Moralizing Utopia:

The Virtues of Collectivity and Happiness in Ledoux’s Ideal City of Chaux

A thesis submitted by

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ABSTRACT

In 1802, French architect Claude Nicolas Ledoux published *L’Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l’art, des moeurs, et de la législation*, a five-volume text that documented the architect’s realized and conceptual architectural designs. In the first volume of *L’Architecture*, Ledoux imagines an ideal city in the Forest of Chaux with a complete architectural program and cultural life based on his realized project for the Royal Saltworks in Arc-et-Senans. In addition to the litany of building types developed for his utopian town, Ledoux crafted a comprehensive prospectus for the lifestyle of Chaux’s inhabitants, including working conditions, quality of education, and leisurely activities, which was then interpreted into his designs. The finalized utopian project, documented in writing and engravings, is the result of three developmental phases over nearly thirty years.

This thesis is driven by what it may mean to speculate on the themes of collectivity and happiness as articulated by Ledoux in the first volume of *L’Architecture*. By parsing out the mechanics of Rousseauian moral philosophy in the ideal city’s civic institutions, I interpret how the moral code institutes collectivity and happiness in Chaux. I argue that morality is enforced by the ideological unification of the collective and virtue's reward of eternal happiness. I achieve this by considering Ledoux’s ideal city, within the literary context of late eighteenth-century writing, as a solution rooted in Rousseauian ideology to the problems of city planning caused by moral ambiguity, overpopulation, overtaxation, and exaggerated class divides and the unstable economy in the last decades of the eighteenth century.
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INTRODUCTION

The Moral Question

Perhaps the most influential figure of French public architecture, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (1736-1804) is now celebrated as one of the masters of eighteenth-century neoclassicism with his monumental symbolic style approaching the utopian. Recognized by patrons in the 1770s for his rationalization of classicism, Ledoux innovated upon the system of architectural design and composition of his teacher Jacques-François Blondel (1705-1774) through the simplification of prismatic volumes. Today Ledoux is perhaps most recognized for his ideas regarding an ideal city put forth in the first volume of *L’Architecture considérée sous la rapport de l’arts, des moeurs et de la legislation* (published 1802). Written over nearly a fifteen year period and illustrated by dozens of precise, idyllic engravings, *L’Architecture* imagines a comprehensive program for a city erected around the existing Saline Royale de Chaux, constructed by Ledoux nearly three decades earlier. Although the nucleus of the ideal city of Chaux would remain the extant saltworks, Ledoux designed new businesses, leisure activities, and educational institutions based on the principles of the Physiocratic ideals from the mid-eighteenth-century and the political philosophy in Rousseau’s *The Social Contract* (1762).

However, for nearly one hundred and fifty years after *L’Architecture* was published, the ideological basis of the text was overshadowed by the exaggerated character of Chaux’s buildings like the Workshop of the Coopers (fig. 1) or Oikéma (fig. 2) in the analyses of architects, critics, and historians. The earliest interest in the architect’s extreme characterization besides criticism from contemporary architects like Charles-François Viel (1745-1819) was in 1852 by architect Antoine-Laurent-Thomas...
(“Léon”) Vaudoyer who claimed that Ledoux’s atypical designs could best be understood as \textit{architecture parlante}, or “speaking architecture,” because they were readable structures that appeared as if they could speak at any moment and directly expressed their meaning through didactic programming.\(^1\) An example of \textit{architecture parlante} can be found in the plan of Oikéma—Chaux’s brothel, whose name comes from Greek meaning “place of debauchery”—which took the form of a phallus, indicating the structure’s function.\(^2\) Ledoux explains, “Here good prevails, it will neutralize the passions of the head to prepare the delicious access of the heart, and if he [the patron] embraces apparent corruption, it is only to identify the principle that maintains the great interests of succeeding generations.”\(^3\) That is, Oikéma was designed to allow the young male patron to unleash his unbridled passions in a contained environment, so when he leaves the brothel, his mind will be relieved of bacchanalian thoughts and ready to embrace marriage and fatherhood. Thus, the phallic plan of Oikéma assumes a didactic program in that it instructs the patron how to experience the institution. The plan “speaks” to the visitor through direct expression.

In labeling these structures as \textit{architecture parlante}, Vaudoyer intended to express his dissatisfaction with a semiotic architecture that takes “no account of the work of their predecessors, and have the pretention of creating a completely new art all by


\(^{2}\)In Greek, Oikéma can mean “house,” “temple,” or “prison,” but in his text, Ledoux uses the term as “place of debauchery” after Herodotus, Plato, and Xenophon. Anthony Vidler, \textit{Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancien Régime} (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 8.

\(^{3}\)“Ici le bien commande, il va neutraliser les passions de la tête pour préparer les délicieux accès du cœur, et s’il caresse l’apparente corruption, ce n’est que pour s’identifier au principe qui maintient les grands intérêts de la succession des générations.” Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, \textit{Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l’art, des moeurs et de la legislation (Premier Volume)} (Paris: Hermann, Éditeurs des sciences et des arts, 1997), 342.
themselves.” For Vaudoyer, these building types were a radical departure from the trajectory of architectural design and signified a break with tradition. This interpretation of Ledoux’s architecture as ahistorical “speaking” designs appears again in early twentieth century architectural historian Emil Kaufmann’s *From Ledoux to Le Corbusier* (1933), *Three Revolutionary Architects: Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu* (1952), and *Architecture in the Age of Reason* (1955). Kaufmann establishes the stereometric formal qualities of Ledoux’s designs as prototypes of a revolutionary modern sensibility perfected in the work of Le Corbusier. As noted by later architectural historians, Kaufmann’s interpretation of Ledoux’s conceptual buildings only considered the formal similarities between the eighteenth-century architect and nineteenth and twentieth-century modernists. He neglected to account for the vast ideological and political differences in these different strains of architectural design. In subsequent decades, scholarship on Ledoux was heavily informed by Kaufmann’s analyses, with the exception of a couple essays and a book on ideal cities by Helen Rosenau, which focused on Ledoux’s role as a city planner.

In the 1980s through the early 2000s, there was renewed interest in Ledoux and ideal city of Chaux, with the publication of monographs by Michel Gallet, Anthony Vidler, and Daniel Rabreau. These texts attempt to revise Kaufmann’s formal associations by reconsidering the ideal city within the context of Ledoux’s education and

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5 Anthony Vidler offers a comprehensive summary of Kaufmann’s analysis of Ledoux. He writes, “Ledoux was now presented as the eponymous hero of modernism, a ‘revolutionary’ avant-garde architect before the fact. Certainly, as Kaufmann himself recognized, Ledoux was no political revolutionary; but his formal transformations and utopian aspirations seemed in retrospect, to anticipate those of the emerging bourgeois state. Like Ernst Cassirer, preoccupied at the same time with the resolution of problems of individuality (Rousseau) and objectivity (Kant), Kaufmann found in Ledoux a rich subject for study at a moment when the rational ideals of the *neue Sachlichkeit* were being attacked by the nostalgic and emotive appeals of the Third Reich.” Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux*, x.
career, eighteenth-century politics, contemporary architecture, and Enlightenment moral philosophy. Anthony Vidler’s *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancien Régime*, in particular, comprehensively covers the social and political context of the architect’s career, with special attention paid to the Rousseauian and Masonic symbolism behind the various institutions in Chaux. Vidler interprets many of Chaux’s moralizing institutions through Foucauldian panopticism, claiming, “Utopia did not diminish the need for continuous surveillance.” He argues that the built Director’s House at the heart of the Saline de Chaux and, thus, the center of the ideal city was positioned to supervise the rest of the complex from a superior position. The regulation of citizens offered by the Director’s House was mimicked through the programming and design of the city’s other major institutions, enforcing moral order through the symbolism of surveillance.

One of Vidler’s key interpretations is the notion that there exists a paradoxical relationship in the Rousseauian model between statehood and surveillance. That is, while the state should be a non-oppressive entity that facilitates man’s goodness while uniting citizens as a collective, surveillance is still required to monitor the moral wellbeing of its people. However, I am interested in an alternative reading of collectivity in Ledoux’s vision. This thesis is driven by what it may mean to speculate on the themes of collectivity and happiness that appear throughout Ledoux’s text. Ledoux’s ideal city is predicated on a strict moral code based on Rousseau’s *Social Contract* in order to create an optimal society. While surveillance may be utilized as a tactic of the state to monitor the moral wellbeing of its people, it does not promote the Enlightenment virtue of collectivity that ensures their happiness. It only endorses the good behavior of citizens as

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6 Ibid., 356.
it relates to the state. Surveillance does not ensure ultimate happiness, which can only be achieved through their participation in moral order. Rather than being purely a consequence of surveillance, I argue that morality is enforced by the ideological unification of the collective and virtue's reward of eternal happiness.

Additionally, this thesis intends to consider Ledoux’s ideal city, within the literary context of late eighteenth-century writing, as a solution rooted in Rousseauian ideology to the problems of city planning caused by moral ambiguity and the unstable economy in the French Revolutionary period. I have chosen to consider Ledoux’s architectural treatise within the context of classical and concurrent literary and philosophical texts for two reasons. Firstly, the architect’s early education was predicated on the Jansenist curriculum of moralizing classical mythology and literature, which occupied the architect’s imagination and architectural approach throughout his career. Secondly, *L’Architecture*’s rhetoric relies on the reader’s familiarity with French classical and contemporary texts regarding morality, collectivity, and the social conscious in relation to Rousseauian moral philosophy. Since Ledoux’s theorization of Chaux is founded upon the philosopher’s theories, it is essential that the reader is cognizant how a Rousseauian society would function within the architect’s conceptual world.

In the first chapter, I will present an overview of Ledoux’s education, career, and professional relationships, with a particular focus on his efforts at the Saline Royale de Chaux between 1773 and 1775. The intent is to highlight the key themes and events in the architect’s life that relate to his ideal city at Chaux. Chapter Two will provide the chronology of the architect’s development of the ideal city as well as examine some of the literary and philosophical substructures in *L’Architecture*. This examination will
include defining the architectural concept of character in Ledoux’s practice, discussing
the text’s literary counterparts, and considering Rousseauian moral philosophy. Chapter
Three will consider some of the ways in which Rousseauian philosophy and Physiocracy
are found in the architectural theories and designs of Chaux’s major public institutions,
using the Church, Public Market, Stock Market, and Public Baths as case studies. Finally,
Chapter Four will engage with the results of Rousseauian morality within Chaux’s
architecture and consider how the structures enforce the collective identity and propagate
communal happiness, exemplified by the Cénobie and Cemetery.
CHAPTER I: The Life and Education of the Architect

The Early Years

Born in the rural village of Dormans, Champagne in 1736 to a family of shopkeepers, Ledoux spent his childhood in the French countryside—an experience that he would later romanticize in his treatment of Chaux. Although he would only spend his first thirteen years in the rural Champagne region, his early provincial experiences would permeate his utopian approach to the rural town of Chaux. For Ledoux, life in the countryside, embodied through the rituals of local festivals and the abundance of natural resources, offered the pure and honorable virtues that were corrupted in the luxuries of the city. As we will see in subsequent chapters, the themes of ritualized celebrations and nature appear in many of his public institutions and attempt to unify the town’s inhabitants.

Between December 1, 1749 and February 5, 1753, Ledoux received a scholarship to attend the Collège de Dormans-Beauvais in Paris. Under the supervision of Charles Rollin, the program at the Collège de Beauvais was based on a Jansenist system—a theological approach to education that perpetuated Catholic moral dogmas—that taught an abridged version of the classical trivium (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) curriculum. Rollin’s personal modification to the Jansenist system was to curate fragments from classical literature and philosophy, which he called morceaux choisies (selected abstracts), creating a mediated

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7 Vidler claims, “Some of his earliest commissions were to come from the [Champagne] region and his professional career was always to be linked to the reform of agriculture. The preoccupation was to culminate in the utopia he imagined for the Franche-Comté, an ideal society pervaded with images of his lost childhood: the seasonal changes, rustic festivals, and artisan practices of village life.” Vidler, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, 5.
moralistic narrative of Antiquity and the Renaissance’s greatest thinkers, without the complications of historical context or paganism. Rollin’s curriculum created a revisionist, cyclical narrative of history, in which kingdoms would conquest and expand until they bloated beyond the sovereign’s control, resulting in ruinous revolutions and ultimate obliteration of the culture. Vidler claims that this mode of logic would occupy Ledoux, who “was often to be comforted in administrative and personal defeat by such a vision of an eternal return.”

It was at the Collège de Beauvais that the future architect was encouraged to pursue classical literature and its modern counterparts, providing Ledoux a more nuanced and textual approach to architectural design than his contemporaries, who typically were educated in courses relating to the trade. Vidler claims, “Ledoux, it is clear, entered this culture eagerly and assimilated its best and worst aspects; it determined not only the allusive and often obscure character of his writing, but also, and fundamentally, his approach to architecture and his personal form of visual rhetoric.”

His informed methodology is evident in L’Architecture, in which recognizable classical figures and mythologies from his early education at the Collège de Beauvais are embedded within the description of Chaux.

After his grant expired, Ledoux trained and briefly worked as an engraver to financially support himself; these early years developing the skills of an engraver would contribute to the precise execution of his designs in L’Architecture. However, it was between 1754 and 1758 that Ledoux began his proper training as an architect, at the

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8 Ibid., 5-7.
9 Ibid., 7.
10 Although I will only be examining a few of the texts that would inspire the architect as a young man, some notable examples include Fénélon’s les aventures de Télémaque (1699), Fontenelle’s Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes (1686), La Fontaine’s Fables (1668-94), La Bruyère’s Caractères (1688), and La Rouchefoucauld’s Maximes (1665-78). 10 Ibid., 6-7.
École des Arts, founded and operated by Jacques-François Blondel. Opened a little over a decade before Ledoux attended, Blondel’s school was created in competition against the declining Royal Académie school and recognized by the royal administration as supplementary to an education at the École des Ponts et Chaussées. The master architect offered public lectures to young architects who were not admitted into the competitive Académie. Under Blondel’s instruction, Ledoux developed his understanding of the professional role of the architect, appreciation of seventeenth-century classicism, theoretical and aesthetic approaches to design, and “his vision of himself as an architecte-philosophe, heir to the reforming idealism of the midcentury.” Arguably, the most influential idea taught at the École for Ledoux and his peers was Blondel’s concept of caractère, or “character,” a system of categorizing design that conflated social hierarchies with aesthetic hierarchies through the codification of ornamentation and arrangements. In Blondel’s four-volume treatise, he describes the function of caractère: “All the different kinds of works belonging to architecture must bear the imprint of the particular purpose of each building; all must have a character that determines their general form and that announces the building for what it is.” That is, a proposed building would be assigned a suitable caractère based on the patron’s status, the functional program, and locality that would appropriately communicate to the public the structure’s objective. In a method comparable to identifying and applying literary genres,

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11 In Blondel’s pedagogical method for design (later appropriated and developed by the Académie and the École des Beaux-Arts), the professor explained the conditions of the program (e.g. the site, contours, and potential programs) and would work out the problem himself in front of the students, providing a detailed problematic to the design (e.g. exterior proportions and ordonnance, problems in distribution, interior decoration). Additionally, it should be noted that the term “architecte-philosophe,” or architect-philosopher, is often used by architectural historians (most notably Vidler and Rabreau) to describe Ledoux. I agree with these scholars that this term is an accurate identifier for him, therefore I will be using it throughout the text. Ibid., 10-13.

12 From Blondel, Cours d’architecture, 2:229. Translation by Vidler, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, 12.
Blondel’s system of (*caractère*), derived from Vitruvius’s distinction between different types of temples, featured a prescribed set of ornamental, stylistic, and rhetorical features according to a list of sixty-four building genres with thirty-eight characters found in Blondel’s book *Cours d’architecture*. This idea of *caractère* was a preoccupation in the master and his students’ work, evident in Ledoux’s later work.

After four years attending Blondel’s public lecture series, Ledoux secured his first position in the workshop of a practicing architect. In 1758, Ledoux completed his architectural education in an apprenticeship under architect Louis-François Trouard (1729-1794), who had returned to Paris after three years in Rome. Little is known about this time in Ledoux’s career, though, it known that the young architect obtained adequate qualifications in Trouard’s workshop to acquire a position as resident architect at the Département des Eaux et Forêts de France.

In the 1760s, Ledoux’s career simultaneously gained traction in two architectural sectors: private urban homes and public rural works. The Parisian public first noticed Ledoux in 1762 for his commission to complete the interior decoration scheme of the Café Godot (fig. 3)—also known as the Café Militaire—where the architect employed motifs of spears and helmets that honored the café’s patrons for the articulation of the

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13 Blondel adapted this “Vitruvian synopsis” which led to both more legible buildings and a radically new approach to architectural composition under the premise that every building features a design appropriate for their station. This approach to design was deeply rooted in the classical orders as metaphors of male strength or female beauty. He also departed from tradition by insisting on the “primacy of massing.” In his book *Symbolic Space*, Richard Etlin quotes Blondel: “I have said it more than once, a beautiful architecture suffices to itself. The architect should begin with the naked mass and be content with this, before trying to add ornamentation. This must be born within the very bosom of architecture. Otherwise it will appear as a misplaced accessory.” Etlin then says “The key to his theory, through resided in his insistence on the massing of the building as the carrier of meaning, with the orders reduced to a supplementary and even superfluous feature.” Richard A. Etlin, *Symbolic Space: French Enlightenment Architecture and its Legacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), 14.
walls.\textsuperscript{14} Ledoux’s meticulous attention to creating an appropriate \textit{caractère} in the interior of a popular military gathering place earned the young architect critical acclaim as the protégé of Blondel’s instruction and led to several private, domestic commissions including the remodeling of the Hôtel d’Hallwyl in 1766 (figs. 4, 5) and the Hôtel d’Uzès in 1769 (fig. 6). Although these renovated urban homes retained the standard characteristics expected of sumptuous Parisian \textit{hôtels particuliers} (urban townhouses) including conventional \textit{corps de logis} (main block) with front and rear courtyards, these early works demonstrate particular architectural attributes that would be seen in his public commissions for the \textit{Barrières des Fermiers généraux de Paris} (Paris’s Wall of the General Farmers) and at the Saline Royale de Chaux as well as his conceptual designs for the ideal city. For example, the exterior and courtyard façades of the Hôtel d’Hallwyl have a pronounced horizontality encouraged by pronounced, narrow rustication. This horizontal massing paired with a simplified façade and use of rustication is repeated throughout the entirety of his career. Likewise, the Hôtel d’Uzès uses an entrance disproportionately larger than the building behind it, similar to the massive gate created for the Saline Royale de Chaux that obscures the view of the factory behind it (fig. 7).

During the 1760s, Ledoux also began working under the direction of Louis-François Du Vaucel, Grand Maître des Eaux et Forêts for Paris, as resident architect for the Département des Eaux et Forêts. During his public works tenure, Ledoux oversaw all architectural and engineering matters concerning the waters and forests in rural Franche-Comté and Burgundy, which required him to plan new constructions (e.g. roads, river

quays, wells, bridges, churches), attend to necessary repairs, and prepare estimates.\textsuperscript{15} It is during this period that Ledoux developed a proficiency in engineering public works and, perhaps, a burgeoning interest in rural public architecture. His experience working in the rural regions of France prepared the young architect beyond the ordinary expertise of a society architect, including the practical programing of transportation, maintenance of forests and rivers, and innovations in rural industry. Most importantly, however, Ledoux made amicable relationships with members of the Ferme Générale—an unpopular, but influential and wealthy organization of tax collectors known as fermiers—during his tenure working at the Département des Eaux et Forêts under Du Vaucel, who was himself the son of one of the fermiers.

**Saline Royale de Chaux**

Ledoux’s career blossomed in the 1770s, with the commissions of his most famous houses in Paris, the saltworks at Arc and Senans, the theater at Besançon, and a multipurpose civic project in Aix. Many of these projects were due in part to Ledoux’s association with patron Jeanne Bécu, comtesse du Barry (1743-1793), Louis XV’s last maîtresse en titre (official mistress), who would launch the architect’s career at court. Although she had limited political interest, du Barry held immense influence at court and knew many political adversaries, thus she formed an alliance with Maupeou, the Chancellor, and the Abbé Terray, the Contrôleur des Fiances and Marigny’s successor as

\textsuperscript{15} Archival research within the last thirty years has revealed that Ledoux reworked several bridges and a dozen ecclesiastical projects in and around Burgundy under his tenure at the Département des Eaux et Forêts. Vidler characterizes these projects as foreshadowing his later work: “in each of these buildings, the simple geometries and massing of the cut stone and the diagrammatic treatment of the orders anticipated Ledoux’s more mature ‘public’ style in, for example, the barrières of Paris.” For more information on his public projects during the 1760s, see Braham, *The Architecture of the French Enlightenment*, 160, and Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux*, 15-16.
the director of the Bâtiments du Roi. Terray, anxious to maintain his position, financially sponsored many of du Barry’s architectural projects completed by Ledoux. Although there is no documentation concerning how architect and patron met, du Barry first commissioned Ledoux to design a pavilion for the park at her newly acquired estate in Louveciennes, situated on the Seine River west of Paris. Completed by 1771, the pavilion gained an influential client in du Barry, who proceeded to give Ledoux the commission to complete her stables in Versailles, build a new château at Louveciennes, and draft a new townhouse in Paris. Even after the death of Louis XV when the maîtresse-en-titre lost her political power at court and was sent to a nunnery, du Barry continued to commission projects from her favorite architecture while in exile.

In 1771, due partly to his work at the Département d’Eaux et Forêts but more significantly because of du Barry’s influence in court, Ledoux was appointed Commissaire des Salines for Franche-Comté, Lorraine, and the Trois-Évêches by the royal Arrêt du Conseil (Order in Council). As Commissaire des Salines, Ledoux acted as an adjunct to the engineer Jean-Rodolphe Perronet. Vidler describes the appointment: “In the event of Perronet’s absence, Ledoux was to ‘oversee the conservation and maintenance of the springs and salt-water of the said salines… as well as the buildings

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17 The saltworks in Lorraine and the Franche-Comté had ancient foundations, with a history of production dating back to Roman occupation. The techniques of salt production saw little innovation over the centuries. The process of manufacture consists of brigades of workers, located in bernes (barnlike structures). Some workers would set up flat boiling pans (*poêles*) over wood burning furnaces, supported by thin iron plates hung from thick wooden beams. Other workers were responsible for evaporating salt water, drawn from the underground springs in salt beds in the Jura and lower Alps, during a 48-hour evaporation process that included skimming impurities from the surface of the pan and stoking the fire for a constant heat. After 48 hours, workers would rake off the wet salt crystals onto a drying rack. Finally, salt was packed into panniers or pressed into flat cakes to be sold by agents of the Ferme subject to a gabelle. Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux*, 77-78.
constructed or about to be constructed for the service of said salines.”  

Although this station offered little financial gain for the architect, it provided him with a greater access to professional connections, allowing Ledoux to turn the job within three years into a major public architectural commission. In this position, Ledoux developed significant relationships with future patrons including Jean-Charles-Philibert Trudaine de Montigny, a chemist-philosophe equally knowledgeable about the arts and the processes and sources of contamination of salt production. Trudaine, the Intendent du Commerce of the salines royales, advocated for the support of Ledoux’s work, as far as recommending him for further commissions in Besançon and Aix. Ledoux also made professional relationships with André Haudry de Soucy and Alexandre-Parseval Deschênes, officials of the Ferme Générale immediately concerned with the salt manufacture in Franche-Comté.

Soon after he assumed his position as Commissaire des Salines, Ledoux toured the various saltworks in the region, noting the disrepair and inefficiency of the factories that produced the country’s most indispensible commodity. Known as l’or blanc, salt was essential for the revenue of the ancien régime with a long history in Franche-Comté, due to the region’s proximity to the massive deposits of salt-rock in the Jura mountain range and in the hydraulic reserve underground.  

Kept in greniers (structures under the jurisdiction of the king that were highly supervised and controlled by agents of the monarch) and peddled by les grenetiers (officers that acted as intermediaries between consumers and the king), salt was subject to a gabelle, the despised taxation of the

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18 Ibid., 75.
19 La France-Comté was the site of heavy salt production since the Roman period and has been one of the most important centers of production since the Middle Ages and is strategically located on the international route for salt trade. It was during the Middle Ages that local French authorities first collected taxes for the sale of salt under their jurisdiction. On 20 March 1340, Philippe VI de Valois established the first ordinance for the first royal monopoly on the sale of salt. Under the centralization of the monarchy, sovereigns were allowed to impose la gabelle (the term derived from the Arabic kabala, “to receive”). Anne Sefrioui, La Saline Royale d’Arc-et-Senans (Paris: Éditions Scala, 2001), 8-9.
consumption of salt and its consequent products (e.g. cheese, preserved meats). By the eighteenth-century, the *gabelle* was the most economically important indirect tax in the nation. Historically, each province had their own administrative system for collecting the *gabelle*, however, the inefficiency of the discrepancy of the individual systems quickly became apparent to the monarch. At the end of the sixteenth-century, Henri IV yielded his control of the properties from which the salt water was harvested and the commodity itself to a group of *fermiers* (leaseholders) in exchange for a predetermined sum of money to be collected at the end of a lease. Within a century, the duc de Sully perfected the system, established over the entire state, and then Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Minister of Finance for Louis XIV, created in 1681 the Compagnie de la Ferme Générale, a collective of about sixty *fermiers généraux* who were in charge of collecting the predetermined amount of tax for the king on a six-year lease.

By the 1760s, salt production in the France-Comté had declined considerably with even the most lucrative saltworks at Salins not yielding enough profitable supplies. With a looming threat of salt shortage, the royal administration for salt production decided to divert the waters to the saline spring to a point between the villages of Arc and Senans, where there was to be the new *saline*. In 1773, under the support of Trudaine and the *fermiers généraux* and with firsthand insight into the neglect and disrepair of extant *salines*, Ledoux seized the opportunity to propose a project for the new *saline* that would

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20 According to Sefrioui, “en 1789… elle représente 0,5 % des rentrées fiscales.” Ibid.
21 This system, although uniform, did not create a uniform tax for the provinces. The tax rate and availability of salt varied amongst provinces, resulting in a serious black market for contraband and fake salt. Ibid., 9.
22 The administration for the saltworks was the Contrôleur Général, which housed the Bureau du Commerce; the office of the Inspecteur des Salines and his adjunct; various state-sponsored inspectors (who investigated architecture, engineering, works and maintenance, conservation and quality of waters, controlling of wood, and regularity of the salt); and the Ferme, who duplicated many of these positions in addition to overseeing production and the management of the other agencies. Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux*, 78.
enhance salt production, increase revenue, and solve the problem of low wood supply to fuel the furnaces. He effectively argued that a new saline should be built in a forest, and water should travel via aqueduct to the building. He claimed that it would be more economical, even if building a 48,000 feet aqueduct would be expensive in the immediate future. On April 29, 1773, the Supreme Council, led by Louis XV, allowed the Ferme Générale—which held a monopoly for the management for all of the salines in Franche-Comté and Burgundy—to call for construction bids for a saline to be built in the heavily wooded forest of Chaux between the villages of Arc and Senans, as called for by Ledoux.

Although the start date of Ledoux’s first plan of the new royal saltworks remains unknown, it has been suggested that a preliminary scheme was submitted along with his original proposal. Nevertheless, this first plan (fig. 8), developed between March 1773 and April 1774, was a centralized square complex comprised of joining pavilions of varying heights and sizes situated around a massive central courtyard. The conventional layout of the first plan resembled that of many other eighteenth-century French institutional complexes, including the Hôpital Saint-Louis. Both living and working quarters—including the Director’s Apartments, the Gatehouse, the Worker’s Apartments,
the Packing Sheds, the Salt Storage, the Chapel, and the Bakery—would be situated within the continuous square and accessible by internal and external roads. In the heart of this plan, the workers could gather communally in the courtyard that culminated in a simple fountain.

The regularized, rationalized order, characteristic of military barracks, was considered by both the architect and the royal administration to be an unsatisfactory character or program; Ledoux claimed that he designed it dispassionately according to Louis XV’s restrictive specifications in the contract. However, the main problem of the first plan for the Saline Royale was the excessive use of classical Doric orders for an industrial complex. There were four rusticated Doric columns surmounted by a pediment at the entrance of the saline; twenty-four columns supporting three covered porches at the rear of the complex; four columns marking Serlian entries to amenity buildings, which led to colonnaded passages; columns encircling the chapel; and over a hundred columns for covered galleries. All of these orders were designed to reflect the austerity and simplicity of industrial life, however, the unprecedented number of columns for an industrial complex—a building type deemed unworthy of classical design—caused the fermiers and Louis XV, according to the architect’s later account in *L’Architecture*, to scoff at the proposal.26 The excess of classical orders for a factory and the lack of hierarchy in the plan was considered as implausible for the commission. Ledoux defended his design on the premise that the type of order he used was not typically found in private, church, or state architecture and they helped ennoble the factory as an emblem of the state’s industrial production. Ultimately, the first plan was rejected on the grounds

that the *bernes* (barn-like manufacturing buildings that housed industrial size furnaces) sat too close to the worker’s living quarters, rendering the plan unsafe and a fire hazard.⁷⁷

Between October 1774 and July 1776, Ledoux developed the executed second plan (fig. 9, 10) for the Saline Royale. The second complex was comprised of ten principle buildings laid out in a semicircle, which practically protected against potential fire hazards by separating the living quarters from the industrial structures and symbolically obeyed the course of the sun, which dictates the rural workers’ calendar and signifies the royal patronage of the Bourbon monarchs.⁷⁸ Although the second plan was still centralized and self-enclosed, it departed from the egalitarian arrangement of the first plan using a hierarchical arrangement of a centralized Director’s House flanked by two *bernes* along the plan’s east-west axis. Several avenues radiate from the central structures to the enclosing arc that included five two-story pavilions that house workshops, storage halls, and dormitories. Beyond the Gatehouse were several gardens surrounded by a dry moat and tree lined avenues. Ledoux retained about a dozen of the Doric columns he originally proposed in the first plan for the temple front of the Director’s House and the Gatehouse.

Isolated from the surrounding communities, the Saline Royale provided all necessary accommodations for workers, resulting in a self-enclosed village. The industrial village offered minor workshops for coopers and carpenters, a chapel, bakery, prison, and courtroom available according to the needs of the inhabitants. This idea of the self-enclosed village was only a small part of Ledoux’s larger plan for Chaux’s ideal city, which would provide all necessary educational and social institutions so workers would

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⁷⁷ Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux*, 94-95.
⁷⁸ Ibid., 98.
never have to fulfill their needs at institutions outside the village. This realized plan of the Saline Royale afforded the architect a small glimpse of the potentiality for utopia in the countryside of Franche-Comté, which he had imagined as early as 1775.

**Later Projects & the Revolution**

Positive reception of the Saline Royale de Chaux in the late 1770s followed by the death of prominent architects Ange-Jacques Gabriel (1698-1782) and Jacques-Germain Soufflot (1713-1780) at the beginning of the 1780s provided Ledoux with several major commissions in both France and Germany. These projects included another grenier à sel in Compiègne for the Ferme in 1775, a theater in Besançon in 1775, a palais de justice-prison complex in Aix in 1785, and the infamous Parisian Barrières des Fermiers généraux (fig. 11, 12) in 1783-1791. The Barrières, or propylaea, of Paris were tollhouses that enclosed Paris, enforced the payment of tolls, and prevented citizens from smuggling untaxed goods into the city. Although French citizens detested how the barrières symbolized further economic oppression by the Ferme Générale, Ledoux considered the gatehouses as “‘magnificent Propylons’ that conferred antique dignity on the city and presented an ever-present reminder of the wisdom of the state and the collective wealth of the nations.”

Although the form differs between many of the buildings (i.e. some were built using Greek conventions, while other were developed from geometric, central plans), all of the designs demonstrate Ledoux’s simplified, unornamented aesthetic as well as demonstrated the architect’s propensity for collapsing millennia worth of architectural design into a single building—a concept that I will

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discuss further in the next chapter. The *barrières* are significant for three reasons: first, they would be Ledoux’s last major commission seen to completion; second, they would be eventual evidence of his loyalty to the *ancien régime* and the hated Tax Farmers; and third, they are characteristic of Ledoux’s mature design aesthetic. The project was abandoned in 1791 during the liberal constitutional phase of the French Revolution, after the Assembly decreed that the tolls should no longer be collected.  

By 1792 when radical republicanism gained traction in the months before the Reign of Terror, there were few architectural opportunities in Paris, and Ledoux, although bestowed with the highest honors of the French Academy, stopped receiving commissions in the years leading up to his death. Like many French intellectuals of the period, he seemed unconcerned by the egalitarian ideologies of Revolutionaries at the beginning of the movement; however, his clients and friends soon became targets of the revolutionaries, leading to the end of his career. In 1793, the architect was denounced to the Committee of Public Safety and imprisoned in La Force for almost a year during the Terror with the charges of being in contact with ex-nobles and financiers, of applying for the *cordon noir* (“the black ribbon” awarded to members of the chivalric order of Saint Micheal), of possessing documents claiming membership to a royalist club, and of being the architect of the oppressive *barrières*.

Forced into early retirement, Ledoux soon became restless. According to his earliest biographer, Jacques Cellerier, Ledoux “complained privately of staying inactive

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31 Ledoux had been elected to the first class of the Academy in 1773 in a political move by Terray and du Barry. Wittman, *Architecture, Print Culture, and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France*, 178-179.
and not being able to dedicate to Napoleon the last fire of his talent." He took, thus, a favorable opportunity in 1800 to show to His Excellency, the Minister of the Interior, a project to restore and finish the two triumphal columns, which form one of the entries to Paris, at the Barrière du Trône. However, nothing came of his efforts and he spent the last years of his life producing conceptual projects for his ideal city in *L’Architecture*.

Decades after Ledoux’s death, most of his urban buildings were destroyed as part of the French Second Empire’s urban renewal plans under Paris’s Prefect of the Seine Georges-Eugène Haussmann. His work on the Saline Royale, however, was left untouched. After the production was halted at the end of the nineteenth-century, the complex quickly fell into disrepair. It was not until 1926 that the historical site at Chaux began undergoing conservation, and, in 1972, opened as the “Centre de réflexion sur le Futur” (“Center for the Reflection of the Future”). It would become a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983.³³

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CHAPTER II: Writing Utopia

The Ideal City

In 1804, two years before his death, Ledoux published *L’Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l’art, des moeurs, et de la législation*, a five-volume compilation that documented the architect’s oeuvre. In 1802, Ledoux wrote a prospectus that articulated his goal of curating buildings of social reform. By 1804, he compiled five volumes of engravings demonstrating his built and conceptual projects. The first volume considered Ledoux’s project for the ideal city of Chaux as well as building types in the Franche-Comté. The second, third, and fourth volumes considered his projects for Paris and the provinces, the fifth considered the Propylaea of Paris. For the purposes of this project, I will only focus on the first volume of the collected works.

*L’Architecture’s* first volume consists of writings and engravings that illustrate the architectural configuration and cultural life of a conceptual town based around the Saline Royale in the Forêt de Chaux. He imagines the small industrial village constructed decades earlier as a full-fledged rural city that would serve the occupational, educational, and social demands of its inhabitants. In addition to the litany of building types developed for his utopic town, Ledoux crafted a comprehensive prospectus for the lifestyle of Chaux’s inhabitants, including working conditions, quality of education, and leisurely activities, which was then interpreted into his designs.

The ideal city of Chaux was based on the architect’s desire to enact social reform in the French rural city. The questions remain as to what exactly were the goals of social

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34 Vidler, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, 378.
35 The first volume of *L’Architecture* also discusses a couple structures that Ledoux had realized during his career, including the Besançon Theater and the Propylaeas in Paris, however, I will not be discussing these aspects in the text because of the narrow focus of my project.
reform in the architect’s project and how do they relate to the Rousseauian concept of moral order? The answers to these questions derive from Ledoux’s opinion of the political landscape in the last decades of his life. In the Prospectus of *L’Architecture*, the architect observes, “Nature weeps amidst this political debris. The immutable order of things is shaken… all the efforts of art are powerless.”36 That is, the state of politics during the last decades of the eighteenth-century have disturbed the natural order of things as reflected in the arts. Thus, Ledoux commences his project for the ideal city as a method of establishing what he considered an ideal social order in an otherwise chaotic political period. He recognizes that modern French society is limited by vanity and self-interest, which cater only to the individual and discount the needs of the collective. The architect remedies these problems through the creation and enforcement of a strict Rousseauian moral code—that is, a system of ethics that prioritizes virtues (based on social conventions) including justness, decency, and collectivity as proposed by Rousseau in his *Discourses* (1750, 1755) and *The Social Contract* (1762). Ledoux argues, “Morality that is the active religion and philosophy that is the sister of this religion are also their [the people’s] sanctuaries.”37 According to the architect, morality founded on sound philosophical principles and actively practiced by citizens is the answer, or “sanctuary,” for any given society. If all members of society actively pursued and valued the moral code with the same passion they have in their religious practices, social problems originating from individual greed could be prevented.

The Evolution of Chaux

Although Ledoux primarily developed *L’Architecture* during his twelve-year period of unemployment, there is a consensus amongst scholars that the architect had first thought of the conceptual city as early as the 1775, while he designed the second plan of the Saline Royale. The early versions of Chaux and its institutions only appeared in fragments in the form of disparate engravings executed by different engravers, until Ledoux compiled them during his imprisonment in 1793. The finalized utopian project, as published in *L’Architecture*, is the result of three developmental phases over nearly thirty years.

In the first stage of developing the ideal city, conceived as early as 1775 but executed in engravings between 1779 and 1785, Ledoux creates the visual layout of the city. Using the realized plan for the Saline Royale and its auxiliary structures (workers’ dormitories, factory, director’s house, etc.), Ledoux axially mirrors the southern semicircle creating an oval nucleus with new residential and civic buildings around the northern arc. The composition of this new city more than doubles the size of the Saline Royale complex with supplementary structures radiating into the countryside from the tree-lined boulevard around the centre ville. This new oval shape also had symbolic implications. Firstly, it more accurately depicted the cosmic course of the sun, celebrating the agrarian society for which it was laid out. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, its circular shape evoked the physiocratic metaphor for the circle of production, the

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38 The following chronology has been curated from the following sources, all of whom have conducted research on which years the engravings in *L’Architecture* were first completed: Kalnein, *Architecture in France in the Eighteenth Century*, 256; Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux*, 266-267; Rabreau, *Claude Nicolas Ledoux (1736-1806)*, 174.
economic structure from which the town would profit which I will explain further in Chapter Three.³⁹

In this first plan (fig. 13), Ledoux also augmented the city with several concentric layers including a boulevard surrounding the *centre ville*, a series of regular terrace houses around this boulevard, and an additional boulevard surrounding the concentric rows of private houses. Two axial grand boulevards pierced this otherwise fortified plan. It is during this stage that he first develops some of the most significant structures in his utopia, including Barracks around the northern perimeter, a Public Market and Public Baths located outside the center, a Town Hall paralleling the position of the gatehouse, and public squares with a Parish Church and Law Courts on each end of the oval’s east-west axis. Many of these early designs stylistically resembled the built structures at the Saline Royale in his treatment of lines and the orders as well as contemporaneous public projects, as exemplified in Chaux’s Church, which had Doric temple fronts on its four facades, a low dome, and a plan based on a modified version of Soufflot’s 1757 Greek-cross design for the Church of Sainte-Geneviève.⁴⁰

Between 1785 and 1789, Ledoux reformed the master plan of Chaux, best recorded in the engraving “Perspective View of the Town of Chaux” (“Vue perspective de la Ville de Chaux”).⁴¹ Ledoux reimagines Chaux as an open, picturesque village, rather than a fortified medieval city. The design retains its oval plan, but Ledoux adds sixteen tree-lined radial streets that converge at the city center and separate the individual

⁴¹ This version “Perspective View of the Town of Chaux” was published in *L’Architecture* and provides the only detailed view of the plan of the town, however, it does not accurate portray many of the buildings Ledoux designs after the Revolution. The facades, placement, and function of my structures were altered during the third phrase of design, but Ledoux did not correct these changes in this view.
Workers’ Buildings. The city’s Church remains in the eastern square, however, the Public Markets replaced the Law Courts and a Stock Exchange was added in the north next to the Public Baths. He also replaced the regular terrace housing with Neo-Palladian villas spread amongst farmhouses, warehouses, and monasteries.

Ledoux’s reorganization of the master plan during this second phase reflects the ideological shift in the architect’s intention for the project. While the structures created in the first plan were practical for a rural town, the buildings in this second phase—which included the Cemetery, the Cannon Foundry, the Grange Parée, the small Hôtellerie, several commercial buildings, the double houses under triple arcades, the barrel-vaulted Worker’s House, various workshops (for woodcutters, coopers, sawyers, forest guards, and charcoal burners), the Cénobie (multi-family housing complex), and Oikéma—are equally functional and utopian, characterized by a lack of ornamentation or modeling of individual elements and dominance of abstract, stereometric forms. Wend von Kalnein identifies the style of these structures as a radical departure from his earlier traditional practice due to, as Kalnein suggests, the architect’s apprehension that such a utopian project could be executed in a politically tense and economically troubled Pre-Revolutionary France. In other words, since this extensive project would be unrealizable in his contemporary political and economic climate, the buildings in terms of their caractère and function no longer needed to be confined to real-world application.

The building types added in the second phase reveal the architect’s departure from practical town planning as exemplified in the first phase—i.e. the Hôtel de ville, the

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42 Although these engravings seem to radically depart from the Neoclassical style of both the realized Saline Royale and the proposed buildings created in the first phase, this series of engravings resemble the same abstracted style as Ledoux’s barrières in Paris, designed during the same period. Wend von Kalnein, *Architecture in France in the Eighteenth Century*, trans. David Britt (New Haven: Yale University Press), 256.
Church, the Law Courts—to a increasing interest in reforming the rural town with a moralizing attitude.

The simplification of Chaux’s concentric layers of boulevards and houses also reflects this idea of the shift towards instituting moral reform through symbolic representation. In the first plan, these layers operated as the protection of the town’s innermost nucleus that housed the factory and civic institutions. However, in the second plan, the number of boulevards is reduced and the impenetrable terrace housing is removed. This change in design occurs because fortification is no longer necessary in the ideal city if didactic security expressed through the planning of moralizing institutions can be instituted. Foreign ideas that could harm the social and ideological structure of the city can be countered if moral principles are effectively enforced in all institutions. Although this may seem like a sudden and disjointed shift between the practical and the symbolic, the second version of Chaux marks an unmistakable transition from the ideal, yet practical plan to the philosophically-grounded utopian vision.

The final developmental stage occurred after Ledoux’s imprisonment between 1793 and 1802. In this last version of Chaux, the architect retained the macro composition developed in the second phase, but added several new buildings characterized by a more radically abstracted style and program, including: twelve country houses, portiques (warehouses), Cour de Service, Hospice, the House of the Surveyors of the Loüe River, the House of Education, Hunting Lodge, Stock Exchange, Monument to Recreation, House of Games, Pacifère, House of Union, Temple of Memory, and the Panarêthéon.43 As opposed to the buildings that facilitated the obvious and immediate needs of Chaux’s inhabitants conceived in earlier phases, Ledoux’s Post-Revolution

43 Vidler, C aude-Nicolas Ledoux, 267.
designs are, as Vidler describes, “concerned with the moral, if not the moralizing, role of institutions, joining the idea of a social world united by brotherhood and communal values—a mingling of Freemasonic and Rousseau-esque ideals—to an architectural, symbolic program that would serve to institutionalize the new order.” As opposed to the second phase of design, in which buildings like the Cénobie attempted to practically ameliorate the corruption of modern society, institutions in phase three were highly symbolic with little utilitarian application and were undergirded by the architect’s desire to facilitate communal happiness by establishing a moral code.

The differences in stylistic and philosophic approach in Ledoux’s three stages of planning Chaux not only demonstrate the architect’s transformation from city planner into architect-philosophe, but they reflect the societal vicissitudes of late eighteenth-century France and early nineteenth-century. The second half of the century saw a shift from the ancien régime’s attempt to reform the absolute monarchy to the French people’s active impulse for aristocratic constitutionalism, as advocated by Enlightenment philosophers, to, finally, a revolutionary period of governmental instability. This political topography can be followed through the three phases of Chaux as Ledoux became increasing aware of the necessity of social and moral reform.

**Redefining Caractère**

Before I discuss Ledoux’s engagement with Enlightenment philosophy as a means of instituting social and moral reform within his ideal agrarian society, I will examine the architect’s propensity to amalgamate several disparate sources of inspiration into a single

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44 Ibid., 267-268.
text. The architect applied his knowledge of architectural and literary tropes with contemporary physiocratic economic theory and a philosophical valuation of moral order to create the ideal rural society. As a result of Ledoux’s efforts to integrate many genres and approaches, *L’Architecture* can be considered at the same time a catalog of the architect’s thinking in the latter years of his career, an architectural encyclopedia, mythological narrative, and socio-economic manifesto.

*L’Architecture*, as the title suggest, was foremost a collection of the architect’s realized and conceptual designs as well as his interpretation of an educational architectural treatise. In the first volume, Ledoux was conscientious to create a new typology of Franche-Comté structures “all distinguished with their own character” that would be to the benefit of young architects working in the region. This didactic approach to writing architectural theory was not revolutionary: Ledoux’s text heavily derived in composition and theory from Jacques-François Blondel’s four-volume *Cour d’architecture*. Like Blondel, Ledoux attempted to create a pedagogical classification system of design based on the classical academic architectural concepts of *caractère* (character), *salubrité* (health), *bienséance* (propriety), *ordonnance* (order), *convenance* (suitability), symmetry, and proportion. These terms are repeated axiomatically throughout the introduction of the text, although are never clearly defined. The reader is first introduced to these principles as the foundation of the ideal city in his *Prospectus*:

45 While many scholars note the near illegibility of Ledoux’s text, Rabreau identifies the nuances in the architect’s writing style as intended for a young audience equally as learned and enthralled by poetics: “Dans la meilleure tradition de l’épopée où interviennent les héros et les divinités antiques—mais aussi les homes illustres de tous le temps—, son livre n’est pas seulement un recueil d’informations sur son oeuvre, ni un simple traité théorique. C’est une oeuvre d’art en soi, qui illustre l’architecture, une encyclopédie (il le dit) et une fiction “prospective” destinée à l’éducation des jeune artistes (les “enfants d’Apollon” dieu de la poésie) et d’un public d’‘initiés’, c’est-à-dire de personnes douées d’une inspiration et d’un gout vertueux dont l’expression s’apparente d’ailleurs à la pensée franc-maçonne, typique de l’esprit des Lumières.” Daniel Rabreau, *Claude Nicolas Ledoux (1736-1806). L’architecture et les fastes du temps* (Paris: Broché, 2000), 7.
There one sees Suitability (Convenance), Order (Ordonnance), Style, Decorum (Bienséance), and Symmetry, all of which have equal relationships among themselves that do not nevertheless exclude the picturesque; Variety, in all the guises to which it is susceptible; Severity of principles; Unity of thoughts and of lines, Unity, the principle of all things, Unity so desirable and so desired, Fitness (Commodité), Distribution, which is welcomed in all levels of society; Decoration, which enlivens surfaces; Proportion, which purifies them.46

This passage is exemplary of Ledoux’s treatment of these terms throughout the text: he evokes these principles as fundamental to the ideal city and his theoretical approach without discussing their practical application in architectural design or indicating how these terms should be evaluated. The architect expects the reader to understand the technical implications of an equal relationship between convenance, ordonnance, style, bienséance, and symmetry without critical delineation on the part of the author. While Blondel used these principles to create a strict taxonomy of architecture, Ledoux elusively evokes these principles in an effort to place his designs within an established architectural tradition.

Although Ledoux’s negligence to circumscribe these concepts may communicate the architect’s reliance on the audience’s familiarity with Blondel’s articles in *l’Encyclopédie*, his neglect also suggests a crisis in the stability of these architectural principles at the end of the eighteenth-century. For early modern French architects like Blondel, architectural caractère could be easily mediated through a pre-established analysis of a building type’s bienséance or convenance. However, by 1770, the combination of class mobility, a growing population, declining economy, and application of Enlightenment ideologies unsettled the static French socio-economic class system. With the complications of the model for a God-given social hierarchy, Blondel’s system of architectural classification was complicated because the function and patronage of a

46 Ledoux, *L’Architecture (Prospectus)*, xii.
late eighteenth-century building could no longer be easily essentialized. When architects were no longer able to design for clients of an easily defined status, they had to shift from using a class-based vocabulary to designing from an individual subjectivity. This breakdown in architecture’s conventional objectivity thus caused the destabilization of class-based taxonomies.47

Ledoux’s inability to conclusively establish definitions for fundamental architectural principles could be further interpreted by the lack of a real audience for *L’Architecture*. In an essay on the emergence of *architecture parlante*, Richard Wittman argues that the new subjectivity of the late eighteenth century architect required Ledoux to “invent a unified audience.”48 For *L’Architecture*, this “invented” audience would be both the rural inhabitants of his ideal city and the students that would continue his tradition. These audiences were purely the products of the architect’s vision since the inhabitants of Chaux were contingent on the existence of the architect’s fictional utopia and the young architectural students who could have adapted his theories during this period had few professional opportunities to employ his principles due to the economic instability following the French Revolution. Although Ledoux’s practice was firmly rooted in Blondel’s theories, the combination of a hypothetical audience and the non-fixity of real social hierarchies gave the architect little structure to demarcate architectural principles attenuated by changing social discourse. Rather, Ledoux relied on *caractère, convenance, bienséance*, etc. to be defined by an abstracted legacy.

The development of individual subjectivity in the late eighteenth-century encouraged architects to use architecture as a medium of expressing moral order.

47 Wittman, *Architecture, Print Culture, and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France*, 201-205.
Enlightenment ideology, particularly that of Rousseau, allowed the arts to derive from emotional expression (as long as it was negotiated through rational order) and to express the sublime. During this period, Wend von Kalnein writes, “Architects were no longer content to see their buildings glorify the state, the monarchy, or one specific stratum of society: they aspired to create monuments that would celebrate human greatness, inculcate worthy remembrance, teach moral values.” Buildings that honored the monumental and the sublime, rather than the monarch, had the ability to oblige and educate all of society.

With caractère and its related principles absolved from serving the social function of delineating class distinctions, these principles were available to architects to be didactically adapted. In his conceptual designs of Chaux published in *L’Architecture*, Ledoux was able to reconfigure his teacher’s principles as subjective tools of reforming rural society based on his own ideas of a collective morality. I would argue, however, that this reconfiguration of classical principles was not a revolutionary act for Ledoux; rather, it was the architect’s attempt to preserve an archaic method of design in a rapidly modernizing society. If he interpreted his new role as architecte-philosophe as a radical identity that should abandon traditional practices, there would either be an intense desire to redefine these concepts or little need to retain them in his theoretical writing. Yet, Ledoux upheld these concepts, as defined by Blondel, with little mediation in a reactionary attempt to continue his teacher’s work—with the additional benefit of adapting them to his fit his personal ideology.

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51 I am borrowing this term from Rabreau, *Claude Nicolas Ledoux (1736-1806)*.
Literary Models and Rousseauian Philosophy

This question of how Ledoux maintains tradition in *L'Architecture* can be further answered by the architect’s rhetorical reliance on classical literary models. As has been noted in many of his biographies, his writing style and composition is an amalgam of the works of Sophocles, Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Plutarch, Fénélon, Plato, Saint Augustin, Pierre Corneille, Étienne Bonnet de Condillac, and Charles Perrault—literature that he would have encountered during his early education at Collège de Dormans-Beauvais. The synthesis is evident even in a cursory reading of *L'Architecture* which reveals that he borrowed several maxims from Virgil and Saint Augustin (e.g. *omnia vincit amor* and *omnis porro pulchritudinis unitas est*, respectively), classical mythology from Homer and Ovid, complex sentence construction from Fénélon, and a positionality as the creator-philosopher of an ideal city based on a pre-established contemporary model akin to Plato in the *Republic*. For the sake of brevity, I will not continue to list or demonstrate each way in which Ledoux copied these writers; however, in order to properly analyze Ledoux’s methodology as both an architect and a writer, it is crucial to call attention to the myriad traditions from which he drew. Resembling the Jansenist curriculum from which he learned in his youth, Ledoux selectively chose elements of classical literature that suited his needs and wove them together to create a heterogeneous text. His ideology was, as we observed in his appropriation of Blondel’s concepts, firmly rooted in

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52 *“Omnia vincit amor,”* (“love conquers all”) from Virgil’s *Eclogues*, appears at the beginning of the architect’s introduction of *L’Architecture*, 1. *“Omnis porro pulchritudinis unitas est”* (“beauty is the unity of all forms”) has been attributed to Saint Augustin in his theory of aesthetics (now lost). Ledoux uses this phrase in *L’Architecture*, 9. Fénélon’s style of writing featured long sentences constructed primarily of several short dependent clauses, sometimes separated by semicolons. As exhibited in the *Prospectus* passage on page 7 of this chapter, Ledoux was also a fan of this type of sentence construction, however Ledoux’s execution of said style is less successful than Fénélon’s, in terms of its transparency and legibility.
historical convention and, by appropriating elements of various literary classics, Ledoux attempted to both elevate his prose and situate his text within a classical literary tradition.

In addition to the classical tradition, the content of *L’Architecture* was in dialogue with contemporary literature steeped in Enlightenment philosophy. The second half of the eighteenth century saw the rise of several utopian novels, including Louis-Sébastien Mercier’s *L’An 2440: Rêve s’il en fut jamais* and Louis Abel Beffroy de Reigny’s *Les lunes de cousin Jacques*, that addressed issues of morality and social reform, often based on the work of major theorists Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Voltaire. Although Ledoux does not explicitly refer to contemporary popular literature in *L’Architecture*, his conceptualization of the ideal city of Chaux often overlaps with the literary utopias of other late eighteenth century authors. Considering the popularity of these texts and the fact that Ledoux was a socially aware erudite, many scholars make the correlation between the architect and works like Mercier’s *L’An 2440*.

One example of contemporary literature that appears to have conceptually influenced Ledoux is Voltaire’s satire *Candide, ou l’Optimisme* (1759). The social hierarchy and monumental institutions of the utopian city El Dorado in *Candide* could easily have been a conceptual prototype for Ledoux’s city of Chaux. Like El Dorado, Chaux operated on a hierarchical class system that offered equal rights to all men: the king of El Dorado treated his people as equals, while the social hierarchy of Chaux

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53 For the purpose of this project, I will only focus on Mercier’s *L’An 2440* and Voltaire’s *Candide*. There are several other notable examples of popular utopian novels published during the second half of the eighteenth century, including: Etienne-Gabriel Morelly’s *Naufrages des îles flottantes, ou les basiliade de Bilpai* (1753), Louis-Antoine de Bougainville’s *Voyage autour du monde* (1771), Denis Diderot’s *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (1772) Donatien Alphonse François Marquis de Sade’s *Aline et Valcour* (1783), and Louis Abel Beffroy de Reigny’s *Les lunes de cousin Jacques* (1787).

54 The scenes in the novel that occur in El Dorado can be found in chapters 17 and 18 of *Candide*. 
operated on the premise of an egalitarian society in an improved version of the monarchical *ancien régime*.

A similar hierarchical social structure is found in Louis-Sébastien Mercier’s futuristic version of Paris in *L’An 2440: Rêve s’il en fut jamais* (1771). Mercier conceptualizes Paris nearly seven hundred years in the future—the most conceivable moment in time in which a perfect society could finally be actualized—as a monarchy without elitism, in which power has been distributed equally to the provinces and amongst the people. Like the king of Voltaire’s El Dorado, Mercier’s king, a descendent of the Bourbon line and purported “second Henry IV,” humbly walks amongst his people as an equal and invites anyone who desires to join him at court. Determined to rid his utopia of any exclusive or coded symbols, the author even prohibits the use of ancient Greek and Latin in public architecture, which “had no use in modern life except to scholars.” In fact, Mercier was deeply concerned with this idea of society only generating architecture that serviced the public good rather than individual vanity. He was one of the loudest critics against the fetishization of monuments to luxury (e.g. flamboyant theaters, Roman-inspired monuments, English parks, etc.) in Paris, which were projects often prioritized over social institutions. Mercier considered the popularization of non-utilitarian public structures to be antithetical to the moral code, commenting in his novel, “Who built the circuses, the theaters, the baths [in ancient Rome]? Who dug those artificial lakes in which an entire fleet could maneuver as though

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55 Although *L’An 2440* is not as well known to contemporary audiences as *Candide*, Mercier’s text was almost unavoidable in late eighteenth century France. Despite being banned for its critique of the Church and State, the books had twenty editions within the five years after its initial publication and forty editions before Mercier’s death. Chisick, “Utopia, Reform and Revolution: The Political Assumptions of L.S. Mercier’s *L’An 2440,*” in *History of Political Thought* 22, no. 4 (2001) 648.

56 Mercier. *L’an deux mille quatre cent quarante,* 22.

at sea? It was those crowned monsters who tyrannical pride crushed half the people in order to treat the eyes of the other half.” Historically, he argues, individuals who have been in power have oppressed those of lower social stations and have selfishly catered to their own desires. This prioritizing of the self over the greater good has led to the fall of many great civilizations. For this reason, Mercier’s Paris is rid of any purely representational monuments or institutions and, instead, is occupied by moralizing, practical institutions like the Temple of Peace, the Academy of Science, and the Hospital of Inoculation. It is worth noting that Mercier includes four Theatres in his utopia, however, he argues that they differ from eighteenth-century theater culture in the type of plays produced (“Our dramatic authors have no other view than the improvement of human nature; they all thrive to elevate and strengthen the mind”) and the didactic sculptural decoration of allegorical figures of virtue on the buildings’ entry façades.

For Mercier and many other eighteenth-century utopian novelists, the egalitarian approach to structuring utopian societies was founded in Rousseauian moral philosophy. For Rousseau and his followers, the socio-political problems of French society were caused by the prioritization of self-interest and individual truth, which promoted social alienation and infidelity. In order to reform this broken system, Rousseau theorized a new social structure based on morality. As articulated in the Discourses and The Social Contract, the philosopher argued that morality, expressed in terms of the common General Will, is a vital political tool to create a non-oppressive State that allows the

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58 Wittman, Architecture, Print Culture, and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France, 196. From Louis-Sébastien Mercier, L'an deux mille quatre cent quarante. Rêve s'il en fut jamais. Nouvelle édition, revue & corrigée par l'auteur, qui a jugé à propos de refonder le chapitre de la Bibliothèque du Roi. Nouv. ed. / revue & corrigée par l'auteur, qui a jugé à propos de refonder le chapitre de la bibliothèque du roi (Londres, 1776), 421

59 Mercier. L'an deux mille quatre cent quarante, 144-148.
natural goodness of man to flourish. The objective General Will is predicated on abstract and general truth established through reason, which is owed to society because truthfulness has the ultimate potential for utility. He writes, “Nothing is useless in the moral order nor in the physical order. Nothing can be owed to anybody that is good for nothing: for a thing to be owed to somebody, it must be, or have the potential to be, useful.” Thus, truthfulness, which supports the General Will (the moral code), is both useful in its ability to facilitate man’s good nature, which is often corrupted by vices of oppression (e.g., self-interest, subjectivity in law), and owed to man as an unconditional right.

Moreover, both Enlightenment intellectuals and the general public who consumed this literature shared the interest in a society that valued moral order. For them, the General Will was indispensible in its ability to unite a community that actively pursued social justness and egalitarianism. In an essay on the political ideology of Mercier’s text, scholar Henry Chisick argued that the readers of these moralizing works knew that morality was vital in order to institute the social order they sought, and, thus, they had to push aside self-interest for the greater communal good. Chisick writes, “If we view human relations as fundamentally constitutive of society and the polity, and constitutive indeed of our humanity, then the principles that determine the nature of our associations

61 Rousseau further elaborates this idea in his *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*: “General and abstract truth is the most precious of all our possessions. Without it man is blind; it is the eye of reason. For through it man learns how to behave, to be what he ought to be, to do what he ought to do, and to strive towards his true purpose. Particular and individual truth is not always a good thing: sometimes it is a bad thing, very often it is an indifferent thing. Those things that it is important for a man to know, and the knowledge of which is necessary to his happiness, are perhaps not very numerous, but however numerous they may be, they are a possession that belongs to him, to which he is right to lay claim wherever he finds it, and of which one cannot deprive him without committing the most iniquitous of all thefts, for this knowledge is one of those possessions that are common to all, and passing it on does not leave the person who gives it in any way bereft.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, trans. Russell Goulbourne (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2011), 35-36.
become a primary concern. Morality ceases to be a matter of politeness or even honesty and becomes instead a vital formative category. If we accept the premise that morality is a precept of humanity and human relations, then it indeed becomes a necessary tool in repairing the disintegration of society, the ultimate condition of humanity’s cultivation.

For Rousseau and the eighteenth century intellectuals who accepted this theory, the degenerated physical and theoretical structure of the French city epitomized all of society’s failures. In Mercier’s text, the Englishman with whom the narrator converses claims, “Your capital [Paris] is an incredible compound; the hideous monster is the receptacle of extreme opulence and excessive misery… In your kingdom, all things are made subservient to the capital; cities, nay, whole provinces, are sacrificed to it.” Paris subsumed the identities of all other communities and represented the societal extremes of extravagance and poverty. The city, thus, was symbolic of how fragmented humanity suffered in mutual misery due to class divides, social unrest, and lack of adequate public institutions. In short, self-interest prevailed over man’s good nature. Eighteenth-century authors consequently turned to writing literary utopias that offered an alternative to immorality of the capital. By reforming the layout of the city and spotlighting certain moralizing institutions, authors could enact the social reform they desperately sought and heroize the fictional people who prospered under this new system.

Although Ledoux published L’Architecture after the turn of the century and after the chaos of the Revolution had subsided, Ledoux’s text was predicated on these fundamental Rousseauian tenets. Ledoux, too, saw the existing city as a site of destruction, social inequity, and unfair distribution of wealth, so for his project he

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63 Mercier, L’an deux mille quatre cent quarante, 4.
decided to abandon the city all together. Instead, Ledoux’s utopia exists in the rural countryside of Franche-Comté, which conjured a different set of societal problems. Villages in the rural countryside were often industrial or very poor, with a significant bulk of their profit going into the pockets of the tax farmers. These small rural communities functioned as agro-industrial fodder for the fiscal benefit of the ancien régime. However, Ledoux theorized that, if the proper economic principles were implemented in agrarian communities, the inherent collective aspects of rural life could provide the ideal setting in which Rousseauian moral philosophy could thrive.
CHAPTER III: Instituting Moral Order & Rural Reform

Moral Order & the Church of Chaux

Ledoux’s ideal rural city of Chaux operates on the same presumption as his literary models: if the city and its public institutions could be rectified through moral reform, then inhabitants could peacefully exist within the Rousseauian collectivist paradigm. For the architect, however, it was necessary that moral reform be implemented within the fabric of the city’s design, rather than simply implied within the collective’s social contract. By loosening the Academic delineation of caractère in L'Architecture, Ledoux could identify and manipulate its intrinsic moralistic characteristics that, if properly used, could institute social order for the advancement of society. This premise is found in even his earliest design for the ideal city, the Church of Chaux (figs.14-16)—arguably the first institution created for the project. The Church was planned according to a prescribed program, but the architect’s arrangement of the structure is undergirded with the pacte social. The very placement of the Church within the plan of the town (located along Chaux’s east-west axis in the center of the eastern square) was indicative of its crucial moralistic function as a cornerstone of the community.

The Church is one of Ledoux’s more conventional designs and is exemplary of the architect’s talent for uniting several heterogeneous sources into one cohesive design: the central rotunda derived from the Pantheon, the four neo-classical façades (each fitted with a pedimented Doric portico surmounted by the low central dome) evoke Palladio’s Villa Rotonda, and the biaxial symmetry of the plan was modeled after Soufflot’s first

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64 The pacte social was Ledoux’s interpretation of Rousseau’s political and moral philosophy described in Social Contract. Vidler, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, 332.
project for the Church of Sainte-Geneviève. However, Antoine Picon claims that Ledoux’s implementation of millennia worth of architectural history had little to do with a desire to recreate the classical past. Picon writes,

There was in actual fact nothing historical about this ambition. For, in spite of its allusions to the ‘ruin of empires,’ the Architecture made a tabula rasa of the past. The possibility was even entertained, as the obsession with the figure of the circle implies, that history was actually circular. This was because the design absorbed history, subsuming it within the development of sensation. All that finally survived was a presentiment of it, together with the evocation of an immemorial symbolic register. The history of architecture was reduced to a bundle of significations which were, like rays of light passing through a lens, refocused by the design.

History reduced to its essence is a reoccurring theme in Ledoux’s work and may derive, as I previously argued, from how history and literature was presented to him during his early Jansenist education. The iconic structures from his architectural education are collapsed into a single design filled with the symbols that architectural history could offer the present. Like the Jansenist system, his approach to designing didactic architecture was a tactic to enforce moral order within Chaux. History and historical precedence could be mined for nuggets of universal truths that could, in turn, signify the architect’s moral and social ideology. In the case of Chaux’s Church, the plan’s centrality—although in a cruciform arrangement—lends itself to the idea of cyclicality; visitor does not undergo a

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65 According to Vidler, this design program (i.e. plain walls, central dome, cruciform plans, pedimented porticoes, and plain Doric orders) directly derived from Ledoux’s early training in public institutional forms, according to the program of the French Academy. He writes, “Ledoux sought instead to define a genre of public building that was entirely modern in its form and reference. To this end he founded his conception of character on the double play of form and representation…. a three-dimensional distribution controlled by a geometry that referred to its role and historical source by abstraction, in a style that might be termed ‘generic classicism.’ Precise enough in identifying its influences for a particular meaning to be communicated, it partook of an overall discourse of geometry that welded together the often heterogeneous sources of Ledoux’s inspiration. Thus, for Ledoux, the unifying force of three-dimensional geometry allowed a form such as the cube subdivided into nine square in each dimensional to be a once a referential figure, a trace of Palladio, and a new geometrical type-form (the modern villa), without perceptible strain.” Vidler, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, 140, 159.

66 Picon, French Architects and Engineers in the Age of Enlightenment, 272-274.
linear, unilateral approach to altar, which is housed in the center of the plan and may be accessed from any angle. The Church’s dome provides a celestial sphere to protect the worshiper at the building’s altar. The rational order of the biaxial, symmetrical plan (originating from the historical models set forth by Palladio and Soufflot) mediates the sublimity of the Church’s interior. The representation of rationality and order, thus, becomes the natural countenance through which sensation and the sublime may be expressed. Likewise, the four equal faces of the Church (again, modeled after the Villa Rotonda) evoke a social egalitarianism in which all inhabitants of the city could hypothetically penetrate the structure from their respective quadrants to communally gather at the central altar.

However, it is also important to note that even if Ledoux uses historical precedents as a “tabula rasa” upon which he could project his ideology, his architecture is still cognizant of the politics of architecture in his contemporary moment. This awareness appears in his design for the Church, which has a plan that is explicitly based on Soufflot’s first plan for Sainte-Geneviève (fig. 17). After Soufflot’s death in 1780, the royal administration and the Académie sought another architect who could resume the project for the unfinished Church of Sainte-Geneviève with the same Greek and Gothic sensibility. The lacuna led to numerous architects from Boullée to Louis Combes (1754-1818) designing their own monumental neo-classical churches. Ledoux’s Church, designed in 1791 but engraved between 1783 and 1784, also responds to this trend. In Soufflot’s first plan, Sainte-Geneviève is arranged in a Greek-cross plan fronted by an oversized temple front façade with massive Corinthian orders. In the interior of Sainte-Geneviève, light would stream through several clerestory windows, flooding the interior.

67 Vidler, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, 140, 159.
space with a Gothic lighting program. Ledoux adapts this cruciform plan and pedimented porticos for Chaux’s Church, however, he employs monumentality for which Sainte-Geneviève was celebrated differently. While Sainte-Geneviève would be flooded with light from several windows on the clerestory level, Ledoux would isolate the interior light program to the dome’s oculus. Rather than overwhelm the worshipper with divine light, he wanted to restrict it to the center of the structure.

Similarly, it is the interior programming of the church that plainly expresses the architect’s ideological goal. The interior walls of the church, which are inscribed with bas-reliefs of the history of religion and great men, are the most literal and representational manifestations of architecture’s didacticism. But, Ledoux cleverly executes a symbolic interpretation of moral order through the arrangement of the plan. The scheme of the main floor is a cruciform plan consisting of four equal arms flanked by side aisles, each with their own altars set in giant wall niches and enclosed by massive semicircular arches. It achieves almost perfect biaxial symmetry (save the two staircases that lead to the crypt along the non-entry axis) and culminates in an centralized altar raised on a square pyramid of steps, lit by natural light from an oculus in the dome. In a lighting program not unlike that of Boullée’s Cenotaph for Isaac Newton, natural light drifts through the oculus and dances on the severe, rationalized interior, gesturing at the sublimity of the sacred space. As sun and moonlight progressively cycle above the Church’s oculus, the interior space and altar of the main floor, too, undergoes the diurnal and annual course.

It is this cyclical program that fascinated the architect-philosophe; Ledoux imagined Chaux’s Church to be not only the site of religious organization, but also the
active epicenter of the city’s festive life. The Church had a primary function as a venue for all Chaux’s inhabitants to congregate for the celebration of festivals that consumed public life (i.e., births, marriages, saints’ days, deaths). Ledoux imagined that the town’s reoccurring festive life would bond the community in a Deistic worship and civic engagement—both cornerstones of moral reform. Although he believed in the Rousseauian concept of morality achieved through the communal, it was necessary that Chaux’s morality was grounded in religious worship because he claimed, “God is to morality what the axis that sustain it is to the earth.”

The single central altar on the main floor of the Church—a motif repeated in the building’s crypt—stood frozen as the apex of the interior space and represented the unification of the religious and civic life of the people. The ever-changing natural light that streamed through the dome’s oculus enlivened the altar through diurnal rotation. The ornamented base of the dais would be surmounted by a flat, plain platform appropriate for either civic or religious ceremony, allowing worshippers to project their own subjectivity upon it while the light that danced across its surface marked the cyclical passing of time. The altar was a metaphor of the larger symbolic program of the Church: the static, orderly structure was in a constant state of flux due to the cyclicality of the community’s festive life.

Altars were a critical motif in some imaginary churches in utopian literature, as well. In Mercier’s *L’An 2440*’s Temple, the altar was the unadorned centerpiece of futuristic Paris’s main place of worship. The circular Temple had a low dome composed entirely of glass under which the dais stood. The center altar, like the building that housed it, would be stripped of all ornamentation and antiquated alienating rhetoric.

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because, as previously discussed, Mercier believed in the removal of esoteric symbolism from public institutions. While Ledoux’s church did have some low-relief decoration on some walls and the altar, the minimal design approach and the use of natural light are strikingly similar in both buildings. The glass dome in Mercier’s Temple is an exaggerated variation of Ledoux’s oculus: both treat the dome as an apparatus through which God’s light can access worshippers. Further, the relationship between light and altar appeals to both creators’ celebration of the Sublime, in which the power of the divine overwhelms the space.

After a close look at how the Church’s design embodies a capacity for moral reform, the question remains as to what kind of moral quandaries the institution attempts to resolve. I argue that the dual function of the Church of Chaux was Ledoux’s effort to oppose the city’s propensity towards the promotion of individualism and self-interest. If the community was organized around an egalitarian, communal locale and the inhabitants were regular participants in the cyclical celebrations then, theoretically, the communal identity would subsume that of the individual. In Rousseauian philosophy, it was imperative that the communal identity was prioritized over the individual, due to the individual’s reliance on the survival of the collective and the people’s sovereignty. In order to avoid the collective sovereignty’s alienation and social denigration, the communal identity and, by extension, the General Will would have to be provided with

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69 The narrator learns about this cultural belief when he visits the temple. The inscription on the door reads: “Loin derain decider sur cet Être Suprême (In awful silence let us God adore) Gardons, en l’ardorant, un silence profound; (Nor ever dare his nature to explore) Sa nature est immense et l’espirit s’y confound; (To search those boundless power by man were vain) Pour savoir ce qu’il est, il faut être lui meme (Which nought but boundless wisdom can explain)” Later, the narrator observes, “all declared the unity of the Godhead; all foreign ornaments were rigorously banished; in a word, God alone possessed his temple.” From Mercier, L’An 2440, 98-99. Translation by John Mellen. Wittman interprets this observation as Mercier’s argument against the fetishization of coded Latin in modern life. Wittman, Architecture, Print Culture, and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France, 198-199.
institutions through which it may flourish. The function of the Church is, thus, predicated on the concept that the communal identity provides a critical moral service to the social fabric of the city.

**Solving Rural Poverty**

As theoretical as the project put forth in *L’Architecture* may have been, it appears that Ledoux was concerned with how a utopia like Chaux could realistically exist in late eighteenth century France. Unlike his contemporaries who imagined utopias in other countries, time periods, or planets, the architect situated Chaux within a real geographic place and temporality. His idea of creating an elaborate utopian city may have been fantastic, however, his imagination was limited by physics and practical necessity. This meant that the city needed to be fitted with the appropriate educational, governmental, and commercial institutions, in addition to having a thriving economy based on the Saline Royale (the realized lucrative manufacturer located on the proposed site). For Ledoux, economic theory was an essential property of the town’s comprehensive caractére, claiming that “One will not pull apart unity of thought, and the lines of a variety of forms, the law of convenance, of bienséance, of the economy.”

As a part of the overall conceptual unity for the agrarian town, it was necessary that the project’s economic system was based in a fiscally sound and realistic theory. Thus, Ledoux adopted the

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Physiocratic doctrines that were employed periodically by the *ancien régime* between 1763 and 1776 to organize the economic structure of the city.\(^7\)

Developed under François Quesnay (1694-1774) and his follower Marquis Victor Riqueti de Mirabeau (1715-1789), Physiocracy was a land-based economic theory that argued that the cultivation of land had historical, logical, and symbolic superiority to all other economic measures. It was based on the belief that nature—specifically economic nature—was an all-encompassing and benevolent force that unites natural human rights, natural social orders, and natural laws. It was meant as a tool for rationalizing an economic model that would create a natural circulation of wealth and good, similar to the circulatory system of the human body. Physiocracy championed free trade and natural level of prices over the monopolist, dirigist state; it wanted society’s wealth to be moved from the frivolous, unproductive realm of the city, to the virtuous, productive countryside.\(^7\) Since it contributed to nearly 80% of the State’s wealth, agricultural production would, in theory, be France’s dominant source of income.\(^7\) The theory arose out of a crisis of a new social class of landowners—as opposed to the established, aristocratic class of wealthy landowners—who needed to rid themselves of the innumerable land taxes imposed by the *ancien régime* that made profitable farming difficult. However, the theory failed in its inability to protect corporatist and monopolist

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\(^7\) Physiocratic principles (particularly the edict of free trade in grain) was put into practiced in France between 1763 and 1770 under comptroller general of finance Bertin and his successor L’Averdy, and then again under Turgot in the edict of 13 September 1774, which lasted another two years. After Turgot’s fall, France returned to old protectionist legislation. The theory was highly contested, however, by the *Ferme Générale*, who could no longer be able to collect tax on agricultural goods under Physiocratic law. Ledoux was first exposed to the theory during his tenure at the Departement d’Eaux et Forêts by his friend the poet Abbé Delille and Louis XVI’s Comptroller of Finances (and opponent to the Ferme) Jacques Turgot, who had encouraged Ledoux during his project for the Saline Chaux. Yves Charbit, *The Classical Foundations of Population Thought* (Dordrecht: Springs, 2010), 115-119

\(^7\) “Dirigist state,” or *dirigisme*, refers to the economic system in which the state exercises a direct influence over trade and industry. Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux*, 256.

\(^7\) During the eighteenth century, industrial production was only a margin of France’s total production. Charbit, *The Classical Foundations of Population Thought*, 118.
interests. Based on the principle of free trade, Physiocracy so viciously protected the merchants and manufacturers’ independent rights for free trade, that it lacked the ability to facilitate established corporatist organizations.

Ledoux considered the principle tenets of Physiocracy—e.g., its basic economic processes, interest in agrarian societies, dedication to rural reform, and preoccupation with the economic benefits of raw materials—as synonymous with his own moral commitment to agrarian reform. Fascinated by the rapid technological advancements in practical farming techniques made by French and English agronomes in the second half of the century, Ledoux was concerned that the profit from these innovations was being unfairly taken from rural communities and ferried into the pockets of cities’ bureaucrats. Although the theory championed the rights of the individual, Ledoux believed in Physiocracy’s ability to reform the impoverished rural communities that were most affected by the unjust economic system. In L’Architecture, Physiocratic theory is most present in the designs executed during Ledoux’s second phase of Chaux, however, its basic tenets appear in his work as early as the first phase for the Public Market (fig. 18, 19)—the town’s major economic institution—and continue to evolve through his final phase for the Stock Exchange and through the writing process.

Conceived in the late 1770s but expanded in 1784 to accommodate the size of the ideal city, the Public Market was the center of the city’s agricultural wealth and could facilitate agricultural trade for villages in the northeast of France. In the larger context of Chaux, the Public Market was positioned in the western public square, axially mirroring the Church in the eastern public square and resting along the extant east-west axis of the Saline Royale. Similar to the Church of Chaux, the plan of the Public Market utilizes the

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programming of public institutional forms developed by the French Academy. The plan is centrally focused with a massive covered storeroom for wheat, rye, barley, oats, lentils, and acorns at the heart of the structure. Four corner pavilions with open-air courtyards that sell fish, meat, game, poultry, cloth, and linen connect to the central portion through covered corridors. In between these four corner pavilions, there are several large open-air markets for wine, fruit and vegetables, industrial resources (wood, coal, and iron), and livestock. The entire complex was surrounded by a moat intended to deter theft.

However, similar to the Church of Chaux, the Market was penetrable through four gates located along the axis of the cardinal directions. Since none of the façades were favored, the design of the complex functions as a metaphor for the egalitarianism of the society.

Unlike the Physiocrats, who fetishized the simplicity of laissez-faire policies, Ledoux feared the sin of self-interest in free trade that could undermine the equality between Chaux’s inhabitants. Therefore, the architect married the most economically concerned institution in the city to one of the most socially conscious. As an economic institution, the Market privileged the farmers and consumers, whose credit was necessary for trade and supported agriculture; however, it also served as a center of charity that distributed benefits to abandoned children, the unemployed, the elderly, and the retired. At the Public Market, Ledoux writes, “One could guarantee cheap meals to the poor, the output of their labor to the rich; one could prevent a worrisome situation that takes advantage of the source of their ignorance, and gain currency by the interested maneuvers

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75 The development of the Public Markets also followed a similar trajectory to that of the Chaux. Like how the Church derived from Soufflot’s first plan for the Church of Sainte-Geneviève, the Public Markets were first conceived as a variation of Le Camus de Mézière’s 1763 Halle au Blé. Vidler, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, 281-285.
of the secondary agents.” That is, the Market would serve as the main source of commerce for the rich and as agent and provider for poor farmers, who are provided a space to sell their wares and financially benefit from the regulation of the institution. The institution was meant as a precaution against the same problems that Physiocracy addressed: it ensured that the local farmers had control over their own wares and would see the profit of their labor and that the wealth generated would remain in the countryside, rather than be transported into the city. It also ensured that there would not be any drastic price inflation in case of a bad harvest, safeguarding against the sale of valuable crops to the wealthiest foreign consumer and granting all citizens with equal access to the food supply.

Perhaps the most curious aspect of the Public Market was the fact that it took the physical and administrative place of the Law Court during Ledoux’s reconceptualization of the city during the second phase. In the first conception of Chaux, the Law Court was the only judiciary institution in the city and was located in the western public square along the main east-west axis. In the late 1780s, however, the architect’s adaptation of Physiocratic theory resulted in the altogether removal of the Law Court, which Ledoux replaced with the Public Market. Rather than providing only practical services to the citizens of Chaux, the Public Market could provide citizens with both nutritional and moral sustenance. If society could be restructured to foster the General Will and if its

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76 “On pouvait assurer aux pauvres des aliments peu dispendieux, aux riches le débit de leurs denrées; on pouvait éviter les situations inquietantes qui prennent source dans l’ignorance, et s'accréditent par les manoeuvres intéressées des agents secondaires.” Ledoux, *L’Architecture*, 266.
citizens actively participated in following a moral code, then the city would have no use for a punitive court system.77

Ledoux was not the only Enlightenment intellectual that thought judiciary institutions were not necessary in a utopian society; Voltaire, too, had ardent confidence that the fictional El Dorado in Candide would be able to maintain social and moral egalitarianism, thus eliminating the necessity of law courts or parliaments in the town. Both the philosopher and the architect replace judiciary institutions and prisons with organizations that they decisively believed could maintain order. In Candide, the reader learns that El Dorado is without a Parliament or prison because of the profound moral impact of the Palais des Sciences, which maintains social order through the education of the people. For Ledoux, however, it was the Public Market—the institution that implemented economic regulation and agricultural wealth—that had the greatest potential to fill the lacuna left by the elimination of judiciary institutions. Institutions located along the main axis of Chaux dictated the moral administration of the community and—although less evident than the Church—the Public Market was no exception.78 Through the charitable responsibilities to the poor and unable, the institution prevented common theft and promoted equal opportunities for all citizens. In his theory, addressing those in extreme need would eliminate petty crime and, thus, the need for Law Courts. Chaux was

77 Ledoux did not completely eradicate courts from the town, however. In the final version of Chaux, the architect created the Pacifère, or Court of Peace, that would settle conflicts amongst inhabitants. A judge “loved by the people” would preside justly over the Court of Peace. This institution differs from the Law Courts in its benign duty to settle misdemeanors or minor disputes, rather than harshly punishing and criminalizing inhabitants. The architect believed that if moral order were strictly enforced, there would be no need for a punitive judiciary system—only minor courts that maintained peace in the community. Ledoux, L’Architecture, 177.

78 I have already demonstrated how the Church employs moral order on the community and many scholars have written on the moralizing advantages of the panoptical Director’s House and centralized berms of the Saline Royale. For information on the Director’s House as a panoptical tool for the Ferme, see Rodolphe el-Khoury’s Seeing Through Ledoux: Architecture, Theatre, and the Pursuit of Transparency (Philadelphia: ORO editions, 2006) or Vidler’s Claude-Nicolas Ledoux.
designed to be a society dedicated to the mission of collective progress, rather than punishing those who could not support themselves.

The civic mission promoted by the Public Market was key to the survival of both Chaux’s economy and social equality. Consequently, Ledoux created other economic institutions in Chaux, like the Stock Market (fig. 20), to bolster the distribution of sustenance to the poor. The Stock Market, like the Public Market, was a commercial and industrial financial center that intended to deal with real commodities and functioned as the regulatory center for foreign trade. Counter to contemporary stock exchanges that deal in the selling and trading of bonds, notes, and shares, Ledoux’s Stock Market was concerned with the trade of material products that could be used or consumed as well as the regulation of foreign goods. The main difference between the Stock Market and the Public Market was that the former dealt solely with commodities sold by foreign entities, while the Public Market served as an institution for the trading of goods from local producers. However, like the Public Market, the Stock Market operated on the premise of public necessity according to the General Will. First created in mid 1780s in the Perspective View of Chaux, it was redesigned after the Revolution as a square temple made elevated on top of a one-story platform. The main temple level was composed of exclusively open porticoes and provided entry way. Similar to the complexity of the maze-like plan of the Public Market, the visitor must navigate the building through a ground level crypt-like hypostyle hall housed underneath a temple canopy. After crossing this passageway, the visitor to the Stock Market would move across the building’s central chamber called the salle d’assemblée, which provided a space for the “gathering of
chosen men, who deal in good faith.” As opposed to the compartmentalized open-air courtyards of the Public Market, the salle d’assemblée was accessible only to representatives of the community and foreign traders, who were to conduct business for the good of the larger collective. The setup of this institution is in stark contrast to that of the Public Market. While the open market courtyards of the Public Market may have been more inviting to the larger community, Ledoux designated the salle d’assemblée to be a distinguished space as indicated by the temple envelope that enclosed the room. A third party established by the local government would moderate the Public Market; however, the Stock Market necessitated the men who worked there to trade “in good faith.” The architecture itself had to symbolically enforce the philosophy on which the town was created, so its temple envelope and crypt-like entrance—which is planned similarly to the crypt of Chaux’s Church, the community’s moral keystone—compel the businessmen to oblige their duty to the moral code.

In order to properly describe these institutions, however, it is critical to ascertain Ledoux’s concept of ideal social equality for Chaux. In the late 18th century, extreme inequality was a topic of increasing tension as the economy weakened and class divides widened. This subject is taken on in several utopian novels, most notably Mercier’s L’An 2440, in which the author eliminates the motifs of decadence and excess in futuristic Paris that came to define the ancien régime. Chisick notes, “For Mercier the social and political implications of extreme inequality threatened the functioning and even the continued existence of his society, for he regarded ‘extreme inequality of ranks and

79 “Qu’entend-on par une bourse? C’est dans les cités nombreuses un monument qui doit attester la pureté des moeurs; dans une ville que la philosophie fonda, c’est la reassemblment d’hommes choisis, qui traitent de bonne foi,” Ledoux, L’Architecture, 199.
fortunes’ as ‘the most destructive vice of all political societies.’”80 These Enlightenment thinkers identified extreme inequality as the issue that perpetuated much of the social unrest in the years leading to the Revolution. Although more optimistic in the time frame in which a society based on equality could be constructed, Ledoux’s ideology was deeply entrenched in the same Rousseauian belief that, regardless of socio-economic class, “Habits, pleasure, thoughts should be the same and bound.”81 This was not a stance for absolute equality. Rather, both Ledoux and Mercier upheld the French monarchical class system, but responded to the real and practical threats of inequality. For the architect, this meant that each citizen would have equal access to the necessities of rural life, although their lot would be directly tied to their socio-economic status. He claims, “By tying man to his advantages, he finds himself at ease in his work, and more, his fortune; but he needs direction. Without this, reason turns into passion, and the economy degenerates into abuse: this occurs when the good he wants to imprint cannot be sustained.”82 Man needed to be responsible to his own station, but if provided with the correct tools, he would prosper and be happy. In Ledoux’s vision, this approach would promote the established class hierarchy, provide every person with life’s necessities, and eliminate poverty.

The Public Market and the Stock Market would be the architecte-philosophe’s greatest tools for enforcing this brand of equality and enriching Chaux’s economy with social dignity. The Public Market was Chaux’s official economic establishment that

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82 “En attachant l’homme à ses avantages, il trouve l’aisance dans le travail, je dis plus, la fortune ; mais il faut le diriger. Sans cela, la raison tourne en passion, et l’économie dégénère en abus : c’est alors que le bien que l’on veut imprimer ne peut être durable.” Ledoux, L’Architecture, 266.
would act as an impartial mediator between the poor and wealthy to eliminate suspicion from either party. Its size, form, and role resembled a microcosm of the entire city, in which several classes of people could caucus and trade under the careful guidance of the Sovereign third party. The Stock Market, which was not nearly as inclusionary in its practice, attempted a similar doctrine of equality. It acknowledged the inevitability of foreign trade, but restricted it upon the basis of necessity. The collective would not partake in the activities there, but relied on the decisions of the men appointed. These economic institutions were practical applications and enforcers of the General Will principle. Although deriving from the agrarian philosophy of Physiocracy, Ledoux’s organizations eliminated its critical defect as understood in Rousseauian thought. The elimination of self-interest ensured Chaux’s inhabitants with the equality he thought all citizens deserved.

**The Virtue of Good Health**

The architect’s interest in Physiocracy extended beyond Chaux’s economic institutions. Ledoux subscribed to their arguments against confining social institutions to solve poverty, illness, criminality, and immorality (i.e. prisons, hospitals, and workhouses) that only seemed to be a breeding ground for further issues. Proponents of Physiocracy wanted to decentralize giant institutions and replace them with smaller facilities run by charitable religious centers or abandon institutions altogether by practicing home care. They saw Paris, in particular, as a ready example of the abuse of aristocratic power over the criminalization and confinement of the poor. Critics noted that institutions in the city that were designed to ameliorate social concerns were destitute and
in disrepair, while the wealthy built impressive monuments of leisure and pleasure for themselves. In the last years of the ancien régime, the contention was exacerbated by a dispute between Parisians about an increasing deficiency in public hospitals for the city’s population. After Hôtel-Dieu, the city’s main hospital, caught fire and was largely destroyed in 1772, the regime was confronted by the lacuna in public health care. Intellectuals and city officials hotly debated what measures should be taken to replace the destroyed hospital, so Louis XIV commanded the structure to be rebuilt and enlarged (although, construction wasn’t completed until well after the Revolution). Although the government agreed to rebuild Hôtel-Dieu, Paris still lacked adequate hospitals and the issue remained fiercely contested amongst intellectuals well into the early nineteenth century.

Lack of proper health care indicated a greater moral issue in the French city: there were numerous centers of leisure and luxury (e.g. theaters, monuments, English parks, mansions, Sainte-Geneviève), but Paris lacked establishments directed towards the public good. In L’An 2440, Mercier was one of the loudest voices against Paris’s representational and leisurely monuments, as he considered the popularization of non-utilitarian structures be oppositional to the moral question of public good. Likewise, Ledoux identified these luxurious buildings to be egregious and antithetical for purposeful institutions that provided public necessity. In his ideal city, he rejects theaters, expansive gardens, and hôtels particuliers, as they derive solely from self-interest and benefit only those of the highest classes. In the same Physiocratic standpoint, the architect also discards hospitals, prisons, and poorhouses, which he considered to be

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84 Ibid., 197.
unhygienic and overcrowded, and thus punitive, of those born with an unfortunate lot. By eliminating institutions of opulence or prosecution, Ledoux hoped to create an egalitarian society, in which all people were afforded the same opportunities.

However, the eradication of hospitals in Chaux would theoretically cause the same crisis unfolding in his contemporary Paris. Without proper healthcare, people who couldn’t afford private physicians would die without treatment and medical epidemics could spread rapidly throughout the city without appropriate prevention. Ledoux’s solution to medical treatment was to create a public institution that could eradicate all disease or health concerns through naturopathic practices. Ledoux designed Public Baths (figs. 21, 22) as a watering place to heal and prevent inhabitants from further ailment. Salt water had been long celebrated for its healing properties for the skin and minor diseases, and the natural thermal salt water from which the Saline Royale sourced their product offered a unique opportunity to the architect. The waters that sustained the main industry in Chaux could also be a source of healing for its inhabitants.

Placed on the edge of the forest adjacent to the canal that supplied the salt water to the Saline Royale, the Public Baths were conceived with the same caractère as the buildings within the heart of the city. The unornamented, stripped classical façade of the structure recalled ancient Roman thermae precedents, as well as the Pantheon. Similar in composition to Chaux’s Church and Public Markets, the Public Baths were a cruciform complex containing a central domed circular building that covered the public bathing hall. Similar to the Church, the dome in the bathing hall was open to allow natural light to wash the bathers and provide ventilation. The circular bathing hall was accessed via an enclosing passageway. Around the perimeter of the corridor were individual rooms and
an additional hallway that led to laundry rooms, wood storage (to supply the furnaces that heated the bathing hall), and concierge apartments in the wings of the cross. The entire structure was enclosed by square stone fortifications, reminiscent of the Public Market’s moat.

Ledoux’s attraction to ancient Roman-inspired baths was not novel. The scientific development of understanding of the health benefits of baths combined with the popularity of the Grand Tour resulted in increased attention to ancient Roman baths. Several contemporary architects experimented with designing classical baths. There was even a competition hosted by the Académie in 1774 for “Public Mineral Water Baths” comparable to those of ancient Rome.85

However, Ledoux’s design for Public Baths in his ideal city responded to a particular social crisis. Rather than designing antiquarian baths that could rival those of the ancients for the sake of celebrating France’s greatness and architectural prowess, Ledoux was interested in how they could practically and symbolically function in a society based on a moral social contract. The creation of the Public Baths had a tripartite intentionality: it obeyed Physiocratic doctrines, it absolved Ledoux from participating in the partisan conflict on public medical facilities carried on among his contemporaries, and it communicated the necessity of hygiene and sanitation in the eighteenth century city. Although they may not seem as necessary or significant as the Public Market in a practical Physiocratic society, the Baths confront a corporeal threat of uncleanliness amongst city dwellers. The institution had the ability to purify the unclean and ailing. Further, the Baths served a symbolic function analogous to that of its practical function. The ritual of purification has a spiritual component in which the bathers cleanse

85 Vidler, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, 278.
themselves from transgressions. Taking the waters connotes the Christian tradition of baptism, allowing the bather to clean themself of both physical grime and transcendent conflict. Even the cruciform plan and circular domed bathing hall of the Public Baths conveys Christianized spirituality similar to that of Chaux’s Church. In the central bathing hall, the bather is able to purify their body through both unsoiled water and divine sunlight that purges the inhabitant of wickedness. I am not arguing that the Public Baths were a tool of enforcing a Christian regime upon Chaux’s inhabitants. Rather, the institution draws upon the rhetoric of Christianity to express a symbolic function to uphold a moral code. The symbolic function of the Baths was to purify the inhabitants’ spirits in order to maintain moral order. Like the Church, the inhabitant repeatedly undergoes the bathing ritual and, thus, absolves the bather from immorality. With the cyclical bathing ritual, the inhabitant could continuously recommit themselves both to the divine as well as the collective’s moral contact. Not only does the Public Baths serve as a center of healing for the individual bathers, it contributes to the community’s overall communal wellbeing.

This notion of the communal wellbeing is the theme at the heart of all the moralizing institutions in Chaux. Regardless of whether if the institution was designed for religious, economic, or hygienic concerns, each institution is didactically programmed to unite the collective. The Public Baths, like the Church, are the site of community gatherings, in which several inhabitants participate in cyclical rituals. Through the repeated practices of cleansing oneself in a communal bath and celebrating annual festivals, citizens engage with one another and form community. The Public Market and Stock Market, too, act as spaces of communal congregation, in which parties from
different socio-economic classes come together for fair trade. As we will examine in the next chapter, it is through the unification of the collective that society most successfully thrives.
CHAPTER IV: The Collective and Their “Asylum of Happiness”

On the Collective

In my analyses of Chaux’s moralizing institutions in Chapter Three, the theme of how the moral code affects and necessitates the collective consistently appears. For example, the Public Baths, like the Public Market and the Church, served a duel function in Chaux: they enforced a moral code to protect both the physical and spiritual wellbeing of mankind, but they also engaged the inhabitants in communal and cyclical rituals. Likewise, we saw that moral reform was established through Ledoux’s ideological adaptation of Rousseauian philosophy in the pursuit of an egalitarian community, as expressed in the planning and programing of his designs. Chaux’s collective maintained order when the Rousseauian moral code was upheld. So, the questions remain: what is collectivity according to Rousseauian philosophy and why is the collective necessary in Ledoux’s vision?

In Rousseauian philosophy, the community is a result of necessity and social convention. In his Second Discourse and The Social Contract, Rousseau famously grapples with man’s predisposition towards isolation and his natural curiosity in satisfying basic needs and desires, which often requires the help of other individuals. The desire towards forming relationships results in civil society. He argues that in civil society, “the social order is a sacred right which is the basis of all other rights. Nevertheless, this right does not come from nature, and must therefore be founded on conventions.”

For Rousseau, society and social relationships are contingent upon the

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maintenance of cultural “conventions,” which are a set of precepts and values already existent in a given society. He argues that even the family unit—the most ancient of all societies—is only bonded as long as there is a codependent relationship. Thus, every relationship in which two parties operate autonomously is strictly a consequence of societal custom. As a result, a system of autonomous relations, when viewed together as a whole, must enter into a social contract that propagates man’s advancement toward a common goal of maintaining order and equality. In order to sustain the social contract, there must be “the total alienation of each associate, together with all his rights, to the whole community, for, in the first place, as each gives himself absolutely, the conditions are the same for all; and, this being so, no one has any interest in making them burdensome to others.” That is, every individual must surrender his individual rights or desires in the pursuit of a common body politic and the maintenance of the social contract, or else he will become a burden on every participant in the community. The collective in Rousseauian philosophy is, thus, the community of participants in a contract dedicated to maintaining the social order. The collective could be maintained if all participants in the social contract followed the common General Will (see Ch. 2).

Over the course of the second half of the eighteenth century, the philosophy behind the contrat social and the General Will became increasingly common amongst progressive French intellectuals. By the end of the ancien régime, the General Will and the interest in the communal dwelled in popular conscious, no doubt due in part to the popularity of Mercier’s L’An 2440, which was published in twenty editions in just the

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87 As soon as the need for either party ceases, the natural familial bond is suspended and any subsequent relationship is based on convention. Rousseau, On the Social Contract, 2.
89 Wittman, Architecture, Print Culture, and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France, 211.
first five years after its initial 1771 publication. The valuation of the collective appears in Mercier’s text through the arrangement of the future Parisian society as egalitarian and rid of the “destructiveness of extreme self-interest.”

Chisick writes,

Mercier was more a collectivist than an individualist… What Mercier shares with Rousseau is, first, a sense that self-interest, the rights of the individual and limitations of contract, when taken to extremes, threaten effective community and, second, a valuation of community as fundamentally constitutive of humanity.

Mercier’s ideal society was predicated on the collective’s acceptance of the social contract and the rejection of their own self-interest, resulting in a society built on what Chisick calls a “non-violent reform.” Mercier’s text, which anticipated the increasing tensions of the expanding population and deteriorating economy in the years succeeding its publication, liberated Paris from the social issues that festered in the subsequent decades. Thus, readers of the popular novel embraced the romantic philosophy of the collective and limited self-interest offered by Rousseauian-inspired literature.

Of course, the collective is a fraught, unstable concept that requires each member in the community to contribute to the common goal and agree with the General Will. Absolute participation in the collective is essential to the survival to any society operating according to the social contract, because, as Rousseau warns, it is possible “to enjoy the rights of citizenship without being ready to fulfill the duties of a subject,” but “if that went on for long enough it would destroy the body politic.” If members of society decide to prioritize their own self-interest, the collective fails. The philosophy requires that each citizen is content with their given role in the social hierarchy and is willing to

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91 Ibid., 657-658.
uphold their end of the contract. It is to these ends that moral reform becomes essential to
the mission of the collective. Inhabitants must adopt an active moral philosophy—which
derives from the culture’s conventions—in order to contribute to a rational General Will.
An active moral life holds all parties responsible to their duties and instills within the
participants the rationality that advises the General Will. In return, the moral code
ensures justice and equality for all participants in the collective.

Like Mercier, Ledoux understood the Rousseauian construct of the collective to
be fundamental in the ideology of his utopia because it is the result of the social contract
upon which all autonomous relations thrive. However, the architect was aware of the
collective’s fragility. Therefore, Ledoux embraced the unwavering power of morality in
the plans for his ideal city by embedding a didactic moral code within the plans,
decorations, and functionality in all of Chaux’s social institutions. By tying morality to
the survival of the collective, Ledoux ensures that inhabitants of his city would feel
morally obligated to advocate the conventions developed by their community. Ledoux
hoped that the overt edification of Chaux’s inhabitants would eliminate any desire to
rebel against the social contract.

After parsing out how the collective functions vis-à-vis the social contract, it is
evident how Chaux’s social institutions cater to collectivity (in an institution like the
Public Market, for example, all equal citizens from different echelons of society gather
communally to fairly trade their goods; all parties are protected by the sovereign and are
thus protected under the social contract to sell or buy goods without fear of being
cheated.) However, Ledoux designed even the private, domestic structures for the ideal
city to follow the construct of the collective. Although he provided country houses for the
wealthier inhabitants, he designed several multi-family homes for the working class to ensure that members of the collective maintained a sense of communality even in a private setting. These residences were created as double houses joined in pairs and connected by arcades, leaving a courtyard between the two wings. For the most part, the homes were arranged and named according to trade (e.g. Houses for Merchants, Houses for Cabinet-Makers, Houses for Artists, etc.). Even though these structures were intended for a working class, the stripped classical aesthetic of the simplified arcades and stereometric forms gave “monumentality that would invest the territory with reminiscences of its former Gallo-Roman glory.”93 Additionally, this monumentality uses classical orders and forms to glorify the people that inhabit the buildings, i.e. working people that would not typically be found residing in exalted neoclassical architecture in a real city like Paris. Although it could be argued that Ledoux uses this classicizing vocabulary as a mode of maintaining the aesthetic that he had created for Chaux, I argue that his use of monumental orders and arcades in lower and middle class homes is a celebration of the virtuous, honorable rural working class, upon whose labor the town’s economy and collective thrive. This argument can be supported by my claim in Chapter One regarding the unusual use of neoclassical vocabulary in the industrial Saline Royale: Ledoux was interested in how classical architectural elements could transcend the rigid hierarchies of classicism maintained throughout the history of architecture. The architecture redefined classicism’s caractère in order to glorify those had a moral worth to the collective.

The ultimate manifestation of the collective in domestic architecture was the secular commune known as the Cénobie, (fig. 23) named after the early Christian

93 Vidler, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, 274.
cenobitic monks.\textsuperscript{94} The Cénobie was theoretically similar to the double houses for working class families, but was fashioned in a much larger scale and accommodated inhabitants of nearly any trade or socio-economic class. The commune was a unified structure with sixteen L-shaped single-family apartments enfolding small service courtyards located in the four corners of the building. The apartments connect to a central pavilion that housed the housekeeping facilities (office, kitchen, laundry, pantry) on the ground floor, circular recreation salon on the second floor, and domed dining room on the gallery level.

At first look, the plan appears similar to that of the Public Market, as both plans feature four corner pavilions attached to a central structure, enclosed by a large wall and large open courtyards. However, the arrangement the communal and private spaces are reversed: in the plan for the Market, the collective gathered in the corners and courtyard of the structure, while the central space was used for storage; and in the Cénobie, the collective congregates within the concentric salons in the central pavilion, while the private is relegated to the periphery. I formulate this contrast because the structures that we have observed up to this point have all been central, biaxial plans that either follow a cruciform plan or central pavilion diagonally flanked by four corner pavilions plan. Although there is a consistency in the arrangement of Chaux’s buildings, Ledoux carefully assesses the functionality of the space and how best the collective can gather. In the Cénobie, the central pavilion is the optimal space for both the practical configuration of space—that is, all of the communal facilities and recreation rooms can be easily accessed, rather than attempting to navigate a complex system of corridors to reach

\textsuperscript{94} In Christianity, cenobitic monasticism was a Late Antiquity and Early Medieval monastic practice in which monks lived in social organized communities, rather than live as hermits with solitary religious practices. Ibid., 332.
facilities in the corner pavilions—and the symbolic configuration of the collective. With the private apartments located in the boundaries of the structure, the residents must access their own quarters via the communal center. The occupants are confronted with the collective as they enter and exit their own spaces, which enforces Ledoux’s ideal society’s prioritization of the community over private interests. The Cénobie “imparts the social virtues” upon the inhabitants who are constantly confronted by the virtue of collectivity through the exposure of public space within their residence.95

The Cenobitic Parable of Happiness

The Cénobie’s emphasis on the collective may be overt in its design, however, in the text of L’Architecture, the majority of the Ledoux’s writing on the commune consists of a parable about the Cénobie’s residents. Under the heading “Plan du rez-de-chaussée et premier étage d’une Cénobie,” Ledoux weaves together the theoretical foundations of the project and an account of sixteen imaginary families that inhabited the Cénobie. In the disjointed atemporal story, these young cenobites grow wary of their prosaic lives so they leave their home to find happiness and wisdom in other cultures. Ledoux writes:

The most fanatic youths, believing to have found the bait of happiness’ seduction that they could not conceive, gathered in small numbers to break the family pact. Our young cenobites, without deliberation, tore themselves away from the sentiments that attached them to free laws to learn those that governed the other people on earth.96

From Russia to the young United States to China, the young cenobites searched the

95 Ledoux, L’Architecture, 303.
96 “La jeuness plus exaltée, croyant trouver dans l'appât de la séduction un bonheur qu'elle ne conçoit pas, se rassemble en petit nombre, pour rompre le pacte de famille. Nos jeunes cenobites, sans délibérer, s'arrachent au sentiment qui les attachent à des loix libres, pour connaître celles qui gouvernent les autres peuples de la terre.” Ibid., 305.
globe for other systems of government. They left behind the security of equality and collectivity that Rousseauian moral philosophy afforded them and symbolically broke the “family pact” that protected the rights of the collective. After wandering through every great nation on the earth, their travels yield nothing as agreeable as their commune in Chaux. The travelers decide to return to France and reside once again in the Cénobie, but on their return they find that their abandoned home had been consumed by nature and turned into a ruin. The young cenobites “realize that improvement, after which one runs, is not worth the goodness one possesses, that improvement in ourselves; independent vacillations of the world is almost always the enemy of the happiness (le bonheur) at our disposal.” That is, the betterment that one seeks in other places (physical or imagined) is not worth one’s own integrity and virtue; rather, man should look inward for self-melioration. He argues that the tradeoff of seeking “independent vacillations” is a sacrifice of the happiness otherwise available to us. This stance may seem severe in its resistance to interrupt the established boundaries of class hierarchies or nationhood, but it is in line with that of the Rousseauian appeal to subjugate selfish interests. If the individual can accept their position within society and not search for an improvement in station, then the collective is stable.

Ledoux’s claim that happiness is attainable to us as long as we don’t embark on aimless, insubstantial pursuits that only serve self-interest raises the question of what exactly the architect meant by le bonheur. As was discussed, the lesson of the parable was to not seek betterment for the sake of curiosity or gross self-interest because one’s happiness will be jeopardized; however, happiness—the parable’s premier virtue—is
vague in Ledoux’s ideology. The term *le bonheur* appears numerous times over the
course of *L’Architecture*, typically as the consequence of the success of Chaux’s social
institutions. The most concrete discussion of Ledoux’s concept of happiness can be found
in the introduction to the text. Ledoux writes, “Happiness and well being can be found in
the common good, from there the purpose of these houses build on the shadow of the
quiet forest, where the wise, lived together under the simple law of nature, is to facilitate
the a collective well being.”98 In this statement, Ledoux relates *le bonheur* with well
being, which he claims are consequences of the General Will. This interpretation of
happiness as a result of participation in the collective equates with the manifestation of
happiness in the cenobitic parable.

Yet, in his discussion of the Cénobie, which the architect adoringly refers to as an
“asylum of happiness,” the concept of *le bonheur* refers to something more stable than a
temporary state of gratification.99 It is easy to overlook happiness in the parable as a
fleeting sensorial experience due to the imprecision of his language. Yet, Ledoux’s
language regarding the notion that one could relinquish one’s happiness in pursuit of
vacillations—the epitome of instability—insinuates that *le bonheur* is a stable mode of
existence. This point is further echoed in the introduction of *L’Architecture* when Ledoux
writes, “[Following a] schedule is the supreme happiness, it hurries measure and leaves
nothing to be desired. Believe not that we need this fugitive and sterile glory that seduces
common people and restricts them to life, when one has the right to claim this irrefutable

98 “le Bonheur et le bien-être peuvent donc se trouver dans le sentiment attraktiv des jouissance communes,
et de là ces cenobites construites à l’ombre des bois tranquilles, où des sages, vivant réunis sous les lois
simples de la nature, cherchent à réaliser la desirable félicité des temps fableux de l’âge d’or.” Ibid., 2-3.
99 “l’azyle du bonheur.” Ibid., 301.
patrimony, fruits of concern, founded on independence.”

That is, one must cognizant of time. If an individual uses their time wisely and, we can infer, contribute to the success of the collective, then they will have the “irrefutable patrimony,” or absolute right, to _le bonheur_. Like the previous examples, happiness is the result of the individual participating in the collective and contributing to the General Will. This suggests that if happiness is the outcome of continual participation, then happiness too is a perpetual, stable state of being.

Like many of the concepts behind the ideal city, some of Ledoux’s notion of happiness derives from Rousseau. The philosopher claimed in _Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire_ that happiness is “nothing external to the self, nothing but oneself and one’s own existence.”

This thought that happiness is strictly an internal construct, may appear antithetical to the Rousseauian collective, but in actuality it is an argument against self-interest. If man can be content with his self, rationality prevails over vanity. On this point, Ledoux agrees, claiming “It is natural for man to want to be happy; with difficulty he finds the good for which he searches; anxious about what he doesn’t have, he is rarely satisfied by what he possesses… The good and the bad are found everyone; true happiness exists nowhere.”

The architect, too, understood that happiness could not be found in the possession of material goods or in a perfect society; greed and longing only fed otiose self-interests. Man is predisposed to seek for happiness, but is too compelled by desires to acquire and occupy and thus projects his focus outwardly on the

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100 “L’emploi du temps est comme le bonheur supreme, il presse la mesure et ne laisse rien à désirer. Ne croyez point que l’on ait besoin de cette gloire fugitive et sterile qui séduit le commun des humains et se borne à la vie, quand on a droit de pretendre à ce patrimoine inattaquable, fruit des sollicitudes, fondé par l’indépendance.” Ibid., 6.
102 “Il est naturel à l’homme de souhaiter d’être heureux; difficilement il trouve le bien qu’il cherche; inquiet sur ce qu’il n’a pas, rarement il est satisfait de ce qu’il possède... Le bien et le mal se trouvent partout; le vrai bonheur n’est donc nulle part.” Ledoux, _L’Architecture_, 305.
material.

Ledoux’s model, however, diverges from that of the philosopher. Rousseau was famously pessimistic and thus argued that happiness was an ephemeral “transitory state,” impossible for any person to maintain, even joking that happiness “happened more easily and more pleasantly on a fertile and isolated island, naturally closed off and separated from the rest of the world.”\(^\text{103}\) The philosopher argued that, based on empirical evidence, the city was the locale of “the society of the wicked, which thrives only on treachery and hatred,” and in no such place could happiness flourish.\(^\text{104}\) Happiness was only to be found in the transience of nature or affection; it was not a sustainable actuality. Yet, Ledoux’s manifestation of *le bonheur* in Chaux does not agree with this aspect of Rousseau’s theory. In the parable, the cenobites were in a constant state of happiness until their curiosity absorbed them; only in their travels did they realize that they were only contented at home. Even though Ledoux locates *le bonheur* within a specified setting, the structure only serves as a concrete signifier of the cenobites’ lifestyle when they lived there. Thus, the derelict Cénobie that they encounter at the end of the story represents that in pursuit of self-interest, their persistent condition of happiness degenerated. Yet, the still-erect structure suggests that *le bonheur*, like the Cénobie, had the potential to be reclaimed. The reclamation, like the general maintenance, of happiness suggests consequently that man must be an active agent in the pursuit of their own happiness. Although happiness is not something to be obtained, to be happy is an active act, as it requires the individual to consciously reject desire and chose to continue the lifestyle that contributes to *le bonheur*. Happiness is, thus, a choice made by the

\(^{104}\) Ibid., 74-75.
individual, rather than a momentary feeling of uncontrollable elation.

Ledoux considered a permanent state of happiness to be viable if society was cognitively constructed on *le bonheur*. In fact, the success of Chaux’s collective was predicated on the maintenance of the collective happiness and the suppression of selfish desire. Clearly, this concept did not follow the template set forth by Rousseau. The question is, then, if there is another philosophical model of happiness upon which Chaux operates. Ledoux’s concept of happiness is a stable and active concept is inconsistent with much of Enlightenment philosophy, and must be rooted in an older source.

I argue that the reader can best comprehend Ledoux’s concept of *le bonheur* as it pertains to the communal life of Chaux in the context of Aristotelian ethics, which correspondingly regards happiness as a stable and active concept. In ancient Greek philosophy, happiness, or *eudaimonia*, was the desired sum of “living well and doing well” and could only be evaluated at a person’s final good (death).\(^\text{105}\) On the topic of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, contemporary philosopher Julia Annas writes, “Happiness is the best thing in life, the greatest of our goods. It is different from the other goods we aim at; it is not just another end, but the way we actively pursue those other ends, and so can be referred to as the use we make of those ends.”\(^\text{106}\) Thus, it is the active pursuit of the good life, the motivation behind the choices that we make, and the impetus of the modus we conduct ourselves. Happiness is a spectrum upon which one can evaluate the trajectory of their life. Ledoux’s parable of the cenobites respects this philosophy; when the cenobites foolishly pursue false pleasure, they experienced a decrease in happiness, causing them to reevaluate their choices.

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\(^{106}\) Ibid. 329.
Further, in Aristotelian Ethics, *eudaimonia* is founded in virtue and morality—the two concepts that are most fetishized by Ledoux and that appear in nearly every institution in Chaux. Ancient philosophical writings reason that virtue and morality are intrinsic attributes of man’s happiness because they are contingent upon the innate qualities of humanity. A reasonable person seeking *eudaimonia* may pursue it for his own interest, but it is also in his best interest for the sake of the virtues and self-fulfillment to respect and treat others well. Valuing and assisting others is a fundamental human quality that rewards the individual with a sense of relationality. Moreover, mankind is prone to caring about and having affection for others, even if the resulting relationship is not quantifiable or computably beneficial to the self. Annas explores this connection between morality and *eudaimonia* in Aristotle further, claiming:

Insofar as the theories give virtue a non-instrumental role in achieving happiness, they are making morality necessary for happiness; and moral demands will lessen the role in the agent’s life as a whole of her own self-centered projects, for their status will be determined by moral considerations, not *vice versa*. Further, all ancient theories recognize that we do, in fact, value others and their interests for their own sake, and not just for our own. And the ancient theories are aware that justice is an important virtue of the individual, and that it is linked to justice as a virtue of social institutions.\(^{107}\)

The two concepts have a reciprocal relationship in which happiness necessitates morality and morality eases the difficulties in pursuing happiness. This mutual bond, as defined by Aristotelian ethics, informs why happiness was so essential to Ledoux’s theories. For Ledoux, happiness was the apogee of moral order, in which the potentiality of the moral code was optimized in the lives of the citizens. If the inhabitants of Chaux were happy, then it meant that the Rousseauian model was successful and that the degeneration of

\(^{107}\) Ibid. 322.
French society was reversed. Dually, if the citizens followed the moral code, they would lead a rewarding existence.

Collectivity factors into morality and happiness’s bond through its ability to straightforwardly delineate the roles of the autonomous citizens within the social framework. The collective, predicated on social conventions, facilitates the proper channels through which inhabitants may pursue happiness. According to Rousseauian moral philosophy, it under the leadership of the collective General Will that people will cultivate their happiness.

The Apotheosis of Happiness

There exists a grim paradox in ancient philosophy’s concept of eudaimonia. Aristotle and his contemporaries argue that happiness may only be realized through the final good. According to Annas, the ancients believed that “happiness applies to my life as a whole, and does not depend on my say-so, because happiness is just a thin specification of my final end, and this applies to my life as a whole… and does not depend on my say-so. Happiness is stable, active and objective just because the final good is.” It is only in death, that the entirety of a person’s choices and accomplishments may be collected and quantified to examine whether that person led a happy existence. Thus, the living person can never be wholly certain that they are happy. One could feel ecstatic, pleased, or elated at any given time, but according to the Aristotelian model, happiness entails that the person has exercised virtue and morals throughout all of their choices. This paradox of living well to achieve eudaimonia

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108 Ibid., 46.
without any opportunity to know if they are happy for certain may result in the living caught in a liminal space, discomforted by their own ignorance.

Ledoux addresses this paradox in his design for the Cemetery of Chaux (figs. 24-26), conceived around 1785.\footnote{Although the actual year that the Cemetery was created is unknown, Vidler has attributed the design to the date 1785 because the concept responded directly to concurrent concerns of the Paris cemeteries. There were several architectural plans proposed in 1785 for the reburying of the human remains from the Cemetery of the Innocents in the closed quarries of Montrouge (popularly known today as the Catacombs). Like the projects for the Parisian catacombs, Ledoux located his Cemetery on top of the close stone quarries of Chaux. Vidler, \textit{Claude-Nicolas Ledoux}, 274-6.} The Cemetery is renowned for being depicted in one of three allegorical plates in the texts (along with the House of the Poor, Plate 33, and the View of the Besançon Theater, Plate 115). Although the structure’s celestial elevation plate metaphorically depicts the building as earth and neighboring planets hit by the rays of the sun, plates showing the building’s plan and section reveal that the Cemetery was designed to evoke a partially buried monumental planetarium. The top half of the sphere and one level of corridors would be above ground, while the bottom half of the sphere and two additional floors would be subterranean. The plan was created in concentric circles with several corridors radiating from the central sphere that led to the catacombs. The circularity of the plan derives from the enduring tradition of the circle as a geometric symbol of the eternal—an affirmation of the afterlife to all mourners. The Cemetery had a similar interior program of the Church with the inside of the giant circular central structure subject to diurnal and annual solar and lunar cycles. During the day, light would penetrate the central space through perforations in the dome, creating the effect of the stars. At night, an artificial sun would illuminate the space, revealing a three-dimensional diagram of Newton’s laws. The entire program was an evocation of the rational order of the cosmos.
It is worth noting that in contemporary scholarship the Cemetery is often examined in tandem with Boullée’s funerary architecture as an example of architecture’s adaptation of Newtonian laws. Vidler offers one such exhaustive comparison between Ledoux and Boullée’s funerary architecture. He writes,

Ledoux’s design seems calculated to follow the precepts of Boullée’s own funerary architecture, exemplified in a series of ‘Temples of Death’ imagined at the time of Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt. For these cemeteries, loci of the terrible sublime, Boullée created what he thought of as new genres of architecture: a ‘buried architecture’ fashioned out of the principle that ‘the skeleton of architecture is the absolutely bare wall’ and an architecture composed entirely of shadows, a negative architecture all the positive elements of construction—columns, pediments, and the like—were traced on the façade in dark cutouts of their absence… Like Boullée, and taking his cue from Burke, Ledoux found in the bare, undecorated sphere, inside and out, ‘an image of nothingness’ that ‘presented to the eye neither woods nor meadows, valleys nor rivers, and even less the benefits of the sun that vivifies nature’ (195). 110

Using Boullée’s 1784 Cenotaph for Isaac Newton (fig. 27) as an example, a correlation between the formal characteristics of Ledoux and Boullée’s works is evident. For his Cemetery, Ledoux adopts the same prismatic forms covered in smooth bare walls that are evident in the elevations of Boullée’s Cenotaph. The severity of the smooth stone walls paired with the total monumentality and verticality of the central celestial sphere offer to the architects an architectural vocabulary able to celebrate both the terror and beauty of the sublime’s final good. Although strikingly traditional in their massing and refined linear lines, the classical beauty of the buildings are overwhelmed by Burkean sublimity, which reminds the visitor of the inevitability of death. Likewise, this encapsulation of the sublime can be found in the interior programming of Boullée and Ledoux’s designs; as Vidler notes, the interiors of both are fashioned to express a “negative architecture” in which typical elements of decoration are absent. Instead, these components are replaced

110 Ibid., 274-6.
by the shadow by architectural elements—that is, a play of the light/dark dyad through the manipulation of light on the interior of the buildings. As we see in the interior of Ledoux’s Cemetery, daylight and the night sky are evoked to offer an alternative to the fixed classical ornamentation. The absence of classical pediments, orders, entablatures, etc. makes one only further aware of the final good’s total annihilation of man.

Vidler ends his comparison between Ledoux and Boullée by offering a quote by the latter. Boullée writes, “It seemed to me impossible to conceive of anything sadder than a monument composed of a plane surface, naked and stripped, made of a material that absorbs the light, absolutely deprived of details and whose decoration is formed by a painting of shadows delineated themselves by shadows still more somber.” Boullée claims that the combination of these elements (bare and opaque walls, use of shadows) ultimately generates an architecture of sadness. Vidler evokes this quotation to suggest that maybe Ledoux, too, is interested in how these elements may contribute to the general feeling of sadness in an ideal funerary monumental.

Although the Cemetery can certainly be understood as melancholy as any funerary structure, I argue that the Cemetery also functions as the space in which the apotheosis of the Aristotelian theory of happiness takes place. If we accept the premise that death is the state through which the living can objectively evaluate the happiness of the dead, then the Cemetery is the courtroom in which all happiness is determined. Endowed with the authority of the cosmos, the spherical hall—the site of the funeral ritual—holds the dead’s tribunal, quantifying the moral value of their existence. In his discussion of the Cemetery’s plan, Ledoux even claims that in this spherical hall, “On a common landing, one purifies the dead to arouse virtue within the living; one side leads

111 Ibid.
to the fields of happiness, the tranquil stay”¹¹² In this claim, the architect affirms that this space, which purifies or absolves the dead from any immorality, leads to the “fields of happiness”—a metaphor referring to the honor of eudaimonia that may be bestowed upon the dead by those who have survived them based on the measurable executions of their morality. Likewise, this is a practice for the living to pay their respects to the deceased in addition to being a reminder to the mourners of own mortality and the practical necessity of the moral code.

In some capacity, the Cemetery complements the moral duty of the Church. As we observed in Chapter Three, the Church functioned as the moral keystone of Chaux and enforced morality through cyclical rituals and festivals. The Cemetery represents the last stage of the human life cycle and operates in the social conscious as a symbol of the idealized final good. It symbolized for the inhabitants of the city the potentiality for eternal happiness, which is granted upon the individual according to their ability to translate the moral code expressed in the Church through all of their endeavors. Although the notion that the Cemetery is the ultimate culmination of happiness in Chaux seems like a paradox, in actuality it imparts meaning and consequence on the moral code. Without consequence, the moral code—a necessity in the Rousseauian society—seems ineffectual and futile. The moral code must have an endpoint in order for citizens to respect the rules of the given collective. The prospect of sustainable happiness motivates the inhabitant to actively participate as a moral member of a body politic.

¹¹² “Sur un pallier commun on épure les morts pour exciter les vivants à la vertu ; l'un des côtés conduit aux champs du bonheur, au séjour de la tranquillité.” Ledoux, L'Architecture, 329.
CONCLUSION

An Architecture of Consequence and Convention

The notion of consequence is important as it pertains to the ideal city of Chaux. Consequence is attached to the moral code, as it offers the contingencies of the success or failure of Ledoux’s society. In other words, there are two inevitable consequences of the enactment of the moral code in a given society: if the moral code is strictly followed, then the consequence is a congenial, ethical society in which the collective can prosper and achieve happiness; if one or more individuals choose to disregard the moral order, then the consequence is the dismantlement of society’s ideological frameworks. In order for the social contract to be valid, all participants must be motivated and active in the execution of its principles. Thus, consequence is essential in its ability to inspire all parties of a social contract to participant in the General Will. As we observed in Mercier’s comments on the French city and his prototype put forth in L’An 2440, the extremities of these contingencies are readily available in the ideal model of moral order as represented in his novel’s futuristic Paris and in the social corruption of real world Paris. Accordingly, Ledoux’s utopia offers the ideal consequence of moral order.

The institutions discussed in depth in this thesis—the Church, Public Market, Stock Market, Public Baths, Cénobie, and Cemetery—all contribute to both the establishment of the moral order as well as its consequences. Although I analyzed these structures according to the progression of my argument, Ledoux’s programming of each of these institutions reflects both the establishment and consequences of moral order. For example, as discussed, the Public Baths had the moral duty as a communal gathering spot, in which citizens could physically and spiritually cleanse themselves. However, the
institution also has an implicit consequence that if citizens do not participate in the bathing ritual, than they are susceptible to diseases that derive from poor hygienic practices. Thus, the individual is responsible not only to the collective, but to themselves. In order to optimize the potential of one’s life, you must consider how your own actions affect the consequences of the collective.

The other notion that is echoed through the rhetoric of moral reform is the theme of convention. In Enlightenment philosophy, convention denotes a set of traditions developed and sustained in society. Conventions are not a natural order of the world; rather, they reflect the conditions and values of society. Rousseau argues that conventions are imperative in the moral order as they communicate the types of values society should maintain. Ledoux adheres to this notion of ideological conventions in his ideal city by establishing his society within the cultural traditions of rural French communities through the continuation of local festivals and the valuation of agrarian principles. The entire lifestyle program of Chaux is predicated on traditions Ledoux would have witnessed (or romanticized) during his childhood in the Champagne region.

However, this idea of convention is not limited to ideological order. The theme appears in Ledoux’s own architectural practice through the conscious use or neglect of classical conventions. As I noted in the introduction, Ledoux’s ideal city is often discussed in terms of architecture parlante, yet with the exception of the Cemetery the buildings that I focused on in this study are more conventional than Oikéma or the Workshop of the Coopers. Although designed using a simplified, direct language, the Church, Public Market, Stock Market, Public Baths, and Cénobie follow the classical principles of form and design. They all use a combination of orders, pyramidal lines,
arcaded passages, temple fronts, and rotundas. Further, they are all centrally planned, encapsulating millennia of Western historical precedents and symbolizing the centrality of moral order in the city. The question then is why Chaux’s major institutions use classical conventions, while other minor buildings depart from it? On the subject Richard Wittman writes,

> When specific classical forms appeared on these buildings, they were presented as discrete points of visual interest detached from, and no longer dependent upon, the complex organizing system of classicism. Yet the provocative bluntness of these buildings also suggested a forward-looking liberation from the formulaic rules of the past.\(^\text{113}\)

Similar to Antoine Picon, Wittman notes that although Ledoux uses classical conventions, it was detached from the original context articulated in Blondel’s taxonomies. He further argues that this “provocative bluntness” is a mode of “forward-looking liberation” that allows the architect to acknowledge and move past tradition. Wittman’s argument holds true if we consider the philosophical definition of conventions in that they reflect the values of society. By maintaining but rationalizing the language of classicism, Ledoux adapts architectural conventions to reflect the new set of society conventions, or values, in his ideal city. This perhaps provides some clarity as to why he may use conventional forms in his major institutions and more plainly stereometric forms in the minor institutions: if the keystones of moral order negotiate the established precepts of architecture with the profound ideologies of the Rousseauian collective, then there may be more opportunity for creative interpretation in the minor institutions that are not as fundamental to the moral order of the city.

\(^\text{113}\) Wittman, *Architecture, Print Culture, and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France*, 201.
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Figure 27. Étienne-Louis Boullée, Cenotaph for Isaac Newton, 1780-93.
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