*Architecture Philosophy* is the journal of the International Society for the Philosophy of Architecture (ISPA). The society was founded in 2009 by Carolyn Fahey, and the journal was founded in 2014 by Tom Spector, Carolyn Fahey, Stefan Koller.

*Architecture Philosophy* (ISSN 2372-0883) is published semiannually. Two parts form a volume. The subscription is free for digital copies, and print copies are avilable to society members at ISPA events. Visit isparchitecture.com for digital access to the journal's content.



Printed in the United States by Oklahoma State University.

CONTACT

WEB isparchitecture.com
EMAIL isparchitecture@gmail.com

# CONTENTS

# WHY ARCHITECTURE PHILOSOPHY?

TOM SPECTOR, CAROLYN FAHEY, & STEFAN KOLLER

Architectural writing that engages philosophy has been around for decades. Philosophical writing with reference to architecture has been around for centuries. But almost none of it has sustained a conversation. It is as though each outing might be the last. Nothing seems to build—one thought upon another. Too often, when those from the architectural side of the fence reference philosophy in their work, it appears they are doing so ornamentally—to render the work with the appearance of higher order wisdom derived from analytic or continental or environmental or Eastern philosophy, yet without enduring the painstaking work of having done so. Too often, when those from the philosophical side of the fence reference architecture, their stylistic or ideological prejudices are all too apparent, and their understanding of the workings of the world of architectural production are too naïve to be persuasive. And yet—the built environment is too important a force in the world for philosophers to neglect in their work of questioning, criticizing and systematizing who we are, what we know, what is important, and all the rest of the fields of inquiry under their roof. And by the same token, philosophy is too important a practice for architects to ignore their efforts to understand the world they account for. The deficiencies have themselves created a need and desire for a field of inquiry that incorporates the expertise of both architecture and philosophy. Sustaining the inquiry and securing the field, is achieved with a journal.

> “THE PURPOSE OF ARCHITECTURE PHILOSOPHY IS TO PROVIDE THE PLATFORM TO ALLOW THE FIELD’S SELF-IDENTIFICATION PROCESS TO BEGIN, ESTABLISH THE FIELD’S STANDARDS, AND IDENTIFY THE MOST PERTINENT TOPICS”

Until a budding discipline has a journal to call its own, it cannot mature because it has no regular

home within which to find its center, explore its boundaries, quantify progress, and evaluate contributions. There is no way of knowing whether an area of inquiry has already been dealt with by others, whether it may prove fertile, and standards for inquiry are left entirely undefined. These criteria are currently lacking in writing at the junction of architecture and philosophy. The purpose of *Architecture Philosophy*, therefore, is to provide the platform to allow the field's self-identification process to begin, establish the field's standards, and identify the most pertinent topics.

The initial issues will explore the boundaries of writing on architecture philosophy and, in the process, begin to show what the key questions, positions, and disagreements amongst architecture philosophers are. Often times, this diversity is apparent in their formal disciplinary training, whether of post-structuralist architecture or analytic philosophy or otherwise. As editors, we are not interested in homogenizing the thinking represented in the nascent field, but rather in engendering genuine debate. At times the voices will be disparate, resonating as a cacophony of debate, but there are already apparent moments of commonality. The prospect of meaningful agreement creates a worthwhile pursuit.

The desired tone of the essays is to aim for accessibility, but at a level that can presume familiarity with the basics of philosophy and with the main currents in recent architectural thought. The method of research sought is of highly rationalized and evidenced arguments, in which poetics are inadequate, authoritarian claims indefensible, and ungrounded abstractions immobile. Most of the writing presented in this inaugural issue is drawn from essays presented at the 2012 ISPA conference—Ethics and Aesthetics in Architecture—held at Newcastle University.[1] The original call for papers is here:

> *The subject of aesthetics is often taken as dealing with questions of mere beauty, where the word 'aesthetic' is colloquially interchangeable with beauty and liking. Someone might, for instance, explain their liking the look of a particular object on the basis of its 'aesthetics'. Interestingly, even within the specialized architecture discourse, the aesthetic is largely discussed on the basis of an object's appearance. Yet, the aesthetic is not limited and should not be limited merely to the way things look. Any philosophically informed aesthetician will contest this limited view, saying something along the lines of 'the aesthetic is* everything*'. The aim of this conference is therefore in part to address this discursive limitation in architecture and related subjects by broadening the aesthetic discourse beyond questions relating to purely visual phenomena in order to include those derived from all facets of human experience. In taking on the aesthetic in a manner that pushes its considerations beyond the realm of mere beauty, questions of ethics*

*often arise. Indeed Wittgenstein famously asserted that, "ethics and aesthetics are one and the same".[2] Questions as to why, for instance a building's form takes the shape it does, not only raises the more conventional aesthetic questions but also questions about what purpose or meaning the building serves beyond purely visual stimulation. Does the form for instance relate somehow to a social ideal or economic ideal? And if so, is this ideal something that its inhabitants subscribe to or are even aware of? In an effort to draw thinkers' attention to the ethical role architecture plays as well as the ethical function architects play, the second part of this conference call addresses this often overlooked dimension of architecture.[3]*

The intent in raising such questions is not merely to broaden architects' discourse to meaningfully include ethical considerations, but also equally as much to broaden the philosophical discourse which has done little to investigate the very same philosophical questions architects do. The hope with bringing the two disciplines together is to propel the broader discourse beyond the limitations of a purely visual understanding of architecture and its aesthetics.

"AS EDITORS, WE ARE NOT INTERESTED IN HOMOGENIZING THE THINKING REPRESENTED IN THE NASCENT FIELD, BUT RATHER IN ENGENDERING GENUINE DEBATE"

The essays in this inaugural issue move beyond those limitations by drawing on a diverse range of approaches. David Leatherbarrow's "Sharing Sense" employs aesthetic readings of architecture to illuminate ethical problems. Paul Guyer's "Pluralism and Monism" traces a strand in the philosophical genealogy from Kant to Ruskin, establishing what the cognitivist approach to understanding architecture is and how this position is situated firmly within both ethics and aesthetics. Emmanuel Petit's essay "Architecture of Ethics" looks at the ethical journey of the architect Stanley Tigerman through his architectural practice in Chicago. Rafeal De Clercq's essay "Building Plans as Natural Symbols" investigates how the architectural plan may be interpreted and understood in terms of symbology. Nathaniel Coleman's "Is Beauty Still Relevant?" is a

fine-grained analysis of an aspect of ancient Greek aesthetics applied to contemporary artistic problems, which seeks to examine whether and how ethics and aesthetics can be understood in tandem. Rick Fox's "A New Interpretative Taxonomy" is a textbook example of epistemic inquiry, which delineates common positions within popular architecture discourse: the singularist, constructivist, and contextualist.

To further explore the journal's limits we include an interview with Andrew Ballantyne, who has made many of first successful forays into the interdisciplinary territory of architecture and philosophy, as well as an interview with Chicago-based architect Stanley Tigerman, and a book review. In later issues, we hope to encourage more dialogue with our readers in the form of responses to published essays, book reviews, roundtables, etc. Occasional themed issues are also anticipated. The society's international events will continue to supply the journal with papers, but we also maintain an open submission. Submission details and guidelines can be found at isparchitecture.com or in the back of this issue.

## ENDNOTES

1. "Ethics and Aesthetics Conference Website." International Society for the Philosophy of Architecture, 13 Dec. 2010. Web. 30 May 2014. <ispaconference.wordpress.com>.
2. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* §6.421.
3. Fahey, Carolyn. "2012 Conference: Call for Papers." International Society for the Philosophy of Architecture, 13 Dec. 2010. Web. 30 Jan. 2014. <isparchitecture.com>.

# SHARING SENSE: OR, HOW ETHICS MIGHT BE THE SUBJECT MATTER OF ARCHITECTURAL AESTHETICS

DAVID LEATHERBARROW

Posing a productive question about ethics and aesthetics in architecture is no easy matter, for these subjects raise whole clusters of problems, not simple or single questions. That observation is not new; these complexities were apparent two millennia ago when the terms were first introduced. Aristotle wrote not one but three books on ethics; as for aesthetics, also three, if you count the *Poetics*, the lost book on *Comedy*, and the *Rhetoric*. After centuries of successive translations and interpretations, through semantic and conceptual innovations, as well as substitutions, alterations and forgeries, we have an exceedingly wide range of issues and meanings from which we borrow and select, always partially, sometimes uncritically. In our search for non-trivial form-making in architecture we have been invited to suppose that ethical considerations will help us imagine aesthetic approaches that are not limited to purely visual concerns. In the terms of a title frequently cited in discussions of both ethics and aesthetics, this question would ask how the beautiful might be *relevant*.[1] An implied corollary is that ethical understanding in architecture can be made tangible through aesthetic creativity.

Although these premises are suggestive, I believe that progress along these lines will not be straightforward. The realities of professional practice in our time present a serious challenge to any *aesthetics-substantiated-by-ethics* thesis. Like it or not, architectural work today is largely a matter of business, in which project making is hurried and abbreviated by cost-cutting measures: mostly we 'fast-track' design development, reuse

details that worked well in previous projects, specify familiar products, have specialists take responsibility for fragments of designs rather than allow single individuals to develop projects in full, and so on. These measures are meant to save time and assure outcomes. There have been business-minded changes in the ways architects work with builders, too. Building construction, a practice that traditionally involved both skill *and* innovation is now seen as the sort of labor that requires regulation by the various instruments of managerial science. Today's design business also constrains the sorts of collaborations that have historically enriched projects—collaborations among architects, builders, clients, critics, and members of the public. Today we govern collaboration through contract administration. Design as planning and construction as management not only save money but allow confident investment.

These comments are not meant as a complaint, only an observation that conditions are no longer what they once were; that the sense of the discipline possessed by academics and critics is often out of step with the realities of practice. If reflection is to illuminate action, if the word is to render a service to the work—something I believe—then the divergence I have described must be taken into account.[2]

As in most types of business, moral issues rarely obtrude themselves into contemporary design practice; except, of course, in the sorts of arguments that lead to legal proceedings. Architects tend to think that ethics is an academic subject, which indeed it is, with linkages to other scholarly pursuits: philology, hermeneutics, decision theory, and so on. The bearing of these on the architecture trade is far from obvious. The old idea that theory is unrelated to practice provides a historical context for the incompatibilities we sense. More significantly, architecture has been absorbed into a broader framework of technological thought and production, a kind of thought that emancipates design from place and functional purpose. Why? Because technical knowledge allows one to do again what has been done before, regardless of context. Nothing in work that is essentially technical acknowledges territorial obligations.[3] This is one of the reasons why technological objects enjoy world-wide distribution. Ethical action is just the reverse; its deliberations and decisions are always bound to concrete circumstances and ways of living, without which they lose their sense of urgency, difficulty, and criteria of relevance. Less positively, calls for ethical behavior sometimes lead to localism and insularity. In these cases the agreements that structure communities are buttressed by practices of exclusion.[4]

Faced with this dichotomy, one might think that reciprocal support is the answer, that techniques could give concrete form to

SCHREINER HOUSE: VIEW TOWARDS GARDEN

ethical understanding and that judgments about what is right in given circumstances could give instrumentality a sense of what should—not only could—be done. This possibility is implied in a wonderful aphorism from Georg Simmel: "The richness of form is that it can adopt an infinity of contents—the richness of content is that it can enter into an infinity of forms. Where both infinities meet, the finite construct emerges. . ."[5]

Unfortunately, when today's designers seek alternatives to technical reason they generally turn to purely formal operations—sometimes called "aesthetic" practices—and focus on geometric experimentation and innovation. We see a lot of it today. Obviously, there is nothing wrong with form; one cannot imagine a design without it. But, as with technical approaches, working with shape or geometry alone runs against the grain of ethical understanding because modern aestheticizing accents not so much what is shared in society and culture, but what is unique to a designer's personal technique and vision, an architect's *brand*. Critics reinforce aestheticizing by praising experimentation in architecture in the ways they would less practical forms of expression and authorship. We commonly identify architectural works with the name of their designer: a Nouvel, Gehry, or Ando building, as if an accommodation were nothing more than a

"WE COMMONLY IDENTIFY ARCHITECTURAL WORKS WITH THE NAME OF THEIR DESIGNER: A NOUVEL, GEHRY, OR ANDO BUILDING, AS IF AN ACCOMMODATION WERE NOTHING MORE THAN A REPRESENTATION, A PAPER MENU THE MEAL"

representation, a paper menu the meal.

Despite these tendencies, one occasionally senses that there may still be some shared background for judgments about what makes a building good, even beautiful. This background is not so much what each of us might state as our values, but a historically constituted and forceful *ethos* that shows itself now and again in both the settings of everyday life and works of art. Obviously, the key question concerns the relationship between these two.





How and when might this *ethics-made-apparent-by-aesthetics* come into being? I will begin my answer by citing an early modern architect, Adolf Loos. Personalizing his *avant garde* polemic, he wistfully reminisced as follows:

> *I did not grow up, thank God, in a stylish home. At that time no one knew what it was yet. ... Here was the table, a totally crazy and intricate piece of furniture ...[with] a shocking bit of work as a lock. But it was our table, ours! Can you understand what that means? Evenings, when I was a young boy and the lamp was burning, I was never able to tear myself away from it. And there was the writing table. There was an ink stain on it, my sister Hermine had knocked over the inkwell when she was a little baby. And there was the picture of my parents ...[with] a hideous frame ... a wedding gift from the workers at my father's shop. And that old-fashioned chair, a leftover from my grandmother's household. Every piece of furniture, everything, every object had a story to tell, a family history. The house was never finished; it grew along with us and we grew within it. Of course it did not have any style to it. That means there was no strangeness, no age. But there was one style that our home did have—the style of its occupants, the style of our family.*[6]

My opening suggestion is that the style Loos describes embodies an *ethos*. It was not a personal matter, such as the manner of Henry van de Velde or Charles Renee Mackintosh, nor a set of rules or objective values. Loos describes a framework that was formed out of habits and shared practices, also conflicts, accidents and bad decisions. He does not say, but it would not be wrong to suppose, that some measure of design intention was part of it too, even if non-professional. Such an *ethos* attains concreteness in the desired and recurring situations of prosaic life, in the house of course, but elsewhere too, in all manner of situations, each with its own *decorum* and typical configuration. Ethical knowledge comes not just from the intimate but also from the public. It is acquired through encounter, meetings that are alternately familiar and challenging, assuring and conflictual. One title from Loos, *Trotzdem*, makes the difficulty of ethical action apparent. *Shared sense* is key, for it is what distinguishes ethical understanding from

the various kinds of technical knowledge possessed by individuals. Because it is teachable, technical knowledge individuates: a person taught to bake bread has a different contribution to a meal than a person who knows how to grow vegetables or play music. Architects know how to design, carpenters to construct. The living *ethos* Loos described is something different, neither taught nor possessed individually, but inherited in a given culture, modified slowly, and often taken for granted. Thus, there is a tension between the comparatively stable and shared ground of ethical sense and productive and relatively autonomous character of technical production. Negotiating this tension is the real work of design (neither experimentation nor affirmation).

I have used the English words ethics and *ethos* interchangeably. To explain my usage I need to take a detour into word origins. Two terms interest me, ethics and ecology. I will say why shortly.

Of the word ecology's two-parts I will discuss only the first. Despite the fact that this compound was introduced in the nineteenth-century, the two-parts are ancient. The *eco* of ecology derives from the Greek word *oikos*, meaning household or estate—something larger and more inclusive than a single building. A faint echo of this origin survives in the grade-school subject 'home economics,' but that term is essentially redundant. Our modern sense of economics narrows the ancient meaning, which embraced all the tasks and understandings of domestic stewardship. Xenophon's famous *Oeconomicus* described a well-run house, farm, or extended family domain. As a treatise on estate management, it addresses topics such as the arrangement and storage of furnishings and supplies, the hiring of slaves, the cultivation of soils, and the management of one's family. His architectural topics included the building's placement and orientation, with respect to times, seasons, weather patterns, and natural

> "IN OUR SEARCH FOR NON-TRIVIAL FORM-MAKING IN ARCHITECTURE WE HAVE BEEN INVITED TO SUPPOSE THAT ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS WILL HELP US IMAGINE AESTHETIC APPROACHES THAT ARE NOT LIMITED TO PURELY VISUAL CONCERNS"

resources, as well as existing buildings and settlements. Further, his account presents a play of analogies between the building, body, and world, as well as practical advice on forms of cooperation, achieving health, undertaking simple and teachable forms of work, and living an honorable life. Here the ethical is linked to the ecological. Discussions of ethics addressed what is required for a good life, as the opening pages of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* make clear. Local interests were at issue, but also involvements with outsiders. What involvement was to Aristotle orientation was to Xenophon. With respect to buildings, the latter's basic premise—one I think we should restore to current thinking—is that the sources of architectural order are partly external to the work itself. For my part, I call this *architecture oriented otherwise*.[7] One way of making the work's involvements clear is to repeat the fact that Xenophon describes an estate not a house. Much later, in sixteenth-century usage—Palladian theory and practice—this meant attention to the form and life of the entire villa, not only the casa. Pre-modern economics, then, was the discipline that allowed a person or family to keep a well-ordered residence, given limited means, energy, and time. Because *oikos* also pertained to an individual's relationships with others, ethical considerations were key to ideas about the house. Economics involved good housekeeping for one's family and for others as both groups existed together in the natural world. This style of thinking joins together two terms and two sciences—economics and ethics.

Can we equate this early sense of *ethos* with our current sense of ethics? Yes and no. No, especially if we assume the original term meant something like morals or a code of conduct meant to guide everyone's behavior. C*onduct* was signified by the ancient word, but it meant a more particular and less objectified sense of behavior than our sense of ethics typically implies. A good comparison is with health, for the knowledge one has of one's own heath can be distinguished from the account presented in scientific description. That's why good doctors always ask patients how they themselves feel, regardless of what the thermometer says.[8] *Ethos* was also constituted culturally and apparent in patterns of behavior that were, in turn, subtended by the belief that they were good. The best translation of *ethos* I can propose is *habit of dwelling*. This usage accords with ancient usage and can work in modern understanding. Accordingly, habits are not only behaviors performed repeatedly but those that are right in specific instances. Dwelling habits can be seen as ethical if they embody the ways of life individuals and others desire in particular circumstances. Decisions about what makes a setting *good* are the ethical aspects of design.

Here, then, is a definition of architecture that acknowledges these

terms and builds on the premises they establish: built works give durable dimension and legible expression to the habits of residing that are commonly understood to be good. In ancient thought a single principle governed the design and construction of works of this kind: *decorum* in Latin, *prepon* in Greek.[9] For Vitruvius *décor* was the principle that allowed one to judge that the form of a building was appropriate for its cultural value, use, and location. In rhetoric the term indicated the style suitable for the subject; gravity for funerals, for example. In everyday life anything or any act could be considered with respect to its appropriateness or fit: celebration is an appropriate response to victory, repayment to debt; likewise, fabric is a fitting choice for shirts, leather for shoes, and so on. The key is this: decisions of suitability were made concretely, in view of existing circumstances, seen as variations on a norm; in architecture, a cultural norm. Today, the word *decorum* sounds a bit stuffy or dusty. Our equivalents are character and atmosphere: a spatial setting has the right atmosphere when its dimensions, forms, and materials are appropriate for and express a given event or situation. Indefinite but unmistakable, the many types of spatial character or atmosphere allow a range of embodiments and encourage interpretation.

I have said that decisions about suitability are partly determined by conditions external to the work, but only partly. Good arrangements also depend on relationships among elements internal to the work. Since antiquity the term that named the right relationships between a work's component parts has been *proportion*. Our English word derives from Latin, which translated the Greek word for *symmetry*. That coupling sounds puzzling when the bilateral sense of the latter term comes to mind. For the Greeks symmetry resulted from commensurate relationships, as indicated etymologically: *sym-metron* meant 'of like measure.' One way to distinguish the Greek and Latin words is to see symmetry as norm-



"THE BEST TRANSLATION OF ETHOS I CAN PROPOSE IS HABIT OF DWELLING"

definition and proportion as norm-realization, the first quantitative, the second qualitative. Unfortunately, this simple distinction was complicated by Vitruvius' introduction of a third term, analogy. Symmetry arises from proportion and the Greeks called this *analogia*.[10] This last word was not explained by Vitruvius but the authors on whom he relied, Varro and Cicero, did provide definitions. Varro, in *Lingua Latina*, introduced both terms in his discussion of regularity, relation, and *ratio* in the inflection of terms. For relation or *ratio* Varro read *pro_portione*, by proportionate likeness, which was in his opinion the same thing as the Greek *analogia*, that is, according to *logos*.[11]

The word *symmetria* also appeared in the famous *Canon* of Polyclitus, a treatise on sculpture. The *Canon's* importance is attested by many sources, most clear and instructive for us is a passage from the medical writer Galen: "beauty, says Polyclitus, resides not in the commensurability of the [the elements of the human body], but in the commensurability of [its members], finger to finger ... these to the forearm … [and finally] everything to everything."[12] Galen's distinction between *elements* and *members* defines the former as the "hot, cold, dry and wet" parts of the body and the latter as fingers, hands, arms, and so on. The commensurability of elements leads to health, that of members to beauty.

Thus for the doctor, proportionality could be discovered among the body's warm and wet aspects; the balanced co-ordination—symmetry and proportionality—of the four elements defined good health, an ethos of suitable, known relationships. Widening the horizon, but earlier, the philosopher Empedocles argued that the qualities that enter into combination in the body are akin to those that make up the wider environment: the air we breathe is the air of the heavens, at the supper table our bodies incorporate the yield of the land.[13] Again we see a connection between *ethos* and *oikos*, ethics and what would come to be called ecology. Earlier, still, in the Hippocratic texts, the connections between character and place demonstrated the same set of interconnections or continuities. The symmetry of elements, in both the body and the world, structures action and life. The key point is that these actions may appear to be beautiful in a metric or formal sense. When they do, in a well-proportioned plan, for example, the work is both suitable and beautiful; which is to say ethical and aesthetic.

When the balance between the body's elements has been disturbed by disease the ancient doctor's task was to devise a regime that would restore the correct *proportion* of the hot, cold, dry, and moist elements. A synonym for healthy is *well-tempered*, for sick, *ill-tempere*d. The *intemperate* among us are characterized by asymmetry. This is what

Aristotle's successor, Theophrastus, described in his famous book on character, which was the ancient source of later architectural theories about a building's character (Boffrand, Blondel, Boullee, Quatremere, and Loos). Again, while this symmetry of qualities defines good health, it is not always apparent; Cosmetic arts—lip painting, hair coloring—fabricate attractive appearances that can cover disease and sickness. Yet symmetry is not only a matter of appearances. Cicero wrote that while the beauty of the body is attractive to the eyes because of the fit composure, proportion and harmony of its members, the order, consistency and regularity of words and actions, the *proportions of conduct* can also be judged beautiful.[14] There is a similitude between physicality and attitude. Can the same be true of a building, or must architects make a choice between the measures that define the building's physical body and the patterns of life the work is meant to accommodate. If not, what might illustrate their conjunction?

A common event—a shared meal—may provide an answer. Defined prosaically, a meal is a division and sharing of consumables. Often, though not always, one person is charged with the task of dividing the whole into the portions or shares that will be distributed to the group. As if the plate of food were akin to the plan of a building, two acts are essential in the work of apportioning: division and distribution (or disposition, *dispositio*, L., or *diathesis*, Gk.). Each act assumes a good sense of measure, of the dish and the desires of the diners. Here is how table-top proportioning works: obviously, no one is given a piece that's too big or too small, but a fair share is not necessarily an equal one, a person's rank or status—a house guest, for example—may entitle them to a larger or preferred portion, also a person's hunger or size. Inequality is not only fair in dining but required. When the meal unfolds as it should, when the child and adult, family member and guest are given their due, the event can be said

> "THE KEY POINT IS THAT THESE ACTIONS MAY APPEAR TO BE BEAUTIFUL IN A METRIC OR FORMAL SENSE. WHEN THEY DO, IN A WELL-PROPORTIONED PLAN, FOR EXAMPLE, THE WORK IS BOTH SUITABLE AND BEAUTIFUL; WHICH IS TO SAY ETHICAL AND AESTHETIC"

to be properly portioned or well-proportioned. Our current sense of a balanced diet derives from but abbreviates this idea, neglecting issues of social rank and expressions of generosity. Nevertheless, table-top economy presents a fairly good portrait of a group's social structure and internal relationships and ethics. By portrait I mean legible appearance, which sometimes can be beautiful.

Edward Hopper's *Table for Ladies* shows a man and a woman at a restaurant table, sharing some beverage, white wine is what I would like to think. His desire for a drink seems to have been interrupted by something she has said. They are not alone, or will not be for long, additional tables have been prepared for others; there is also a woman in black behind a countertop and register; and a waitress or cook dressed in white, grasping a basket placed among other items on display—I can't tell if she is removing or returning it to where it belongs. With respect to the setting's economy, emblems of excess and restraint have their place in the scene. On the one hand a principle of tacit serviceability governs many of the elements we see: the expanse of glass we are looking through, the chalkboard of prices, the plain wooden cladding, the mirrors, and black and white floor tiles all express modest and purposeful urbanity. Restraint seems to be the theme of the figure in black: looking down, curled into her work, concentrated and concentric, she is fully absorbed in collecting and counting, also limited by her work station, which is itself equipped with containers of various sorts—the cash register, toothpick dispenser, and vitrine. The figure in white shows something completely different, not limitation but outward reach, suggesting a range of involvements, or spread of interests: clearly she's more concerned about something on the street than the basket of fruit—if only for the precise moment Hopper brings before us—but her apron links her back to the kitchen; her shadow in the first mirror gives her a place among the diners, and her reach ties her to the consumables on show. The line-up of fruit, meat, and greens says no one—at least the two at the table—will go hungry, or even thirsty for that matter, as the bottles below the server's right elbow are clearly within reach.

This little scene, like any other, has its own internal coherence. The objects make the room all-of-a-piece. All that's required for public dining is there, nothing missing, nothing unnecessary. The room's geometries argue the same point, unbroken patterns, clear horizons, and repetitions bring all of the parts into coherence. But to say that the room is well-defined, that its parts are commensurate, does not mean it is insular. Topographically, the setting and events reach back to the kitchen, forward to the street, and upward. The diner's hats and coat recall the weather and the town, the latter is also the server's focus. More abstractly, or formally

SCHREINER HOUSE: FIREPLACE

the prominent diagonals (her back and its shadow line, the row of grapefruits, the window frame, and the hand rail) open the enclosure to settings beyond its ostensible limits. Just as the renaissance villa coordinated the internal structures of the casa with the external opportunities of the location—according to the principle of orientation and the rule of "ecology"—this setting's character, temperature, or *ethos* result from the interplay between interior and exterior orders. The proportionality Hopper has constructed, the similitude of ratios that stages a possible meal, not only accommodates a way of life but also paints a portrait; in this case one of considerable beauty.

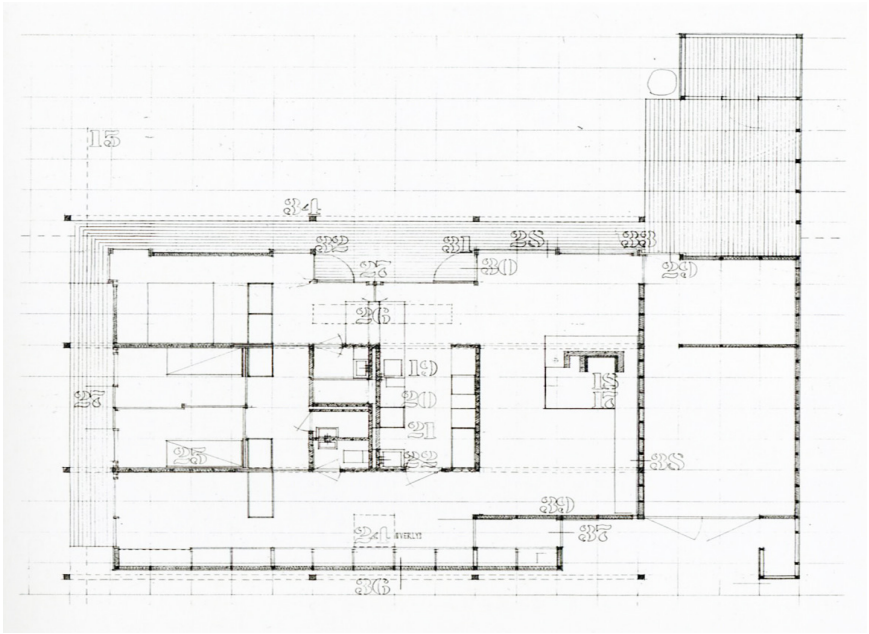
> "TO SAY THAT THE ROOM IS WELL-DEFINED, THAT ITS PARTS ARE COMMENSURATE, DOES NOT MEAN IT IS INSULAR"

To end I would like to describe something similar in the works of the great Norwegian architect Sverre Fehn. Fehn lectured often but wrote little,

just one essay, which is really a gloss on his visits to Moroccan villages.[15] His account begins ecologically and ends ethically: furthest out from the village center, at the threshold of the desert, he found covered stalls that protected the livestock. Closer in were small storerooms for animal fodder, which were necessary because grazing was impossible in the parched environment. Still closer to the heart of the village were the dwellings, ringing its center. The center itself, however, shifted in dimension and configuration, by virtue of changes in the perimeter rings, as if by some reversal of the laws of physics ripples of land and building form converged on the center in order to shape it. About this central space Fehn had little to say, his description abruptly turned at this point to the dwelling itself, seen in section.

He began with a workplace, observing that the cool temperature and deep shade that result from its lower position are congenial to housework when the summer heat and light are too fierce for work of any other kind. Just as the sectional position of these rooms reduces heat gain, so does the thickness of the house's walls. Above the ground level is the floor for food preparation, above that the level for sleeping and living. Little furniture gives a trace of these activities, but there seems to be no uncertainty about uses to which these rooms are put, for their long history makes these practices strikingly stable, contrasting domestic topography with the shifting sands outdoors. And these uses are not only the kind we might call functional, the *ethos* they express is also symbolic: the instance Fehn gives of the latter is the removal of shoes before a meal. Enabling the meal also is a mat or carpet on which one sits, and the table around which people gather. While Fehn does not elaborate the analogy, he implies that a ratio or symmetry governs the use and meaning of these architectural elements: what the mat is to the dwelling floor the table is to the village center, both serving as gathering places that give orientation to a "round dance" that ties together the settings that make up the perimeter, the very same ones that accommodate the dance's functional patterns. As if they were capable of performing this dance, the several pieces of furniture in the house are "mobile." This movement of people and their accommodations, Fehn explains, is a remnant of nomadic culture, the steps and shoes of which still carry ancient sands into the house, challenging the distinction between inside and outside just observed. With this entire structure in mind—from livestock stalls to the central carpet—Fehn's approach can be called cultural ecology, or an aesthetics of ethical life.

There are two aspects of this account I want to hold onto: the rings of distance that encircle the house, giving its settings and events their orientation and limits, and the coupling of the practical and representational aspects of architectural elements, as if ways of living and of showing, ethics and aesthetics can, indeed, be linked together.




SCHREINER HOUSE: PLAN

SCHREINER HOUSE: DINING SPACE

In the Schreiner House, finished several years ago, Fehn indicates just this coupling, this double proportionality: forms to functions and house to environment. The corner of the dining space, where the window and side walls meet will be my point of focus. Reportedly, Fehn himself rather liked this position, especially during wintertime meals, when the brick bench on which the leather cushions sit radiated heat from the fireplace behind. I sat there just once, in summer, but could easily imagine the spot's thermal sense. The social dimension of a meal there benefited from the spatial dimension of the situation, between the warm surround and the open prospect. Tectonically, this corner joins together the building's two basic types of enclosure, timber cladding and window walls. Using the term 'wall' for both the glazing and the cladding is perhaps incorrect for each is really a 'partition,' which is to say a non-load-bearing element that structures space, modulates natural forces, and confers character. When seated at the dining table, the view into the garden is unimpeded; the glazing extends from the floor to the ceiling and from one side to the other. An adjustable blind hangs from the top frame, ready to block any glare that might arrive from the late afternoon sun. The right hand edge of the glass panel also operates in the milieu: a narrow louver that edges the glazing screens the interior against insects and admits fresh air through a full-height hinged panel. Turning to the timber cladding to the right of the dining table, we find another well-proportioned ensemble: at eye height a cantilevered book case sets one level, the horizontal boarding extending the enclosure establishes another, and the clear story glazing that admits direct light to the depth of the room defines still another horizon. Through these means the changing conditions outside the house—the environment's constructive and corrosive forces—are modified to suit the interests and needs of the interiors, preserving its quiet stability and warm intimacy, which is to say its character, atmosphere, or *ethos*. The atmosphere Fehn has made is both tangible and legible. Is it also beautiful? My answer is yes because its aesthetic shows nothing less than how we might share the sense of the world it accommodates and expresses.

## ENDNOTES

1. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) "Relevance" translates Gadamer's *Aktualität*.

2. I borrow this phrase, "the word rendering service to the work," from Paul Ricoeur; see: "Work and Word," *History and Truth* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 197-222

3. The argument is developed in the concluding chapter to David Leatherbarrow and Mohsen Mostafavi, *Surface Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.,: MIT, 2002), 215-

242.
4. On this point see: Helmuth Plessner, *Limits of Community: a critique of social radicalism* (New York: Humanity Books, 1999).
5. Georg Simmel,"Life and Form," in *Rembrandt* [1916] (London: Routledge, 2005).
6. Adolf Loos, "Interiors in the Rotunda," [1898], in *Spoken into the Void* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982), 22-27.
7. David Leatherbarrow, *Architecture Oriented Otherwise* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009).

8. This point is made clearly in Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Treatment and Dialogue," *The Enigma of Health* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 125-140.
9. Although somewhat old, the best study of this term in architecture remains Alste Horn-Oncken, Über *das Sichliche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967)
10. Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, 3.1.1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 159.
11. Varro, *On the Latin Language*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), 10, 36-38.
12. Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato,* 5.3.15 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981)
13. See the unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation by Esra Sahin, *Exchange of Forces: environmental definition of materials in the works of Vitruvius, Alberti, Le Corbusier, and Peter Zumthor*, University of Pennsylvania, 2009: http://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/76
14. Cicero, *On Duties*, ch. 18 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1913)
15. Sverre Fehn, "Moroccan Primitive Architecture," [1952] in *The Poetry of the Straight Line* (Helsinki: Museum of Finnish Architecture, 1992), 38-41

# MONISM AND PLURALISM: THE HISTORY OF AESTHETICS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF ARCHITECTURE - PART I

PAUL GUYER

## I. MONISM AND PLURALISM IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF AESTHETICS

One way to think about the history of aesthetics since its inception as a properly named subdiscipline of philosophy in the early eighteenth century is to think of it as a debate about the right way to understand the relations among the terms of the Neo-Platonist triad comprised by the true, the good, and the beautiful: do these terms designate three separate domains of human interest, the theoretical, the practical and moral, and the aesthetic, the boundaries between which must be sharply defined and maintained, or do they designate three aspects of human experience that can and should be fused in practice, indeed do they suggest that the distinctive function of art among human activities is precisely to fuse our natural love of beauty with our theoretical and moral concerns, to provide a kind of unity in human experience that we otherwise do not find?[1] Immanuel Kant might be thought to be the foremost of separatists rather than synthesizers in the modern history of aesthetics: his definition in the "Analytic of the Beautiful" in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* of the "judgment of taste" as "aesthetic," where that means that it is neither cognitive nor practical, that on the one hand "In order to decide whether or not something is beautiful, we do not relate the representation by means of understanding to the object for cognition"[2] and that on the other hand "The agreeable, the beautiful, and the good...designate three different relations of representations to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure," that "One can

say that among all these three kinds of satisfaction only that of the taste for the beautiful is a disinterested and *free* satisfaction; for no interest, neither that of the senses nor that of reason, extorts approval,"[3] seems to assert that the experience of beauty has nothing to do with knowledge of truth or with practical interest of any kind, whether merely prudential interest in the gratification of the senses or a more elevated moral interest of some kind. By contrast, an author like Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, seems to assert an underlying identity or at least continuity among the true, the good, and the beautiful when he says things like "the most natural Beauty in the world is *Honesty,* and *Moral Truth*. For all *Beauty* is TRUTH,"[4] and "since for our parts, we have already decreed that 'Beauty and Good are still the same'";[5] in fact, we do not even have to add these two statements together to get a threefold equation of truth, goodness, and beauty, for although Shaftesbury continues the first of these statements by saying that "*True* Features make the Beauty of a Face; and true Proportions, the beauty of Architecture; as *true* Measures that of Harmony and Musick. In Poetry, which is all Fable, *Truth* still is the Perfection,"[6] which might suggest that Shaftesbury has in mind some formalist conception of truth, perhaps as coherence in the case of faces, architecture, and music, and correspondence in the case of poetry, his opening statement had made it clear that he also considers honesty as a kind of truth, and thus does seem to think of all truth as having a moral dimension, thus of the true, the good, and the beautiful as truly coextensive or unified.

Kant's position in aesthetics is actually more complicated than these opening remarks suggest: they are part of an initial analysis of the simplest experience of beauty, but by no means a complete statement of his account of art, a fortiori of architecture. But before I say anything more about Kant, I want to announce the thesis of this paper, which is that the history of modern thought about architecture is marked by the same kind of tension between separatist approaches on the one hand, which locate the value of architecture or even define it by a single aesthetic possibility, and synthesizing approaches on the other, which find in architecture the possibility of satisfying in a unified way a variety of human interests. And my further claim will be that even though there seems to be a powerful human tendency to prefer simplicity to complexity, not just in academic philosophy but in thought in general, there is rarely a good argument to be made for a separatist or reductionist approach as opposed to a synthesizing one: to put it simply, why should we ever prefer an impoverished to an enriched form of experience, at least as long as the latter does not simply become chaotic and overwhelming?

My plan for this paper, which will appear in two parts, is as follows. In the remainder of this section, drawing on my recently published *A History of Modern Aesthetics,*[7] I will show how three different conceptions of the source of aesthetic value were introduced in the eighteenth century that were only partially synthesized by Kant, although they were more fully synthesized by several others, but separated again, in favor of a purely cognitivist approach to aesthetics, in the hands of German Idealists such as Hegel and Schopenhauer (only to be fully synthesized again by a few figures at the end of the nineteenth century, such as George Santayana, and then again by a number of the most interesting aestheticians of the twentieth century, such as Richard Wollheim, although I will not have room to discuss either of these figures here). In the second section, I will show how the separatist tendency of Idealists such as Hegel and Schopenhauer manifested itself in their thought about the specific case of architecture. In the final section of the paper, which will appear as Part Two, I will consider the synthesizing rather than separatist approach to architecture of John Ruskin in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), although to be sure to be of continued use to thought about architecture today Ruskin's views must be modernized in certain ways, some of which he himself at least grudgingly foresaw.

> "THE HISTORY OF MODERN THOUGHT ABOUT ARCHITECTURE IS MARKED BY THE SAME KIND OF TENSION BETWEEN SEPARATIST APPROACHES .... AND SYNTHESIZING APPROACHES"

My general claim about the history of modern aesthetics goes like this. Although the field was only named by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in his 1735 master's thesis *Philosophical Meditations on some Matters pertaining to Poetry,*[8] and the new name was not received into English until the early nineteenth century,[9] this was an adult baptism: in some ways at least the field is as old as philosophy itself, beginning with Aristotle's response in the *Poetics* to Plato's attack upon the arts in the *Republic*, or even with Plato's own, perhaps anticipatory response in the *Symposium* to the argument of the *Republic*. In

the *Republic*, Plato argued, in the name of Socrates but no doubt going well beyond anything the historical Socrates had held, that the arts should be largely (although not entirely) excluded from the education of the future rulers of the well-ordered states, because they are cognitively worthless, being at three removes from the truth, and morally deleterious, because without a sound cognitive content they do nothing but exacerbate emotional tendencies that the guardians instead need to learn to control.[10] In the *Symposium*, by contrast, whether or not hewing more faithfully to the thought of the historical Socrates, Plato had argued that the appreciation of beauty in earthly things is the first step toward knowledge of the form of the beautiful itself,[11] and in the *Poetics* Aristotle famously defended the cognitive import of art by stating that "poetry is something more philosophic and of greater import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars."[12] My thought is that this cognitivist justification of the value of art, the thought that the experience of beauty is actually the experience of something of the greatest cognitive import, perhaps the experience of a kind of truth that is not given to us otherwise than through the experience of beauty or is at least not given to us in such a palpable and moving form by anything other than the experience of beauty, remained the central idea of aesthetics throughout subsequent antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, and continued to be a powerful presence throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and even twentieth centuries, where it remained the foundation of the very different aesthetic theories of, for example, Martin Heidegger and Theodor Adorno.

The cognitivist approach to aesthetics manifested itself in the eighteenth century in several forms. One form was the view that the essential function of art is imitation, with the underlying assumption that the function of imitation is information. That all fine art could be reduced to the single principle of imitation was of course the thesis of Charles Batteux, who argued in his work of 1746 whose very title promised the reduction of fine art to a single principle that "it can be shown from the inner nature of the human understanding that the imitation of nature is the common object" of all the arts "and that they are not distinguished from one another by anything except the means they apply toward the execution of this imitation,"[13] and who explicitly opposed Plato's worry that imitation could have a deleterious effect on morals with the argument (appealing to the authority of Horace) that from imitations the best manners and morals can also be learned.[14] But before Batteux, the German Christian Wolff had illustrated his idea that pleasure arises from the sensory perception of perfection with the case of painting, the perfection

or function of which consists in imitation: "If I see a painting that is similar to the object that it is to represent, and contemplate its similarity, then I take pleasure in it. The perfection of a painting consists in its similarity" to its object. "For since a painting is nothing other than a representation of a certain object on a tablet or plane surface, so is everything in it harmonious if nothing can be distinguished in it that one does not also perceive in the object itself."[15] Wolff's follower Baumgarten might also be thought to have taken an essentially cognitivist approach to aesthetics, in spite of his subtle transformation of Wolff's formula "sensory perception of perfection" into the formula "perfection of sensory cognition as such,"[16] which might seem to foreground the representation or medium of a work of art over its object or content, when he begins his great unfinished work the *Aesthetica*, the first philosophical treatise to be so entitled, with the topic of the "beauty of cognition," and lists as the first of the beauties of cognition the wealth of material or content in a work of art, *ubertas aesthetica*.[17] It is this aspect of art that is reflected in Baumgarten's conception of a poem or other work of art as a cognitively dense representation, one that is "extensively clear"[18] or packs a great deal of content into a pregnant image rather than separating content into its constituents as scientific analysis does.

A fuller reading of the *Aesthetica*, however, shows that Baumgarten was not just even a subtle follower of Wolff, but that he had integrated into his outlook a second major approach to aesthetics, one that overtly rejected Plato's suspicion of the arousal of emotions through the arts and instead saw the arousal of emotion as the essential aim of art. An early but influential advocate of this new approach was the French Abbé Jean-Baptiste Du Bos, who in his widely read *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting, and Music* of 1719 asserted that "The soul hath its wants no less than the body; and one

of the greatest wants of man is to have his mind incessantly occupied,"[19] or to avoid ennui, and then argued the arousal of our passions by affecting works of art, such as tragedy, is so to speak the most cost-effective way to avoid boredom, because art, unlike say gambling, as a result of which we usually end up losing our money, excites only "artificial passions, sufficient to occupy us while we are actually affected by them, and incapable of giving us afterwards any real pain or affliction." "Painters and poets," Du Bos says, "raise...artificial passions within us, by presenting us with the imitations of objects capable of exciting real passions,"[20] and indeed the only difference between "artificial" and real passions is that the former do not have the same after-effects and costs as the latter. Baumgarten then quickly took this idea up by arguing that since what really moves us to pleasure or displeasure is passions, poems or other works of art are most effective when they offer not just cognitively dense images but dense images of affecting objects: "Since affects are noticeable degrees of displeasure and pleasure, so are their sentiments those that represent something as good and bad," although in the "confused manner" of the cognitively dense rather than analytically separated. "Hence it is *poetic*," he continues, "*to arouse affects*."[21] From the age of twenty-one, then, Baumgarten's approach to art was actually to synthesize the idea that art is a vehicle for a pleasing form of cognition with the idea that art is also a vehicle for a pleasing arousal of our emotions.

Yet a third approach to aesthetic experience in the eighteenth century is the one that we typically associate with Kant but which was actually introduced in Scotland, especially by Alexander Gerard in his prize-winning 1759 *Essay on Taste,* the idea, namely that aesthetic experience is a pleasing form of the free play of our mental powers with our representations, even ones with cognitive and emotional significance, where however the primary source of our enjoyment is the mind's play with those ideas and not their contents. Gerard shares Du Bos's idea that the mind must be occupied, but begins from the idea that it can be pleasingly occupied by its own activity and does not need either emotional arousal or cognitive pay-off to enjoy its activity. Thus the first of the "simple principles" of taste that he enumerates is our enjoyment "Of the sense or taste of novelty," the "pleasant sensation" we have "whenever the mind is in a lively and elevated temper," to be had especially when it overcomes "moderate difficulty, such as exercises the mind, without fatiguing it" and thus gives "play to our faculties."[22] This was the idea that was then taken up by Kant in the argument of the "Analytic of the Beautiful" that the state of mind that could satisfy the dual constraints inherent in the idea of a judgment of taste, that it be based on a subjective experience of pleasure on the

one hand yet speak with a "universal voice" on the other, that is, postulate or even demand consent from all, is not the state of actual cognition but the state of the free play of our cognitive powers of understanding and imagination, a state in which "no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition" but which is nevertheless a state of the "animation of both faculties...to an activity that is indeterminate but yet, through the stimulus of the given representation, in unison" or "harmonious" (*einhellig*).[23]



But the "Analytic of the Beautiful" is only Kant's analysis of the logic of the judgment of taste and the experience of beauty that makes such judgment possible, not his theory of fine art. That comes later, presented (following Baumgarten) in the form of a theory of the artist, that is, the genius, and when it comes it actually represents a synthesis of the new theory of free play with the traditional cognitive approach to art: Kant's idea is that the "spirit" of a work of art, whatever its medium, comes from "the presentation of *aesthetic ideas*," representations that "one the one hand... strive toward something lying beyond the bounds of experience, and thus seek to approximate a presentation of concepts of reason (of intellectual ideas)," to which, "on the other hand...because no concept can be fully adequate to them," can only be intimated by "a representation of the imagination that...by itself stimulates so much thinking that it can never be grasped in a determinate concept, hence which aesthetically enlarges the concept itself in an unbounded way,"[24] a representation, in other words, that stimulates a free play of our cognitive powers.

Thus Kant's theory of fine art represents a synthesis of the traditional idea of beauty as a form of cognition of the highest things with the new theory of beauty as that which occasions a free play of our mental powers. Indeed, one might

suggest that because Kant assumes that the ideas presented by works of art are morally fraught ideas such as "rational ideas of invisible beings, the kingdom of the blessed, the kingdom of hell, eternity, creation, etc., as well as...death, envy, and all sorts of vices, as well as love, fame, etc.,"[25] ideas that are ordinarily accompanied with great emotional impact, he must be on his way toward a synthesis of all three approaches, the traditional cognitive approach to art, the new theory of free play, and the idea of the emotional impact of art, which Baumgarten had synthesized only with the first but not the second of these approaches. However, since Kant is throughout at such pains to argue that any genuinely aesthetic experience is *disinterested* and produces only a simple feeling of pleasure but not any more particular emotion, I count him as someone who was willing to countenance only a twofold synthesis of approaches to aesthetics, not a threefold synthesis: he was willing to combine the traditional theory of cognition through art with the new theory of mere play with our cognitive powers, but always strove to keep the emotional impact of art at arm's length.

Perhaps a better model for a thoroughly synthetic rather than separatist approach to art in the eighteenth century is the 1762 work by another Scot, Henry Home, Lord Kames, modestly entitled *Elements of Criticism,* not "The Elements of Criticism," to signal that the arts offer us numerous possibilities of pleasure, which cannot be reduced to a single avenue or even exhaustively enumerated.[26] Kames begins with what seems like an emphasis on the free play and emotional impact aspects of aesthetic experience: his first chapter concerns "Perceptions and Ideas in a Train," and argues that "we are framed by nature to relish order and connection"[27] even when perceived without overt regard to truth, while his second, very large chapter concerns "what power the fine arts have to raise emotions and passions," and argues that "The principles of the fine arts, appear in this view to open a direct avenue to the heart of man."[28] But there is a cognitive dimension to both of these as well: in the first chapter Kames argues that "Every work of art that is conformable to the natural course of our ideas, is so far agreeable; and every work of art that reverses that course, is so far disagreeable,"[29] which suggests that we enjoy not just the orderly play of our ideas but correspondence between those suggested by art and by nature, or between representation and object, which is the essence of cognition; and Kames continues our quotation from the second chapter by stating that "The inquisitive mind beginning with criticism, the most agreeable of all amusements, and finding no obstruction in its progress, advances far into the sensitive part of our nature; and gains imperceptibly a thorough knowledge of the human heart, of its desires, and of every motive to action,"[30] thus implying

that the arousal of emotions by works of art is enjoyable not just in its own right but as a source of self-knowledge. Kames goes on to enumerate many more "principles" or sources of pleasure from art: beauty, grandeur and sublimity, motion and force, novelty, resemblance and similitude, uniformity and variety, congruity and propriety, dignity and grace, and more, a list that suggests that art offers us the possibility of free play with formal aspects of its objects, e.g., uniformity and variety; of emotional and moral response, for example to propriety and dignity; of cognitive discovery, e.g. of novelty, and so on. There is no suggestion that these need be separated from each other, let alone that any one is more important to the other; on the contrary, the suggestion is always that the more "elements of criticism" a work of art affords us, the fuller and more pleasurable our experience may be -- though at the same time, Kames never makes an argument that the pleasures in these different dimensions of art are strictly additive, that a work of art that exploits more of these dimensions is always more pleasurable than one that exploits fewer. The list of elements of criticism is not intended as a rule of addition. Yet this qualification being noted, it seems safe to say that Kames offers a richer model of the possibilities of aesthetic experience than Kant's merely twofold synthesis does.

Both Kames and Kant raise the question of how architecture, with its inescapable concern for the intended function of its products, is to be fitted into an account of art that stresses any combination of cognition, free play, and emotional impact, none of which are overtly connected to functionality. They both remain within the Vitruvian tradition of combining *utilitas* and *venustas* (in my opinion, two ends to be supported by an underlying foundation of *firmitas* as a means) by seeing the intended function of a structure as providing constraints within which the other aesthetic goals identified by their theories for all arts can also be pursued: as Kant famously



"KANT WAS WILLING TO COMBINE THE TRADITIONAL THEORY OF COGNITION THROUGH ART WITH THE NEW THEORY OF MERE PLAY WITH OUR COGNITIVE POWERS, BUT ALWAYS STROVE TO KEEP THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF ART AT ARM'S LENGTH"

says in his account of "adherent beauty," "One would be able to add much to a building that would be pleasing for the intuition of it if only it were not supposed to be a church";[31] but that also implies that there is much that can be added to a building -- on Kant's theory, the expression of an aesthetic idea -- that is consistent with its intended function as a church. But I am not going to expand on this point here,[32] for what I now want to argue is that what followed the period of Kames and Kant was not a continuation of their synthesizing strategies, but a return to a single-minded cognitivism in the aesthetics of German Idealism that took the better part of the nineteenth century to recover from within philosophical aesthetics, and, in a very general way, with however one major exception, perhaps even longer within architectural theory and practice.



## II. A MONISTIC APPROACH TO AESTHETICS AND ARCHITECTURE: GERMAN IDEALISM

One might have thought that, particularly with the example of the syncretic or even eclectic approach to aesthetics of Kames before them, the response of Kant's successors to the twofold synthesis of cognitivist aesthetics and the aesthetics of free play represented by his theory of "aesthetic ideas" would have been to lift his ban on the emotional impact of art and give that its proper due. Indeed, it might even be argued that the Germans had a domestic model for that in the versions of Kantian aesthetics developed by Friedrich Schiller and the lesser known Karl Heinrich Heydenreich,[33] the latter in his own *System of Aesthetics*[34] published in 1790, the same year as Kant's third *Critique*, and Schiller in his unpublished "*Kallias* letters" of 1793 as well as the *Letters on Aesthetic Education* of 1795.[35] However, the German Idealists instead rejected Kant's theory of the free play in order to focus exclusively on the intellectual content of art: in other words, they largely removed from Kant's concept of aesthetic ideas the element that he thought was distinctively aesthetic and returned to the cognitivism of Aristotle's response to Plato, or perhaps better, given the pronouncedly metaphysical character of their conception of the content of art, to the response of Plato's *Symposium* to his own *Republic*. This turn also had pronounced results for their treatments of architecture.

I will illustrate this development with the cases of Hegel and Schopenhauer who make the Platonic and therefore cognitivist affinity of their thought explicit. Hegel asserted that "the beautiful is...the pure appearance of the Idea to sense"[36] without accepting the idea that the mind of the subject of aesthetic experience can play freely with the form of the sensory appearance of the Idea or with the indeterminate relation

between the form of appearance and its content. For this reason Hegel can say that "fine art [is] truly art, and...only fulfils its supreme task when it has placed itself in the same sphere as religion and philosophy, and when it is simply one way of bringing to our minds and expressing the Divine, the deepest interests of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of the spirit."[37] This might sound like a ringing endorsement of the enduring importance of all forms of art, but in fact it is the premise that leads directly to Hegel's notorious thesis of the "end of art," the thesis that "art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past,"[38] because Hegel's view is that art is actually competing with religion and philosophy to express the same content, but is doomed by the indeterminacy of its means of expressing this content: art is essentially cognitive but essentially inadequate as cognition. Thus for a philosophical enlightened age such as Hegel's own, art is doomed to irrelevance, doomed to serving as a reminder of our more primitive past but as nothing more.

> "BOTH KAMES AND KANT RAISE THE QUESTION OF HOW ARCHITECTURE, WITH ITS INESCAPABLE CONCERN FOR THE INTENDED FUNCTION OF ITS PRODUCTS, IS TO BE FITTED INTO AN ACCOUNT OF ART THAT STRESSES ANY COMBINATION OF COGNITION, FREE PLAY, AND EMOTIONAL IMPACT, NONE OF WHICH ARE OVERTLY CONNECTED TO FUNCTIONALITY"

And architecture is Hegel's poster-boy for this argument. Hegel is actually responding to a fact that has been emphasized in some of the best recent writing on architectural theory, namely that the existence of determinate sets of forms within some architectural styles, such as the existence of the columnar orders in classical and neo-classical architecture, cannot justify the interpretation of architecture as a language, because without any determinate semantics for reference to ideas outside of itself, the use of such forms to organize the design of structures cannot really count as a linguistic *syntax*;[39] for Hegel, architecture is the paradigmatic art of the earliest phase of art, the "symbolic" phase, in which the Idea that "in itself...is still abstract and indeterminate"[40] seeks expression in forms that, as symbols, would in any case be too indeterminate to express even a more

determinate content, the more fully developed understanding of the spiritual nature of reality that Hegel means by "the Idea." Hegel's view is that it is the essence of a symbol that it "should not be wholly inadequate to its meaning" but that "still conversely, in order to remain a symbol it must not be made entirely adequate to that meaning"; in symbolic art "the content remains also indifferent to the shape which portrays it, and the abstract determinacy which it constitutes can equally well be present in infinitely many other existents and configurations,"[41] and conversely "the look of a symbol as such raises at once the doubt whether a shape is to be taken as a symbol or not, even if we set aside the further ambiguity in respect of the specific meanings which a shape is supposed to signify amongst the several meanings for which it can often be used as a symbol through associations of a more remote kind."[42] Hegel then illustrates this thesis with such examples as the pyramids[43] and labyrinths[44] of Egyptian architecture, which are forms too abstract to express any very definite ideas about divinity, or the attempt of Indian architecture to represent the "procreative force" of the Absolute through buildings in the shape of "generative organs" with numerous "solid phallic columns."[45] And what we might have thought would count as one of the pinnacles of architectural accomplishment, the Greek temple, is in fact nothing more than the form of an ordinary house[46] writ large as a house for the statue of a god: it is only in the statue that it houses and not in the structure that houses it that art can make manifest "the free spirit" as "spiritual individuality equally determinate and inherently independent," only the representation of a god in human form that "constitutes the centre and content of true beauty and art"[47] —although on Hegel's account the classical representation of divinity in strictly human form will also turn out to be inadequate. Thus architecture plays a strictly supporting role in housing a form of the representation of the spirit that will itself turn out to be inadequate and that needs to be superseded by a purely philosophical rather than artistic understanding of reality. That there might be other values in housing as such, independent of the function of housing a god, plays no role in Hegel's assessment of architecture. Architecture therefore enjoys a very lowly place in Hegel's strictly cognitivist hierarchy of the arts, which themselves enjoy only a lowly place in the hierarchy of forms of cognition more generally.

Schopenhauer's cognitivism takes a different form than Hegel's, but results in an equally lowly status for architecture. Schopenhauer's aesthetics might be thought to be a development from Kant's conception of the disinterestedness of aesthetic experience and the judgment of taste, but Schopenhauer has no more room for the idea of free play than

does Hegel,[48] and looks to the experience of art only for a momentary release from the frustration of the ordinary life of the will, comprised as it is either by desires that go unsatisfied or that, even if satisfied, soon lead to more unsatisfied desires. For Schopenhauer, aesthetic experience is an intuition in which the individual "has lost himself" and become "the pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of cognition," and this state is induced by the contemplation of an object, or the artistic representation of one, that has lost its own individuality and manifold connections to the world of will and use, and become only "the Idea of its species."[49] By contemplating the essences of the species of things — in Schopenhauer's metaphysics, the characteristic forms of the different degrees of the "objectification of the will" that underlies all reality — or what he calls "Platonic Ideas," notice, *not* "aesthetic ideas," the human subject becomes detached from her own individuality and its woes, and enjoys if not positive pleasure then at least momentary respite from pain. "In this state, pure cognition draws towards us, as it were, to deliver us from willing and the stress of willing...but only for a moment: we are always torn back again from peaceful contemplation by willing, by the memory of our personal aims,"[50] and ultimately need to turn from art to ethics to achieve a more enduring transcendence of our own painful individuality. Thus in Schopenhauer's philosophy, as in Hegel's, the value of art and aesthetic experience as a whole is subordinate to that of a form of philosophy, although in this case to ethics rather than metaphysics.

And even within the sphere of the arts, the value of architecture is minimal, because within Schopenhauer's cognitivist aesthetics what architecture represents is the most elementary forces of nature, but nothing about the human will, which is our only real clue to the ultimate character of reality. "The only intention we can attribute to"

"ARCHITECTURE IS HEGEL'S POSTER-BOY FOR THE ARGUMENT THAT ART IS DOOMED TO IRRELEVANCE, DOOMED TO SERVING AS A REMINDER OF OUR MORE PRIMITIVE PAST BUT AS NOTHING MORE"

architecture, Schopenhauer argues, "is that of bringing some of the Ideas at the lowest levels of the objecthood of the will more clearly into intuition, namely: gravity, cohesion, rigidity, hardness, these universal qualities of stone, those first, simplest, and dullest visibilities of the will, the sounds of the ground bass of nature; and then, alongside these, light, which is in many respects their opposite." [51] For Schopenhauer, architecture does not attempt, as a symbol, to give us knowledge of the Spirit, but fail at that; rather, through its structure, its solids and voids, through light and dark, it offers us Platonic Ideas of natural forces, but these forces are only the "ground bass" of nature, and do not seem very important. In particular, while no contemplation of Platonic Ideas can release us from pain for very long, architecture is decidedly inferior to music, where, paradoxically, we get the greatest release from the painful demands of our individual wills by contemplating as directly as we can the essential forms of willing as such.[52] On Schopenhauer's account, architecture does give us some genuine knowledge, but not very important knowledge; and if knowledge is the only source of value in art, then architecture is not very important —"the objective significance of what architecture reveals to us is relatively small."[53]

Indeed, Schopenhauer does not merely ignore other sources of potential value in architecture, its value for housing a variety of human functions, as does Hegel, but specifically rejects such "other, practical purposes" of architecture as "foreign to art itself." The "great merit of the architect consists in carrying through the purely aesthetic goals" of architecture, the exhibition of Platonic Ideas of gravity, rigidity, and so on, "*in spite of* their subordination to foreign ones."[54] Schopenhauer must argue this, because on his theory of human willing in general, the attempt to fulfill specific practical purposes through architecture, as in any other way, is doomed to lead to failure and frustration in either the short or long run: either the work will fail to achieve its intended purpose, and thus frustrate anyone involved with it, whether directly or even only sympathetically, or even if it does fulfill its intended purpose, that will either just lead to satiety and boredom or else to other, frustrated desires. Functionality can never be an enduring source of pleasure in Schopenhauer's pessimistic view of human existence, so whatever value architecture might have has to be in spite of its functionality, not in addition to or in conjunction with its functionality.

We now have some examples of how the one-sided cognitivism of German Idealist aesthetics led to reductionist conceptions of architecture and in turn to negative assessments of the value of architecture. I think

it could readily be shown that many twentieth-century conceptions of architecture, particularly the linguistic models of architecture so effectively attacked by Richard Hill and Edward Winters but also forms of structuralist rather than programmatic functionalism, to borrow a distinction from Viollet-le-Duc,[55] are versions of this one-sided cognitivism; and even if they have not led to overtly negative evaluations of architecture of the sort we have found in Hegel and Schopenhauer, they have at least sometimes led not only to simplified theories but to unsatisfying architecture. But rather than pursuing that argument, I will, in Part Two, turn to one nineteenth-century treatment of architecture that is pluralistic rather than monistic and thus in at least some ways points to the possibility of a more satisfying aesthetics of architecture. I refer to the theory of architecture adumbrated by John Ruskin in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture,* which even though it must be shorn of some of the Romantic assumptions long ago pointed out by Geoffrey Scott,[56] nevertheless offers at least a model for a synthetizing rather than separatist approach to architecture.

*Part II of this essay will appear in Vol. 1, No. 2 of* Architecture Philosophy.



"WITHIN SCHOPENHAUER'S COGNITIVIST AESTHETICS WHAT ARCHITECTURE REPRESENTS IS THE MOST ELEMENTARY FORCES OF NATURE, BUT NOTHING ABOUT THE HUMAN WILL, WHICH IS OUR ONLY REAL CLUE TO THE ULTIMATE CHARACTER OF REALITY"

## ENDNOTES

1. Frederick C. Beiser stresses the importance of the Neo-Platonic triad, what he calls the "classical trinity," to what he considers the rationalist tradition in eighteenth-century aesthetics in *Diotima's Children: German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 41-44.
2. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* edited by Paul Guyer, translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §1, 5:203 (p. 89).
3. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* §5, 5:209-10 (p. 95).

4. Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Sensus Communis, an Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour,* Part IV, section III, in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times,* edited by Philip Ayres (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), vol. I, p. 77.

5. Shaftesbury, *The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody,* Part III, section II, in *Characteristicks*, vol. II, p. 112.

6. Shaftesbury, *Sensus Communis*, Part IV, section III, in *Charackeristicks*, vol. I, p. 77.

7.Paul Guyer, *A History of Modern Aesthetics,* 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

8. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus/Philosophische Betrachtungen über einige Bedingungen des Gedichtes,* edited and translated by Heinz Paetzold (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1983); *Reflections on poetry: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's Meditationes philosphicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus,* translated, with the original text, by Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954). The discipline of aesthetics is defined in §CXVI of this work as *episteme aisthetikē,* the logic of *aisthetá* or the objects of the senses.

9. The earliest occurrence of the word "aesthetics" recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is in an 1830 entry in the *Penny Cyclopedia* (I.156), where it was defined as "the designation given by German writers to a branch of philosophical inquiry, the object of which is a philosophical theory of the beautiful."

10. The argument for the cognitive worthlessness of art is made above all in Book X of the *Republic*, where it provides a foundation for the exclusion of most poetry from the education of the guardians previously developed in Books II and III (376d-403c). Alexander Nehamas has discussed the connection between Plato's argument in Book X, which is overtly concerned with painting, with the case of poetry in "Plato on Imitation and Poetry in Republic X," in his *Virtues of Authenticity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 251-78, and Stephen Halliwell has demonstrated that Plato's argument in Books II and III is really directed against allowing the young guardians to perform roles that exemplify the kind of emotional abandon that they will have to learn to control; see *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

11. See Socrates's recounting of what he was told by Diotima at *Symposium* 201d-212c.

12. Aristotle, *Poetics*, chapter 9, 1451b5-7; translation by Ingram Bywater in *The Complete Works of Aristotle,* edited by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), vol. II, p. 2323.

13. My translation from Charles Batteux, *Einschränkung der schönen Künste auf einen einzigen Grundsatz,* translated by Johann Adolf Schlegel (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1770), p. 8.

14. Batteux, *Einschränkung*, pp. 34-5.

15. Christian Wolff, *Vernüftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt, und der Seele des Menschen* (1719), fourth edition (Halle: Renger, 1751), §404.
16. My translation from Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Ästhetik* (1750-58), translated into German with facing Latin text by Dagmar Mirbach, 2 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2007), §14, vol. I, pp. 20-1.
17. Baumgarten, *Ästhetik,* §115, vol. I, pp. 92-3.
18. Baumgarten, *Meditationes,* §XVII.
19. Jean-Baptiste Du Bos, *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting, and Music,* translated by Thomas Nugent, 3 vols. (London: John Nourse, 1984), Part I, chapter I, vol. I, p. 5.



20. Du Bos, *Critical Reflections,* Part I, chapter III, p. 22.
21. Baumgarten, *Meditationes,* §XXV, pp. 24-5.
22. Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Taste* (London: A. Millar, and Edinburgh: A. Kincaid and J. Bell, 1759), Part I, section I, pp. 3, 7.
23. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* §9, 5:217, 219, pp. 102, 104.
24. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* §49, 5:314-15, pp. 192-3.
25. Kant, loc. cit.
26. Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism,* sixth edition (1785), edited by Peter Jones, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), Original Introduction, vol. I, p. 19.
27. Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, chapter I, vol. I, p. 26.
28. Kames, *Elements of Criticism,* chapter II, vol. I, p. 32.
29. Kames, *Elements of Criticism,* chapter I, vol. I, p. 27.
30. Kames, *Elements of Criticism,* chapter II, vol. I, p. 32.
31. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* §16, 5:230; p. 115.
32. I have discussed this issue in "Kant and the Philosophy of Architecture," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 69 (2011): 7-19. For a more general discussion of Kant's concept of "adherent beauty," see "Free and Adherent Beauty: A Modest Proposal," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (October, 2002) 357-66, reprinted in my *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 129-40. For another recent discussion of the implication for Kant's aesthetics to the theory of architecture, see Edward Winters, *Aesthetics and Architecture* (London: Continuum, 2007), especially Chapter 2, "Modernism," pp. 25-37.
33. On Schiller, see my *Kant and the Experience of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), chapter 3, pp. 116-30, and "The Ideal of Beauty and the Necessity of Grace: Kant and Schiller on Ethics and Aesthetics," in Walter Hinderer, editor, *Schiller und die Weg in die Moderne* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neuman, 2006), pp. 187-204. On Heydenreich, see "The Perfections of Art: Mendelssohn, Moritz, and Kant," in *Kant and the Experience of Freedom*, pp. 131-60, at pp. 144-7, and "Heydenreich, Karl Heinrich," in Michael Kelly, editor, *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics,* 4 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), vol. 2, pp. 400-1.

34. Karl Heinrich Heydenreich, *System der Ästhetik* (Leipzig: Göschen, 1790), facsimile edition with an afterward by Volker Deubel (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1978).
35. See Friedrich Schiller, "Kallias or Concerning Beauty: Letters to Gottfried Körner," in J.M. Bernstein, editor, *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 145-83, and *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters,* edited and translated by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).
36. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, translated by T.M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) (based on the posthumous edition of 1835 by H. Hotho), vol. I, p. 111.
37. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. I, p. 7.
38. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. I, p. 11.
39. See Richard Hill, *Designs and their Consequences* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), chapter 5, "Meaning," especially pp. 109-116, and Winters, *Aesthetics and Architecture,* chapters 5-7, especially chapter 7, "Architecture and Semantics," pp. 84-91.
40. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. I, p. 300.
41. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. I, p. 305.
42. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. I, p. 306.
43. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. I, pp. 354-6.
44. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. II, p. 647.
45. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. II, p. 641.
46. See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. II, pp. 662-3.
47. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. I, p. 432.
48. For documentation of this, see my "Back to Truth: Knowledge and Pleasure in the Aesthetics of Schopenhauer," in Alex Neill and Christopher Janaway, editors, *Better Consciousness: Schopenhauer's Philosophy of Value* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 11-25.
49. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation,* Volume I, translated and edited by Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman, and Christopher Janaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Third Book, §34, pp. 201-2.
50. Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Representation,* Third Book, §51, p. 277.
51. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation,* Third Book, §43, p. 239.
52. See Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Third Book, §52, pp. 282-95.
53. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation,* Third Book, §43, p. 241,
54. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation,* Third Book, §43, p. 242.
55. See Winters, *Aesthetics and Architecture,* pp. 40-1.
56. Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism,* first edition 1914, second edition 1924 (New York: Scribner's, n.d.), especially Chapter V, "The Ethical Fallacy."

# THE ARCHITECTURE OF ETHICS: STANLEY TIGERMAN

EMMANUEL PETIT

Chicago-born Jewish architect Stanley Tigerman wouldn't mind to be portrayed as a sort of freethinker and even libertine of the architectural discipline while, paradoxically, constructing himself as the defender of ethics in architecture. He is somebody who insists that what architects do with physical architecture is important but that ultimately the architecture of the 'here and now' is a mere scaffold to support ideas that exceed the sphere of art and that lie beyond the expressive possibilities of architecture.

Philosophy has institutionalized a series of major figures—the positive philosophers—who constitute the foundation of the field as we have come to define it: Plato, Kant, Hegel, and the like; but it also draws its vitality from their dialectic counter-parts: the anti-philosophers—Socrates, Kierkegaard, Bataille—i.e. those thinkers, who don't play by the rules, and who (some would claim) have no business being counted as a part of the discipline of philosophy. These anti-philosophers, however, are indispensable to making philosophy move. If given the choice, Tigerman would certainly side with the anti-philosophers ... constructing himself as a sort of anti-architect, who cannot leave the discipline because it is what fuels his resistance—the resistance to all these fantasies of perfection, synthesis and performance—of "do-good-ism" in the world. He insists that he wanted to become an architect when he read Ayn Rand's *Fountainhead*. It made him furious! If your hope is to save the world, build the largest shelter for homeless people, like Stanley did with his Pacific Garden Mission in

"HE WANTED TO BECOME AN ARCHITECT WHEN HE READ AYN RAND'S FOUNTAINHEAD. IT MADE HIM FURIOUS!"

Chicago, or found a school for socially responsible and environmentally conscious design (like he did with Eva Maddox when they founded *Archeworks* in Chicago in 1994). But do not expect an invitation into the architectural Hall of Fame for it. For that, you need other techniques: You need a *theory* of *anti*-architecture.

Tigerman provides something of that sort. He has all the credentials to master the subject of architecture; but in spite of that, his *real* "subject" never ceased to be the human being, while architecture was, for him, a sort of stage or dramatic space within which to choreograph the dialogues and encounters between humans. His long-lasting friendship with the late dean of the Cooper Union School of Architecture, John Hejduk, was largely based on this common interest: Didn't Hejduk also fathom architecture as an arena for the poetic and ineffable meeting between humans, as well as for the empathy between human subjects and the subject of architecture? While Hejduk designed cities "populated" with architectural characters on their journeys from Venice to Berlin and to Prague, and from Riga to Vladivostok, Tigerman liked to draw his own autobiographical dream cities set against the backdrop of non-realist environments in the spirit of Joan Miró's "Carnival of Harlequin" (1924-25) and the "Garden of Earthly Delights" by Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch, which was filled with literal renditions of certain proverbs of the day. The so-called Architoons were always colonized with the fragments and anecdotes of Tigerman's personal, eclectic architectural memory—from Greek caryatids, to Mies van der Rohe's buildings, to tectonic details of the Chicago balloon frame, concentration camp barracks and their steaming chimneys, the temple of Solomon, the Chicago street grid, and Tigerman's own buildings and paper projects. This imaginary cosmos was animated by little frogmen or cherubim in the tradition of François Rabelais's grotesque carnival characters in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*—which the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin had rediscovered as the epitome of an "open" or "polyglossic" text in his *Rabelais and His World: Carnival and Grotesque* from the mid-1960s.[1] Tigerman's cartoon figures seemed to protect his personal and plural *Oikos* of memories as much as they guarded the disciplinary book of architecture—which was at risk of turning abstract, inert, and static in the hands of the second and third generation modernists under whom Tigerman was trained (i.e. the generation of Paul Rudolph). One of the Architoons portrays one such cherub (a.k.a. an architect), who is torn in a Janus-faced reality between the "archaeological" gravity of the discipline and his spirited need to escape into another world of personal, idiosyncratic creativity: He is stepping on top of an architectural column which breaks underneath his feet while at the same time he stretches and reaches up to

hold on to the umbilical cord of one of his creative offsprings, the phallus-shaped Daisy House (Porter Beach, Indiana, 1975-78), which took flight on top of a cloud.

His interest in the exchange between "subjects" is the reason Tigerman kept being drawn to ethical philosophy and the theories of dialogism, from Aristotle to Emmanuel Lévinas—Lévinas, the philosopher and Talmud-scholar who was also formative for Jacques Derrida's attentiveness to the alterity of writing, and who was close friends with the anecdotalist of the unknowable, Maurice Blanchot; and then to Martin Buber, who published



THE DAISY HOUSE

his book *Ich und Du* (I and Thou) in 1923, in which he cogitated about the nature of the true encounter with the Other. Buber maintained that the genuine meeting between I and Thou could not be premeditated (or "composed"), but that it was utterly serendipitous and, hence, revelatory. In a sense, the sublime spontaneity and transience of the principle of "dialogue" as described by Buber has been at odds with the tradition of architectural production where thorough planning, notation, and representation preceded the actualization of the project. In Buber's terminology, such a "structured" confrontation with the world treats that world as a

collection of objects. When the subject "plans" the world in this way, however, he can no longer encounter subjects, but all his relationships are reflections of his own ideas: Ich-Du turns into Ich-Es (I-It). As one of the ills of modernity, dialogue is turned into a monologue, and alterity is suppressed.

In Tigerman's view, by the 1960s, architectural modernism had turned into a monologue only accessible to the narrow circle of architectural *cognoscenti*. He hoped, nevertheless, that his career as an architect could be a journey to discover otherness in architecture, and, as the title of his 1982 book *Versus: An American Architect's Alternatives* suggested, to track down "other" stylistic and ideological attitudes in architecture. To this end, he made a point of remaining a sort of outsider to the orthodox teachings of the discipline.[2] Like Buber, Lévinas, and Derrida, Tigerman's Jewishness has played a determining role for this desire for alterity. He was introduced to the study of the Torah by his grandfather, a self-taught Talmudic reader, and has subsequently always affirmed his Jewishness. With it, he has cultivated a compassion for the oppressed and the persecuted. In architecture, this empathy translated into a skepticism towards establishment doctrine, from which he liked to distance himself. His book *Architecture of Exile* from 1988 thematized the "exilic" relationship the Hebraic culture entertained with the hegemonic, Greek or "Hellenic" tradition of architecture as manifested in the candid structure of the Parthenon. The book also made a case for the liaison and convoluted dialogue between the (visible) realm of architectural aesthetic with the more ethereal spheres of ethics and the sacred—between presence and absence. As a Jew, Tigerman continues to relish the existential "drift" between the contrasting sentiments of alienation and belonging to the city of Chicago—a predicament Saul Bellow had so captivatingly described in his *Adventures of Augie March*; the *bildungsroman* begins with the famous sentence "I am an American, Chicago born—Chicago, that somber city—and go at things as I have taught myself, free-style, and will make the record in my own way: first to knock, first admitted; sometimes an innocent knock, sometimes a not so innocent. But a man's character is his fate, says Heraclitus... ."[3]

At the time Tigerman tried to launch his architectural career in Chicago, he felt that a certain strand of modernism had besieged architectural discourse while the experimentalism of younger architects was pushed aside. In order for the discipline to stay energetic and lively, however, the "minimal palette" of the modernist canon had to open up and accept certain "contaminants" into its stern aesthetic, stringent utopianism, and ideological catechism. Tigerman challenged all claims

that architectural study was "ontological" in nature, i.e. that the discipline had to devote itself to some stable conceptual "synthesis" or inner "being," which theory was called to uncover. Instead, he alleged that architecture had an "inability to define itself inherently"[4] and that, therefore, it needed to transgress its cherished myths of purity and perpetuity (e.g. the clarity of tectonic and functional principles, the permanence of proportional systems, the synthetic nature of typological partis, a.s.o.). Instead of propagating the modern myths of stability, Tigerman fathomed architecture as the rift or space, which inserts itself in-between incongruous temporalities: "The gestalt of art lies in that intersection of one's own epoch and eternity."[5] One of his missions became to disclose the heterogeneity of Chicago's architectural heritage and reveal alternative directions to the legacy of the "heroes" of modernist Chicago—of Louis Sullivan, Daniel Burnham, Frank Lloyd Wright, and, most of all, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

Mies had come to Chicago following the close of the Bauhaus by the Nazis, as part of what Tigerman called the "German invasion"[6] of Chicago modernism. Appearing as a sort of European aesthetic arbiter and ideologue, Mies was able to give something to the United States that none of the other modernist forefathers could: Unlike Le Corbusier, who was perceived as too intellectual to fill this role, Tigerman argued, or Walter Gropius, whose theories lacked paradigmatic clarity, Mies's architecture, "was not unnecessarily demanding on the functional or intellectual levels,"[7] and was thus able to convey a sense of Ur-European taste, permanence and democracy. While Tigerman praised Mies's early role in America, he rejected the subsequent pervasive dissemination and banalization of his architecture by his many followers, particularly C.F. Murphy and Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, who adjusted Mies's ideas to the corporate context and made of his architecture

> "LIKE BUBER, LÉVINAS, AND DERRIDA, TIGERMAN'S JEWISHNESS HAS PLAYED A DETERMINING ROLE FOR THIS DESIRE FOR ALTERITY"

the official canon.

Tigerman's relationship with Mies and Miesianism has been complex to say the least; he invokes Mies in most of his texts, where he makes of him a kind of straw figure or vodoo doll of modernism. While the acolytes had turned Mies into their "object" of contemplation, study, and imitation, Tigerman fathomed a more subjective (Buber's Ich-Du) encounter with Mies — Mies as an imaginary father figure and mentor. Nine years after Mies's death, in 1978, Tigerman addressed an open letter to him in which he reported that, "here in Chicago everything appears to have remained much the same as it was ten years ago"[8]; he then wrote a postscript to that letter in 1986, in which he deplores "that Americans, by and large, still consider you [Mies] as a commercial paradigm rather than as a philosophic role model."[9] Tigerman did see in Mies's abstractionism a philosophical stance: Because the German *emigré* had inaugurated a radically "other" vision in architecture, he could figure as the epitome of the liberal freethinker. In Tigerman's mind, to imitate Mies did not imply that one had to repeat his abstract aesthetic, it meant to make oneself different from anyone else so far ... including Mies. In architecture, Mies could function as the model for the individualist.[10] Much of Tigerman's own architecture can be read as a dialogue with Mies's "matrix," which nevertheless is traversed and warped by another, more "supple" geometrical logic: The composition of Tigerman's Oakbrook Residence from 1976-77, for example, seemed to emulate the paradoxical meeting of the Miesian grid with a more fluid, flexible, and lyrical geometry. Similarly, some of Tigerman's early oil paintings, which directly borrowed from another German-born artist, Josef Albers, also evidenced an interest in the close alliance between rational line geometries and the quasi-figural presence a slight disturbance of geometry can engender.

Tigerman's part real, part imaginary exchange with the German expatriate was intentionally concocted as a psychoanalytically charged relationship, which culminated with Tigerman's creation of an ambivalent collage in 1979, entitled "The Titanic"; the work showed Mies's Crown Hall at the Illinois Institute of Technology precariously floating (or possibly sinking) in the ocean against the backdrop of a clouded sky. "The Titanic" illustrated the *nachleben* of the ambivalent encounter between Tigerman and Mies—immersed in an oneiric and unstable milieu of the clouds and the deep water. With it, Tigerman demanded that the baton be passed to a (then) young generation of architects in Chicago, who felt a Bloomian anxiety of influence from their modern antecedents.[11]

In 1976, Tigerman turned his personal discontent with the architecture

scene into a more collective disagreement when he co-founded a group of self-declared "individualists" and "freethinkers": The Chicago Seven included Tom Beeby, Larry Booth, Stuart Cohen, James Ingo Freed, James Nagle, Ben Weese; in 1977, the group expanded to eight to include Helmut Jahn, the "Baron von High-Tech."[12] The first formal event of the Seven was an exhibition the group organized for The Cooper Union in New York, and later took to Illinois. The participants of the exhibition conceived of "Chicago Architects" as a sort of *salon des refusés*, which was scheduled to be on display at the Richard Gray Gallery simultaneously with the "official" and "canonical" retrospective of Chicago architecture at Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art, entitled "A Hundred Years of Chicago Architecture: Continuity of Form and Structure."[13] The New York opening of the show was to give it legitimacy before it would go back "home" to Chicago. In order to communicate their insurrectionist intent, facing up to the official tenet of Chicago modernism, this group of architects was named after its political homologue in Chicago, also called the Chicago Seven around social right activists Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, David Dellinger, Tom Hayden, Rennie Davis, John Froines, Lee Weiner and Bobby Seale, all of whom had been arrested and put to trial for conspiracy and for instigating to riot at massive protests against the Vietnam War at the 1968 Democratic National Convention.[14] Seale had to appear again at hearings in 1970 as one of the New Haven Nine during the New Haven Black Panther trials. During these trials, the architecture school of Tigerman's alma mater, Rudolph's Art and Architecture Building at Yale, fell prey to a mysterious fire, although no arson was revealed. Both the Chicago Seven and the New Haven Nine were all finally found not guilty of conspiracy, yet Tigerman was well aware of the cultural stir these conspirators had provoked—not least because Tigerman knew Weiner. Beyond the

name of the political precedent, some of its street-fighter terminology was also adopted by the architectural Seven; one of its members explained that "what Mies did is that he thought of it as a war for saving our souls or the battle for the saving of architecture. Late in his life he once said, "I've showed them how to do it. I am winning the war for architecture."[15] The Seven rose up against becoming the foot soldiers of a war they did not endorse.

The Seven also positioned themselves in rivalry with two groups of architects on the East Coast, one of which had declared a shared interest in the autonomy of the discipline of architecture in the context of the CASE study groups in the late sixties.[16] As an outcome of one of these meetings held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1969, five of its members published a series of house projects in a book entitled *Five Architects* in 1972; the projects were intellectually strung together by a critical essay by historian Colin Rowe.[17] Because of his aptitude to provide a connective theory for their ideas, Rowe emerged as the *eminence grise* of the "New York Five," or "Whites," which included Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk and Richard Meier. It did not take long until the Whites' interest in Le Corbusier and the autonomous, abstract syntax of form was challenged by the so-called "Grays," who were mostly associated with Yale and Pennsylvania universities, and included Vincent Scully, Robert Venturi, Robert A.M. Stern, and Romaldo Giurgola, among others. The Grays promoted the semantic dimension of architectural form, and its ability to "communicate" by connecting to the history and the architectural motives of the Western humanist traditions.[18] The staged rivalry between the Chicago and the New York groups was based on a significant conceptual difference, in that the Seven abstained from defining a shared set of aesthetic and theoretical principles, so that every one of its members would preserve his individuality and singularity. Tigerman described the Seven's liberal agenda as follows:

> *The New York Five thought they had something in common, and they presented themselves as Whites: exclusivist, autonomous beings ...they had a certain collective belief in "autonomy." The Grays, which was [Romaldo] Giurgola, [Robert A. M.] Stern, and all those people, saw themselves as inclusivists. The guys in L. A., the Silvers, saw themselves as studies in extrusion, because of the speed of the automobile.*
>
> *The Chicago Seven have nothing to do with each other—formally, and now, personally. I don't even see them. ...It was the only way we could get seven desperate people who had nothing in common, including respect for the other; but one thing we had in common: we needed to penetrate a city that was monolithic, that was Miesian.*[19]

The Seven stayed away from delineating a shared aesthetic-formalist code; instead, they were mostly defined *negatively*, by stating that they did not participate in the established architectural culture of Chicago. This strategy of affirming identity through negation and distance was entirely consistent with Tigerman's ironic weltanschauung, which hinged on the possible co-existence of contradictions and unresolved dualities. The Seven made this ironic self-understanding into an ideological model for urban cohabitation when, in 1978, they organized the "Chicago Townhouse" competition at The Graham Foundation. This event came in defense of a pluralist discipline, and became one of the forerunners of the *strada novissima* installation at the showcase event for postmodern architecture two years later at the Venice Biennale, called "The Presence of the Past."



Tigerman's advocacy of the creative and independent freethinker has to be seen against the background of a determining and officially sanctioned conflict the United States engaged in at the time he developed his project in architecture: the Vietnam War. The senseless loss of human life in the worsening war after 1965, and well into the 1970s, presented the American society with an existential puzzle, which destroyed the former confidence in the ability to master and control every aspect of life; moreover, it stirred up suspicions about the ethical value underlying the positivism of the modern and secular lifestyle. When the United States's official campaign against Communism turned into a national disaster, Tigerman started to question the relative gain of abstract and universalizing heroism in the face of the individual suffering of the people of both war nations. He was well aware that the emerging existential angst around Vietnam did not only affect the collective conscience, as the media in the socially oriented sixties kept suggesting, but it resulted in fears on a very personal level: The national calamity made him

aware of his own finitude and mortality. Together with this realization of finitude, Tigerman's simultaneous midlife crisis, only added to his individual disquietude at the time.[20] He wrote in 1982 that towards the second half of the 1970s, "I felt the need to reassess the way I wished to live the rest of my life. I became fascinated with the idea that the notions of humor and irony could be regarded as perverse responses to the acknowledgment of death."[21] Here, he announced his primordial reason as well as the rhetorical modes of expression of his form of architectural liberalism; the introduction of humor and irony into architecture was to open a space within the discipline's dense matrix of foundational assumptions, and re-conquer within it a territory for individual freedom of expression. In spirit, the double, tragic/comic rhetoric of his architectural writing and design is very close to Roberto Benigni's in his 1997 comedy *La vita è bella*—a daring aesthetic-ethical *tour de force* about the life in the concentration camps in Auschwitz.

In view of the Western world's apparent lack of self-doubt and self-criticism manifested in the U.S. government's bad judgment around the Vietnam war and the war protests, Tigerman challenged the "modern" notion of an overarching and synthetic ideology (i.e. the *zeitgeist*) which was considered to epitomize all aspirations of a people at a particular moment in time. He criticized the collective delusion of endless progress which, more than engrained in the very project of modernity, was also endemic to the post-Emersonian, American pioneer ethics and found itself boosted by the economic upswing and the consumer euphoria in the postwar decades. Ultimately, he considered the United States' one-sided confidence in an uninterrupted cultural, social and economic renewal in the 1950s and early 60s immature: "There is something perverse about the reenactment of the desire to remain collectively 'young.' It is as if an entire culture rejects its own coming of age because it may ruin that culture's optimism."[22] The heroic and positivist devotion to this shared belief seemed like a naive conceit of a nation, which failed to understand the true meaning of individual "existence." Vietnam shuttered the illusion that a nation like the United States would or could speak with one voice, and that any attitude of dissent and disagreement should dissolve in the positive spirit of an allegedly unified ideological will of the American society.

In the context of these questions raised in the socio-cultural sphere, Tigerman was drawn magnetically to the intellectual tradition of existentialism, from Socrates to Søren Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, from Dostoevsky to Kafka, and finally, to Mark C. Taylor's (a-)theological

speculations—themselves based on Kierkegaard.[23] Tigerman liked to think of his own position in architecture as analogous to the place Kierkegaard occupied in philosophy: What Kierkegaard was to Hegel, Tigerman thought he could represent in relation to Mies. In a sense, Hegel and Mies both attempted to "systematize" existence through their respective sterile metaphysics, which was in the service of a universal *welt-* or *zeitgeist*. Kierkegaard and Tigerman, by contrast, insisted on the importance of the subjective perspective as well as the freedom associated with it. They maintained that singular, contingent acts and reflections were not dictated by any universal will, but instead, belonged to the free initiative of every discrete human being–the sphere of "That Individual."[24] Along with his disapproval of abstract *systemdenken,* Kierkegaard had expressed his criticism against a fixed, dehumanized, and "spatialized" view of time, and suggested to replace it with the more individualized and transient notion of "life-time."[25] Tigerman similarly insisted that space and time were contingent on the mortal existence of a person's lifecycle; many of his sketches make thematic the idea of the irrecuperable passage of individualized time, as does, for example, the drawing entitled "Hinge." About his phallus-shaped Daisy House, Tigerman wrote: "The necessity to communicate the finite condition of man in all its ironic nobility was an obvious requirement of [this building]."[26] The house's patron truly epitomized the Janus-faced relationship between the very human sentiments of tragedy and comedy: The client was the owner of burlesque show venues in Chicago, and was diagnosed with terminal cancer when he approached Tigerman to design the house. After turning down the client several times, Tigerman finally accepted to design a house for him under the condition that the project would make his patron laugh: "I drew an erect phallus with semen coming out at the end, directed at him, and he laughed. He

"WHAT KIERKEGAARD WAS TO HEGEL, TIGERMAN THOUGHT HE COULD REPRESENT IN RELATION TO MIES"

liked it, and we built it, and he died three months later; that's the truth."[27] This thoroughly humanized, tragic/comic liaison with other subjects through the medium of architecture has been at the core of Tigerman's critique of modernism, and was, at the same time, fundamental to his own version of "postmodernism."



## ENDNOTES

1. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968).
2. Refer to Tigerman's autobiography *Building Bridges to Burn*, forew. by Emmanuel Petit (ORO, 2011).
3. Saul Bellow, *The Adventures of Augie March: A Novel* (New York: Viking Press, 1953).
4. Tigerman, "The Ten Contaminants" (1991), *Schlepping Through Ambivalence: Writings on an Ambivalent Architectural Condition,* ed. Emmanuel Petit (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 54.
5. Tigerman, "Juxtaposition vs. Judgment, 1965," *Versus: An American Architect's Alternatives* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), 56.
6. Tigerman used the expression "German invasion" to designate Mies van der Rohe's arrival in Chicago in an interview with Barbaralee Diamonstein. Diamonstein-Spielvogel, "American Architecture Now: Stanley Tigerman," Diamonstein-Spielvogel Video Archive, Duke University Libraries, 1984.
7. Stanley Tigerman, "Mies van der Rohe: A Moral Model"; "Paradigms in Architecture," *Perspecta 22, The Journal of the Yale School of Architecture,* Rizzoli, New York (1986), 118.
8. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, quoted in Tigerman, *Versus*, 30.
9. Refer to Tigerman's "P.P.S. to Mies," *Schlepping Through Ambivalence,* 153.
10. I borrow the idea of the meaning of imitating an individualist from Alexander Nehamas's view of Socrates, in *Art of Living,* where Nehamas claims: "To imitate Socrates is therefore to create oneself, as Socrates did; but it is also to make oneself different from anyone else so far, and since that includes Socrates himself, it is to make oneself different from Socrates as well. That is why he can function as the model for the individualist" *Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, Sather Classical Lectures, 1998), 11.
11. In 1973, Harold Bloom published *Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry,* in which he argued that because a poet must look for an original poetic vision in order to guarantee his survival into posterity, the overwhelming influence of his precedents provokes a sense of anxiety in living poets.
12. Tigerman designates Jahn as the "Baron von High-Tech" in *Versus,* 30.
13. Oswald W. Grube, Peter C. Pran and Franz Schulze, *100 Years of Architecture in*

*Chicago: Continuity of Structure and Form* (Chicago: J. Philip O'Hara, 1976).

14. The Chicago Seven were originally eight, but one of their member's trial (Bobby Seale's) was separated from the trial of the other seven because of his blatant disrespect of the court proceedings and the judge.

    On the Chicago Seven protests and trials, refer to: J. Anthony Lukas, "Judge Hoffman Is Taunted at Trial of the Chicago 7 After Silencing Defense Counsel", *New York Times,* February 6, 1970; David Dellinger, *From Yale to Jail: the Life Story of a Moral Dissenter* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993); Abbie Hoffman & al., *Conspiracy*, introduction by Noam Chomsky, edited by Peter and Deborah Babcox and Bob Abel (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1969).



15. James Ingo Freed, *Chicago Architects Oral History Projec*t (Chicago, Illinois: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2000).

16. On the CASE study group meetings (Conference of Architects for the Study of the Environment), refer to Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Modern Architectural Theory: A Historical Survey, 1673-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

17. *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier* (New York: Wittenborn, 1972).

18. For a discussion of the "White/Gray" debates, refer to Joan Ockman, "Resurrecting the Avant-Garde: The History and Program of Oppositions," in Beatriz Colomina (ed), *Architecture Production* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988).

19. Conversation Stanley Tigerman with Emmanuel Petit, Princeton, NJ, December 2001; in Emmanuel Petit, "Irony in Metaphysics's Gravity: Imagination and Iconoclasm in Architecture 1960s-80s," Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, January 2006, Annex B.

20. Ibid., 115.

21. Ibid.

22. Tigerman, *The Architecture of Exile* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 155.

23. Tigerman extracts most of his references to existentialist thinkers from William Hubben, *Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Kafka: Four Prophets of Our Destiny* (London and New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1952 & 1962). Later, Tigerman refers a lot to Mark C. Taylor's *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

24. The epitaph on Kierkegaard's grave referred to the philosopher as "That Individual."

25. Paul Bové, "The Penitentiary of Reflection: Søren Kierkegaard and Critical Activity," *boundary 2*, vol. 9, no. 1, A Supplement on Irony (Autumn, 1980), 233-58, p. 237.

26. Tigerman, *Versus*, 116.

27. Conversation Tigerman with Petit; "Irony in Metaphysics's Gravity... ."

**QUESTION:** *The essay by Emmanuel Petit is talking about your ethics. And in the essay one of the things he says is that your temperament or approach would have more in common with the anti-philosophers like Socrates and Kierkegaard and Bataille rather than the system builders like Kant and Hegel. Is that something that you would agree with or be in sympathy with?*

ANSWER: I don't have any feeling about it at all. Emmanuel writes what he sees and thinks is correct, and I am, with respect to him, simply an other. So I don't have any feelings that he's right or wrong or whatever.

Q: *Then he does get in to the struggles that went on in the 1970s and 1980s with postmodernism and your central role there, and at the time, a lot of times it was relegated to being about style, and he brings out the idea that there was a strong ethical incentive or underpinning to your work and your positions at that time, and I was hoping that you might have something to say about that.*

A: Yeah actually I do. Architecture is an elitist one. We are the hired guns for the wealthy. Or those in power, or kings or princes, or princes of industry, or princes of the art world. We were never about ethical considerations. But its provable in the last fifty years at least, when you could actually explore the phrase "follow the money and you will find architects" So when kings had to build in apartheid South Africa, we did. When the kings had to build for the Shah of Iran we did. When it came time to build for OPEC money we did. And so today you find major corporate firms stampeding to the ticket counter of overseas airlines to work on projects in countries whose human rights history doesn't exist. So it still is the same. But in the 1970s on the heels of Venturi's book Complexity and Contradiction in

Architecture, architects took a second look at their origins. And so there was an attempt, feeble there's no question of it, stylistic, yes, to get in touch with their predecessors. To find roots as it were—of a rootless people. I wrote a book twenty-five to thirty years ago entitled the Architecture of Exile, which stipulates that Americans are in exile. This is not our land. It belonged to the American Indians etc. It was promised by the bible. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust but this is not our soil and we are exploitive even as I speak to you, so yes I for a very long time, not that I hold it as a badge of honor, I have been a person who has been involved with ethics, who writes about it, who tries to build about it, etc. Yes that's true.



Q: *What specifically in postmodernism as it was playing out at the time seemed to you to have an ethical imperative?*

A: Well, among other things, you have to remember that you are talking to someone who may be native to Chicago, but ultimately it is not my home. I was born here but it is not my home. This is a Baptist fundamentalist city. And also was a city that took great care to patronize Mies van der Rohe. And so it was very difficult in the sixties to come back from graduate school and to find a place in this place which was no place for me. And so we formed something called the Chicago Seven, with a group who was were antagonistic to an establishment condition, and we tried to make a place for us at the table. Around that time, a little bit later, I did that infamous piece about the titanic, about Crown Hall sinking into Lake Michigan and it struck a note at the time and it drew great discussion in the then emerging architectural culture in Chicago which was really nothing more than two sides battling it out between the traditional, canonical structural constructivist tradition and another group that had nothing in common—the Chicago Seven—but who felt that a more open, multi-valent condition might be better for all concerned in Chicago, and so

we battled our way to the table, and there were any number of events—mosh pits or whatever—where we invited others to argue it out with us and they came and we did. That condition no longer exists today. Basically, there is no Chicago architectural culture.

Q: *What you had in common was an attitude towards multivalence?*

A: What we had in common was we wanted a place at the table. Make no mistake about it. We were all different, one from the other and to find that place took a long time but it did transpire at some point. So yes, you could call it multivalent, you could call it philosophically inclined, but it was really very self- oriented and selfish. We wanted respect without the credential of having studied with Mies. And it ultimately transpired. In the process, Chicago opened itself up to every stripe of ambulance chaser who came to Chicago to build.





Q: *I do have one other question I would like to run by you. One of the things Emmanuel brings out in the article is about spontaneity. He thinks that cultivating spontaneity with another person through design rather than sort of presenting them with a design—he thinks that spontaneity is something that characterized what you do. Do you agree with that?*

A: Again, I don't know about that. I do know that we in the West fear, as Emmanuel Levinas put it, the other–The other that stalks the street. We are terrified of looking this person in the eye. We're terrified of terrorists, forgetting that the tradition of terrorism is rampant in all the countries of the West. Think of the French Revolution, think about the American Revolution—it was filled with terrorists. The British didn't know if they were going to have a bomb in their pocket. Suicide bombers are just an advanced version of the terrorists we were—American, that is. So I think—I'm reading a book right now that is very interesting, called On the Muslim Question which years ago could have been called "On the Jewish Question" the Jews in America and everywhere else, were never respected, they had to fight for the place and ultimately they had no place even in America. Only if you fell into the melting pot and declared yourself an American first—so we don't take kindly to veiled Muslim women or trance-talking Muslim males. We could—this country is supposed to be made up of diversified people that are not the same to each other. It's the only country on Earth that has that distinction. We could embrace an other, a foreign person, a person that doesn't speak like us and who has values other than ours—meaning values established by the Koran—as opposed to the Judeo-Christian bible. But we could, so I'm of the type who believes in that, who doesn't scare. You know, you go through life with only two ways, with fear or with love. And those who go in fear die

in fear, and those who go in love die in love. And that's really all I have to say about it. I mean, I am an architect. I trade, I also read and I write and I draw. I do other things other than making buildings. And I like to think and hope that the buildings I make, make sense. We [Tigerman McCurry] don't market, we don't brand, we don't have a marketing director. I'm not interested in branding, I'm not interested in any way in the diminishment of the discipline. But it is being diminished all the time—right now, as we speak. In other words, I'm glad I'm eighty-three and I'm not going to live to see the disaster that's about to come to architecture.



STANLEY TIGERMAN

# BUILDING PLANS AS NATURAL SYMBOLS

RAFAEL DE CLERCQ

At present, there are no hotly debated topics in the philosophy of architecture. One could take this as evidence of the dreariness of the discipline, but one could equally see it as a sign that the discipline has not been caught up in its own internal dialectic and thereby lost touch with issues that matter outside of philosophy. After all, when a (philosophical) discipline lacks a compelling internal dialectic, there is every reason for researchers in the field to look beyond its boundaries, to other, neighboring fields. In the case of the philosophy of architecture, these neighbors include architectural history, architectural theory, architectural criticism, and, last but not least, the practice of architecture itself. It should come as no surprise, then, that the topic of my paper is an entirely self-selected one from the field of architectural history and theory. More specifically, I will focus on a claim about building plans that can be found in the work of architectural historian Carroll William Westfall. The claim has received little attention, perhaps because it is considered implausible, or because it is made by someone whose taste in philosophy (Aristotle) and architecture (Jefferson) seems all too classical. Whatever the case may be, in what follows I will try to argue that the claim is not implausible. I will, however, give my own interpretation to it, one that may not match entirely what Westfall had in mind.[1] Still, the claim is supposed to remain sufficiently strong under the proposed interpretation to make it far from trivially true.

> “THERE ARE BUILDINGS BELONGING TO DISPARATE FUNCTIONAL KINDS (E.G., ‘TEMPLE’, ‘DWELLING’, ‘SHOP’) WHOSE PLANS ARE NATURAL SYMBOLS OF THE ACTIVITIES ACCOMMODATED BY THOSE BUILDINGS”

I.

Westfall advanced his thesis about building plans in *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism,* a book co-authored with Robert Jan van Pelt in 1991.[2] Here are some relevant quotations from Westfall's chapter on building types:[3]

> *Here it is argued that a building imitates a type which is timeless. The type provides a symbol of the purpose which the building embodies… The particular building is a conventional sign within which is embedded the natural symbolism of the type (van Pelt & Westfall 1991, p. 156).*

> *In this sense, [the type] is a natural symbol of the political purpose it accommodates. In both the most simple and most complex way, then, the type's character is embodied in its plan diagram, and that plan diagram is about a purpose… (Ibid., p. 160)*

> *Each purpose has a corresponding building type with a characteristic plan diagram. The type embodies the continuity between the present and the past. It is that which endures because it is true. Because it is true, it exists outside the time marked by history, and it has symbolic value—it symbolizes some particular political purpose (Ibid., p. 166).*

The claim I wish to extract from the above quotations can be stated as follows: there are buildings belonging to disparate functional kinds (e.g., 'temple', 'dwelling', 'shop') whose plans are natural symbols of the activities accommodated by those buildings. It may not be immediately clear why this claim is extracted from the quotations. First of all, in the quoted passages, Westfall is not saying that activities are symbolized; he says that purposes are symbolized. However, activities and purposes are not clearly distinguished in van Pelt & Westfall 1991 (e.g., on pp. 156, 161-2). Moreover, as we will see in section III, the explanation of the symbolic relation may be roughly the same regardless of whether purposes or activities are symbolized. In other words, the plausibility of the central claim does not depend on which of the two interpretations is preferred.[4]

Another interpretative issue arises from the fact that Westfall does not say that building plans are symbols; he tends to say that building types are symbols. However, since, according to the second quotation, "the type's character is embodied in its plan diagram" it does not seem too extravagant to take him as claiming that building plans are symbols or, if one prefers, that buildings symbolize by virtue of their plan. Indeed, more recently, Westfall writes that (particular) buildings "based on" building types are

natural symbols (unpublished, p. 14).

In any case, my interpretation of the claim will henceforth focus on two expressions: 'plan' and 'natural symbol'. My discussion of the claim's significance—in particular, how it differs from similar claims—will have to wait until the conclusion, when a clear interpretation has been provided.



## II.

The plans that are supposed to serve as natural symbols are not diagrammatic representations of horizontal sections (these are "conventional signs"), but the horizontal sections themselves. Moreover, they are the horizontal sections of particular buildings, for example, a horizontal section of the ground floor of the Houses of Parliament in London. However, if we follow Westfall, these plans or sections are able to serve as natural symbols only because they exemplify a certain abstract shape; in other words, because they are tokens of a certain type. Westfall identifies six basic types: the tholos, the temple, the theatre, the regia, the dwelling, and the shop. (For our purposes, we can regard a basic type as one whose symbolic significance does not derive entirely from its being an instance of another, more general type.) The activities symbolized by the tokens of these types are, respectively, venerating, celebrating, imagining (or "aspiring"), governing (or "exercising authority"), dwelling, and sustaining (or "trading"). The diagrams in figure 1 represent the abstract shapes the tokens have in common in virtue of being tokens of the same type.

> "WHAT DISTINGUISHES NATURAL FROM NON-NATURAL SYMBOLS IS THE WAY THE CONNECTION IS ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE SYMBOL AND WHAT IT STANDS FOR"

When introduced in this way, the list may strike one as somewhat arbitrary, and indeed Westfall does not explain in detail how he arrived at it. He says little more than the list is based on, "[e]xperience with historical building and reflection about the historic within that experience as well as the knowledge available to us through our life in the present" (p.

156). Nonetheless, it seems to me that the list cannot be rejected out of hand as based on someone's parochial (say, Western) experience. This may be evident in the case of the dwelling and the shop, but even the peculiar-looking tholos is exemplified by religious structures around the world such as mosques and Chinese altars and pagodas. The apparent universality of the types is of course due to the fact that they are very general and leave many features undetermined, for example, dimensions of rooms, the placing of windows and doors, etcetera.[6] However, such indeterminacy does not empty Westfall's list of significance as long as the shapes, and the corresponding activities, are recognizable and recognizably different from one another.[7] That is enough for Westfall's list to be refutable. Moreover, Westfall leaves open the possibility that a different (and presumably, equally correct) list can be produced on the basis of a "different understanding of the way political life is given conventional form in constitutions and a different interpretation of the activities that constitute political life" (p. 157). However, in what follows, I do not want to defend even the thesis that Westfall's list is a correct enumeration of basic types. All I want to argue is that some such list (perhaps a much longer one) may be correct. That is enough for the claim under investigation to be plausible or at least worthy of further investigation.

The claim extracted from Westfall's chapter makes reference only to horizontal sections. In principle, one could also take vertical sections into account. The word 'plans' in my formulation of the main thesis would then have to be replaced by something like 'horizontal and/or vertical sections'. This should not affect (what I take to be) the substance of the claim, although it may make it more plausible. In what follows, however, I will largely ignore vertical sections; in part to remain as close as possible to Westfall's text, in part to keep things as simple as possible.[8] For the same reasons, I will ignore complexities arising from the fact that part of a building may exemplify a type without the building itself exemplifying that type.

## III.

The expression that is bound to cause most puzzlement is 'natural symbol'. In the sense that is relevant here, a symbol is an object (or an action or an event) that stands for something valued within a community such as a deity or the nation.[9] Two additional clarifications may make this definition a bit more helpful. Firstly, an object stands for something valued only if it (i) has the capacity to call it to mind and (ii) in virtue of that capacity, is the object of attitudes normally directed towards the

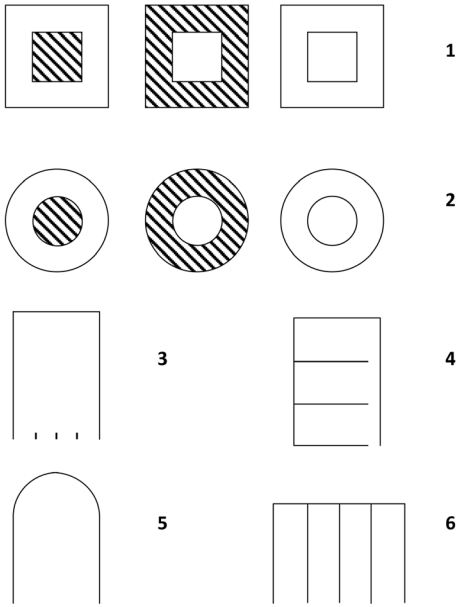



FIGURE 1: WESTFALL'S ALPHABET OF BUILDING (P. 160): (1) REGIA (2) THOLOS (3) TEMPLE (4) DWELLING (5) THEATRE (6) SHOP. HATCHED AREAS REPRESENT SOLID FORMS. [5]

valued thing (for example, reverence and respect). Secondly, what a symbol stands for usually is not itself an object or at least not an object of sensory experience: it can be a past event, a supernatural being, a non-perceptual property, a disposition, and so on. In the present case, it is (the purpose served by) an activity of a very general kind such as venerating, celebrating and dwelling. What distinguishes natural from non-natural symbols is the way the connection is established between the symbol and what it stands for. In the case of a non-natural symbol, the connection is established by a convention such as the convention that x is a monument for y or that x is the flag of y. In such cases, the connection is arbitrary in the sense that a different convention would have resulted in a different connection. In the case of a natural symbol such as an icon or a relic, the connection is not the result of a convention, but of something

outside our will such as striking resemblance and/or spatiotemporal contiguity (contact). Note that the difference lies in how the connection is established – by convention or not – not in how it is maintained. Even if the connection between a symbol and what it symbolizes was established by convention, a change of convention may not result in a change of connection. For example, a country may adopt a new flag without the old flag thereby losing its symbolic significance.





Evidently, this raises the question how the 'natural' connection is established between building plans of a given type on the one hand and kinds of activities on the other hand. Westfall does not explicitly address this question, but, as we will see, there is an answer that is compatible with what he says and which seems defensible.

One may think that spatiotemporal contiguity can explain the symbolic connection between building plans and activities. After all, the symbolized activities (for example, dwelling) may take place in close proximity to the horizontal sections of buildings. However, on the face of it, this cannot be the whole explanation. The reason is that spatial contiguity can establish a connection only between items that have a location in space and time, for example, between a particular – locatable – building and a particular – dateable – activity that has taken place within it. But the connection that Westfall needs is one between building plans of a given type and certain kinds of activities. Because types and kinds are abstract objects, which do not have a location in space, they cannot stand in a relation of spatiotemporal contiguity to one another.

One might think that it is enough to have spatiotemporal contiguity between tokens and instances in order to have a connection between the corresponding types and kinds. In other words, if activities of a certain kind always take place in buildings of a certain type, or vice versa, if buildings of a certain type always accommodate activities of a certain kind, then will this not be enough to establish a symbolic connection between the two? To be sure, this seems closer to the truth. It certainly is true that the actual use of a plan may enhance its symbolic value. By having a certain history of use, a plan may be better able to call to mind what is symbolized, for example, through recollection. However, it does not follow that such constant association can create symbolic value or that it creates it in every case. At least in our present case, it seems that other factors may be involved. In fact, in order to find out whether there are other factors, it may be worth investigating why certain types of plan have come to be associated with certain kinds of activity. For example, it may be worth asking why veneration often takes place in tholos-like forms.

An obvious answer is that this type is experienced as suitable or appropriate. This then suggests the following answer to our initial question: a building plan of type x can be a natural symbol of a kind of activity y because x is (especially) appropriate for the accommodation of y. Or, if one prefers the interpretation under which purposes rather than activities are symbolized: a building plan of type x can be a natural symbol of purpose y because x is especially appropriate for the accommodation of an activity that serves y.



One may ask what is more important, whether a building plan is experienced as appropriate or whether it really is appropriate? I think the latter relation is more fundamental, and in any case, in greater need of clarification (to be provided soon). Nonetheless, it is obvious that appropriateness alone does not suffice to confer symbolic significance on a building plan. The appropriateness has to be recognized if it is to make the building plan stand for a particular purpose or a particular kind of activity. In other words, only manifest appropriateness explains symbolic significance. Similarly, a piece of clothing cannot function as a relic unless it is believed to have belonged to a particular person.

The idea that certain types of plan are appropriate for certain kinds of activity is one that occasionally shows up in the literature, for example, when it is said that variations on a plan and/or section occur in the history of building types until the 'appropriate' form has been found. To quote just two examples:

> *In a healthy building culture, tradition and innovation are not contradictory but complementary concepts. In both cases, [a] building type is allowed to take on the most appropriate form (Davis 2006, p. 153; italics omitted).*

> *A type represents the organizational structure of a building in plan and section. A type evolves until it*

> *achieves its basic (i.e. its rational and logical) form… [T]he fact that airport terminals are everywhere in a state of permanent reconstruction demonstrates the fact that shelter and function have not yet found a suitable type. (Krier 2007, p. 42)*

Although 'suitable' and 'appropriate' seem to be used here in their everyday meaning (of 'right'), it may be useful to spell out the idea a little bit more.





Echoing Nelson Goodman's theory of rightness (see, for example, Goodman & Elgin 1988, p. 158), one might say that a type of plan is appropriate for an activity if and only if using it for the accommodation of that activity works; in other words, if using the type for that purpose helps to create a successful building, where 'helps to create' can be understood as designating a causal relation. Nothing much hinges here on a particular view of what a successful building is, but it seems reasonable to demand – in addition to the Vitruvian criteria of firmness, commodity, and delight – that a building be adaptable and in harmony with the existing environment.[10]

If using a type for the accommodation of a particular activity works, then at least part of the explanation must be that the use of the type fits into a larger building culture which itself works.[11] As Goodman and Elgin say, "working tests fitting" (Ibid., p. 159). For example, architects and building users unfamiliar with a type of plan may have no clue as to how a building based on it can accommodate the activity it is supposed to accommodate, and they may find it difficult to fit it into an existing context. In the building culture to which they belong, using the type may not work.[12] When confronted with such a case, one should not jump to the conclusion that there is something wrong with either the type or the culture. One may just be confronted with a lack of fit between the two. Nonetheless, the possibility of a deficient building culture should be borne in mind, especially when criticisms of the culture are widespread and persistent. This seems to be the case with our present building culture, whose shortcomings have been foregrounded by an ever-growing number of critics, including architects (e.g., Bruce Allsop, Léon Krier, Paul Rudolph), engineers (e.g., Malcolm Millais), architectural critics (e.g., Peter Blake), architectural theorists (e.g., Brent C. Brolin, Howard Davis), architectural historians (e.g., David Watkin), philosophers (e.g., Roger Scruton), sociologists (e.g., Nathan Glazer), writers (e.g., Jane Jacobs, Tom Wolfe), and the Prince of Wales (Charles).[13] According to these critics, our present building culture is not very good at producing successful buildings in the sense that has just been made half-precise; in other words, it does not work very well.

The notion of a successful building, then, turns out to be essential to spelling out the relation of appropriateness between building plan and activity (which relation is essential to explaining the symbolic significance of certain types of building plan). Of course, this makes the relation partly normative. From a hermeneutic point of view, this is a desirable consequence, since Westfall often calls his types 'normative'. However, Westfall's types are normative in a stronger sense: they are not just appropriate forms, they "provide the basic character of what the plan of the finished building must be if it is to serve its purpose" (p. 161; my italics). Moreover, it seems that, in Westfall's view, the only condition that can get one exempted from the requirement of using the form for a particular activity is one in which it is (practically) impossible to use the form for that activity: "while the building types suggest how certain purposes ought to be accommodated by a building, circumstances do not always allow it to be so" (p. 161; italics in original). This may be overly strict. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that, according to Westfall, the requirement to use a certain building plan applies only to certain kinds of building. For example, he claims that it does not apply to farms and libraries, and for reasons to be given soon, one may suppose that it does not apply to factories either. Moreover, the issue of whether the types are normative in a strong or in a weak sense (i.e., whether they are mandatory or merely appropriate) has little bearing on the main issue, that is, how building plans can function as natural symbols of certain purposes or activities. After all, if a building plan is required in a given context – if one "must" use it – then, a fortiori, it is appropriate to use it in that context.



The normativity imparted by the notion of a successful building may seem to be incompatible with the claim that building plans are 'natural' symbols. However, the distinction between natural and non-natural symbols is not supposed to be an

instance of the metaphysically puzzling distinction between the descriptive and evaluative, causes and reasons, and so on. Rather, the distinction was supposed to be a metaphysically innocent one between items whose symbolic significance is based on a convention and items whose symbolic significance has a different basis. (By 'symbolic significance' I mean an item's standing for something valued.) In sum, 'natural' has to be understood as 'non-conventional'.





Even if an item's symbolic significance is not the result of a convention, there is still a potential for cultural variability. To see this, consider that, according to the explanation given above, appropriateness is a matter of working, and that working is a matter of fitting within a culture of building. As a result, instances of the same type of building plan may not stand for the same thing, or even anything, in every culture. It does not follow (from the fact that working is a matter of "fitting within a culture of building") that there is no fact of the matter as to what is a working building plan or even a working building culture. Compare: from the fact that different types of medicine work for different kinds of people, it does not follow that there are no absolute standards for therapeutic effectiveness. Moreover, although I have again departed from what Westfall suggests – like Jungian archetypes, his basic building types seem to have universal symbolic significance – our disagreement (again) has no implications for the main thesis.

As said, there is room for variability across cultures with respect to what a building plan stands for. However, within a culture, a building plan cannot stand for a completely heterogeneous collection of activities, even if those activities happen to be all instances of the same kind of action. In other words, there have to be constancies in the form the activities take (p. 158). Otherwise there cannot be a type of plan that suits them all, and which can therefore serve as a symbol of the kind. If this line of reasoning is correct, it may explain why the activities of production and transportation do not seem to have associated types of building plan: there is just too much variation in the form that such activities can take. In other words, even if there is a type suitable to railway stations (cf. Krier 2007, p. 51), there is no type suitable to all of the following: railway stations, bus stations, ferry piers, airports, rocket launchers, and so on.

Of course, this raises the question of when certain activities are too heterogeneous to be appropriately accommodated and hence symbolized by a particular building type.[14] It seems to me that this question is best answered a posteriori, by examining the building types that have actually been developed. To be sure, certain expectations are reasonable on a

priori grounds. For example, it seems reasonable to expect that activities which are defined in highly general terms and which, at the same time, are highly reliant on technology (for example, transportation, production, and research) will not find appropriate accommodation in a single type or even in a plurality of types. In such cases, the appropriate form of accommodation is likely to depend on the nature of the technology and the stage of its development. However, it seems that such a priori reflection on the relationship between building types and activities can easily lead one into paradoxes. Consider, for example, the apparently contradictory statements which the prominent art historian James S. Ackerman issued about the villa (on what seem to be a priori grounds). One the one hand, Ackerman writes:

> *This makes the villa unique: other architectural types—the palace, the place of worship, the factory—have changed in form and purpose as the role of the ruler, the character of the liturgy, the nature of manufacture have changed, frequently and often radically. But the villa has remained substantially the same because it fills a need that never alters, a need which, because it is not material but psychological and ideological, is not subject to the influences of evolving societies and technologies. The villa accommodates a fantasy which is impervious to reality (Ackerman 1990, p. 9).*

On the other hand, he writes:

> *There is hardly a moment in the history of architecture when villas were less innovative than other architectural types… The villa is less fixed in form than most other architectural types because the requirements of leisure lack clear definition (Ibid., p. 18).*

On the face of it, this seems inconsistent. How can the villa, and the activity or "need" it is supposed to serve, simultaneously be more stable and less fixed compared to other building types?[15] One may try to resolve this apparent contradiction by saying that

"IN THE CASE OF A NATURAL SYMBOL SUCH AS AN ICON OR A RELIC, THE CONNECTION IS NOT THE RESULT OF A CONVENTION, BUT OF SOMETHING OUTSIDE OUR WILL SUCH AS STRIKING RESEMBLANCE AND/OR SPATIOTEMPORAL CONTIGUITY"

certain elements of the villa remain unchanged while others are subject to change. But how could the villa be "unique" in this respect? Unless reference is made to particular elements, the statement that some of the villa's elements change, while others do not, borders on triviality. Of course, the only way one could reasonably make reference to particular elements is by investigating the matter empirically (that is, a posteriori). Eventually, this is what Ackerman does by distinguishing two types of villa that have survived from ancient times: the 'compact-cubic' type, which is regular (cubical) in shape, and the 'open-extended' type, which is irregularly shaped and more integrated with the natural environment (Ibid., pp. 18-26).





## IV.

The hypothesis put forward in the previous section is that a building plan of type x can be a natural symbol of a kind of activity y because x is (especially) appropriate for the accommodation of y. Alternatively, a building plan of type x can be a natural symbol of purpose y because x is (especially) appropriate for the accommodation of an activity serving y. In brief, appropriateness explains symbolic significance. However, it seems that the two factors can be regarded as mutually reinforcing, since the reverse—symbolic significance explains appropriateness—is also true. When a building plan comes to stand for a certain activity, it becomes all the more appropriate to use it for the accommodation of that activity. This is of course most clear in the case of buildings accommodating 'serious' activities such as monuments, government buildings and churches. In such cases, it may be found awkward and even desecrating if the building plan calls to mind another, less serious activity; similarly, an ordinary dwelling or shop may be found pompous or pretentious if its plan calls to mind a more serious activity. Furthermore, a configuration of buildings wearing their purposes 'on their sleeves' is more likely to constitute a meaningful whole. After all, we do not experience a configuration of buildings as an abstract configuration of shapes and colors any more than we experience an individual building in such a way. Our knowledge of the actual purpose of a building inevitably informs our perception of it. If that purpose does not correspond to its apparent purpose, then this can be easily picked up as an oddity in an individual case, which may even enhance the significance of the whole. However, if such incongruence occurs on a larger scale, then our attention will tend to drift away from the whole to the individual buildings making up the whole. What we are left with, then, is no longer an environment properly speaking, but a sequence of buildings whose true

significance is to be deciphered.

Finally, if a building plan's symbolic significance is somehow local—a possibility mentioned in previous section—then that may make it again more appropriate because it may create the 'sense of place' that is so much desired nowadays.[16]



## V.

This paper took its starting point in a claim attributed to Carroll William Westfall, namely: there are buildings belonging to disparate functional kinds whose plans are natural symbols of the (purposes served by the) activities accommodated by those buildings. My aim was to give an interpretation to this claim that makes it plausible and yet not trivial. Moreover, the interpretation was supposed to remain close enough to Westfall's text to be able to count as an interpretation. In order to demonstrate the plausibility of the claim under the proposed interpretation, I explored the idea that certain types of building plan are appropriate for certain kinds of activities. My claim was that such appropriateness can explain the natural (i.e. non-conventional) symbolism of building plans, and can also be reinforced by it.

> "ON THE FACE OF IT, THIS SEEMS INCONSISTENT. HOW CAN THE VILLA, AND THE ACTIVITY OR "NEED" IT IS SUPPOSED TO SERVE, SIMULTANEOUSLY BE MORE STABLE AND LESS FIXED COMPARED TO OTHER BUILDING TYPES?"

Now that an interpretation of Westfall's claim has been provided, it is possible to say something about its significance. To be sure, Westfall is not the first to ascribe symbolic value to building plans. For example, Rudolf Wittkower (1998[1949]) already argued that the circular plan of certain Renaissance churches symbolized divine attributes and even God himself. In Eastern traditions of architecture, such symbolism seems more entrenched. For example, Indian temple and palace plans were often based on cosmological diagrams called 'mandalas'. Similarly, in the Temple of Heaven Complex in Beijing, circular and square plans were used to allow for the worship of (a round) Heaven and (a square) Earth respectively (Steinhardt 2002). To some extent, Westfall's is a generalization of such claims, since it

ascribes symbolic value to the plans of buildings belonging to disparate functional kinds: religious structures, but also, for example, houses and shops. Moreover, under the interpretation given in this paper, the significance of Westfall's claim extends beyond the art-historical. After all, on this interpretation, the symbolic significance of building plans does not depend on anything contentious. In particular, it can be reasonably doubted that the circle resembles God or Heaven, but it seems much harder to doubt that certain forms are appropriate for certain activities, let alone that such activities exist. In other words, the circular plan symbolized something for Renaissance architects (if Wittkower's interpretation is correct) and for 15th century Chinese people, but the plans Westfall has in mind can symbolize something for everyone capable of recognizing their appropriateness, which basically means… everyone. In short, Westfall's claim is not so much an interpretation of a particular (historical or regional) architectural practice, as an interpretation of architectural practice tout court. Whether it is a correct interpretation of that practice has not been decided in this paper, but, hopefully, it now looks a little bit more credible.

The previous paragraph may, however, invite an objection. In particular, Westfall's claim may seem to be not just a generalization of earlier claims about the symbolic significance of floor plans; it may seem to be an over-generalization. To understand why, it may be worth recalling two necessary conditions for being a symbol: (i) having the capacity to call to mind something valued (ii) in virtue of that capacity, being the object of attitudes (e.g., reverence, respect) normally directed towards the valued thing. Now it may be obvious how these two conditions can be met when what is symbolized is God or one of his attributes. If we are believers, such 'things' automatically command our respect. But what if the thing symbolized is, as in (one interpretation of) Westfall's theory, something banal like trading or dwelling? My inclination is to say that these, too, command our respect, although it may be less obvious precisely because they are so commonplace. Nonetheless, there are times when the importance we attach to them becomes manifest. Mircea Eliade, for example, reminds us of the rites that accompany "the passing of the domestic threshold" (Eliade 1959, p. 25) and the settling in a new house (Ibid., p. 57). In a similar vein, John Ruskin points to the "sanctity in a good man's house which cannot be renewed in every tenement that rises on its ruin" (Ruskin 1990[1880], p. 179). Such remarks are difficult to understand if dwelling is considered trivial and devoid of intrinsic value.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Paisley Livingston, Yu-Ping Luk, and especially Caroll William Westfall for helpful comments and suggestions.

## REFERENCES

Ackerman, J. S. (1990) *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Allsopp, B. (1974) *Towards a Humane Architecture*. London: Frederick Muller.

Blake, P. (1977) *Form Follows Fiasco: Why Modern Architecture Hasn't Worked*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Brolin, B. C. (1976) *The Failure of Modern Architecture*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company.

Charles, Prince of Wales (1989) *A Vision of Britain: A Personal View of Architecture*. New York: Doubleday.

Davis, H. (2006) *The Culture of Building*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

De Clercq, R. (2011) 'Modern Architecture and the Concept of Harmony', *British Journal of Aesthetics 51*, pp. 69-79.

Eliade, M. (1959) *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Translated by W. L. Trask. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

Glazer, N. (2007) *From a Cause to a Style: Modernist Architecture's Encounter with the American City*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Goodman, N. & C. Z. Elgin (1988) *Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company.

Hamlin, T., ed. (1952) *Forms and Functions of Twentieth-Century Architecture. Volumes III & IV*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Jacobs, J. (1992) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Vintage Books.

Krier, L. (2007) *Architecture: Choice or Fate?* London: Papadakis Publishers.



> "THE PLANS WESTFALL HAS IN MIND CAN SYMBOLIZE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE CAPABLE OF RECOGNIZING THEIR APPROPRIATENESS, WHICH BASICALLY MEANS... EVERYONE"

Millais, M. (2009) *Exploding the Myths of Modern Architecture*. London: Frances Lincoln.

Pevsner, N. (1976) *A History of Building Types*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Rudolph, P. (2008) *Writings on Architecture*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Quincy, Quatremère de (1999) *The True, The Fictive, and The Real: The Historical Dictionary of Architecture of Quatremere de Quincy*. Translated by Samir Younès. London: Papadakis.

Rossi, A. (1982) *The Architecture of the City*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Ruskin, J. (1990[1880]) *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. New York: Dover Publications.

Scruton, R. (1994) *The Classical Vernacular: Architectural Principles in an Age of Nihilism*. New York: St Martin's Press.

Steinhardt, N., ed. (2002) *Chinese Architecture*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Thadani, D. A. (2010) *The Language of Towns and Cities: A Visual Dictionary*. New York: Rizzoli.

van Pelt, R. J. & C. W. Westfall (1991) *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Watkin, D. (2001) *Morality and Architecture Revisited*. London: John Murray.

Westfall, C. W. (unpublished) 'The formal leg', chapter 20 of *The Architecture of American Liberty*.

Wolfe, T. (2009[1981]) *From Bauhaus to Our House*. New York: Picador.

Wittkower, R. (1998[1949]) *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*. London: Academy Editions.



## ENDNOTES

1. At least occasionally, I will allow myself to deviate from Westfall's terminology and metaphysics. For example, I will not always heed his fine distinction between 'functions' and 'purposes', and I will remain neutral on the ontological status of types.
2. Henceforth, all references will be to this book (van Pelt & Westfall 1991) unless indicated otherwise.
3. The term 'building type' is used ambiguously in the literature, as Quatremère de Quincy's historical dictionary (de Quincy 1999) already makes clear. Although de Quincy did not make the different senses

much clearer (pace Rossi 1982, p. 40, who claims that de Quincy "gave a masterly definition of type"), it seems possible to distinguish at least the following two senses in the current literature. On the one hand (see, for example, Hamlin 1952 and Pevsner 1976), 'building type' is used to denote the functional kind to which a building belongs: factory, monument, train station, church, hotel, town hall, concert hall, school, prison, museum, shop, and so on. On the other hand (see, for example, Davis 2006 and Krier 2007), 'building type' is used to denote the structural kind to which a building belongs, as determined by its plan and/or section: centralized versus linear, Greek-Cross versus Latin-Cross, single-story versus multi-story, row versus detached, with or without courtyard or loggia, and so on. Westfall seems to use the term in the second sense, and so will I. Of course, it is possible two combine the two senses, for example, when one speaks of the dumbbell tenement or the Danish row house as a type.



4. More recently, Westfall writes that "[t]he presence of the building idea type within the diagram and then the plan allows the building to signify, or better, to express, the activity it serves and therefore to connect it to the purpose that the institution or arrangements serves within the civil, religious, or cultural order" (unpublished, p. 12; my italics). This suggests that building types symbolize certain purposes by symbolizing ("expressing") activities serving those purposes.
5. In personal communication, Westfall pointed to a minor inaccuracy in the diagrams included in van Pelt & Westfall 1991 (p. 160). The diagrams in this paper should better match his intentions.
6. According to Westfall (personal communication), these specifications "enter with the conventional configuration that the [plan] diagrams have taken within a time and a place and with attention to the actual functions that serve the purposes".
7. By 'recognizable' is meant 'recognizable in their instances'. In other words, it must be possible to sort particular buildings according to the types. For example, Bramante's Tempietto in Rome can be classified as an instance of the tholos type, which means that the type is recognizable.
8. Westfall does not ignore the vertical dimension. However, in his view, differences along that dimension (e.g., elevation) do not help to differentiate types of building, but merely regional versions of types (see, for example, pp. 162-7). Westfall does not ascribe natural symbolism to such versions, in part because he seems to equate 'natural' and 'universal'. As will become clear, this is one respect in my reconstruction may differ from the original view.
9. "Signs point to particular meanings such as functions and the relative

importance of similar things, while symbols embody the larger purposes that enliven the aspiration to live the good life of justice and nobility" (p. 156).

10. For an analysis of architectural harmony, see De Clercq 2011. However, harmony can be understood here in a wider sense, including environmental friendliness.
11. Building cultures are usefully analyzed in Davis 2006, where the term 'building culture' refers to "the coordinated system of knowledge, rules, procedures, and habits that surrounds the building process in a given place and time" (Davis 2006, p. 5). Members of the culture include contractors, clients, architects, building users, bankers, and so on.
12. Brolin 1976 provides several examples illustrating how the acceptability of a floor plan may depend on social customs and cultural values (e.g., pp. 42-3, 66-7, 99).
13. References are in the bibliography.
14. Here 'building type' is used in the structural or structural-cum-functional sense. See footnote 3.
15. Ackerman acknowledges the tension by concluding that the villa "poses a cultural paradox" (p. 34).
16. The connection between architectural types and local character is stressed in Davis 2006 (several places) and in Thadani 2010 (p. 694).

## RAFAEL DE CLERCQ RESPONDS

**QUESTION:** *If we must admit to some cultural variation for the view of natural kinds to hold plausibility, does then that recognition require us to accept that culture itself is a natural kind to preserve the argument? In other words, if, as many think, culture is significantly dependent on conventions to function at a high level, then haven't conventions crept in through the back door?*

ANSWER*:* The argument in the article does not imply that building types are natural kinds; only that they are non-conventional symbols. So let me rephrase the question as follows: if building plans symbolize by virtue of their appropriateness, and if their appropriateness depends at least in part on culturally variable elements such as customs, then how can it be claimed that building plans are non-conventional symbols? My short answer is that, although the appropriateness of building plans depends on the presence of conventions, it is not itself a conventional property. Rather, it is a causal property (cf. "one might say that a type of plan is appropriate for an activity

if and only if … using the type for that purpose helps to create a successful building, where 'helps to create' can be understood as designating a causal relation"). Perhaps the following example can help to understand how a property can depend on conventions without being itself conventional. In Western societies, handshaking is among the conventions for greeting. As a result, refusing to shake hands may cause someone to feel offended. When this happens, the relation between the refusal and the feeling is causal, but it is also dependent on the existence of a particular convention for greeting.

Q: *What does an analysis of architecture as captured by symbolism or type do or speak to, within the philosophical or architecture discourse? For example, the Westfall concept you argue for could be seen as a potential support for the traditionalists—Leon Krier, Prince Charles, and their fellows—in their struggles with modernists. Do you agree and is this how these ideas apply?*

A: I am inclined to think that the main argument in the text—plans symbolize activities by virtue of being appropriate for these activities—is neutral between modernism and traditionalism. Nonetheless, it is a fact that traditionalists tend to be more concerned with building types, as can be gleaned from my references. Moreover, there is another argument in the text that may provide some support for traditionalism, namely, where it is said that "[w]hen a building plan comes to stand for a certain activity, it becomes all the more appropriate to use it for the accommodation of that activity". For various reasons, local building traditions tend to contain types with considerable symbolic significance, and this is a reason for drawing on them if the quoted sentence is true.

Q: *Kant's distinction between free and dependent beauty bears a relationship to what you discuss here. For Kant, the beauty of architecture was decisively dependent on its functioning as intended. Yet ultimately he opted for the idea that it wasn't function per se, but instead a concept of functioning that determined the harmonious play of mental faculties that created an aesthetic experience of architecture. This idea has led*

*Richard Hill, for example, in his* Designs and their Consequences, *to argue that "We do not need actually to use a building in order to respond aesthetically to it: it will be enough that we see those aesthetic ideas that are incorporated into its design." Could you respond to this more indirect, or perhaps once-removed sense of utility as an alternative?*

A: I certainly agree that we do not need to use a building in order to experience it aesthetically. But the question probably is how, or to what extent, a building's aesthetic or architectural value is determined by its symbolizing a certain activity or purpose. It is difficult to answer this question in a general way. For example, in some cases, symbolizing a certain activity may be a function of the building, in other cases, it may not be. Similarly, in some cases, the symbolized activity may be one that the building was designed to accommodate; in other cases, it may be one that the building ended up accommodating; and there are still other possibilities. The notion of function enters here in different ways, and accordingly, there will be different answers to give for the different cases. In another paper ('Reflections on a Sofa Bed: Functional Beauty and Looking Fit', *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 47:2 (2013)), I argue that not all functions are equally important from an aesthetic point of view; for example, I argue that acquired functions are less important than original functions. If this claim is correct, then it is has implications for how the above question is to be answered. But in any case, I think there is no doubt that symbolization of activities is aesthetically relevant. This much is already implied by the sentence quoted in response to the second question, namely, "[w]hen a building plan comes to stand for a certain activity, it becomes all the more appropriate to use it for the accommodation of that activity".

# IS BEAUTY STILL RELEVANT? IS ART? IS ARCHITECTURE?

NATHANIEL COLEMAN

## THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL

Although notions of the good and the beautiful might seem impossible to discuss in our non-foundational age, the continuing relevance of beauty can sit comfortably alongside post-foundationalist, post-metaphysical, and more generally post-modernist thought, no matter how much a tendency for slipping back into a structuralist mind-set may be evidenced. The relevance of beauty and the good are in fact paradoxically intensified when thought beyond metaphysics, not least when the practical or pragmatic value of both categories is considered. The work the beautiful and the good can accomplish in our attempts to reimagine professions and their products remains vital. For example, all efforts to wrench architects and architecture out of their moribund state might well depend on an understanding of both categories for any chance at success.[1]

The problematic of what the 'good architect' is, or might be, in the present epoch arises out of disciplinary doubt and reflection on poor results. Any discussion of the figure of the architect must inevitably also include a consideration of what 'good architecture' is, or might be. Nevertheless, current discourses on both tend to be strangely dissociative, as if architecture could be autonomous, or that novelty or a formalist view of architectural aesthetics is enough to preclude discussion of architecture's social dimension or the social obligations of architects—beyond the limiting perspectives of the marketplace.[2] Ideas of the 'good' in terms of architectural practice and its

results bedevil our capacity to judge as we waiver between ideas of radical subjectivity and absolute ideals. However, when the ethical dimension of both the good and the beautiful are recollected, it becomes possible to imagine them as bound to the fortunes of propriety, to appropriateness. Doing so is even possible today, albeit as situational, rather than absolute.

The problem of the good and the beautiful in architecture today reveals something of its intractability and thus also suggests a pathway to its solution. In an effort to rescue aesthetics from a street level conception, my interest here is the problem of beauty, more so than the problematic of thinking of aesthetics in terms of questions of beauty as 'mere beauty.' Such propositions position beauty as if it were simply a matter of 'the look of a particular object,' or were interchangeable with impulsive 'liking'; as though ideas of beauty could have no reach beyond formalist aesthetics, sensualist proclivities, or radical subjectivity.

Yet, despite its compartmentalization in recent times, the ethical dimension of beauty has persisted at least from the Greek philosopher Socrates (died 399 BC), via Plato (died 347 BC), to the Renaissance architect and theorist Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), and onward from there to nineteenth century social critics John Ruskin (1819-1900) and William Morris (1834-1896), and arguably beyond them to architects Le Corbusier (1887-1965) and Aldo van Eyck (1918-1999) as well. Each was as preoccupied with the aesthetical (as a matter of beauty) as much as the ethical (as also a matter of beauty). But this only works if we think of beauty as a sense of wholeness or at least the striving toward it, as Socrates did, summarized by Alberti as 'that to which nothing may be added nor taken away but for the worse' . Perhaps surprisingly, this definition of beauty turns on an ideal of comprehensiveness that can also accommodate the parts out of which it is made. It could continue to help us to judge works of architecture, whether radical or conservative, postmodern or deconstructive, etc. Indeed, even in an epoch in which no syntonic universal ideal of beauty prevails (in which all master narratives are subject to question), the superlative aim of completeness persists as a guide to practice and as a way to judge its results alike. Only in this way could Wittgenstein's claim that 'ethics and aesthetics are one and the same' be credible.[3]

In order to work through the problem of beauty, to rescue it from claims of its apparent meagreness, cases for tradition and hermeneutics are made. On the one hand, the thinking of Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy[4] is a proponent of tradition and inheritor of the lineage from Plato to Morris. On the other, Gianni Vattimo,[5] is as much intrigued

ONE KIND OF ART AND SHOCK: DANIEL LIBESKIND, TORONTO CRYSTAL

by a hermeneutics of tradition as by generalized communication and a weakening of the strong thought of western metaphysics, with its attendant inescapable propensity for violence. Vattimo and Coomaraswamy share a revaluation, or rethinking, of art that rescues beauty from being 'merely,' and as such, suggests how architects might begin to reclaim the richness of their task, albeit in a dispersed way, to act on behalf of the beautiful and ethics simultaneously, and in so doing, rescue the pervasive claims of architects to be acting on behalf of the people from being little more than empty words forming banal slogans primarily conjured up to justify simply doing business.

## ART AND SHOCK: VATTIMO

In a passage that begins to confound the conventional divide between the ethical and aesthetical, Vattimo charts a pathway to enhanced encounters with art (including architecture) that do not simply move beyond the aesthetic but which are suggestive of much fuller experiences, precisely because the 'theoretical, moral, and emotional,' —the ethical—is acknowledged:

> *True, on the one hand, enjoying the work always implies or in some sense even comes to a head with an act of aesthetic contemplation, in which the work imposes itself by virtue of its formal perfection, without further referring to anything that might disturb the satisfaction or stillness connected with such a state.*

Up to this point, Vattimo outlines a fairly conventional depiction of the nature of aesthetic experience. However, as the paragraph progresses he turns from an exclusively aesthetic understanding toward an ethical one as well:

> *On the other hand, it is equally true that the encounter with a great art work always represents not only an 'aesthetic' but also a theoretical, moral, and emotional experience, which engages the person at all levels and leads us to speak of art's truth, of its cosmic nature, and of its ontological meaning.*

The value of the recognition outlined above lies in liberating art from a 'formalist view of beauty,' that limits understandings of it to an ideal of beauty entrapped within the 'aesthetic sphere' and thus as removed from the real, or the potential of having any significant impact on it:

> *Hence, in concrete experience the work resists being confined within the limits of the formalist view of beauty, it moves out of the 'aesthetic sphere' in which it is enclosed and holds its truth appeal, in the broadest and fullest meaning of the word.*[6]

Art's 'truth appeal' resides in its opening up of vistas onto new worlds. Or as Vattimo puts it, "the work [of art] opens a new "epoch" of being as an absolutely originary event, which cannot be reduced to what it already was, and it grounds a new order of relationships within beings, a true and actually new world."[7] The newness of this world, that art founds, captivates experiencing subjects of it by shocking them. Accordingly, for Vattimo the term that defines 'the encounter between the reader and the work ... is "Stoss," shock or quake: the artwork suspends in the reader all natural relationships, making strange everything that until that moment

ANOTHER KIND OF ART AND SHOCK: CALATRAVA'S QUADRACCI PAVILION

had appeared obvious and familiar.'[8] It is worth noting that the 'shock' that occurs in encounters with the previously unknown that art opens up, does not necessarily have anything to do with so-called 'shock art,' which shocks in its way by referring to 'natural relationships,' rather than suspending them, and by intensifying the 'obvious and familiar,' rather than making either strange. However, it is Vattimo's description of intense encounters with art as a 'shock' that is of the greatest interest.

> "THE WORK [OF ART] OPENS A NEW "EPOCH" OF BEING AS AN ABSOLUTELY ORIGINARY EVENT, WHICH CANNOT BE REDUCED TO WHAT IT ALREADY WAS, AND IT GROUNDS A NEW ORDER OF RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN BEINGS, A TRUE AND ACTUALLY NEW WORLD.—VATTIMO"

## ART AND SHOCK: COOMARASWAMY

In his own attempts to challenge an aesthetic view of art Coomaraswamy also found it necessary to refer to 'shock' to describe an alternative. According to him, 'For the most part, our 'aesthetic' approach stands between us and the content of the work of art, of which only the surface concerns us.'[9] For Coomaraswamy, the surface, apparent beauty, invites attention, but the real experiential payoff (as much emotional as intellectual) resides in getting close to the ideas that motivate the object and which it makes visible to the senses, which in turn moves, or shocks, us during our encounters with works of art. As Coomaraswamy argues, 'it is not only in connection with natural objects (such

as the dew-drop) or events (such as death) but also in connection with works of art, and in fact whenever or wherever perception [. . .] leads to a serious experience, that we are really shaken.'[10] Coomaraswamy uses the Pali word sa*ṁ*vega 'to denote the shock or wonder that may be felt when the perception of a work of art becomes a serious experience,' which, of course, is quite similar to Vattimo's description of such encounters.[11]



It is perhaps quite difficult for us to experience works of art in the way either Vattimo or Coomaraswamy describe encounters with it. As Kuspit suggests, the commodification of art, and the overabundant stimuli available to us through electronic and mechanical production and reproduction of art works, has made it all but impossible for us to gain access to the *truth of art*, or the *shocking nature* of this.[12] Even so, most of us have had encounters with works of art that have left us moved, even shaken, and these tend to be the most memorable, because the profoundest. If even one of these experiences can be recollected, Coomaraswamy's conviction that "*Saṁvega* [shock, wonder], then, refers to the experience that may be felt in the presence of a work of art, when we are struck by it, 'as a horse might be struck by a whip' will have resonance for us."[13] More so, such recollection might begin to suggest what the aim of art, its vocation ought to be (and for architecture as well): to make the world strange so that we might see it anew, in all its depth and seriousness, such that we might believe with Coomaraswamy that, "In the deepest experience that can be induced by a work of art (or other reminder) our very being is shaken (*saṁvijta*) to its roots."[14]

## WHAT ABOUT ARCHITECTURE?

The conceit of philosophers is that architecture is, of course, an art, more so one of the fine arts, even though in practice today it would be hard to describe much of what is built in the name of architecture as having convincingly been conceived or constructed under the sign of the fine arts – to say nothing of being serious in the ways described by Vattimo and Coomaraswamy above. Rather than tangle with this issue here, I would like to consider a conception of architecture advanced by Vattimo that could suggests how it might escape from its entrapment within the logic of capitalism (with its habit for destroying communities):

> *[W]hat is left to legitimize our projects? Precisely those conditions of belonging ... which are disclosed as we walk around the neighbourhood and notice that there, there used to be an old store, that here, there are traces, ruins, histories.*[15]
>
> *[A]ll that is left is to understand legitimation as a form of the creation of*

SAMVIJTA AT KAHN'S KIMBELL MUSEUM

*horizons of validity through dialogue, a dialogue both with the tradition to which we belong and others.*[16]

*[E]dification has two principal meanings – to build and to be morally uplifiting. Both are quite closely tied in today's rather vertiginous coming and going between architecture and philosophy... . That is, edification must be ethical, entailing communication of value-choice. In the present situation of thought on the one hand and architectonic experience on the other ... the only possibility of edifying in the sense of building is to edify in the sense of 'rendering ethical,' that is, to encourage an ethical life: to work with the recollection of the past, with the expectations of meaning for the future, since there can no longer be absolute rational deductions. There follows then edification as a fostering of emotions, of ethical presentability, which can probably serve as the basis for an architecture determined not by the whole but by the parts.*[17]

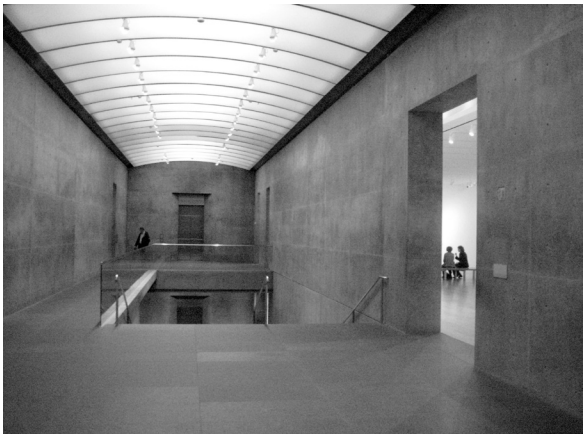
The idea of architecture developed by Vattimo above is both more humble and more radical than anything coming from within the discipline of architecture, across the whole spectrum, from the most commercial practices, to those that are ostensibly avant-garde, to the apparently socially engaged as well. It is Vattimo's conception of tradition—as a common ground of belonging, dialogue, and invention—that returns thinking about architecture to ethics, which holds out the promise of a renewed relevance for architecture and beauty alike. One, however, is left wondering why architecture in these days seems all but incapable of thinking such thoughts on its own, suggesting also that at its best, philosophy could help it to do so.

## THE DISEMBODIMENT OF BEAUTY

The relevance of beauty for architecture is far from spent. As 'a vision that has been a source of inspiration to all Western philosophy', perhaps Plato's definition of beauty, as developed in the *Symposium*, remains at the essence of understanding art and life.[18] But if in the present aesthetic preoccupations can seem to limit *the basic appeal of art (or architecture) to the eye (as it does music to the ear),* it is here that Plato, and his commentator, Neo-Platonist philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) following him, cease to provide a way for recuperating the relevance of beauty in the present. Obviously, sight and hearing are less physically engaged than taste, smell, or touch, making the first two the obvious preference of idealists. By privileging the senses of sight and hearing to those of taste, smell, and touch Plato and Ficino severely limit the possibilities of full-bodied experience. In this regard, art critic Adrian Stokes (1902-1972) reminds us that all the senses are integral to an appreciation of both life and art. The persisting problem of Plato for art and architecture is the persistence of the idea that the highest ideal of beauty is an appreciation of it divorced from the sensuous—the body —and taken up by ideas and the mind alone. As one commentator summarizes:

> *From Plato comes the view of the realm of ideas set off from the world of the phenomenal which is but an imperfect copy of the archetype. This distinction corresponds to that between the material and the immaterial. In the Platonic tradition the note is persistent that the body is a clog.*[19]

Arguably, Plato's reification of ideas transforms them into beauties lacking in objects. If the aim of creativity is beauty, understood – following Plato – as associated with the Good, it is difficult to imagine how any notion of beauty can dispense with the body as its origin. If beauty



THE EXPERIENCE OF THE 'LESSER' SENSES: TACTILE EXPERIENCE AT ANDO'S FT. WORTH MODERN

originates with notions of the body, how could a philosophy of beauty that exiles the body actually be about beauty (or perhaps even about knowledge)? If self understanding and understanding of the world begin with the body, evolving into mental contents that are transformable into symbols that make art possible, then arguably, theories of beauty that abolish the body (and with it the world of objects), are of little use to the invention and elaboration of art. Articulating just this dilemma in a critique of Greek philosophy, philosopher Ortega Y. Gasset (1883-1955) elaborates on the relation between ideas and things, the mind and the body, and thoughts and actions:

> *When the Greeks discovered that man thought, that there existed in the universe that strange reality known as thought (until then man had not thought, or, like the* bourgeois gentilhomme*, had done so without knowing it), they felt such an enthusiasm for ideas that they conferred upon intelligence, upon the* logos*, the supreme rank in the universe. Compared with it, everything else seemed to them ancillary and contemptible. And as we tend to project into God whatever appears to us to be the best, the Greeks with Aristotle, reached the point of maintaining that God had no other occupation but to think. And not even*

"BY PRIVILEGING THE SENSES OF SIGHT AND HEARING TO THOSE OF TASTE, SMELL, AND TOUCH PLATO AND FICINO SEVERELY LIMIT THE POSSIBILITIES OF FULL-BODIED EXPERIENCE"

*to think about things- that seemed to them, as it were, a debasement of the intellectual process ... .*

*This doctrine has been given the name 'intellectualism'; it is idolatry of the intelligence which isolates thought from its setting, from its function in the general economy of human life. As if man thinks because he thinks, and not because, whether he will or not, he has to think in order to maintain himself among things* ... . We do not live in order to think ... *we think in order to* succeed in subsisting ... *[*and*]* surviving.[20]

Ficino's famous commentary on Plato helps to situate Gasset's criticism of 'intellectualism'.[21] For Ficino, the real is unreal, which encouraged his attempt to prove that the appreciation of beauty is 'highest' when incorporeal, even if language, as reality, makes the dis-realization of objects all but impossible: things remain as bodies, material, and existent. The indefeasible physicality of thought and beauty renders Ficino's preference for dis-realization peculiar:

*The eyes see nothing but the light of the sun, for the shapes and colors of bodies are never seen unless illuminated with light, nor do they come to the eyes with their own matter itself ... in this light, since it is separate from matter, the order is completely independent of body.[22]*

Above all else, the preceding negates bodily experience. It is a peculiar intellectual exercise to imagine that since light is reflected off objects, we do not actually perceive them, as they apparently do not actually exist, except as the light the eye perceives. The problem here is that even in darkness, a body, an object, even beauty, can be perceived. As a Platonist, Ficino is obligated to disregard the senses of taste, smell, and touch. In this regard, philosopher Leon Ebreo (ca. 1465- ca. 1521) described taste, smell, and touch as *"the three material senses"*; on the other hand, he called sight and hearing *"the spiritual senses"*.[23] Echoing Plato and Ebreo, Ficino writes;

*Love is the desire for enjoying beauty, Love is always limited to the [the pleasures of] the mind, the eyes, and, the ears. What need is there of the senses of smell, taste, and touch? Odors, flavor, heat, cold, softness, hardness, and the like qualities are the objects of these senses. None of these is human beauty, Since these qualities are simple, and human beauty of the body requires a harmony of various parts. Love regards as its end the enjoyment of beauty; beauty pertains only to the mind, sight, and hearing. Love, therefore, is limited to these three, but desire which rises from the other senses is called, not love, but madness.[24]*

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE BODY: PETER ZUMTHOR'S VALS BATHS

## THE RETURN TO EMBODIMENT

Ficino's idealism (as introduced in the preceding section) turns on an impoverishment of experience that if operative would deprive us of our appreciation of flowers, food, and love-making – to say nothing of buildings and dancing – as expressions of beauty and as pathways toward different and deeper understandings of the world, ourselves, and others. Further, as much as beauty may derive from a divine sense of goodness, it also comes from an appreciation of the natural world, of landscape, and the body. A deep appreciation of the beauty of each of these things requires the senses of 'odors, flavor's, heat, cold, softness, and like qualities', not to mention 'sight and hearing.' Any conception of the experience of beauty, or of anything else that rejects the fullness of the senses inevitably permits only a partial experience of the world. In contradistinction, Stokes takes up an argument for the body in his work on Michelangelo (as elsewhere in his writing):

> *It is likely that images of the body belong to the aesthetic relationship with every object; emotive conceptions of physique are ancient in us; awareness of our own identity has always been upon the flesh; the outer world of objects was conceived in the first place as an extension of our bodies. This early view,*

*of course, bears no resemblance to an adult impression. But art tends to return some of the way back to the sources of feeling and perception.*[25]

Stokes consistently argues for the corporeality of art and for an art of intensity embodying total outward expression. Well-versed in most aspects of his subject, Stokes also turned his attention to what he believed were some of the questionable aspects of Platonism, Renaissance theory, and Neo-Platonism:





*Stress upon mathematics, both in the case of Alberti; and Piero, by itself explains nothing of their art. Similarly Platonism, Neo-Platonism, was but a necessary garment, the cover of nameless joy in things; paradoxically, since the philosophy of Plato is far from the senses, allowing no more value to the sensible world than to the individual, that other God of Renaissance man.*[26]

Despite Stokes' observations, it might be reasonable to conclude that neither philosophies of beauty nor objects of beauty any longer occupy the center of considerations of art or culture. This modern condition arguably begins with the advent of science as we know it and with the secularization of society. In the West, this new condition parallels the loosening of the Church's temporal powers and the rise of industrialization, and began to take definitive shape during the late Seventeenth century.

The separation of mind and body that persists throughout philosophies of beauty, originates the crisis of meaning in art and architecture that continues to persist. Plato's model is of man ascending from earthly conceptions to heavenly ones. At a certain moment of elevation the process requires transcendence in the form of disengagement of the mind from the body, of ideas from reality, with ideas ultimately taking precedence over objects and the experience of them. Gasset considers the modern manifestation of this tension between ideas and objects as follows:

*Under the name Reason, then of Enlightenment, and finally of culture, the most indiscreet deification of the intelligence were effected. Among the majority of the thinkers of the period ... culture [and] thought ... came to fill the vacant office of a God who had been put to flight.*[27]

The desire to liberate the mind from the body, in order to free ideas, was acceptable, if filled with foreboding, so long as all-knowing continued to be tied a-priori to the body. These ties were both effected and supported by a sense of God, that concept above man, and deriving from us, which once promised to keep the human world from descending into chaos. Without

THE BODY SURROGATE: SENSUAL FORM AT NORMAN FOSTER'S SAGE GATESHEAD

such a conception we are on our own. The more the emergence of the *Modern World* is explored, the more the loss of *God* has left moderns flailing about for something to hold on to, and for something to bind us to the earth. God, once perceived as the center of *all* and the origin of Love, and therefore of beauty, creativity and human beings, was reason enough for virtuousness. Without the comforting anchors of God and religion—which gave purpose to art and architecture over and above what the state could provide—enlightened moderns are left wondering how we could have ever lived with God, and simultaneously how it could be possible to live without Him (Her), despite the many horrors justified in the name of religion.

With the advent of *reason* and the victory of *ideas*, humans have become ever more estranged from those parts of thought that were once bound to love, beauty, goodness, and personal conceptions of God; ties that were, often enough, the source and justification for humane character. Reification of ideas, and the deification of them that followed, greatly concerned Gasset, who intuited the extreme danger of such operations, in particular leading to the dehumanization of art: "The idea instead of functioning as the means to think an object with, is

> "THE DESIRE TO LIBERATE THE MIND FROM THE BODY, IN ORDER TO FREE IDEAS, WAS ACCEPTABLE, IF FILLED WITH FOREBODING, SO LONG AS ALL-KNOWING CONTINUED TO BE TIED A-PRIORI TO THE BODY"

itself made the object and the aim of thinking."[28]

## CONCLUSION

Philosophers of beauty have often seen beauty as a means to an end – the conduit from earthly to divine love. For most, moving from the corporeal to the incorporeal must follow one route: from the feet to the head. So long as ideas about ideal beauty proceeded along this route, *lesser* sensual forms deriving from the body had a place. The heady—at times earthy—sensuality of the body, and its manifold references could still find a place in thoughts about art and beauty, without apparently contradicting ancient philosophy.



However, the dominance of absolute reason, with its corollaries of quantification and abstraction has loosened connections between *real* and idealized beauty. Paradoxically, as thinking and making drift skyward to the realm of pure *forms* (pure ideas) desire has become dissociated from attainable objects (including from the body): a disconnection intensified by the increasing dominance of screen time in everyday life, which inevitably atrophies the senses other than seeing and hearing. Mind dissociated from body, ideas from reality, and the spirit from the everyday, encourages scientistic thought processes disconnected from the sensuous reality of persons, and things. Ultimately, recuperating the relevance of beauty for inventing art and architecture, no matter how irrelevant they may appear, turns on rekindled awareness, "that memory helped reality to retain the things received by the five senses."[29]

Although 'the five senses and memory' have largely been outsourced to virtuality and digital data, Voltaire's pronouncement in *Memory's Adventure* is even more relevant today than when first published in 1775. Mnemosyne's admonishment in the story is especially apropos: "Imbeciles I forgive you; but this time remember that without the senses there is no memory, and without memory there is no mind."[30] The dominion of thought processes masquerading as scientific, as if objective, measurable, and uncontaminated by emotion calls out for a rejoinder; recollecting beauty and its mirror in the body would be a good place to start.

## ENDNOTES

1. A condition adeptly theorized by Manfredo Tafuri (1935-1994), amongst others.
2. Autonomy is a fallacy I will leave aside for the moment.
3. Wittgenstein, L. [1921] *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* Abdingdon: Routledge, 2001. §6.421, p. 86.
4. Coomaraswamy was born 1877, Columbo, Ceylon – died 1946, Needham,

Massachusetts

5. Vattimo was born 1936, Palermo, Italy
6. Gianni Vattimo, *Art's Claim to Truth* (New York: Columbia, 2008), p. 158.
7. Ibid., p. 152.
8. Ibid.
9. A. K. Commaraswamy, '*Saṁvega*, "Aesthetic Shock,"' *Harvard Journal of Aesthetic Studies,* Vol. 7, No. 3 (1943), n. 2, p. 174.
10. Ibid., p. 176.
11. Ibid., p. 174.
12. Donald Kuspit, 'Secrets of Success: Paradoxes and Problems of the Reproduction and Commodification of Art in the Age of the Capitalist Spectacle,' Available online at: *http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/kuspit/art-and-capitalist-spectacle2-8-11.asp* (Accessed 09 May 2012).
13. A. K. Commaraswamy, '*Saṁvega*, "Aesthetic Shock,"' *Harvard Journal of Aesthetic Studies,* Vol. 7, No. 3 (1943), p. 178.
14. Ibid.
15. Gianni Vattimo, 'Project and Legitimization I,' *Lotus International* 48/49 (1986), p. 121-122.
16. Ibid., p. 124.
17. Ibid., p. 125.
18. Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns, *Philosophies of Art and Beauty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 68.
19. Roland H. Bainton, *Early Christianity* (New york, Toronto and London: Van Nostrand, 1960), pp. 12-13.
20. Ortega Y Gasset, 'The Self and the other' [1952], in *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Essays on Art, Culture, and Literature* (Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 194, 195, 196.
21. Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato's Symposium (de Amore), 1475, in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty,* eds. A. Hofstadter and R. Kuhns (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 204-238.
22. Marsilio Ficino, *de Amore,* in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty,* p. 222.
23. Joseph Rykwert, *The First Moderns: Architects of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, [1983] 1991), p. 13.
24. Ficino, *de Amore*, in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty,* pp. 207-208.
25. Adrian Stokes, *Michelangelo* [1958], in *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes, Vol. III* (Great Britain: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 33.
26. Adrian Stokes, *Art and Science* [1949], in *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes, Vol. II* (Great Britain: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 194.
27. Gasset, 'The Self and the other', p. 197.
28. Gasset, 'The Dehumanization of Art' [1925], in *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Essays on Art, Culture, and Literature* (Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 18.
29. Voltaire, *Memory's Adventure* [1775], in *Candide, Zadig, and Selected Stories,* Trans. Donald A. Frame (New york and Toronto: Signet Classic: New American Library, 1961), pp.325-326.
30. Ibid., p. 328.

# A NEW INTERPRETATIVE TAXONOMY FOR WORKS OF ARCHITECTURE

RICK FOX

## I. RECENT INTERPRETIVE PRACTICE

A core aim of architectural interpretation is to elucidate, explain, make sense of, and help others understand the existing built-environment, proposed works of architecture, architectural theories, and other elements of architectural discourse. Indeed, there are numerous aspects of architectural works, theories and discourse about which we may render interpretations. The field of architectural interpretation broadly construed includes, *inter alia*, the literature of philosophical aesthetics, the writings of design professionals, architectural thinkers and educators, the views of architectural critics, and the voices of the general public.

In this essay, I aim to introduce readers to a new philosophically grounded approach I have developed for organizing interpretive positions within architectural discourse. The interpretive taxonomy I advocate relies on some philosophical insights from the American philosopher Michael Krausz. I will concentrate my efforts on presenting an overview of the taxonomy, and focus on its importance to the philosophy of architecture. To illustrate various elements of the framework, I mention particular works, and discuss specific views, but the focus here is not on a detailed examination of specific works, nor do I offer a robust rejection or endorsement of any particular view. Before I get into the framework's specifics, let me try to establish the breadth of the problem, by offering three examples where interpretive practice would benefit from a more rigorous understanding

of the space of interpretation.

Whether a new work of architecture ought to "fit in" with extant works is an enduring problem in architectural theory and practice. Frequently, architectural works are criticized on the grounds that they do not belong. Many famous, and now respected, works have been criticized for this supposed failure.



The contextualist argument relies on the claim that the existing context deserves our respect, and we ought to show deference to current norms and practices in our decision-making about how to, or even whether to, alter it. The argument, however, also makes a deeper supposition, namely, that the context is comprised of self-evident facts and meanings. Yet, understanding what is "already there" is often more than simply a straight-forward documentation of a few observable facts; it is a matter of active engagement and interpretative practice. So, the background views of the interpreter as to whether the context is "fixed" play a relevant role. The way we construe the boundaries of a given context, and determine which aspects of it are salient for our understanding is also a matter of interpretative practice. When we encounter a familiar work of architecture we do not feel compelled to interpret it; we simply take it for granted. An alien or anomalous work that does not comport with our current understanding challenges us, and we are inclined to try and make sense of it. Indeed, the views of the interpreter may be affected in the process. The anomalous thing may prompt some of us to recontextualize a few of our existing beliefs as we attempt to make sense of the world and the anomaly. Others prefer instead to reject the anomaly and adhere to their cherished certainties. Commonplace interpretive practices regarding context fail to account for its malleability, and the dialectic nature of interpretive practice.

The rebuilding efforts on New York's World Trade Center site following the events of 9/11 illustrate a second type of interpretive problem. Significant disagreement exists in answer to the question, What does 9/11 represent? Answers that have been offered include, but are not limited to: 1) the unprovoked attack marks the turning point from the Cold War to the "War on Terror;" 2) it is a pointless act perpetrated by psychopaths who simply want to kill vast numbers of innocent people as a demonstration of their cruelty; 3) Islamic fundamentalists seek to end Western imperialism by any means possible—no matter how violent; and, 4) the attack is a misguided hatred of global democracy and global freedom. For our purposes, the precise answer does not matter all that much, since it is not the real focus here. No matter what specific answers

VIEW OF NEW YORK'S WORLD TRADE CENTER

are offered, the question itself calls our attention to a broader philosophical concern, namely, is there a single right interpretation of these events or not? Furthermore, it is clear that the meaning of the underlying events, no matter how we construe them, significantly affect our interpretation of the architectural work that is supposed to denote, memorialize, exemplify, or express them. In these sorts of cases, our background knowledge, beliefs, and values play a significant role in the interpretive process. These background views often include beliefs about what role architecture ought to play, if any, in responding to important social, political, and historical events.

To further complicate attempts to interpret the meaning of and best response to 9/11, the

Byzantine array of stakeholders has been the source of a number of complicated political, economic, aesthetic, and interpretive disagreements over whose interests the work ought to advance, and whose stake ought to take precedence. When the results of the international design competition sponsored by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation were unveiled in Fall 2002, the popular response was unprecedented. Unlike most of the other entries, Daniel Libeskind's proposal resonated loudly with prominent architectural critics and the public. Ada Louise Huxtable emerged as an early advocate of Libeskind's proposal and remained an unwavering supporter of the priorities expressed in his design. Conversely, Herbert Muschamp, architecture critic for the New York Times, dismissed the rich symbolism employed in the design as jingoistic. John Silber, professor emeritus of philosophy and law, and former president of Boston University, scathingly criticized the proposal calling it "an exotic and enticing jumble of novelties" that expresses "hubris and a penchant for absurdity." [1] Still other observers felt strongly that the only correct response to the tragedy was to rebuild exactly as before. How could such divergent interpretations all be, in some sense, correct or at least admissible?

We take it for granted that all of these critics are interpreting the same work of architecture. This commonplace assumption, however, overlooks deeper philosophical questions about the nature of the thing they are interpreting. For instance, it is a commonplace argument nowadays that complex things (such as a work of architecture) license a plethora of interpretations, and our contemporary society is prepared to regard so many things as indeterminate anyhow. Additionally, it is commonly accepted that in a pluralist society diverse and divergent interpretations ought to be encouraged, and tolerance ought to be embraced. Many argue that non-judgmental acceptance of a plurality of viewpoints is the ideal we should strive for in a democratic society. But, as the controversies surrounding the various interpretations of the Freedom Tower design and the 9/11 Memorial illustrate, it seems counter-intuitive to think we are genuinely obligated to countenance every interpretation offered. Is there a non-arbitrary basis for admitting some interpretations while excluding others? If so, how would this impact interpretive practice?

The question of how to properly construe the relationship between the three-dimensional form of an architectural work and its meaning, a staple of debate within architectural discourse, illustrates a third type of interpretive problem. A celebrated debate in 1989 between Leon Krier and Peter Eisenman on the theme of "Reconstruction versus Deconstruction"[2]

forms a case in point. At the time, the stylistic skirmishes over historicism and the "next wave," of which this debate was a part, garnered a great deal of attention, and pre-occupied many of us in the architectural community. It came as no surprise at the time that, stylistically, Krier and Eisenman were far apart with Eisenman claiming that history had few relevant precedents for contemporary conditions while Krier argued that all the necessary precedents already existed prior to modern times. The enduring gulf between them is rooted in their divergent views about what a work of architecture is, how we understand it aesthetically, the role architectural discourse is supposed to play within culture, and how best to interpret what a work of architecture means. The underlying philosophical differences between Eisenman, the paradigmatic spokesperson for autonomy and Krier, the traditionalist, could hardly have been greater.



While the urgency of this particular debate seems to have waned, the deep, unresolved disagreement about what properly constitutes a work of architecture, and how we are to interpret or explain it remains worthy of our philosophical attention. In my view, both historicism and deconstructivism are examples of interpretive practices that rest on a few philosophical mistakes. Historicism is built on the premise that an object's determinacy secures only one right interpretation of it while deconstructivism, an example of critical pluralism, holds an object's indeterminacy licenses an open-ended plurality of interpretations. (The critical pluralist argues that: 1) there can be more than one good way to construe the initial object; 2) divergent interpretations are always admissible; 3) differing interpretive aims provide differing criteria as to what constitutes a valid interpretation; and, 4) disagreements among qualified interpreters can be reasonable yet they may not be reconcilable. What makes critical pluralism attractive, according to its advocates is the intuition that taken together several

judgments may be inconsistent, yet each judgment could be individually true. Since the identity of the thing being interpreted is not stable, it is not susceptible to fixed interpretation. Thus, critical pluralism gives us a polite way to have our strenuous disagreements, and robust truth at the same time.) These sorts of claims: that what a work of architecture *is* necessarily entail how many interpretations of it we ought to hold admissible, while widely accepted, are mistaken; the entailment is not necessary.



As I think these examples illustrate, what we have in each situation, ultimately, is a stand-off. We need a better way to talk about interpretive practices within our discipline to transcend their intractability. Architectural practitioners, theorists, critics, educators, and philosophers of architecture need new interpretive tools.

## II. A KRAUSZIAN-STYLE TAXONOMY

In this enterprise of developing new tools we need a philosophically grounded approach to architectural interpretation that: 1) promotes interpretive tolerance, whereby architecture may be interpreted in a number of ways, without fostering unrestricted license; 2) serves as a superior framework to others prevalent in contemporary architectural interpretation, notably critical pluralism; and, 3) is not based on the false assumption that an object's ontology necessarily entails the number of interpretations we find admissible.

One candidate for introducing a new basis for architectural interpretation can be found in the two-tiered framework advocated by Michael Krausz. This framework differentiates the interpretation from the thing being interpreted, called the object of interpretation. I prefer the term interpretandum, because this makes clear that what is being interpreted could be a real object, an abstract object, a sense perceptible phenomenon, a theory, or a social practice, but is not necessarily a material thing. One of Krausz's major contributions to the philosophy of interpretation is his insight about the logical non-entailment between our ontological theory of the interpretandum and the number of interpretations we hold as admissible of it. This thesis is called the detachability thesis. I offer the following formulation:

> *D: Our ideal interpretive stance with respect to the number of admissible interpretations of a given common object is logically detachable from specific ontological theories.*

It is this mechanism that de-couples ontological theories from interpretive ideals. Each enterprise is logically independent of the other;

neither logically entails the other. Thus, it is this thesis about the logical non-entailment between specific ontological theories of interpretanda and the number of interpretations we hold about them that sets up the overall framework of possible interpretive positions that I advocate. Next, I offer overviews of two ontologies useful for architectural interpretation, followed by a discussion of the two interpretive ideals that comprise this taxonomy.

### II.I: REALISM/CONSTRUCTIVISM

One difficulty with the literature of architectural theory and professional practice is that typically design professionals, architectural educators, and theorists do not have philosophically articulated ontological views. This makes it difficult to discern the full extent of their interpretive position. Although I discuss various ontological views about what an architectural object is, for the purpose of articulating various interpretive positions, I do not endeavor to resolve in this essay whether there is a correct ontology for works of architecture, and if so, what it ought to be.

The gulf between realists and constructivists derives, at least in part, from the distinction between object-as-such and object-as-represented. The realist may not be able to say precisely how things are, but insists that there is a way that they in fact are. The realist holds that realism can be defended even if access to the way the world is cannot be (fully) obtained. Constructivists hold that this is a distinction without a difference, and that the object-as-such collapses into object-as-represented. Since the object-as-such does no interpretive work, then according to the constructivist, it ought to be dropped. For the constructivist, objects are never simply "given," and no fact of the matter exists that grounds either the interpretation or the thing being interpreted. So, it is in this way that all attempts to segregate objects-as-such from objects-

> "ONE OF KRAUSZ'S MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF INTERPRETATION IS HIS INSIGHT ABOUT THE LOGICAL NON-ENTAILMENT BETWEEN OUR ONTOLOGICAL THEORY OF THE INTERPRETANDUM AND THE NUMBER OF INTERPRETATIONS WE HOLD AS ADMISSIBLE OF IT. THIS THESIS IS CALLED THE DETACHABILITY THESIS"

as-represented fail according to the constructivist. Any interpretive framework that presupposes that interpretanda are constituted as matters of fact is already predisposed to realist ontology; frameworks denying this are predisposed to constructivism. Such presumptions would be detrimental to the larger project of showing how an object of interpretation is constituted within interpretive practices, and that the ontology of an interpretandum does not necessitate the number of interpretations we ought to find admissible.

For the aesthetic realist, aesthetic properties are reified; there are real properties in the work and these ought to ground our judgments about it. Aesthetic realism does not demand that for any given artwork only a single aesthetic description is admissible; more than one description may be admitted. The realist view of what constitutes a work of architecture is that a work is necessarily a "brick and mortar" building possessing aesthetic properties, and standing before us. The claim that the difference between a building and an architectural work ought to be grounded in the possession of aesthetic properties is well entrenched. When the British architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner famously remarked, "A bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture,"[3] he likely meant that aesthetic properties make the difference. The ontic locus of aesthetic quality is in the work. By implication, then, aesthetic judgments are seen as stating truths that occur in virtue of some mind-independent state of affairs. Realists hold that a substantial notion of truth is a valuable resource in ridding ourselves of interpretations we find inadmissible. Preference is a measure of how an interpretation comports with descriptive truth. Thus, under architectural realism elucidation aims at explicating actual or emergent properties in the work itself – it is an object-centered ontological enterprise.

The constructivist would find these claims unsupportable. According to the constructivist, a work of art is primarily a mental object; its physical presence is primarily a device for transmitting meaning from one mind to another. Advocates hold that aesthetic perception is theory laden and thus we ought to drop any talk in aesthetics of an un-interpreted world. The architectural constructivist holds that the design is the work of architecture, and a building is just a "brick and mortar" instantiation of that work. Under the constructivist's approach a work of architecture can be construed to exist in multiple media; a floor plan drawing, a perspective rendering, and a 3-D computer model could simultaneously constitute the same design, and hence the same work of architecture. In a recent interview, the writer and architect Iman Ansari poses a question to Eisenman that

probes the difference between the [architectural] object and the idea of the [architectural] object. Eisenman responds, "'Real architecture' only exists in drawings. The 'real building' exists outside the drawing. The difference here is that 'architecture' and 'building' are not the same."[4]



It is important to note that this distinction between 'architecture' and 'building' is possible even where no actual brick and mortar construction exists that can be pointed to as the finished work. Thus, under architectural constructivism elucidation characteristically aims at clarity of consciousness—at epistemic rather than ontological clarity. It is an interpretation-centered epistemic enterprise.

In Section 3, I will expand on these ontologies as a way of further illustrating the structure of this taxonomy. The next major component of the framework is comprised of the interpretive ideals of singularism and multiplism, to which we now turn.

### II.II: SINGULARISM & MULTIPLISM

Krausz distinguishes and explicates two interpretive ideals. One he calls singularism; the other he calls multiplism. Andreea Deciu Ritivoi, offers a helpful summary, "An ideal is a critical stance that identifies the range of admissible interpretations of a given object prior to the conduct of interpretive inquiry."[5] As Krausz uses the term in his interpretive philosophy "idealization" is best construed as something like the "desiderata of interpretive practice." Thus, an "ideal" refers to a value or belief about interpretive practice that is worthy of being optimized and promoted – it is a norm of practice. (In private conversation Krausz has stated that he does not intend "ideally" to be read in any Platonic way.)

> "SINGULARISM IS THE VIEW THAT THERE IS A ONE-TO-ONE RELATION BETWEEN THE THING BEING INTERPRETED AND AN INTERPRETATION"

Singularism is the view that there is a one-to-one relation between the thing being interpreted and an interpretation, and several admissible

interpretations are conjoinable into a single "unified" interpretation.[6] I offer the following formulation of the singularist thesis:

*S: ANY given object of interpretation necessarily answers to one and only one ideally admissible interpretation.*

The singularist holds that incompatible interpretations cannot be jointly defended, and incomplete knowledge about competing interpretations ought not act as a barrier to embracing the ideal of a single comprehensive interpretation. For the singularist, under ideal conditions there just is one and only one right interpretation.[7] Although the singularist advocates the pursuit of a single right interpretation it should be noted, however, that the singularist need not advocate infallibilism. The possibility exists, even for the singularist, that any given interpretation could be replaced with a better one. In this formulation the singularist understands the admissibility of a given interpretation in bivalent truth-functional terms.



For any given object, when distinct interpretations are present, the singularist would argue that the true ones are conjoinable into a single coherent interpretation. Logically, a conjunction is true just in case each of its conjuncts is true. So given a number of interpretations, the adherent of singularism first determines which are true and which false, and then proceeds to work out how the true ones are conjoinable. Contemporary architectural interpreters, particularly those committed to critical pluralism, are unlikely to hold a strict view of S. Yet, I hold that a thickened description approach, where a "unified" singular view of the work emerges, qualifies as singularism. Later, I will argue in more detail why I think Zaha Hadid holds this view.

Multiplism is the view that a one-many relation holds between the thing being interpreted and interpretations of it. I offer the following formulation of the multiplist thesis:

*M: SOME objects of interpretation MAY answer to more than one ideally admissible interpretation.*

This thesis claims that multiple non-convergent interpretations are ideally admissible and ought not be conjoined into a single "unified" interpretation. The multiplist is committed to the view that sometimes there just is no such singularity, and holds that more than one interpretation could legitimately be held at the same time. Though multiplism recognizes that while several interpretations may be possible, not all of them should be considered equally admissible; further it is not the case that all admissible interpretations are equally preferable. This allows the multiplist to embrace certain singularist cases, but not vice versa. The multiplist could acknowledge that there are cases where a one-to-one relation

between an interpretandum and an interpretation could occur without committing to the truth of S. In this formulation the multiplist understands admissibility in multivalent terms, in Krausz's words as, "reasonableness, appropriateness, aptness or the like."[8] For the multiplist, affirming one interpretation as admissible does not necessarily exclude others as inadmissible. Even though multiplism does not adopt a bivalent mode of determining admissibility, principled distinctions among competing interpretations remain possible. Thus not every would-be interpretation is admissible. So, the architectural multiplist is keen to point out that rational inquiry about works of architecture does not mandate a bivalent "true-false" assessment of an interpretation.



## III. INTERPRETIVE POSITIONS

With this understanding of ontological theories and interpretive ideals we are better equipped to understand the import of the four main interpretive positions that a Krauszian-style taxonomy affords. Two of these positions are orthodox; two are heterodox. The orthodox view is that constructivists promote a multiplicity of interpretations while realists promote a single right interpretation. In my view, it is precisely their individual entrenched commitments to their respective orthodox views that deeply mired Eisenman and Krier during their rancorous 1989 debate. I offer Leon Krier, the American philosopher Michael Mitias, and the British philosopher Roger Scruton as characterizing the real-singularist position, and those of Nelson Goodman and Peter Eisenman as characterizing the constructive-multiplist view. I would argue that in addition to being divided by their ontological commitments, these advocates embrace differing interpretive ideals that further divide them.

> "MULTIPLISM IS THE VIEW THAT A ONE-MANY RELATION HOLDS BETWEEN THE THING BEING INTERPRETED AND INTERPRETATIONS OF IT"

The detachability thesis, D, suggests that the heterodox interpretive positions of constructive-

singularism and realist-multiplism might be fruitful ones to hold. I offer two British architects, Zaha Hadid and Richard Rogers, both modernists, as examples of constructive-singularism and realist-multiplism, respectively. While both of them embrace the stylistic virtues of architectural modernism, and on the surface this would seem to unite them, their ontological commitments and their differing stance about how many interpretations are ideally admissible creates an interpretive gulf between them. Hadid's commitment to modernism amounts to singularism, insofar as she holds that the proper role of architecture is singularly fulfilled to the extent every project strives to be culture-altering and an opportunity to invade "new territories."[9] Rogers' considerably more conciliatory view that architecture ought to be capable of adapting to emerging social and technological circumstances, and be aesthetically resilient enough to endure alteration amounts to multiplism. While the views of Hadid and Rogers characterize the heterodox interpretive positions, their views may not be exhaustive of their respective positions. As with the orthodox positions, the views of these interpreters ought to be seen as instances of the positions they occupy within the taxonomy, and not fully constitutive of the entire position.

Under Mitias' realist-singular account, a work of architecture emerges, that is it comes into being, in the aesthetic experience of a building. Our experience of the building as the physical structure of an architectural work is the proper starting point for aesthetic inquiry. He rejects the claim that external factors such as background knowledge of cultural practices and knowledge of symbol systems are inherent to the work's features qua object. According to Mitias, in his essay, "Expression in Architecture," buildings possess and express their properties:

> *A building possesses its aesthetic properties. Those properties are not…added, or introduced, to the work from the outside, regardless of the nature of this external source. They originate from the building.*[10]

Yet these aesthetic properties are not ready made realities, rather they exist as potentialities in the work. Aesthetic perception is needed to discover properties in the work "not given to ordinary perception."[11] In this way aesthetic properties are emergent in the aesthetic experience of a work. He writes:

> *This means that a building becomes art, i.e. acquires its aesthetic identity as a work of art, only during an event of aesthetic perception, and outside this perception its status is similar to the status of ordinary objects.*[12]

In a subsequent essay, "The Aesthetic Experience of the Architectural Work," he clarifies his view that aesthetic qualities are not feelings

evoked in the observer when aesthetic attention is brought to bear on the object, rather the quality is inherent in the object itself.[13] His commitment to a realist ontology forces the conclusion that what distinguishes a building from a work of architecture is the existence of potential aesthetic properties in the latter but not in the former. Similar to Pevsner's view, aesthetic properties are the ontic difference-makers between 'architecture' and 'building.'



Mitias embraces the view that there is only one set of non-contradictory properties that can be said to emerge from a given artwork. The claim that aesthetic qualities inhere but not as ready-made realties, that is, as actual properties given to sense perception, but as potentialities in the work implies a certain singularism insofar as Mitias does not think that it is possible for several non-convergent aesthetic potentialities to emerge from the same building. The singularist is keen to point out that it cannot be the case that p & ~p are inherent in the same work. Mitias certainly does not want to countenance the idea that contradictory qualities could emerge from the same work for two different interpreters. If two people hold contradictory views, then someone must be wrong. Taken together Mitias' claims of aesthetic realism are supposed to compel his conclusion that a single right interpretation of a work is the goal of inquiry.

In his essay, "How Buildings Mean," Nelson Goodman claims that architecture is a building that symbolically functions, that is, a work of architecture performs a referential function that a mere building does not. Although modernist works of architecture typically do not denote anything outside themselves, at least not in the manner of classical architecture, neither are they devoid of meaning, contrary to the claims of realists such as Krier. Under Goodman's account the work qua object has features that allow it to point both outside itself and to itself. A given work of architecture has meaning in virtue of its

> "HADID'S COMMITMENT TO MODERNISM AMOUNTS TO SINGULARISM"

capacity to simultaneously embody, and make explicit reference to, the properties it possesses. Thus, a building's meaning is rooted in what it exemplifies. One example he cites is Gerrit Reitveld's Schroeder House (1924), Utrecht, where the work references its own structural features of columns, beams and walls.



One advantage of Goodman's constructivist account is that the difference between a building and a work of architecture does not require any distinction between ordinary and aesthetic perception. Furthermore, his view that referential functioning, at least in part, ought to ground the divide that separates a building from a work of architecture has an additional advantage for the constructivist, because this approach does not require an ontological resolution of aesthetic properties. It only requires human understanding of symbol systems.

In Goodman's view of meaning, exemplification plays an important cognitive role with respect to works of art, because it affords epistemic access to features we might not otherwise attend to. As this line of reasoning demonstrates, it is not incoherent to talk of an internal locus for meaning, particularly for non-representational works, but focusing on the notion of a locus tends to reify meaning and distract us from Goodman's central point that the value of a work of art is its role in furthering our understanding, and that meaning is a correlate of that understanding. As Catherine Elgin has remarked of Goodman's views, "Understanding works of art is not a matter of passive absorption, but of active intellectual engagement with symbols whose syntactic and semantic features are often elusive."[14]

His endorsement of a multiplist ideal is explicit and unmistakable, "A work of art typically means in varied and contrasting and shifting ways and is open to many equally good and enlightening interpretations."[15] The multiplicity of interpretations Goodman is prepared to accept appears to be rooted in his commitment to constructivism. Goodman makes an important point about his view of the nature of architecture and interpretation. He writes "More than any other art, architecture makes us aware that interpretation cannot be so easily distinguished from the work."[16] His path to multiplism is evident insofar as what we think the work is due to our interpretations of it – our interpretations thus construct the work.

Can a constructivist object to Mitias' ontology yet concur with S? I hold that this is a reasonable result and I offer the Iraqi-born British Architect Zaha Hadid as an example of a constructive-singularist. She is a constructivist due to her thorough-going reliance on the centrality

of "constructed" symbol systems in her work. No determinate meaning exists to be discovered, so she claims. She is a staunch advocate of aesthetic modernism and, in her view, this is the singular lens through which works of architecture ought to be interpreted.[17] Her unyielding commitment to a purified aesthetic modernism and her advocacy of the aesthetic implications of modernity is clear:



> *We can no longer fulfill our obligations as architects if we carry on as cake decorators. Our role is far greater than that. We, the authors of architecture, have to take on the task of reinvestigating Modernity ... there is only one way and that is to go forward along the path paved by the experiments of the early Modernists.*[18]

In claiming that Hadid's commitment to aesthetic modernism grounds her singularism, I am not making the larger claim that all adherents of modernism are necessarily advocates of singularism. Nor am I making the claim that modernism is somehow the aesthetic equivalent of singularism. In Hadid's case her singularism is rooted in her commitment to modernism, yet this commitment in itself does not entail that only singular interpretations emerge from modernity. I classify her as a singularist, largely because I think that a thickened description of her work renders a single interpretation of it the best approach. The thickened description argument for S relies on the distinction between "thin" concepts and "thick" concepts. Thick concepts are those where less variation is tolerated among instances. So, in the process of building up numerous descriptions of the thing under inquiry we narrow the range of admissible variations of it, and thus come to see it as "unified."

Stylistically, Hadid stands in stark contrast to the British philosopher Roger Scruton. In his book *The Classical Vernacular* Scruton argues that generations of architects educated in a modernist outlook that rebuked traditional ornament, traditional

materials, and the orders of classical Greek and Roman architecture have created aesthetically disappointing and nihilistic works that disregard the civic nature of architecture.[19] In short, he argues that classicism is more aesthetically correct than modernism. He is forthright in his disdain for modernism, "its language is uncouth, unredeemed by detail, utterly indifferent to its surroundings, or to the person who is obliged to pass by the building."[20] We need to see that his aesthetic commitment to classicism need not be tied to his interpretive commitment to singularism. A multiplist, for example, could hold the views expressed by Scruton that modernism is not aesthetically satisfying, but reject his claims about the sole "true" function of architecture. Clearly Hadid and Scruton disagree about the aesthetics of modernism. Even though both are singularists they are divided by their ontology.

In contrast to these two singularists, the British architect Richard Rogers stands as an example of a realist-multiplist. He is a realist insofar as he is committed to the view that the thing being interpreted, the "brick and mortar" building, is constituted independent of what interpreters think. Rogers holds that technology, scientific research, and an emphasis on function should serve as the basis for contemporary architecture. However, he also holds that architecture ought to be capable of adapting to changing social and technological needs. He is a multiplist due to his deep reliance on an "open ended" architectural object that is in principle flexible enough to admit numerous interpretations. He writes:

> *Though a building must be complete at any one stage, it is our belief that in order to allow for growth and change it should be functionally and therefore visually open-ended. This indeterminate form must offer legible architectural clues for the interpretation of future users. The dichotomy between the complete and the open nature of the building is a determinant of the aesthetic language.*[21]

Yet we need to be careful not to argue that an underlying indeterminacy of the work is what necessitates his being a multiplist. Contrary to the deconstructivist position, this line of reasoning would undermine M1, rather than bolster it. Instead, it is important to show that in principle a common object is countable yet it admits of more than one interpretation. That Rogers holds this outcome to be both possible and desirable is evident in the following passage:

> *The building form, plan, section and elevation should be capable of responding to changing needs. This free and changing performance will then become part of the expression of the architecture of the building, the street and the city. Program, ideology and form will then play an integrated and legible role within a changing but ordered framework. The fewer the building constraints for the*

*users, the greater the success; the greater the success the more the need for revision and then programmatic indeterminance will become an expression of the architecture.*[22]

Rogers points to an important set of difficult cases, namely, those objects of interpretation that change over time. These sorts of cases present difficulty not because they threaten our interpretive ideals; both singularism and multiplism remain unaffected. The singularist, for example, would argue that the one-to-one relation still holds over time, because at any given time the single right interpretation is grounded in the state of the object at that particular time. The multiplist would agree that an object's changed status could, though not necessarily would, ground different interpretations than those rendered earlier, but not because multiplism is false. These cases are difficult, precisely because where something is physically altered, the question emerges, Do we have a new interpretanda or not? What would constitute a priori limits to alteration, such that the interpretanda remains "fixed," is difficult to say but is the crux of the interpretive problem facing contextualists discussed at the outset.

Under a Krauszian-style interpretive account, the community of informed interpreters would be relied upon to determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether or not alterations to a given work of architecture create a new object of interpretation.[23] Furthermore, this same approach to resolving interpretive disputes about individual works would apply to the larger context within which a new work is to occur. Some works of architecture change the context within which they occur, and some do not. This realization that a dialectical relation exists between our views about context, and our views about the identity of interpretanda could help move the contextualist debate forward.

"HADID AND SCRUTON DISAGREE ABOUT THE AESTHETICS OF MODERNISM EVEN THOUGH BOTH ARE BOTH SINGULARISTS"

As the World Trade Center site example

illustrates, the ways in which architecture ought to memorialize human events continues to be a significant source of interpretive disagreement. This framework makes it clear that interpretive debates often occur on many levels simultaneously. And this may be a significant source of their seeming intractability. When differences in belief about the underlying events (what it is that is being memorialized) are conflated with how admissible interpretations elucidate architectural responses to it, disagreement is bound to occur. Additionally, the framework makes it evident that one could be a either a singularist or a multiplist with respect to an underlying event, and proposed responses to it. Whether a critic could be a singularist about an underlying event, and a multiplist in regards to proposes responses (or vice-versa) is a question this approach explicitly raises.

This taxonomy also brings conceptual clarity to the Krier-Eisenman debate by providing an account of how their respective positions are both grounded in specific, yet differing, ontological commitments and differing interpretive ideals. In spite of their many differences, both Eisenman and Krier, in effect, endorse the view (though they would not have phrased it this way), that claims about what a work of architecture is necessarily entail the number of interpretations of it we ought to hold. As this taxonomy makes clear, both Eisenman and Krier have overlooked a crucial philosophical point about the relationship between their own ontological views and their interpretive ideals.

## IV. RESPONDING TO OBJECTIONS

Several objections may be raised against this taxonomy. Here, I address a few.

*Objection 1: Many contemporary works of architecture are indeterminate, and this undermines S*. This is the critical pluralist's objection. I concur, that one feature many contemporary works have in common is their indeterminacy. The existence of indeterminate works, however we construe them, is a separate issue from whether indeterminacy compels the adoption of a specific interpretive ideal. Importantly, the success of both S and M depends necessarily on the notion of commonality—the proper construal of a common object. For differing interpretations of entities to meaningfully compete they must be about a common object of interpretation; they must be about the same thing. As I have already argued here, the determinacy of the object of interpretation does not necessitate singularism, nor does indeterminacy necessitate multiplism.[24] Thus, indeterminacy does not threaten S1—it remains a defensible ideal.

*Objection 2: The taxonomy is incomplete; there are more than two ontologies for works of architecture.* This objection is almost certainly true. There is at least a third major ontological theory – constructive-realism – in this taxonomy that I discuss elsewhere, but given its philosophical complexities I chose to forego discussion of it for two reasons: 1) the difference between internal and external constructive-realism makes it difficult to determine the relevance of constructive-realism as an architectural ontology; and, 2) no one within the field of architectural interpretation, as far as I know, has advanced anything to discuss.



*Objection 3: There are lots of interpretations about architecture; not just four.* True, insofar as we are talking about the number of actual interpretations; they are inestimable. But an interpretation is not an interpretive position. The focus of the taxonomy is to articulate a philosophically-grounded framework that fosters enhanced dialogue and comprehension of interpretive positions and strategies. As I have argued, the number of interpretive positions is not unlimited. My aim here is not to articulate and then adjudicate specific interpretations, but rather to enrich dialogue among disputants, build a few bridges, and get beyond the interpretive gridlock that has characterized architectural interpretation in recent decades.

*Objection 4: The detachability thesis, D, fails.* For the sake of brevity, I offer two reasons why D succeeds. First, each of the four positions is coherently adoptable. There are no internal contradictions within any of them. Second, the methodological issue of which interpretive ideal we should adopt, S or M, can occur prior to interpreting any particular object, and it simply does not hinge on how we characterize the ontology of the object we are interpreting; one issue is located at the level of practice, the other at the level of ontology.

In conclusion, the interpretive framework

I propose has numerous advantages. First, the interpretive conduct it sanctions with respect to the number of admissible interpretations does not entail an a priori commitment to a specific ontological theory, something architects do not possess as a matter of professional training, and something that few architectural theorists articulate in any careful or systematic fashion. Second, where an interpreter is committed to a particular ontology with respect to works of architecture, such commitment does not obligate them in advance to accept a specific number of admissible interpretations. Being a realist, for example, does not compel an interpreter to embrace the view that a single right interpretation exists. Last, it is useful for assisting interpreters that may be unable or unwilling to overcome differences in their interpretive positions and reach agreement about the cultural value and meaning of specific works. For all these reasons, I consider this interpretive framework to be a substantial improvement over what we have now.

## ENDNOTES

1. John Silber, *Architecture of the Absurd: How "Genius" Disfigured a Practical Art.* (New York: Quantuck Lane Press, 2007), 59.
2. Peter Eisenman and Leon Krier, "Peter Eisenman versus Leon Krier: My Ideology is Better Than Yours," *Architectural Design* 59, 7-18.
3. Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2009), 10.
4. See "Q & A: Peter Eisenman", in *The Architect's Newspaper,* Vol7, Issue 5, May 29, 2013. p. 22.
5. Andreaa Deciu Ritivoi, *Introduction to Interpretation and its Objects,* ed., Andreea Deciu Ritivoi (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 8.
6. Michael Krausz, Introduction to I*s There a Single Right Interpretation?,* ed., Michael Krausz (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 1.
7. For proponents of the singularist view see David Novitz, "Against Critical Pluralism," in *Is There a Single Right Interpretation?* ed. Michael Krausz (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 101-121; and, Brandon Cooke, "Critical pluralism Unmasked," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42, 296-309.
8. Krausz, Introduction, *Is There a Single Right Interpretation?* 2.
9. Zaha Hadid, "The Eighty-Nine Degrees," in *Theories and Manifestoes of Contemporary Architecture,* 2nd Ed., ed., Charles Jencks and Karl Kropf (Hoboken: Wiley Academy, 2006), 280.
10. Michael H. Mitias, "Expression in Architecture," in *Philosophy and Architecture,* ed., Michael H. Mitias (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 99.
11. Mitias, "Expression," 99.

12. Mitias, "Expression," 100.

13. Michael H. Mitias, "The Aesthetic Experience of the Architectural Work," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 33, 64.

14. Catherine Z. Elgin, "Relocating Aesthetics," in *The Philosophy of Nelson Goodman: Nelson Goodman's Philosophy of Art, Vol 3,* ed., Catherine Z. Elgin (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), 171.

15. Nelson Goodman, "How Buildings Mean," in *Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts & Sciences,* ed., Nelson Goodman and Catherine Z. Elgin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1988), 44.



16. Goodman, "How Buildings Mean," 45.

17. Hadid, "Eighty-Nine Degrees," 280.

18. Hadid, "Eighty-Nine Degrees," 280.

19. Roger Scruton, Introduction to *The Classical Vernacular: Architectural Principles in an Age of Nihilism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), xiii.

20. Scruton, *Classical Vernacular,* 16.

21. Richard Rogers, "Observations on Architecture," in *Theories and Manifestoes of Contemporary Architecture,* 2nd Ed., ed., Charles Jencks and Karl Kropf (Hoboken: Wiley Academy, 2006), 252.

22. Rogers, "Observations," 253.

23. What constitutes the community of informed interpreters, and who qualifies for admission into it, is an important aspect of the framework. For a more in-depth treatment see Chapter 3, Richard N. Fox, *Interpreting Architecture: A Krauszian Approach.* (Long Beach, CA: California State University Long Beach, 2009).

24. I first argued this point in Richard N. Fox, "Ambiguous Works of Architecture: A Krauszian-style Interpretive Approach to the Gehry Residence," (paper presented at the Pacific Division Meeting of the Society for the Philosophic Study of Contemporary Visual Art, San Diego, California, April 2011). In the paper I offered a critical extension of the notion of a common object of interpretation and examined what we ought to look for in construing what the common object amounts to when we examine a specific work of architecture. I argued that: (1) concerns about determinacy ought not compel us to adopt a particular interpretive ideal; and, (2) a work's ambiguity does not hinder interpreter's ability to agree on what constitutes the common object of their interpretive disagreement.

## ANDREW BALLANTYNE'S BOOKS INCLUDE

*Key Buildings From Prehistory to the Present: Plans, Sections and Elevations,* 2012
*Architecture in the Space of Flows,* 2012 (co-edited by C. Smith)
*Deleuze and Guattari for Architects,* 2007
*Architecture Theory: A Reader in Philosophy and Culture,* 2005
*Architecture and Experience: Radical Change in Spatial Practice,* 2004
*Architectures: Modernism and After,* 2004
*Architecture: A Very Short Introduction,* 2002
*What is Architecture?*, 2002
*Architecture, Landscape and Liberty: Richard Payne Knight and the Picturesque,* 1997

ANDREW BALLANTYNE AND STEFAN KOLLER

# TRYING TO THINK IN A CONNECTED SORT OF WAY

ANDREW BALLANTYNE IN CONVERSATION WITH STEFAN KOLLER

**QUESTION:** *You've written* Deleuze and Guattari for Architects, *you've written on architecture philosophy, but originally you've written things that were maybe not so clearly yet situated within the philosophy of architecture. How did you eventually came to that material and why?*

ANSWER: It is difficult to summarize, but my doctorate and my first book were about Richard Payne Knight and the theory of the Picturesque. I was interested in the topic from the point of view of architecture theory, but it turned out to be the theory of everything else as well. Especially the theory of landscape design, people's relationship with their environments, people's relationship with ideas, and the ideas that they use to think about things, think about places, think about nature and how they engage with nature. So I found myself going on a very wide-ranging study of Knight's ideas.

I first encountered him as a theorist of architecture through Peter Collins' book, the *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture* where he's positioned as someone who thought all rules were wrong. That seemed to me to be so evidently sensible. I didn't understand why anyone would every have moved on from that position. So I wanted to find out about him, and through a very rich, very rewarding character who turned out to have lots of interest.

Now of course I do understand why people moved on from that position. Because if you have rules, it simplifies things, it cuts down the range of choices. Often what you want as a designer is a reason to limit what you're interested in so that the

"OFTEN WHAT YOU WANT AS A DESIGNER IS A REASON TO LIMIT WHAT YOU'RE INTERESTED IN SO THAT THE QUESTION ISN'T AS MULTIFARIOUS AS IT COULD BE"

question isn't as multifarious as it could be, but it's focused on the issue of the day, or of the issue that we decide to make the issue of the day, and that simplifies things. It resolves the question into what we're dealing with now.

Q: *These are all inherently, genuinely, legitimately philosophical questions. At what point does moving on and engaging with people like Deleuze and Guattari become a move towards philosophical questions? Or is it more of the same that just happens to be concerned with authors who are recognized by others as having philosophically dealt with the built environment?*





A: I'm not sure, but what I want to pick up on in that question is the idea of the variety and multifariousness of the world as we know it, of things, and the way we need to simplify it in order to deal with it. What I'd hope that I try to do is engage with lots of things and the big complexity of what we are immersed in and then fasten on different things to focus on in each text.

So, we hone in on something and try and address some sort of questions, but I do want the background richness and the background, complexity or chaos – whatever it is – I want that to be part of my life, part of my intellectual outlook, and so there's a tradition of dealing with those things. Deleuze and Guattari very nicely formulate it as nomadic thought where you move about, you change the set of ideas that you're using to deal with the world from one occasion to another, and you use the ideas that are the most effective at the given time, given what you are trying to do, what you're trying to think about, what you're trying to engage with and then move on from them and use a different set on another occasion.

Q: *Deleuze's book on Nietzsche talks about taking other peoples' insights like arrows that have landed on the ground and that we can just pick them up and shoot them off again. So it seems you instrumentalize the arrows and you make them do the things that you want them to do for you. In the sense there is a tradition that engages these broader questions more narrowly or in a more design-oriented context, is that one way to draw on and instrumentalize the philosophical tradition? In order to pose, articulate, and sometimes answer questions within the tradition of architecture that may be harder otherwise to unearth?*

A: My first reaction is to think, 'I don't know, I'll have to go away and think about that'. But, what I do know is that I don't read philosophical texts as a philosopher. I read them, however I do read them. There are some things that jump out and seem interesting, seem compelling and I somehow latch on to and they seem like something that I've got to do something with. If what I'm doing with that concept is just explaining it in exactly the same terms that the philosopher has presented it, then

I have no role, there's no point in my doing that. Other people can do that. The philosopher has done it already. Why would it be interesting just to repeat back what the philosopher has said? What I'm interested in doing is taking it up, picking up that arrow, firing it to a new place, and seeing where it lands. It's an instrument for exploration of something. You find that it will do something, and I'm not always clear what it's going to do, but I have this feeling that something is going to happen with it. We find out as we progress with the text, with the thinking, with exploring that idea, seeing what it leads ups with, and seeing where it lands.



Q: *In* Deleuze and Guattari for Architects *you quote from a novel by Bernard Malamud where he reads Spinoza. Malamud reads Spinoza with great speed and says, 'sometimes I wouldn't understand a sentence and I would go through it and afterwards I felt I wasn't the same man anymore'. So there's a transformative potential of philosophy here which doesn't require Malamud's character to read Spinoza's text the way academically trained philosophers might feel compelled to do (line by line). So it's a way to open up something about architecture without knowing where it will lead you, but also without feeling compelled that for philosophy to do this, you have to follow an academic philosophical attitude of engaging the text. Is that fair to say?*

A: Yes, it is fair to say, but also I would say that one of the things that I like about listening to philosophers is that methodical presentation of an argument and leading me through step-by-step. I hope that's something that I can learn from and can follow that sort of procedure. I'm not sure that it always works out that way, but I would hope (to have) that clarity of thinking and the precision of thinking that philosophers are so good at demonstrating. That's something I'd aspire to do and that I'd hope that I could learn from.

> "THE WAY THAT I COME ACROSS PHILOSOPHERS BEING USED BY ARCHITECTS, FAR TOO OFTEN, IS OF IMPERFECTLY UNDERSTOOD IDEAS BEING COLLAGED TOGETHER"

The way that I come across philosophers being used by architects, far too often, is of imperfectly understood ideas being collaged together. I know

that if I hear the names of more than three philosophers in a sentence I panic. I just know that I'm not being presented with something that's being thought through. I'm perfectly comfortable with the idea that I don't know everything, and I'm perfectly contented with the fact that there may be philosophers who've thought the way I've thought before, and I'm not referencing them; that doesn't invalidate the argument. What I'm really keen on doing is trying to think in a connected sort of way like philosophers do. It's *that* I want to learn from them more than anything.

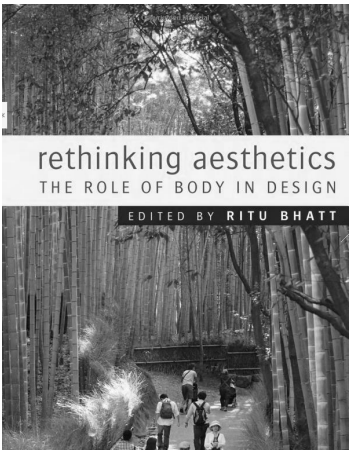
Q: *What I find so interesting is the way you characterize your work, the way you characterized what you sometimes find in the field, and what I think many of us have encountered. Of course, that is nothing at all peculiar to architects. Philosophy belongs to the public and to a readership well beyond the academic establishment, which means that people engage with it without scholarly scruple. Perhaps in the same sense that they read novels without having to feel the need to attend a seminar on say French literary theory first.*

*Sven Olov-Wallenstein's book on bio-politics contains a history of all of Enlightenment philosophy. That's not a presentation, or representation, of someone like Kant or Locke in these pages that is recognizable to a trained philosopher, but at the same time it would be extremely effective, and has been extremely effective in opening up some questions to ask of architecture, or to confront architecture with.*

*That's exactly the same mixture of not being too scrupulous with the source material to be able to arrive at something original. That is something that Olov-Wallenstein does, in a very short space, and I understand that you give yourself and your own philosophical explorations much more space and fewer authors to work with. But compared to your work, is the Olov-Wallenstein example a difference in degree, or difference in kind?*

A: Well, I don't know my way around that text, but I would guess that the substance of it, if it's doing something valuable, probably isn't in those introductory remarks. That's setting the scene and if it is doing something valuable then it would have to be thinking through things in a more careful way than that. It may be giving a few broad-brush strokes to set things up. There may be something inaccurate or wayward in that, but maybe that's not important, that's just background. The key to it would be the central argument where the ideas are properly engaged. I don't know, but that's my suspicion from your description there. There's always something that's in the background that you don't know about but you might need to make reference to it, just as something maybe out of focus in the background which nevertheless is helpful in establishing some sort of context.

*Part II of this interview will appear in Vol. 1, No. 2 of* Architecture Philosophy.




RETHINKING AESTHETICS: THE ROLE OF BODY IN DESIGN,
EDITED BY RITU BHATT
NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE PRESS, 2013.
ISBN 978-0-415-53474 (HBK)/978-0-415-53475-8 (PBK)
PRICE $170.00 (HBK)/$49.95 (PBK)

REVIEWED BY TOM SPECTOR

The driving force behind the corporeal turn in recent philosophy is to overcome what many see as a stultifying reliance on the eye in the Western canon of aesthetics for both knowing and appreciating the world. Developments in neuroscience would bear-out this effort. Knowing is closely tied to the emotions and the emotions are closely tied to the more immersive senses of touch, taste, hearing and smell. By paying closer attention to non-visual ways of perceiving, designers stand to make their work more responsive to desires for a more fully experienced world. Contributing to this endeavor, Ritu Bhatt has convened some of the most well-known names in the philosophy of embodied aesthetics and in the role of the body in design to bring together the under-theorized disciplines of architecture and aesthetics, and to explore how dissolving certain disciplinary boundaries could help reconsideration of the body in design. While the results of this cross-disciplinary work give encouraging signs of the vitality of this line of inquiry, any such work inevitably leads to questions of the state of the sub-discipline and the identity of the audience. The mostly engaging and well-written essays fall short of providing clear answers to these questions.

The book is divided into two sections; the "Role

of Aesthetic Response in Everyday Life," and "Modes of Aesthetic Response: Tacit Perception and Somatic Consciousness." It begins with well-established pragmatist philosopher Richard Shusterman's "Everyday Aesthetics of Embodiment." Since his book *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, in which he lays out the concept of "somaesthetics," Shusterman has been a prominent exponent of the embodied nature of aesthetic response. So it makes sense that he would lead-off the essays. But the piece is also a wonderfully clear-headed account of his efforts to sensitize himself to an embodied consciousness—especially of the associated increased sensory participation (perhaps we should call it a renewed aesthetic living) possible to achieve, in his case, by immersion in a Zen Buddhist school in Japan.

This essay is followed by Mark Johnson's "Dewey's Big Idea for Aesthetics" In which Johnson gives a concise explanation of Deweyan aesthetics:

> *Art reveals, through immediate presentation of qualitative unities, the meaning and significance of some aspect of our world, either as it was, is, or might be…. Dewey's central question here is how art realizes meaning. His answer is that art achieves meaning by enacting in us a heightened awareness of the "pervasive unifying quality" of a given situation." Johnson then argues for a set of implications that follow from a Deweyan interpretation of art and aesthetics. Most importantly, "Pervasive qualitative unity" is what makes an experience aesthetic. Furthermore, this unity is the main point of works of art. These two ideas imply the third point that "any aesthetic theory or critical analysis that attends only to selected features of an artwork will necessarily fail to capture what is most important (pg. 42).*

Johnson's reappraisal of Dewey's relevance provides both a sensitive and well-reasoned set of implications for embodied aesthetics.

Three more essays round-out Part One. Sonit Bafna provides a worthwhile close reading of an iconic building in downtown Atlanta, Marcel Breuer's Atlanta Public Library, completed in 1980. While it is delightful to revisit a building that asserted high modernism on a mostly unappreciative town, it is curious that the essay is primarily concerned with the visual in a book emphasizing embodiment.

Following Bafna, Remei Capdevila-Werning's essay on symbolism in buildings rides a mini-wave of a resurgence of interest in Nelson Goodman. The author reminds us of the Nelsonian ways in which buildings convey meaning through the "main modes" of "denotation and exemplification" and the lesser modes of expression and indirection (pg. 89). But the meanings of these terms get stretched a bit. Does the Villa Rotunda "symbolize harmonic proportions" as the author asserts (pg. 88), or does it enact them and realize them? The further assertion that "there are no true or false interpretations,

but rather, right or wrong, adequate or inadequate to the work's symbolic functioning" is perplexing (pg. 94). How could an interpretation be right or wrong if it is completely uncoupled from its being true or false? Capdevila-Werning would have it that fitness or aptness would suffice, but how could these concepts be stable without some correspondence theory of truth under them?



Chris Abel's nearly forty-page essay "The Extended Self" tells the story of twentieth century architects' naïve attempts to capture embodiment, the more sophisticated explanations provided by Polanyi, and confirmation by more recent developments in neuroscience. The purpose is to provide a convincing argument for the existence in all humans of extensive body maps. These well-developed maps, the author hopes, could be used to provide a more psychologically sound basis for teaching design than do current methods that more resemble indoctrination. Though they do not directly engage architecture theory, these ideas could surely be the basis for substantial further work.

Part Two opens with Galen Cranz's "Somatics and Aesthetics" which both condenses and builds on her exploration of the near environment provided by her well-regarded book *The Chair*. The essay provides a concise look into somatics – the conceptual fusing of sensation, emotion and knowledge – with examples of its implications for design thinking based especially in the author's knowledge of the Alexander Technique.

Following Cranz, Yuriko Saito's "The Moral Dimension of Japanese Aesthetics" is one of the standout essays in the volume. Her main point, similar to the one Kant attempted to establish in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* is that aesthetic sensitivity enhances one's ability to act ethically. Her examples drawn from Japanese arts provide vivid examples of the relationship between aesthetic and

"SAITO'S MAIN POINT IS THAT AESTHETIC SENSITIVITY ENHANCES ONE'S ABILITY TO ACT ETHICALLY"

moral concepts. These examples also seem capable of extension into other cultures.

Editor Ritu Bhatt's own contribution discusses the relevance of both Feng shui and Christopher Alexander's *A Pattern Language* as illustrative of "unconscious relationships with space, day-to-day cognition, and normative frameworks of knowledge" (pg. 183). Bhatt wishes, not to promote either concept, but rather to use their persistence as traditional agent-empowering practices to help overcome the seemingly intractable opposition between high modernist presumptions to get at architecture's essence on the one hand, and post-critical assertions that such theoretical projects are best left alone on the other. While bringing some rapprochement to these conflicting outlooks would be welcome, it is a lot to ask of these two examples. While both Feng shui and *A Pattern Language* are intimately connected with embodiment in space, it is hard to say what is new that either brings to the discussion.



The last two essays, David Seamon's short "Environmental Embodiment, Merlau-Ponty, and Hillier's Theory of Space Syntax" and Juhani Pallasmaa's "Mental and Existential Ecology" should be seen more as survey pieces suggestive of future areas of inquiry than as presenting a sustained argument. Seamon's straightforward aim is to introduce Merlau-Ponty to sociologies of space, place and body. Pallasmaa introduces a basketful of concepts: "loss of silence," mediation between "world and self," the neurobiological insights of artists, "existential space," the primacy of touch, the loss of hapticity and how architecture structures not only experiences but our inner world. The essay's speculative nature makes the reader wonder if it would have been better placed as an introductory piece. Perhaps its inclusion at the end of the volume was meant to leave readers with a sense of large vistas yet to come, but those of us who want to know if this new cross-disciplinary effort has direction will not come away with any strong compass points.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

DAVID LEATHERBARROW is Professor of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania.

PAUL GUYER is Jonathan Nelson Professor of Philosophy and Humanities at Brown University.

EMMANUEL PETIT is Associate Professor of Architecture at Yale University.

NATHANIEL COLEMAN is Reader in History and Theory of Architecture at Newcastle University.

RAFAEL DE CLERCQ is Associate Professor, Department of Visual Studies, Lingnan University.

RICK FOX is a principle architect in the firm Stratos Form.

## IMAGE CREDITS

Schreiner House: David Leatherbarrow
Daisy house and Stanley Tigerman courtesy of Tigerman Mccurry Architects
Westfall's diagram: Rafael DeClerq
All photos in Is Beauty Still Relevant?: Nathaniel Coleman
9/11 memorial: Tom Spector
Andrew Ballantyne and Stefan Koller: Carolyn Fahey

# REVIEW CRITERIA

*Architecture Philosophy* conducts double-blind reviews of all papers submitted. Each paper is reviewed by one philosophy expert and one architecture expert. Reviewers are members of the editorial board and are asked to evaluate submissions according to the following criteria:

### APPROPRIATENESS TO THE FIELD OF ARCHITECTURE PHILOSOPHY

Does the paper acknowledge and/or build on existing scholarship in both architecture and philosophy?

Does the paper acknowledge existing scholarship in philosophy and architecture respectively?

### PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

Is philosophy engaged directly?

Is there an argument?

Is there analysis of the claims made?

Is the logic of the argument presented explicitly?

Are the paper's arguments valid and sound?

### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Is architecture engaged directly?

Is architecture's relevant history/contemporary situation acknowledged?

Is architecture's history/contemporary situation dealt with accurately?

### ORIGINALITY

Is this paper a contribution to knowledge?

Does the paper present new ways of solving philosophical problems in architecture (philosophy) or does it engage architecture to illustrate philosophical problems?

Does the paper present new ways of engaging architecture and the built environment?

### PRESENTATION

Is the paper written in English to general academic writing standards for the humanities?

Does the paper follow the journal's submission guidelines?

# SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Please direct all submissions and general inquiries to isparchitecture@gmail.com. There are no deadlines for submissions, unless otherwise announced (e.g. special issue, conference proceedings, etc.).

## SUBMISSION TYPES

Authors are invited to submit full papers, response pieces, and book reviews. Full papers should be between 4,000 and 5,000 words, response pieces between 500 and 1,500 words, and book reviews between 1,000 to 2,000 words.

## GENERAL FORMATTING

All submissions should be presented in accordance with the University of Chicago Style. Papers should be MS Word documents, 12 point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, and with no additional or otherwise unique formatting.

## PHOTO GUIDELINES AND IMAGE PERMISSIONS

Images should be at least 300 dpi and read well in greyscale prints. The images should be submitted as individual files (TIFF or JPEG), in combination with proof of copyright permission. Authors are responsible for obtaining image permissions, and are asked to have done so prior to submitting their papers for review. The Oklahoma State University image archive is also available for use. Please send inquiries about the OSU image holdings to Prof. Tom Spector at tom.spector@okstate.edu.



Authors are responsible for obtaining copyright permission for the use of images in their papers. Original images created by the author are acceptable, and copyright access to the Oklahoma State University image archive is available to the journal and its authors. In most cases, authors will be seeking image permissions and are asked secure image permissions on their own before submitting their paper for review.