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# AUTONOMY RECONSIDERED

CAROLYN FAHEY, STEFAN KOLLER & TOM SPECTOR

Like the inaugural issue last summer, the present issue owes the lion's share of its contributions to an international conference held by the *International Society for the Philosophy of Architecture*, the society behind *Architecture Philosophy*. Entitled 'Autonomy Reconsidered', the conference raised a host of questions to both disciplines, indeed calling the disciplines to join their efforts in answering them:

*Contemporary philosophy and architecture discourse alike marginalize the ethical dimension of architecture. Yet, it seems that the ethical dimension in both architecture and philosophy has been compromised because both disciplines have not established a clear interdisciplinary understanding of autonomy. Together, and in service to both fields of study, we must reconsider what autonomy means for both architecture and philosophy, or rather, for architecture philosophy.*

*Without consideration to design intent, societal (at times, utopian) agendas and programs, architecture is still largely deemed to be ethically 'neutral' or silent. But is architecture ethically neutral? Is it ethically silent? Can ethical evaluation of designs and built objects operate autonomously from evaluation of the human agents that create them? Can a designer's activity be considered autonomous, and hence allow for questions of attribution and responsibility? Once we isolate the architectural, landscape, or urban designer from outside pressures, and only focus on her core métier – to what extent is*

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*that isolated activity autonomous? And if an architect's actions cannot be autonomous, would architecture stop having to answer to itself?*

*Philosophical ethics has opened its purview beyond human action to animal ethics and environmental ethics, but has not yet found a way to expand its existing reflections to designed objects, particularly built ones. Perhaps in parallel to ethics, contemporary aesthetics discusses the moral repercussions of art works with clear representational content – socially critical novels, figurative paintings – but has not paid closer attention to architecture. Is the lack of attention in aesthetics due to architecture's representational content being elusive, or because architecture's aesthetic appraisal is taken to proceed autonomously from moral considerations? How would architecture be considered otherwise?'*

The conference's call went on to, "invit[e] papers which probe these questions, or re-draw the assumptions behind them."<sup>2</sup> It is in that spirit that we present to readers the opening contribution, a keynote at that conference. In "The Myth of Autonomy," Nathaniel Coleman exposes and dissects foundational myths that, he argues, drive various autonomy projects in architecture to this day. Such projects, Coleman argues, operate on assumptions that cannot be upheld, and presuppose the unavailability of architecture's live relation to the social and the ethical. That unavailability comes into stark question once architecture's relation to utopia is reconsidered: not autonomy, but its great other, merits reconsideration if we are to redraw present day assumptions. Coleman's authoritative tour de force across the prominent figures in today's autonomy debates in architecture sets the stage for the journal issue more widely. Its claim that philosophers' (especially Kantian) notions of 'autonomy' are of limited use in such concerns should certainly not stand unanswered for long.

Tackling the call for papers' challenges to the philosophical community head-on, Noël Carroll and Christoph Baumberger also argue against the self-insulation of architecture from ethical considerations, as Coleman does. Yet, they appear more conservative about the means required to get us there, while disagreeing between themselves on those means – thus inaugurating the proliferation of viewpoints and arguments this journal seeks to promote. Carroll and Baumberger's implicit disagreements are delicate precisely because both authors are driven to a similar position: 'moderate moralism'. Moderate moralism is a position Carroll himself coined and developed for various art forms, but never before for architecture. The position's validity – especially its claim to an internal relation

of architecture to ethical values – both authors remind us, has vast consequences for how we build and design. Autonomism, once again, is found to be unsupportable. Will no one stand up for its defense?

This brings us to the papers of Mark Jensen and Felipe Loureiro. Jensen considers autonomy from a different point of departure. What, he asks, if autonomy were primarily concerned, not with the status of the object, but with the status of its producers? Could their relative autonomy be an important determinant of the quality of the built environment? To consider these questions, Jensen draws from Aristotle's ethics as a framework. Felipe Loureiro's essay on the applicability of philosopher of media Vilém Flusser's ideas to architectural images engages the topic of autonomy indirectly by examining the increasing opaqueness of the means of architectural image production – from hand drawing, to photography, computer images, and now prototyping – in contemporary times. While the means of image generation becomes increasingly abstract, the decreasing distance between conception and production is blurring the distinction between design and craft. Could this development be bringing the modern-day designer's unhappy choice between irrelevant celebrity or embedded anonymity back into some sense of real control and significance?

If the journal's inaugural issue introduced features not often encountered in an academic journal – follow up questions posed to authors or their targets, an interview, room for sidebar notes – the present issue inaugurates a further such feature central to the journal's concept: the continuing of conversations previously left open, as befits philosophical reflection. The second part of Paul Guyer's essay on monism and pluralism, and the interview with Andrew Ballantyne both take off where we left them in

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the previous issue. With both conversations having run their course thus far, we look to readers to pose questions of their own – whether to join conversations already begun, or to start a fresh thread of exchange.

ENDNOTES

1. Fahey, Carolyn, and Stefan Koller, June 27, 2013, “Autonomy Reconsidered,” *International Society for the Philosophy of Architecture*, <http://isparchitecture.com/events/call-for-papers/>

# ARCHITECTURE AND ETHICS; AUTONOMY, ARCHITECTURE, ART

NOËL CARROLL

## INTRODUCTION

This paper concerns the relation(s) between architecture and ethics. Perhaps needless to say, the intersections between architecture and ethics are manifold. Architects, for example, should not cheat their clients or endanger them by using substandard building materials. Nor should they take risky shortcuts or evade building codes. They bear certain responsibilities for the safety of the inhabitants of their buildings. Their structures should stand firm. They should not collapse under predictable pressures. If the client has paid for one kind of stone, the architect should not try to counterfeit it with a cheaper substitute.

Architecture intersects so often with ethical issues that it is plausible to suggest that there are more connections between architecture and morality than there are in the case of any other art form.

However, while conceding this, it may also be said that a great many of these relations do not have to do with architecture-as-architecture. Many, rather, concern architecture-as-business and the ethics thereof. Architects are business persons and, like all business persons, they should not, all things being equal, cheat their customers. Building Potemkin villages, for instance, is immoral.

But, if “business” sounds like too narrow a concept here, we might categorize the pertinent relations in question in terms of architecture-as-service. The architect is a provider – a provider of services – and her clients have the right to expect



that their contracts and their agreements with their architects will be fulfilled, including expectations grounded in prevailing social expectations, such as: that houses not fall down.

The relevant ethics here are fairly generic – deriving from the kinds of responsibilities any provider has to her clients, albeit with specific reference to the sorts of contractual relations and social expectations that bind builders to those for whom they build.

Nevertheless, admitting these connections between ethics and architecture-as-service leaves open the question of the nature of the relation (or relations), if any, between ethics and architecture-as-architecture. This is the question I will address in this paper.

### ARCHITECTURE AS INSTRUMENT

In order to engage the issues of the relation of architecture-as-architecture to ethics, we need to get a handle on the notion of architecture-as-architecture. As a first approximation, let us think broadly of an architect as a designer who constructs places – a person who shapes or builds environments – by arranging material forms, enclosing spaces and opening them. Conceived this way, architectural activity as such is patently related to ethics in that architects can be seen to be organizing spaces for morally assessable purposes.

For example, designing airport terminals in such a manner that passengers are confused about how to find their way out of the shopping area in search of their departure gates is to be complicit in chicanery; as is designing shopping malls that effectively entrap the clientele so they keep circling the same stores, constantly tempted into buying something.

Likewise designing highway overpasses so that they are too low to allow buses carrying poor people to travel to the parks and beaches frequented by the better-off is another example of designing space for immoral purposes.

Of course, spaces can also be organized for eminently righteous goals as in the case of much contemporary green architecture. Similarly, Shigeru Ban's designs for emergency disaster relief habitats are creations of indisputably great humanitarian value.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, there can be no question that architects as designers of built environments can use their skills for good or ill, morally speaking. Nevertheless, those who are interested in the relation of ethics to architecture-as-architecture – or architecture *qua* architecture – will protest that these are not the sorts of examples that need to be explored. For, they

will argue that the relation of architecture to moral or immoral purposes is an external relation. That is, it is the *purpose* of the organization of the space and not the *design itself* that is subject to moral assessment. And, furthermore, that purpose is external to the practice of architecture *qua* architecture. This is not to say that the architect is not culpable if he/she is complicit in implementing an immoral scheme. But his/her guilt is not, so to speak, architectural guilt. Or, maybe a related, but somewhat different way of getting at this general point is to say that the moral wrong in this case is attributable to the architect and not to the structure – i.e., not to the architecture.

#### ARCHITECTURAL OBLIGATIONS

The very notion of architectural guilt brings to mind, and possibly implies, that there must be something like architectural obligations. If there were architectural obligations – commitments architects incur simply by being architects – they would secure an internal relation between ethics and architecture *qua* architecture inasmuch as these putative obligations would be internal to the practice of architecture as such. Part of what it is to be an architect, then, would be the responsibility to abide by said obligations. Any builder would have to live up to these duties and any building would have to meet the standards they imply. Failure to do so would be immoral. These obligations would constitute an ethics of architecture *qua* architecture. The rhetoric of such an approach is resonant in such phrases as “truth to the materials” and “structural honesty.”<sup>22</sup> Some well-known candidates for alleged architectural obligations are:

- 1) that architects should be “true to” or beholden to their materials.
- 2) that architects should practice structural honesty – that they should not mask the true structure of their constructions.
- 3) that architects should embody or articulate

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the spirit of their age,  
or even more radically,

4) that architects should by their buildings shape the spirit of their age prospectively.

Let us look at each of these proposals in turn.

The requirement that architects should be true to their materials appears to rest supposedly upon the moral principle of honesty. Don't try to palm off so-called crystal glass as true crystal, to cite an example of Ruskin's cited by Pevsner.<sup>3</sup> Of course, if your client is paying for true crystal, there is an obvious moral infraction here in terms of the ethics of architecture-as-business. But what are the grounds for suspecting that there must be a moral infraction from the perspective of architecture *qua* architecture? The worry seems to be that there is deception afoot. But suppose that it is freely advertised that it is crystal glass?

I suspect that those who maintain that architects are beholden to their materials will still contend that there is a breach of architectural obligation in this case. But what could it be? What are the grounds for this alleged moral transgression? Maybe it will be proposed that, even if it is widely advertised, many may still take the crystal glass for true crystal. But whose fault is that and, in any event, who is harmed and how? The "true to the materials" line of thought sometimes makes it sound as though the materials have rights. Yet that's just superstitious.

Similar objections may be leveled against the appeal to structural honesty. This is the idea that the built environment should show forth its structure. It should not hide it underneath ornament, for instance. It should not suggest that it bears its weight anywhere other than where it actually does. But again, it is hard to identify who is harmed if the structure of a building is not evident to your average observer. Is one harmed if one takes the beams on the façade of Mies van der Rohe's Seagram's Building to be its central weight bearing structure rather than the beams recessed behind them?

One may call for foregrounding the structure of a building in the name of clarity, but it is an equivocation to equate a taste for intellectual clarity with honesty in the moral sense.

Moreover, it cannot be a moral transgression to fail to make manifest the structure of a building to outside observers since very often the structural supports are not visible to the naked eye – for example, the underground timbers upon which rest the Richardsonian Romanesque Trinity Church in Boston. Indeed, the view that there is a moral imperative

to reveal architectural structure appears to confuse a stylistic preference with an ethical concern.

Hegel began his grand survey of the history of art with what he called the symbolic stage, which was best exemplified by the great pyramids of Egypt. These structures, he claimed, revealed the level of Consciousness's self-understanding of itself at a very early stage, one whose lack of inwardness was putatively reflected symbolically in the limited interiority of the pyramids. At least since Hegel, it has become common for art historians to approach artworks with an eye to establishing the way in which they articulate the spirit of their age. Various architectural theorists have taken this role of emblemizing the spirit of the age as the brief of architecture as such.<sup>4</sup> It is not clear how this is a moral obligation, unless we endorse an extremely broad sense of the notion of ethics; perhaps it may be argued that when architecture performs this role, it provides a social good. However, if this is the idea, then it makes it seem as though architecture cannot but help doing good all of the time, since it is difficult to imagine the failure of any work of architecture to reflect its time. Even something like Horace Walpole's antiquarian fantasy Strawberry Hill reflected at least one strand of his cultural moment. That is, since even nostalgic architecture will reflect its times, it seems impossible to fail in this regard which would place all architecture *qua* architecture on the side of the angels. This not only seems too rosy an outlook, but also is too intellectually indiscriminate to be informative even on its own terms. Moreover, connected to the problem that all architecture reflects its time is the underlying fact that this is so precisely because there are so many different, often conflicting, tendencies going on during the same time period. It seems doubtful that there is ever *a* spirit of the age in the sense of a singular, all-encompassing theme. But if that is true, then the claim that architecture should articulate its age is an impossible obligation, since

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there is no singular spirit to embody. Thus, to the extent that “ought” implies “can,” there can be no architectural obligation to emblemize the (one and only) spirit of the times.

Not only have some argued that architecture should reflect the spirit of the age. Some have gone further, contending that architecture should abet the development of the age prospectively, bringing supposedly positive tendencies in the present into fruition in the future by means of built environments that reinforce and guide those tendencies.<sup>5</sup> Much of the rhetoric of modern architecture sounds this clarion call. In this case, structural honesty is sometimes invoked as a commitment to the kind of intellectual clarity associated with the rationality of allegedly enlightened times. Truth to the materials of modern industrial society – like steel – is linked to the notion of being true to our times. Modern architecture, it was believed, not only reflects the emerging rational-industrial culture, but would hasten it as life in various machines for living and working would blossom into an enlightenment utopia, specifically a blue print utopia – to take advantage of a very useful notion introduced by Nathaniel Coleman.

(Parenthetically, there is a parallel dystopian story told about how this apotheosis of so-called rationality contributes to the tyranny of instrumental reason and neoliberalism.)

The notion of architecture’s obligation to being on the side of history, of course, inherits the liabilities of its component parts, including the ideas of truth to the materials, structural honesty, and the emblemization of the spirit of the times. Just as there is no singular spirit of the times, for example, there is no privileged path to the future, no end of history to which the architect must be committed. As commentators like David Watkin have persuasively demonstrated, architectural modernism rides on the same faith in a teleological view of history that Karl Popper discredited under the rubric of historicism.<sup>6</sup> History has no preordained narrative and, even if it did, it is not clear how architects could know it. Consequently, it cannot be their moral obligation to realize it. Indeed, added to the epistemological limitation of not being able to discern the course of history, architects would also confront another epistemic roadblock, namely the lack of the kind of causal knowledge that would be required to influence the historical process in determinate, predictable ways. Think of all of the unintended consequences modern architecture has set in motion. So, even if architects knew where history was headed, neither they nor anyone else knows how to get there.

(This lack of causal knowledge also bedevils dystopians, although in a different way. Juhani Pallasmaa claims that the privileging of vision

in modern architecture leads to detachment and contemporary alienation.<sup>7</sup> But that is an immensely complicated causal hypothesis, one so complex that it is hard to know how to even begin to isolate the variables needed to test it empirically.)

Of course, so far I have only challenged some of the leading versions of the idea that there are architectural obligations. That does not conclusively prove that there are no such obligations. But it does shift the burden of proof to the friends of the conviction that there are ethical obligations internal to the practice of architecture. So, in the absence of a creditable proposal from their side, it may be useful at present to pursue another tack in an effort to establish an internal relationship between ethics and architecture *qua* architecture.

#### ART AND ARCHITECTURE

At this juncture, I propose to parse the notion of architecture *qua* architecture in terms of architecture *qua* art. Architecture is a matter of building environments but not all built environments are architecture. What makes a building architecture? I suggest that it is its claim to art status.

Of course, I need to say more about what is involved in a building's possession of art status. Nevertheless, it should be uncontroversial that it is by being considered art that buildings are *commonly* identified as architecture. That is, if a built environment is art, then it is architecture. Thus, architecture-as-art is one – perhaps the most common – way of satisfying the formula, architecture-as-architecture.

Moreover, if this is acceptable, it suggests a straightforward way of linking architecture *qua* architecture internally to ethics. Namely, architecture-as-architecture will be connected to ethics at least in the way or ways that art in general *qua* art can be connected to ethics.

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However, this strategy immediately faces a challenge, namely the contention that art is categorically separate from ethics. Call this view autonomism. Obviously autonomism must be tackled head-on before we can take advantage of any putative link between art and architecture.

#### AUTONOMISM

Autonomism is a viewpoint that begins to take its modern form in the eighteenth century in discussions of beauty. Francis Hutcheson, borrowing the notion of disinterestedness from the Earl of Shaftesbury, characterized beauty as an immediate feeling of disinterested pleasure. “Disinterested” for Hutcheson meant “independent of personal advantage.” To find a building beautiful was to take pleasure in the mere sight of it rather than, say, taking pleasure in it because it belongs to you. The disinterestedness of the lover of beauty, for Hutcheson, is just like the impartiality of a judge in a court of law. In both cases, they are required to issue judgments independent from their personal interests and advantages.

Kant took on board much of Hutcheson’s conception of beauty – or what he, Kant, called free beauty – and argued that judgments of free beauty (also known as aesthetic judgments) were based upon experiences of disinterested pleasure. However, Kant expanded the range of pertinent interests to be bracketed for the sake of disinterest, encompassing purposes in general, including ethical ones, and reference to concepts, possibly, at least in part, because concepts are typically connected to purposes.

Subsequently, interpreters, or perhaps more accurately misinterpreters of Kant, erected a theory of art upon Kant’s theory of free beauty. Stated crudely, it presumed that the function of art is to afford aesthetic experiences, experiences divorced from purposes, such as ethical ones, and that are instead valued for their own sake. This transmogrified into the *art-pour-art* (art-for-art’s sake) slogan in France, popularized by Benjamin Constant and Madame de Stael and which also provided the impetus for nineteenth century aestheticism as practiced by Pater and Wilde, the latter of whom famously denied the relevance of morality to literature, maintaining books were only well-written or not.

Of course, if art, properly so called, is divorced altogether from purpose, that bodes ill for architecture’s claim to art status, since architecture is so wedded to serving ulterior purposes. This is why so often in nineteenth century hierarchies of the arts, architecture’s status is typically demoted to the lowest art form on the totem pole, if it is not disenfranchised entirely. Under earlier theories of art, architecture suffered for not being imitative. Things did not get better under the dispensation of aestheticism, because

architecture was linked to non-aesthetic purposes and thus to uses and interests.

In the twentieth century, earlier art-for-art's sake tendencies were refined and worked into a theory called the aesthetic theory of art which we can regard as the contemporary form of autonomism. In rough outline, it holds that something is a work of art if and only if it is made with the primary intention to afford aesthetic experience, which nowadays is generally conceived to be an experience valued for its own sake and not for some other purpose whether cognitive, moral, religious, political, etc. This theory can allow that architecture is an art so long as and to the extent that it is made with a primary intention to afford aesthetic experience, such as contemplation of the visible form of a building. But, at the same time, this theory severs architecture-as-art from ethics. The aesthetic theory of art has been extremely influential among analytic philosophers of art. Even those who would never profess allegiance to it outright show themselves to be under its sway when, for example, they consult their "intuitions" and find that art and ethics are necessarily twain.

However, despite the authority of the aesthetic theory of art, it fares badly empirically when weighed against the history of art. Most art historically was and arguably continues to be made with primary intentions other than affording aesthetic experiences. Commissioned by churches, rulers, guilds, aristocrats and so forth most art has been made with the primary intention to serve religion, politics, cognition, morality and so on.

Catholic painters for centuries composed their devotional pictures with the primary intention of engendering reverence. They would have considered it blasphemous to suggest that their work be contemplated primarily for the disinterested pleasure it imparted to viewers.

Similarly, the Maori of New Zealand have a war



dance called the Haka in which they stamp their feet ferociously, bulge their eyes, stick out their tongues and wave their arms aggressively for the purpose of scaring off intruders. Were the enemy to sit down and savor a Haka for the sake of contemplative pleasure, the dance would be self-defeating, since it was made with the primary intention of driving away invaders in terror.<sup>8</sup> Nor can the aesthetic theory of art be repaired by dropping the requirement that the intention to afford aesthetic experience be primary because that will make the theory too broad. For example, almost every commodity in the industrialized world today is made with some intention to support what are called aesthetic experiences. Yet no one mistakes the cereal aisle in the grocery store for a modern day art gallery.

So, the aesthetic theory of art, at least as characterized thus far, is dubious. For our purposes, that removes a major barrier blocking the strategy of extrapolating the relation of architecture *qua* architecture to ethics via the relation of art to ethics.

#### ART AND EXPRESSION

To model the relationship of architecture *qua* architecture to ethics on that of the relation of art to ethics requires saying something about how we understand *art*. Obviously I cannot elaborate on a full-scale theory about how to identify art in the middle of the already large project of exploring the relation of ethics to architecture. So allow me to cut some corners.

Let us say that pronounced expressivity is a pretty reliable symptom of art status. By this, I do not mean to be defending some version of the expression theory of art. I am not claiming that art is necessarily expressive; some art, like Duchamp's readymade canine grooming comb, is not. Nevertheless, pronounced intentional expressivity is a fairly reliable symptom of art. It is because the Haka projects such an intentionally pronounced and coherent aura of fearsomeness and male aggressivity that we are provisionally disposed to classify it as dance art.

Interestingly, from our point of view, pronounced expressivity is also frequently cited as a mark of architectural art.

Paul Goldberger says: "Architecture begins to matter when it goes beyond protecting us from the elements, when it begins to say something about the world..."<sup>9</sup> As is well known, Nelson Goodman thinks that buildings are architectural art when they *mean*. He writes, "A building is a work of art insofar as it signifies, means, refers, symbolizes in some way."<sup>10</sup>

For Gordon Graham, architecture as such ideally expresses its function; he observes of Marble Hall in Holkham Hall in Norfolk, England, that its elegance expresses its function, i.e. to display the elegance of its owners.<sup>11</sup>

And Paul Guyer argues that Kant holds that all art, including architecture, involves the expression of aesthetic ideas. For example, by way of illustrating Kant, Guyer notes “that a (Protestant) church must keep its décor simple to induce the proper mood of humbleness.”<sup>12</sup>

Not all of these characteristics of the art of architecture amount to exactly the same claim, but they agree broadly in taking some measure of pronounced expressivity, albeit understood in different ways, to be a sign of architectural art. For example, it is the pronounced expressivity of the curving colonnades, reaching out from St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome, that prompts us to regard them as architectural art. For they gather together and embrace the crowds in the plaza in their “arms” in a way that is welcoming.

Or consider the majestic central staircase in the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Its majesty marks with heightened significance and drama the experience we are about to have of the museum’s magnificent collections. August and ceremonial, the stairway expresses the pride appropriate to the holdings it introduces.

Perhaps pronounced expressivity may even be an ingredient in a sufficient condition for architectural art status. However, be that as it may, it is enough for my purposes that there be a recurring internal relation between architectural art and pronounced expressivity. For inasmuch as certain expressive properties are ethically charged, their architectural projection will be ethically assessable.

For example, the façade of the Georgian doorway at 16 Bedford Square in London with its fanning window by Thomas Leverton radiates the

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most energetic hospitality, bursting with cheerful amiability, epitomizing the virtue of sociability.<sup>13</sup> Or, for architectural art on the dark side, consider the narrative relief in the palace of the Assyrian King Ashurbanipal which was designed with the express intention to celebrate the king's wanton cruelty.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, we see that architecture *qua* architecture maybe related to ethics by way of expression. The case goes like this: some art, including architectural art, is expressive. Some of that expressive art, including architectural art, is ethically charged. If some architectural art is ethically charged, then that architecture is potentially ethically assessable. Thus, the relation of some architectural art to ethics can be internal because it is rooted in the nature of architectural art. Consequently, there is at least this one way in which architecture-as-architecture is internally related to ethics.

#### MODERATE ARCHITECTURAL AUTONOMISM

Undoubtedly the autonomist will be suspicious of the preceding maneuver. Thus far the autonomist has been represented as claiming that art is categorically divorced from purpose and use, including ethical purposes. This is a very radical position. But the autonomist, upon hearing the previous arguments, may retreat and regroup, counterattacking with a position that we can call "moderate autonomism."

The moderate autonomist concedes that art may be made for many purposes, not only affording aesthetic experience, but also commanding reverence, advancing ideologies, bringing consolation, promoting virtue, rallying the troops, etc. Call 'affording aesthetic experience' the aesthetic dimension of art. This dimension is allegedly distinct from the others just mentioned. Though these others can be considered legitimate features of art *qua* art, they contrast with the aesthetic dimension. The former features of the artwork are artistic features of the artwork, but they are not aesthetic features. The aesthetic dimension is comprised of properties, like form, that afford aesthetic experiences thereof and which are valued for their own sake.

Furthermore, the moderate autonomist maintains that only those aesthetic affordances are relevant when considering architecture *qua* architecture. If there is an argument here, it probably relies upon severing aesthetics from purposes. And that will putatively segregate categorically the aesthetic properties of the artwork from the artistic ones, including the ethical ones, in the process of distinguishing mere building from *pure* architecture or architecture as such or architecture *qua* architecture. In this way, the moderate autonomist may recoup at least part of her position in

the face of the considerations that I raised earlier.

#### MODERATE ARCHITECTURAL MORALISM

According to the moderate architectural autonomist there is a categorical distinction to be drawn between the aesthetic dimension of the architectural work of art and the ethical dimension. The ethical dimension may be a legitimate part of the architectural artworks *qua* art, but it is not ever part of the aesthetic dimension which is putatively the only dimension that counts in considering architecture *qua* architecture. One important corollary of this view is that an ethical defect in a work of architecture will never count as an aesthetic blemish in architecture *qua* architecture because the aesthetic properties are categorically distinct from the artistic ones, including the ethical ones.

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This is autonomism to the degree that it asserts that there is a domain of pure architecture *qua* architecture where moral considerations never play a role. It is moderate autonomism because it allows that things like ethics, religion, politics, etc. are legitimate concerns of art. They are just never aesthetically relevant where aesthetic relevance is what determines the domain proper of architecture *qua* architecture.

Moderate Architectural Moralism is the rejoinder to Moderate Architectural Autonomism. The moderate architectural moralist contends that some works of art, including some works of architectural art, feature moral defects that are also aesthetic defects, specifically formal defects. Thus the moderate moralist argues contra the moderate autonomist that the aesthetic dimension and the ethical dimension of the arts, including some architectural art works, are not absolutely cleaved, since sometimes there can be an internal relation between the ethical dimension of a given artwork and its aesthetic dimensions as evidenced by the possibility that sometimes an ethical defect in an

artwork can also count as – i.e., be identical with – an aesthetic defect.

The moderate moralist might proceed defensively, questioning whether the moderate autonomist's argument for the categorical separation of the artistic properties and the aesthetic properties can be advanced without begging crucial questions. However, the moderate moralist may also propose a positive argument on behalf of his conclusion.

The first step in the moderate moralist's argument is his definition of form: the form of an artwork is its ensemble of choices which realize the point or purpose of the artwork. Formal features then are choices that contribute to the point or purposes of the works. Architectural theorists should be familiar with this conception of form, since it echoes the architectural slogan that form follows function.

Next the moderate moralist points out that the point or purpose of many artworks is to engender emotional responses. The point of a comedy, like Shaw's *You Never Can Tell*, is to elicit comic amusement. Characters, situations, and plot coincidences are designed to that effect.

Clearly architectural artworks often have the purpose of provoking emotional responses. Both the interiors and the exteriors of Gothic cathedrals are predicated upon instilling awe by means of their vaulting spires and naves. They are literally designed to take our breath away and to reduce us to hushed silence. Often the mood or emotion we identify as expressed by a building is connected to the feeling it arouses in us. So in the case of the Gothic cathedral, we say the cathedral is awesome.

The emotions aroused in us by artworks do not arise by happenstance. They, like all emotions, are governed by certain conditions of appropriateness. The appropriate object of fear is perceived danger. If an object does not appear threatening to us, it is not an appropriate object of fear, and if we are sound of mind, it will not be frightening to us. One of the conditions for awe is that the object be perceived to be of great size or power. If the object does not meet this condition, the object will not be experienced as awesome.

These observations about the emotions have obvious applicability to the arts, including architecture, since artworks are often in the business of eliciting emotional responses. Horror fictions, for example, are in the business of provoking horror, a compound emotion of fear and disgust. Thus, horror fictions must design characters to this end. Were one to present as the monster a figure like Casper the Friendly Ghost in what is intended as a genuine horror fiction that would be a failure in design because Casper is too nice to be scary and too clean to be disgusting. Casper would be a design choice that would be a defect because he

would fail to realize the purpose of horror fiction. That is, the choice of Casper would be a formal failure. Similarly to build out of papier maché an architectural structure such as a triumphal arch, meant to project strength, would be a formal error since it would dissolve in even a mild rainstorm.

But, what has this to do with ethics? Simply this: many of the emotions are related to ethics either because they involve moral conditions – as anger is concerned with justice being done to me or mine; or they are moral emotions on their own terms, like righteous indignation. Eliciting these emotions requires meeting certain ethical conditions. If these are not met, the intended emotion will not take hold and the artwork will fail in its purpose.

For example, with respect to an Aristotelian tragedy the central character cannot be an evil, truly reprehensible character because we will not feel tragic pity for him, but joy at his being dealt his just desserts. To present the historical Hitler as the protagonist of a play intended to elicit tragic pity in the Aristotelian sense would be a design error – a formal defect – because it involves the choice of an element not suited for – in fact at odds with – the purpose of the work. The audience is more likely to shout “well done” when calamity befalls Hitler than to shed a tear for him.

Moreover, notice that the formal error here is rooted in an ethical defect. Tragic pity depends upon an object that is morally undeserving of the calamity that befalls him. The historical Hitler does not meet that condition. He deserves whatever he gets. To attempt to mandate tragic pity will encounter imaginative resistance on the part of morally sensitive audiences. The creator of our abortive Hitler tragedy has a morally defective understanding of what is required for tragic pity. Thus he makes the wrong design choice in constructing the protagonist of his play. But this is simultaneously a formal error, precisely because it

is a moral error. Thus, sometimes a moral defect in an artwork is a formal defect just because it may block the audience's intended emotive uptake.

A similar possible scenario can be sketched with respect to architectural art. Imagine a memorial constructed after a bloody civil war between the As and the Bs. Made of granite, it is divided into two equal halves that formally mirror each other. On the left slab are listed all of the names of the fallen As. On the right side are all of the names of the fallen Bs. The structures are enormous, granting each side enormous gravity. Each side looks the same. The only differences appear when you get close enough to read the names which differ from one side of the monument to the other. Otherwise, neither side of the memorial diverges in appearance from the other. Neither side receives special architectural accent or emphasis. Architecturally the two sides are equal and the design calls upon viewers to feel sorrow equally for and to admire or honor equally the dead of both sides of the civil war.

But, in point of fact, one side – let's say the Bs – were guilty of horrible atrocities, bombing civilians with poisonous chemicals, employing rape to demoralize and subdue villages that showed sympathy to the As, and worse. Many of the names of the fallen Bs on the memorial belong to known war criminals. For the morally sensitive viewer, the two sides of the civil war are not deserving of equal sorrow and honor. The Bs don't merit sorrow at all. Thus the morally sensitive audience will resist the architectural rhetoric of the monument.

For that reason, the choice of presenting the As and the Bs as equal visually is a formal error because it is a design choice that fails to realize or to implement the purpose of the memorial. But it is simultaneously a formal defect because it both exhibits and mandates a morally corrupt point of view – one that equates war criminals with the honored dead who opposed them. Thus, the uninflected handling of the two sides of the memorial represents a formal, aesthetic flaw, exactly because it embodies a morally defective viewpoint that undermines the purpose of the work by thwarting audience uptake. Consequently, moderate architectural autonomism is false.

#### A BRIEF SUMMARY

We began with the challenge to ascertain whether there might be an internal relation between architecture *qua* architecture and ethics. Although there may be more, we identified at least one such relation by construing architecture *qua* architecture as architecture-as-art. We then modeled the relation of architecture to ethics on the relation of art to ethics,

specifically with reference to art as expression. This led to the conclusion that architecture can be ethically assessable as architecture when it projects properties expressive of moral import.

We then considered how a moderate architectural autonomist might respond to this conclusion and disputed that response by mounting an argument on behalf of moderate architectural moralism, the position that maintains that in some cases a moral defect in a work of architectural art may be constitutive of an aesthetic defect.

ENDNOTES

1. See Dana Goodyear, "Paper Palaces," *The New Yorker*, Volume XC, Number 23, August 11 and 18, 2014: 66-75.
2. See: Joan Ockman, "Ethics and Aesthetics after Modernism and Postmodernism" in *The Hand and the Soul* ed. by Sandra Iliecu (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 45. Quoted in Stefan Koller, "Architects on Value" in *Ethics, Design and Planning of the Environment* ed. by Claudia Basta and Stefano Moroni (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 59.
3. Quoted in David Watkin, *Morality and Architecture Revisited* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977, 2001), 108-9.
4. See Sigfried Gideon, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941); Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (London: Faber and Faber, 1936); Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).
5. Pevsner, op. cit.
6. Watkin, op. cit.
7. Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin* (Oxford: Wiley, 2005).
8. An alternative account of the Haka was offered

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at the conference on architecture and ethics in Delft in July of 2014. An audience member argued that the function of the Haka was to present rivals with a performance that they assessed in terms of how formidable the dancers appeared. However, even if this, rather than the account offered above, is the correct account of the Haka, it remains clear that the dance was not created with the intention to be valued for its own sake. Moreover, the same could be said about much of the armor designed for European knights. It was made to strike terror in the hearts of the enemy and not to deliver disinterested pleasure.

9. Paul Goldberger, *Why Architecture Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), ix.

10. Nelson Goodman and Catherine Z. Elgin, *Reconceptions in Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), 33. See also: Remei Capdevila-Werning, *Goodman for Architects* (London: Routledge, 2013), 13.

11. Gordon Graham, *Philosophy of the Arts 3rd edition* (London: Routledge, 2005), 178-182.

12. Paul Guyer, "Kant and the Philosophy of Architecture", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Volume 69, Number 1 (Winter, 2011), 15.

13. See Alain de Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 99.

14. See Noël Carroll, "Art and Recollection" in *Art in Three Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 171.

# THE MYTH OF AUTONOMY

NATHANIEL COLEMAN

*Architecture, one would think, has its own validity. It needs no reference to any other discipline to make it “viable” or to “justify” its value. We might even question whether words like value or morals are applicable to an architectural style.<sup>1</sup>*

*My point is very different from e.g. Eisenman’s idea that architecture is self-centered and only concerned with its own formal-compositional issues. Eisenman posits that architecture should throw off its concern with the world, abandon function and only concentrate on architectural form. [...] I am trying to formulate the overall rationality of the discipline that necessarily involves the integration of world-reference (function) and self-reference (form).<sup>2</sup>*

In this article, the so-called ‘autonomy project in architecture’, as theorised by Ignasi de Solà-Morales (1942-2001); K. Michael Hays’s (b. 1952); Patrik Schumacher’s (b. 1961), of Zaha Hadid’s office; and Pier Vittorio Aureli (b. 1973) is interrogated. In particular, the main aim of this article is to reveal the project of autonomy in architecture as a myth, especially in relation to the parallel myth of an avant-garde (especially a neo-avant-garde) in architecture. However, it is important to underline that my interrogation of ‘the myth of autonomy’ has little to do with recent trends in anti-theory, for example as outlined by Jeremy Till (b. 1957) in his *Architecture Depends* (2009).

Ultimately, the aim of this article is to recover a critical-historical perspective that reveals the project of orthodox modern architecture eschewed by

autonomists as itself an earlier response to the same persisting disciplinary crisis that animates their efforts. Following on from this, Utopia is reintroduced as providing architects with a much more promising set of tools for redeeming architecture than autonomy ever could. As I will argue, the most significant contribution Utopia can make to architecture is to return the social and political to it, which also provides a way to resist the formalist pull of autonomy. Renewal of Utopia, and with it the social and political dimensions of architecture, inevitably reveal(s) autonomy as a myth invested primarily in the dissolution of just such a possibility. The great paradox of autonomy in architecture is that it is duplicitous, using the inevitable impurities of realization as a cover for impossible desires for purity as a means to liberate architecture from its obligation to communities. The apparent naiveté of the modernist project as one of engagement, as interpreted by architects such as Aldo van Eyck, is discarded in favor of disengagement as apparently the only *realistic* response.

#### OPPOSITIONS

In the introduction to *The Oppositions Reader* compilation he edited, Hays ruminates on why autonomy became such an important preoccupation of so many of the architect authors and theorists who contributed to *Oppositions* (1973-1984), the journal of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York City (1967-1984). However, he goes no further than raising the question, a move as provocative as it is frustrating:

*For the essential contradictions between architecture's autonomy – its self-organization into a body of formal elements and operations that separate it from any place and time – and its contingency on, even determination by, historical forces beyond its control subsumes all the 'formal socio-cultural and political' concerns into an all embracing dialectic. The conflicts of formalism and determinism [...] seem almost symptomatic of a deeper [...] social pathology [... .] One should ask not whether architecture is autonomous, or whether it can willfully be made so, but rather how it can be that the question arises in the first place, what kind of situation allows for architecture to worry about itself to this degree.<sup>3</sup>*

Despite leaving readers without a definitive response to his question, Hays does offer several takes on autonomy drawn from the pages of *Oppositions*. Even so, relatively convincing explanations for architects' turn inward, away from material reality and the perplexing burdens of their discipline, do exist. As the German philosopher of hope Ernst Bloch (1885-1977) and the Italian architectural historian and theorist of closure Manfredo Tafuri (1935-1994) have intimated, architecture as a 'work', akin to the

unique achievements of the fine arts, rather than as an industrially reproducible ‘product’ – as French sociologist and philosopher of *cracks* Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) asserted – is all but impossible under capitalism. The failures of orthodox modernism, in particular its ostensive social project and ultimate rejection of this, left architects without a program or project for architecture and the city. Ascribing this failure to Utopia also left them without the tools for thinking their way beyond capitalism and modernism. Although these phenomena are often presented as a new condition particular to the crisis of modernity after the Second World War, with the move toward autonomy seen as having taken a cue from the frontiers of visual and performing arts. However, this understanding deprives narratives of the terminal condition of orthodox modernity of a critical-historical perspective that might well reveal the project of modern architecture eschewed by autonomists as itself an earlier response to the same persisting disciplinary crises. Although Tafuri’s discussion of Piranesi in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* is very helpful in illuminating this predicament, to my mind, British architectural historian and theorist Joseph Rykwert’s (b. 1926) *The First Moderns* (1980) offers an even more lucid account of the shift in direction for the discipline suggested here. Indeed, Rykwert, who was awarded the 2014 Royal Institute of British Architects Gold Medal, pushes the origins of this shift slightly further back than Tafuri does, to the end of the Baroque and the period of the Rococo, in particular to Claude Perrault’s (1613-1688) conceptualization of ‘positive and arbitrary beauty’ – the division between the quantitative and qualitative in building. In light of the dramatic consequences of this, for Rykwert, the only way forward for the discipline of architecture is to recuperate its enduring vocation:

*The nature of our responses to the world of artifacts, the way in which groups and communities appropriate space, occupies sociologists and anthropologists. And*

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*we acknowledge these human scientists as important and wholly serious people. Yet their studies are, in the last reduction, almost inevitably problems of form. This book [The First Moderns, 1980] recalls a time when the architect's business was just that. Perhaps if there is to be a place for the architect's work within a future social fabric, he will need to learn how to deal with such problems again.*<sup>4</sup>

Rykwert leaves us with a challenge at the end of *The First Moderns*, rather than an answer: for architects to regain their lost place within the culture, they must reconnect with those aspects of their discipline that once ensured this. Although not explicitly stated, this clearly reveals the project of autonomy in architecture as a profound form of alienation that deprives buildings of many of its associations and topics. While Rykwert's reconstruction of the preconditions that have led to the current situation of the past forty to fifty years is decidedly wide-ranging, he does not exactly excavate the causes of this condition, which Tafuri is more comfortable doing. As such, the significant socio-political import of his argument is somewhat obscured. Perhaps the reason for this is that whereas Tafuri had lost all hope for architecture, Rykwert has remained optimistic, leaving it to those more pessimistic of his readers to intensify the polemic his work suggests.

Indeed, my consideration of autonomy in relation to architecture developed here is informed by the battle for an architectural soul (perhaps only my own) carried out – in spirit at least – in the triangulated space between the thinking of Tafuri, Lefebvre, and Rykwert.<sup>5</sup>

The tension that exists between Tafuri's theoretical world and Lefebvre's is a product of the friction between the former's conviction that the world system of capitalism is totally closed, and the latter's belief in the generative potential to be drawn through the cracks that always exist in that never quite totally closed system. Rykwert provides the third point of the triangle by being even more stalwartly optimistic than Lefebvre on the one hand, and unconvinced by Tafuri's pessimism on the other. Arguably, the play of architectural theory today continues to be carried out within the triangulated space created by the tensions identified above, even if it tends to be imagined as operating within the altogether less determinate spaces of *Collage City*, as conceived by architectural historian and theorist Colin Rowe (1920-1999), who, as Hays observes, suffered a, "deep disillusionment with the utopian mission of [modern] architecture."<sup>6</sup> Actually, of the four theorists introduced just above, Rowe is the one who most believed, if only half-heartedly, that autonomy – as a using of things and not believing in them – alone could redeem Orthodox modern

architecture from its significant failings that came into view after World War II.

Tafuri was also committed to autonomy in architecture, but did not share Rowe's conviction that it could only be redeemed by formalism, which promised to quash its social and political content. Tafuri's conception of autonomy differs from Rowe's as fundamentally a critique of the tragedy of architecture under capitalist production. However, the inevitable self-indulgence of the autonomy project in architectural practice, especially as advanced by the New York Five architects in the 1960s and 1970s proved too much for Tafuri to take. Ultimately, he came to see the crisis of architecture as 'a crisis of ideology'. In light of this, he came to assert that architects are powerless to resist their capture within the system of capitalist production; as they are little more than technicians within a building industry, ensnared within the total closure of the capitalist/neoliberal system.

It is in confronting Tafuri's pessimism (valid as it might be) that the possibility of the counter-spaces suggested by Rykwert, and more emphatically theorized by Lefebvre really cannot be ignored. Rykwert's positivity, and, in particular, Lefebvre's stubborn optimism, furnishes compelling antidotes to Tafuri's resolute pessimism. As introduced above, Lefebvre could locate possibilities in even the most unpromising conditions of the same system described by Tafuri as total; precisely because Lefebvre believed that systemic closure is never as total as it might appear: cracks in the system can always be detected, which reveals the apparently impossible as actually possible, even across the scant moments that separate the two. Paradoxically, Tafuri's pessimism seems to me to have been, at least in part, an inevitable byproduct of the ultimately frustrated hopes he placed in autonomy, no matter how short-lived, while Lefebvre's work on space, in particular his determined optimism, would have

been impossible had he grounded his hopes for transformation, even his ideas on *autogestion* (self-management), in autonomy. The crypto-utopianism of Rykwert and the more overt utopianism of Lefebvre articulate an alternative to the project of autonomy that long ago lost its political edge as a form of resistance to the inevitable dissolution of the engaged cultural work of architecture when subsumed within the building industry as one of the most extreme forms of capitalist production.

Tafuri, Lefebvre, and even Rykwert share serious doubts about the architect as expert, or advocate, or as guardian of some imagined “communal imaginary” (at least in the present), rendering such a view difficult to sustain, unless the conventional professional mythologies of the architect are left unchallenged. Although Tafuri and Lefebvre shared a relative suspicion about autonomy and the avant-garde alike, what separates them are their respective ideas on the degree to which the total closure of the given condition is actually final. As such, they differed on the relative value of Utopia as well.

In contradistinction to its reputation, Utopia is bound up with the real world on the ground (at least in Lefebvre’s conception of it, and my own). As such, Utopia offers real possibilities for overcoming given conditions without exiting the everyday. Indeed, Utopia is actually nearly always about the everyday. But Utopia permits us to act on the everyday, and even exit given conditions, without necessitating the delusion of either autonomy or a fictional avant-garde to imagine transformative alterity. The otherness of Utopia is always about return as well – the exit is necessary to re-imagine the present that will be transformed. Ultimately, concrete, or constitutive, Utopias mount a challenge to autonomy in architecture, to the repetition compulsion of neo-avant-gardes without a cause as well. The alternatives that Utopia posits enlivens history and renews tradition by being a ‘handing over’ rather than a ‘handing down’: Utopia imagines how the past can be surrendered to the future by way of renewed – reimagined – tradition.

Reading autonomy through Utopia, as I am doing here raises a paradox by which Utopia (in the way I understand it) although so commonly presented as impossibility or no place, inevitably problematizes the myth of architectural autonomy. By returning the social and political to architecture, Utopia provides a way around the formalist pull of autonomy while retaining the hope of freedom in the distanced space it articulates, which autonomy must negate. The space of utopian thought, though located elsewhere in space or in time, is always situated in the present as a critical appraisal of and alternative to it. In this way, Utopia can never be autonomous, as its engagement with the context it attempts

to transform is always dialogical, interweaving self and other, individual and society.

Autonomy must ultimately take the form of a myth – in art as in life – because all works – especially architecture – and all people are always already embedded within a wider web of associations, primarily social. In this way, autonomy in architecture is arguably above all else a fairytale remarkably well-suited to transforming ideologies of freedom, individualism, and neoliberalism into a myth, a self-soothing story that perpetuates the illusion of agency (particularly evident in the endless cycles of aimless neo-avant-gardes in architecture). Considered in this way, the shape autonomy has taken in architectural theory and practice as formalism begins to make sense, especially in the form of spatializations of disconnectedness from the social and political in architecture that autonomy entails.

As developed immediately above, what I am proposing here might well seem to be at odds with framing the question of autonomy in a traditionally Kantian way. For Kant, autonomy is to be valued as a form of ethical understanding, in the sense that it presupposes some rational will. As noted Kant expert Paul Guyer notes,

*Above all, Kant was the philosopher of human autonomy, the view that by the use of our own reason in its broadest sense human beings can discover and live up to the basic principles of knowledge and action without outside assistance, above all without divine support or intervention.*<sup>7</sup>

I am unconvinced that life on the ground bears this out as a real possibility. While such a belief may be seductive, how many people actually act in accordance with their own moral duty (or even their own best interests, rather than apparent self interest) independent of a web of social relations?

Although autonomy in practice in architecture might be explained as the (morally) laudable effort

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to act ‘without outside assistance’, architecture is not philosophy, at least not in the sense that permits the purity of argumentation in isolation from concrete experience and practices on the ground. So while arguments in philosophy might need not be troubled by the way in which the mundane inevitably taints practice, as architects we are so deeply embedded in the world that attempting to claim any such luxury is at best a misapprehension. Inevitably, as architects, only if we are vigilant in attending to just how infrequently any of us actually act in our own best interest, or on behalf of the communities to which we belong, will we have any hope of acting in remotely ethical ways. It is in this regard that autonomy as individualism (and as willful disengagement), inevitably suggests just the sort of isolation associated with formalism. Intriguingly, the idea of freedom that best describes a wide range of autonomy projects in architecture is transcendental (in the sense of being *a priori* or preternatural), rather than empirical (in the sense of being experiential or pragmatic).<sup>8</sup> In this regard, perhaps the opposition ought to be more simply stated as the ‘pure’ as opposed to the ‘impure’, which in terms of Utopia could be indicated as the difference between the ‘abstract’ (transcendental) and the ‘concrete (empirical). However, for these differences to have dialectical value, in terms of defining an alternative idea of freedom with regard to architecture, the concrete, empirical, or pragmatic would need to be thought of as far more nuanced than technocratic understandings of them usually permit.

#### K. MICHAEL HAYS

Influenced by philosophical post-structuralism in their responses to the failures of architects’ flirtations with positivist social science that so marked the orthodox modernism of the post World War II period, a fair number of the generation of architects reaching maturity post-1968 set for themselves the task, as Hays has put it, of ‘thinking architecture back into its own.’ Interestingly, this group’s prevailing conception of *architecture’s own* imagined it as domain of practice free of social obligation and unfettered by the habits of culture, of comprehensibility and of the everyday. Arguably, this fantasy of a *pure architecture* remains dominant, or at least prevails as an aspiration for practice, what Hays calls the ‘autonomy project.’<sup>9</sup> Given the association of high-modern, or orthodox-modern architecture with Utopia, most of the post-1968 generation of architects wants to be as post-utopian as they are autonomous; indeed, many are categorically anti-utopian.

According to Hays’s reading (and that of other chroniclers) of

autonomy, architects as divergent as Aldo Rossi and Peter Eisenman, or Bernard Tschumi, Rem Koolhaas, and Zaha Hadid (amongst others) share a suspicion of architectural sincerity of the sort Aldo van Eyck detailed until his death in 1999, and which Rykwert continues to encourage. The counter-projects of still practicing architects as diverse as Tadao Ando, Deborah Berke, David Chipperfield, Herman Hertzberger, Renzo Piano, Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, and Peter Zumthor come to mind. Paradoxically, the first group attempt to escape Utopia by way of inventing architectures in which some relative perfection is achievable, whereas the second group transacts in the transformative potential of hope, while embracing hints at fallibility as a crucial humanizing characteristic (yes, arguably even Ando, Zumthor, and Chipperfield).

Consciously or otherwise, I believe this tension reveals some sort of awareness (in both camps) that autonomy is preternatural, only possible outside of the realm of “time and necessity” (as Alberti observed), or “place and occasion” (as van Eyck observed). Equally, as John Ruskin long ago asserted (and Le Corbusier practiced) perfection is reserved for the unknown or unknowable, or is achievable only when the problem is so reduced, or the aims set low enough, that it can be attained. Confirming this interpretation, Hays argues that the “autonomy project” entails freeing “architecture from the burden of utility” necessarily so in “recognition of the impossibility, or failure of meaning” for an architecture inexorably compromised by its capture within the building industry that realization ironically exacerbates. It is for this reason that autonomists like Hays are not particularly interested in the actual reception of built works. Only theories and theoretical (or visionary) projects have any chance of freedom from the burden of use and the destructive consequences of the capitalist production of building. In Hays’s view, architecture, in, “any traditional sense, such as van

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Eyck proposed,” is irredeemably lost, ostensibly leaving autonomy as the only *authentic* response.<sup>10</sup>

The troubling thing about the supposedly authentic response of autonomy is that it requires emptiness, or meaninglessness, for its achievement. As an example of this, consider Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co’s assessment of Louis I Kahn’s work:

*[T]he new bases for architecture set up by Kahn are every bit as artificial as the myths and institutions in which he put his trust [...]. It is nostalgia that determines Kahn’s language. That determinism breaks with the modern tradition no less violently than does every attempt to confine it in the display cases of a museum. Kahn’s work inveighs against the reduction of architecture to a negligible object.*

*But this signifies protecting the values from the process of history by transfiguring them into symbols, by attempting to recover their arcane properties.<sup>11</sup>*

While I might experience Kahn’s work as an audacious attempt to recuperate social meaning and comprehensibility in modern architecture, Tafuri and Dal Co necessarily see it as confirmation of a *false consciousness*, in the sense that it is an attempt to resist the, ‘reduction of architecture to a negligible object,’ as an inevitable consequence of capitalist production and the flows of history. In Tafuri and Dal Co’s terms, although resistance of this sort might be possible because it exists, it is *false* – a myth – in the sense of misleading us as regards the material, ideological and institutional processes of capitalist society. The significance of this is that, in Marxist terms, those conditions could only ever be overcome if nothing diverts attention from the reality of our circumstances under capitalism. While I have great sympathy for this position, I remain unconvinced by the prospect of autonomy – of a socially and politically empty architecture that retreats from reality and the everyday, as much as from Utopia – as the way to set the stage for what Ernst Bloch called “true architecture” that will only ever be possible when architecture emerges from the, “hollow space of capitalism.”<sup>12</sup> Although this might make me into a utopian socialist who encourages piecemeal attempts to willfully act upon history out of step with its flows, rather than a scientific socialist, Deleuze and Guattari argue that, “[w]hat matters is not the supposed distinction between utopian and scientific socialism but the different types of utopia, one of them being revolution.”<sup>13</sup> In my estimation, as practiced, autonomy is not a revolution but rather a restoration of sorts in the sense that an empty architecture, whatever its claims to resistance, is an architecture fully coincident with the processes of the capitalist production of buildings. Without the edge of Utopia, of a sustained critique of the present that seeks to transform it,

architecture is just another product to be exchanged.

By the same measure, the *autonomy project* of architecture is compensatory; a sad response to architects' diminished authority and reduced influence within the building industry of capitalist production, effected through a reduction of the tasks of architecture primarily to formal or typological concerns. Thus, the autonomy project is less *liberation* than *requiem*.

Couched as a form of resistance to the dominance of capitalist production, autonomy in architecture is more convincingly a symptom of the very condition it purports to resist. In point of fact, autonomy in architecture constructs an apologia for solipsism, radical individualism, self-indulgence, and a negation of the social and other external forces that shape architecture and which it shelters, to say nothing of the web of associations of which it is part. Clearly, nothing could be more consistent with the logic of products. Though I feel closer in spirit to Lefebvre and Rykwert, this pessimistic conclusion is closer to Tafuri, who, as Hays observes, “found architecture in a double bind. To the extent that architecture can function in a capitalist society, it inevitably reproduces the structure and codes of that society in its own immanent logics and form.”<sup>14</sup> Escape becomes capture, suggesting that the choice is between either capitulation or transformation, rather than between determinism or autonomy. Summarizing Tafuri, Hays notes: “When architecture resists, when it attempts to reassert its own disruptive voice, capitalism simply withdraws from service, relegates it to the boudoir, so that demonstrations by architects of their works’ autonomy and degraded life become redundant and trivialized in advance.”<sup>15</sup> Indeed, for Tafuri, the, “*return to pure architecture,*” that capitalism necessitates, is little more than a return, “*to form without utopia [...] to sublime uselessness.*”<sup>16</sup>

“THE AUTONOMY  
PROJECT IS LESS  
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THAN  
REQUIEM.”

For Ignasi de Solà-Morales (1942-2001), the autonomy project really begins to take shape in the aftermath of the rebellions of 1968. For him, in its present form, this condition is describable as, “our present panorama of incertitude and desolation.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the self-absorption suggested by the very desire for an autonomous architecture arguably only becomes a preoccupation in periods of crisis, or of “pessimism.”<sup>18</sup> In Morales’s view autonomy entails, “the disappearance of all reference to anything beyond the universe of artistic products’ themselves.”<sup>19</sup> What is more, “the idea’ is put ‘before the materiality of the object [...]. The process is more important than the work of art. More important than the finished, isolated object are the ideas [that] made it possible.”<sup>20</sup> Although for Morales the preceding describes what he calls “plastic arts,” a similar condition exists for architecture, in which its autonomy is “based on the body of theory intrinsic to it.”<sup>21</sup> In a passage that highlights the limitations of thinking of theories and projects as autonomous from construction – from the built reality of building – Morales describes the experience of visiting a constructed building designed by Italian architect Aldo Rossi (1941-1997), as opposed to the genuine pleasure of seeing his drawings and other representations:

*The sense of disillusion experienced by many upon seeing a Rossi building constructed on an actual site and from concrete materials derives from the fact that the building thus asks to be considered objectively or functionally, while its author tries to call instead to the process revealed in his drawings, so that the construction of the building is an episode in an architectonic discourse understood as autonomous and thus indifferent to construction or use.*<sup>22</sup>

In such work, including that of the architects Peter Eisenman (b. 1932), Michael Graves (b. 1934), Richard Meier (b. 1934), John Hejduk (1929-2000), and Charles Gwathmey (1938-2009) considered in the 1971 book the *New York Five*, “[t]he idea, defined by sketches, not by built work overtakes the importance of the ‘real thing.’”<sup>23</sup> The desire for ‘the autonomy of the discipline’ of architecture is a symptom of, “the failure of modern architecture,” that apparently joins this grouping of architects together.<sup>24</sup> As described by Morales, the architecture of autonomy is characterized by, “the evocation of impossible architectures, of ruins, of spatial absurdities, and of conceptual paradoxes,” indicative of a, “loss of confidence in the possibility of a truly buildable and culturally valid architecture.”<sup>25</sup> The internalized work of autonomist architects is, “concerned purely with syntax [the composition or arrangement of architectural elements]: semantics [the meaning of architectural elements that emerges from assemblages of

them, and from their metaphoric power] constitute not so much a goal to be reached as a point from which to depart.”<sup>26</sup> Here, Morales returns our attention to the association between autonomy and a draining away of culturally associative content in architecture, in response to the crisis of architecture (and modernity) as a crisis of meaning and ideology, and as a symptom of the capitalist production of buildings.

#### PIER VITTORIO AURELI (B. 1973) – THE PROJECT OF AUTONOMY

For Aureli, the key aim of what he calls “the project of autonomy” is to intensify the difference between “present thinking” and “past thinking.” In this sense, “autonomy” is that process by which the apparent uniqueness of the present can know itself as distinct from the past and from tradition, even if both become tropes that autonomists “mess” with. However, while Aureli is interested in autonomy as a project of international architectural culture in general, his main preoccupation is with emphasizing its Italian origins and the multiplicity of expressions within that context, which is to say, that while it might be convenient to identify Aldo Rossi with Tafuri, for Aureli they are different in the way that Rowe and Eisenman are. Although the subtlety of this might be elusive, it is surely reasonable to argue that historian/theorists (Tafuri and Rowe) will be different from practitioner/theorists (Rossi and Eisenman). At the very least, the former could make a much more convincing claim to autonomy than the latter: history and theory exist in the realm of texts, which are much less costly or risky to produce than buildings are. On the other hand, architecture is always implicated in the dominant culture and bound to its modes of production. As such, the construction of architecture always renders it already far too compromised – by association – to lay any claim to autonomy of any substantive sort. It is precisely

this compromised position that implementation foists upon architecture that encouraged a range of autonomists to initially turn away from making buildings toward the construction of theories and representations. However, even these activities, in particular the crafting of supposedly autonomous representations, are quickly subsumed within the logic of the provision of products and of consumption. The beautiful representations of architect theorists may have been free of the ‘burden of use’ because they could, or would, never be constructed, but this did not inoculate them from quickly becoming objects of exchange, far from autonomous in any convincing sense. One need only think of the importance of the Leo Castelli Gallery in SoHo New York City in this regard during the 1970s and early 1980s. Many architects’ reputations were made, and building careers ultimately launched, on the basis of first producing apparently autonomous representations. It is in this regard, as Aureli observes that “capitalism evolves to disarm [...] resistance.”<sup>27</sup>

Aureli’s argument, it is worth noting, obtains to a small architectural elite that is not representative of architecture as generally practiced. Nor does his argument particularly relate to the individuals who conventionally populate buildings. Indeed, this is likely the point: autonomy of any sort that actually proceeds to some real form of resistance presupposes isolation from the mainstream. It is in this regard that autonomy is countercultural, which ostensibly confirms it as a critical practice of a sort. Though only for so long as it is not named as a style or consumed as one. The near impossibility of actually achieving this turns on the duration of the cycles of style that autonomy is part of having – paradoxically – become shorter and shorter since the 1970s. Although Aureli offers something of a history of autonomy in architecture – from the 1960s onward – with an emphasis on Italian currents, it seems to me that the main aim of his project is to locate, or more precisely, to carve out, a place for his own practice by laying claim to an inheritance from the Italian Autonomists, in the belief that this would actually make practice – his own – possible in the midst of capitalist production. Thus, his observations about the convictions of the Autonomists appear to mirror his own hopes:

*[The Autonomists’ Project was] not about the destruction of capitalist culture and bourgeois history per se but, on the contrary, [it was rather about] their deep analysis and instrumental use. Autonomy was not the creation of politics and poetics ex nihilo but rather an audacious effort to appropriate the political realm in order to construct an alternative to capitalist domination.*<sup>28</sup>

The peculiar thing about Aureli’s reading, or perhaps of the strain of autonomy he is interested in, is that its aims are, according to him,

“postpolitical” rather than “political”, which to me seems a sure recipe for failure.<sup>29</sup> Clearly, attempting to act upon capitalist production in some postpolitical manner comes just a bit too close to the myths of the end of history that underpin the neoliberal project today. However, in telling the story in this way, Aureli brings us close to a truer condition, that of melancholia, of a sense of exhaustion and despondency in the face of the apparent failure and defeat of communism, and of the Left more generally, particularly in their inability to offer up a compelling alternative to the entrepreneurial spirit and chameleon-like wiles of capitalism. Indeed, in Aureli’s view Autonomy’s target was not so much capitalism as it was communism and the Left, in the belief that through the antagonism of autonomy, capitalism could be transformed (somehow from within). But how this could be achieved – disengaged from politics – remains a mystery. Nevertheless, Aureli is clear: he wants to, “attempt to extract from [the] history [of the project of Autonomy] what is still valid today.”<sup>30</sup> Achieving this clearly presents a significant problem in a context where autonomy suggests a particular attitude, or style, as much as a retreat from many of the multiple problems that make up architecture, for example, encounters with place and use. Ultimately, for Aureli, by the time the autonomy project in architecture was exported to the Anglo-American context it arrived as an already spent force, suggesting aesthetic innovations of a formalist sort, rather than any radical political initiative. As such, the very conditions of extreme commercial production that autonomy professed to counter quickly consumed it within its own capitalist logic. Nevertheless, Aureli looks to, “autonomia as a way to establish long-term responsibilities and solid categories by which to counter the positivistic and mystifying ways that social and political development comes to be seen as evolutionary progress.”<sup>31</sup> While I certainly agree with the necessity of doing just this, the “autonomy

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project” in architecture must inevitably turn-in on itself to become both self-justifying and self-indulgent, little more than a compensation for the near impossibility of socially rich and significant architectural practise with the reach of capitalism. Ultimately, the myth of the autonomy project maintains the status quo by which Utopia must still be renounced, including the commitment to transformation it speaks, and the real social and political engagement it requires. In this renunciation, the architect can also maintain his or her fiction of some special status in the making and remaking of the world, despite all of the evidence to the contrary that persistently debunks this myth.

PATRIK SCHUMACHER

Patrik Schumacher, who teaches at the Architectural Association in London, is a director in the office of Zaha Hadid Architects; his prominence in UK architectural education and position in Hadid’s office, as representative of so-called *starchitect* practises, are the key reasons for considering his take on the autonomy of architecture here. The main shortcoming of Schumacher’s writing on architecture is that to make his point he presumes an either/or situation of either grand master narratives, or none. As such, his argument is totalizing and lacks subtlety. His tone suggests that the current system of cultural production really is as closed as the absolute fragmentation he posits would ensure. He associates master narratives with the social renewal projects of Utopia, evident, according to him, in the urban projects of orthodox modern architecture. Overcoming master narratives, with a putative realism, entails, as with most autonomists, doing away with Utopia. According to Schumacher, the current condition reveals, “the all too evident impossibility of designing a new world,” not least, he argues, because the current condition, “indicates how far utopia has been left behind.” In this regard, Schumacher observes, “two related tendencies that conspire to frustrate any straightforward utopian impulse within architecture and design: 1. The dissolution of the utopian politico-cultural discourses of emancipation and social progress [...]” And, “2. The increasing autonomy and self-referential closure of the discipline of architecture, as expressed [...] in the [...] work and writings of Peter Eisenman.” He continues, “while [i]t might seem that [...] architecture withdraws into itself because no compelling social project exists that could inspire and direct architectural speculation [...], there is another way one could theorise the relationship between these two phenomena.”<sup>32</sup> On the basis of the argument developed in the preceding pages of the present article, by this juncture it should come as no surprise that my conviction

is that the withdrawal of architecture into itself is indeed a symptom of having, “no compelling social project,” to, “inspire and direct architectural speculation.”

In Schumacher’s view:

*[t]he tendency towards architectural autonomy might be understood as a moment of an overall societal process of differentiation, whereby social communication fragments into a series of autonomous domains – the economy, politics, the legal system, science, art etc. – establishing self-referentially closed subsystems within society. Each of these autonomous discourses contributes, in its specific way, to the overall social process. But this overall social process – society – does no longer have any control centre over and above the various increasingly autonomous communication systems. The differentiated discourses establish their own sovereign independence with respect to their underlying values, performance criteria, programmes and priorities. In this sense the various subsystems operate self-referentially [...] in a kind of self-referentially enclosed autonomy.<sup>33</sup>*

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According to Schumacher, such fragmentation is to be welcomed precisely because the condition of autonomy facilitates, “the ability to experiment with adaptations to a turbulent environment on many local fronts simultaneously, without the need to synchronise all moves, and without running the risk that failures rip too deep into the social fabric.”<sup>34</sup> Moreover, his belief is that such fragmentation protects architecture because, “design rationality too can neither be reduced to nor controlled by any other than its own logic.”<sup>35</sup>

Schumacher’s discourse depends on a large degree of overconfidence in the supposed logic of his statements. Nowhere is this arrogance more pronounced than in his naïve and out-of-date statements on Utopia that are, admittedly, fairly typical of primitive understandings of the concept, and which stubbornly persist in architecture theory:

*The self-referential closure of the differentiated subsystems of societal communication spells the end of utopia. Utopia as a coherent project and blueprint, i.e. as the wholesale reinvention of society integrating politics, law, economy and architecture, breaks up in the face of an insurmountable complexity barrier [...]. Today society has no address, no centre and no opportunity to generate a binding representation of itself and its destiny.<sup>36</sup>*

The preceding begs the question as to whether or not Utopia must be *blueprint* to articulate *reinvention*. An alternative position arising from within the discipline of utopian studies and beyond is that the *blueprint* Utopia is just one, albeit unfortunate, utopian possibility amongst others. Examples of these alternatives include “Utopia as method” as Ruth Levitas understands it, as a way of thinking about and working toward the “possible-impossible” as Henri Lefebvre described it, or the taking of the first resolute, though by no means certain, steps toward the realization of alternatives that would be “constitutive” rather than “pathological”(of a blueprint utopian sort), in Paul Ricoeur’s sense.<sup>37</sup>

Amongst the many peculiar aspects of Schumacher’s thinking is his conviction that:

*[a] mark of the self-referential closure of architecture is that design decisions are tightly knit to their kind and only obliquely/indirectly [...] refer to external demands and circumstances [...]. Political, legal or financial concerns are not immediately architectural concerns.<sup>38</sup>*

The sheltered vision of architecture this encourages only serves to further separate architecture from the everyday and to absolve architects of their obligation to communities and individuals. As construed by Schumacher, autonomy liberates architects to a space of unobstructed self involvement of an “art-for-art’s-sake” sort which only confirms the disconnect between architects and their architecture from everyday life while contributing to the transformation of buildings and cities into little more than a collection of branded commodities. As with so many architects, Schumacher’s ultimate defense for such a disconnected view of architecture is the cultural capital that attaches to some imagined association with a putative avant-garde:

*The distinction of avant-garde versus mainstream, merely commercial “architecture”, remains constitutive for the discipline. Only innovative, generalisable contributions [...] that are deeply entangled in the autopoietic network of architectural communication [are considered]. The degree of autonomy that architectural discourse has established by differentiating itself from the immediacy of everyday talk about buildings [...] should grow with the overall complexity of society.<sup>39</sup>*

Although Tafuri could see only false consciousness – and certain failure – in attempts to *act upon history*, when *acting within history* is seen as the only possible option, the risk is that the results will be as self-serving as they are anti-utopian. But what other possibility could there be if attempts to act upon history are seen as being out of step with its flow, and thus supposedly doomed? Moreover, if *acting within history* entails doing away with Utopia, *acting upon history* is fundamentally utopian. Resigning oneself to history as determinant also risks becoming self-serving by absolving architects from being critical and acting critically. This conundrum leads me to a passage from Deleuze and Guattari's *What is Philosophy?*, with which I would like to conclude, as I believe it captures many of the strands I have been developing in this paper while helping us to imagine how to reconcile our desires for freedom with our simultaneous capture within webs of social association, by way of Utopia:

*Actually, utopia is what links philosophy with its own epoch, with European capitalism, but also already with the Greek city. In each case it is with utopia that philosophy becomes political and takes the criticism of its own time to its highest point. Utopia does not split off from infinite movement; etymologically it stands for absolute deterritorialization but always at the critical point at which it is connected with the present relative milieu [...]. In utopia (as in philosophy) there is always the risk of a restoration, and sometimes a proud affirmation, of transcendence, so that we need to distinguish between authoritarian utopias, or utopias of transcendence, and immanent, revolutionary, libertarian utopias [...]. The word utopia therefore designates that conjunction of philosophy, or of the concept, with the present milieu – political philosophy [...].<sup>40</sup>*

“ IF ACTING  
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UPON  
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FUNDAMENTALLY  
UTOPIAN.

The quote above establishes an apparently irresolvable paradox for architecture: if the autonomy project in all of its myriad guises actually reveals an attempt to be free of Utopia, it is precisely this self-deceiving attempt at escape that renders architecture irrelevant and ensures its conclusive separation from culture – in Adolf Loos’s sense – and from everyday life. Conversely, it seems, then, that Utopia holds out a potential resolution to the problem of renewed purpose and relevance for architecture, fortifying it to act against the solvent of capitalism, the very same condition that inspired most of the doomed attempts at architectures of autonomy in the first place.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Philip Johnson, “Where Are We At?”, *Architectural Review*, CXXVII, September 1960, pp. 173–75, reprinted in *Philip Johnson Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 100.
2. Thomas Schumacher, “On Parametricism: Georgina Day interviews Patrik Schumacher” (2012), available at [http://www.patrikschumacher.com/Texts/On%20Parametricism\\_.html](http://www.patrikschumacher.com/Texts/On%20Parametricism_.html)
3. K. Michael Hays, ‘Introduction’, *Oppositions Reader* (New York City, Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), p. ix.
4. Joseph Rykwert, *The First Moderns: The Architects of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1980), p. 470.
5. For more on Tafuri, Lefebvre, and Rykwert see N. Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2005), and Nathaniel Coleman, *Lefebvre for Architects* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015). I have also considered the importance of Tafuri, Lefebvre, and Rykwert, as outlined here, in numerous journal articles.
6. *Ibid.*, p. xi.
7. Paul Guyer, “Kant, Immanuel”, in E. Craig (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (London: Routledge 1998/2004), retrieved June 16, 2014, from <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/DB047>
8. See Paul Guyer, “Kant on the Theory and Practice of Autonomy”, *Social Philosophy and Policy* 20.2 (July 2003), pp. 70-98, here p. 98.
9. K. Michael Hays, “The Textualization of Architecture, 1978–1986” (talk presented as plenary speaker at Text & Architecture, An International Word & Image Conference, Paris, 26–28 June 2003, organized by the University of Paris, 7 Denis-Diderot/College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA, 26

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10. K. Michael Hays, “Textualization”, *ibid.*

11. Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture*, trans. Robert Erich Wolf (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1976), p. 402.

12. Ernst Bloch, “Building in Empty Spaces”, in *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Zipes and F. Mecklenburg (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), pp. 187-190.

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14. Hays, “Introduction”, *Oppositions Reader*, p. xiv.

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16. Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (1973), trans. Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976), p. ix.

17. Ignasi de Solà-Morales, “From Autonomy to Untimeliness” (1991), in *Differences: Topographies of Contemporary Architecture*, trans. Graham Thompson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), p. 73.

18. Ignasi de Solà-Morales, *ibid.*, p. 73.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

27. Pier Vittorio Aureli, *Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture Within and Against Capitalism* (New York City: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), p. 9.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

29. Ibid., pp. 9-11.

30. Ibid., p. 12.

31. Ibid., p. 83.

32. Patrik Schumacher, "The Autopoeisis of Architecture", in *LATENT UTOPLAS - Experiments within Contemporary Architecture* (Vienna/New York: Springer Verlag, 2002). Available online at: <http://www.patrikschumacher.com/Texts/Autopoeisis.htm>. Interested readers are encouraged to see also an earlier treatment of Schumacher's thinking on Utopia and contemporary architecture in my article 'Utopia Beyond Amelioration', *Boundaries* 8 (April-June 2013), 4-11.

33. Schumacher, "Autopoeisis".

34. Ibid

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. See Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Nathaniel Coleman, "Utopia and a New Romanticism", in *Lefebvre for Architects* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 18-52; and Nathaniel Coleman, in *Utopias and Architecture* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2005), pp. 10-11, 29, 38-39, 52, 56-62, 237-38.

38. Patrik Schumacher, "The Autopoeisis of Architecture," in *LATENT UTOPLAS - Experiments within Contemporary Architecture* (Vienna/New York: Springer Verlag, 2002). Available online at: <http://www.patrikschumacher.com/Texts/Autopoeisis.htm>.

39. Patrik Schumacher, *ibid.*

40. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* [1991], trans. G. Burchell and H. Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 99-100.

# THE ETHICAL CRITICISM OF ARCHITECTURE: IN DEFENSE OF MODERATE MORALISM

CHRISTOPH BAUMBERGER

The practice of architectural criticism is supercharged with ethical evaluations. We praise certain works of architecture for their sustainability, their inspiring and enlivening character, their encouragement of an autonomous and satisfying life for their users, or their contribution to the peaceful cohabitation of different social or ethnic groups. We criticize other works for the harm they cause to the environment, for their negative impact on the health or well-being of human beings, for the morally reprehensible attitudes they convey or the morally despicable functions they serve. Such assessments of architectural works are of an ethical nature, or at least possess an ethical dimension. I take this feature of architectural criticism seriously and wish to address two questions<sup>1</sup>: Do ethical assessments of architectural works have any bearing on their value as works of architecture? And how is the ethical value of an architectural work related to its aesthetic value? The answers I defend are, roughly, that the ethical value of an architectural work has a bearing on its architectural value, and that the ethical and aesthetic value of such a work have a bearing on each other. More precisely:

- 1) A work of architecture will in some cases be architecturally flawed (or meritorious) due to the fact that it has ethical flaws (or merits).
- 2) A work of architecture will in some cases be aesthetically flawed (or meritorious) due to the fact that it has ethical flaws (or merits).
- 3) A work of architecture will in some cases be ethically flawed (or meritorious) due to the

“ MODERATE MORALISM CLAIMS THAT THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ETHICAL VALUE AND THE AESTHETIC AND ARCHITECTURAL VALUE ARE INVARIANT AND SYMMETRIC. ”



fact that it has aesthetic flaws (or merits).

In claims 1 to 3, “work of architecture” is to be understood in a very broad sense, including works of artistic as well as of everyday architecture, and buildings as well as other elements of the built environment, such as bridges and squares.<sup>2</sup> Such a broad notion of an architectural work suits my purpose since buildings and other elements of the built environment can – regardless of whether they are artworks or not – be judged from an ethical as well as from an aesthetic point of view, and it certainly makes sense to assess their overall value, what I call “architectural value”.<sup>3</sup> The questions about the relation between ethical, aesthetic and architectural value arises thus for architectural works in the broad sense. Moreover, this broad notion is of great importance since our built environment contains much more than buildings, and most of what it contains are not (or, at least, are not typically considered to be) artworks.

In this article, my main concern is to defend claims 1 to 3. In my argument I will mention particular works of architecture, but any detailed examination of specific works is beyond the scope of this article and will have to wait for another occasion. Before I defend my three core claims (sections 2 to 4), I first further specify the proposed view these claims substantiate, distinguish that view from opposing views and explain what is at stake in holding the view (section 1).

## 1. MODERATE MORALISM

Claims 1 to 3 define what I call *moderate moralism* with respect to architecture. It is a form of moralism for two reasons. Firstly, it claims that there is some ‘interaction’ between ethical assessments of architectural works and their aesthetic and architectural assessments, where claims 1 to 3 define the nature of that interaction. This distinguishes moderate moralism from *autonomism*, which holds that ethical flaws or merits are never aesthetically and/or architecturally relevant; either because it makes no sense to morally evaluate works of architecture (radical autonomism), or because the ethical assessment and the aesthetic or the architectural assessment of an architectural work never interact (moderate autonomism). Secondly, moderate moralism claims that the relations between the ethical value and the aesthetic and architectural value are invariant and symmetric, i.e. positive ethical qualities are always associated with positive aesthetic and architectural qualities and negative ethical qualities are always associated with negative aesthetic and architectural qualities. This distinguishes it from *contextualism*, which agrees with moderate moralism that the ethical value of a work of architecture can have a bearing on the

aesthetic and architectural value, but takes it to be a contextual matter whether an ethical flaw or merit is aesthetically and/or architecturally meritorious or defective. According to contextualism, the relations between ethical, aesthetic and architectural values are complex and invertible, i.e. negative ethical qualities can in certain cases be associated with positive aesthetic or architectural qualities, and *vice versa*. In this respect, moderate moralism is more demanding than contextualism.<sup>4</sup> What makes it nonetheless a moderate form of moralism is that it does not claim that ethical assessments of architectural works and their aesthetic and architectural assessments always interact.

My use of the terms in italics differs from their usage within the recent debate on the relationship between art, aesthetics and morality.<sup>5</sup> This is partly due to the fact that I deal with architecture whereas the recent debate is focused mainly on the representational arts, such as literature and painting. The main difference is that moderate moralism or (as Berys Gaut calls it) ethicism is usually defined only by a claim regarding the influence of the ethical on the aesthetic, i.e. by a claim of type 2. In particular, it does not involve anything which corresponds to the distinction between aesthetic and architectural value, and thus no claim of type 1. The value of a piece of literature or a painting is its aesthetic or, maybe, artistic value, but the value of architectural works in my broad sense is, as we will see, not exhausted by their aesthetic value, and it cannot generally be identified with their artistic value since most buildings and other elements of the built environment are not artworks. Moreover, moderate moralism as it is usually defined does not include any claim regarding whether the aesthetic value of a work has a bearing on its ethical value. But this question, addressed in claim 3, is especially pressing in the case of architecture since due to their public character architectural works unavoidably affect people's well-being. Hence my version

“MY VERSION  
OF MODERATE  
MORALISM IS MORE  
AMBITIOUS THAN  
THE VIEW IS OFTEN  
CHARACTERIZED.”

of moderate moralism is more ambitious than the view is customarily characterized as being.

Whether architects should regard themselves as moderate moralists has important implications for how they should conceive of their profession. If moderate moralism is correct about the relation between ethical, aesthetic and architectural values, then ethical considerations belong to the core of architecture and must play a crucial role in design, planning and construction processes. Architects cannot dismiss ethical criticisms of their works as irrelevant or misguided in principle. Moreover, they cannot defend ethical flaws of their works by arguing that these flaws contribute to the aesthetic worth of the works, as would be possible if contextualism were right; at most, they can argue that the ethical flaws in question are neither aesthetically nor architecturally relevant.

Before I turn to claims 1 to 3, here is what I mean by ethical, aesthetic and architectural values of works of architecture. Firstly, I construe the ethical in a wide sense, according to which it concerns normative questions regarding what is morally right or wrong, as well as evaluative questions regarding the good life. Thus the ethical value of an architectural work includes its positive or negative contributions to the good life and the well-being of people, as well as its promotion or violation of moral rights or duties. Secondly, the aesthetic is also to be understood in a wide sense, according to which it concerns questions regarding aesthetic experiences and properties (aesthetic questions in a narrow sense), as well as questions specifically regarding artistic architecture, for instance, about artistic style, expression, genre and art-history. Beside its capacity to yield aesthetic experiences (aesthetic value in the narrow sense), the aesthetic value of an architectural work with art-status thus also includes, for example, stylistic, expressive and art-historic qualities, which contribute to the artistic value of the work. Aesthetic value cannot generally be identified with artistic value since we can aesthetically experience buildings and other elements of the built environment which are not artworks. Such structures can thus have aesthetic value (in the narrow sense) even if they do not have artistic value. Finally, I construe architectural value as the total value of a work of architecture as such. It includes all qualities appropriate to consider when evaluating an architectural work. Aesthetic properties are certainly among these qualities, but even in the case of architectural works with art-status they do not exhaust them. Thesis 1 claims that at least some ethical properties should also go into an overall evaluation of an architectural work. I leave it open which further properties or values constitute architectural value, but it seems likely that utility,<sup>6</sup> durability, social values

and cognitive values are also among the qualities that should be considered in an overall evaluation of a work of architecture. Architectural value can thus not be equated with the aesthetic or the artistic value of an architectural work.

## 2. ETHICAL VALUE AND ARCHITECTURAL VALUE

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Claim 1 states that architectural value partly depends on ethical value in such a manner that a work of architecture will in some cases be architecturally flawed (or meritorious) due to the fact that it has ethical flaws (or merits). This might seem uncontroversial if the architectural value represents the total value of an architectural work. However, autonomists raise two objections against this first thesis. According to the first objection, we morally assess people (their actions, motives, intentions and characters), but it makes no sense to morally evaluate artifacts such as architectural works. Moral evaluations of such works, so the objection goes, are based on a category mistake since moral criticism assumes moral responsibility and thus moral agency, but architectural works have no mental states and can thus not be moral agents.<sup>7</sup>

However, such artifacts as laws and constitutions, for instance, are also subject to moral evaluation. Hence, there is no general objection against artificial products of human activity being subject to ethical assessment. Moreover, a closer look at critical practices reveals that we can and do morally evaluate architectural works.<sup>8</sup> Firstly, we morally evaluate such works with respect to their planning, design, and construction processes. A building can, for instance, be ethically criticized due to a violation of moral rights during its construction phase, at least in certain instances.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, we morally evaluate architectural works with respect to their impact on the environment. A building can, for instance, be ethically criticized due to its disproportionate emission of pollutants,

energy consumption, and waste of resources. Thirdly, we morally evaluate architectural works with respect to their impact on individuals and society. A building can, for instance, be ethically criticized because it negatively influences the health, well-being, or behavior of individuals, and because of its negative social ramifications. Finally, we morally evaluate architectural works with respect to their functions, symbolic meanings, and forms. Clearly, such aspects can be ethically evaluated regarding their impact on human beings and the environment. However, there may be reasons for ethically evaluating them regardless of their impact. Some functions seem to be ethically objectionable, regardless of whether they actually impair any person's well-being. The symbolic meaning of a building that expresses morally abject attitudes seems to deserve a negative ethical evaluation, regardless of its actual influence on people. And Nigel Taylor has argued that the form of a building which has obviously not received requisite care is ethically objectionable, regardless of how it actually influences the well-being of persons.<sup>10</sup> The first three ways to morally evaluate architectural works determine their extrinsic ethical value, since such evaluations concern the conditions under which the works are developed, as well as their causal effects. The last one establishes the intrinsic ethical value of an architectural work, since such an evaluation concerns features of the work itself, regardless of how it affects people and the environment. Within the debate about the relation between ethical and aesthetic values of artworks, the ethical value is often restricted to the intrinsic ethical value which, in turn, is typically construed solely in terms of the ethical features of attitudes that the artwork manifests.<sup>11</sup> However, such a conception of ethical value is too narrow for architecture and rules out consequentialist considerations from the beginning.

Thus there are senses in which judging architectural works along ethical lines appears reasonable and is common practice. But how should such ethical judgments be interpreted? It has been argued that such judgments should be re-described as evaluations of what is done through the works by those who have participated in their realization and maintenance, and can be meaningfully considered responsible for.<sup>12</sup> According to this view, the ethical appraisal is primarily directed towards people who commission, design, construct or use an architectural work, and only obliquely towards the work itself. Others have argued that we can at least take particular moral assessments of architectural works at face value if we distinguish between moral responsibility and moral accountability. From such a perspective, an architectural work itself can be morally accountable, even though it cannot be made morally responsible due to its lack of moral agency.<sup>13</sup> My answer to the first objection against claim 1 does not require any decision

as to which strategy is more promising.

The second objection against claim 1 grants that architectural works can be morally evaluated, but insists that the ethical cannot be architecturally relevant since some architectural works are good or even great works of architecture, even though they are severely ethically flawed. Some (architecturally) great works are ethically flawed due to a violation of moral principles during their planning and building phase; perhaps corruption was involved, or exploitation, or discrimination, forced labor, even the use of slaves, as is the case for the Egyptian pyramids. Other great works are ethically problematic due to harm they cause to the environment, as is the case for minimally insulated modernist buildings with ecologically wasteful heating systems. Further great works are ethically deficient due to negative impacts on the health or well-being of humans, either due to immoral intended use (as with the Roman Coliseum), or due to functional unsuitability (as in case of Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House, where comfort is sacrificed for the sake of aesthetics). There also exist great buildings that are ethically flawed due to morally objectionable attitudes or views they express; an example is Giuseppe Terragni's Casa del Fascio, which is often described as symbolizing fascist ideologies.<sup>14</sup>

This objection applies only to an extreme moralism, according to which architectural value is exclusively determined by ethical value. Such extreme moralism is implausible since we evaluate works of architecture with respect to a wide variety of qualities, such as their beauty, originality, site specificity, durability, functionality, or clarity. A moderate moralist should be a pluralist with regard to architectural value and acknowledge that, beside ethical values, architectural value also encompasses aesthetic, design, and use-values, as well as art-historic, social and cognitive values, among other

things. Then he can hold that a building is architecturally flawed as it is ethically flawed, but that it has many architectural merits, which make it a good or even great work of architecture overall.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. ETHICAL VALUE AND AESTHETIC VALUE

The main argument for my second claim – that an architectural work will in some cases be aesthetically flawed (or meritorious) due to ethical flaws (or merits) – is that it best suits our evaluative practices. This can, for instance, be demonstrated with reference to the role functional considerations play in architectural criticism.

Such considerations are crucial for evaluations of architectural works since architecture is essentially functional. It does not only deal with shapes and forms, but these shapes and forms must be arranged such as to provide a suitable framework for specific human activities. As I have pointed out, functional considerations have a bearing on the ethical evaluation as functional suitability of an architectural work can influence the well-being of its users. We can, for example, praise a building ethically for spatial adequacy and user-friendliness. However, functional considerations frequently influence also the aesthetic evaluation of an architectural work. It is widely assumed that we can, for example, aesthetically praise a building due to its functional beauty.<sup>16</sup> A building can be functionally beautiful if it is, and also appears, fit for its function, since the expectations triggered by our knowledge of its function appear to be satisfied. Thus many Art Nouveau residential buildings appear to offer a place suitable for living. A building can also be functionally beautiful if it exhibits a pleasing tension with respect to its function, given that it fulfills its purpose yet shows some surprising features in relation to its functional category. Mies van der Rohe's Boiler Plant at the Illinois Institute of Technology, for instance, functioned well though its tower-like chimney and high clerestory windows made it look more like an early church. Finally, an architectural work can be functionally beautiful if it is elegant with respect to its function, by meeting our expectations and fulfilling its function in efficient or ingenious ways. Robert Maillart's Salginatobel Bridge, for instance, crosses a steep valley in a bold and elegant manner without employing unnecessary elements. In this way, functional adequacy (or inadequacy) can be an ethical as well as an aesthetic merit (or flaw) of an architectural work. Hence, there are ethical merits (or flaws) of architectural works that constitute aesthetic merits (or flaws). This is what 2 claims.

In the remainder of this section, I further defend my second thesis by addressing four objections. The *Irrelevant Dimensions Objection* insists

that not every ethical flaw of an architectural work is aesthetically relevant: A building during construction of which human rights of workers have been violated, or a building which uses materials produced under inhuman conditions, may be ethically flawed, but it is doubtful whether such a building is consequently aesthetically flawed. This, however, is not an objection against my second thesis, since 2 only claims that ethical flaws or merits of architectural works will *in some cases* be aesthetically relevant. Moderate moralism postulates only that an architectural work is aesthetically flawed (or meritorious) when it contains an ethical flaw (or merit) which is aesthetically relevant.<sup>17</sup> This raises the question whether there are general conditions of aesthetic relevance with regard to architecture. It seems unlikely that there exist strict criteria, but we might hope to find symptoms of the aesthetic relevance of ethical flaws or merits. As a rough idea, an ethical flaw or merit tends to be aesthetically relevant if it is essentially connected to at least one main feature of architectural works; frequently mentioned candidates for such features are (a building's) form, function, structure, and meaning.<sup>18</sup> An ethical flaw is essentially connected to such a feature if the feature could not have been realized or maintained in morally legitimate ways, or if the flaw consists of ethically problematic aspects or effects of this feature. A general account of aesthetic relevance is certainly desirable, yet not necessary to argue successfully for 2.

Autonomists (as defined in section 1) often invoke another argument against 2: the *Aesthetic Attitude Objection*. It claims that ethical flaws or merits of an architectural work are *never* aesthetically relevant because we adopt an aesthetic attitude when we assess works aesthetically, and this attitude is insensitive to moral considerations.<sup>19</sup> The aesthetic attitude is generally characterized in terms of disinterested attention to the aesthetic object. It has been questioned whether such a specific aesthetic



attitude exists,<sup>20</sup> but even if it does, a dilemma arises. Either the aesthetic attitude is understood as precluding any appeal to functional considerations, or it is understood in some other way. In Jerome Stolnitz's approach, for instance, disinterestedness requires a deliberate withholding of concepts so that the very attempt to conceptualize an object in terms of its function is incompatible with adopting an aesthetic attitude.<sup>21</sup> If the attitude is understood in these terms it is too narrow for capturing everything that is aesthetically relevant, since functional considerations are aesthetically relevant. Alternatively, the aesthetic attitude is understood in such a way that it may include an appeal to functional considerations. According to Glenn Parsons and Allen Carlson, for instance, disinterestedness only requires an object to be appreciated for its own sake rather than for some personal benefit it may signify, but this does not entail experiencing an object without applying any concepts to it.<sup>22</sup> If the attitude is understood in this manner it need not be insensitive to moral considerations, since functional considerations are ethically relevant. Hence, the aesthetic attitude is either too narrow or not necessarily insensitive to moral considerations.

A third objection against my second thesis has been put forward by contextualists (as defined in section 1). They claim that ethical flaws of works are sometimes aesthetic merits at the same time.<sup>23</sup> One major argument for this view is the *Immoral Function Objection*. As we have seen, an architectural work may be aesthetically meritorious when it is functionally beautiful. However, an architectural work can be functionally beautiful with respect to an immoral function. In such a case, the work is aesthetically meritorious due to the fact that it is ethically flawed. Thus, the ethical flaws of architectural works may be in some cases aesthetic merits. An argument along these lines has been put forward by Andrea Sauchelli. His example is the Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome. A critic of Catholicism might argue that it has the immoral function of promoting an ideological worldview that harmfully influences moral education. However, the critic might, at the same time, appreciate the ingenuity and adequacy of the Basilica's design to the end of fulfilling this immoral function. The critic might argue that the Basilica is functionally beautiful with respect to an immoral function, thus illustrating a building's ethical flaw that at the same time is an aesthetic merit.<sup>24</sup> In such cases, though, it is not the ethical flaw as such that promotes the aesthetic merit. The aesthetic merit is based on the function, not on the immorality. In contrast to a comedy that achieves its humor by means of the immorality of its point of view, the Basilica does not succeed aesthetically due to its immoral function, but due to a function that just happens to be immoral. Hence the example does not establish any particular connection between aesthetic value and immorality.

Sauchelli himself ponders such an answer to his objection against moderate moralism.<sup>25</sup> This may indicate that we should construe his objection as an instance of another objection against 2, i.e. the *Inseparability Objection*.<sup>26</sup> According to moderate moralism, some moral flaws are aesthetic flaws, so it seems that the removal of such moral flaws should lead to aesthetic improvement of the work – but this is not the case. An aesthetically commendable feature of an architectural work (e.g., its functional beauty) may depend on its moral flaws (i.e., having an immoral function). Hence removing the moral flaw (replacing the immoral function by a morally good one) would not necessarily aesthetically improve the work, since it might then no longer be functionally beautiful. However, as Gaut stresses, moderate moralism does not claim that removal of a moral flaw *invariably* leads to an aesthetically better work. Moderate moralism is formulated in terms of the *pro tanto* principle that an architectural work is aesthetically flawed when it contains ethical flaws; in other words, that ethical flaws of a work diminish its aesthetic value.<sup>27</sup> But moderate moralism does not hold that removing an ethical flaw must – *all things considered* – aesthetically improve the work. The reason is that removing the ethical flaw (namely, replacing the immoral function) might remove some other aesthetic merit depending on that flaw (namely, its functional beauty). Thus, moderate moralism agrees with contextualism that removing a moral flaw might not aesthetically improve an architectural work, all things considered, but moderate moralism insists that, when a work is ethically flawed, it is aesthetically flawed, too.<sup>28</sup>

Let me illustrate this claim by using the example of the Farnsworth House. According to moderate moralism, the house is aesthetically flawed due to the fact that it is ethically flawed because of its functional unsuitability. However, this claim does not imply that improving the user-friendliness of the house will improve it aesthetically. This will

“ MODERATE MORALISM DOES NOT CLAIM THAT THE REMOVAL OF A MORAL FLAW INVARIABLY LEADS TO AN AESTHETICALLY BETTER WORK. ”

hardly be the case since the house achieves its remarkable beauty precisely because it distills habitability to the breaking point. That many aesthetic qualities of the house depend on its user-unfriendliness does, however, not imply that it is the ethical flaw which makes the house aesthetically appealing. The kind of beauty the house exhibits may only be achievable at the cost of the ethical flaw of being functionally unsuitable, but the ethical flaw is not among the features that we aesthetically appreciate. (I here presuppose that not all beauty a building can have is of a narrowly functional variety.) Moreover, the claim that the house is aesthetically flawed due to its ethical flaw is compatible with claiming that it is excellent from an aesthetic point of view and a great work of architecture. The aesthetic flaw constituted by its ethical flaw is clearly outweighed by other aesthetic merits of the house.

#### 4. AESTHETIC VALUE AND ETHICAL VALUE

Debates regarding relations between ethical and aesthetic values usually discuss whether the ethical value of a work can influence its aesthetic value. The converse question – whether the aesthetic value of a work can influence its ethical value – is rarely discussed.<sup>29</sup> My third thesis affirmatively answers this further question; here is an argument:

- P1) An architectural work is ethically flawed (or meritorious) when it impairs (or promotes) human well-being.
- P2) Since living in an aesthetically appealing environment is essential to human well-being, an architectural work will in some cases impair (or promote) human well-being due to aesthetic flaws (or merits).
- C) An architectural work will in some cases be ethically flawed (or meritorious) due to its aesthetic flaws (or merits). (Thesis 3.)

All three steps of this argument are *pro tanto* claims. The influence of an architectural work on the well-being of human beings is not the only factor to determine its ethical value. For instance, the work can also be ethically flawed because it contributes to violation of moral rights. And having aesthetic merits or flaws is not the only factor to determine whether a work promotes or impairs human well-being, or whether it is ethically meritorious or flawed. The work can, for instance, also promote human well-being and be ethically praiseworthy because it is structurally safe and suits its function. Furthermore, P2 and C are qualified as relevant in some cases, since not all aesthetic merits and flaws are sufficiently significant to be ethically relevant or have serious impact on human well-being.

This argument leaves three big questions to address. The first two

concern P1, the third P2. Firstly, whose well-being should be considered in ethical evaluation of an architectural work? For fairness' sake, this must encompass all persons affected by the work. Due to their public character, architectural works affect even the well-being of persons not directly involved in constructing or using them. Due to their durability, they affect people for a long time, often over many generations. Hence not only the well-being of architects, workers, and users should be taken into consideration, but also the well-being of neighbours and passers-by, for instance; and not only the current well-being of people, but also their future well-being – even the well-being of future generations.

Secondly, what does it mean to promote or impair the well-being of affected human beings? This depends on the account of well-being.<sup>30</sup> According to a “desire-satisfaction” account, well-being lies in the satisfaction of one’s informed desires, that is, desires one would have if one were fully or at least sufficiently informed about one’s situation. It is likely that these desires include the desire to live in an aesthetically pleasing environment, as well as much more specific aesthetic preferences, which may vary across persons and cultures. The main problem with such accounts is that people may desire things that run counter to their own (and other people’s) well-being, and they may hold such desires even after being properly informed of such. “Objective list” accounts, on the other hand, hold that well-being lies in possession of all or most of the goods to be found on a list, which is objective in the sense that its items contribute to our well-being even if we do not desire them. Most lists proposed in the literature contain an aesthetic asset – “aesthetic experience,”<sup>31</sup> for instance, or “the awareness of true beauty.”<sup>32</sup> A frequent objection to such accounts is that they ignore reasonable differences among people as to what well-being consists of. This objection can be accommodated

“THE KIND OF BEAUTY THE HOUSE EXHIBITS MAY ONLY BE ACHIEVEABLE AT THE COST OF THE ETHICAL FLAW OF BEING FUNCTIONALLY UNSUITABLE, BUT THE ETHICAL FLAW IS NOT AMONG THE FEATURES THAT WE AESTHETICALLY APPRECIATE.”

to some extent by admitting that the listed goods can often be realized in very different manners.

A third big question arises relative to subjective preferences, which include aesthetic propensities: Which qualities of an architectural work count as aesthetic merits, and which are considered aesthetic flaws? This may vary with culture and age, but also within a culture during a certain age. There is, for instance, often a divide between the aesthetic assessments of experts and those of laypersons. Architects and architectural critics tend to find certain forms, materials and styles beautiful, which laypersons may find ugly and unfriendly; and laypersons tend to find buildings aesthetically appealing, which experts may criticize as banal or kitschy.<sup>33</sup> Taking aesthetic preferences of laypeople as authoritative might lead to a banal repetition of conventional structures; in many contexts, retro-architecture which imitates a well-established and popular style of the past may be what best fits the aesthetic preferences of the general public. Letting experts determine what is considered an aesthetic merit means adopting a paternalistic attitude. Both are undesirable stances. Since architectural works are part of our living environment, aesthetic preferences of people who use public spaces need to be taken into account in planning contexts as well as in political decisions regarding land-use. These aesthetic preferences, however, should not be regarded as simply given and unchanging, as laypersons may learn from experts who are more experienced in dealing with aesthetic questions. To navigate an intermediate course between uncritical satisfaction of laypersons' aesthetic requirements and a paternalistic approach demands dialogue between architects and the public, and presents an educational challenge to architects and architectural critics.<sup>34</sup>

## CONCLUSION

I have proposed a broad notion of architectural value which includes all qualities appropriate to consider when evaluating a work of architecture. It is beyond dispute that aesthetic properties are among these qualities. My first thesis claims that at least some ethical properties are also among the qualities that should be considered in an architectural evaluation. My second and third theses concern relations between the ethical and the aesthetic value out of the values involved in composing the architectural value. These theses claim that the ethical and the aesthetic value interact in such a manner that an architectural work will in some cases be aesthetically flawed (or meritorious) due to the fact that it is ethically flawed (or meritorious) and *vice versa*.<sup>35</sup>

## ENDNOTES

1. However, I do not take for granted that, every time architects or architectural theorists use morally supercharged terminology, the evaluation is of an ethical nature. Since Vitruvius' age, architects and architectural theorists have often used ethical terms in order to justify aesthetic preferences – e.g. when claiming that it be a moral duty to design buildings true to their materials, not hiding structural support, and expressing the spirit of their period. See Maurice Lagueux, “Ethics versus Aesthetics in Architecture,” *The Philosophical Forum* 35 (2004): 124-133.

2. “Work of architecture” is often understood in a much narrower sense and reserved for works of artistic architecture, which are distinguished from mere buildings. Nikolaus Pevsner, e.g., opens his *Outline of European Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, [1948] 1957, 23), with the famous remark: “A bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture.”

3. What I mean by ethical, aesthetic and architectural values is further explained at the end of section 1.

4. Technically, the difference between moderate moralism and contextualism is as follows. Moderate moralism takes the value relations to be invariant and symmetric; according to contextualism, they are complex and invertible.

5. See, e.g., Noël Carroll, “Moderate Moralism”, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 36 (1996): 223-238; Berys Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch. 3; Alessandro Giovannelli, “The Ethical Criticism of Art: A New Mapping of the Territory,” *Philosophia* 35 (2007): 117-127. Giovannelli's taxonomy has been adapted to architecture by Andrea Sauchelli, “Functional Beauty, Architecture, and Morality: A Beautiful Konzentrationslager?” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 62 (2012): 128-147.

6. It could be argued that we should not be concerned with utility when evaluating a work of architecture as such because a building's usefulness is disturbingly malleable over time while other features such as its beauty may endure. (Thanks to Tom Spector for raising this objection.) However, I do not think that the variability of a feature is a good reason not to consider that feature in an evaluation of an architectural work. Furthermore, in evaluating a work, we should distinguish between its intended and its actual function. An architectural work may have fulfilled its intended function, even though it is no longer in use (as in case of ancient temples), or it may function well, even though it did not fit the originally intended function (as in the case of Zaha Hadid's Vitra fire station).

7. Cf. Sauchelli, "Functional Beauty," 138.

8. See Christian Illies and Nicholas Ray, "Philosophy of Architecture," in *Philosophy of Technology and Engineering Sciences*, Vol. 9, ed. Anthonie Meijers (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2009), 1199-1256; Warwick Fox, "Architecture Ethics," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Technology*, ed. Jan Kyrre Berg Olsen, Stig Andur Pedersen and Vincent F. Hendricks (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 387-391.

9. Under which conditions can we say that the architectural work itself is morally flawed in such cases? James Harold has suggested a counterfactual test for narrative artworks that can be adapted to architecture: The violation of moral rights during the planning and construction phase of an architectural work influences its moral evaluation if the same work could not have been realized without violating moral rights. See James Harold, "On Judging the Moral Value of Narrative Artworks," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64 (2006): 259-270.

10. Nigel Taylor, "Ethical Arguments about the Aesthetics of Architecture," in *Ethics and the Built Environment*, ed. Warwick Fox (London: Routledge, 2000): 163-206, here 201-205.

11. See, e.g., Gaut, *Art*, 6-9.

12. See Sauchelli, "Functional Beauty," 138-139.

13. For the distinction between responsibility and accountability see Luciano Floridi and J.W. Sanders, "On the Morality of Artificial Agents," *Minds and Machine* 14 (2004): 349-379.

14. See, e.g., Simona Storchi, "Il Fascismo è una casa di vetro': Giuseppe Terragni and the Politics of Space in Fascist Italy," *Italian Studies* 62 (2007): 231-245.

15. Cf. Gaut, *Art*, 64-65.

16. See Sauchelli, "Functional Beauty." In contrast to Sauchelli, I assume

that simply looking, without being, fit for function is not an aesthetic merit. A more elaborated treatment of functional beauty should distinguish between intended and actual functions (see endnote 6). For slightly different conceptions of functional beauty than Sauchelli's, see Glenn Parsons and Allen Carlson, *Functional Beauty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), and Larry Shiner, "On Aesthetics and Function in Architecture: The Case of the 'Spectacle' Art Museum," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 69 (2011): 31-41.

17. Cf. Gaut, *Art*, 83.

18. The notions of form, function and structure are widely debated and defined in very different ways within architecture theory; for a good overview, see Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson 2000). An in depth study of the varieties in how and what buildings 'mean' is provided in Christoph Baumberger, *Gebaute Zeichen. Eine Symboltheorie der Architektur* (Frankfurt a/M: Ontos 2010).

19. Cf. Gaut, *Art*, 81-82.

20. See George Dickie, "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1 (1964), 56-65. For an overview of the debate provoked by Dickie's article see James Shelley, "The Concept of the Aesthetic," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/aesthetic-concept/>.

21. Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism: A Critical Introduction* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), 35.

22. Parsons and Carlson, *Functional Beauty*, 25.

23. Positions committed to this claim are sometimes labeled "immoralism." See Matthew Kieran, "Forbidden Knowledge: The Challenge of Immoralism," in *Art and Morality*, ed. José Luis Bermúdez and Sebastian Gardner (London:



Routledge, 2003), 56-73.

24. Sauchelli, "Functional Beauty," 143-144. He admits that in some cases (such as Nazi extermination camps) immoral functions are perceived as so hideous that we are unable to aesthetically appreciate these buildings as functionally beautiful in virtue of their immoral functions.

25. Sauchelli, "Functional Beauty," 146.

26. Cf. Gaut, *Art*, 59-60.

27. A *pro tanto* aesthetic principle specifies the contribution an aesthetically relevant feature makes to the aesthetic value of a work, but it does not determine whether the work is aesthetically good, all things considered. In this way, the moderate moralist's *pro tanto* principle that ethical flaws of an architectural work diminish its aesthetic value leaves open the possibility that an ethically flawed work is aesthetically good overall. This will be the case if the work has aesthetic merits which outweigh the aesthetic flaws of the work constituted by its ethical flaws (see the last paragraph of section 1).

28. Cf. Gaut, *Art*, 57-66.

29. While one could find historical examples, the matter is rarely discussed in the contemporary literature. An exception is Robert Stecker, "The Interaction of Ethical and Aesthetic Value," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 45 (2005): 138-150.

30. Cf. Ibo van de Poel, "Can We Design for Well-Being?" in *The Good Life in a Technological Age*, ed. Philip Brey, Adam Briggie and Edward Spence (New York: Routledge, 2012), 295-306. For the distinction between "desire-satisfaction" and "objective list" accounts of well-being see also Philip Brey, "Well-Being in Philosophy, Psychology, and Economics," in the same volume, 15-34.

31. John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 60.

32. Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 499.

33. Cf. Robert Gifford, Donald W. Hine, Werner Muller-Clemm, D'Arcy J. Reynolds JR, Kelly T. Shaw, "Decoding Modern Architecture: A Lens Model Approach for Understanding the Aesthetic Differences of Architects and Laypersons," *Environment and Behavior* 32 (2000): 163-187.

34. See Sabine Roeser, "Aesthetics as a Risk Factor in Designing Architecture," in *Ethics, Design and Planning of the Built Environment*, ed. Claudia Basta and Stefano Moroni (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 93-105.

35. I thank Stefan Koller, Tom Spector, and an anonymous reviewer for their constructive comments and suggestions.

# ARISTOTLE, AUTONOMY, AND DESIGN: ANCIENT WISDOM AND THE MODERN HOME <sup>1</sup>

MARK JENSEN

In the discipline of architecture, we can distinguish at least three different questions related to autonomy. First, we can ask about the autonomy of the concepts and judgments made by architects and philosophers of architecture. Does architecture possess conceptual frameworks and principles of judgment that are logically independent of other disciplines, such as ethics, aesthetics, engineering, and politics? Second, we can ask about the autonomy of the architect herself in her practice. Are her designs constrained by persons and factors outside of her control? Finally, we can ask about the autonomy of citizens who live in spaces designed by architects. What possibilities or constraints are actualized by the design of a space for those who dwell in it?

Hidden among these questions are two different conceptions of autonomy. The conception presupposed by the first question is concerned with the independence of architecture as an area of theoretical investigation. A discipline is autonomous when it can be carried out independently of other disciplines. A discipline that lacks autonomy is one that depends on other theoretical domains for its investigation. The conception presupposed by the second and third questions, however, is concerned with the autonomy or freedom of the people involved, both architects and those who occupy their dwellings.<sup>2</sup> Here, an architect is autonomous or free to the extent that her designs are within her control; an occupant is autonomous or free to the extent that she faces no external constraints

“THE CONCEPTION PRESUPPOSED BY THE SECOND AND THIRD QUESTIONS, HOWEVER, IS CONCERNED WITH THE AUTONOMY OR FREEDOM OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED, BOTH ARCHITECTS AND THOSE WHO OCCUPY THEIR DWELLINGS.”

in attempting to live according to her own rational plan.<sup>3</sup> The problem for architects and occupants who lack autonomy is not dependence on something else but rather a restriction on their freedom to access their respective goods.

My aim in this paper is to explore this second conception. Is it possible that we as designers and occupants – are not realizing all of the goods that could be available to us? Do current practices in residential architecture restrict the freedom of designers and occupants? It is my view that we have good reasons to answer these questions in the affirmative. In order to vindicate my judgment, I will develop a critical approach grounded in the anthropological, social, political, and architectural analysis of Aristotle. Central themes in Aristotle's thought, especially his accounts of *eudaimonia* (happiness), *arête* (virtue), and *phronêsis* (practical wisdom), have been rehabilitated by contemporary moral philosophers and find support among contemporary moral psychologists.<sup>4</sup> Insofar as Aristotle's thought in these areas retains theoretical and practical significance, it seems possible that other aspects of his thought, especially his accounts of the *oikos* (house) and the *polis* (city-state), are worthy of renewed attention as well.<sup>5</sup> To be clear, my primary aim in this paper is not interpretive: while the reader will gain some insight into Aristotle's views on the topics in question, my aim instead is to develop a critical approach to architectural practice that draws upon some of the compelling aspects of Aristotle's thought.

Aristotle's recent rehabilitation among moral philosophers was motivated by worries about the reigning Enlightenment orthodoxy.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the best way to appreciate the appeal of an account of freedom in architectural practice based on Aristotle will be to begin by drawing a contrast with the Enlightenment. This discussion occupies Part 1 of the paper. In Part 2, I develop my critical standpoint. Finally, in Part 3, I point out ways in which our contemporary architectural and urban planning practices inhibit the realization of important goods and sketch some avenues for improving the current state of affairs in accord with my approach. I also return to the distinction between the two different conceptions of autonomy that I laid out at the very beginning, arguing that my exploration of the second question has implications for how we think about the first.

## 1. AUTONOMY AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT TRADITION

In the Western Enlightenment tradition, autonomy is self-governance. The autonomous person is ruled by her reason; she is not controlled by the internal influences of passion and appetite or the external influences

of custom and culture.<sup>7</sup> Understood in this way, autonomy lies at the heart of the liberal tradition of Western individualism. It is the only legitimate basis for political authority.<sup>8</sup> It is the proper achievement of mature people in mature societies.<sup>9</sup> With their correlative respect for the autonomy of others, mature autonomous citizens are reasonable, democratic, tolerant, and just.<sup>10</sup>

Despite its many virtues, the Enlightenment account of autonomy strikes many of us as too thin. In the first place, there is little explanation for how it is that we as individuals and groups achieve autonomy. Apart from notable outliers such as Locke's discussion in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, Rousseau's meditations in *Emile*, and Mill's personal reflections in his *Autobiography*, little attention is paid to the specific task of cultivating autonomous people. In the philosophical tradition, mature, autonomous citizens are typically taken as given. The problem here is of course that real people are not like this. We were children once; we are adults now; and we will be senior citizens later. Human life is a succession of stages with different challenges, standards, and requirements for self-governance at each stage. An account of autonomy that leaves out this dimension is not adequate.

In the second place, the account of autonomy, especially in its Kantian and neo-Kantian versions, is tied to an account of self-governance that appears to be too abstract. For Kant, the autonomous person is the person who makes moral judgments on the basis of a universalization procedure.<sup>11</sup> It seems to me, however, that moral judgments cannot be made on the basis of a universalization procedure alone. Moral judgment also requires a pre-deliberative canon of norms including ideals, functional descriptions, principles, practices, and habits. To be sure: I'm not defending a particular account of the pre-deliberative canon. My point is merely that the contents of a good life marked

“ DO CURRENT PRACTICES IN RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE RESTRICT THE FREEDOM OF DESIGNERS AND OCCUPANTS? ”

by excellent moral judgment cannot be determined on the basis of an impartial rational procedure alone.

The implication of these concerns, it seems to me, is that we need a more robust account of autonomy. This not to reject the Enlightenment tradition altogether: several aspects of the tradition seem to be correct. For example, autonomy of the sort that matters to us is a condition that human beings achieve when things are going right for us – it is a mark of human flourishing. It is something we achieve in varying degrees. In this way, autonomy is not a necessary or basic characteristic of the human condition; it is instead something that we must figure out how to get for others and ourselves.

## 2. AUTONOMY AND ARISTOTLE

Aristotle begins with a very different understanding of human flourishing and a correspondingly different account of self-governance. In developing my approach, I will focus on three specific aspects of his analysis: (i) his account of the fundamental unit of human life, (ii) his account of the good life in community, and (iii) the way he employs the “doctrine of the mean” in the context of architecture. These three elements will give us tools sufficient to sketch an account of freedom sufficient to sustain a critique of contemporary architecture – especially contemporary home design and construction.

### 2.1 THE FUNDAMENTAL UNIT OF HUMAN LIFE

The concept of the “fundamental unit of human life,” is the concept of the proper starting point for an investigation into the human species from the perspective of philosophical anthropology. Finding this fundamental unit requires some care: we can err too small by focusing on a component and err too big by focusing on an aggregate. Aristotle regards the household as the fundamental unit of human life and identifies its elements with a quote from Hesiod. The household includes: “a house, a wife, and an ox for the plow.”<sup>12</sup> Abstracting a bit, let’s call these elements (i) one’s residence, (ii) one’s intimate relationships, and (iii) one’s tools for one’s work.<sup>13</sup>

We should notice immediately the contrast between Aristotle’s starting point and that of the Enlightenment. Aristotle does not begin with the abstract rational individual. He begins instead with a person in context. From Aristotle’s perspective, the Enlightenment approach that begins with the bare individual is bound to fail in the same way that the biologist

is bound to fail who attempts to make sense of ants by starting the investigation with a single ant confined to a specimen jar. The component part is mistaken for the whole unit.

Aristotle's more inclusive starting point lays the groundwork for our account of human freedom. The extent of one's freedom will depend on the degree to which one achieves success appropriate to one's residence, relationships, and work. For example, as physical beings, we require shelter from the elements in the world that threaten our bodies. As developmental beings, we require relationships with more mature people to help us grow. And as dependent and aspirational beings, we need avenues through which we can work to meet our unmet needs. Together, it seems right to say that the degree to which we are free depends in part on the degree to which we have found success in building a dwelling, establishing a social network, and finding meaningful work.<sup>14</sup> Contrapositively, to the extent that these three tasks are challenges for us, our freedom is constrained and our lives are characterized by a kind of servitude. In other words, the idea of self-governance for Aristotle is one that presupposes natural dependence on others and modifications to the environment.

This insight is not especially profound; we might regard it as a philosophical adaptation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.<sup>15</sup> However, it seems to me that the relationship between these three elements of basic human life and human freedom is more complex. It is also the case that freedom, at least to some degree, is necessary in order to achieve a degree of success in these three elements. In other words, these elements, together with freedom, are symbiotically related. For example, in order to secure a residence that will enable my family to flourish, I require successful work. And in order to secure successful work, I require a secure residence in which or from which to do it.

And both of these observations presuppose that I can make choices with respect to my residence and my work that are free from the constraints that would keep me from making reasoned choices that reflect my own moral, philosophical, or religious account of the good life in the context of my community.

We can conclude then that the Aristotelian account of freedom begins holistically and *in situ*. To be a human being is to be located in a place, intimately connected to others, and involved in work. Autonomy in the more robust sense that I am developing here both requires and enables success with respect to these basic elements of human life. One is free to the extent that one can pursue one's account of the good life.

## 2.2 THE GOOD IN COMMUNITY

While Aristotle regards the household as the fundamental unit of human life, he does not regard it as the complete focus of an investigation into human affairs. By itself, a household is not self-sufficient. On his view, households are naturally organized into villages and a group of villages together constitutes a city (*polis*).<sup>16</sup> Only when we build a city do we achieve a self-sufficient human community, and, in turn, the proper focus for a comprehensive investigation.<sup>17</sup> In other words, to understand and then evaluate human affairs we cannot but make reference to the city. Villages, households, and citizens are all constituents of a city in their own fashion; their activities cannot be understood without reference to the city as a whole.

Now to say that a city is constituted by its citizens is not to say that a city is simply composed of citizens. If that were so, the good of the city could be measured purely in terms of the individual success and failures of its citizens. Instead, the good for the city is a common good. It is achieved when each of the citizens in the city performs his or her specific function well. Consider Aristotle's claim about the chief good at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

*And since it [political science] uses the other sciences concerned with action, and moreover legislates what must be done and what avoided, its end will include the ends of the other sciences, and so this will be the human good. For even if the good is the same for a city as for an individual, still the good of the city is apparently a greater and more complete good to acquire and preserve.<sup>18</sup>*

As Aristotle will explain in more detail, the function of the citizen is given not only in terms of her function in the context of the fundamental unit. Citizens' also have functions attached to their roles in the village,



and in turn, their roles in the city.<sup>19</sup> In Aristotle's ideal constitution, the government assigns these roles according to citizens' stages and capabilities. It seems to me that we need not follow him in assigning these roles involuntarily, but we must follow him in recognizing that the obligations associated with excellent citizenship extend beyond one's obligations in the household.

We must take care in describing the relationship between the household and the city in much the same way that we took care in describing the relationship between the constituent elements of the household and the freedom of the individual. The flourishing city is certainly one in which all of the households are flourishing as well. But it does not follow that a city of flourishing households is sufficient to realize a flourishing city. In other words, the success of individual households in achieving their private goods does not guarantee the achievement of all of the common and public goods associated with a flourishing city. Insofar as citizens identify with the good not only of their household but also of their city, citizens' pursuits will include a range of private, public, and common goods. As always, the starting point for these pursuits will be citizens' dwellings, relationships, and work. As a result, our final account of these elements must be further tailored to suit the further goods that these elements both require and enable. Importantly, free citizens are not defined in terms of the absence of government interference.<sup>20</sup> Instead, free citizens are those who are enabled by the city to accomplish their good and who, at the same time, enable the city to achieve its common and public goods.

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### 2.3 THE GOLDEN MEAN

The “golden mean” is a central theme in Aristotle's moral and political thought. In many activities and pursuits, we achieve excellence when we find the mean between extremes of excess and

deficiency. Courage, for example, is the moral virtue concerned with our feelings of confidence in the face of a threat.<sup>21</sup> Courage is found in the mean between excessive feelings of confidence (the vice of foolhardiness) and a deficiency of feelings of confidence (the vice of cowardice).

Aristotle doesn't say much about architecture. But the few comments he does offer on the subject reflect a more generalized application of the doctrine of the mean. First, with respect to the organizational plan for houses in a city, Aristotle says:

*Where private dwellings are concerned, the modern Hippodamean scheme of laying them out in straight rows is considered pleasanter and more useful for general purposes. But when it comes to security in wartime, the opposite plan, which prevailed in ancient times, is thought to be better. For it makes it difficult for foreign troops to enter and for attackers to find their way around. Hence the best city-state should share features of both plans. This is possible if the houses are laid out like vine "clumps," that is if certain parts and areas are laid out in straight rows, but not the city-state as a whole. In this way, both safety and beauty will be well served.<sup>22</sup>*

Notice here that Aristotle is concerned with both form and function. For the purposes of aesthetics, he regards straight rows as superior. For better defense, irregular arrangements make it difficult for invaders to succeed. While this discussion departs from Aristotle's usual way of employing the doctrine of the mean, he is clearly following a middle path here between an extreme concern with aesthetics and an extreme concern with specific function. This moderate path will best achieve excellence in city planning.

Aristotle's predilection for moderation can also be found in his reflections on residential design, at least by implication. In describing the design of the city, he says, "...it should be large enough to enable the inhabitants to live a life of leisure in a way that is generous and at the same time temperate."<sup>23</sup> Aristotle's overall aim is to describe a happy city where the citizens live flourishing lives together. Flourishing citizens, in turn, are citizens who live excellently; living excellently, in turn, is a matter of performing activities virtuously. It would be consistent with Aristotle's argumentative approach, I think, to extend this remark to residential design. Residences should be big enough to enable citizens to be leisured (that is, free to pursue the liberal arts and the social virtues) but not so big as to encourage vices of excess such as ostentatiousness and wastefulness.

In other words, happiness will not be found in a life preoccupied with maintaining one's estate. Such a life would be similar to the hypochondriac or the germaphobe: people who've made an end out of something that should rightfully be regarded merely as a means to an end. Residences for

Aristotle are the tools of their occupants, not the purposes of life for the occupants. The homeowner who does nothing with his life but work on his home misses out on the complete human good and contributes little to the common good. Interestingly, just as residences are not the ultimate ends of their occupants, nor are residences the ultimate ends of their designers. Residences are designed and built in order to enable their occupants to pursue the good, including the individual, common, and public good. In this way, an architect is a good architect if she designs and builds residences that accomplish these aims. She contributes to the common good of the city. She is free *qua* architect insofar as she identifies with the common good of the city, this good informs her practice, and she is not encumbered by external constraints on her practice.

Finally, it's not just the size of the residence that has an effect on the extent of our freedom. The design of the residence can also have an effect. Aside from the studies that show that our environment can affect our mood and productivity, we know from our own experience that the nature and quality of our surroundings can profoundly affect the vitality of the talking, living, and working that we do in them. Together with an excellent architect and builder, we believe that we could construct for our household a space that could maximize the capabilities of our household and thereby greatly increase the degree of freedom with which we could achieve an excellent (and thereby happy) life in community with others.

“THE HOMEOWNER WHO DOES NOTHING WITH HIS LIFE BUT WORK ON HIS HOME MISSES OUT ON THE COMPLETE HUMAN GOOD AND CONTRIBUTES LITTLE TO THE COMMON GOOD.”

#### 2.4 A MODEL OF AUTONOMY IN ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE

Let us now synthesize the themes that we've developed above. First, consider the residence. At bottom, residences are tools: they are spaces designed to enable us to flourish in the context of our relationships, our work, and our leisure. The good residence is one in which our freedom

is enhanced. At the same time, the design of the residence must reflect the circumstances of our household and its responsibilities with respect to the city more broadly. A good residence increases the freedom of its occupants to pursue the good life in community. But like all of our tools, we prefer those that do more than answer to our functional needs – we prefer those that answer to our functional needs in a way that we find aesthetically pleasing.

Next, consider the architect. We do not assume that every citizen will be a master of design and construction. In the excellent city there will be division of labor. Some citizens will be excellent at design and construction; the flourishing life is one in which they are free in the city to design and construct residences (etc.) that enable households and the city to flourish. Given what we've said above, the design and construction process must be a rational partnership. The architect brings expertise and experience to bear while the occupants bring aesthetic preferences and an account of the particular goods and pursuits attached to their household. The ultimate aim of the partnership is to produce a dwelling that conforms to the description above.

Finally, we must qualify this account by noting that, as human beings, there is no one perfect designed space in which we will be enabled to flourish for our entire life. At different stages in our life, we will have different functional requirements, together (perhaps) with developing aesthetic judgments. So either our residences must be flexible or our city must offer a range of choices. Both of these options involve the risk of limitations to our freedom.

### 3. CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

#### 3.1 A CRITIQUE OF CURRENT PRACTICE

How does this ideal match up with our current realities? We should note first that this entire vision is available to the wealthiest members of contemporary society. Architects and builders exist who could, in partnership with homeowners, design and build dwellings that reflect and enable freedom in this sense. I frame this first claim counterfactually, however, because in most cases those homeowners who can afford to realize this model fail to achieve it. They build without regard to the common and public good of the community, seeking instead to isolate themselves in enclaves with other wealthy people. They also build large, wasteful, ostentatious homes that enable vice and inhibit virtue. At the same time, the socioeconomic realities of contemporary markets act as disincentives to architects and builders to partner with middle and lower

classes in pursuit of freedom in the sense I describe above.

Outside of the wealthy, most of us select from and live in residences that neither are the product of genuinely autonomous architecture nor enable freedom for occupants. In the first place, many of us cannot make significant alterations to our dwellings because we do not own them. Even in the United States, the ownership rate is below sixty-five percent.<sup>24</sup> In the second place, even when we have some choice among possible houses or apartments, our options are nearly all one form or another of mass housing. Mass housing is, by definition, designed without contact and therefore without input from those who will occupy it. To be sure: designers of mass housing are constrained by the market – the market requires that they produce units that people will select among a range of choices. But since the architects of mass housing must cater to a wide range of people, they must produce designs that are suited broadly.

This problem could be overcome if our building methods for mass housing permitted greater flexibility for configuration and reconfiguration. Unfortunately, our contemporary designs and building methods permit very little change on a macro level. Occupants can add furnishings, detailing, and color to a unit but they have little opportunity to create or adapt their main spaces to better match the distinctive aesthetic and functional characteristics of their particular household. Macro level aesthetic and functional characteristics – the ways in which the beauty of the unit as a whole might be tailored to match the household – are inaccessible without great cost. The autonomy of occupants is significantly constrained.

It is no better for the architects and builders of mass housing than it is for the occupants. In addition to having no direct connection to the eventual occupants of the dwellings they design and

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construct, they are rarely permitted to add furnishings, ornamentation, color, and other details to their products. In other words, they are not really permitted to finish designing and building a residence. Market forces require them to build residences that are incomplete from a design standpoint. Note that the problem here is not merely that of not seeing a design plan through to its full realization. It is instead the problem that the architect is not permitted to fully design a residence. Since she does not know the occupant, even a fully designed but not fully built structure would fail to satisfy the needs of a mass housing market that requires broad appeal. In this way, the architect too is constrained in her freedom with respect to the full use of her expertise in service of the good of the community and its citizens.

### 3.2 ELEMENTS OF A SOLUTION

It is possible that the problems I suggest above all reduce to problems of economic class. Even in a flourishing capitalist economy with redistributive policies that create a broad and flourishing middle class, it might be that the kind of freedom and flexibility that I defend is available only to the wealthiest members of society. A more optimistic attitude would hold that with creative thinking, sound government policy, and motivated entrepreneurship we could make progress.

Supposing that my model provides an attractive starting point for rethinking contemporary practice, it seems clear that at least the following three improvements would need to be made. First, we need to increase the *flexibility* of the residences that we design. Given that households and their needs are constantly evolving over time, we must design and build residences that can be more easily configured and reconfigured to fit the conditions necessary for a flourishing household. To be sure: some changes in the nature of a household will require changing residences. But changing residences is highly disruptive to the household and ought to be minimized for the sake of their pursuit of the good. Second, we need to find ways to enable households to make use of the full spectrum of talent that architects and builders have to offer. Achieving a complete design offers benefits for both the architect whose full talents are utilized and the occupants whose dwelling will be better suited to achieving their goods. Finally, we must find a way to reduce the costs associated with flexibility and complete design in order to expand the possibilities for a wider segment of the population. Insofar as greater numbers of architects and occupants can better achieve their goods, the common good for the community is better achieved.

At the outset, I noted that the autonomy of architecture as a theoretical discipline is different from the autonomy of the architect and the occupant. The latter two forms of autonomy concern the realization of specific goods while the former concerns disciplinary independence. The critical perspective that I develop here implies that architecture *qua* theoretical or academic discipline cannot be independent. Architecture serves the good of the city and thus stands subordinate to politics, broadly construed. Of course, this follows only in the context of the Aristotle-inspired ideal. If cities and other forms of community have no common good or *telos*, then architecture could be independent as a discipline. In a world of this sort, there is no such thing as a building out-of-place since there would be no organizing principle from which to render the judgment in question. But insofar as we still find ourselves making judgments of this sort, we still find the Aristotelian perspective or something like it attractive.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The views expressed in this presentation are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.

#### ENDNOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2nd International Conference of the International Society for Philosophy of Architecture: Autonomy Revisited, on July 11, 2014.
2. A discussion of the concepts of autonomy and freedom naturally invites the distinction between negative liberty and positive liberty. (For the

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canonical paper, see Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” in *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.) Insofar as my account has roots in Aristotle, it is best seen as part of the positive liberty tradition. However, it seems to me that the account I develop here can avoid the slippery slope to dogmatism and tyranny that was the chief concern of Berlin.

3. For a contemporary discussion of the idea of a rational plan, see John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Revised Edition (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 358-365.

4. See for example Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd Edition (Notre Dame: Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), and Daniel Russell, *Practical Intelligence and the Virtues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009). For virtue theory and moral psychology, see Nancy Snow, *Virtue as Social Intelligence: An Empirically Grounded Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010) and Christian Miller, *Character and Moral Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

5. Some work has already been done to re-appropriate Aristotle for politics. See Aristide Tessitore, ed., *Aristotle and Modern Politics: The Persistence of Political Philosophy* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

6. See for example MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 51-61.

7. See Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, edited by Lara Denis (Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2005), pp. 98-102.

8. See John Locke, “Second Treatise of Government,” in *Two Treatises of Government*, Student Edition, edited by Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), §99 (p. 333).

9. See Immanuel Kant, “Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment [1784],” translated by Thomas K. Abbott, in *Basic Writings of Kant*, edited with an introduction by Allen W. Wood (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), pp. 133-141.

10. John Rawls paints a thorough picture here. See Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” in John Rawls, *Collected Papers*, edited by Samuel Freeman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 573-615.

11. Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 81.

12. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252b10.

13. Notice that I have framed my discussion of our dwellings, relationships, and work as abstract types, rather than specific tokens. In Aristotle’s *Politics*,



the specific tokens include a patriarchal marriage, and slaves (human tools) if you have the money for them. We can accept the view that our thinking about human anthropology begins with dwellings, relationships, and work without being required to accept his specific account of the household.

14. Recently, Andrew Ballantyne has argued that architecture must be concerned with the habits of the occupants in their everyday lives. (See Andrew Ballantyne, “Architecture, Life, and Habit,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 69(1) 2011: 43-49.) On this point, Ballantyne and Aristotle are in agreement. However, Aristotle and contemporary neo-Aristotelians might worry that Ballantyne’s appeal to pragmatism will not provide him with the normative justification that he needs for “an appreciation of the fitness of the match between place and the ethos...” (p. 48). They might suggest that a neo-Aristotelian approach would provide what he needs.

15. Abraham Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” *Psychological Review*, 50(4): 370–396.

16. There is an excellent monograph on this relationship. See D. Brendan Nagel, *The Household as the Foundation of Aristotle’s Polis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

17. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252b27.

18. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Second Edition (Kindle Edition), translated and annotated by Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company), p. 2.

19. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1329a2ff.

20. Cf. Berlin, “Two Concepts...” As I noted above (note 2), I am defending a version of positive liberty.

21. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1115a7ff.

22. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1330b25.

23. Ibid, 1326b30.

24. Robert R. Callis and Melissa Kresin, “Residential Vacancies and Homeownership in the Second Quarter 2014,” *U.S. Census Bureau News*, <http://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/files/currenthvspress.pdf>. Accessed August 1, 2014.

# THE IMAGE IN POWER: VILÉM FLUSSER AND THE CRAFT OF ARCHITECTURE

FELIPE GUIMARÃES DE SOUZA FERNANDES LOUREIRO

The use of 3D renderings – computer-generated images which can look very realistic, some of them being easily mistaken for photographs – is widespread in both architectural practice and education. At first glance, these images seem to be incredibly useful for the communication between architects, clients and the general public, since they appear to offer a very clear and detailed vision of the final ‘product.’ However, my experience as a practising architect led me to believe that this apparent accuracy is misleading, and that it can actually be counter-effective. The *realism* of these images forces architects to be highly precise about aspects that were only supposed to come up at later stages, and they can also trick clients into approving a “beautiful picture” instead of a clearly expressed architectural idea.

In addition to these concerns, the indiscriminate use of these images seems to reinforce the idea that a building – or *space*, in broader terms – is mainly something to be experienced visually, and that a good building or space is one in which our eyes are constantly looking at ‘good pictures.’ This picturesque understanding of architecture not only neglects the haptic experience of space, flattening volumes into surfaces and space into perspectives, but it also reduces the work of the architect to the composition of pictures. As an architect, I cannot feel at ease with this reduction, and this unsettling led me to pursue a deeper understanding of the way we experience architectural images.

In his 1985 book *Ins Universum der technischen Bilder*,<sup>1</sup> Czech philosopher Vilém Flusser presents,

“THIS PICTURESQUE  
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OF ARCHITECTURE...  
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WORK OF THE  
ARCHITECT TO THE  
COMPOSITION OF  
PICTURES.”

“a model of cultural history” consisting of five rungs that symbolize different moments, each one being defined by a specific medium which prevailed in, “the task of transmitting information crucial to society and to individuals.”<sup>2</sup> At first, we could only express ourselves and transmit any kind of knowledge through our actions. Then, through the creation of objects, we could perpetuate these actions, leaving their imprints in artifacts which could still speak for us when we were no longer present. These objects have thus created culture, and were the first medium for transmitting and perpetuating it. Later on, images which depicted or symbolized objects and actions became even more relevant than the objects themselves. These images, such as cave paintings, are what Flusser calls *traditional images*. They were eventually supplanted, around 4000 years ago, by linear texts, which *explained* images, creating what he calls the “historical level.” Much more recently, texts have collapsed, “into particles that must be gathered up. This is the level of calculation and computation, the level of *technical images*,” or images created by apparatuses such as cameras, computers and TV sets.<sup>3</sup>

This model gives us an image of a linear process in which Man is constantly stepping back from the direct experience of the world, going deeper and deeper into abstraction. However, though new rungs are added, the previous ones are not lost or forgotten – they are simply different worlds, created and shaped by different media. Figure 1 is an attempt to sum-up and illustrate Flusser’s model.

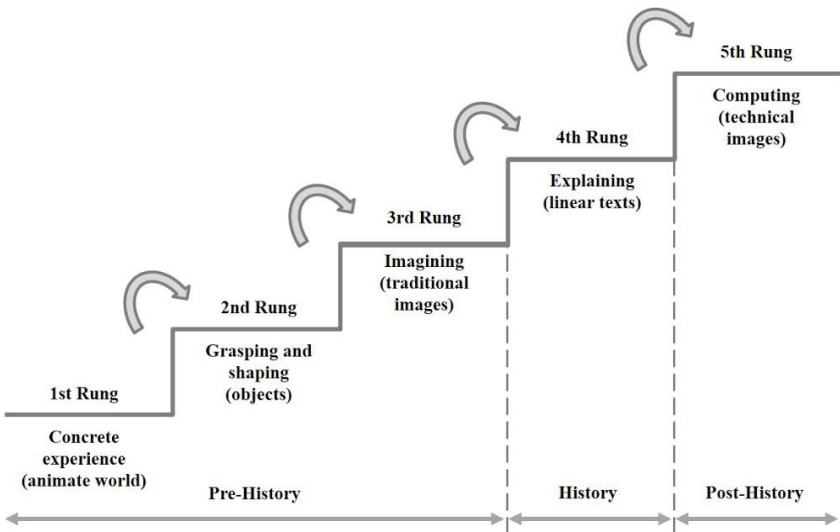


FIGURE 1. FLUSSER RUNGS.

Flusser calls the fifth rung, shaped by the prevailing of technical images, “a new, dimensionless level, one to be called, for lack of a more positive designation, ‘posthistory.’”<sup>4</sup> The term “posthistory” rises from the notion that History was created by writing, whose linear logic shaped the dominant ontology of an era, and that the prevalence of technical images – which are non-linear, but rather two-dimensional – marks the end of History. Today, the logics of linear writing no longer apply to the way we experience culture, and this experience influences the way in which we perceive reality as a whole. Regarding the production of images, for instance, technical images are made by *envisioners*, whereas traditional images were created by *image makers*.

*The gesture of the envisioner is directed from a particle toward a surface that can never be achieved, whereas that of the traditional image maker is directed from the world of objects toward an actual surface. The first gesture attempts to make concrete (to turn from extreme abstraction back into the imaginable); the second abstracts (retreats from the concrete). The first gesture starts with a calculation; the second starts with a solid object.*<sup>5</sup>

Photographers, for instance, work through an apparatus – a camera – and they, “can only desire what the apparatus can do. Any image produced by a photographer must be within the program of the apparatus.”<sup>6</sup> The apparatus is itself a kind of medium through which the envisioner works and *thinks*, since, “not only the gesture but also the intention of the photographer is a function of the apparatus. [...] a human intention works against the autonomy of the apparatus from the inside, from the automatic function itself.”<sup>7</sup>

Photography provides us with a great example of how we work *through* and *with* apparatuses in order to create technical images, but it also gives way for a confusion regarding the essence of these

“ THIS MODEL GIVES US AN IMAGE OF A LINEAR PROCESS IN WHICH MAN IS CONSTANTLY STEPPING BACK FOR THE DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF THE WORLD ”

images. Photographs can be seen as snapshots of reality, which arise, “through the capturing and holding of approaching particles or waves from the environment,” but these depictions are essentially different from those made through traditional images.<sup>8</sup> This can be easily understood if we consider their essential similarity with computer-generated images:

*The photographer visualizes a house as houses seems to be in the outside, objective world. Then he takes an apparatus in hand to “grasp” (with concepts such as “perspective” or “shutter speed”) what he has visualized. The apparatus calculates these concepts automatically, and the photographer presses a button to release the machine to carry out these calculations, making the vision of the house into an image. The computer operator visualizes an airplane as one might be found in the outside world. Then he takes an apparatus in hand [...] to “grasp” what he has visualized [...]. The apparatus calculates these concepts automatically, and the computer operator presses on the keyboard to make the apparatus carry out these calculations, making a visualization of an airplane appear on the screen. The same power to envision is at work in both cases, that of the photographer and of the computer operator, only it is more evident with the computer operator, who is more conscious than the photographer of this power.<sup>9</sup>*

At first, these two kinds of images seem to be very different: the photograph of the house can be seen as a *depiction*, while the airplane drawing could be understood as a *model*. However, *they are both models*. In the example above, Flusser is talking about an activity which was created by an apparatus – there were no photographers before there were cameras – and another which already existed, but that was re-created by the use of an apparatus. Architects and designers have always worked with handmade drawings, and now most of them use computers for drawing. We can say that the handmade drawings were traditional images, and that they were depictions of what the designer or architect had in mind – they were depictions of *visions*, and these image makers knew how to *build* these images. On the other hand, anyone can take a picture without understanding how a camera works, and how photographs are *built*. The camera is what Flusser calls a *black box* – a mysterious apparatus that blindly, “transforms the effects of photons on molecules of silver nitrate into photographs.”<sup>10</sup> It is *opaque*, impenetrable.

Referring to his own work process, Flusser describes the functioning of his typewriter, which can be clearly understood and seen as an extension of his fingers: “I can watch as each pressed key sets a hammer in motion that strikes the intended letter onto the page and how the carriage moves to make way for the next letter.”<sup>11</sup> The typewriter is *transparent*, and Flusser seems to believe that this transparency makes it adequate for the craft

of writing: “When I write, I write past the machine toward the text.”<sup>12</sup> This happens because the typewriter is not a medium, but only a tool. The medium is linear text, which can be handwritten, typed, carved in stone, etc. The act of typing was obviously created by the typewriter, but apparently writers learned to use it as instinctively as their predecessors used their hands and tools. Writers have not become ‘typists.’

On the other hand, an opaque apparatus does something, which we do not understand, in a way that is invisible to us. Its working has no connection or resemblance to human actions, only its interface can be recognizable. Analyzing the development of human-computer interfaces, Bill Verplank argues:

*Piaget described three stages of learning. We are born with ENACTIVE or kinesthetic knowledge; we know how to grasp and suck. At a certain age we pay more attention to how things look; our ICONIC thinking is mistaken for example by a tall glass as “more.” Only at a certain age do we understand conservation; then we are ready for SYMBOLIC thinking. [...] The development of human-computer interfaces has followed the opposite path. The first interactive computers used teletypes (TTY) and the style of interaction was a dialog of symbols; I type and the computer types back at me. [...] with the invention of mouse and bit-map display, the iconic graphical “direct manipulation” interface became the dominant style. This progression suggests that the next stage is enactive interfaces.<sup>13</sup>*

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It is interesting to see that Flusser’s model for cultural history is quite similar to Piaget’s model for human development, and how human-computer interfaces apparently developed in the opposite way, becoming increasingly *intuitive*. With touchscreens and gesture recognition, this interaction seems much closer to the way we interact with concrete objects, but the process has become even more opaque, since we do not even have to know how

to operate the apparatuses – they can *read* us, understand our gestures, decode and compute them. The apparatus offers a field of possibilities, through which we can browse by repeating recognizable gestures – thus, to a certain extent, it is the apparatus which operates us. It can capture and translate our apparently instinctive gestures, but we have to ‘speak’ its language.

The ‘direct manipulation’ interface is still dominant, and the opaqueness of the apparatuses is transferred to the images they generate. Flusser states that technical images can never be true nor false – they can only be regarded as *probable* or *improbable*. This notion becomes quite clear if we consider how easy it is to manipulate technical images. With Photoshop and other similar software, photographs can be edited in a radical but imperceptible way. We can only tell that a photograph was edited when the editing goes too far, making it look *improbable*. This reveals how the “reality” of technical images is misleading, which led Flusser to state that “the basis for the emerging universe and emerging consciousness is the calculation of probability. From now on, concepts such as ‘true’ and ‘false’ refer only to unattainable horizons, bringing a revolution not only in the field of epistemology but also in those of ontology, ethics, and aesthetics.”<sup>14</sup>

This revolution has surely affected architecture in many different ways. In his 1982 essay *Architecture as Drawing*, Alberto Pérez-Gómez describes the development of architectural drawing throughout history, focusing on the Renaissance notion that architectural drawings were images of an architectural *idea*, “implying ‘look’, ‘semblance’, and ‘form.’”

*While the traditional builder, a primeval poet (from the Greek poiesis, to make) made his thoughts into building through the implementation of an operational geometry (in the original sense of giving human dimension to external reality), the Renaissance architect articulated the necessarily “abstract language” of walls, openings, and columns in architectural drawing, by means of plans (ichnographia), elevations (orthographia) and profiles or sections.*<sup>15</sup>

These drawings were never understood as *pictures* of the future building – they represented an idea, “to be fulfilled in the building.” Since most architects were deeply involved in the construction process, they were also responsible for turning this idea into reality. Thus, architectural drawings formed, “an autonomous realm of expression,” somehow independent from architecture itself - but always aiming for it.

During the 18th century, the development of descriptive geometry allowed architects to elaborate geometrically *precise* drawings. Architects could then distance themselves from the building site, drawing, “universal



projections that could [...] be perceived as reductions of buildings, creating the illusion of drawing as a neutral tool that communicates unambiguous information, like scientific prose.”<sup>16</sup> We can thus say that descriptive geometry is the “mother” of photography, since these drawings created the same illusion created by photographs – that of an impartial, direct depiction of reality. These “realistic” drawings have freed architects from the craft of building, turning them into “efficient designers.” Thus, the craft of the architect changed from conceiving an architectural idea – that could be communicated through the abstract language of drawings – and getting it built, to conceiving and creating drawings that illustrated how parts of a building should be built. This is why, following the development of descriptive geometry, architects like Boullée and Ledoux created another meaning for architectural drawings:

*Their drawings constituted a set of theoretical projects that they assumed to be true architecture, in opposition to their actual buildings. Not surprisingly, both architects felt that architecture was deeply akin to painting. Thus architecture became primarily the making of the drawing (or the model), the same poetic act that has always magically revealed the truth of reality.*<sup>17</sup>

The emphasis on this relation between architecture and painting may signal an attempt to keep the craft of architecture close to *traditional imagery*, protecting it from the *proto-technical images* created through descriptive geometry. Thus, at this point, we can say that there were two kinds of architectural drawings: instructional drawings made for the construction site and poetic drawings made for the expression of “true” architectural ideas. Although the poetic drawings to which Pérez-Gómez refers illustrated utopian, sometimes “unrealistic” buildings, actual buildings were still conceived through similar images, that is, from images of architectural *ideas*.

“FLUSSER STATES THAT TECHNICAL IMAGES CAN NEVER BE TRUE NOR FALSE – THEY CAN ONLY BE REGARDED AS PROBABLE OR IMPROBABLE.”

If we compare them with those made by Renaissance architects, the only difference would be that these images were now developed and divided into a set of instructional drawings which would guide the construction process.

Today, most architectural drawings are made through apparatuses, and even handmade drawings are inserted into a world dominated by technical images. Figure 2 below combines the process described by Pérez-Gómez with the model presented by Flusser. The visualization of this combination seems to highlight the fact that the current role of architectural images does not seem to be quite clear.

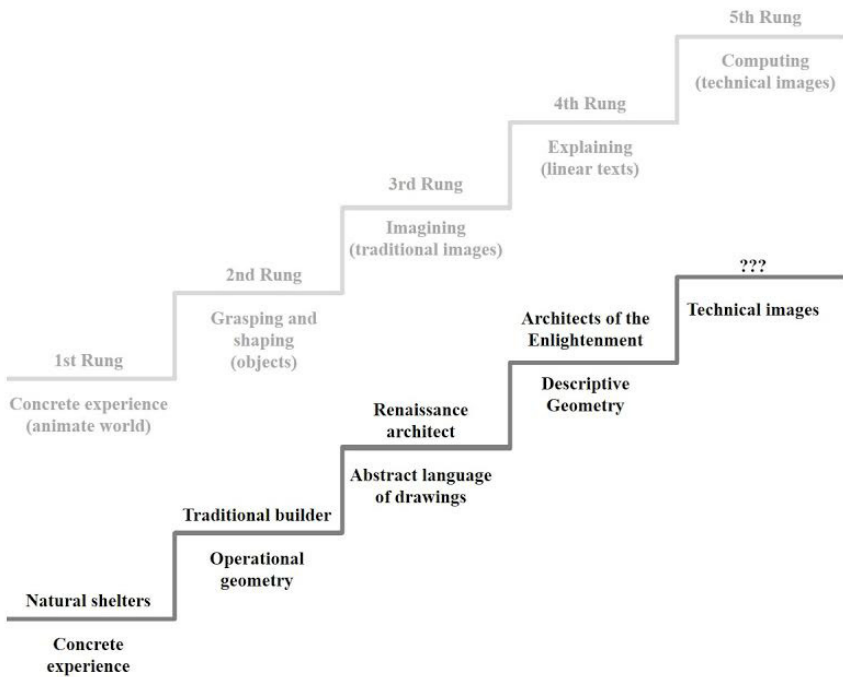


FIGURE 2: TIMELINE OF ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING.

In a 1990 lecture held in Budapest, Flusser states:

*The idea was that image should document politics. But, in the first half of the XX century, and more strongly after the Second World War, this relationship began to change. All of the sudden, politics were made in order to get into an image. The purpose of politics was an image – the purpose of the Arabs hijackers of airplanes was to be taken in television. Politics is aimed at being taken in an image.<sup>18</sup>*

To a certain extent, the same inversion happened to architectural images.

Now, it is the picture that generates the building. Photo-realistic 3D renderings “look” real, as if they were photographs taken in the future, after the building is complete. Thus, these images are “models for photographs,” and not depictions of architectural ideas. While most architectural drawings aim to represent a building which will only exist in the future, these images try to represent photographs that can only be taken in the future.

In a *New York Times* article on the role of renderings in the real estate market, Elizabeth A. Harris states that “the real purpose of these drawings is not to predict the future. Their real goal is to control it.”<sup>19</sup> This idea of controlling the future by providing an apparently objective vision of it can be traced back to the 18th century architectural drawings, and has reached its peak with the apparent photorealism of computer-generated images – which look even more objective and ‘neutral.’ However, to a certain extent, these images only exist as instructions to be interpreted by apparatuses. They have the same logic of the instructional drawings which made possible the creation of industrial design – they are a set of instructions, the numerical description of a composition. This is the logic of programming, the internal logics of the apparatus which is, at the same time, tool, surface, and frame.

Becoming envisioners, architects have lost the connection to the craft of image-making. This affects the expression, representation and communication of architectural ideas, and also the construction of the ideas themselves. Descriptive geometry created the theoretical background for the emergence of photography, and technical images as a whole, since its “neutral” depiction is something like an apparatus; it is a system that is already somehow “outside” of the architect’s mind, and through which he must work, keeping himself inside a limited field of possibilities.

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The role of the architect, like we usually see it now, is still the one forged in the 18th century. By working through and with descriptive geometry, architects are almost like industrial designers, the main difference being that construction has remained a much less automated process. Industrial design, including not only the design of industrial products but of the machines themselves, was only possible after the creation of descriptive geometry – and, if we see it as a “mental apparatus,” we can say that this apparatus has *created* industrial designers, as much as the camera has created photographers. After all, how could one conceive a machine to manufacture a product without being able to predict and translate the shape of the product with extreme precision? The machine had to be *programmed*.

Following the process described by Pérez-Gómez, we can sketch a progression that starts with the traditional builder, the *primeval poet* who worked directly on the building itself, develops into the role of the builder/artist/intellectual of the Renaissance, who worked with abstract drawings while still being deeply involved with building, and moves forward to the efficient-designers of the Enlightenment, who made instructional drawings in their studios, detached from the construction site. Figure 3 demonstrates a growing separation between thinking and building, which was mediated by drawing.

Now, we give instructions to an apparatus that “draws” instructional images, which will then be interpreted by the builder. However, with 3D printing, another apparatus is responsible for the production of the

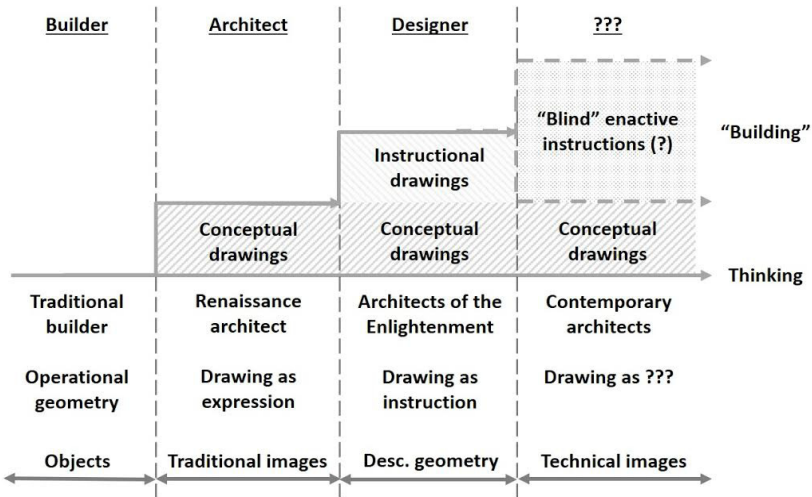


FIGURE 3: ARCHITECTURE'S INCREASING ABSTRACTION

object itself. In this case, a software – which can be the same the designer uses for drawing – decodes and transmits instructions for the apparatus which is going to mold, cut, or sculpt the object. Thus, there is no need for dialogue between different people – architect and builder, or designer and production engineer; the dialogue happens between apparatuses, and it is obviously *opaque* to us. All the designer needs to do is to give instructions to the software. Thus, we can say that this technology frees designers from having to create instructional drawings – they can focus exclusively on the creation of the object, of its *form*.

In a fairly near future, 3D printers may become widespread, so that anyone will be able to design and print (build) objects. Thus, no instructional images will be needed at all. Would anyone need designers then? Or should we expect designers to be the ones creating the best conceptual models for printing? The dialogue between apparatuses may free architects and designers from the need to create instructional images, but can this freedom be demeaning to their practices? Bill Verplank believes that the development of enactive interfaces can bring us closer to the objects we shape, like the traditional builder mentioned by Pérez-Gómez:

*This direct engagement with the materials, producing immediate results, is what makes for a craft tradition. There is no time to step back and plan or abstract and analyse. We need no principles, textbooks or classrooms, only studios. Masters pass on their practices to apprentices; the only learning is by doing.*

*The introduction of architecture and engineering as distinct from construction and manufacture made explicit the role of drawings and design. Are we returning to craft and forgetting design?<sup>20</sup>*

Verplank seems to consider *craft* as a practical skill learned through imitation and repetition, and design as an intellectual activity for ‘anticipation and reflection.’ Many of us may share this notion,

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US.”

only using the word “craft” when talking about a hands-on activity such as woodworking or shoemaking. These craftsmen use different tools and different gestures, whereas computers are now the main – if not the only – tool for intellectual work. Architects, engineers, lawyers and accountants work in similar workstations – desks with computers – and repeat the same gestures – typing and clicking. Thus, in *physical* terms, these activities have been leveled. These professionals work with different software, which provide different possibilities, but they are all *envisioners*. Their work is seen as a set of intellectual activities that can be reduced to the logics of programming – to information processing, to computation. Thus, while working, they can only imagine what was already imagined by the programmer, and this limitation can be really damaging to the *poetic* dimension of creative work.

Brazilian philosopher Olavo de Carvalho has developed the “Theory of the Four Discourses,” which consists in the idea that “human discourse is a unique potency which can be actualized in four different ways: poetics, rhetoric, dialectics and analytics (logic).”<sup>21</sup> This theory is based on his interpretation of the overall structure of Aristotelian philosophy, considering that the differences between the four discourses lie in the human intentions behind each one of them. Like Flusser, Carvalho also provides a model in which different eras were created by the prevalence of one of these discourses, which had, at the time, a recognized authority

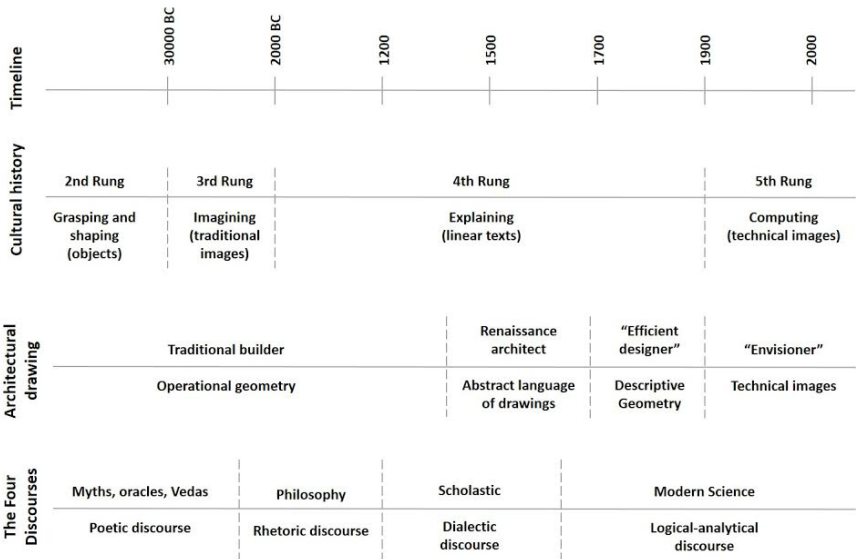


FIGURE 4: THREE MODELS

over the other three. This model also illustrates an increasing abstraction, a distancing from concrete experience which follows towards an analytic worldview, “scientific reason emerges as the supreme fruit of a tree which has poetic imagination as its roots, planted in the soil of the sensible nature.”<sup>22</sup>

This does not mean, however, that we live in an analytical age devoid of poetic discourse. In fact, this gradual movement from the poetic imagination all the way to logical ‘certainty’ pervades all creative work. Carvalho argues that “Poetics correspond [...] to the ‘first level’, to the connection between the data captured by the senses and the universe of discourse. The bridge between ‘world’ and ‘discourse.’”<sup>23</sup> Thus, when we are *creating*, we are turning our impressions of the world into discourse, that is, into something that can be *thought* and communicated. This is why Carvalho states that “Poetry belongs, therefore, to the genre of *mimesis*, it is a form of imitation, and its specific difference is that it does not imitate what has happened (like History, for instance), but what is possible. The imitation of *the possible* is the definition of poetic work.”<sup>24</sup>

We can then say that all creative work begins with the imitation of the possibilities in which the work will develop. Architects and designers begin their work not by envisioning images or manipulating form, but by discovering and selecting possibilities in which – and *with* which – to work. We can only discover possibilities by imagining them, and everything that can be imagined can become a possibility. When working with black boxes, we can surely use our imagination to discover possibilities inside those provided by the apparatus, but we are necessarily limiting our imagination, which was open to the whole of reality – as captured by our sensitive nature – to the program of the apparatus.

When we draw through apparatuses, we are

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necessarily creating a gap between thinking and drawing. Actually, we are not really drawing, but only giving instructions to an opaque, mysterious black box which will draw for us. Even though enactive interfaces can make this process more direct and intuitive, there is still this gap, this barrier – we are still losing something along the way. Pérez-Gómez refers to the platonic concept of *Chora*, which is, “both cosmic place and abstract space, and is also the substance of human crafts. [...] It is the ‘region’ of that which exists.”<sup>25</sup> When we design through apparatuses, the computer is not just a substitute for the pencil – it is actually a substitute for the pencil, the paper and, ultimately, a “virtual” substitute for *Chora*. Apparatuses try to create a virtual *Chora*, an immaterial region for that which exists – but only exists as information, as numbers which can be rearranged into images. Its hidden functioning emulates the aura of mystery that one can sense in the dimension of *the possible*, but it cannot really emulate the complete realm of possibility, the reach of the imaginable.

In any creative work, the process of imagining never stops, and it is actually made not only through thinking, but also through testing and prototyping. Architects and designers draw to visualize what they imagine, and to test possibilities. These drawings are not “printed ideas” – snapshots of what they are envisioning in their minds – but part of the process of imagining, of unraveling possibilities. Irish architect John Tuomey, for instance, draws inspiration from the ‘constellations’ of drawings made by Carlo Scarpa, who filled pages with small conceptual sketches in which he tested many variations of the same solution. Scarpa stated: “I want to see things, that’s all I really trust. I want to see, and that’s why I draw. I can see an image only if I draw it.”<sup>26</sup> Palladio’s sketches for the reconstruction of the Baths of Agrippa, for instance, are of the same *nature*. These drawings have 400 years between them, but their similarities allow us to believe that the process behind them was fairly the same. At least in this conceptual stage, Palladio and Scarpa worked in a very similar way – they were not thinking and drawing, but thinking *through* drawing.

Computers and 3D printers may seem to free us from a secondary activity which is – or at least was – part of the intellectual activity of design. However, this activity is not secondary – it is actually what makes design a *craft*. There is no design without drawing, especially without the kind of drawing which works as a way of thinking, “imagining, shaping, seeing, all at the same time.”<sup>27</sup> This kind of drawing can never be delegated to apparatuses, since these black boxes can never be *poetic* in the sense of making reality transparent to us. Architecture does this in a deep and direct way, by shaping the world in which we live.



The emergence of *parametricism* may lead us to believe that, in the future, the work of an architect can actually be reduced to just inserting data into a software, which will then create *forms*.<sup>28</sup> However, architecture cannot be reduced to a set of choices, to data processing. Any creative work develops in what Jorge Luis Borges calls, “the ambiguous time of art,” or, “In real time, in history, whenever a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates and loses the others. Such is not the case in the ambiguous time of art, which is similar to that of hope and oblivion. In that time, Hamlet is sane and is mad.”<sup>29</sup>

Architectural design is a creative, poetic activity based on reflection and synthesis, and achieved through drawing and visualization. Apparatuses can surely be very useful for architects, as long as they do not let themselves be “tricked” by the apparently unbiased, objective outputs made by these devices – and they also should not use them for tricking others. As Flusser puts it: “From the standpoint of so-called common sense, technical images are objective depictions of things out in the world. The critical project is to show that in defiance of common sense, they are not mirrors but projections that are programmed to make common sense appear mirror like.”<sup>30</sup> Architecture is indeed a craft, responsible for creating a connection between our lived-world and our culture, making some aspects of reality transparent to us. Its scope is that of the imaginable. This scope should not be reduced, and it just cannot be *programmed*.

#### ENDNOTES

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5. Ibid., p. 21.
6. Ibid., p. 20.
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11. Ibid., p. 24.
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22. Ibid., p. 43.
23. Ibid., p. 105.
24. Ibid., p. 137.
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26. Carlo Scarpa, in *Carlo Scarpa. The Complete Works*, edited by Francesco Dal Co and Giuseppe Mazzariol (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), p.

164. Cf. John Tuomey, *Architecture, Craft and Culture* (London: Gandon Editions, 2008), p. 14.
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29. Jorge Luis Borges, “The False Problem of Ugolino,” in *Selected Non-fictions. Volume 1* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1999), pp. 277-281.
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# MONISM AND PLURALISM: THE HISTORY OF AESTHETICS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF ARCHITECTURE

PAUL GUYER

*Part I of this essay appeared in Vol. 1, No. 1 of Architecture Philosophy.*

In Part I we observed several 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. In Part II, I now 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,<sup>1</sup> nevertheless offers at least a model for (what Part I identified as) a synthetizing rather than separatist approach to architecture.

“ I WANT TO SUGGEST THAT WE CAN INTERPRET THE LAMPS OF POWER AND BEAUTY AS RUSKIN'S VERSIONS OF THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE SUBLIME. ”

### 3. A PLURALIST APPROACH TO ARCHITECTURE: RUSKIN

*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, first published in 1849, thus three decades after Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Representation* and the commencement of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics in Berlin, is notorious for its conclusion that there are only four styles suitable for contemporary architecture – the Pisan Romanesque, the early Gothic of the Western Italian Republics, the Venetian Gothic, and the

English earliest decorated.<sup>2</sup> This is hardly the aspect of the work that I wish to discuss, let alone defend. *A fortiori* I have no intention to defend his even more restrictive remark in the Preface to the second edition of the *Seven Lamps* that “I have now no doubt that the only style proper for modern northern work, is the Northern Gothic of the thirteenth century, as exemplified in England, pre-eminently by the cathedrals of Lincoln and Wells,” let alone to defend the even more strident remark of this Preface that “there are only two fine arts possible to the human race, sculpture and painting,” so that “What we call architecture is only the association of these in noble masses, or the placing them in fit places.”<sup>3</sup> I cannot reconcile this last remark in particular with Ruskin’s statement in the original text that “perfect sculpture may be made a part of the severest architecture; but this perfection was said at the outset to be dangerous.” Ruskin continues:

*[T]he moment the architect allows himself to dwell on the imitated portions, there is a chance of his losing sight of the duty of his ornament, of its business as a part of the composition, and sacrificing its points of shade and effect to the delight of delicate carving. And then he is lost. His architecture has become a mere framework for the setting of delicate sculpture, which had better all be taken down and put into cabinets. It is well, therefore, that the young architect should be taught to think of imitative ornament as of the extreme of grace in language; not to be regarded at first, not to be obtained at the cost of purpose, meaning, force, or conciseness, yet, indeed, a perfection -- the least of all perfections, and yet the crowning one of all...<sup>4</sup>*

Here Ruskin makes it clear that the merits of sculpture, which might certainly include their cognitive significance as imitations, should only be part of the larger complex of aims in architecture, which, like language, can please us through formal properties like conciseness and emotional impact or force as well as through its semantic content. A passage like this suggests that Ruskin’s fundamental position is that we should take a synthesizing rather than separatist approach to architecture, seeing it as involving our cognitive powers in play as well as work and engaging our emotional and conative powers as well.

A statement like, “It has been my endeavour to show [...] how every form of noble architecture is in some sort the embodiment of the Polity, Life, History, and Religious Faith of nations,”<sup>5</sup> also suggests that Ruskin takes a multivalent approach to the pleasures of architecture. I do not want to take this statement too literally, but to take it as exemplifying the attitude that the experience of architecture is complex, not restricted

to a single form of cognition as the German Idealists had just argued, but involving and at best fusing a wide range of human values and sources of pleasure. In particular, I want to suggest that Ruskin's seven "lamps" – sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, memory, and obedience – can, without too much distortion, be associated with the three sources of aesthetic pleasure identified in the course of the eighteenth century – cognition as such, the free play of the mental or cognitive powers, and the experience and expression of emotion – all three of which were synthesized in a complex account of aesthetic experience by at least a few authors, such as Kames (whose *Elements of Criticism* remained a common textbook in American colleges throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, although I cannot say if that was true for Ruskin's Oxford in the 1840s). Specifically, I want to suggest that we can interpret the lamps of power and beauty as Ruskin's versions of the beautiful and the sublime, both of which from a Kantian point of view involve freely playing cognitive powers, the former imagination and understanding, the latter imagination and theoretical and practical reason; that the lamps of truth but even more those of life, memory, and obedience bring out elements of straightforward cognition rather than the free play of cognitive powers in the experience of architecture; and that the lamps of sacrifice but also life, memory, and obedience highlight emotional dimensions of the experience of architecture.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the discussion of the seven lamps, I suggest, Ruskin's tacit argument is that all of these lamps are sources of pleasure in the experience of architecture, and that there is no reason to restrict our experience – or the buildings that produce it – to any one or any proper subset of these lamps.

Ruskin introduces both the lamps of power

“RUSKIN'S TACIT ARGUMENT IS THAT ALL THESE LAMPS ARE SOURCES OF PLEASURE IN THE EXPERIENCE OF ARCHITECTURE, AND THAT THERE IS NO REASON TO RESTRICT OUR EXPERIENCE.”

and beauty at the start of the chapter explicitly devoted to the former, stating that

*In [...] reverting to the memories of those works of architecture by which we have been most pleasurably impressed, it will generally happen that they fall into two broad classes: the one characterised by an exceeding preciousness and delicacy, to which we recur with a sense of affectionate admiration; and the other by a severe, and, in many cases mysterious, majesty, like that we felt at the presence and operation of some great Spiritual Power.<sup>7</sup>*

Ruskin signals the association of his two lamps with two basic eighteenth-century categories in the very act of stating that his understanding of them also goes beyond the simple distinction between the beautiful and sublime:

*the difference between these two orders of building is not merely that which there is in nature between the beautiful and the sublime. It is, also, the difference between what is derivative and original in man's work: for whatever is in architecture fair or beautiful, is imitated from natural forms; and what is not so derived, but depends for its dignity upon arrangement and government received from human mind, becomes the expression of the power of that mind, and receives a sublimity high in proportion to the power expressed.<sup>8</sup>*

These statements are rich in historical resonances. The initial claim that beauty is something delicate to which we respond with affection while the sublime is something powerful to which we respond with awe is, of course, reminiscent of the way Edmund Burke distinguished between them ninety years before the *Seven Lamps*.<sup>9</sup> The claim that beauty consists in the imitation of natural forms of course reminds one of Batteux's thesis that the single principle of all the arts is imitation, but I think a more proximate antecedent for Ruskin would have been Archibald Alison's *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* of 1790, reissued in 1811<sup>10</sup> and thus presumably still in circulation when Ruskin was young,<sup>11</sup> the thesis of which is not that similarities between works of nature and works of art are important because they allow the latter to be a means of cognition of the former, but rather that we enjoy "associations" between art and nature that allow the pleasures of the latter to be carried over in non-rule-governed ways to the former; in other words, Alison's theory of the associations between art and nature is a version of the Scottish idea of free play, published in the same year as but entirely independently of Kant's version of the theory of free play, according to which the mind freely plays back and forth between art and nature. I think that this free, associationist rather

than strictly cognitivist interpretation of artistic and architectural beauty is evident in Ruskin's following chapter on beauty when he states that "I do not mean to suggest that every happy arrangement of line is directly suggested by a natural object; but that all beautiful lines are adaptations of those which are commonest in the external creation; that in proportion to the richness of their association, the resemblance to natural work, as a type and help, must be more closely attempted."<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, Ruskin's account of the lamp of power, namely that we enjoy powerful works especially because of their suggestion of the power of the human mind or minds behind their creation, stands in a tradition going back to Thomas Reid, who asserted, although about beauty, that "it is in the moral and intellectual perfections of mind, and in its active power, that beauty originally dwells; and that from this as the fountain, all the beauty which we perceive in the visible world is derived,"<sup>13</sup> and before him to Shaftesbury, who held that our pleasure in the outward forms of objects is grounded in "*the Forms which form*, that is, which have Intelligence, Action, and Operation."<sup>14</sup> But in this case, too, it seems to me, Ruskin is not arguing that we appreciate sublime works of architecture because they give us actual knowledge of the intentions of the human minds that created them, but because they suggest the power of the human mind in a more general way. In both the cases of power and beauty, then, it seems to me that Ruskin is arguing that we enjoy suggestions and intimations rather than determinate cognition, and so these two lamps can be associated with the eighteenth-century theory that in the beautiful and the sublime we enjoy the free play of our cognitive powers rather than actual cognition, perhaps especially with the associationist version of this theory.

“ IN BOTH THE CASES OF POWER AND BEAUTY, THEN, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT RUSKIN IS ARGUING THAT WE ENJOY SUGGESTIONS AND INTIMATIONS RATHER THAN DETERMINATE COGNITION. ”



The lamp of truth, by contrast, would seem to suggest a more straightforwardly cognitivist account of aesthetic pleasure: if truth is *adequatio rei et intellectus* or correspondence between representation and object, we would enjoy a true representation because of the information it gives us about its object. Here, however, we have to proceed with some caution, because Ruskin's suggestion seems to be more that we enjoy *truthfulness* rather than *truth* in architecture, *sincerity* rather than *information*<sup>15</sup>: "That indignation which we profess to feel at deceit absolute, is indeed only at deceit malicious. We resent calumny, hypocrisy, and treachery, because they harm us, not because they are untrue."<sup>16</sup> Ruskin's thesis is not that we should dislike architecture that misinforms us of some truth, conversely that we should like architecture simply because it correctly informs us, but rather that we should dislike architecture that intentionally deceives us, above all about its own materials and structure, because we dislike being intentionally deceived, and conversely enjoy architecture that deals with us honestly, because we like to be dealt with honestly. This is the premise of Ruskin's thesis that we should condemn architecture that disguises the nature of its materials: not because we need to acquire from architecture some information about the nature of its materials or the natural forces that govern them that we do not otherwise have (as Schopenhauer's account might suggest), but simply because we dislike being handled dishonestly. And this premise is important because it is what allows for the distinction that Ruskin makes between deception and imagination, his claim that "a communicated act of imagination" is "no lie,"<sup>17</sup> and the allowance he makes that for non-exhibition of underlying structure in what we recognize to be intended as a work of imagination rather than a piece of information, thus his claim that "The architect is not *bound* to exhibit structure" but that if, in Gothic vaulting, "the intermediate shell were made of wood instead of stone, and whitewashed to look like the rest, – this would, of course, be direct deceit, and altogether unpardonable."<sup>18</sup> Ruskin's distinction between imagination and deception would also allow, I think, for some common ground between him and Geoffrey Scott, who defended the use of stucco to mask the underlying brick in Renaissance architecture against Ruskin's preference for the honest display of stone in Gothic architecture on the purely aesthetic ground that it allows for pleasing patterns of line and light that could not otherwise be achieved<sup>19</sup>: if a building can be understood as intended as a work of imagination rather than a presentation of fact, then there is room for the enjoyment of decorated rather than displayed structure on Ruskin's as well as Scott's

account; indeed, here Ruskin's otherwise outrageous suggestion in the Preface to the second edition of *The Seven Lamps* that architecture must ultimately exploit the means of painting or sculpture could be used in his defense.

Ruskin's discussion of "The Lamp of Truth" also includes his notorious argument that even in his own nineteenth century an architecture of wood, stone, and masonry is preferable to one of iron. He writes that the art of architecture:

*having been, up to the beginning of the present century, practised for the most part in clay, stone, or wood, it has resulted that the sense of proportion and the laws of structure have been based [...] on the necessities consequent on the employment of those materials; and that the entire or principle employment of metallic framework would, therefore, be generally felt as a departure from the first principles of the art. Abstractedly there appears no reason why iron should not be used as well as wood; and the time is probably near when a new system of architectural laws will be developed, adapted entirely to metallic construction [...] . [But architecture's] first existence and its earliest laws must depend [...] upon the use of materials accessible in quantity, and on the surface of the earth, that is to say, clay, wood, or stone: and as I think it cannot but be generally felt that one of the chief dignities of architecture is its historical use [...] it will be felt right to retain [...] the materials and principles of earlier ages.<sup>20</sup>*

On the one hand, this seems like sheer conservatism, adequately confounded by, for example, the accomplishment of Mies van der Rohe in works like the Illinois Institute of Technology campus and the Seagram Building in finding incomparable elegance in the structural forms of steel (and glass). On the other hand, Ruskin's comments suggest that we find a genuinely cognitive pleasure in architecture as a

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form of history, as giving us insight into the past, and that this should not be entirely forgotten in the face of other sources of pleasure. This leads us to “The Lamp of Memory,” which can also be understood at least in part as an expression of the cognitive aspect of architectural experience.<sup>21</sup>

The lamp of memory seems like the most straightforward expression of a cognitivist aspect in Ruskin’s conception of the sources of architectural pleasure. Specifically, Ruskin argues that architecture is a medium for knowledge of the human past. “Architecture is to be regarded by us with the most serious thought. We can live without her, and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her [...] there are but two strong conquerors of the forgetfulness of men, Poetry and Architecture.”<sup>22</sup> But Ruskin’s conception of the cognitivist function of architecture as a vehicle for memory differs from that of the German Idealists in several key ways. Unlike Hegel, Ruskin does not conceive of architecture as a – doomed – vehicle for metaphysical knowledge, nor, like Schopenhauer does he conceive of it as a – not necessarily doomed – vehicle for knowledge of the fundamental forces of non-human nature; he conceives of it specifically as a vehicle for knowledge of human history. And then it should also be noted that architecture serves human memory in several ways, partly intentionally but also partly unintentionally. Ruskin begins his discussion of the “Lamp of Memory” with the case of buildings whose decorations are “animated by a metaphorical or historical meaning,”<sup>23</sup> buildings whose ornamentation is thus intended to carry a message about a people and their present and past to the future. But he also argues that buildings are witnesses to history in ways that could not have been intended by their original builders, that the glory of a building may be:

*in its Age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity [...] it is in that golden stain of time, that we are to look for the real light, and colour, and preciousness of architecture; and it is not until a building has assumed this character, till it has been entrusted with the fame, and hallowed by the deeds of men, till its walls have been witnesses of suffering [...] that its existence [...] can be gifted with [...] language and life.*<sup>24</sup>

Here Ruskin claims that buildings are witnesses to the human deeds that play out within and before them, much of which of course cannot have been foreseen by the original builders and may even undermine their intentions in all sorts of ways, and that we who come later can read this

history in the buildings as they stand, well-preserved or ruined or in between, before us. Ruskin also notes that can get a sense of non-human history from buildings as well, from the “superinduced and accidental beauty [...] of the rents, or fractures, or stains, or vegetation, which assimilate the architecture with the work of Nature, and bestow upon it those circumstances of colour and form which are universally beloved by the eye of man.”<sup>25</sup> Buildings thus yield us knowledge of the general processes and specific events of both non-human and human history.

Now Ruskin’s last remark about the universally beloved color and form that are produced by natural processes suggests that in actual experience the cognitive significance of architecture cannot be separated from what might have been thought of as its purely aesthetic dimension; and since it would also be artificial to separate the historical significance of architecture from our emotional response to human history, the argument of “The Lamp of Memory” suggests that all three aspects of the experience of art distinguished in eighteenth-century aesthetics are in fact fully merged in the experience of architecture as Ruskin conceives it. But before I turn to the emotional dimension of the experience of architecture, let me just mention that there are cognitivist aspects to Ruskin’s accounts of the lamps of “Life” and “Obedience” as well. Ruskin uses his chapter on “The Lamp of Life” to begin the argument that he will continue in the famous chapter on “The Nature of Gothic” in *The Stones of Venice* that we love the evidence of the creativity of all involved in the creation of a work of architecture, the stonemasons as well as the master mason or architect, as itself the product of the various lives of all these people, their “accidental carelessnesses of measurement”

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as well as their “proposed departures from symmetrical regularity, and the luxuriousness of perpetually variable fantasy.”<sup>26</sup> But there is another, or perhaps more general argument here, that “no inconsiderable part of the essential characters of Beauty depend [...] on the expression of vital energy in organic things, or on the subjection to such energy, of things naturally passive and powerless”; the “vivid expression of the intellectual life which has been concerned”<sup>27</sup> in the production of architecture is one instance of this, but so might be the evidence of organic but non-human life in, say, the limestone used in a building. The presupposition of Ruskin’s argument is that of course we must in some way *understand* the expression of life in any of its forms in architecture before we can respond to it in other ways. A similar assumption underlies Ruskin’s argument in his final chapter on “The Lamp of Obedience.” His argument here is that architecture can be an expression of freedom, as opposed to mere chaos, only if it is an exercise of “Restraint” within a style<sup>28</sup> – it is in this context that he makes the claim earlier mentioned that there are only four styles suitable for modern building.<sup>29</sup> But of course to work within a style, even to innovate within it and test its limits without exceeding them, the architect has to *understand* the style and its laws; so freedom in design and construction, which might be associated with the eighteenth-century idea of free play, also has to be associated with knowledge. The necessity of connecting rather than separating free play and knowledge is also on display in this passage, which begins the penultimate section of the final chapter of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*:

*It is almost impossible for us to conceive [...] the sudden dawn of intelligence and fancy, the rapidly increasing sense of power and facility, and, in its proper sense, of Freedom, which such wholesome restraint would instantly cause throughout the whole circle of the arts. Freed from the agitation and embarrassment of that liberty of choice which is the cause of half of the discomforts of the world; freedom from the accompanying necessity of studying all past, present, or even possible styles; and enabled, by concentration of individual, and co-operation of multitudinous energy, to penetrate into the uttermost secrets of the adopted style, the architect would find his whole understanding enlarged, his practical knowledge certain and ready to hand, and his imagination playful and vigorous [...].*<sup>30</sup>

Here knowledge is argued to be a necessary condition of free play. That might mean that knowledge is not a source of pleasure in its own right, but only a means to the pleasure for both architects themselves and

the audiences for their work over time that comes from the playful and vigorous imagination. But, as we have seen, the knowledge of both history and the laws of non-human as well as human nature that we can get from architecture is also, in Ruskin's view, a source of pleasure in its own right. So there is no danger that knowledge will be reduced to a mere means for the pleasure that comes from free play: both are sources of architectural pleasure in his view.

Finally, I return to Ruskin's recognition of the emotional dimension of our experience of architecture. As I already suggested, it would be entirely unnatural to separate our emotional response to human deeds and for example "suffering" from our cognition of them, and likewise artificial to separate our emotional response to manifestations of human freedom from our knowledge of the laws or style or other laws that furnish the constraints within which freedom can be meaningfully exercised; so the emotional aspect of the experience of architecture is implicit throughout Ruskin's treatment of its cognitive dimensions in the lamps of memory and obedience. It would be equally implausible to leave out the emotional aspect of architectural experience from "The Lamp of Power," Ruskin's version of the sublime: his statement there that,

*In the edifices of Man there should be found reverent worship and following, not only of the spirit which rounds the pillars of the forest, and arches the vault of the avenue [...] but of that also which reproves the pillars of the earth, and builds up her barren precipices into the coldness of the clouds, and lifts her shadowy cones of mountain purple into the pale arch of the sky; for these, and other glories more than these, refuse not to connect themselves, in his thought, with the work of his own hand [...].<sup>31</sup>*

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makes clear the emotional impact of the sublime in architecture on the author, but on the author only as a representative of us all: we cannot think of “the works of God upon the earth” and “the dominion over those works which has been vested in man” as “intellectual Lamps of Architecture” without also experiencing a profound emotional response.<sup>32</sup>

But the emotional dimension of architectural experience has been on display since the outset of Ruskin’s book, beginning with the first “Lamp of Sacrifice.” This refers to the “spirit which offers” especially for “devotional and memorial architecture” “precious things, simply because they are precious; not as being necessary to the building, but as an offering, surrendering, and sacrifice of what is to ourselves desirable.”<sup>33</sup> Through using precious materials in our – public rather than merely private – buildings, we “exercise self-denial for the sake of self-discipline”<sup>34</sup> – and express our need to honor, for Ruskin of course specifically our need to honor God.<sup>35</sup> The need to express self-discipline and honor must be grounded in our feelings or emotions, not just our desire for pleasure but in a wide range of other, first-order emotions. And in response to works of architecture that express such feelings in their creators similar feelings may be and surely often are expressed in subsequent spectators of those works, even those who do not share the beliefs of the original creators – even one who does not share the belief-systems of their creators cannot fail to be stirred by the Chartres or the Suleimanya of Sinan or the St. Matthew Passion of Bach, although of course the experience of such a spectator can hardly be identical to that of the original creator of the work or its originally intended audience. As Ruskin concludes “The Lamp of Sacrifice,” the creators of such works, “have taken with them to grave their powers, their honours, and their errors; but they have left us their adoration,”<sup>36</sup> that is, their emotion, which we, for all our differences, with them and amongst ourselves, cannot but at least to some degree agree with.

So Ruskin actually begins his work with an emphasis on the emotional dimension of our experience of architecture and by implication of aesthetic experience more generally. But we have seen that as his argument unfolds, he equally emphasizes the pleasure of sheer cognition through architecture as well as of the vigorous play of the human imagination in architecture, and further the ways in which all three of these dimensions of aesthetic experience are not merely intertwined but are also interdependent. So I conclude that Ruskin’s *Seven Lamps* is a paradigmatic expression of a

synthesizing rather than separating approach to aesthetic theory in general and architectural theory in particular, and that although a century and three-quarters on, we can hardly feel constrained by his particular stylistic dictates, an enduring benchmark for the complexity of aesthetic ambitions we should have in architectural practice as well.

## ENDNOTES

1. Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, first edition 1914, second edition 1924 (New York: Scribner's, n.d.), especially Chapter V, "The Ethical Fallacy."
2. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, introduction by Sir Arnold Lunn (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1907), p. 213.
3. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, p. xxii.
4. Ibid, p. 137.
5. Ibid, p. 203.
6. My interpretation of *The Seven Lamps* thus differs from that offered by Cornelis J. Baljon in "Interpreting Ruskin: The Argument of The Seven Lamps of Architecture and The Stones of Venice," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1997): 401-14. Baljon argues that all seven "lamps" are forms of associations of ideas, thus that the work stands entirely within the tradition of eighteenth-century Scottish "associationism," represented above all by the 1790 work of Archibald Alison (see p. 403), while Ruskin then broadens his approach to architecture in *The Stones of Venice*. Without controverting Baljon's claim that Ruskin's philosophical knowledge was (proudly) confined to the British tradition and excluded German aesthetics from Kant to Hegel (p. 401), I would suggest, indeed already have suggested in my comments about the work of Kames, that the British or even the Scottish tradition is broader than



associationism alone, and that Ruskin's work is more fruitfully read against the background of the threefold division of cognition, play, and emotion that I have suggested.

7. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, p. 69.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

9. See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757, second edition 1759), edited by J.T. Boulton (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), especially Part One, sections VII-XI, XIX. See also Baljon, p. 403.

10. Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Bell & Bradfute, 1811). See Baljon, p. 403.

11. Baljon goes beyond this weak statement and calls Alison's work, "a particularly rich source of inspiration," for Ruskin (p. 403).

12. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, p. 104.

13. Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), edited by Derek R. Brookes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), Essay VIII, "Of Taste," p. 602.

14. Shaftesbury, *The Moralists*, Part III, section II, in *Characteristicks*, vol. II, p. 107.

15. For a general discussion of this distinction, see Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

16. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, p. 30.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

19. See Scott, *Architecture of Humanism*, chapter IV, "The Mechanical Fallacy," e.g., pp. 103-7.

20. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, pp. 39-40.

21. Baljon suggests that Ruskin thought iron architecture lifeless and thus should have included his argument against it in "The Lamp of Life" (p. 403). This overlooks Ruskin's argument for our historical attachment to stone rather than iron construction, which would suggest that if his argument against iron architecture should have been included anywhere other than in "The Lamp of Truth," then it should have been in "The Lamp of Memory." But had he done that, Ruskin would have spoken too soon: riding now across a great late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century railroad bridge such as the Hell's Gate in New York or the Firth of Forth bridge in Scotland is certainly an experience redolent with historical significance.

22. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, p. 182.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 190-1.

25. Ibid, p. 197.
26. Ibid, p. 160.
27. Ibid, p. 150.
28. Ibid, p. 205.
29. Ibid, p. 213.
30. Ibid, pp. 213-14.
31. Ibid, p. 71.
32. Ibid, p. 70.
33. Ibid, p. 9.
34. Ibid, p. 10.
35. Ibid, p. 11.
36. Ibid, p. 28.

# TRYING TO THINK IN A CONNECTED SORT OF WAY: PART II

ANDREW BALLANTYNE IN CONVERSATION WITH STEFAN KOLLER

*Part I of this interview appeared in Vol. 1, No. 1 of Architecture Philosophy.*

**QUESTION:** *There seems to be something important to you at the level of pure methodology, regardless of the philosophical content engaged. Is that something that you think is peculiar to philosophy or is philosophy one of the disciplines that might bring method to architecture? Why is method not already inherent to architecture as an academic discipline? Why is the methodological stringing together of content not already inherent to architecture as an academic discipline?*

**ANSWER:** It's not that thinking is especially isolated in philosophy, or in architecture, or in anywhere else. I don't think that thinking in architecture is necessarily less rigorous than in other places. I think thinking in architecture is very rigorous about certain sorts of things, but equally rather lax, or typically rather lax, in some other ways.

That's probably true of all disciplines, but we have different ways of making use of information, different ways of thinking about things, or coming close to thinking about things. I put things on a scale ranging from common sense at one end of the scale to perhaps something more like logic thought at the other. When you're dealing with common sense, it's not philosophical thinking, you're recognizing a pattern of events and assuming that that pattern of events will repeat itself the way it did when you encountered it the last time. Most of the time, that kind of recognition works.

So with everyday activities we can deal with common sense and yesterday and today and

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tomorrow, are fairly similar and we can go through them in a similar way. Not by thinking out the situation afresh but by remembering what we did yesterday and the day before, and in fact we stop thinking about it, we just go through our routine, habitual patterns, and everything is fine and everything continues the way it did. But if we want to change things or we're faced with a fresh problem, then we have to do a different sort of thinking, which may involve an element of recognizing patterns from what we did before. Also, you need to make some sort of analysis, maybe have some sort of creative response to what it is. Maybe it's a matter of logical deduction, but there's a different kind of thinking that goes on. That's the kind of thinking that it's important for me to engage with when I'm writing.

I don't have to do that every day in every way. I wouldn't get through the day if I did. A lot of things I just do as routine. When it's a matter of academic work, academic thinking, then you do have to think. Philosophy is good at prioritizing that sort of thinking discipline. Actually Michel Tournier described philosophers as the professionals of thought. He studied philosophy as a student alongside Deleuze, and it took him completely by surprise when he failed the exams that Deleuze passed. He went on to become a novelist and won the Prix Goncourt, but there's a wistful tone when he talks about philosophers. Thinking is their business and they show you how to do it. There's other ways of doing it, but philosophy is good, it's rigorous, and it really makes you think. The other person I really like on that subject is David Hume, who describes himself being sent into depression by the isolation that comes with rigorous philosophical thinking. He says that if he needs a remedy for that, it's easy to find. He just seeks out company – a game of backgammon – and all his philosophical problems disappear. He regains the will to live or whatever it is. He was a sociable person. We're all sociable people, and we feel good and comfortable with the world if we're engaged with conversation and so on. That doesn't get you thinking philosophically. In order to think rigorously and logically, you do have to withdraw and internalize. It's quite an isolated process. Maybe there are philosophers who can conduct Socratic dialogues with others, but for me that kind of conversation makes best sense if you think of it as articulating the different voices in your own head. Maybe I haven't met the right people. But I recognize what I do as feeling like what Hume describes. So you need to be able to do that and then to function as a human being, you need to come out of it.

Hume's punch line is his remedy for the depression that comes with philosophical work is carelessness and inattention. He says, "for this reason I rely entirely upon them." His method is a method of carelessness

and inattention, but that's a method for living, not a method for doing philosophy.

*Q: How extraordinary to bring out the contribution of philosophy in that light when it's philosophy that kind of temporarily puts ordinary life and common sense on hold, as in Hume. Nothing ultimately, if you narrowly attend to it, even the collision of billiard balls, makes sense anymore and you have to relapse into custom to even be able to get by. It makes philosophy pull away from common, ordinary life.*

*In one of your most recent works, "Architecture, Life, and Habit" you use the work of some philosophers, or your own philosophical thought, to reorient thinking about architecture from this remote disengaged aesthetic touristic contemplation. Towards an understanding that, in dealing with building, we deal with the people that inhabit them, and the life that shapes around them. The work becomes a new pragmatist aesthetics of architecture which looked as if the philosophy pulled a customary architectural historian back into engaging with the life that surrounds these buildings – the common life.*

A: Of habits that become so habitual that you've lost sight of them, which become the things that shape your world.

*Q: It seems to run in the opposite direction of the Humean relation to philosophy, where philosophy is something that pulls you out of ordinary life. Then there's the Wittgensteinian way of pulling you back in and enabling you to engage with it. In a sense that is not everyday in the sense of being common or habitual, but in reconnecting you to something that maybe through habit or academic study or even a design attitude to the built object has removed it from its built, lived reality.*

A: Yes. I'd hoped that one could find a way to aestheticize the everyday activity and find value in it. And enjoy doing everyday things by waking up to them. It may be going against that idea of thinking through withdrawal. It's withdrawn thinking but turned in on the activity of living and perhaps being more sociable.

What lies at the heart of that article, is that

“ IN ORDER TO THINK RIGOROUSLY AND LOGICALLY, YOU DO HAVE TO WITHDRAW AND INTERNALIZE. IT'S QUITE AN ISOLATED PROCESS. ”

architectural discussion ought to begin with ordinary things and daily life and branch out from there. I think too much of the time we're faced with architectural discussion that begins with an admiration of form or something. These things can be quite demanding or difficult or even get in the way of ordinary life. They stand apart from it. They're special in some way and it's nice that they're special, they're challenging in that sort of way. But for sanity's sake, there just has to be a way of valorizing things that you have to do anyway. Why not make that the substance of what you do rather than something that has to be awkwardly fitted in afterwards?

**Q:** *Does that also entail that you would not follow the distinction that many other writers have tried to make between architecture with a capital "A" on the one hand and mere building (in German, bauen as opposed to Baukunst) on the other hand?*

*The second is the vernacular, or the ordinary utilitarian domestic-level but culturally significant building. On the other hand, you've got some things that are much closer to the fine arts or architecture at least tries to align itself with the lofty ambitions of the artistic. Would you not want to draw a distinction precisely to avoid us having this split attitude?*

**A:** I really don't want there to be that separation. I want it to be a sliding scale – if anything – where you begin with the ordinary things that you have to do and then find special intensifications of those things that makes them out of the ordinary, that makes them more pleasurable, or dramatic, or whatever it is. They're rooted in something meaningful. They're not separated. Otherwise, you get this split and it starts feeling like there's a separation between everyday activity and aesthetic sensibility. I really want them to be connected. I want my life to be full of wonderful aesthetic experiences.

**Q:** *Everything you say is the complete opposite of Schopenhauer. The reason for that is that you strike me as someone who is very optimistic and cheerful and that means also for you that these aesthetic experiences, especially when they are of buildings, ought to be life-affirming in a broader sense than just having an uplifting experience of contemplation.*

*For Schopenhauer the idea is that life is full of woe and suffering and then aesthetic experience of architecture is one of the very few things that enable us to pull out of this life of suffering. So I'm also wondering to what extent these very fundamental decisions and your attitude towards how to approach architecture and ordinary building relates to a larger understanding of human life? Because in your work that emerges clearly at several junctures, but where exactly does that come from for you? What's the entry point of that? Is it already the reality of how you encounter the buildings, or is there an independent philosophical view that brought you to this?*

**A:** I wonder. It's a conviction. Where do convictions come from? I

do think that a lot of aesthetic experience is unconscious. A lot of what we do all the time is unconscious and of course philosophical reflection is conscious. If you're trying to think about everyday experiences and why you feel good about having done something one way or another, what is it you're dealing with?

A lot of the time you're dealing with something that's unconscious, at the moment of your decision-making. You're deciding to sit at this table rather than on that sofa, but why are you deciding that? What are the issues that you're rehearsing? You're not entirely conscious of what they are but somehow one is more comfortable, the other feels better adapted to the task at hand.

There's a big element of unconscious stuff going on and what is that? There's all kinds of things we've got to get right before we can start worrying about aesthetic issues in a conscious sort of way. For example, things like heating and lighting, they just have to be dealt with in some way. If you're in a house that's too cold to be comfortable then there's no way you're going to be dwelling on the elegance of its proportions for too long, you'll be moving on or wrapping yourself up.

*Q: So, it would be like addressing, or talking about concrete building considerations as heating, lighting, and construction more broadly. To what extent do you think philosophy could contribute to our understanding of such things?*

A: Nothing at all. I think that they're more or less preconditions. If we can't get enough food to survive, we don't worry about the meaning of life. The meaning of life becomes very clear: it's to get food. I don't think that philosophy would help us to find food in that sort of emergency, but with more leisure and forethought – well, if your job is to teach philosophy then it would be philosophy that was putting food on your table. And then in the most ambitious restaurants there's certainly room for a philosophy of food, which has quite a lot of

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OR A BUILDING. ”

aesthetic content and very little discussion about nutrition.

**Q:** *What do you think authors, especially young authors, going into architecture philosophy right now should be aware of? What can they learn from what is currently less than perfect, or just plain bad?*

**A:** On the one hand you have philosophers, even aesthetic philosophers whose very business it is to write about art, where it is astounding just how uninformed they are about the actual details, say, of a painting, a piece of music, or a building. On the other hand, you have architecture historians who are greatly accomplished in mopping up every last detail about a work of art, but fall flat when they raise more general issues. Admittedly, I have painted the extreme end points on a wide spectrum – but there is a lot of room in between these that is still left unexplored. And that is where I think a great deal of interesting work remains to be done.

#### 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



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CALL FOR PAPERS:  
INTERNATIONAL WITTGENSTEIN SYMPOSIUM

USE VALUE IN ARCHITECTURE:  
RECONCEPTUALIZING  
BUILDINGS' FUNCTIONS

WITTGENSTEIN HOUSE  
VIENNA, AUSTRIA  
17-18 AUGUST 2015



WITTGENSTEIN HOUSE, VIEW FROM STREET

Given the wealth of new ways of conceptualizing building, its practice, and its meanings, this call for papers prompts authors to reconceptualize the notion of buildings' functions in terms of use, particularly as is described in Wittgenstein's use theory.

By engaging one of philosophy's richest and most formidable postmodern thinkers — Ludwig Wittgenstein — the discourse surrounding function can move away from architecture's Modernist paradigm that has largely defined how we think about and deal with questions relating to function. Wittgenstein — who remains largely undealt with by the architectural discourse, but whose work has nevertheless had ample development from within the philosophical discourse — provides genuine contributions to the understanding of use and meaning. Specifically, the Wittgensteinian notion of meaning as use moves the discussion away from mechanical or systematic notions grounded in scientific enquiry, and instead focuses analysis on the particular context or language-game within which

KEYNOTES:

JAMES CONANT, PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
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SIMO SÄÄTELÄ, PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN  
PAUL WUDE/ELD, AUTHOR OF LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN, ARCHITECT

a building partakes. Thus, the hope is to utilize Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of meaning to achieve radically alternative analyses of building's use, thereby allowing for productive re-engagement with one of architecture's most fundamentally philosophical questions.

Lines of enquiry may include:

- Does a building mean in isolation from humans? Does a canonical building mean outside of its local socio-cultural context? Or does a building only mean within the architectural discourse that has canonized it?
- Within Wittgenstein's use-theory, does the distinction between building and architecture exist? In which contexts does this distinction hold meaning? Is the distinction still meaningful today?
- What is the use value of building in contemporary society? Are there new use values in building that suggest a shift in the trajectory of the building practice, of society, of culture?
- Does building itself challenge commonly accepted theories of meaning? Does building itself challenge commonly accepted readings of Wittgenstein's use-theory? Are there specific instances in which building can be shown as revealing limitations in Wittgenstein's theory of use?
- Does Wittgenstein's use theory supplant notions of the symbolic? Or does it give symbolism renewed significance? How do different types of architectural symbolism figure in Wittgenstein's use theory?

The symposium will take place between the 17th and 18th of August 2015 in the famous Wittgenstein house in Vienna, Austria. Given the unique and incredibly inspiring setting, space is limited.

Abstracts should be between 300 and 500 words. All submissions are due by **01 May 2015** submitted in RTF file format to [isparchitecture@gmail.com](mailto:isparchitecture@gmail.com).

For questions regarding the call for papers or the symposium please contact the acting editor for the issue and event organizer, Dr. Carolyn Fahey at [carfahey@gmail.com](mailto:carfahey@gmail.com). Refer to the ISPA website for the most up-to-date information regarding the event's organization.

A selection of the papers will be published as a special issue in *Architecture Philosophy*. Symposium delegates who wish to be considered for inclusion in the special issue will be asked to submit papers between 5,000 and 7,000 words by 01 December 2015. More details regarding full paper submission will be provided at the time of the event. In the meantime, detailed submission instructions for *Architecture Philosophy* are available in this printed journal as well as on the ISPA website at [isparchitecture.com](http://isparchitecture.com).

# 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](mailto: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 with a 200-300 word abstract, response pieces should be 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 RTF documents, 12 point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, and with no additional or otherwise unique formatting. References should be manually placed in brackets (e.g. [1], [2], and so on) with full citation information placed in the references section at the end of the document.

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