



**6.6** ‘Sociofugal’ and ‘sociopetal’ space for sitting, brilliantly provided by Gaudi in his Barcelona Parc Guell. People can choose to sit in groups and converse in the concave segments (sociopetal), or individuals can sit in relative isolation, perhaps reading or simply contemplating the scene in the convex segments (sociofugal)

Clearly some spaces are intended to create settings that are particularly sociopetal or sociofugal in their effect. Outdoor places that provide an opportunity for people to gather round and chat can become well known meeting places and greatly enrich urban life. An excellent and much frequented example is the tiers of curved spaces provided at the junction of Scotts and Orchard Roads in the centre of Singapore (Fig. 6.7). Also providing shade from the sun and shelter from the occasional tropical storm, these simple spaces adjacent to sources of food and drink are extremely popular. I have never once passed this spot and failed to see animated conversation. One sometimes thinks the whole of Singaporean youth culture must be run from here!

A more formal and obviously sociopetal setting might be a table for a dinner party. The whole purpose of the event is to bring the people together, and in fact the food is often in reality simply the excuse for this social communing. It seems a very human and particularly English failing not to be able to invite people simply to be close for the sheer sake of it. We need some sort of excuse for it, and to pretend that the food at the dinner table is the real reason. So this table, unlike the business meeting table, is one to bring people closer rather than to hold them apart. It should focus on its centre, and perhaps the round table is the most sociopetal of all! We might surround our table with those wonderful high-backed chairs designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh originally for Miss Cranston’s tearooms in Glasgow. They would