

stockpot. . . . He is rather giving us an insight which preserves the unity of experience and which, at its higher and more serious levels, triumphs over the apparently contradictory and conflicting elements of experience by unifying them into a new pattern.”²¹

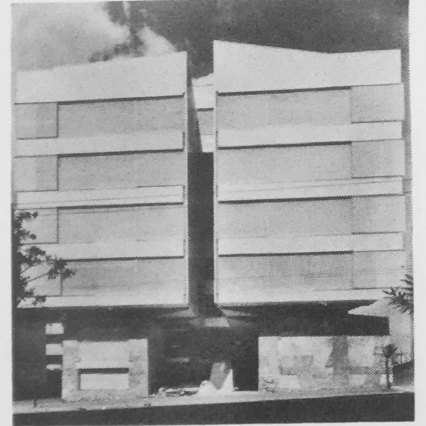
And in *Seven Types of Ambiguity* William Empson “dared to treat what [had] . . . been regarded as a deficiency in poetry, imprecision of meaning, as poetry’s chief virtue . . .”²² Empson documents his theory by readings from Shakespeare, “the supreme ambiguiist, not so much from the confusion of his ideas and the muddle of his text, as some scholars believe, as simply from the power and complexity of his mind and art.”²³

Ambiguity and tension are everywhere in an architecture of complexity and contradiction. Architecture is form *and* substance—abstract *and* concrete—and its meaning derives from its interior characteristics and its particular context. An architectural element is perceived as form *and* structure, texture *and* material. These oscillating relationships, complex and contradictory, are the source of the ambiguity and tension characteristic to the medium of architecture. The conjunction “or” with a question mark can usually describe ambiguous relationships. The Villa Savoye (5): is it a square plan or not? The size of Vanbrugh’s fore-pavilions at Grimsthorpe (6) in relation to the back pavilions is ambiguous from a distance: are they near or far, big or small? Bernini’s pilasters on the Palazzo Propaganda Fide (7): are they positive pilasters or negative panel divisions? The ornamental cove in the Casino Pio V in the Vatican (8) is perverse: is it more wall or more vault? The central dip in Lutyens’ façade at Nashdom (9) facilitates skylighting: is the resultant duality resolved or not? Luigi Moretti’s apartments on the Via Parioli in Rome (10): are they one building with a split or two buildings joined?

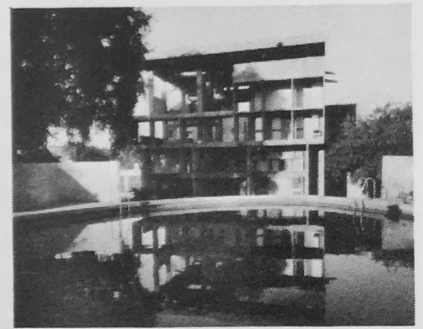
The calculated ambiguity of expression is based on the confusion of experience as reflected in the architectural program. This promotes richness of meaning over clarity of meaning. As Empson admits, there is good and bad ambiguity: “. . . [ambiguity] may be used to convict a poet of holding muddled opinions rather than to praise the complexity of the order of his mind.”²⁴ Nevertheless, according to Stanley Edgar Hyman, Empson sees ambiguity as “collecting precisely at the points of greatest poetic effectiveness, and finds it breeding a quality he calls ‘tension’ which



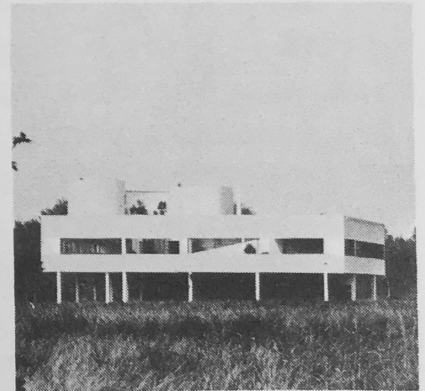
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