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THE HUMOURS OF SPACE AND POWER: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE URBAN SQUARE IN EUROPE, 1100–2000

Since the late medieval period much of the consequence and charm of European cities of any note have rested on the design and upkeep of public squares. These squares are derived ultimately from classical models and secondarily from models of Baroque urban space. They can be open and paved spaces or sheltered and planted. The residential 'garden square' originated in Britain, becoming popular in France and Germany in the 1860s and 1870s. There are few private squares in mainland Europe, but numerous examples survive in Britain. Looking at the square across a variety of European cities it is possible to set out a rough classification of types of square and to suggest some of the social and political constraints within which squares developed.

This is a rather slight essay on a vast and important subject: the development, over the span of a millennium, of the architectural space known usually as a 'square' in European cities and towns. As citizens know the square today, these spaces are features of such significance as to define the quality and importance of a city. Indeed it is hard to conceive of a city or town of any size without a square, though they may come in several forms and styles. Cities and towns, however, between the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the 1400s (and often later) lacked standardized space of that kind. The construction of urban squares from the early Renaissance consisted, among other things, in an endeavour to reinstate classical urban spaces recognizable in the layout of Greek and Roman towns. The urbanity of the square, the connection between the modern European square and that common to the Greek and Roman city-states and something of the paradoxical qualities of the form itself are well captured in the commentary of the Spanish philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955):

> Greeks and Romans appear in history lodged, like bees in their hives, within cities, *poleis*. This is a simple fact, mysterious in its origin, a fact from which we must start […] the transition from […] pre-history, purely rural and without specific character, to the rising-up of the city […] this remains a secret. We are not even clear about the ethnic link between […] pre-historic peoples and these strange communities which introduce into the repertoire of humanity a great innovation: that of building a public square and around it a city, shut in from the fields. You take a hole, wrap some steel wire tightly around it and that's your cannon. So the *urbs* or the *polis* starts by being just an empty space, the forum, the agora, and all the rest is just a means of fixing that empty space, of limiting its outlines. The *polis* is not primarily a collection of habitable dwellings, but a meeting-place for citizens, a space set apart for public functions. The city is not built, as is the cottage or the *domus*, to shelter from the weather and to propagate the species […] but in order to discuss public affairs. Observe that this signifies nothing less than

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> the invention of a new kind of space. […] Till then only one space existed, that of the open country […] the man of the fields is still a sort of vegetable. […] But the Graeco-Roman decides to separate himself from the fields, from 'Nature', from the geo-botanic cosmos. How is this possible? How can man withdraw himself from the fields? Where will he go since the earth is one huge unbounded field? Quite simple, he will mark off a portion of this field by means of walls, which set up an enclosed, finite space over against amorphous, limitless space. Here you have the public square. It is not, like the house, an 'interior' shut in from above, as are the caves which exist in the fields. The square, thanks to the walls which enclose it, is a portion of the countryside which turns its back on the rest, eliminates the rest and set[s] up in opposition to it. […] This is the *res publica*, the *politeia*, which is not made up of men and women, but of citizens.[1]

But if the square meant citizenship of a republic to y Gasset, in practice the architecture of the square as it evolved since the 1500s owed most of its shape and character to the pretensions of royal, papal or imperial courts, that is, the claims of hierarchy and power. In fact, the thought of the European square, as a form, forcibly evokes, to the present writer, fairly or unfairly, the somewhat absurd but unforgettable image of the serene majesty of Louis XIV (1638–1715), the future Sun King, at the age of twenty-four (Figure 1), presiding over the Place Royale. The picture commemorates a grand '*carroussel*' (a watered-down version of the medieval tournament or joust), staged in 1662, in which Louis XIV acted as commander of an army of Roman soldiers set against a combined enemy army in the dress of Persians, Turks, East Indians and American Indians, savage and inferior civilizations to the absolute French state, which was seen

Figure 1. Carroussel 1662, Place Royale, Paris; from Charles Perrault, *Courses de testes et de bague faites par le roy et par les princes et seigneurs de sa cour en l'annee 1662* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1670)

as endued with the moral fibre and clarity of principle of the classical world. The inevitable victory of the Roman–French under Louis XIV took place on the open ground of the Place Royale in Paris where the court had assembled to see their king carry out a demonstration of martial prowess (he was one of the last French kings sometimes to attend battle as monarch). The image makes emphatic play with associations between royalty and formal space while the orchestration of the *carroussel* identified the king with the imperial glory of the Roman world.[2]

It is the case that one of the archetypal patterns of the square in Europe since the 1500s has been the so-called *place royale*. And squares in the cities of continental Europe have tended to more grandeur, scale and uniformity than squares in Britain and Ireland. However, though the Place Royale of Paris, set out by Henri IV (1553–1610), where the carrousel took place fifty years later (now the Place des Vosges) was the first example of its kind in Paris and although this square exerted a powerful effect, for generations, on the evolution of the square in France, and in Europe as a whole, it turns out, curiously, that there are not many other squares exactly like it. It should have been an easy model to copy but this was not often done. In its character as a residential square the model developed more strongly in Britain and Ireland than in Europe. Elsewhere the regularity of square architecture connoted state or royal power but more often proved a focus of administration than a centre of affluent residence.[3]

Equally, the concept of the European square was derived ultimately from the example of the Roman forum, but only those made in Rome during the Renaissance ever looked much like those of the classical world. No matter how plausibly architectural lineage of this kind may be sketched out, the open grace of the square still holds a fascination and mystery that makes it difficult to reach summary or final definition of such an architectural space, though something of the kind naturally seems called for in any effort (such as this), no matter how simple, to interpret changes in how state power was reflected in urban form. Every such urban space is different. Few are actually square in shape, for one thing. But something of the 'ideal' form of the square seems to hover over all such spaces, no matter what they look like in reality.

Looking at the crudest expanse of tarmac and bollard, allotted the name of square or place by planner or corporation, the observer feels a subtle pressure to squeeze the scene mentally into something approximating such an 'ideal' square, often, it may be, in the image of the Place Royale. It might appear adequate simply to say that a square consists of any large open space comprised of enclosing buildings and an open or landscaped interior. But this does not capture the peculiar character of the square. The problem feels metaphysical in nature.[4] For the sake of his unique interest in the meaning of the square, it may be worth going back to y Gasset for an adaptation of one of his leading insights into human existence, that is, the famous argument that a person is properly defined as 'a self plus his circumstances', which includes the meaning that the place you are in is part of what you are.[5] On this analogy, it might be credible and illuminating to say that the 'square' is the architecture plus the people in it and what they are doing. That might be said to make all the difference between a mere enclosure bounded by four ranges of buildings and the 'feel' to be expected of a square.

The architecture of the square came into being in Italy *c.*1400 shortly after the word 'square' itself (meaning no more than a four-sided geometrical figure) appeared first in medieval English. But the descriptive vocabulary of the urban square, as we know it, began to be coined over a century later. The English word 'place' was first used to mean an open space in a city or town about the 1540s. The Italian '*piazza*' was used first in the 1580s to describe a 'public square' in a town. The Spanish '*plaza*' was first written to mean a town square as late as the 1680s. At this late period the word 'square' took

on in England one of the relevant facets of its present set of usages, as an architectural term to indicate an 'open space in a town'. So the urban square existed well before such nomenclature emerged, as if complete awareness of the meaning of the form followed long after appearance of the form.

'Place' and 'plaza' come from the Greek *plateia*. And the ancient Greek towns and villages generally maintained small central places, often triangular in shape, for communal events. But when the Italian engineer-architects of the 1400s and 1500s set about designing squares under the encouragement of the aristocratic leaders of city-states such as Florence, they meant to hark back to the civic forum of Roman life. The original Roman forum or the *forum magnum* was a rectangular space filled with statues and monuments and overlooked by shrines, courts and places for the conduct of politics. As a primary orthogonal form it was therefore comprised of an open space for people to assemble and attend business in courts, to engage in political debate, or to watch or take part in theatrical pageants. It served also as the culminating venue for military processions known as 'triumphs', welcomed into the space through a temporary triumphal arch. The forum was set out in a higgledy-piggledy arrangement, built up over centuries, despite the best efforts of some emperors to tidy it up.[6] This was also the case among most of the early Italian imitations of the forum, which displayed a strange mix of mathematical ingenuity and organic irregularity to their designs.

The idea of the urban square took more rational shape in France in the early seventeenth century (though foreshadowed in the 1540s). Henri IV constructed the Place Royale and the Place Dauphine in Paris before 1610, both stripped down versions of the Renaissance form. Equestrian statues were added to the equation of the urban square by the 1630s. The full-blown Baroque form of the square in which a vast expanse of space was laid out in daunting linear design came into vogue in France by the 1660s. The Place Royale of Henri IV looked relatively homely by then. The larger Baroque form persisted in different guises till the late nineteenth century, sponsored by monarchical and imperial states and took on a caricatured form under the corporate states of the twentieth century.[7]

There is little point in a short article attempting more than a simple account of linear change of this kind, however. Anything more elaborate is certain to run into trouble by attempts at grand oversimplifications. The present article seeks instead to contribute to understanding the form of the square by a broad survey of the form as it appears in cities across Europe and by analysis of the results.

THE TYPES OF THE SQUARE IN EUROPE

There has always been a vague sense that squares on the continent were different in character from those in Britain and Ireland: Charles Dickens, a lover of cities, commented in the 1860s that while Britain possessed squares ornamented with gardens, continental Europe was endowed with chillier, more functional spaces redolent of societies different in spirit to his own.[8] It must be said that now, having surveyed some two hundred and thirty city squares at present existing in fourteen major European cities (Tables 1–3), it seems that more concrete research evidence also points this way (though it should not necessarily endorse Dickens's aesthetic or political preferences). This survey, however, can amount only to a sample of perhaps a couple of thousand squares in all European towns and cities.

There are other possible flaws to the tabulation too. It is arguable that as some of the cities looked at were very badly damaged in the Second World War, the physical structure of certain squares was likely lost in their entirety and certain squares may make no showing in a modern survey. However, a countervailing argument would suggest that continuities in the ownership of land ensure that although squares can change greatly

Table 1. Squares and plaza in various European cities

	Total squares	Garden square	Plaza	Traffic hub	Other
Amsterdam	14		9	3	2
Athens	5	1	2	1	1
Berlin	25	3	16	6	
Bucharest	10	1	6	3	
Budapest	13	3	2	8	
Copenhagen	33	32	22	1	8
Florence	10	1	9		
Milan	11		5	4	2
Munich	9		9		
Paris	44	6	31	5	2
Prague	4	1	3		
Rome	26	1	21	2	2
Vienna	15	1	13		1
Warsaw	15		12	5	1
Totals	234	20	160	38	19
Percentage	100	8	68	16	8

over time they rarely seem to disappear in their entirety (so buildings may go but streets or roads remain in existence). On balance, therefore, the sample is probably an accurate reflection of the full number of squares made in those cities selected. The aim of the survey is specially to get a sense of the nature of the square in continental Europe: for this reason the cities and larger towns of Britain and Ireland were not included except as introduced to part of the comparative analysis. For the purposes of the survey a garden square was defined as a squared-off space with enclosed and planted interior; a plaza was defined as a squared space with open, unenclosed, paved interior (sometimes without separate roadways: the divided street-way appeared along with the carriage). The form of a 'traffic hub' is more or less self-explanatory (Table 1).[9]

Most of these squares are oblong. A few are circular or irregular in outline. The 'garden square', as we know it in Britain and Ireland, is very much in a minority. There are sometimes 'gardens' at the heart of wider plazas. But the closest European relatives to the British garden square probably are those in Paris, inspired by the enthusiasm of Napoleon III for the warmth of Victorian public horticulture, picked up while in exile in England. Parts of the Place de Batignolles in Paris (made 1862–63) immediately resemble parts of Merrion Square or Stephen's Green in Dublin or perspectives in many of the private or public squares of London. Most of the other spaces tabulated consist of plazas of different descriptions. Some, like that in the 'pastiche' square in Renaissance Revival style, the Plaza de Espana (not in the table), made in Seville for the Ibero-American exposition of 1929, are very grand, sweeping spaces, relatively unfurnished. People are given no particular direction in such pathless space. And there is a deliberate effect of magnitude in the construction of the great plaza, heart-stopping in grandeur at times. Moving about alone or in small groups in these great spaces feels confrontational and might even be said to take a certain courage. But if people might be made to feel puny in such spaces they might also, perhaps, be made to feel part of a greater whole. The latter effect was certainly the aim of St Peter's Square in the Vatican City in Rome, laid out by Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) between 1656 and 1667. These are the great European plazas. The more ordinary town plazas, though still big and unobstructed, are not quite as overwhelming.

Figure 2. Gerrit Berckheyde, *View of the Dam with the Town Hall* (1670–75); Gemaldegalerie, Dresden

One common version round Europe is the plaza laid out in front of a city hall or civic office. The example in Dam Square, Amsterdam, where the focal building served as city hall from 1655 till converted into a royal palace in 1808, illustrates this species of plaza very well (Figure 2). This plaza, as it happens, was built up over time rather than designed as a unity. Many of these plazas were designed by architects, but by no means all of them (my own tabulation reckons that architects contributed to the making of about thirty-six per cent of squares in the sample of two hundred and thirty-four city spaces). However, city government allowed for and regulated the provision of open public space and restricted encroachment upon it, and in this sense the plaza was regarded as a vital part of city planning, coming under the care of the city architect often from the 1700s.

The simple neighbourhood plaza, as in those made in Parisian suburbs during the nineteenth century, may be exemplified by the intimacy of Place de Tertre, Montmartre. These spaces combined simple residential accommodation with shops and workshops. There was nothing aristocratic about them. Regrettably a proportion of the larger plazas, since the appearance of the motor car, have been turned into mere traffic junctions or interchanges. The openness and plainness of the plaza made it relatively easy for this to happen. The example of Constitution Square in Warsaw is one of many such. Lastly there are ‘squares’ that do not fit into these typologies. One kind is the broad street often enlarged over centuries that catered to market stalls and crowds. The expanded market street known as the Graben in Vienna is one of this kind.

THE CHARACTER OF SQUARES AND PLAZAS IN EUROPE

About one-sixth (or sixteen per cent) of squares examined are dominated by town halls or major administrative centres, such as offices of departments of state (Table 2a). If the twenty-three per cent of squares accommodating public buildings such as museums, national libraries, universities and art galleries is added to this percentage, then the sum comes to nearly forty per cent of squares formed in character by secular institutions

Table 2a. Character of squares and plaza in various European cities

	Total squares	Significant monument	Fountain	Old city gate	Offices/ city hall	Church/ temple	Other public buildings	Offices/ business
Amsterdam	14	4	1			2		
Athens	5	2						
Berlin	25	9		3	6	2	5	1
Bucharest	10	6			3		2	
Budapest	13	5	1		2	1	7	1
Copenhagen	33	7	4	1	1	3	3	
Florence	10	6	2			2	4	
Milan	11	5			1	2	2	1
Munich	9	6	1	2	4	3	6	
Paris	44	21	12	1	6	4	11	1
Prague	4	3		1	1	2	3	
Rome	26	26	14	1	1	15	7	
Vienna	15	6	3		4	3	4	
Warsaw	15	5		1	7	3		
Totals	234	106	38	10	36	42	54	4
Percentage		45	16	4	16	18	23	1.5

Table 2b. Character of squares and plaza in various European cities (continued)

	Total squares	Retail/ café	Originally a market	Presence of a contemporary market	Royal/ Baroque association	Originally a country estate	Architect design/ contribution	Impacts urban renewal
Amsterdam	14			4				
Athens	5							
Berlin	25	4	3	2	5		12	
Bucharest	10	1					3	
Budapest	13	2					5	
Copenhagen	33	1	1	1		1	4	4
Florence	10	1	1				6	
Milan	11	1	1				4	
Munich	9	1	3		2		6	1
Paris	44	6	3	2	5		21	
Prague	4	1	2				2	
Rome	26	3	3		3		12	
Vienna	15	3	3		2		6	
Warsaw	15	3	3				4	
Totals	234	27	23	9	17	1	85	5
Percentage		11	10	4	7	< 0.5	36	1.5

and offices. These squares are rarely converted into traffic hubs. Then nearly one-fifth of plazas hold a large church or cathedral. All these facilities are of course reminiscent of the public structures available in the classical Roman forum. Few of these plazas are residential in tone (though of course some contain buildings with apartments).

There are significant monuments present in nearly half of these squares – generally patriotic statues. The heroic or patriotic statue has been inseparable for centuries from the furniture of public space. Till the early modern period the only public statues were of religious or fantastic figures. The most significant shifts in the making of statues for public display in Christian Europe occurred first in the sixteenth century, when the legitimacy of putting secular figures of sculpture outside on show became socially acceptable, and then, second, during the seventeenth century, when the display of sculptures of living figures in open public space – normally kings and queens – was increasingly tolerated. The idea underlying the erection of such statues may be that when the city population takes the air in open spaces it is anticipated that they are likely to be inspired and brought together emotionally by common respect for such men (rarely women). But of course the ordinary population everywhere tends more often to nurse a coarse irreverence for 'weather-beaten famous figures', kings and queens included.[10] It is possible that no secular figure of sculpture in an iconographic culture can escape invidious contrast, even over generations and across centuries, with the venerable qualities of religious statuary.

Then there are fountains in most squares – more in Rome than in any other city in the world, it seems – though there are many fountains also in Paris. The contemplative element of water seems to make sense as an extra dimension provided to the flat space of the plaza, like a wishing well in the centre of the arena. Like many aspects of the public square in Rome the fountain can be a glorious and ebullient grotesque: Bernini's *Triton* (1642–43) fountain in the Piazza Barberini, Rome, rears powerfully still over city traffic. Forms of statuary tend to follow more chaste lines in Northern Europe.

The triumphal arch has been an important feature of the large urban square in Europe since the 1500s, reproducing numerous versions of the Arco di Tito (Arch of Titus), raised on the Via Sacra, Rome, *c.*82 AD. Some of the arches are freestanding – as the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile on the Champs-Élysées, Paris (one of a number in that city). But they are also often built into the lines of buildings framing the plaza (see the eighteenth-century design of Palace Square, St Petersburg). Then there are ranks of equestrian statues to be reckoned with in every square and plaza. The equestrian pose represented martial valour and, accordingly, these sculptures amounted to an irresistible temptation to most Baroque rulers (European kings ceased to take even distant part in battle in the mid-eighteenth century). There is only one female equestrian to be found in the cities surveyed – a statue of Joan of Arc in the Place des Pyramides, Paris. The most recent equestrian sculpture was completed in 1901 for a square in Bucharest. As horses became militarily redundant the pose lost cachet.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE EUROPEAN SQUARE

Some ten per cent of those city squares in the survey are ancient or medieval in origin (Tables 2b and 3). These began mostly as market places, signified by a cross where oaths were sworn and juries examined into trade disputes. Commonly these markets had originally been held just outside the old city gates and were incorporated into later urban plans as cities got bigger.

The square first manifested in the classical world. The form was reborn partly under the aesthetic influence of Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72) during the Italian Renaissance where the square seems often to have served to glorify the authority of rulers in the city-states. Alberti codified the architectural theories of the ancient Roman military engineer-architect Vitruvius, emphasizing that a 'forum' should be laid out at a ratio of 2:3 length to width. Buildings were supposed to be made in dimensions relating sensibly to the space concerned, that is, usually no greater in height than one-third of the width of the space. In practice, though Italian engineer-architects took delight in the laws of perspective and

Table 3. Periods of origin of squares and plazas in various European cities

	Total squares	Ancient	Medieval	1500–1700	1700–1850	1850–1910	Modern
Amsterdam	14		1	3	4	5	2
Athens	5	1			1	2	1
Berlin	25		1		9	7	8
Bucharest	10					4	7
Budapest	13				1	8	4
Copenhagen	33		6	3	10	3	11
Florence	10			5	1	4	
Milan	11	1	1	1	1	5	2
Munich	9	1	1	1	4	3	
Paris	44	1		5	15	22	1
Prague	4	1	2			2	
Rome	26	2		14	5	3	2
Vienna	15	2	1	1	7	3	
Warsaw	15		2	1	6	2	4
Totals	234	9	15	34	64	73	42
Percentage		4	6	14	27	31	18

the mathematics of illusion, their squares resisted a rigid sense of proportion.

One of the seminal examples of these newly conceptualized or rediscovered 'rules' of architectural order was the Piazza Ducale, at Vigevano, Northern Italy, built by Donato Bramante (1444–1514) and Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) between 1492 and 1495 at the instructions of two of the Dukes of Milan. This may also have been one of the quickest squares ever built. This work managed to bring out a sense of spatial regularity in the irregular space given to the architects by setting out a series of large triumphal arches in 'illusionistic perspective'. The triumphal arch was regarded by Alberti as the 'greatest ornament to the forum or crossroad' and indispensable to the layout and tone of the most perfect squares.[11] Another inspiration to later work was the Campidoglio, an ensemble created by Michelangelo Buonarotti (1475–1564) at the Capitoline Hill, Rome, under the patronage of the Papacy, which wanted the space to become a centre for public events and a terminus for processions. Working with a non-rectilinear space Michelangelo made the piazza out of trapezoidal and oval spaces laid out so as to organize it along axes that made sense out of unusual proportions. The mounted statue of Marcus Aurelius gave a classical impress to the square.

Though these first urban squares of Christian Europe were inspiring in their ingenuity, the next development of the square did not repeat the vital idiosyncrasy of the Renaissance square in Rome. It appears, among other things, that the further evolution of the square was linked to the development of the public or courtly walk or boulevard, though this connection was eventually exploited most fully in Britain. The promenade of distinguished courtiers and citizens made open exhibition of aristocratic taste and correctness, celebrating the rule of honour and decorum as part of the fullness of civilized society.

Since the mid-1500s French court society was heavily influenced by Italian taste. Squares came to France first in the planning experiments of François I of France (r. 1515–47) when the Italian military engineer Girolamo Marini (d. 1553) was commissioned in the mid-1540s to lay out a number of fortified towns to the north-east of Paris, including Vitry (le François), which was made according to the symmetrical

Figure 3. Sir Thomas Raven, *The Plat of the Cittie of London:derry as it Stand Built and Fortyfyed* (1622–25); Public Record Office Northern Ireland (PRONI), T1965/1E/14

principles of contemporary Italian theory, built around a magnificent central square adorned with a royal statue. It is believed that the structure of this particular town was copied in the defensive and street layout of the frontier city of Londonderry, in the newly colonized province of Ulster, Ireland, between 1613 and 1619 (Figure 3). The cultivated preference for architectural rationality became further evident when Henri IV set out to embellish the kingdom and the French capital in the early 1600s. One of his first projects was the creation, in the Marais district of Paris, of what became the *Place Royale*. It appears, surprisingly, that his initial vision was for the construction of a spacious residential and working quarter for craftsmen and bourgeois. But this fell apart and was reinstated as an exclusive residential zone for the court nobility. The space approached closely to a square in shape and was surrounded by continuous three-storey buildings in Mansard style. Inaugurated in 1612 for the wedding festivities of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria the square was regarded as revolutionary in concept at the time. It initiated the radical separation of the aristocratic and bourgeois worlds that became a hallmark of Baroque society.[12]

France by the 1660s provided the norms of aristocratic taste in Western Europe and its architectural models inspired other rulers. In the 1670s, for instance, Christian V of Denmark levelled the old square of Kongens Nytorv in Copenhagen, making it a centre for military assembly and parade and a place royale on the French model. Land around the square was distributed among the Danish elite and a Baroque garden complex ornamented by a gilded, equestrian statue of the king was laid out in the 1680s,

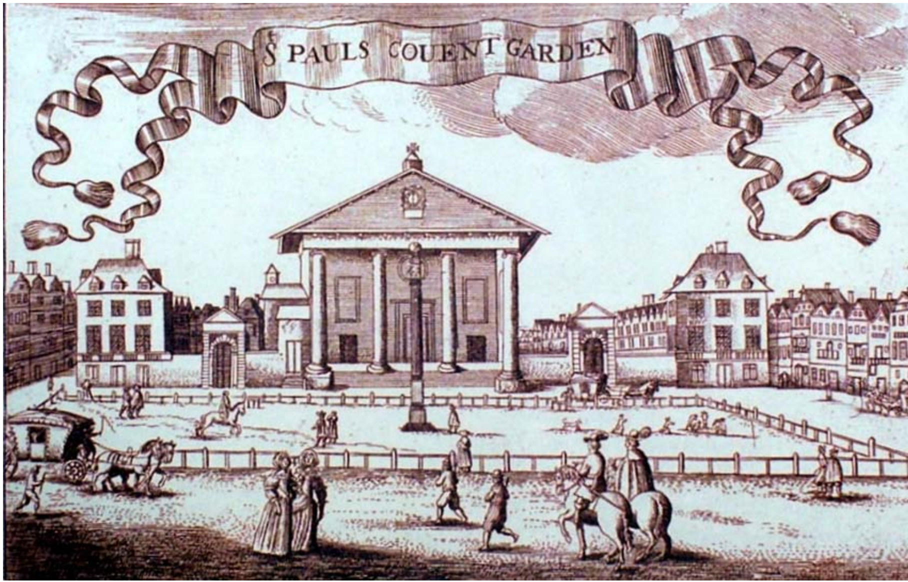

Figure 4. Wencesclas Hollar, *St Pauls Couent Garden* (1647); Bridgeman Art Library

according to the developing formula for Baroque public spaces. A greater extravagance of Baroque form became evident in France by the later seventeenth century under the Versailles Court. Even the rearing of the horse at the Place des Victoires in Paris seems to mark an ambition and arrogance not discernible in earlier equestrian statues. The French Baroque developed a logical order distinct from the idiosyncrasy of Italian style. Lewis Mumford described French Baroque architectonics as 'an absolutist vocabulary of symmetry, axiality, uniform facades and iconography' making an impersonal impress of royal order in the civic world.[13] Space is reduced to 'measure and order'. The form of the designed city square was felt to epitomize the qualities and aspirations of aristocratic life. This vision proved compelling for several centuries after the 1600s.

Till the late nineteenth century, though some few city squares were adapted to the garden style from the 1860s, the value of immensity and scale remained important in the great city squares of Europe. More such squares were developed in mainland Europe than in Britain. Though some of the principles of the Italian square were introduced to Britain by Inigo Jones (1573–1652) in the making of Covent Garden in the 1660s (Figure 4), very quickly the British square become something different to squares in the rest of Europe. The residential quality of the Place Royale was emphasized in works such as the making of Southampton Square (later Bloomsbury Square). The creation of open gardens in the centre of such squares followed naturally and indeed also occurred eventually in the Place Royale itself. The court promenade had more influence on the British square than it had on squares in Europe: the landscaped interiors of the first British squares were rectilinear open promenades suiting members of a social elite who wanted to see and be seen. The real landscaped garden square took another century to emerge in Britain, but the direction of change was well defined by the 1740s. There is a clear divergence of architectural form between the European and the British squares from the 1660s and 1670s and distinct differences in the character of squares persist.[14]

CONCLUSIONS: ARCHITECTURAL FORM AND SOCIAL PURPOSE

The urban square was designed to suit and to evoke a way of life, partly ideal-exemplary and partly routine. Y Gasset, in the introductory citation to this article, pointed to the

open discussion of affairs as the principle of sophisticated civic existence as expressed in the demand for the public square. However that may be, it is clear that public architecture over time mysteriously reflects and affirms principles of social life belonging to each era (which may explain the degradation of modern public spaces). It is arguable that the peculiar post-medieval concept of aristocratic honour – visible on the British square in the social institution of the promenade and also in the practice of the duel, among other things – has a link with the culture of the aristocratic square between the 1600s and the 1800s. And it may be arguable, further, that the social anthropology of 'honour' has something to do with religious sentiment in wider society, which may be part of the reason why Louis XIV attempted to ground the conduct of life among the aristocracy and wider population in the notion of the divinity of the monarch (which led, among other things, to the exaltation of the 'place royale'). We tend to think of 'honour', nowadays, as something ridiculous, the touchy nonsense of silly male aristocrats who liked to prate of being guardians of public honour , or female 'honour', by virtue of protecting or asserting their own *amour propre*. 'Honour', even in the limited meaning of a sense of worth in the public eye, that might be lost or gained in the vicissitudes of social activity, seems a merely notional belief to those inhabiting a modern commercial existence where values are individualized and marketable. But 'honour', in its origins and in its strongest sense, should be understood as a kind of social trust by the light of which mutual communication was enabled to take place in customary or unrationalized society. And while we continue (crudely and mechanically) to live with each other we are actually obliged to retain a debased sense that our common reality depends on how we value each other and show our estimation for nobility of purpose in those around us. Though barbarized and distorted by the affectations of a pseudo-aristocratic clique in Baroque society (as the culture of aristocracy waned) the concept of honour still holds real meaning, and properly understood has religious connotations of the kind of common purpose and community inherent in primitive Christianity, for example.

This cannot be a comprehensive argument for the meaning of honour and its relationship to the layout of public space. It can only be proposed here that the concept of honour first represents a sense that the practice of virtue can be publicly intelligible between and among neighbouring people of goodwill and mutual trust and that breaches of social trust may be articulated and are likely to lead to sensible action. Further, it is suggested that, because we have a physical existence together, our actions are in some way oriented by the space we are given together in which to live: it is not possible to abstract the demands and possibilities of social life from the physical realities of co-existence and in the urban context the square served and serves as a kind of ritual space where the social principle of honour may be fulfilled or remain unfulfilled. Modern society is so inorganic and privatized that we lack any faith in the possibilities of honourable trust. But the kind of social relationships that we actually long for are not possible without restoration of some sense of 'honour', as a mutual consciousness of the best or noblest impulses in each other, that is, the discretion of honour as the conscience of public and interior relationship. Squares restored to full vitality can be spaces offering people the possibility to be together without compulsion and without the distortions of excessively regulated and commercialized life and may encourage 'honourable' behaviour, civic honour even, and a new trust in each other, if these words of conscience and goodwill have not been tainted or dishonoured.

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[6] O. Charles-Picard, 'Classical Greece', in Gilbert Charles-Picard (ed.), *Larousse Encyclopedia of Archaeology* (London: Hamlyn, 1972), pp. 267–89; Oswyn Murray, *Early Greece* (London: Fontana, 1980).
[7] Dayna Katherine Kirk, 'From *piazza* to *place royale*: the evolution of an absolutist type', unpublished MArch thesis, Rice University, Houston, TX, 1989.
[8] The author lately came across the remarks of Dickens in the course of reading a number of his novels but (to his frustration) has not been able, for the purposes of this article, to identify which one. He can see the paragraph in his mind's eye and can vouch for the accuracy of the ascription!
[9] The evidence for this survey was assembled from the online resources of Google Maps, Google Earth and Wikipedia, supplemented by published historical sources, city by city.
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