo. Princeton Uni Press, p334.)

Gentrification represents a massive appropriation of public resources and urban space.

Globalisation:

1. More decentralised and globally interdependent economies become, the greater the need for centralising nodes of operation, control centres.
2. More we work as a unit in real time on a planetary scale, the greater becomes the in competition and so the inequalities.
3. More advanced our information and capital flows, more segregated those communities it no longer serves but produces.
4. City has undergone plastic surgery and is now living beyond itself, no longer constituted by its citizens. They disconnect from their locality and region and float internationally.
5. This all dissolves the age-old analogy between family and polis and state.
6. Yet a 'Fourth World' left out.

Manuel Castells: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture

With modern technology we see 'flows' of capital, information, technology, organisation, images, sounds, symbols. All managed by cosmopolitan elites. Global in that they can be anywhere in world, yet local customisation, targets. Yet globalism is a virtual myth. Economics therefore becomes metaphoric.

Cyberspace as Transcendent

The scientific solution to the Death of God is the Internet.

'Cyberspace' coined in 1985 by William Gibson in Necromancer.

'Virtual Reality' coined 1992 by Jaron Lanier.

A transcendental reasoning that constructs cosmos in utopian concepts.

A modern metaphorical speculation.

Transcends Time and Space: Does not actually transcend self – one remains alone.

Gives total Knowledge: transcendence is unity with the whole.

Promethian: human beings can become whatever they will. But real is forgotten.

Reality without God is virtual!

Cities of Aspiration and Desire lack truth, justice, goodness and beauty. Virtual.