We must always say what we see, but above all and more difficult, we must always see what we see.
What is the state of architecture today? Never in the past has a society been as directionless as ours. We have destroyed the relationship between material progress and the natural elements of a spiritual life. Our means are unrelated to our ends. We lack all sense of direction. In building, this confusion is at its height. A Byzantine mentality has deprived of worthy goals a civilization that possesses the most unprecedented means of realizing them. At the moment of his greatest material power, man is without direction. France, beacon of Western civilization, is at the center of this chaos. Here and abroad, the effort demanded of our machine society is staggering. Though we must reconstruct whole provinces ravaged by the war, this is really but a fragment of the whole. After so many stagnant years, surely a country must build and rebuild and regenerate as cells in tissues and families in homes, each new generation participating in the eternal game of life.

Alas, we fell soundly asleep as dust settled over the country. I realize that the dust was that of a supremely
brilliant past. It was the history of a nation that had been exceptionally alive, alert, enterprising, courageous, adventurous, happy, optimistic, ringing with the sound of bugle and song, dazzling all with an art that pervaded all. This was a land long respected as an empress among nations. Yet this flattering halo of dust was no more than the glow of a roaring fire long extinct. We were sleeping, instead of building piece by piece this new civilization, born with the first steam engine over one hundred years ago. Nevertheless, here probably more than elsewhere, there were many who recognized the problems. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was no dearth of prophets, who thought, discovered and spoke out... Their reward was criticism, disgrace, rejection. They were called troublemakers, those scientists, thinkers, sociologists and artists. Abroad as well as at home, the ravages and conquests of the technical revolution during those critical years made it philosophically imperative that the revolution of consciousness must follow. Values of hundreds and of thousands of years were questioned and destroyed. Distributed with mechanized speeds, new information flooded the country. Familiar relationships were disrupted and man, denaturalized in some way, as he stumbled off the traditional paths, knew in his environment the horror of his abandonment: his home, his street, his town, his suburb, his countryside. The new constructions, in all their foul, irresponsible ugliness, invaded and polluted landscapes, towns and hearts. It was a total victory carried to the limits of abuse, a consummate catastrophe.

The men of those hundred frantic years, the noble and the base, have strewn the earth with the refuse of their action. Architecture dies and architecture is born. You must think clearly henceforth. Alone, the young, free enough and still unprejudiced, are capable of creating the nucleus around which this new architecture can grow. Their elders are engrossed in the same old games in which they found their interests and formed their habits. For them the time and taste for adventure is over. The page turns; young people of this incomparable age, that turning page is for you, who will cover its blankness with the
flowering of your greatness and your feeling.

Teaching in this country has hardly inspired you to devote yourselves to the creative struggle or to the constant battle with yourselves. It has never stopped asking you to move backwards. Look at the years before 1914: they had wrung the neck of the "modern style." Yet think of the many people who during the course of a generation had put their hearts into the struggle. At the next opportunity, the reconstruction of the regions devastated by the war of 1914-1918, the consequences of our years of neglect were all too apparent. Upon the conclusion of one of the greatest building enterprises ever undertaken in France, we could write in the column of our ledger, one large zero. The only profit resulting from that great opportunity was financial. The stiffening of the academic spirit was carried to the limit under rather unusual circumstances in 1927, on the occasion of the competition for the Palace of Nations in Geneva. At stake was nothing less than the beginning of a new architecture for our era, fixing the direction it would take. The judges had a choice between

the expression of two ways of life. The interest in the competition was enormous, the number of contestants significant. The three hundred and seventy-seven projects submitted in Geneva, laid end to end, would have stretched more than eight miles. The Academy was sharpening her weapons, watching, pressuring, pouncing, biting, killing ... The decision which should have opened the way to a new age in the life of our society was a travesty of justice. In a series of underhanded maneuvers, one of your teachers, gifted in this way, made a cynical comedy of the competition. He escaped the justice of the penal courts, but not the verdict of time. His ploy was successful, and the next day, the beneficiary of the ruse, that ambush, declared, "... I am happy merely for the sake of art. When the French team entered the lists, its goal was the destruction of barbarism. We call barbarism that certain architecture, or rather anti-architecture, which has been making a lot of noise in the past few years in northern and eastern Europe, a style no less horrible than the curlicues of Art Nouveau, which we fortunately crushed some
twenty years ago. It denies all the beautiful periods of history; it is an insult both to good taste and to common sense. It is destroyed. All is well...” The French team that entered the lists consisted of M. Nenot, Member of the Institute, associated for the occasion with M. Flegenheimer, architect of Geneva, Switzerland. The author of this arrogant statement was the builder of the Sorbonne and, incidentally, one of those responsible for the Monument to Victor Emmanuel in Rome, that unspeakable pile of white marble dumped in the heart of the Eternal City, a painful, insufferable offense to the eye of the visitor. The “anti-architecture” mentioned above is not really from eastern Europe at all, but from France herself. It is the product of the dogged research of the builders of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into the calculus, the new materials, steel, reinforced concrete and glass and into the problem of an aesthetic reflecting the great currents in gestation during those years: Labrouste, Eiffel, Séjourné, de Baudot, Tony Garnier, Auguste Perret. It was a forceful architecture, which began to drive its way into northern and eastern Europe only in the years after the Great War. You can see that in such competition the problem of direction was implicit. With a sharp turn of the rudder, the premeditated return to the old formulas was assured. But, fortunately, life is strong. The Palace of Nations was built by the Academy, but in order to fulfill satisfactorily the physical requirements of the program, the Academicians had to plagiarize and do violence to the solutions of their own opponents. In consequence of these scandalous proceedings, the C.I.A.M. (International Congress of Modern Architecture) was born at a meeting in June, 1928, at La Sarraz. From all over the world, leading architects and town planners came in the spirit of modern endeavor to establish on common foundations the basic human considerations that govern both the art of architecture and the art of town planning. With the exception of France, the member countries profited immediately from the work of the C.I.A.M. Some of them entrusted their delegations with considerable responsibility: Holland, Belgium, Sweden, Finland, Spain, Brazil, U.S.A., Switzer-
land and many more. Repeatedly, particularly on the occasion of the 1937 Exposition, the C.I.A.M. group in France vainly requested the opportunity to participate in the development of their country. The group clarified its position further with the publication of *The Athens Charter*. This was the town-planning charter of the C.I.A.M. prefaced by Jean Giraudoux. In *Full Powers* of 1939, this great French thinker and poet urged his country to aspire to high ideals: greatness of spirit and nobility of imagination. For many years, France, that great laboratory of ideas, had chosen to ignore, discourage, reject and crush her innovators. Recent events have made the dangerous consequences of this neglect apparent. This land of great builders, home of the great traditions of architecture, country of the great revolutionary discoveries in the art of building; her energies today have slowed to ultimate inaction. Land of the pointed arch, land of steel and glass and reinforced concrete, its destiny must naturally be to unite its young people, to impel you in confidence and faith to adventure, to the taste for risk, to harness your energies for the exquisite task of erecting dwellings worthy of your fellow man. I would like to show you here that we are in fact concerned urgently, immediately with the construction throughout France of dwellings worthy of man, of his works, of his possessions, of his institutions, of his ideas. Let us be done then with disorder.
The legitimate pursuit of any society aiming at permanence must primarily be the housing of man, sheltering him from the elements and thieves, and above all maintaining around him the peace of his home, sparing no effort, so that his existence may unfold in harmony without dangerously transgressing nature’s laws. This aim bears no relationship to the housing tolerated today. It is nothing but a crude compromise, brought about by the powers unleashed by money: profit, rivalry, haste — all the motives which have degraded man’s dignity, crushed him into submission and made him forget his fundamental right to a decent way of life. Do you know that at the Beaux-Arts, one of the largest architectural schools in the world, the problem of the home has never been included in the curriculum? No attention was ever given to the environment in which a man lives: day-to-day existence, those moments and those hours spent in the streets, the squares, in his room, day after day, from infancy till death — all those places potentially inspiring, constituting as they do the context within which our consciousness
develops from the moment we open our eyes to life. When we founded *L'Esprit Nouveau* in 1920, I gave to the home its fundamental importance. I called it a "machine for living," thereby demanding from it a complete, flawless answer to a clearly articulated question. This profoundly humanistic program restores man to the central preoccupation of architecture. I was never forgiven for that expression, neither in Paris nor in the U.S.A. - in the U.S.A. where the machine is king. The dictionary tells us that the word "machine" is derived from the Latin and Greek meaning "artifice" or "device," "an instrument constructed to produce certain results." The word "device" states the problem well. It is to grasp the increasing perilousness of the situation and to create out of it a necessary and adequate framework for life. Through the medium of art, and with a dedication to the welfare of mankind, we then have the power to brighten that life by elevating it. I persevered and grasped every opportunity to pursue this vital problem for my own and others' edification. I drew plans, gave lectures, wrote books. In twenty books and three periodicals, I invariably made the dwelling the primary objective of architectural and town-planning concerns. This was a most revolutionary attitude. I was overwhelmed with criticism from the right and from the left, as well as castigated by the Academy for my pains.

In 1935 *The Radiant City* appeared. The word "radiant" was not used fortuitously; it has a meaning that surpasses a merely functional connotation. It has the attribute of consciousness, for in these perilous times, consciousness itself is at stake, more important than economics or technology. In the final analysis (considering the tremendous events of our time) it is consciousness alone that is able to determine the program of our work. And its claims are valid. This theme served as preamble to the works of the Fifth Congress of the C.I.A.M. in Paris, 1937: *Housing and Leisure*. "We feel that it is imperative that in the work of this Congress we give top priority to the dominant, primary fact of our time: after a hundred years of conquest, dispute and disorder, modern society has come to the conclusion that the construction of a new home for
man is the factor that definitively determines the character of a civilization. By creating a new form of dwelling, the second phase of the Machine Age enters a period of universal construction. This is an active, optimistic, human endeavor that bears ‘essential joy.’ It transcends questions of technology (rationalism and functionalism). It is the pure, essential, fundamental expression of a new consciousness. It is only in the light of a new consciousness that we can henceforth envisage the problems of town planning and architecture. Each new society creates in its own image the home which is the framework of its life: man and his shelter, towns and the country.”

France lives in factions, each devoted to its selfish passions. So in the field of architecture: an enthusiastic author recently submitted a great unexpected discovery, stemming from 1942, a year of disgrace, to a professional journal as naïvely informed as he himself: Domism, the architectural science of housing. He demonstrated that we don’t know each other well, divided as we are by mistrust, by specters nourished and sustained by those who benefit by our confusion.

The Sleeping Beauty in her Slumbering Forest was waking up. The Ecole des Beaux-Arts was abandoning its Roman palaces (Roman? why Roman? a question that has yet to be answered) and directing its footsteps to the home of man. Housing, or Domism places man on stage, an ordinary man, natural and reasonable, a being of today. In the play, architecture will be his partner. Look at the stage, occupied by the protagonists. Marie Dormoy, in her book French Architecture has very charmingly, seemingly without prejudice, set them up against each other. One should oppose the “academic” to the “modern” (though I use this last word conditionally), but it is regrettable that the modern spirit should have to be split into two camps. One camp proclaims: “Build first.” The other says: “Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of forms in light.” In the present machine revolution, calculus and technology have been the forerunners, preceding a conclusion which must one day be the instrument for reorganizing this disjointed life of ours. This reorganization can become reality only after a constructive revolution has already actually occurred and brought with
it its own liberating methods. This is a natural sequence of events. It would be most regrettable to make of this chronology a quarrel. By whom are these two camps led? On the one hand, by an extraordinarily talented architect-contractor, descended from a line of entrepreneur-builders. This determined character dedicated himself, at the turn of the century, to the problem of concrete, introducing it validly to architecture. After a life of struggle against a bristling professional clan (his diplomaed colleagues), after a life of courage and professional integrity dedicated to the constructive use of a material rejected, shamed and banished by academicism, he succeeds. He triumphs. Even during his lifetime, in his old age, he is honored. His work commands the respect of all. To this end all his efforts were directed, and to no other. By now you have recognized our heroes: Auguste Perret; and the other man—Yours Truly.

In addition to its many other demands, the art of building requires that we pay more attention to our mistreated “brother-man,” that we prepare for his use the kind of dwelling we have been discussing. Here we are confronted by a series of new considerations, which concern town planning. This is at the root of our architectural revolution. It is a topic which will allow inventive spirits to discuss aesthetics and practice simultaneously and without apprehension. Town planning is a new state of mind and a singularly engrossing one. In fact, it is part of that “science of man” whose aid we will need during one of the most momentous periods of change in history. Town planning is profoundly traditional if we accept the truth that tradition is a continuous sequence of all innovations, therefore the most reliable guide to the future. Tradition is like an arrow pointing to the future, never to the past. Transmission—tradition’s real meaning, its reality. Thus town planning emerges once again from the depths of time; its mission is to give our civilization a home of its own.

Never having wanted to oppose Auguste Perret, but, on the contrary, having benefited greatly from his work, I have applied myself specifically to the problems: the
home—town planning. Inseparable concepts. I investigated the problem according to rules learned in school: from the inside, work outwards. This rule, I think, is equally a law of nature and of architecture. Let me illustrate: man (that creature always before me, his size, his senses, his emotion) is seated at his table. His eyes rest on the objects around him: furniture, carpet, curtains, paintings, photographs and many other objects meaningful to him. A lamp or the sun coming through his window gives him light. There is light and there is shadow, contrasting those extremes which have such a powerful effect on our bodies and psyches: the light and the dark. The walls of the room envelop him and his belongings. Our man gets up, wanders around, leaves the room and goes somewhere else, no matter where. He opens his front door and leaves his home. He is still in a house: corridor, stairs, elevator... Now he is in the street. What is this outdoors like? Does it repel or does it attract? Is it safe or is it dangerous? Our man is in the street of the town and then after, in short succession, he is outside the town and in the countryside. Not for a moment has he been free of architecture: furniture, room, sunlight, artificial light, air, temperature, the arrangement and function of his dwelling, the building, the street, the urban environment, the town, the throb of the town, the countryside with its paths, its bridges, its houses, plants and the sky, nature. Architecture and town planning have affected his every move. Architecture is implicit in every object: his table and chair, his walls and rooms, his staircase or his elevator, his street, his town. Delightful, commonplace or boring. Even disgust is possible. Beauty or ugliness. Happiness or unhappiness. Town planning concerned him from the moment our man rose from his chair: the location of his house, of his neighborhood, the view from his window as determined by the town councilors, the life of the street, the pattern of the town. You can clearly see now not for a moment could vigilance or care have been abandoned. You can see the need for this fraternal dedication of architecture and town planning in behalf of our "brotherman." Material needs and spiritual appetites can be
satisfied by a concerned architecture and town planning. You can see the unified purpose, the totality of the responsibility and the grandeur of the mission of architecture and town planning. Many have yet to realize that at stake here is brotherly concern for all. Architecture is a mission demanding dedication of its servants, dedication to the dwelling (for a dwelling shelters work, possessions, institutions, and the thoughts of man, as well). Architecture is an act of love, not a stage set.

At this time of transition, as one civilization dies and another replaces it, devoting yourselves to architecture is like entering a religious order. You must consecrate yourselves, have faith and give. As a just reward, architecture will bring a special happiness to those who have given her their whole being. This happiness is a sort of trance that comes with radiant birth after the agonies of labor. It is the power of invention, of creation which allows man to give the best that is in him to bring joy to others, the everyday joy found only in the home.