vanishing point is determined by, and after, the focal point. In the photographs the lines converging towards the vanishing point reinforce the presence of a focal point but are not specific to it. A focal point may be apprehended at varying proximities to the viewer; the vanishing point is, mathematically speaking, at an infinite distance. The focal point generally resides in a plane that is frontal to the viewer, the axis then being perpendicular to this plane. This plane terminates the reading of depth so that the viewer may apprehend shallow or deep space.

In these photographs the visual axis is cultivated as an axis of asymmetry. Architectural elements assemble themselves about the visual axis without regard for symmetrical arrangement. Visually, the receding frontal planes, which disclose to the eye only a partial view of the space beyond, can be juxtaposed to the lateral planes that are parallel to the visual axis, but are represented perspectivally as converging diagonals. On one side of the visual axis, the reading of depth is more dynamic, as the eye races from the foreground to the background. On the other side, it is more modulated by the spatial transversals of the coulisses between the frontal planes. Both conditions begin to beckon the viewer into the scene which is not scenographic but the space of potential occupation.

Figuratively, with the introduction of asymmetry, the possibilities abound to create new meanings using binary commentary. For example, at the entrance to the Villa Savoye (Figure 1.14) the camera's/viewer's eye is fixed on a focal point in the distant landscape (ambiguous in its definition, but unmistakable in its presence). The visual axis between the viewer and the focal point is roughly equivalent to the centreline between a row of columns on the right and a transparent wall on the left. Narratively, it seems clear that the viewer is arriving and not leaving since the entry door is forward in the route; however, there is the insistence of the focal point in the landscape, producing a tension between inside and out, between arriving and continuing, between culture and nature.

Similarly, in a view from the roof garden towards the ramp, the visual axis virtually divides the photographic composition into two halves (Figure 1.15).

Figure 1.14 Le Corbusier. Poissy: Villa Savoye 1929 © 2003 Artists Rights Society (ARS)/ADAAGP, Paris/FLC L2(17) 23.
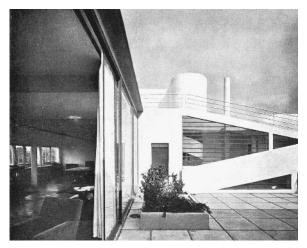
Figure 1.15 Le Corbusier. Poissy: Villa Savoye 1929 © 2003 Artists Rights Society (ARS)/ADAAGP, Paris/ FLC L2(17) 49.

Clearly, the focal point is the dark door in the white wall at the centre of the image (one almost assumes that the perspectival vanishing point must be in the centre of the door, but in fact it is very much closer to the left edge). Reinforced by the severity of the diagonal convergence of the lateral wall between living-room and roof garden, the connection between the viewer and the focal point is riveting. The axial cleavage creates an opposition between inside and outside, dark and light, spatially determinate and spatially indeterminate. The visual axis, which impels the viewer forward, is countered with a different kind of perceptual diagonal denoting the more objective, upward movement of the ramp. The ramp and the spiral stairs are captured in the coulisses between the layered, frontal planes. The expressed depth on the left side competes with the implied depth of the frontal planes on the right. Both vie for the viewer's attention and potential movement; horizontal is contrasted with vertical.

This fascination with the bilaterally asymmetrical led Le Corbusier to more complex and less traditional photographic constructions. Thomas Schumacher (1987) has demonstrated that a large number of photographs in Le Corbusier's *Oeuvre Complète* borrow the compositional device used by Piero della Francesca in his painting *The Flagellation* in which a single image is turned into a virtual diptych (ibid., p. 41).

In Piero's painting a column divides the composition spatially into a right side and left side (Figure 1.16). The vanishing point[14] of the composition occurs within the left side of the painting and, while it does serve to establish a space of relatively great depth, it does not function as a focal point as described above. The eye is not drawn to the vanishing point; indeed, the vanishing point can be ascertained only by analysis of the converging lines. Here there are competing focal points, one on each side of the painting, created by two groupings of human figures, each of which *en masse* creates a distinct frontal plane and a focal point. The tension between these two focal points is exacerbated by the positioning of one group at the extreme foreground and the other in the background. This is not the place to reference the many