ARCHITECTURE
PHILOSOPHY

CONTENTS

THE NEED FOR A PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF ARCHITECTURE

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> *Some have said that it was fire and water which were initially responsible for bringing men together into communities, but we, considering how useful, even indispensable, a roof and walls are for men, are convinced that it was they that drew and kept men together.* [1]

These remarks on architecture's social function are taken from Giovanni Battista Alberti´s *De re aedificatoria*, in which he searches for underlying principles behind the architectural categories and concepts of Vitruvius. This passage expresses both an underlying principle of social life and awards architecture a unique role in relation to society: Because four walls and a roof bind a group of people together they are a force that fashions a society.

Alberti, however, bases society also on a strong notion of *the individual human being*; and thus for him, architecture's second, and equally important focus must be the individual. This focus is, as he emphasizes, a necessary precondition for the socially important *varietas* (variety) of the city. In the beginning of the fourth of his ten books, dedicated to the scrutiny of "works of a public nature", he writes:

> *It is obvious that buildings were made to serve man. […] buildings were designed for life´s necessities, others offer themselves for practical requirements, while still others are for occasions of pleasure, […].*
>
> *Yet, when we look around at the quantity and the variety of buildings, it is easy to understand that […] the range of different works depends principally on*

" WE [...] MUST BEGIN HERE, BY CONSIDERING HUMAN VARIETY IN GREATER DETAIL "

the variation within human nature. If we wish to give an accurate account of the various types of buildings (as was our intention) and of their constituent elements, our whole method of investigation must open and begin here, by considering human variety in greater detail; since buildings arose on man´s account, and for his needs they vary; so that they may be dealt with more clearly by distinguishing their individual characteristics.[2]

For Alberti, only if the individuality of human beings is taken as the starting point, can architecture fulfil its social role; and only then do we understand the task of architecture properly.[3] Good architecture and good cities care for both society and individual human beings; but the individual must come first. Alberti was inspired by the ideals of early modernity which celebrated the re-birth (Re-naissance) of individual accomplishment. It was a time when man became a self-aware individual as Jacob Burckhardt famously stated in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* in 1860—at the same time proposing Alberti as a true Renaissance-man (*uomo universale*).[4]

Alberti set the tone for subsequent thinkers up to the modern period. The 20th-century's concern about the role of architecture for society is like a distant echo of his thoughts, but in a lopsided way. Modernity often focuses too much on society. Equality becomes the prime value and for some the collective gains absolute priority over the individual. Not much has changed when we reflect on the digital revolution and other major transformations relating to architecture in the 21st century. Debates are largely dominated by ideas and texts of architectural modernity and its tradition that remains biased towards the collective over the individual. For Le Corbusier or Hannes Meyer[5] and other heroes of this tradition, the individual human plays a subordinate role, despite occasional contradictory utterances (for example in the *Athens Charter*).[6] To be sure, this is a somewhat simplified picture that forces at least three reservations: First, architectural modernity is not a homogenous movement. One can distinguish at least five strands of early architectural modernity at the beginning of the 20th century: constructivism, functionalism, rationalism and biomorphic and sculptural architecture.[7] And especially within biomorphic architecture we can find architects like Hugo Häring who take the biological functionings of the single human being as their starting point.[8] Despite this variety of approaches it seems fair to talk about architectural modernity in a more general sense to identify its predominant form (sometimes called "International Style" or "*Neues Bauen*"), promoted by Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer and Le Corbusier as dominant figures who sought to tie modernism to social change. Second: Since World War Two, additional varieties in the form of postmodernism or deconstructivism have

emerged. These movements can be defined as reactions to modernity. However, in retrospect, they did little to challenge its basic precepts. Third: Several outstanding modernist architects did place the single human being in the centre of their (mostly practical) efforts. Alvar Aalto, for example, stressed the importance of individual human beings (as Nicholas Ray has pointed out[9]). In his address to his old school, the *Jyvaskyla Lyceum*, Aalto says that in order to make a "cultural contribution" one needs an "unwillingness to 'move with the stream,'" that can ultimately be transformed into a "love with a critical sensibility […] It is a love that lasts, as it rests on a critically tested foundation. It can result in such a love for the little man that it functions as a kind of guardian when our era's mechanized lifestyle threatens to strangle the individual and the organically harmonious life."[10] Ralph Erskine and Aldo van Eyck embody other prominent examples who consciously aimed to balance concern for both society and the individual as Alberti demanded. But these architects are to be regarded as exceptions from the rule. Their works are explicitly judged as "humane architecture" in order to distinguish it from the mainstream,[11] which means that the latter is obviously seen as somehow less humane and—again—one reason for this is that in general social considerations are regarded as more important than "considering human variety in greater detail."

"THE FOCUS ON IMPROVING SOCIETY AND THE COLLECTIVE IS A TRADEMARK OF THE 20TH CENTURY, NOT ONLY IN ARCHITECTURE BUT CROSS POST-WAR INTELLECTUAL LIFE."

Thus, we can grant the architecture of modernity is more complex than our initial remarks might have suggested while continuing to assert a dominant discourse biased in favour of the social. There are at least three reasons for this bias. First of all architectural modernity continues to derive much of its impetus as a political project that aims at improving the structure of modern societies by architectural means.[12] Industrialization had brought about modern mass societies, migration to the cities, and diverse social problems of all sorts; and

there was an increasing need to respond to them–socialism, incorporated in architectural modernity, became the most prominent attempt to do so. This impetus continues today in architecture's insistence that it be part of the solution to global warming and to homelessness.

Secondly, the dominant architects of the modernist socialism subscribed to the idea that the individual s a product of society and not *vice versa*. The individual's reality is an "ensemble of social relations," as Marx famously remarks. As a consequence, architectural modernism understood itself as part of the project to create a better human being, via creating a better architecture for a new society without, for example, unjust privileges. This orientation also explains why equality became the dominant aesthetic guideline for this project. Equality, however, can often be mistaken for sameness, and an architecture exclusively guided by this idea tends to create over-homogenous environments.

Finally, the focus on improving society and the collective is a trademark of the 20th century, not only in architecture but also across post-war intellectual life. Most humanities, but philosophy in particular, have replaced the "paradigm of the epistemic subject" (that dominated 18th and 19th century philosophy) by the new "paradigm of inter-subjectivity," as Karl-Otto Apel famously calls it.[13] Language is the grand topic of the early 20th century, the age of the linguistic turn; and since language is, by its very nature, a social not individual reality, the turn pushes philosophical reflection towards society. Wittgenstein's "form of life", Habermas' "discursive community," or even Heidegger's critique of the modern subject are prime examples of the new paradigm. Inspired by Nietzsche and Heidegger, Foucault has even claimed that there is no such thing as the human being: "As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end. […] one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea."[14]

Alternative approaches that emphasize the individual human had a short life in the 20th century. Most notably, the so-called Philosophical Anthropology, a school of thought between 1920 and 1960, did not have a lasting influence. Its main representatives, Max Scheler, Arnold Gehlen, Helmuth Plessner, Ernst Cassirer, and Hans Jonas (the two latter being both members of the tradition in a wider sense), tried to conceptualize what it means to be an individual, yet also a group-oriented social being, in an age of modern science. This movement was never given much attention by Anglo-Saxon philosophy and stopped rather abruptly on the continent when people like Jonas and Cassirer had to emigrate and then philosophers

and sociologists of the Frankfurt School began to dominate the philosophical discourse. In a famous paper from 1958, Habermas tellingly argued that Philosophical Anthropology should be entirely *replaced* by sociology because there is no relevant notion of the individual outside society–and it took him decades to moderate his conviction.[15]

And this still seems where architectural theory stands today. We find plenty of debate on formal questions, but when it comes to what architecture is about (or what building is for), most discussions focus on society. The topics of the *Venice Biennale for Architecture* over the last 20 years provide ample evidence: Except for the "Fundamentals" exhibition in 2014 (Rem Koolhaas) and partly the exhibitions "Out there: Architecture Beyond Building" (Aaron Betsky 2008) and "Next" (Deyan Sudjic 2002), all of the biennales dealt with either societal or formal problems: "Reporting from the Front" (Alejandro Aravena 2016), "Common Ground" (David Chipperfield 2012), "People Meet in Architecture" (Kazujo Sejima 2010), "Cities, Architecture and Society" (Richard Burdett 2006), "Metamorph" (Kurt W. Forster 2004), and "Less Aesthetics more Ethics" (Massimiliano Fuksas 2000).

FIGURE 1: VENUE OF THE 3RD INTERNATIONAL ISPA-CONFERENCE 'THE HUMAN IN ARCHITECTURE AND PHILOSOPHY'. BAMBERG: VILLA CONCORDIA

And so Alberti's second criterion for good architecture and good cities, a focus on the well-being of the individual, is still unjustly neglected. A research field that would continue the tradition of Philosophical Anthropology and apply it to architecture simply does not exist.[16]

Do we need any such endeavour? We believe that it is as much required for any profound philosophy of architecture as for architectural

theory. Alberti can still remind us why architectural sociology, or a philosophy of architecture that focuses on society while neglecting the individual will always be insufficient. On a theoretical level, the relationship between the individual and society seems much more complex than much 20th century sociology and philosophy has assumed. Evolutionary and developmental psychology, amongst others, have shown that there are innate individual human needs, desires, and tendencies that have some correspondence in society, but are not simply their product. If architecture wants to respond adequately to this complex interactive relationship between society and the individual, it will have to develop more individualistic and flexible theories than mainstream modernism has been able to supply. Environmental psychology has shown that our relationship with buildings is both personal and individual. That is why a traditional sociological theory of architecture will not do. The problem is sharpened by the two conflicting tendencies that characterize our globalized world: one tendency towards multi-culturalism and the other towards an atomistic, uniform consumerism. Both tendencies dissolve traditional, more homogenous societies. They demand new architectural strategies of community-building and of guarding people against an overwhelming standardisation and enforced conformism. All of that speaks for an important role of architectural philosophy: it should pave the theoretical way for a more balanced view by adding a practical focus on the individual and the possibilities of creating space for all her needs and desires, thus for the good life within a community. This new research field might be called *Philosophical Architectural Anthropology*.

There is already a research-field called "Architectural Anthropology" in the Anglo-Saxon world, but as yet, it is more a sociological or ethnological endeavour than a philosophical. What we need is an investigation that is at least supplemented by philosophical considerations. This is something that is also argued for from within the already existing field of Architectural Anthropology:

> *The anthropology adjectivized as architectural should be a critical, ethical anthropology that keeps asking fundamental, philosophical questions about what being human and communicating through culture mean and what is best for humans in terms of what is habitable. Therefore, anthropology should add to interdisciplinary roots and evolutionary interests—characteristics that accompanied its birth a century ago—an ethical dimension that will provide a new set of questions to evaluate the huge ethnographical and archaeological corpus of information on the diverse human habitats created over the years.*[17]

A first step towards a Philosophical Architectural Anthropology was

made at the 3rd International Conference of the *International Society for the Philosophy of Architecture* from July 19th to 23rd 2016 at Bamberg University, Germany, with the topic "The Human in Architecture and Philosophy." Some papers have already been published in 2018 in a special issue of *ArchitecturePhilosophy* (APJ, vol. 3 No.1/2017); this is the second selection of papers that come out of the conference.

We open with Gerald Adler's "Architecture is Concealed Unto Itself: Helmuth Plessner and his Influence on Twentieth-Century Architecture." Adler presents the architectural implications of German philosopher Helmuth Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology. Plessner (1892-1985) saw the human being as characterised by an "ex-centric positionality," because humans, unlike animals, are able to self-distance, to be "out of their centre." Having simultaneously different perspectives on oneself constitutes the *conditio humana*, according to Plessner. He specified this ex-centric positionality in the form of three anthropological laws that are also in the centre of Gerald Adler's analysis: The law of *natural artificiality*, the law of *mediated immediacy* (or *immanence and expressivity*, the law that is most interesting for the philosophy of architecture,) and the law of *nothingness and transcendence*, which "drives man to engage in culture, it awakens needs that can only be satisfied through a system of artificial objects."[18] Buildings are obvious examples of such objects, produced within each society's architectural culture. Adler's assessment of the importance of Plessner's thought for architecture not only introduces a much-neglected twentieth-century philosopher to an English-speaking audience, but also provides reflections that lie at the very heart of what we call a Philosophical Architectural Anthropology.

66*THIS NEW RESEARCH FIELD MIGHT BE CALLED PHILOSOPHICAL ARCHITECTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY*99

Following Adler, we continue our focus on the individual, this time, however, on the individual

creator with Aleksandar Kostić's "Aporia in Architectural Design." An aporia, the experience of irresolvable internal contradictions, emerges when a designer, presented with apparently contradictory requirements, is unsure how to proceed further with her design, and finds that striking out in a new direction is necessary to overcome her perplexity. Thus, an initial source of a designer's dismay becomes both the occasion and demand for creative problem-solving. But, the resolution of this kind of puzzlement in architecture can only arise if the designer understands the conundrum and is fully engaged with the aporia. To explain the creative potential of aporiai, Kostić draws on the accounts that Plato and Aristotle give us in their works before moving into a detailed account of a classic aporia in architecture where the Ionic order must turn a corner. He then generalizes from this example to suggest that "aporia has intrinsic value for design and therefore that it should somehow be present in the more abstract subject matter of design itself."[19]

Graham Owen's paper, "The Anthropology of a Smoke-filled Room: Ethnography and the Human at OMA," moves us decisively back to a contemporary situation by employing the conceptual tools of Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory and the participant-observation work of Albena Yaneva to dissect the labour practices and ensuing working conditions of the celebrated Dutch architectural office. The article contrasts the relative absence of discussion of issues of labour and working conditions in other studies of OMA with their prominence in recent work by observers of architectural education and by activist academics such as Peggy Deamer, Paolo Tombesi and Mabel Wilson. A clearly ethical concern with the well-being of individuals underlies this discussion, not of architectural objects, but of potentially abusive processes which give rise to architectural objects.

The last two papers derive from keynotes from the 3rd international ISPA-conference by two great figures in the philosophy of architecture who, not at all coincidentally, happen to be two champions of the human individual in architecture. They have consciously kept their oral style.

In his reflections on "*Ut Architectura Philosophia?* Questioning the Relationship of Architecture and Philosophy", Karsten Harries considers the mutual inspiration of philosophy and architecture, their relationship and their mutual contributions to one another. To look at philosophy's contribution to architecture more closely, Harries begins by asking what it means that architecture should build for humans. By reference to observations by Vitruvius, Hegel, and Le Corbusier, Harries argues that "the requirements of human dwelling resist their reduction to the need

for physical shelter or functional frames for certain activities. Not only the body, the spirit, too, needs shelter, shelter especially from the terror of time." He then considers how architecture might influence philosophy. Harries looks at Heidegger, his important source of inspiration, and focusses on the need of humans to dwell and find a place—physically but also self-reflectively, thus philosophically. In his *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (1997), a classic of the Heidegger-based phenomenological tradition of the philosophy of architecture, Harries had argued for the power of buildings to interpret the most fundamental truths of human existence, and to give humans a place and thus ethical orientation. Does that assertion still hold or is our modern society un-representable by architecture? Harries renews his earlier position powerfully by focussing on the challenges of modernity that seem to refuse a dwelling-place. Consequently, our world is most adequately represented by the decorated shed (a term popularized by Robert Venturi), a functional building with a superficial aesthetic addition. This shed becomes a "potent figure for the spiritual situation of this age, which tends covers up the spiritual poverty that is the price of our objectification of reality, with an often borrowed aesthetic veneer." But we are in need of more, he argues. Humans still have to find a meaningful place. To what extent architecture, or even reason-based philosophy, might still be able to provide the much needed orientation, must remain somewhat open.

While Karsten Harries is a founding father of contemporary phenomenological philosophy of architecture, Roger Scruton's *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (1979) plays the same role for the entire analytic tradition of philosophy of architecture. The title of his keynote from the Bamberg-conference, "Aesthetic Education and Design," indicates his central contribution to a philosophical architectural

anthropology: We need a fundamental architectural education, Scruton argues, "in which pattern, composition, and the idea of fit are given a proper place, and in which function and utility are regarded as the consequences of beauty and not prior requirements that must be independently fulfilled." Only such an education can work as an "antidote" to the kind of "depersonalised madness that had possessed the schools of architecture and town planning in the wake of the Second World War." Its desire has been and still is, he critiques, a "total solution" and thus a "total control in manifestoes and projects that involve destroying whole settlements and cities." Since this madness is inhuman, to fight it via education (and in keynotes) becomes a moral obligation. The new education must "transmit a culture that embodies shared conceptions of life and discovered solutions to life's problems, including the principal problem, which is how to live at peace with one's neighbours and competitors, even when you dislike them."

Given Scruton's well-known public engagement for re-establishing beauty in the public space, it comes to no surprise that his keynote turned into *philosophie engagé*, a passionate *Philippica* for a new education and for beauty as a primary goal in architectural design. And since few escape the vigour of his pen and voice, his keynote obviously provoked critical responses at the Bamberg-conference. This provides an excellent basis for a debate about his theses. In a future issue of *Architecture Philosophy* we would like to present several responses to Scruton's plea for changes to architectural education and his attack on the apparent failure of most architectural modernism. We hope in this way to further a stated goal of the journal to provide a forum for ongoing discussions and continue these exchanges in subsequent issues.

Next to contemplation, engaged argumentation, debates and disagreement are the elixir of philosophical life. According to Thomas Kuhn, strong debates and heavy disagreements can also mark the crisis of an existing paradigm and the search for a new one. It seems fair to argue that architecture is currently in a crisis and struggling about what sort of answer it can provide in the modern world shaken by environmental, societal and political crisis, in which the over-challenged, homeless individual still has to find his or her place to dwell. And this place must be built. We hope that a flourishing *Philosophical Architectural Anthropology* will contribute to it being a good one.

Martin Düchs and Christian Illies

ENDNOTES

[1] Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building. In Ten Books*, translated by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, Mass, London: MIT Press, 1988 [1452]) Prologue, 3.

[2] Ibid., book IV, Chap. 1, p.92.

[3] Hanno-Walter Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory. From Vitruvius to the Present.* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press., 1994), 49.

[4] See: Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York: Modern Library, 2002 [1860]).

[5] The writings of the former Bauhaus director (1928-1930) Hannes Meyer are probably the most striking example for the ideas mentioned. In his essay "Die neue Welt" from 1926 he states for example as follows: „Die Gemeinschaft beherrscht das Einzelwesen. […] Das sicherste Kennzeichen wahrer Gemeinschaft ist die Befriedigung gleicher Bedürfnisse mit gleichen Mitteln. Das Ergebnis solcher Kollektivforderung ist das Standardprodukt." Hannes Meyer, „Die Neue Welt" in: *Das Werk* 13 (7, 1926), 205. Online: http://www.cloud-cuckoo.net/openarchive/Autoren/Meyer/Meyer1926.htm.

[6] See especially the §87 of the Athens Charter of the CIAM. Le Corbusier, *The Athens Charter* (New York: Grossman Publishers 1973), 101.

[7] See: Jürgen Pahl, *Architekturtheorie des 20. Jahrhunderts* (München, London, New York: Prestel, 1999), 54.

[8] See Peter Blundell-Jones, *Hugo Häring. The organic versus the geometric* (Stuttgart: Ed. Axel Menges, 1999).

[9] Nicholas Ray, *Aalto* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

[10] Quoted in Göran Schildt, ed.: *Alvar Aalto in his Own Words* (New York: Rizzoli International, 1998).

[11] See: Mats Egelius ed., Ralph Erskine: *the Humane Architect. AD - Architectural Design* Vol 47 (11-12, AD Profile 9. London, Architectural Design, 1977). See also: Winfried Nerdinger, ed.: *Alvar Aalto. Toward a Human Modernism* (Munich, London, New York: Prestel, 1999)

[12] Le Corbusier concludes his seminal book *Toward an Architecture* from 1923 with considerations about architecture as the key to solve societal problems: "C'est une question de bâtiment qui est à la clé de l'équilibre rompu aujourd'hui : architecture ou révolution." Le Corbusier, *Vers une Architecture* (Collection de "L'Esprit Nouveau". Paris: Éditions Crès, 1923)

[13] See: Otto Apel, „Die Kommunikationsgemeinschaft als transzendentale Voraussetzung der Sozialwissenschaften," in *Transformation der Philosophie*, (vol. 2, 1972), 220–263.

[14] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.* (London Routledge, 2006), 442.

[15] Jürgen Habermas, "philosophische Anthropologie" in Alwin Diemer und Ivo Frenzel, ed., *Fischer Lexikon Philosophie* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1958), 18–35.

[16] There is social or cultural anthropology of architecture, but these sciences dwell upon different issues and mostly place, again, society in the centre.

[17] Mari-Jose Amerlinck, "The Meaning and Scope of Architectural Anthropology," in Mari-Jose Amerlinck, ed., *Architectural Anthropology* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2001), 1–26.

[18] Helmuth Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch: Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928), reprinted 1975 (Berlin: de Gruyter), Sammlung Göschen 2200.

[19] The quote is taken from Aleksandar Kostić's paper in this volume.

ARCHITECTURE IS CONCEALED UNTO ITSELF: HELMUTH PLESSNER AND HIS INFLUENCE ON TWENTIETH-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE

GERALD ADLER

INTRODUCTION

> *Nestling in, moving along, feeling one's way, occupying space, the thousand ways of living within our postures and giving the silent image of spaces and planes through such postures an immediate connection to me, these are the ways to understand architecture. We always have to feel such an image and its ideal system of expression on our own body in order to taste the sense of a building. The purely ornamental, the effect of light, the qualities of materials form a meaningful structure, if not consciously, then in a more or less immediate reaction to the artificially formed world of space.*[1]

By any measure, this is an inspiring, evocative, and illuminating text that feels absolutely of the moment. That it was written almost one hundred years ago by an aspirant former student of zoology on his way to obtaining a chair in philosophy at the University of Göttingen, gives pause for thought. The writer was Helmuth Plessner, and the field of study he made his own was Philosophical Anthropology. The purpose of this paper is to elucidate Plessner's thinking and the relationship Philosophical Anthropology had with architecture.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Helmuth Plessner was born into an affluent family of Jewish descent in Wiesbaden, in 1892.

A bright schoolboy, he went on to study medicine, and then zoology and philosophy in Heidelberg. On the eve of the First World War he moved to Göttingen to study phenomenology under Edmund Husserl. He was appointed professor of philosophy in Cologne in 1926, having already published his first major work, *The Unity of the Senses* (*Die Einheit der Sinne*, 1923). Within two years at Cologne he had published what is generally regarded as his magnum opus, *The Levels of the Organic and Man* (*Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch*, 1928). Seven years later he was dismissed from his post, and, after a short stay in Istanbul, was offered refuge in Holland with a chair in sociology in Groningen. As the war progressed, he went underground in Holland but returned to Germany in 1951. Numerous writings followed, leading to his collected works being published by Suhrkamp by 1985, the year of his death.[2] Plessner, who wrote his key texts in the years of the Weimar Republic, has been largely absent within architectural discourse, especially in comparison with the attention afforded his contemporary, Martin Heidegger, with whom Plessner shares some common interests, particularly as regards the architectural implications of his thinking. His work on the concept of what he termed 'ex-centricity' is the cornerstone of Philosophical Anthropology; indeed, similar to Heidegger, Plessner's language—his images and metaphors—make explicit references to human spatial relationships, and indeed to the culture of architecture. Plessner deserves to be seen in the light of the great upsurge in philosophical enquiry and critical thinking emanating from Weimar Germany in the 1920s, alongside the likes of Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Cassirer, Arnold Gehlen, Martin Heidegger, Siegfried Kracauer, and Max Scheler.[3]

PLESSNER'S HOUSE

Before dealing with Plessner the philosopher let us consider the house he commissioned for himself and his wife in Göttingen (Figure 1). On his return to postwar Germany in 1951, Plessner took up the newly-founded chair in sociology at the University of Göttingen, married Monika Tintelnot, and commissioned the architect Lucy Hillebrand (1906-97) to build their house in the eastern suburbs of the town. Hillebrand was an inspired choice, being both local as well as a convinced and thoughtful Modernist.[4] From the north entrance side the house appears single storey; this belies the fact that it is built into a sloping site. It is rendered white, with a low-pitched hipped roof: *sachlich*, simple and straightforward, a 1950s rendering of a 1920s *Neues Bauen* house. The layout of the (upper) ground level is surprising, the orthogonal lines of the exterior softening

into an organic essay of a curved staircase leading down to the guest bedrooms beneath. The private
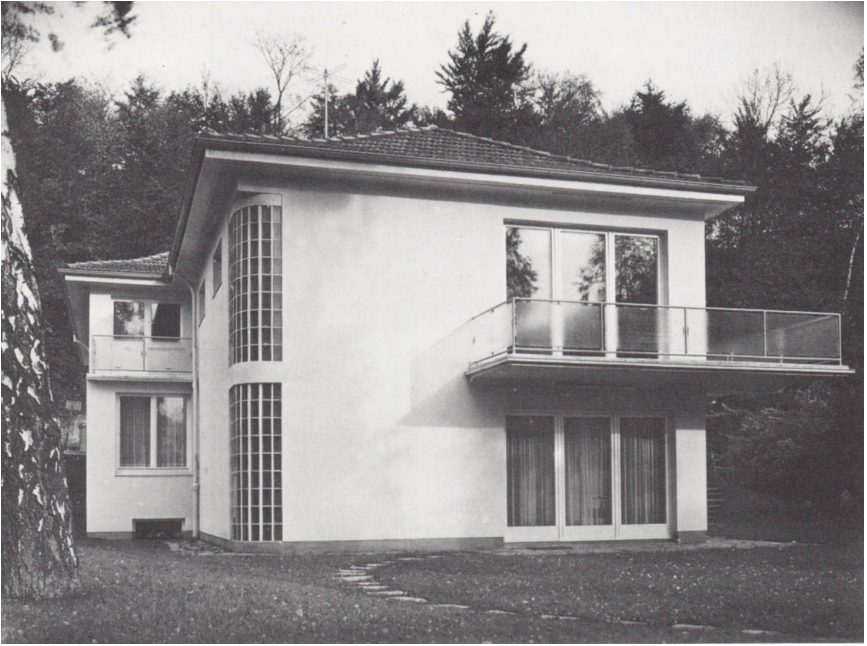
quarters of Plessner, hard by the entrance, give onto a free-planned workroom. Beyond, visible through glass doors and panels, is a narrow gallery lined with bookcases, enveloping the top section of a double-height void overlooking the guest and reception areas beneath (Figure 2). These give directly onto the garden. The house is one of a family of villas designed by Hillebrand in post-war West Germany, all of which continue the theme of external restraint combined with internal freedom of layout.[5] Evident from the plan, the house abounds in fluid spatial transitions from one area to the next;[6] its organic composition resembles that of the houses of Hans Scharoun and Hugo Häring, and as the sociologist Heike Delitz has recounted, "Hillebrand designed by virtually dancing through her spaces. Bodily movement in space was her guiding principle; […] Plessner explained 'designed' more precisely, in that she drew for him, and they 'spurred each other on'

in this creative work, as Monika Plessner has recounted […] A Bauhaus, then, instead of Heidegger's hut."[7]
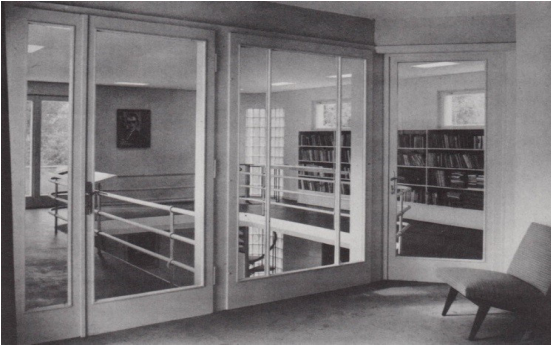
Delitz's point with this final, acid aphorism is that Plessner's engagement with Modernism and the development of architecture was a positive and creative one, immersive in the practice, theory and politics of contemporary design, as opposed to the Freiberg professor's haughty withdrawal from it in his Todtnauberg retreat.[8] In the words of Tom Spector, "while Plessner was engaging the modern condition, Heidegger was retreating from it. While Heidegger bemoans modern alienation, Plessner tells us that such alienation is actually the human condition. Whereas Heidegger wants to get at the headwaters of conventions, Plessner prefers to take us as we present ourselves. Where Heidegger retreats, Plessner is convivial."[9] Plessner's Göttingen house, in its 'natural artificiality,' its 'mediated immediacy,' and its 'utopian transcendence,' resembles in all its complexities the houses of Josef Frank, with their inner spatial gymnastics contrasted with their external simplicity of form, plane, and line (Figure 3).[10] We shall deal with these three concepts, the lynchpins of Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology, in the main section of this paper, and then explain the relevance of the Viennese-born architect Frank (1885-1967). Plessner was straightforward and uncomplicated in his understanding that "[a]rchitecture, on account of rationally understandable functional concepts, presents the object with its meaning, a house, a staircase, a garden."[11] For Plessner, these 'functional' elements are also clear conveyors of 'cultural' meaning: we see a staircase, and know that it will take us up to the floor above.

It is wonderful to imagine Plessner and Hillebrand 'dancing' the Göttingen house into being. And yet Plessner had already described such an embodied approach to space, anticipating Maurice Merleau-Ponty's later writings, as the extraordinary passage from his 1923 book *The Unity*

of the Senses quoted at the start of this paper makes clear.

Plessner built an edifice through his work in Philosophical Anthropology based on human positionality. It is complex and nuanced, and has ramifications for architecture that are similarly complex and nuanced and that are, moreover, suspicious of radicalism for its own sake. Having given a sense of Plessner's architectural interests and preferences, it is now time to delve into his concepts of Philosophical Anthropology and the all-important term 'positionality.'

ERDGESCHOSS:

1 = Windfang und Diele   6 = Balkon
2 = Bad   7 = Wirtschafterin
3 = Schlafzimmer   8 = Speisenaufzug
4 = Arbeitszimmer   9 = Küche
5 = Bibliothek   10 = Garderohe
   11 = W. C.
   12 = Garage
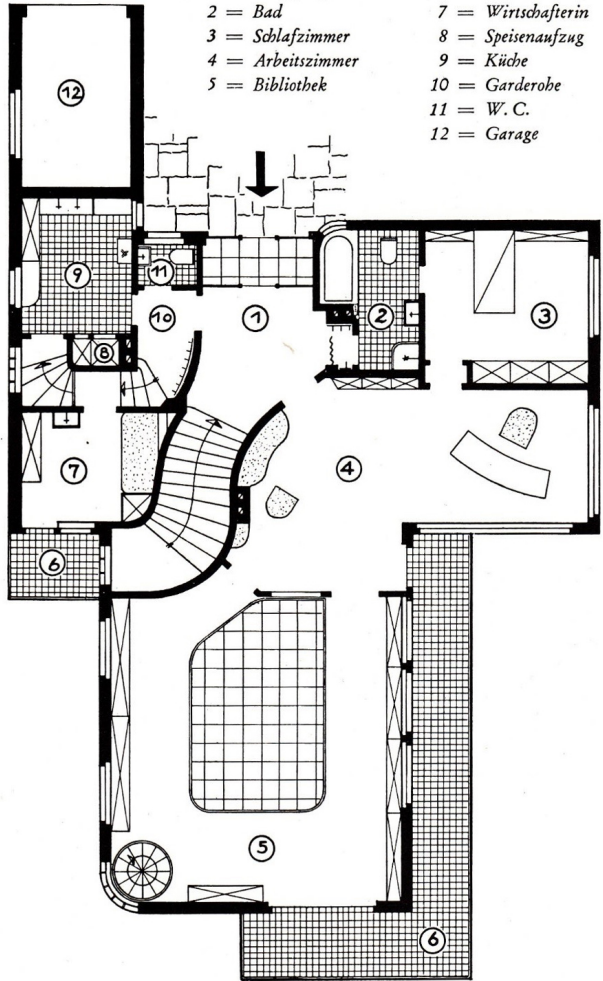
PLESSNER'S PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Philosophical Anthropology deals with questions like 'what is man?' and 'what is man's place in the nature of things?' as opposed to the more philosophically fundamental 'what is being?' The German sociologist Joachim Fischer (president of the Helmuth Plessner Society from 2011 until 2017) has distinguished Philosophical Anthropology (the capital letters denote its distinctiveness), the

special movement within German philosophy of the 1920s, from a more generalised philosophical interest in anthropology.[12] Following Fischer's distinction, this paper will capitalise 'Philosophical Anthropology' to demarcate philosophical anthropology (no capital letters) from Plessner's particular take on it.

Plessner's claim for Philosophical Anthropology is that it provides "a clarification of the position of man in the world."[13] Plessner formulated his thinking about Philosophical Anthropology at the same time as Martin Heidegger conceived his fundamental ontology, although it derives from very different premises. In brief, where Heidegger's ontological starting point is man's temporal sense of being ('*Dasein*', roughly, 'being', or 'being-there', to use a word of Heidegger's) in the world, Plessner begins with man's spatial relationships, with other humans, creatures, and the wider environment. With this in mind, it is all the more surprising that he has been so neglected by architectural culture, especially in light of the 'spatial turn' in the humanities of recent years. Plessner came from a background in the natural sciences, a field of knowledge requiring plain and straightforward language, a language that, moreover, has to act as an adjunct to non-verbal forms of communication, such as drawings, diagrams, and photographs, akin to architectural communication.[14] Immersed in transcendental philosophy in parallel with and subsequent to studies to those in medicine and zoology, Plessner sought to answer Goethe's wish that Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*) be completed by a *Critique of the Senses* (*Kritik der Sinne*).[15] In a nutshell, this was to be Plessner's contribution to knowledge, initiated with his *The Unity of the Senses* and substantiated with his main text *The Levels of Organic Being and Man* five years later.[16] In this book we find Plessner's one substantive contribution to philosophical vocabulary: the word 'ex-centric' in the sense of "out of the centre."[17] *The Levels* failed to sustain the same degree of interest as the key contemporaneous work of phenomenological philosophy, Heidegger's *Being and Time*, either in the field of philosophy or, as this paper focuses on, that of architecture.[18] The reason, perhaps, is due to its interdisciplinary nature: Plessner was a trained biologist, and indeed of the seven chapters of *The Levels*, it is only the final one, 'The Sphere of Man,' that fully fleshes out his Philosophical Anthropology.

MAN'S EX-CENTRIC 'POSITIONALITY'

Plessner posits that, at the (human) observable scale of biological life, each organism's position relative to that of others, and to the environment,

is a decisive factor in our understanding its motivations and *Dasein*. Viewed in terms of an ascending hierarchy in the natural world, plants have fixed positions in the world, whereas animals move freely. They have, according to Plessner, different kinds of 'positionality.' Human beings have the additional characteristic of being aware of their positionality and of being able to reflect upon it. They have 'ex-centric positionality.'

Seen in the context of architecture, the concept of man´s ex-centric positionality has interesting implications, both for the way we perceive our position in the world, in reference to our surroundings, and in the way designers conceive, propose, and make such environments. First of all, architecture provides a way of understanding ex-centricity through the developing means of representing buildings in the early decades of the twentieth century where, in avant-garde circles, the axonometric projection began to be favoured by architects in preference to the perspective, as a means of conceiving and representing the objective realities of a building's formal composition.[19] The axonometric, famously, is a more analytical representation of a building from which we are able to scale off accurate dimensions, and does not depend upon the single human observer and viewpoint demanded by the perspective. It is emblematic of a disinterested abstraction, 'ex-centric,' as opposed to the perspective's centredness on the human (and one particular human's) eye. The human viewpoint of the perspective, as opposed to other apparently more dispassionate and objective architectural projections, is the main topic of Robin Evans's groundbreaking study, *The Projective Cast*, and Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Louise Pelletier's book *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge*.[20] These were published in the late 1990s, in the wake of a renewed and sustained interest in architectural drawing for its own sake, on the part of avant-garde

" HUMAN BEINGS HAVE 'EX-CENTRIC POSITIONALITY.' "

architects and students, and on the brink of the computer revolution in architectural practice that would fundamentally change the way buildings are imagined and produced.[21] In recent years, the ubiquity of digital means of representation and architectural production has multiplied the questions regarding man's position with respect to architecture, in an era where images are commonly projected onto flat screens and scaled up or down at will into virtual space.[22]

We cannot claim that buildings and places have any views of their own positions in the world, be they objective or subjective. What may be argued, though, is that people who imagine or make buildings and places, 'architects,' have, in modern times and places, steadily developed an ex-centric view of their work that has tended to locate them outside, and separate from, the work itself, and, moreover, with heightened abilities to reflect on their work dispassionately. To be 'outside the work itself' means having the mental ability to regard the world dispassionately, where 'outside' is seen as being increasingly separate from the sentient self, while 'heightened abilities' may be understood as belonging to the increasingly independent and 'professional' architect, no longer (quite so) subservient to the whims and interests of a powerful and socially superior patron. Such an 'ex-centric' position is a particularly twentieth-century, 'modern,' disposition of architects as practitioners, theorists, and historians who stand broadly against the 'autonomy' of architecture, seeking instead to couple it with other disciplines, most notably sociology in the 1960s, linguistics in the 1970s, critical theory in the 1980s, and so on. The 'criticality' at large in the humanities and social sciences has noticeably extended into architectural design and has gained increased traction in the last decades. Examples from the last decades would be Post-Modernism in architecture, where criticality issuing originally from linguistics has been a powerful influence upon architectural theory and practice (for instance, in the work of Charles Jencks, Denise Scott Brown, and Robert Venturi). 'Critical Architecture' has had a significant impact on post-1980s design theory and practice, where psychoanalysis, feminism, and most notably Derridean Deconstruction has had a profound influence upon architects as diverse as Jennifer Bloomer, Daniel Libeskind, and Peter Eisenman.[23] The architect, as artist and agent, is emblematic of a renewed philosophic interest in the question of "how to combine the perspective of a particular person inside the world with an objective view of that same world, the person and his viewpoint included. It is a problem that faces every creature with the impulse and the capacity to transcend its particular point of view and to conceive of the world as a whole."[24]

Plessner's emphasis on space and position as opposed to time and occasion is probably his most important contribution to architectural culture, and is the subject of the next section of this paper.

THE FINITUDE OF HUMAN BEINGS

Published in the same year as the now more famous *Being and Time*, Plessner's *The Levels* similarly explores the philosophical implications of man's finitude. The substantive difference is that whereas Heidegger sees finitude in its temporal sense ('we will all die'), Plessner regards our spatial limitations and relationships as more compelling ('we are all located in different places, and in a constantly changing relationship to those places').[25] He goes on to maintain that 'human beings live in three worlds: an outer world (*Aussenwelt*), an inner world (*Innenwelt*), and the shared world of culture (*Mitwelt*).[26] This more nuanced and holistic sense of the world, derived from a biological understanding of plant, animal, and human life-forms, challenges Cartesian dualism and is furthermore at odds with Descartes in an additional elaboration. Plessner maintains there is a 'double aspectivity' to life, at least as it appears to us humans. We experience the world 'from an inner and outer perspective' and have a double vocabulary when describing ourselves in the world.[27] There are contrasting outer-world concepts such as 'body' ('*Körper*') or 'living body' ('*Leib*') and inner-world ones such as 'soul' ('*Seele*') and 'lived experience' ('*Erlebnis*'); and, as far as the *Mitwelt* (a word translated by Jos De Mul as '[shared] world of culture') goes, 'I' ('*ich*') and 'we' ('*wir*'). This is indeed an elaboration, or perhaps a circumvention, of the mind-body problem bequeathed by Descartes.

PLESSNER'S THREE ANTHROPOLOGICAL LAWS

In the final chapter of *The Levels*, 'The Human Sphere', Plessner outlines his three anthropological

laws that follow from his understanding of man's ex-centric positionality and his finitude. These are (i) the law of natural artificiality, (ii) the law of mediated immediacy, and (iii) the law of the utopian standpoint.

1. NATURAL ARTIFICIALITY

The law of natural artificiality, in a clear nod to Heidegger's thinking, states that man uses artificial means (technology) to overcome his 'constitutive homelessness'.[28]

> *As an excentric being standing in disequilibrium, out of place and time, constitutively homeless, [man] has to "become something" and form his own equilibrium. […] Man wishes to escape the unbearable excentricity of his being, he wishes to compensate for the dichotomy [Hälftenhaftigkeit] of his own life-form and he can only manage to do this with things that are sufficiently heavy to weigh on the scales of his existence.[29]*

Plessner goes on to specify what it is that supplies this corrective to man's ex-centricity: culture. To put it simply, as Jos De Mul does in his introduction to his edited book on Plessner, "[t]he world of culture and technology is the expression of the desire of human beings to bridge the distance that separates them from the world, their fellow man and themselves."[30] What better combination of culture and technology is there than architecture? Plessner understands architecture as 'artificial,' certainly, but its artificiality is natural to man as he is currently constituted. Here Plessner makes common ground with his contemporary, the philosopher Arnold Gehlen, for whom man, the deficient being ('*Mängelwesen*'), has to build his own world, before he can 'be': "Man is naturally a cultural being."[31] Plessner's law of natural artificiality is an ontological response, one that answers man's existential need for a secure place in the world. Plessner recognises that

> *since man is compelled, through his type of existence, to lead the life that he actually lives, that is, to make what he is – since he only is when he accomplishes things–he needs a complement of an unnatural nature to which he is unaccustomed. Because of this he is by his very nature, by dint of his form of existence, artificial. As an ex-centric being that is not in equilibrium, standing in the void, placeless, timeless, constitutively homeless, he has to "become something" and to create his own equilibrium. And he creates this only with the assistance of unnatural things that emerge from his creation when the results of this creative making are granted their own heft.[32]*

Plessner makes it absolutely clear that culture, the very essence of natural

artificiality, requires both mind and hand; it is, as he puts it, "sucked out of the fingers: intelligence and manual dexterity lie at the root of the origin of the use of tools and of culture."[33]

2. MEDIATED IMMEDIACY: IMMANENCE AND EXPRESSIVITY

Plessner's second anthropological law, mediated immediacy (subtitled 'immanence and expressivity'), speaks of the centrality of culture and technology in enabling man to express himself and his ex-centric position in the world. "Man can only invent insofar as he discovers," in other words, man can only mediate things and conditions that are immediately available to him.[34] "[Man's] productivity is only a pretext by which discovery becomes occurrence and gains substance," a sentiment that finds an immediate echo in the writings of his contemporary, the architect Hugo Häring (1882-1958).[35] Häring asks us to "call on things and let them unfold their own forms. It goes against our nature to impose forms on them, to determine them from without, to force upon them laws of any kind, to dictate to them."[36] Form finding has become the mantra of organic architecture ever since and shares its vitalism with that of Plessner and others from the first decades of the twentieth-century.[37] However, we would be mistaken in thinking that the architectural implications of Plessner's second law are limited to the organic: let us not forget the adjective 'mediated' that Plessner couples with 'immediacy.' Cultural activities may well begin with the world as experienced, but they soon develop trajectories of their own, 'aesthetics' if you will, in order to express and make intelligible any particular ethos. Certainly, reading the speech that he gave at the German Werkbund's twenty-fifth anniversary conference in Berlin, in 1932, it is evident that Plessner alludes to the architecture of the Bauhaus, and to the benefits of the flat roof, while criticising the overtly aesthetic tendencies of the International

" PLESSNER'S THREE ANTHROPOLOGICAL LAWS 1. NATURAL ARTIFICIALITY 2. MEDIATED IMMEDIACY 3. UTOPIAN STANDPOINT "

Style and its followers. For instance, in answer to the question of a how a designed object should appear, and what it should look like, Plessner (ironically) replies, "It should be beautiful!" He then goes on to explain that "This painterly view is somehow to be seen as superseded. […] A room is there for living in. A chair is there for sitting in."[38]

By the end of the section on this second law, Plessner has expanded his thesis. He can now claim that, as a "law, […] in the end people do not know what they do, but only experience it through history."[39] This second law is one that poses problems for those seeking a single architectural direction from Plessner, for surely the demands of extreme functionalism, exemplified by the organic architecture of Häring, compete directly with those of formalism and historicism. However, for Plessner, culture is always at least one step removed from the body's physiology; his phenomenology never leads to an over-simplistic manifestation of function, which for him is always historically embedded. The architectural import of his second law leans more towards the claims of history and the memorability of received forms of buildings, and chimes with Plessner's own maturing views by 1932 elaborated in the following section, with an inclusiveness and largeness of character that leads to an 'open' architecture, and one, moreover, that is able to accommodate historical precedent. Plessner is reticent as to what 'open form' might actually mean for architecture. In his Werkbund speech in which he alluded to such epicentres of avant-garde design as Dessau, Rotterdam, and Amsterdam, Plessner praised asymmetrical layouts and (especially) the flat roof, both emblematic of Bauhaus architecture, as examples of 'openness.' The flat roof, in particular, lacks a conventional termination, and so is open to possibilities of buildings being stacked one on top of another.[40]

This second law is, therefore, ambiguous regarding its implications for architecture. On the one hand, and of great relevance to one strand of the *Neues Bauen*, it has an obvious relationship with the organic functionalism of Häring; on the other, with the demands of history and the importance of a continuing tradition, it represents the antithesis of Functionalism. Josef Frank's interwar work—about which more later—comprising well-wrought buildings and pithy writings, represents perhaps the ideal balance between the demands of invention and of tradition. One aspect of tradition that links Viennese aesthetics with Plessner's demand for expressivity is the mask. Here one thinks of Plessner's playful and insightful essay "The Smile," concerning the subtleties of the facial expression that is for him the most human of all our (dis)guises.[41] The mask was certainly something that Adolf Loos railed against in his

writings even if his executed buildings, with their spatially rich interiors of Raumplan, their mixed palette of materials, and with their owners' eclectic furnishings, are all 'hidden' by the white-painted render of their exteriors.[42] His buildings, especially the houses, invariably have clear boundaries, even if these boundaries belie complexities within. Loos believed that the exterior of a building should have a neutral public presence. This would be apostrophised by the professor of literature Helmut Lethen as 'public coolness,' which Plessner "[sought] to turn […] into a medium that accepts vitalizing boundaries."[43] The mask for Plessner acts as an essential distancing mechanism, a human mediation of the immediacy of the external world (*Aussenwelt*) that allows human beings to be *in* the world. For Lethen,

> *Plessner's sociological discovery of roles as a protective medium is informed by Nietzsche's claim that every profound spirit needs a mask; his anthropology centres on this paradox: 'Only masked is man entirely real'. Oscar Wilde's motto – 'Man is least of all himself when he speaks in his own name. Give him a mask, and he will tell the truth' – echoes through Plessner's code of distance.*[44]

Human beings' ex-centric positionality is due to the 'membrane' that separates them from their environment.[45] The German architect Heinrich Tessenow's executed buildings, drawings and writings—an oeuvre that reached its maturity exactly contemporaneous with Plessner's halcyon years of the 1920s—have uncanny echoes of much of the philosopher's work.[46] In an earlier essay, "Objectivity or Truth in Craftsmanship," Tessenow (1876-1950) wrote: "It would be more beautiful, we would form closer human bonds, if we were able to openly show our sorrows and joys or the pipes of our houses and streets etc, everything that concerns us as humans; but we lack the ability to do so, lest such frankness embarrass or hurt us, and so we

have much to hide."[47] Tessenow acknowledges the mask-like function of architecture that conceals the dreary if not dire facts of human life, and so makes it possible for us to live. His thinking concedes that suppression is necessary in order to allow meaningful expression to emerge, and concurs with Plessner's view that there must be "in every artistic reading […] a distortion of the work, a partisanship, a choice, an emphasis, in a word a distancing alienation, in order to see the object."[48]

It is in the city of Vienna, the birthplace of psychoanalysis, that 'mediated immediacy' found its most obvious outlet, though without the directness and polemical purity that are the hallmarks of Weimar Germany's protagonists of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (*New Objectivity*), cognate with interwar modern architecture (*Neues Bauen*). Within Viennese critical writings, too, there is frequently a mismatch between texts and buildings. Texts are by their very nature one step removed from the objects they describe or analyse, and so tend to be more polemical and uncompromising than the buildings designed by the same author. One only has to compare Loos's shrill and hectoring writings, for instance, "Ornament and Crime," with the architect's nuanced buildings and interiors, embedded in Viennese traditions of Biedermeier (the comfortable bourgeois aesthetic of Central Europe, between Neoclassicism and Romanticism) as they undoubtedly are.[49] On the other hand, in the era of 'Red Vienna,' exactly contemporary with Weimar Germany in the 1920s, we have the suave cynicism of Frank, who later wrote (in his Swedish exile), in his famous essay "Accidentism": "The formal rules of art have been preserved through tradition, even though their validity cannot be proven; for that reason, there can be no art without recourse to tradition. Since these rules have been consistently observed from the earliest times up to the present day, one can regard them as axioms."[50] Frank's pragmatic and non-partisan views clearly relate to Plessner's more nuanced thinking at the dawn of Nazi rule in Germany, a point that will be elaborated in the final part of this paper. The tenor of Frank's writing is on a par with the wry wit evident in his buildings and other design work: his architectural thinking is always mediated via understandable and stylistically knowing writings and buildings. This accords well with Plessner's 'mediated immediacy' of his second anthropological law, and his recognition that culture and technology are key human faculties that comprise our ontology.

3. UTOPIAN STANDPOINT: NOTHINGNESS AND TRANSCENDENCE

The third and final law of man's utopian standpoint is the one that connects Plessner most profoundly with questions of philosophical

ontology. It builds on the mediating role of the second law with the implication for architecture that it is to be located firmly within a historical tradition. Its subtitle, 'nothingness and transcendence,' seems more distant from the scientific underpinnings of the previous laws, and yet man's ex-centric being can only result in a belief in transcendence, as a bulwark against nothingness (i.e., the belief in God), or its profane equivalent, a hope in and striving for a brilliant (and atheist) future. "The ex-centric form [of] human existence drives man to engage in culture, it awakens needs that can only be satisfied through a system of artificial objects."[51] Buildings are obvious examples of such objects, produced within each society's architectural culture.

Architecture is central to Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology as it simultaneously acts in the inner, outer, and 'with-worlds,' with the architect as ex-centric agent: "[human existence's] ex-centric form compels man to engage in culture, it awakens needs that can only be satisfied through a system of artificial objects […] Its constitutive rootlessness bears witness to the reality of world history."[52] History, together with its twin, memory, is a central human faculty that affords us utopian transcendence, and with this third law, Plessner's philosophical anthropology broadens out to encompass man's historical nature. It is the law he expresses most succinctly (at some five pages right at the end of *The Levels*, it is significantly shorter than the preceding two laws), but the one to which he returns in his postwar writings in a more expansive mode. He considers the implications that man's ex-centric position has for history, and for historiography, in his book *The Belated Nation* where he states that "only one thing remains of life: memory."[53] And in a late essay he writes:

> *Thus man never returns. We have to renounce the romanticism of alienation and homecoming inherent in Marxism and admit to ourselves its illusionary*

❝HUMAN EXISTENCE'S EX-CENTRIC FORM COMPELS MAN TO ENGAGE IN CULTURE, IT AWAKENS NEEDS THAT CAN ONLY BE SATISFIED THROUGH A SYSTEM OF ARTIFICIAL OBJECTS❞

character. In its optimistic linkage of progress and homecoming Marxism is based on an outmoded anthropology, which, still under Hegel's spell, ignores the consequences of insight into the impenetrability of man and the essence of his historicity.[54]

This is (late) Plessner, at his most hard-boiled and without any illusions. It is in complete contrast to the romanticism of Heidegger that suggests that appropriate architecture could provide such a refuge from modernity. Such a homecoming, expressed in the late 1960s but harking back to the antagonistic polarities of late Weimar Germany, would be satisfied neither by the nostalgia offered by Ferdinand Tönnies's 'community' nor by the rigidities of Marxist society.[55] Instead, according to Lethen, "Plessner contrasts the identikit picture of community as a symbiotic companionship with an idea of society that lacks idyllic features. It is an open system of unencumbered strangers."[56] An open political and social system, moreover, that finds its architectural equivalence in the open form typified by Walter Gropius's Bauhaus ensemble (1925-26) at Dessau. This characterises Plessner's pragmatic turn away from the abstract idealism inherent in Marxism to a transcendence which is just out of our reach, lying in the future of some utopian dream, or as Plessner concluded in *The Belated Nation*, "[e]ven in the apparent finality of fundamental dogmatism [the philosophy of life] remains linked to historical change and in truth ready to awaken those unknown forces that herald what is coming."[57]

What might this mean for architecture? In his Werkbund speech, Plessner claimed that "we have to underline one more point that is important for the success of this train of thought: the dissolution of the private ties through the technical world, the limitation of the private space of human existence, the eradication of private relationships and in place of these eradicated private relationships the gradual coming into being of a public realm."[58] He went on to discuss the bankruptcy of aesthetics, since

the aesthetic attitude is no longer valid, it has become in a quite definite sense a private matter. It is the preserve of people of taste, of those who possess time, money and education, who take pleasure in fine things and know what to do with them: however, it is no longer the preserve of the public sphere, no longer the preserve of that unassuming subjectivity of the masses, in which we all participate, like it or not.[59]

So far, so *sachlich*. However, in what at first sight appears to be a volte-face on the part of Plessner, towards the end of his speech he appears to subvert, or soften, his argument:

But the things with which we are concerned here [...] are greater than the things of politics and of political ideology. Not only do we have the firm belief, but we already know that the new form-making and the search for new form does not rely upon the socialist train of thought. The hope that this new form-world can only be completely brought about by dint of a proletarian revolution [...] we can no longer entertain.[60]

Plessner's decoupling of the *Neues Bauen* from Marxist ideology is quite startling in the light of his foregoing polemic. The views of the Werkbundists present at the speech are not known, but they—and Plessner—must have seen the writing on the wall: Hitler had become Chancellor by the end of January 1933, and the Werkbund was subsequently disbanded.[61] Yet had the Werkbund audience been familiar with Plessner's writings, and with his carefully plotted development of his anthropological laws stemming from his understanding of man's ex-centricity, then they would have taken his words—prophetic, from our post-Communist perspective—in their stride. Nine years earlier, one year after the publication of his *The Unity of the Senses*, in 1924, he had published *Limits of Community: A Critique of Social Radicalism*. It is worth quoting some of its opening remarks, in order to gain the full impact of Plessner's withering assault on dualistic thought, and on the dire consequences such thought would have on political and social life, and, by implication, on architecture:

By radicalism we mean generally the conviction that the truly great and good only come about by conscious recourse to the roots of existence; the belief in the healing power of extremes whose method is to make a stand against all traditional values and compromises. [...] Social radicalism [...] is the native world-view of the impatient, sociologically: of the lower classes, biologically: of youth. [...] Radicalism means dualism. [It is] contemptuous of the conditional, of the

limited, of small things and steps, of restraint, or reticence, of unconsciousness, joyful, but only of great things, devout, but only to the mighty, purist, therefore Pharisaic, principled, therefore inhibited, fanatic, therefore destructive. The enemy of radicalism is nature.[62]

Plessner is here announcing a new social construct for man, one that recognises its artificiality while acknowledging its anthropological roots in the biological and the natural.

CONCLUSION

The burden of this paper has been to introduce a relatively unknown philosopher, and to outline the implications his thinking had for architecture. Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology had little effect on his architect-contemporaries, although aspects of his three 'laws' had clear resonance with the buildings of the *Neues Bauen* in Germanophone Europe of the interwar years. We began the paper with a passage from Plessner's *The Unity of the Senses* of 1923, one that seemed to presage much of the 'phenomenological' architecture we are currently experiencing, followed by the postwar house designed for him and his wife Monika by the architect Lucy Hillebrand. We end with some examples of the work—writings and buildings—of the Viennese architect Josef Frank, already alluded to several times.

Frank's 'compromised' architecture is less well known than the designs and writings of his Viennese peers, most notably Adolf Loos. The 'compromise' (regarded by Frank as a virtue) is with stylistic purity in the buildings and dogmatic correctness in the writings. The latter, especially those of the Viennese years before his exile, have a pithy irony that speaks to us directly today, as evinced by the recent translation of his collected writings with the foreword written by Denise Scott Brown. In his long essay "Architecture as Symbol: Elements of the German New Building" (1931) Frank writes about

imagin[ing] a world in which people live in small houses in meadows, growing tulips and pursuing arts and crafts of that sort, cut off from the world, peaceful and sedate. All they need grows in their garden, and they know nothing of the rocket ship that will soon fly to the moon. Any rush is unnecessary since no one works more than he must, and all find their work fulfilling. Such a way of life will seem strange to most today, even if in its straightforwardness it is not absent of all propagandistic pathos and as an ideal is even preferable in some respects. But how few will even see [any] point in shaping something lacking in any

pathos, even the pathos of absolute primitivism; alas, very few people accept that a pleasant life is always a via media between all kinds of ideals – no person has the same disposition all the time -; and that shaping a pleasant life as a composite of all these ideals is a matter with goals just as consistent and absolute as the goals of those who strive for a single extreme. The fate of modern architecture hinges on achieving this ambition, for its essential function resides in the formation and symbolization of our lives.[63]

This function of architecture, to form and symbolise our lives, represents in a nutshell how it serves mankind's 'positioned' existence, as expressed in Plessner's three anthropological laws. Frank's house that best exemplifies these twin architectural functions is the Beer House, Vienna (with Oskar Wlach, 1929-30; Figure 4). In its 'white' aesthetic, its simplicity and composition of external form, and the 'flow' of major internal spaces, it has much in common with the similarly undoctrinaire, yet unashamedly modern, Plessner house of the early 1950s designed by Hillebrand. While they both share attributes of Modernist aesthetics and planning, they are equally unapologetic about their historical and cultural roots: they exhibit the 'mediated immediacy' of Plessner's second Anthropological Law. Frank wrote a sturdy defence of the Beer House, "The House as Path and Place." To choose just one extract from this admirable essay, one that has a clear relationship to the Plessner house, is difficult; nonetheless, when Frank writes that "[t]he focus of the house is the sitting area, its piazza," we can see the connection with the doubled-height salon that Hillebrand designed. Frank continues:

Every living room must have a center, around which it is ordered, giving the space its character. In the old days this was more easily accomplished, as there was a fireplace or–even though much less characteristic–the oven. Today [1931], at a time when this focus is, more often than not, absent, the organization of the

> " THE FUNCTION OF ARCHITECTURE, TO FORM AND SYMBOLISE OUR LIVES, REPRESENTS IN A NUTSHELL HOW IT SERVES MANKIND'S 'POSITIONED' EXISTENCE "

plan has become more difficult, as this center has to be created in architectural terms. The numerous means available for this are windows, niches, columns, etc. It is also the absence of the formal center that renders the rectangular room so uninhabitable.[64]
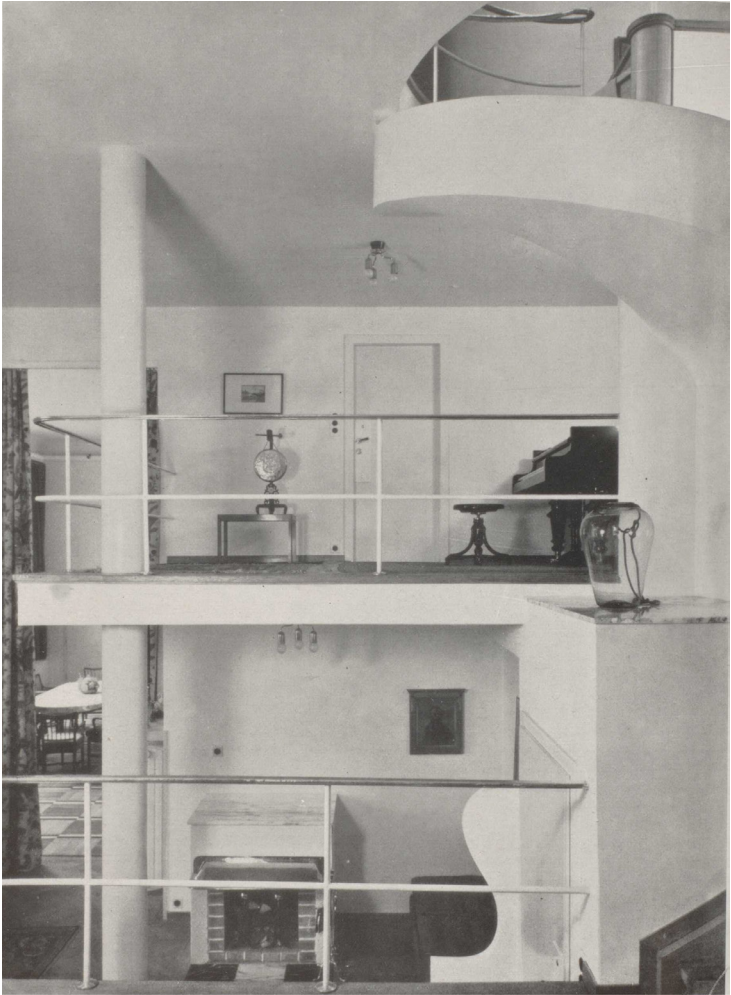
FIGURE 4: JOSEF FRANK WITH OSKAR WLACH, BEER HOUSE, VIENNA (1929-30). VIEW INTO THE HALL FROM THE LIVING ROOM. THE 'PATH' THROUGH THE HOUSE IS ACTUALLY A SERIES OF CONNECTED 'PLACES,' AND WHILE THE CONCEPTION AS A WHOLE IS STARTLING, THERE IS AN UNMISTAKABLE HOMELINESS IN THE FAMILIARITY AND SCALE OF THE DISCRETE SPACES AND THEIR COMFORTABLE FURNISHINGS AND FITTINGS.

The concluding remarks of Frank's essay may be regarded as an architectural formulation of much of Plessner's positional, human-centred philosophy:

> *All our commodities, and here we may include the house, are really a compromise between function, material, form, quality, price, and other things, all following a middle (and varying) course, yet the rules for the good house as an ideal do not change in principle and have only to be looked at afresh. How does one enter a garden? What does the route look like from the gateway? What is the shape of an anteroom? How does one pass the cloakroom from the anteroom to reach the living room? How does the seating area relate to the door and the window? There are many questions like this which need to be answered, and the house consists of these elements. This is modern architecture.*[65]

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES

All translations are by the author unless otherwise stated.

ENDNOTES

[1] Helmuth Plessner, *Die Einheit der Sinne: Grundlinien einer Ästhesiologie des Geistes* (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1923) in Helmuth Plessner, *Anthropologie der*

Sinne: Gesammelte Schriften III (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 267.

[2] For the biographical sketch of Plessner's life from which this is drawn see *Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology: Perspectives and Prospects*, ed. Jos De Mul (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 12-14.

[3] Plessner has, though, featured prominently in two recent books of cultural history: Frederic Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth-century Germany* (London: Yale University Press, 2005) and Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: the Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2002), especially chapter three, "The Conduct Code of the Cool Persona," 33-100. Originally published as *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte: Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994).

[4] Hillebrand was, like Plessner, of mixed Jewish descent, and was unable to practise during the Nazi interregnum. See "Biografie," FemBio, accessed June 27, 2017, http://www.fembio.org/biographie.php/frau/biographie/lucy-hillebrand/. See also Lucy Hillebrand, *Zeit-Räume der Architektin Lucy Hillebrand*, ed. Dieter Boeminghaus (Stuttgart: Krämer, 1983) and Sonia Ricon Baldessarini, "Lucy Hillebrand: Architektur als Schrift der Beweglichkeit," in *Wie Frauen bauen: Architektinnen von Julia Morgan bis Zaha Hadid* (Berlin und Grambin: AvivA, 2001), 93-102.

[5] See Hillebrand, *Zeit-Räume*, 156-7. The description of Plessner's house cites Albrecht Bürkle, "Das Haus des Professors," in *Merian* 6, 1 (1953): 41.

[6] "There were hardly any doors [in Plessner's Wiesbaden house]." Cited in Heike Delitz, "Ein Bau für die modern Philosophie und Soziologie: Plessner in Göttingen," in *Plessner in Wiesbaden*, eds. Tilman Allert and Joachim Fischer (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2014), 133-143, cited 136, from original in Carola Dietze, *Nachgeholtes Leben. Helmuth Plessner 1892-1985* (Göttingen: Wallstein-Verlag, 2006), 362. The lack of doors puts one in mind of the domestic architecture of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, of whom it was said that "he [Plessner] might have been Mies's favourite philosopher, therefore the favourite philosopher of one of the three great heroes of modern architecture." (From Dietze, *Nachgeholtes Leben*, 138, citing Hans-Joachim Dahms, "Mies van der Rohe und die Philosophie um 1930," in *Arch+* no. 161 (2002), 55.

[7] Delitz, "Ein Bau," 133. Delitz cites Dietze, *Nachgeholtes Leben*, 361. For more on Hillebrand's relationship to dance, see Klaus Hoffmann, "Über Tanz-Schrift zu Raum-Schrift" ("On Dance-Script to Space-Script"), in Hillebrand, *Zeit-Räume*, 14-15. Monika Plessner is cited by Dietze in

Nachgeholtes Leben.

[8] Todtnauberg in the Black Forest is the location of Heidegger's hut where he retreated in order to write, in his refuge from the world. See Adam Sharr, *Heidegger's Hut* (Cambridge: MIT, 2006).

[9] Tom Spector, in comments to this issue's editors, and communicated to the author February 27, 2018.

[10] See the Beer House, Vienna (with Oskar Wlach, 1929-30) for a prime example of Josef Frank's domestic output.

[11] Plessner, *Die Einheit der Sinne*, 266.

[12] A good overview of philosophical anthropology may be found in Joachim Fischer, "Die 'Kölner Konstellation,'" in *Plessner in Wiesbaden*, eds. Tilman Allert and Joachim Fischer (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2014), 89-121. Here the three 'stars' alluded to are, in addition to Plessner, Max Scheler and Arnold Gehlen. See also Bernhard Beller, "Anthropologie und Ethik bei Arnold Gehlen" (Munich: Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, 2010), unpublished doctoral dissertation, especially "Eine kurze Geschichte der philosophischen Anthropologie," 12-41, accessed November 13, 2017, https://edoc.ub.uni-muenchen.de/15913/1/Beller_Bernhard.pdf. For the distinction between the specific, 1920s movement and more a generalised anthropological interest for philosophy, see Joachim Fischer, *Philosophische Anthropologie. Eine Denkrichtung des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Alber, 2009), 9. In a similar vein, the term Neues Bauen ('New Building') is a specific reference to architecture in the German-speaking lands in the 1920s, an aesthetic reference that cannot be used in respect of architecture, however 'new,' in, say, the 1890s or the 1950s.

[13] Helmuth Plessner, "Homo absconditus," in Helmuth Plessner, *Conditio humana* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 353-66, 353. First published in Merkur, 23rd year, vol. 11 (1969): 989-998.

[14] One is reminded of Otto Neurath's work in 'Red' Vienna and his project to develop a clear language of visual communication before the semiotics revolution of the 1960s. See Eve Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna*, 1919-1934 (Cambridge and London: MIT, 1999).

[15] Helmuth Plessner, *Die Einheit der Sinne*, 7-315 and 31.

[16] Helmuth Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch: Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928), reprinted 1975 (Berlin: de Gruyter), Sammlung Göschen 2200.

[17] The German term "exzentrisch" does indeed mean both eccentric and

"out of the centre." Plessner uses the term "exzentrische Positionalität" in the sense of "being in a position that is out of the centre." So I have rendered the spelling in translation in order to differentiate its meaning from the English 'eccentric.' See Plessner, *Die Stufen,* chapter 7, "Die Sphäre des Menschen," 288-346, especially section 1, 'Die Positionalität der exzentrischen Form. Das Ich und der Personcharakter,' 288-93.

[18] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1927).

[19] See Auguste Choisy, *Histoire de l'Architecture* (Paris, 1899).

[20] Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Louise Pelletier, *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge* (Cambridge: MIT, 1997).

[21] See Rolf Sachsse, *Bild und Bau. Zur Nutzung technischer Medien beim Entwerfen von Architektur* (Braunschweig and Wiesbaden: Vieweg, 1997).

[22] See Gerald Adler, Timothy Brittain-Catlin, and Gordana Fontana-Giusti, "Introduction", in *Scale: Imagination, Perception and Practice in Architecture*, eds. Gerald Adler, Timothy Brittain-Catlin, and Gordana Fontana-Giusti (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 1-9. The phenomenon of flatness is explored in various scales, media, and locations in Barry Higman, *Flatness* (London: Reaktion, 2017).

[23] See, for instance, *Critical Architecture*, eds. Jane Rendell, Jonathan Hill, Murray Fraser, and Mark Dorrian (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).

[24] Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3. Nagel's is a restatement, in modern terms and times, of a philosophical question that may be traced at least as far as back as Descartes. For Plessner, the only such creature on earth is the human being.

[25] See De Mul, *Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology*, 14-15, and Plessner, *Die Stufen*, 293, ff. (Aussenwelt, Innenwelt, Mitwelt).

[26] See De Mul, *Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology*, 16-17.

[27] Ibid., 17.

[28] See Helmuth Plessner, *Die Stufen*, 310. The reader who is looking for a shortcut to Plessner's three main anthropological laws should refer to Helmuth Plessner, "Der Mensch als Lebewesen," in Helmuth Plessner, *Mit anderen Augen: Aspekte einer philosophischen Anthropologie* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982), 9-62. This essentially reprints the laws as stated in *The Levels* (See Plessner, *Die Stufen*, 309-46), prefaced by a short introduction. There is as yet no English translation of *Die Stufen*.

[29] Plessner, *Die Stufen,* 310-11.

[30] De Mul, *Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology*, 19.

[31] Arnold Gehlen, "Philosophische Anthropologie," (1971), in Arnold Gehlen, *Philosophische Anthropologie und Handlungslehre* (Collected Works, Vol. 4) (Frankfurt-am-Main: Klostermann, 1983), 236-46, here 240. Actual quote: "So erscheint der Mensch schon von Natur aus als Kulturwesen, seine Sonderstellung hierin begründet." See also Arnold Gehlen, *Der Mensch: seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt* (Berlin: Junker & Dünnhaupt, 1940).

[32] Plessner, *Die Stufen*, 310.

[33] Plessner, *Die Stufen*, 312. Plessner embraces technology in ways that Heidegger found impossible. For Plessner, as for his contemporary, the philosopher Friedrich Dessauer, "[t]echnology is for Germany what sun is for Spain's wine, for Canada's grain, for Argentina's pastures." (Friedrich Dessauer, *Philosophie der Technik: das Problem der Realisierung* (Bonn: Friedrich Cohen Verlag, 1927), 31.

[34] Plessner, *Die Stufen*, 321.

[35] Ibid., 32.

[36] Hugo Häring, *Die Form*, vol. 1 (October 1925): 5, cited in Peter Blundell Jones, *Hugo Häring* (Stuttgart and London: Axel Menges, 1999), 78.

[37] See Peter Bernhard, "Plessners Konzept der offenen Form im Kontext der Avantgarde der 1920er Jahre" ("Plessner's concept of open form in the context of the avant-garde in the 1920s"), in *Arhe IV* (July 2007). There is by now a large bibliography on the relationship between biology and architectural modernism. The English-speaking reader will be more familiar with D'Arcy Thompson's book *On Growth and Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961). This is an abridged version of the original book published in 1917. Thomson's ideas about the relationship between biological and structural and architectural form were taken up with alacrity in the years following its re-edition.

[38] Helmuth Plessner, "Wiedergeburt der Form im technischen Zeitalter" ("Rebirth of Form in the Technical Age"), in *Arch+* no. 161 (June 2002): 52-57, transcript of Plessner's speech on October 14, 1932 in Berlin on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the German Werkbund, here 54. ("Es soll schön sein! Diese malerische Blickhaltung wird irgendwie als überwunden empfunden. […] Ein Raum ist zum Wohnen da. Ein Stuhl ist zum Sitzen da.") Translations from this speech are my own, although a complete English translation exists: Helmuth Plessner, "Rebirth of Form in

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the Technical Age," trans. Jonathan Blower, in *Art in Translation* 3, 1 (2011): 37-51. First published in German in *Politik—Anthropologie—Philosophie: Aufsätze und Vorträge*, ed. Salvatore Giammusso and Hans-Ulrich Lessing (Munich: Fink, 2001), 71-86. The International Style exhibition opened at MoMA, New York City on February 9, 1932, some eight months before the Werkbund's anniversary meeting in Berlin.

[39] Plessner, *Die Stufen*, 341.

[40] Plessner, "Wiedergeburt der Form," 57.

[41] Helmuth Plessner, "Das Lächeln," in Helmuth Plessner, *Mit anderen Augen: Aspekte einer philosophischen Anthropologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), 183-97. Originally published in 1950.

[42] See Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge and London: MIT, 1994). "We are divided between what we think and what we say and do," from Colomina, Private and Publicity, 33. Colomina is referring to the fin-de-siècle disjunctions manifested in 'civilised' cultures, especially visible in Vienna, between rich and poor, outside and inside, technology and culture, and so on. She starts the section with an apposite quote of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's (from his *Buch der Freude*): "Depth must be hidden. Where? On the surface." See also Janet Stewart, *Fashioning Vienna: Adolf Loos's cultural criticism* (London: Routledge, 2000), especially chapter four, "The display and disguise of difference," 98-130.

[43] Lethen, *Cool Conduct*, 55, and Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974). Lethen goes on to account for just such 'coolness' in western mores and habits of behaviour since the Enlightenment: "[Richard] Sennett [in *The Fall of Public Man*, 1976] looks for orientation to public dialogue in the eighteenth century, while Plessner's theory breathes the air of seventeenth-century French classicism." Since 2007, Lethen has been Director of the International Research Centre for Cultural Studies in Vienna (University of Art and Design Linz). Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften, accessed March 29, 2018, ifk.ac.at/pdfs/helmut_lethen_bibliographie.pdf.

[44] Lethen, *Cool Conduct*, 62, citing Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden* vol. 2 (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1963), 604. Nietzsche's actual words are "[j]eder tiefe Geist braucht eine Maske," literally, "every deep spirit needs a mask." Lethen further emphasises the point: "Plessner does not tolerate the enactment of 'naked honesty' or 'eruptive authenticity' either in contemporary design, whether the new objectivity interiors of Bauhaus architecture—'with overhead lighting and tiled walls'—or in expressionist

stage sets. Hygiene resides for him at the cold pole, 'reckless sincerity' at the warm. He takes aim at all forms of unmediated directness, pleading for moderate temperatures and indirect lighting, for art and literature of whatever type as long as they eschew intimate self-revelation in favor of the regulating practice of distance." From Lethen, *Cool Conduct*, 54.

[45] Plessner must have been aware—although his writings do not attest to it—of the Dessau visionary designer Siegfried Ebeling, whose tract "Space as Membrane" was published in 1926. See Siegfried Ebeling, *Space as Membrane* (London: Architectural Association, 2010), edited and with an afterword by Spyros Papapetros; introduction by Walter Scheiffele; translated by Pamela Johnston based on an earlier translation by Anna Kathryn Schoefert. Originally published in German as *Der Raum als Membran* (Dessau: Dünnhaupt, 1926).

[46] See Gerald Adler, "Energising the Building Edge: Siegfried Ebeling, Bauhaus bioconstructivist," in *Peripheries*, eds. Ruth Morrow and Mohamed Abdelmonem (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 183-99.

[47] Heinrich Tessenow, "Die Sachlichkeit oder die Wahrheit in der gewerblichen Arbeit" ("Objectivity or Truth in Craftsmanship"), in *Heinrich Tessenow, Hausbau und dergleichen* (Weimar and Rostock: Edition M, 2011), *Heinrich Tessenow Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 2, ed. Theodor Böll, 38. Originally published in Berlin by Bruno Cassirer, 1916, and subsequently in Braunschweig by Vieweg, 1986.

[48] Helmuth Plessner, "Mit anderen Augen" ("With other Eyes"), in Helmuth Plessner, *Mit anderen Augen: Aspekte einer philosophischen Anthropologie* (Stuttgart: P. Reclam, 1982), 171.

[49] Adolf Loos, "Ornament und Verbrechen" ("Ornament and Crime") (1908), in Adolf Loos, *Trotzdem* (Vienna: Prachner, 1982), 78-88. Originally published in Adolf Loos, *Trotzdem. 1900- 1930* (Innsbruck: Brenner-Verlag, 1931). Loos's writings can still appear shocking, especially "Ornament and Crime." However, his buildings and interiors are remarkably and richly finished and furnished, in complete contrast, for instance, with the generally more polemical German modern architects. To take an extreme pairing, one need only compare, say, Loos's famous Müller House in Prague (1930) with Hannes Meyer's starkly ascetic 'Co-op Zimmer' installation of 1926.

[50] Josef Frank, "Accidentism," in Josef Frank, *Schriften/Writings*, vol. 2, trans. Christopher Long (Vienna: Metroverlag, 2012), 373. Originally published (in Swedish) as "Accidentism," in *Form* 54 (1958): 160-65, and in German in *Baukunst und Werkform*, Year 14, Nuremberg 1961, vol. 4, 216-18. Frank continued:

In our age of scientific thinking, all traditions are gradually being lost; there is no longer any reason to recognize rules that cannot be proven. Thus, concepts such as art and beauty—which cannot even be fully defined—have come under doubt. A person without tradition is forced to invent his own rules of art, which, as a result, must be quite arbitrary. To believe these rules himself and to disseminate the belief in them, he must base them on moral, scientific, utilitarian, or mystical motives.

For a pithy and concise assessment of Frank's centrality in Vienna's interwar architecture and debates concerning aesthetics, see Friedrich Achleitner, "Josef Frank und die Wiener Architektur der Zwischenkriegszeit," in Friedrich Achleitner, *Wiener Architektur: zwischen typologischem Fatalismus und semantischem Schlamassel* (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau, 1996), 81-87.

[51] Plessner, *Die Stufen*, 341.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Helmuth Plessner, *Die verspätete Nation* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1959), 97. This book, originally published in 1935 with the title *Das Schicksal deutschen Geistes im Ausgang seiner bürgerlichen Epoche* (The Fate of the German Spirit at the End of its Bourgeois Epoch) was suppressed the following year. It was only republished in 1959 with its new title.

[54] Helmuth Plessner, "De Homine Abscondito," trans. Claus Mueller, in *Social Research* 36, no. 4 (Winter 1969): 509.

[55] Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1887). Tönnies famously distinguished notions of (traditional) 'community' from those of (modern) 'society,' paving the way for much of the sociological and political thinking of the twentieth century.

[56] Lethen, *Cool Conduct*, xi.

[57] Plessner, *Die verspätete Nation,* 166.

[58] Plessner, "Wiedergeburt der Form," 52.

[59] Ibid., 53.

[60] Ibid., 55.

[61] See Peter Bernhard, "*Plessners Konzept der offenen Form.*" This is a version of a lecture given by Bernhard at the Plessner Workshop held at the TU Dresden in April 2005. It is essentially a commentary on the position 'open form' has in Plessner's "Rebirth of Form" speech on the occasion of the Werkbund's twenty-fifth anniversary in 1932. Bernhard alludes to

Plessner's understanding of open form in the context of technology as well as of life itself. For technical artefacts, such as machines, their 'open forms' enable them to change as needs and capabilities change.

[62] Helmuth Plessner, *Grenzen der Gemeinschaft. Eine Kritik des sozialen Radikalismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 14. Originally published by Friedrich Cohen, Bonn, 1924. It remains untranslated into English. Helmut Lethen has commented that "[w]ith term 'radicalism,' Plessner attacks worldviews based on a conviction that there was any good to be had from 'a return to the roots of existence.' To the wish projections of 'primary unity' and radical therapies, Plessner opposes his behavioural doctrine of distance and bases it on the anthropological principle that every human being, from the moment of birth, leads an incomplete existence. 'That is why man is "by nature" artificial and never in balance.'" From Lethen, *Cool Conduct*. Embedded quotation from Helmuth Plessner, *Macht und menschliche Natur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 199, quoted in Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct*: the culture of distance in Weimar Germany, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2002), 53.

[63] Josef Frank, "Architektur als Symbol. Elemente deutschen neuen Bauens" ("Architecture as Symbol: Elements of the German New Building"), in Josef Frank, *Schriften/Writings*, vol. 2, trans. John Sands (Vienna: Metroverlag, 2012), 9-191, here 27-28.

[64] Josef Frank, "Das Haus als Weg und Platz" ("The House as Path and Place"), in Josef Frank, *Schriften/Writings*, vol. 2, trans. Wilfried Wang Vienna: Metroverlag, 2012), 198-209, here 207. Originally published in *Der Baumeister* 29/8 (August 1931): 316-23.

[65] Ibid., 209. See also Christopher Long, *The New Space: Movement and Experience in Viennese Modern Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), with photographs by Wolfgang Thaler. Here Long enlarges on his earlier monograph on Frank (See Christopher Long, *Josef Frank: Life and Work* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002)) and relates Frank's concept of Weg (path) to similar concepts of movement and experience in the work of Loos and Oskar Strnad. Long focusses in particular on the Beer House, and cites a contemporary reviewer's description of the entry sequence that evokes the visitor's experience of entering the Plessner House: "One enters the hall [from the anteroom] through an unobtrusive door and is at once standing, surprised and moved, in the heart of the structure. The first glance instantly offers a clear understanding of the entire arrangement." From Long, *The New Space*, 140, Long's translation, citing Wolfgang Born, "Ein Haus in Wien-Hietzing,"

Innen-Dekoration 42 (September 1931): 364.

APORIA IN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

ALEKSANDAR KOSTIĆ

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I will be looking at the notion of aporia, as traditionally understood, and how it may apply in the field of architectural design. First, I will explain what aporia is and then clarify its role in inquiry, as originally conceived in Plato and Aristotle, emphasizing its way of searching by encountering an impasse and articulating and formulating an intractable puzzle.

In book Beta of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says: "Those who search without first engaging with aporiai are like people who don't know where they need to be going; moreover, they do not even know whether or not they have found what they are searching for. For the end [of a search] is not clear to such a person, but it is clear to the person who has first raised aporiai."[1] If we accept Aristotle's claim that aporia is indeed necessary for inquiry and if design is a form of inquiry, then it is reasonable to expect to find aporia in design.

In section two I consider the domain for the emergence of aporia which will show us where to look for aporia in design. I will also indicate laws of thought that traditionally apply in the setting of this domain. Not all laws of thought are universally accepted in contemporary logic, and some relevant distinctions must be noted. It is important to note that the domain includes classical and formal logic extended to modal logic, but excludes paraconsistent logical systems. Setting aporia's domain will allow me to identify both the source and necessary conditions for the emergence of aporia and, in

turn, the necessary conditions for finding aporia in design.

Section three presents a clear case of aporia in architectural design. I will show that, given the initial distinctions and certain rules that apply, any problem with clearly defined design intention would present a good enough source to demonstrate this type of puzzle in architecture. The conflict inherent in cornering the classical Ionic order presents such an example of aporetic reasoning in architectural design. Aporia, therefore, can be shown not only to be useful and routinely used, it is also of instrumental value in the practice of architectural design.

Section four investigates whether aporia is also intrinsic to design theory. If it is the case that aporia has intrinsic value for design, then it should somehow be present in the more abstract subject matter of design itself. Its existence might be revealed within an attempt to establish the foundations of a design theory. After making a distinction between dilemmas and aporiai, one of these attempts will be examined to determine if the question of the subject matter of design and its unclear ontological status may indeed produce an aporetic situation.

If this proves to be the case, it shows that design is intrinsically aporetic. An ancient myth of Prometheus tells us that the "wisdom of the arts," such as house building indeed have something intrinsically aporetic. In Protagoras's speech given by Plato in his dialogue *Protagoras,*[2] human beings receive gifts from the Titan Prometheus (the Fore-thinker),[3] namely fire, and, often forgotten, the arts (τέχνη). This was a compensation for the lack of other human abilities, since these had already been distributed to other living creatures by his twin-brother, Epimetheus (the After-thinker).[4] For our purposes, it is important to underline two aspects here. Firstly, this story explains to us some of the fundamental tensions of the human condition; in our actions, we seem to be spread between planning and reflecting upon our plans; in our emotions, we are sometimes split between desire and fear; and in our thoughts, we are often torn between thinking ahead and an afterthought. But more importantly, this story is relevant as Prometheus himself seems to be in perplexity, in the state of aporia.[5] Out of his aporia he reasons out and finds a solution: fire and arts are to be given to human kind. Both the "wisdom of arts" and fire (which, in Plato, is an image of knowledge or insight) were instilled in human kind. Thanks to this, people invented house building and many other crafts. In some, perhaps remote sense, both human access to knowledge and the human condition are related to aporetic states of mind as their original source.

Aporia is a Greek word, and it literally means "no passage" or "no way out" (a-, "a-"=no, without) + πόρος (póros="passage").[6] Plato, committed to the method of dialectic, never spells out an exact definition of aporia. He rather demonstrates aporiai through conversations between the interlocutors in his dialogues. Some of the dialogues begin with aporia, some are centred on it, while others end in it. On the other hand, Aristotle provides a few definitions of aporia: one in *Metaphysics*, quoted above;[7] and another one in his *Topics*, when he defines aporia as a state of mind caused by "equality of opposite reasonings."[8] Plato strictly distinguished knowledge from opinions in his *Republic*.[9] His elaboration on the poverty of the senses in the Myth of the Cave[10] comes after the distinction between the realm of opinions from the realm of knowledge in the famous divided line analogy.[11] The realm of reality which is accessible to the senses, the apparent world, is subjected to experiential opinions, while the intellectual, or, for Plato, the only real world, is accessible through knowledge (Figure 1).[12] The only entities that really exist are universal Forms or ideas. Thanks to their high ontological status, these Forms represent the only possible object of knowledge, as only what is perfectly real can be properly known. In the divided line analogy, a clear hierarchy of cognitive capacities (παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς) and their corresponding objects is established. Images, shadows and reflections of things are less real than things themselves; images of Forms are more real than *things*, but less real than Forms themselves, and so on. In addition, each cognitive capacity has its own mode of cognition and way of searching. The lower end of cognitive capacities, concerned with sensible particulars, is reserved for imagination (εἰκασία) and belief (πίστις). These two capacities are based on observation and together form an

> "APORIA—THE STATE OF BEING PERPLEXED, PUZZLED, LACKING RESOURCES, OR BEING AT A LOSS"

opinion (δόξα). The higher end (intellect) is also split into two cognitive capacities—between thinking (διάνοια) and reasoning (νοῦς). The unchangeable objects, corresponding with thinking, are representable in the physical world (by use of drawings, numbers, etc.) and sometimes are referred to as mathematicals or as intermediaries. Discursive thought, with the use of a hypothesis (assumed to be true), is its mode of cognition. The commonly used example to describe this way of searching is mathematics, or Plato's favourite—geometry. Our highest cognitive capacity, which is reasoning (νοῦς), has *Forms* (ideas) as its object of searching; it reaches towards the highest realm of knowing (ἐπιστήμη), and it searches through dialectic.
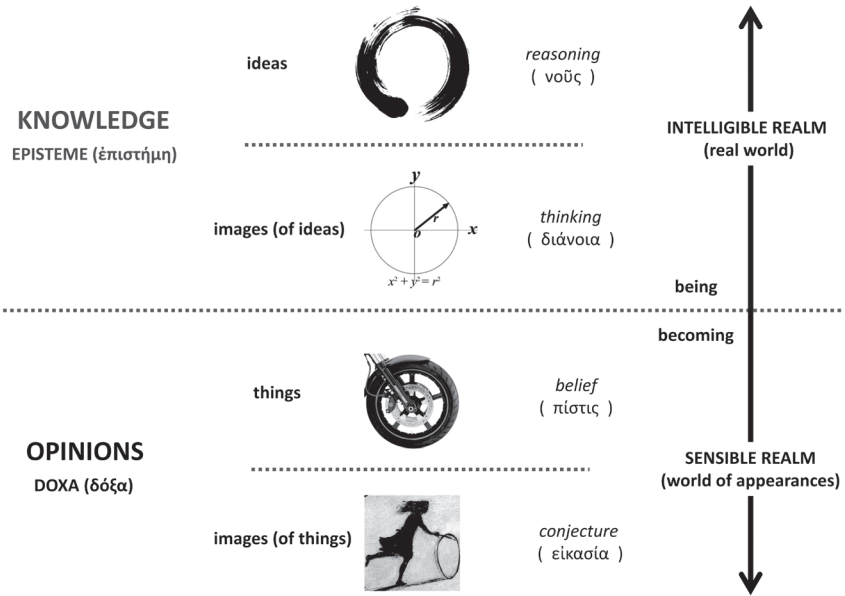
FIGURE 1: PLATO'S DIVIDED LINE. SEE PLATO, REPUBLIC, VII, 509D-511E.

It is precisely dialectic that puts the "mind's eye" in a position to access and "see" the puzzles within this highest realm of reality. The capacity to recognise how exactly a particular puzzle becomes the source of aporia belongs to a "considerable dialectical ability."[13] Aporiai are therefore resolved by means of dialectical investigation.

It is traditionally accepted that aporia in Plato has a purifying effect. Supposedly, aporia purifies the inquirer from the pretence of knowledge on the subject of investigation. Often, Socrates's interlocutor, faced with a *Socratic demand for definition*, presents an account about the matter of

inquiry, typically based on personal experience or belief. After Socrates has refuted him, or at any rate put his belief to the test, the interlocutor, having no other alternative, doesn't know how to proceed and is in a state of aporia. The immediate effects of the aporetic state of mind are speechlessness and inarticulateness, but, as Politis points out,[14] these are only adding to the overwhelming feeling of uneasiness and distress[15] or lack of resourcefulness and a strong sense of intellectual incompetence.[16] Generally, the way the interlocutor responds to this disclosure largely depends on his character, but it also points at his intellectual limitations. If the interlocutor exhibits anger and remains paralysed, his chances to progress in dialectics are quite limited. If, on the other hand one accepts one's own lack of knowledge, only then it will be possible for one to progress further in the search. Besides this cathartic role, more importantly, aporia has also a searching (zetetic) function.[17] Namely, aporia is not only a mental state of puzzlement but is indeed a puzzle about the matter of inquiry. The essential property of such a puzzle is the co-existence of two sides, seemingly opposed. The apparent contradiction is present in an aporia when two propositions both seem to be true, but are mutually exclusive. Apparently, when two propositions are contradictory, at least one of them must be false. This is precisely what constitutes aporia—seeming logical impossibility. The decisive move then, in order to resolve aporia, consists in searching for the possibility to eliminate contradiction (e.g., by arguing that both sides of aporia are true).

Let us now look at a classic example of Socratic aporia and its resolution, which incidentally is about Socrates' own wisdom: "What can the god possibly mean and why does he speak in riddles? For I am only too conscious that I have no pretence of wisdom, great or small. So what can he mean when he [Apollo] says that I am the most wise? For surely

he does not utter falsehoods; that would not be proper for him."[18] In analysis of this passage Politis suggests two seemingly contradictory propositions (both apparently true, but mutually exclusive): "(1) 'I know that I am not wise in any way'; and (2) 'The god, who does not lie, pronounces me the most wise.'"[19] He points out that Socrates's "immediate response is to ask what this apparent contradiction can possibly mean, that is how both its sides can be true."[20] Politis goes even further, proposing that this way of posing the problem is also a model of at least one way of solving an aporia—by drawing a distinction.[21]

2. NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR EMERGENCE OF APORIA

It is now established that the essential property of aporia is the apparent contradiction between two attractive propositions. I will next set the domain and elaborate the conditions for the emergence of aporia, bearing in mind differences between standard and non-standard logical systems.

In classical logic, a proposition can have only one out of two truth-values at any given time and in any given sense—these values are *true or false*: Either Socrates *is* wise, or he is not.

Aristotle's law of non-contradiction (LNC) maintains that it is impossible to hold the same thing to exist and not to exist; or for the same thing to have and not to have the same property; or for the same thing to have a property and a contrary property.[22] Aristotle argues that this principle cannot be strictly demonstrated (for any demonstration presupposes it and makes use of it), but also that it is the firmest of all basic principles.[23] However, some non-standard logical systems partially or in whole reject this principle of non-contradiction (Figure 2). For example, in the logic of Łukasiewicz a proposition can have three distinct truth-values—true, false, and unknown ("neither true nor false").[24] In probabilistic and fuzzy logic a proposition can have an infinite number of different truth-values.[25]

Any paraconsistent logical system (fuzzy logic, intuitionist logic, or dialetheism) are not of interest here not only because the topic of this paper deals predominantly with the notions of aporia in Plato and Aristotle, which in time greatly precedes the emergence of these extended systems of logic in the twentieth-century, but also because classical and standard logic as well as modern science and contemporary thinking are still vastly depending on the truth-values in a traditional sense and have
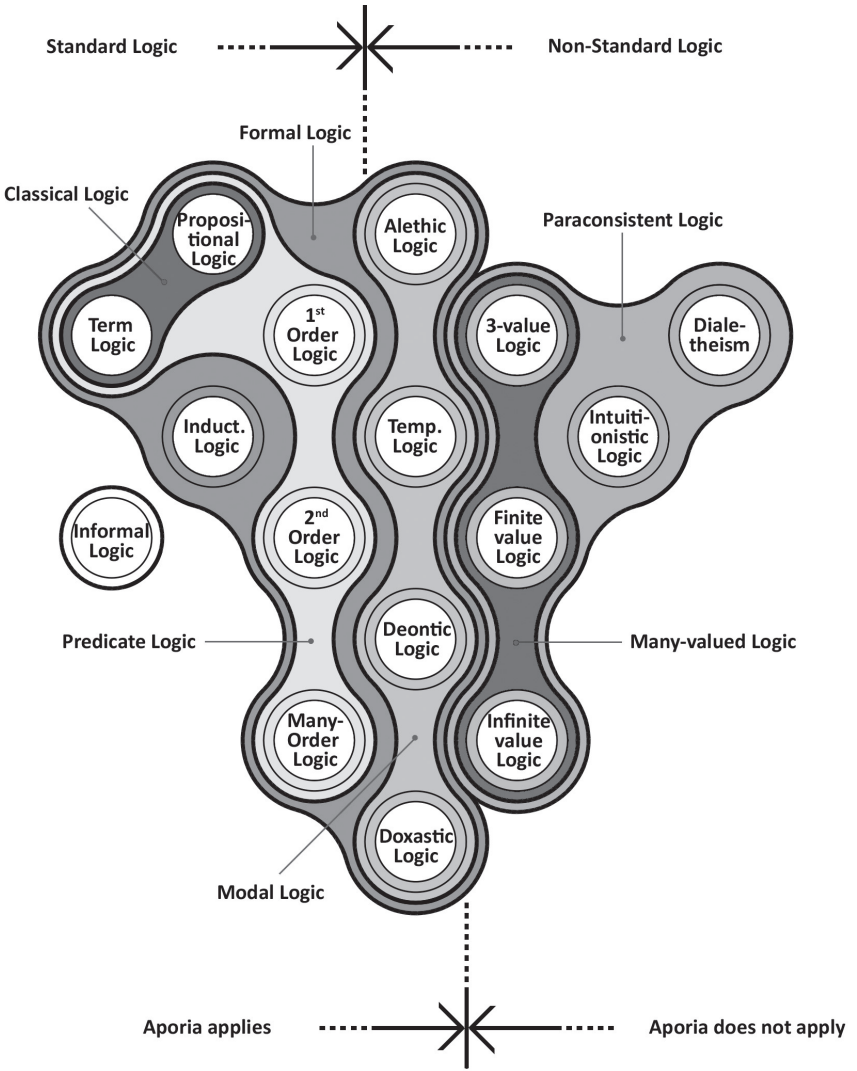
FIGURE 2: CLASSIFICATION OF LOGIC, BASED ON THE INCLUSION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF REASONING (ID, LC, LM), USE OF QUANTIFICATORS AND FORMAL LANGUAGE, AND, FINALLY, DOMAIN OF TRUTH-VALUES (STANDARD 2-VALUED LOGIC SYSTEMS INCLUDING MODAL LOGIC; PARACONSISTENT LOGIC SYSTEMS INCLUDING 3-VALUE LOGIC SYSTEM OF ŁUKASIEWITZ, GÖDEL'S FINITE-MANY VALUE LOGIC, AND INFINITE-MANY VALUE LOGIC (FUZZY LOGIC).

no tolerance for inconsistency within the system.[26] Furthermore, any form of many-valued logic systems must be excluded here, because where the tension between opposing truth-values is downplayed (fuzzy logic), or largely non-existent (dialethism), due to the presentation of another one or many other options (besides *true* and *false*), the notion of aporia, which rests on precisely this tension between the equality of reasoning on opposing sides simply would not apply or even make much sense in any such inquiry.[27] In fact, if there is another way out, besides the two apparently mutually-exclusive propositions being true, the impasse, which is a key feature of aporia, will simply not arise. The aporia also cannot arise when the principle of non-contradiction is excluded from the logical system simply because it wouldn't be possible to distinguish between a contradiction and a non-contradiction, let alone to make a distinction between the apparent and the real contradiction.

To further refine the conditions under which aporiai can arise, a distinction must be made between (1) contradictory claims, which can give rise to aporia, and (2) the situations where opposing sides of reasoning are only contraries or sub-contraries, in which case they cannot give rise to aporia. Let us remind ourselves of the difference between the contradictions and contraries in traditional propositional and predicate logic. Two propositions are *contradictory* when the truth of one implies the falsity of the other, or when the falsity of one determines the truth of other. According to Johnson, "contradictories have exactly opposite truth-values. If A is true, then O is false, and vice versa."[28] For example, in propositional logic, the negation of the proposition "Socrates is wise" would be "it is not the case that Socrates is wise." This forms a contradictory opposition between the propositions. In standard logic, these two propositions are (1) mutually exclusive, which means that only one of them can be true, and (2) mutually exhaustive, which means that nothing else is possible. It becomes clear that if and only if it is the case that two propositions are at least apparently contradictory, then aporia can arise. If the Law of Excluded Middle (LEM)[29] is invalidated (as in intuitionistic logic),[30] then two propositions do not fulfil the second condition—they cannot be mutually exhaustive. There would be a middle ground between the two. Hence aporia cannot exist in such systems. For example, let us look at a slightly different formulation of the two propositions: "Socrates is wise" and "Socrates is unwise." It may be tempting to hold this new pair of propositions as also contradictory. However, that is not the case. They are only contrary. Propositions are *contrary* when they cannot both be true (Socrates cannot be both wise and unwise in the same sense and

at the same time), but there is a possibility for both of the propositions to be false (Socrates being neither wise nor unwise). The latter means that the propositions are not mutually exhaustive; namely, the pressure of apparent contradiction (that is, only one of the otherwise plausible propositions can be true) does not arise as there is a possibility of both propositions to be false. Hence, with merely contrary propositions, aporia cannot arise.

The outcome is the same in predicate logic. Predicate logic extends propositional logic by including the quantifiers ($\forall$ and $\exists$) which determine whether subject (x) of the categorical proposition is respectively *universal* or *particular* and includes two types of assertions—*affirmative* and *negative*. This results in four types of propositions—Universal Affirmative (All men are wise), Universal Negative (No man is wise), Particular Affirmative (Some men are wise) and Particular Negative (Some men are not wise). There are also four possible types of relationships between these propositions. The relationship between each type is shown on the classical square of opposites in the diagram (Figure 3), which originates from Aristotle, but also figures in modern times, especially in Boolean algebra and in Fregean logic.

As in propositional logic, categorical propositions are *contrary* when they cannot both be true (All men are wise and No man is wise), but there is a possibility for both of them to be false (it may be the case that neither everybody is wise nor that nobody is wise), namely, there is a possibility of the middle ground (perhaps only a few men are wise). This means that aporia cannot arise in the case of the contraries, simply because there is a passage away from the mutual exclusion of propositions. The situation is similar with propositions which are *sub-contrary*. This is the case when it is impossible for both categorical propositions to be false (Some men are wise and Some men are not wise); however,

there is a possibility for both of them to be true. If both propositions can be true, then the mutual exclusion, which was a primary condition for the emergence of aporia, is removed and together with it also the pressure of finding a way out of the impasse has disappeared. It can be concluded that in none of these cases does aporia arise.

Therefore, aporia has bearing only in cases of apparently contradictory
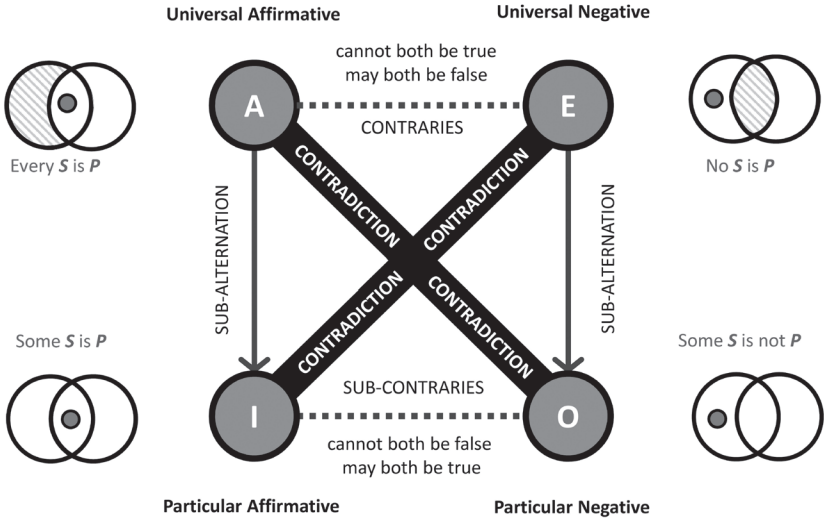
FIGURE 3: TRADITIONAL SQUARE OF OPPOSITION.

propositions, both of which (or sets of which) appear attractive, but neither the tension nor the attraction have been properly investigated or understood. It has been demonstrated that aporiai apply directly within the domain of at least propositional and predicate logic. It naturally follows that aporia will also have bearing in all forms of standard and modern logic that extend the field of classical logic, but retain the laws of thinking such as the law of non-contradiction and the law of excluded middle. Such cases not only automatically apply to Boolean mathematical logic but also, perhaps more interestingly for designers and architects, to the non-classical logical system of modal logic. The application of modal logic in design and architecture is significant because it relates to what necessarily follows and to what might or ought to follow in deductive reasoning. Therefore, modal logic encompasses design propositions (with respects to certain rules or styles) and it is useful in design predictions.

Now that the domain and the source of aporia have been clarified along with its nature, we can look more closely into how aporia applies to architectural design.

3. APORIA IN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

An actual design situation may reveal a particular reference of aporia in design. In architecture, the well-known corner conflict inherent in the employ of the classical Ionic order provides a good example of aporetic reasoning in architectural design.

The Ionic order's sensual spiralling volutes that cushion the architrave provide an enduring source of difficulty for designers needing a colonnade to turn a corner—for the traditional volutes only face forward. Traditionally, in Greek and Roman architecture, the corner capital in the Ionic order is different to other capitals as, for example, on the external corner of Palladio's Basilica in Vicenza and in Piranesi's study (Figure 4).

The corner problem with the Ionic order arises due to the requirement for each capital (including the one on the corner) to appear the same in all elevations. Because of the lateral position of volutes, the corner capital in the Ionic order cannot be the same if the appearance of the capital is to be equal for all capitals on both front and side elevations. That constitutes a clear case of aporia in design. In the case of the corner capital conflict, aporia can be clearly represented with the following two, apparently contradictory, propositions:
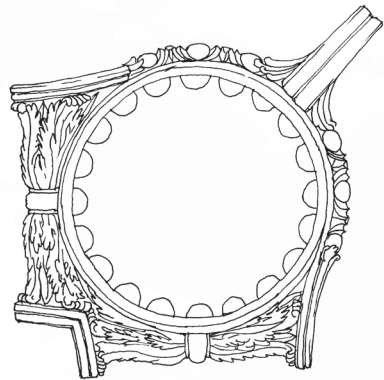
FIGURE 4: SKETCH AFTER OPERE DI GIOVANNI BATTISTA PIRANESI.

(1) All volutes are positioned in the same manner in all elevations, and

(2) Some volutes (namely corner capitals) are not positioned the same.

One is invited to compare these propositions to the previously given examples in propositional and predicate logic (Figure 3). It is obvious that this example forms an apparent contradiction in the first-order predicate logic and its representation as an aporia clarifies the design challenge that must be addressed. One may elect to confront the aporia in various creative ways or try to avoid the contradictory situation by eliminating the columns altogether from the side elevations, as in Palladio's Villa Capra (La Rotunda) shown in Figure 5.

However, once aporia is engaged,

FIGURE 5: VILLA CAPRA (LA ROTUNDA), PALLADIO, 1567.

FIGURE 6: VILLA FOSCARI (LA MALCONTENTA), PALLADIO, 1560.

two alternatives are possible. The first alternative is when the apparent contradiction is not resolved and hence it becomes prominent as in the Temple of Fortuna Virilis or Palladio's Villa Foscari (Figure 6). Some cases, such as the exposed inside corner capital in Palladio's Palazzo Barbaran Porto (Figure 7), reveal the unresolved puzzle in greater detail.

FIGURE 7: PALAZZO
BARBARAN DA PORTO,
PALLADIO, 1569.

The other alternative is when the apparent contradiction is resolved and contradiction removed by adjusting the architectural element or the way it is used. One of the resolutions of the Ionic capital corner conflict can be found in the work by Palladio's contemporary architect Vincenzo Scamozzi. The evidence for this can be found in his book *The Idea of a Universal Architecture*, where he proposes a new capital for the Ionic order with diagonally positioned volutes.[31] Scamozzi's drawings (Figure 8) and writings on the Ionic capital conflict testify that, not only was he fully engaged with this particular aporia, he also proposed a way of resolving it. It is important to note that the solution to this puzzle was independent of the level of craftsmanship applied. The resolution depended only on an architect's ability to recognise the aporia and engage with it through design.

> *I will now show the plan and elevation of another Ionic capital that is partly copied from antiquity, partly based on Vitruvius and for the rest is a design I have invented and used. To this day it remains different from any other [Ionic] capital ever invented because of the concave profile of the abacus and the corner volutes that look the same whether they are*

viewed from the front or the side, which is not the case when capitals have volutes at the front… It is the kind I have used most frequently in my buildings.[32]
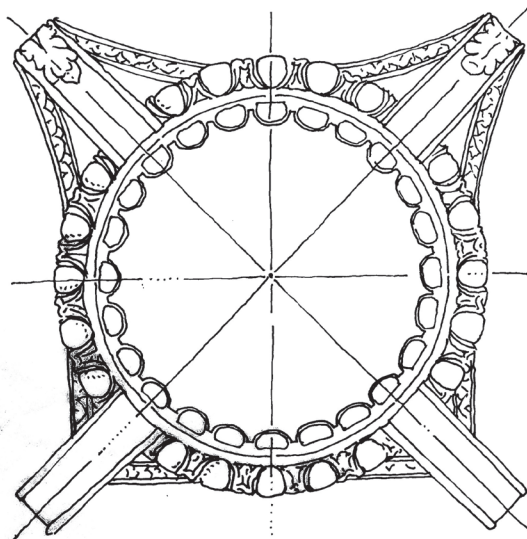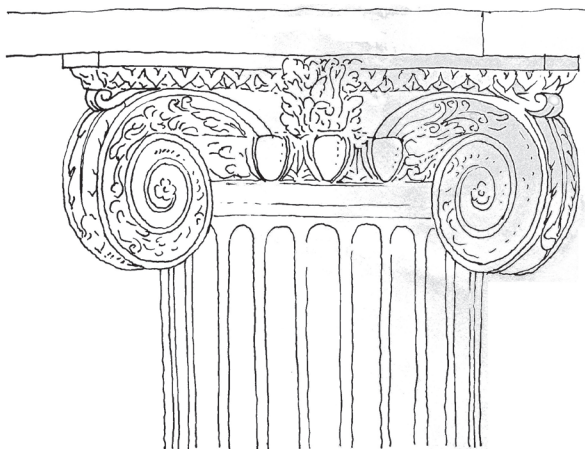
FIGURE 8: SKETCH AFTER SCAMOZZI'S DRAWING OF IONIC CAPITAL, L'IDEA DELLA ARCHITETTURA UNIVERSALE.

For architects and planners it is quite possible to confuse the state of perplexity which comes from aporia with the perplexity which is a result of a *wicked* problem. Rittel and Webber, in the classic essay "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," described planning problems as wicked problems, which can always be recontextualized in terms of other problems and which therefore admit an utter lack of stopping rules or 'solutions' in the mathematical sense.[33] For efficiency, a distinction between the two is drawn on the relevant points and summarized in a table below (Figure 10). Besides perplexity, the other similarities between the two are that of the possible paralyzing effect of both aporiai and wicked problems and the fact that an aporia may as well remain as unresolved as the wicked problem. It seems that the only intrinsic link between the two is that some wicked problems can indeed turn out to be aporiai, but never the other way round.

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'Wicked Problem'	Aporia
impossible to solve	sometimes possible to solve
cannot be formulated	can be formulated
solutions cannot be true or false	solutions can be true or false
caused by another problem	caused by apparent contradiction

FIGURE 9: THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN RITTEL AND WEBER'S WICKED PROBLEMS AND APORIA.

In what seems to be an outline for a framework of a coherent design theory, Per Galle identifies two "dilemmas of references" as he calls them. Basing his case on the presupposition that design is related to predictions (of a certain artefact as its product), and on the fact that designers sometimes in their predictions refer to things, or entities, whose ontological status is at best unclear, Galle proposes two questions as a starting point in search for the common ground of a coherent design theory: (1) "If the singular terms of design predictions do not refer [to an entity], how and in what sense can the predictions be true or even meaningful?" and (2) "If those terms do refer [to an entity], to what category of entities are they referring?"[34] Even though Galle recognises this situation as a "puzzlement," and presents this problem as a challenge to design theorists, he appears to think that this seeming contradiction in questions of fundamental importance to design is a sort of an embarrassment for designers. In a way, he seems to suggest that these "dilemmas of references" at hand are practically a problem of choice, closely associated with ready-made philosophical world views: *Nominalism* and *Realism*. Moreover, theorists of design are invited to untangle this conundrum by selecting a world view from which to create a coherent design theory. Galle claims that this sort of a problem has a more general, philosophical context and that other "philosophical disciplines" might help in resolving it.[35] But, instead of philosophy generally, Galle proposes to use philosophy of language to engage with this fundamental puzzle in design—that is: *What exactly is the subject of Design?* I agree with Galle that, as sciences got Philosophy of Science and languages got Philosophy of Language, perhaps Design needs to get Philosophy of Design. However, I propose that a fundamental philosophical question about design can be addressed through philosophy directly and, likewise, that question about the merits of philosophy in design should be addressed through design itself.

I propose that the problem at hand here is more fruitfully treated, not as dilemma as suggested by Galle, but as an aporia. In order to demonstrate this with clarity, an important distinction must first be drawn between the notions of aporia and dilemma.[36] Despite the fact that both dilemmas and aporiai can produce a state of indecisiveness and perplexity, they are also profoundly different. Dilemma is commonly used in everyday speech to describe a problem of choice, where none of the two given options (not necessarily propositions) are desired or preferred (but not necessarily with any truth value at all). It is sometimes used in rhetoric, as a persuasive device. However, in formal, propositional logic, dilemma

is a form of valid argument always leading to the same conclusion (true), regardless of the truth-value in either of the propositions. In a dilemma we are presented with a choice, none of which may be appealing to us, while in aporia, as we have seen, we are faced with two equally plausible propositions in an apparent contradiction, effectively producing a lack of choice. The troubling case of design entity ontological status cannot be a dilemma, or a problem of choice in any way, as that would mean that there would be no problem in reasoning correctly. The only problem would be to select one of the options. However, both of the "references" seem to be true, and it is obvious that they are mutually exclusive. Namely one cannot assert that both of them are true at the same time and in the same sense. That means these assertions are in apparent contradiction. Let us look closer and see if these two sides are indeed in an apparent contradiction.

First of all, we need to disburden ourselves of the pretence of knowledge, and at least for the moment assume without false pretence, that we truly do not know what the nature of the subject matter of Design is. Hence, I propose to re-formulate Galle's questions into these two propositions:

(1) During the design process, artefacts that are being designed must refer to an entity that exists, for they are in the process of being designed, we can refer to them (even in space and time), and they are not purely imaginary. (I shall argue for the plausibility of this presently).

(2) During the design process, artefacts that are designed must refer to an entity that does not exist, for if they did exist that would entail that they have already been designed.

These two propositions are apparently equally true, but opposed and mutually exclusive, therefore

seemingly contradictory. The propositions are also mutually exhaustive as there is no other conceivable option offered to a designer. There seems to be no middle ground left to settle, and an inquirer is under pressure, left without any easy and obvious way out. This is what constitutes an aporia by its definition. Now an inquirer is ready to engage with aporia and its zetetic (searching) function by, ideally I suggest, answering the question— what is required for both of these propositions to be true at the same time?

It might be objected that the first side of the aporia has no real attraction. Why, it may be said, not simply suppose that the object of design is purely imaginary, just like fictional objects? Unlike mere phantasies and purely imaginary objects, a key capacity of an architectural designer is to create not only meaningful, but accurate and reasonable predictions with respect to objects designed.[37] The main attraction of this side of aporia is in that a designer can provide accurate predictions about those objects. Consequently, we should not be satisfied with a general theory of imaginary or fictional objects as suitable for either articulating or gauging the attractiveness of this side of the aporia.

This example is explicated here in order to demonstrate that aporia is necessarily a part of inquiry into the consistency of a Design Theory. The way one reasons out of aporiai in design is, in part, a subject of this whole project, and it would take us a lot more space to attempt its resolution here. Therefore, unless curious readers engage themselves with this particular aporia on the subject matter of Design, they are asked to suspend their judgements and remain puzzled.

If it is indeed the case that a world view on design theory can be grown out of these "seed questions" as Galle proposes, then one must be first fully engaged with them by recognising the aporia.[38] I agree with Galle that these questions are "not to be shrugged off", as he says.[39] Furthermore, it seems to me that they are fundamental for any design theory. In other words, if one wishes to establish a consistent design theory, it is *necessary* for one to engage with this particular aporia in one way or the other. For how can we otherwise give an account for the subject matter of design itself? Any design theory must either reject at least one of the propositions and embrace the other, or find a way to embrace both. An informal thinker may indeed find more compelling evidence why one proposition is more acceptable to him or her than the other. But, as we have seen, unless one rejects the principle of non-contradiction, it is difficult to find a firm ground on which one can dismiss one and embrace the other proposition as they both seem to be plausible. One way forward

could be to find a way in which both propositions can be true, namely, explore the possibilities that are required in cases where both of these propositions are true at the same time. That means engaging in aporia. The only alternative to that is to find a justification to abandon reasoning on the subject matter of design altogether and conceive of design as a craft-like activity and accept that design is fully exhausted through practice alone like any other *techne*. However, if we indeed do that we will resemble people who are not engaged with aporia and as Aristotle says, *don't know where they need to be going* in their inquiry. In that case it is difficult to see how design can be understood as a form of inquiry, and a form of enquiry grounded in design theory.

For those willing to engage the aporias that present themselves, architectural design does indeed become a form of inquiry. This conception of architecture that is engaged with aporia opens up the possibility of removing the experiential limits sometimes imposed on design and to realign architectural design within the classical division of knowledge in such a way so that all cognitive capacities are engaged in design—from experiential to higher, intellectual capacities.[40]

I have not attempted to resolve this aporia— this is for another occasion. What I have done is argue that, if we want to take seriously the idea of design as a form of inquiry, and a form of inquiry grounded in design theory, then we must engage with and try to resolve this (and similar) aporiai.

I want to end by drawing attention to one condition for a successful resolution of this aporia—which is, I believe, a core aporia in design theory. For, as we saw in our response to Galle, there is a danger here that grand philosophical views—be it this, that, or the other philosophical position—be hauled in ready-made to do the job of resolving an aporia that, if it is at all genuine and worth taking seriously, is specific to and rooted in

" APORIA IS INDEED ROOTED, NOT ONLY IN GENERAL PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT DESIGN THEORY, BUT ALSO IN THE PROCESS OF DESIGN ITSELF. "

design and design theory. This, I believe, has to be resisted. For if this is what we do to engage with and try to resolve the aporia, then we are in effect admitting that the aporia is not specific to or rooted in design and design theory: since its resolution will not make use of any tools or idea that are specific to design or design theory. In that case, however, one would be forgiven for wondering why design theory should worry about this aporia and not simply leave it to the philosophers.

Nonetheless, we have shown that aporia is indeed rooted, not only in general philosophical considerations about design theory, but also—and, for us designers and design theorists, primarily—in the process of design itself.

ENDNOTES

[1] Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House Incorporated, 2001), *Metaphysics*, III. 1, 995a34-b1.

[2] See Plato, *Protagoras*, 321c. Extract from Protagoras's speech:

Prometheus arrived to examine his [Epimetheus] distribution, and saw that whereas the other creatures were fully and suitably provided, man was naked, unshod, unbedded, unarmed; and already the destined day was come, whereon man like the rest should emerge from earth to light. Then Prometheus, in his perplexity [ἀπορία] as to what preservation he could devise for man, stole from Hephaestus and Athena wisdom in the arts together with fire—since by no means without fire could it be acquired or helpfully used by any—and he handed it there and then as a gift to man.

[3] The meaning of the word Prometheus can be translated as "Forethought."

[4] The meaning of the word Epimetheus can be translated as "Afterthought."

[5] Plato actually uses the word aporia to depict Titan's mental state. See Plato, *Protagoras*, 321c2.

[6] ἀπορία = aporia—the state of being perplexed, puzzled, lacking resources, or being at a loss.

[7] Aristotle, *The Basic Works, Metaphysics*, III. 1, 995a34-b1.

[8] Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics Topica*, ed. Loeb Classical Library (London and New York: Harvard University Press, 1960), 145b17.

[9] If not stated otherwise, in this paper I have generally relied on Cooper's edition of Plato's Complete Works. See Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper, (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997).

[10] Plato, *Republic*, 514a-519a.

[11] Ibid., 509d-511e.

[12] See Plato, *Republic*, VII, 509d-511e. Illustration by Aleksandar Kostić.

[13] Vasilis Politis, "Aporia and Searching in the Early Plato," in *Remembering Socrates: Philosophical Essays*, eds. Lindsay Judson and Vassilis Karasmanēs (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 101. For the place of aporia in Plato's philosophy, see especially Politis, *The Structure of Enquiry in Plato's Early Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), Part II.

[14] Ibid., 88-110.

[15] Plato, *Laches*, 194a-b.

[16] Plato, *Meno*, 80a-c.

[17] Politis proposes that besides being a mental state, "aporia is [also] zetetic: [its aim is] to generate particular searches, defined and directed by the puzzle and problem at hand." See Politis, "Aporia," 108.

[18] Plato, *Apology*, 21b3–7.

[19] Politis, "Aporia," 88–110.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 98.

[22] Aristotle, *The Basic Works*, *Metaphysics,* IV, 1005b24.

[23] Ibid., 1011b13–14.

[24] Graham Priest, *An Introduction to Non-Classical Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 119.

[25] Susan Haack, *Deviant Logic, Fuzzy Logic: Beyond the Formalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[26] The belief that it is possible for a single proposition to be at the same time both true and false, without inferring that this leads to any and every proposition being true is called Dialetheism. However, this view fails to define a negation, as it is difficult to grasp what a concept of disagreement would be in the world where a proposition can be both true and false at the same time. Another important and undesired consequence of Dialetheism is the principle of explosion. Namely, if we hold both propositions p and ¬p to be true, then it follows that for any statement q both p∨q and ¬p∨q to be also true, which means any and every proposition q is true.

[27] A passionate read on many-valued logic can be found in Graham Priest's *An Introduction on Non-Classical Logic*, cited above.

[28] Robert M. Johnson, *A Logic Book: Fundamentals of Reasoning* (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007), 63.

[29] The Law of excluded middle (LEM) is the third law of thinking in traditional logic and it simply means that besides true or false there is no other available option for truth-value.

[30] Intuitionistic logic invalidates the Law of excluded middle. This rejection has "far-reaching consequences." (See Joan Moschovakis, "Intuitionistic Logic," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2015 edition, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logic-intuitionistic/.) One of those consequences being that the principle of elimination of double negation also becomes invalid and, perhaps more importantly, intuitionistic logic becomes "axiomatically incomplete." For our purposes, it is important to note that rejection of the LEM practically disables the condition of the principle of mutual exhaustion (i.e., there is a middle ground available, hence aporia is not possible).

[31] Vincenzo Scamozzi, *The Idea of a Universal Architecture*, Volume VI (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura Press, 2008).

[32] Ibid.

[33] Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," *Policy Sciences* 4 (1973): 155-169.

[34] Per Galle, "Candidate worldviews for design theory," *Design Studies* 29, 3 (May 2008): 279.

[35] Ibid., 280.

[36] Some philosophers consider a notion of dilemma that is closely related

to aporia. For example, Karamanolis uses the term "dilemmatic structure" to describe weighing various possibilities or ways out of the aporia. (See George Karamanolis, "The Aporetic Character of Plotinus' Philosophy," in *The Aporetic Tradition in Ancient Philosophy*, eds. George Karamanolis and Vasilis Politis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 250.) Others hold that the reasoning leading to an aporia need not take the form of dilemma. (For example, see John Palmer, "Contradiction and Aporia in Early Greek Philosophy," in *The Aporetic Tradition in Ancient Philosophy*, eds. George Karamanolis and Vasilis Politis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 9.) Gelber maintains that a particular type of aporia, in cases where we are presented with equally impossible options (i.e., 'negative aporias'), can present itself in a form of dilemma, but also that some aporiai do not have "the appearance of dilemma at all" and so on. (See Jessica Gelber, "Uses of Aporiai in Aristotle's Generation of Animals," in *The Aporetic Tradition in Ancient Philosophy*, eds. George Karamanolis and Vasilis Politis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 164-165.) I am considering the notion of dilemma here in the context of Galle's proposition (seed questions) to distinguish between problems of choice and aporiai.

[37] To describe the predictions architects make, Galle gives an example of an architect designing an opera who points "to one of his drawings, saying 'every seat on this balcony has an unobstructed view of the stage.'" Galle rightly emphasizes that "if we could not rely on such design predictions as largely true, we should hardly be able to make artefacts at all." See Galle, "Candidate Worldviews for Design Theory," 278.

[38] Galle, "Candidate Worldviews for Design Theory," 267-303.

[39] Ibid.

[40] For Plato, architecture is indeed a form inquiry leading to true knowledge. In the *Statesman*, when Plato makes a distinction concerning the highest kinds of knowledge, he specifically uses the example of an architect to depict the highest level of knowing (γνωστικὴ ἐπιτακτικὴν), which is removed from practical experience and belongs to higher cognitive capacities. See Plato, *Statesman*, 260d.

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF A SMOKE-FILLED ROOM: ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE HUMAN AT OMA

GRAHAM OWEN

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines ethnographic studies of design processes within the celebrated Dutch architectural practice OMA, studies undertaken from an Actor Network Theory perspective as promulgated by the anthropologist-philosopher Bruno Latour. Considering the participant-observation work of Yaneva, the article contrasts the relative absence of discussion of issues of labour and working conditions with their prominence in recent work by observers of architectural education and by activist academics such as Deamer, Tombesi and Wilson. Why might this ethnographic study have overlooked or de-emphasised these aspects of human relations at OMA? With critiques of Latourian and ANT-based approaches in mind, the paper asks if this is an aversion characteristic of such perspectives, with their defining self-distinction from critical theory. This paper argues for at least four reasons that these studies of OMA do not tackle the issues of architectural "labour in the making," reasons that are respectively ethnographic, methodological, epistemological, and ontological. The article draws upon the reflections of Ignacio Farías and Alex Wilkie on the evolution of "Studio Studies" from Latour et al.'s laboratory studies. From a philosophical point of view, it proposes potential extensions of studio studies to foreground labour conditions, which can be seen as central to design processes in studios such as OMA.

The year is 1991. The scene is a two-bedroom apartment in Rotterdam. I am visiting former classmates working at Rem Koolhaas's Office for Metropolitan Architecture. Five OMA employees share the flat. My friends, a couple with some means, have one of the bedrooms. The rest are, in effect, camping. One, from the States, has a thin mattress on the floor. All his possessions are scattered around it, like those of a homeless person under a bridge. I have come to visit OMA, but also to see significant Modernist works in Rotterdam. But my friends do not know where those are. All they know is the route between the apartment and the office, and the cafes where they eat breakfast and dinner when they can.

When I arrive, trouble is brewing. No one, other than Rem and the three associates, has been paid for two months, say the junior architectural staff. Simply, no cheques have appeared. A letter of protest is being drafted: the staff, after all, do have bills of their own to pay. And the pay, when it has come, is not great: 14,000 pounds a year, or a dollar figure in the 20,000s. A typical work week consists of 70 to 100 hours. The average time to burnout and departure for a staff person at their level, they report, is two to three months, although my classmates, with more personal resources at their disposal, have lasted longer. The staff are international, but many have come to Rotterdam without work permits, under the radar; they receive no employment benefits.[1]

Over time, did success change OMA? Did the practice become able to offer working conditions befitting trained professionals, recognizing that they too have lives to lead outside the office, obligations to others to fulfil? Anecdotal but firsthand web reports from 2015 suggest otherwise. One former employee of less than a year describes a spirit of camaraderie on all-nighters, but nonetheless acknowledges "Extremely long hours–Below market pay–Very high turnover rate," and remarks that "if everyone is going to be there for 15-18 hours a day, maybe include more than just a coffee machine and microwave in the kitchen".

Another former staff member recognizes the attraction of an OMA stint on one's resume, and reports receiving benefits, but confirms a

"[r]uthless working environment. Management really doesn't care if you don't sleep for days in a row as long as deadlines are met. Working hours are ridiculously long. You basically never stop working, specially [*sic*] if you are an intern or junior architect. Forget about having anything resembling a life outside of the office, the office is open 24/7. Office culture is bad. Lots of dissatisfied employees. Incredibly disorganized

project environment. Very high rate of turnover […] most employees who [have been] here for a long time have been raised in these types of environments so they 'don't know any better' and have little 'real world' experience." A third former staff member observes more succinctly: "No sleep ever. Tense environment. And no sleep ever. Ever. Ever."[2]

While the review comments on OMA are among the more extreme, such concerns are not unfamiliar among architectural firms that seek celebrity status within the discipline, indicating a set of labour issues endemic to culturally ambitious "starchitect" practices and certainly worthy of investigation.

ANT AND ARCHITECTURE, LABORATORY AND LABOUR

To think back today to the mattress of the 1991 OMA employee, to his belongings scattered on the floor around him, is to be reminded all too easily of other more recent sleeping accommodations associated with the production of culturally ambitious architecture. Those in the Rotterdam apartment were admittedly less dire and more self-chosen than those of migrant workers with which we are now familiar in the Emirates, as evidenced by the

FIGURE 1: DUBAI MIGRANT WORKERS' SLEEPING ACCOMMODATIONS

work of investigative journalists and activist groups,[3] but as those activists have argued, the two instances are connected by a disciplinary complex of issues as regards architectural labour. These issues, however,

do not appear to have surfaced in the ethnographic studies of OMA's practice, despite their focus on the daily practices of design as a necessary component in the understanding of architecture.

Trained as a philosopher and anthropologist, Bruno Latour has brought influential attention to design in the more recent decades of his career.[4] Drawing upon his applications of Actor Network Theory and the concept of the Thing in studies of science and technology, Latour seeks, as Ariane Lourie Harrison observes, to challenge architecture

> *to revise its conception of buildings as static objects, to understand that buildings develop agency as sociotechnical systems, through negotiations among people, institutions, and technologies. […] Any entity (human or non-human, individual or organization, architecture) can be conceptualized as both an actor and a network, in actor-network theory, its constitutive actions redistributed accordingly. […] By this approach, it becomes more difficult (and less productive) to refer to an entity as a discrete or isolated object. […] All phenomena are networked assemblages of actors, each capable of reconfiguring the network, affecting each of its constituents. Latour proposes the term Thing to describe these socio-technical assemblages that make up the bulk of our environment and experience, and to distinguish his hybrid schema from the more rigid, modernist categorization of phenomena into subject and object. An ANT approach to architecture highlights the discrepancy between the manifest Thingness of a building (multiple constituencies, overlapping material, technological and discursive systems, inherent spaces of controversy) and its representation as a rendered object (static, set serenely in Cartesian space). […] [A]n ANT's view would suggest that buildings be represented as dynamic 'spaces of controversy'.*[5]

Latour and Yaneva remark that, "It is paradoxical to say that a building is always a 'thing' that is, etymologically, a contested gathering of many conflicting demands and yet, having said that, to be utterly unable to draw those conflicting claims in the same space as what they are conflicting about."[6] Latour himself asserts that, "What is needed instead are tools that capture what have always been the hidden practices of modernist innovations: objects have always been projects."[7] Particularly through his students and collaborators, he has encouraged close studies of the processes of the studio. Transposing their techniques from Latour's earlier studies of laboratory life, and seeking to understand "architecture in the making," his colleagues have undertaken ethnographic enquiries into the process by which architecture comes into being, and have challenged conventional interpretations. In philosophical terms, these studies constitute a search for, if not "truth," a more accurate understanding of the construction of knowledge and the relationship between architecture

and the social. In examining the respective roles of human and non-human actors, this work alters normative assumptions about the extent of human agency.

Albena Yaneva has made notable contributions to this endeavour. She claims that architecture cannot be understood by conventional narratives of its production and reception. In essays such as "Give Me a Gun and I will Make All Buildings Move," of 2008, by Latour and

Yaneva, they seek to reverse Etienne Jules Marey's ambition to build a "photographic gun" that would freeze the stages of a bird's action in flight. Instead, they seek a theoretical device to reveal "that a building is not a static object but a moving project, and that even once it is has been built, it ages, it is transformed by its users, modified by all of what happens inside and outside, and that it will pass or be renovated, adulterated and transformed beyond recognition."[8]

FIGURE 2: BRUNO LATOUR LECTURING AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN. 2009.

In the process of this argument's elaboration, theorists as notable as George Baird, Neil Leach, Ian Borden, and Jane Rendell are set aside as representative of superseded paradigms of interpretation:

> *Everyone knows that a building is a contested territory and that it cannot be reduced to what is and what it means, as architectural theory has traditionally done. […] As long as we have not found a way to do for*

buildings the reverse of what Marey managed to do for the flights of birds and the gaits of horses, architectural theory will be a rather parasitical endeavor that adds historical, philosophical, stylistic, and semiotic 'dimensions' to a conception of buildings that has not moved an inch.[9]

In writing of her observations of OMA, Yaneva insists that, "You can still appreciate a building, like or dislike it, praise or dismiss it, without knowing anything about the design experience that made it happen; but you cannot *understand* a building without taking these design experiences into account."[10] Thus Yaneva asserts that there is a deep and wide knowledge (attainable by both outsiders and, ultimately, by those involved in its production) of a work of architecture that takes into account the extensive processes and controversies through which it has come into physical being; and, indeed, she is asserting that the work of architecture is that assemblage of processes, controversies, actors… Without that recognition, Yaneva is claiming, there is no adequate knowledge of architecture; rather, only a superficial appreciation or casual evaluation. But given these substantial epistemological claims, it is surprising—even though Yaneva picks up clues in the texts under consideration here—that issues of employment ethics, conditions of work, and their rationalization by staff members, do not surface as foregrounded parts of the assemblage.

Yaneva's work opens up in detail the day-to-day working practices in an ambitious and influential practice such as OMA. Her painstaking observation of the role of physical models and digital representations in their process of design undoubtedly offers valuable insights. Years of fieldwork, the demanding tasks of collation of notes, transcripts and correspondence, and the continued research enterprise through the University of Manchester are worthy of respect, and the writings of both Yaneva and Latour have become increasingly evident in architectural discourse in recent years. But as others have observed,[11] Latour's aggressive promotion of paradigm shifts and his inclination to use the language of warfare in seeking to colonize and dominate intellectual fields suggest that some circumspection is warranted in assessing these claims regarding the formation and adequacy of knowledge (at least scholarly and practitioners' knowledge) of architecture. And in this particular instance, that circumspection needs to address the downplaying of those aspects of studio life that pertain to the ethics of architectural labour.

In the early 2000s, Yaneva undertook research as a participant observer within OMA. The results of this ethnographic observation were published as *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture: An Ethnography of Design* (2009), hereafter *Made by OMA,* and *The Making of a Building: A Pragmatist Approach to Architecture*, also of 2009. In her interviews excerpted in *Made by OMA*, in particular, she confirms that there is an "overproduction" of design ideas in blue foam model form; hears of staff being asked to "put a [design] proposal on the table overnight;"[12] and hears another say, "[S]ometimes I don't have dinner for like two days, because I work during the evenings. [AY:] [T]hat's how everybody works here? [Abji:] Yes, we even work in the weekends, but it's OK, it's a good atmosphere."[13] In *The Making of a Building*, Yaneva observes that:
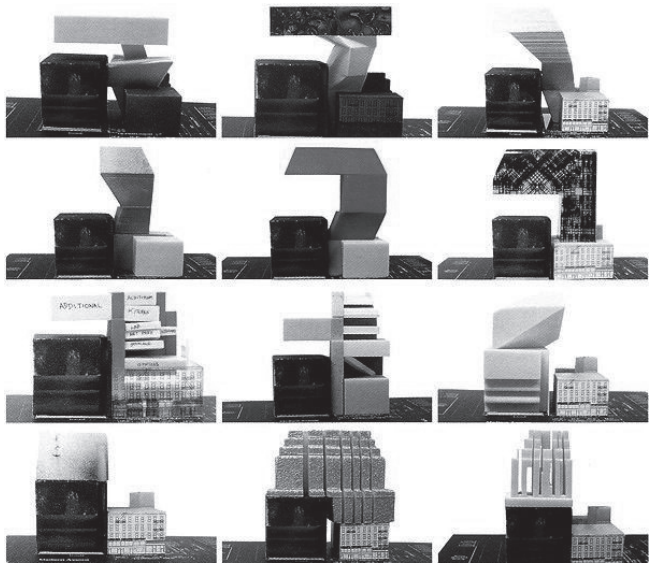
FIGURE 3: OMA 'NEWHITNEY' SELECTED STUDY MODELS

> *at the end of the ordinary working day (around six o'clock), computer music announces the beginning of 'the evening shift'. Architects start buzzing with excitement following the departure of all the administrative staff. They find themselves alone with specific design tasks to complete surrounded by the sounds of the same music they have listened to during the day in the privacy of their earphones. Now the music is given the opportunity to contribute to the office*

hubbub, and to amplify the excitement. The architects share a pizza around the table of models […] [S]ometimes a new model arrives with the sunrise, more updated drawings are printed out and set up on the table just as the city of Rotterdam is about to wake up.[14]

The young architects recover from their nocturnal labours with "one of those strong OMA coffees that really wake you up even if you have only slept for a couple of hours."[15]

Yaneva remarks that, because designs for terminated projects are sometimes resurrected in later commissions, "the sleepless nights spent in the company of a foam-cutter, a computer and a couple of fellow architects from the same [project team] have not been in vain."[16] The blue foam "smells," she notes, when cut on the hot-wire cutter[17]—and it does so because it is releasing toxic fumes—but no one, we might note, seems concerned with the health risks to the staff. Indeed, the demands of OMA's working conditions seem to serve Yaneva's larger claims regarding knowledge and reality:

> *"The fact that there is no urban life 'out there', far from the studio, has been demonstrated by all those who never visited the Whitney [Museum] site in Manhattan but kept on designing for it, by all those who never learned Spanish but built in Cordoba, and by those who never borrowed a book from the Seattle Library but reinvented the library typology. Designers never go 'outside'; there is no outside. […] The studio constitutes their world. […] OMA and Koolhaas treat the studio as the world."*[18]

One may well ask whether these descriptions and assessments constitute an apologia for the conditions observed, or whether they serve instead to expose the conditions of labour without direct accusation or criticism? The tone of the description of the musical all-nighter is positive, even approbatory, conveying the student-like "excitement" of the participants without evident irony; generally speaking, irony is by no means absent from the Latourian rhetorical repertoire, but conspicuous by its absence in this instance.

REFLEXIVITY

Yet Yaneva's observations, undertaken in the early 2000s, overlap with a period of notable reflexivity within architectural practice and education, particularly within the North American context. Brought to professional attention in the publication *Progressive Architecture* in the early 1990s,[19] given intensity by the accidental deaths of several students after

multiple all-night work sessions, exposed to the wider academy and the public at large through further journalistic exposés,[20] concerns with the adverse effects of the traditions of the design discipline and profession were confronted in *The Redesign of Studio Culture*, of 2002.[21] In these and subsequent reports, the reproductive cycle between the architectural academy's tradition of do-or-die work practices and a similar culture in the profession, particularly among its most culturally ambitious members—with all the implications for work-life balance, health, and the perceived value of architects' time—was indicted. But traditions die hard, bound up as they are with identity, and debates over such concerns and indictments have continued internationally to the present day.[22]

Philipp Oswalt and Matthias Hollwich, who between them had experienced working at OMA from 1996 to at least 2000, published in that latter year "OMA at work," an account of that experience. Oswalt, editor of the journal *Arch+* from 1988 to 1994, evidently brought a critic's eye to that endeavour. They describe and explicate in detail the processes of the office, and it is worth quoting these accounts at some length for comparison with Yaneva's observations and the more recent ex-employee reports online:

> *An important precondition is that the majority of the employees are quite inexperienced and young. Not only do they work unbelievably hard for relatively little money and thereby make it possible to pursue thousands of ideas, to try them out and reject them, which no client would ever want or be able to pay for, but more importantly, it is the naivety with which they approach the tasks they are set. Ignorant of how the problem would normally be solved, they can experiment with a childlike lack of inhibitions and thus develop new ideas. [...]*
>
> *Rem's instructions are mostly so vague, his presence over long periods only intermittent and his distance*

to the design team so great that some employees opine that he is not really a designer at all, it is his staff who produce the architecture. […] [But t]he distance between the team of designers and Rem leads to great flexibility: at any time, the direction can be changed unexpectedly, and the more doggedly the design team sticks to a solution or a problem, the likelier it is that this will happen. The work of days or weeks can be discarded in the space of a minute without much discussion. […] [O]ther members of staff are occasionally drawn in at short notice. […] Less in awe of that which has already been achieved, the staff who have been uninvolved until then foil the intentions of their colleagues, which makes it at the same time much easier to develop substantial new ideas.

Basically, almost any form of destabilization appears to be welcome. It is rather unlikely that the team that has begun a project takes it through to realization. It may happen that a team, having worked through the night and an interim presentation, comes into the office to find that the workplaces have been seized by colleagues and the team has to find new ones. The concept of private property does not exist in the office anyway: every drafting pen, every adhesive film, every geodesic triangle that you have with difficulty acquired for yourself can disappear again within days or hours. And it would not surprise anyone in the office if he or she were told that they had to fly that very day to Hanoi for several days because of a project. One hundred per cent availability is implicitly demanded—24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, with the exception of Christmas. […]

It can happen that just a few hours before a presentation or a deadline Rem wants to change the design, the model, the drawings or collages. Then arguments of time or costs are of no import, to the despair of the financial director and the curses of the staff who have to change everything at the last moment.[23]

As Oswalt and Hollwich suggest, these accounts describe, by comparison with conventional professional practices, a deliberately unstable and chaotic situation, one in which "human resources management" evidently occurs in part by placing staff and their design ideas in a quasi-Darwinian struggle for recognition, with status, approval, and reliable communication and decision-making constantly undermined; the possibility of predatory internal competition apparently tacitly condoned. Billable hours (those hours of work charged to the fee that the client has agreed to pay) are clearly far exceeded by actual hours expended and, from that conventional professional perspective, the financial viability of such an office is enabled only by the absence of overtime pay, an intense stigma attached to time-in-lieu (paid time off equivalent to unpaid overtime worked), and significantly below-par compensation for the majority of staff.[24] Drawn in, it seems, by the cachet of being known to have worked for OMA, and by its apparent value—if not in monetary terms—in one's portfolio and CV

(especially given Koolhaas's international renown and influence), young staff in particular appear to find themselves in an exploitative situation. Mutinies, by the time that Oswalt and Hollwich are working there (and Yaneva is about to undertake her observations), seem less likely, as some of the "voluntary prisoners"[25] turn out to be the warders of their co-workers: in a passage of sharply ironic tone, Oswalt and Hollwich note that, "The office is characterized more by an American mentality than a European one: produce, criticize and don't ask for reasons, don't argue, show unlimited commitment, don't expect any solidarity from your colleagues – don't worry, be happy. It is not by chance that almost all the project leaders come from the USA."[26]

Yaneva cites Oswalt and Hollwich's article in *The Making of a Building*, but takes pains to distinguish her intentions from theirs: "My aim is not to present the habits of the office and the general rules of their design philosophy […] but to make the reader hear the architects' voices, to follow the reactions and discussions of architects, engineers, stage designers, cost evaluators, curators and artists, to see them draw, build models, negotiate the costs of a building, and design the NEWhitney."[27]

RESISTANCE

In her participant observations, Yaneva adheres to Latour's exhortation to "follow the actors" (both human and non-human), and to describe rather than seek to explain, in order to observe "architecture in the making." Such an approach contrasts with recent investigations into attitudes in the discipline and profession to work and labour, regarding the fabrication of buildings but also regarding the production of design. These include the studies undertaken by Peggy Deamer, Paolo Tombesi et al.;[28] by the artists' activist group Gulf Labor with Andrew Ross on the exploitation of migrant labour

" PRODUCE, CRITICIZE AND DON'T ASK FOR REASONS, DON'T ARGUE, SHOW UNLIMITED COMMITMENT, DON'T EXPECT ANY SOLIDARITY FROM YOUR COLLEAGUES – DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY. "

for cultural projects in the Gulf States;[29] and by Mabel Wilson and others of the academic activist group Who Builds Your Architecture,[30] who have argued that the conditions under which architecture is produced are an integral part of its ethical dimension. It might be asserted that such studies revisit Marxist concerns characteristic of the 1970s, and indeed Deamer's edited collection *The Architect as Worker* opens its "Foreword" with a quotation from Marx distinguishing between mental and material labour. Nonetheless, the contributors are at pains to identify the differences at play in our times: Joan Ockman, in that same "Foreword," acknowledges that:

> *intellectual labor has become increasingly arduous and stressful today by virtue of the expansion of the workday to the 24/7 cycle, 'flexible' hiring and firing policies, insecurity with respect to healthcare and other social benefits, and– in the particular case of young, highly educated architects–low compensation and unpaid internships. […] These problems are compounded today in the context of a disorganized global 'precariat' that has to market its own skills as 'entrepreneur of itself.'* [31]

To these formulations we might add other dimensions of the neoliberal dispensation: the virtuous social roles ascribed to "creativity" as "innovation," construed as bringing economic liberation to cities (through the creative class itself; the Bilbao Guggenheim, etc.) and individuals (liberated, by means of digital platforms, from the need of nanny-employer conditions such as benefits, unions, workplace rights) alike. And, indeed, in her online summary of *Made by OMA*, Yaneva declares her intention to show "how innovation permeates design practice, how everyday techniques and workaday choices set new standards for buildings and urban phenomena."[32] In contrast, as Manuel Shvartzberg confirms, under that neoliberal dispensation, "In material terms, creativity is the measure by which workers will cannibalize themselves for the sake of the company – extreme work hours, no parallel commitments (love, friendship, community, etcetera)."[33]

OMA's location in this complex of concerns has in part to do with the firm's status as an acknowledged generator of innovation in those terms (the Seattle Public Library's impact on library usage and the city's economy, for example), and in part with its principals' and former staff's status in the world of architectural education (Koolhaas's appointment at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, for instance). If the university— in spite of the ongoing attempts to reconstruct it in the image of neoliberal values—is still expected by some to engage in challenges to the ideological conventions of its time, then the prominent architectural

practitioner-teacher might well be expected to use their affiliation with the academy not simply as a source of clients and junior staff, but rather as a venue to be openly reflexive about the conditions of their own professional practices. As Dariel Cobb observes:

> *Academics now need to do more: examine the labor rights of architecture workers and the labor practices of architecture offices within a larger social history. Having personally experienced the unmitigated drudgery of long hours and low pay within a purportedly elite professional architecture setting, I think it's time to move workers' whispers and complaints from blogs and trade publications to the arena of sustained critical discourse. Generations have passed during which such engagement would have been vilified, only to arrive at this ripe political moment for reexamination.*[34]

With such initiatives in mind, could one suggest that an additional path of observation might have been undertaken in the ethnography of OMA; namely, Who Builds Your Foam Models?

❝ WHO BUILDS YOUR FOAM MODELS? ❞

THE METHODS OF SISYPHUS

A further objection might be raised, however, that many culturally ambitious architects have obtained from their staff, by one means or another, long hours at low pay, and that this is indicative of the low value placed by society at large upon architectural work. Quality of ideas and execution takes more time (so the argument goes) and therefore costs more than most clients are willing to pay; thus, in this noble shared cause, the shortfall in income has to be passed on to staff. In other words, inadequacy of compensation is a condition forced upon the practice as a whole for those who set their ambitions high; and (by implication of this argument) the moral issue is shifted to the societal level. Might this constitute a rationale for Yaneva's

overlooking of the labour issues at OMA? It seems unlikely, given this invocation of Latour in *Making*: "society has to be composed, made up, constructed, established, maintained, and assembled. It is no longer to be taken as the hidden source of causality which could be mobilized so as to account for the existence and stability of some other action or behaviour."[35]

Oswalt and Hollwich, though, in their laconic recounting of the particularities of OMA's design method, offer apologias for some of its more extreme demands:

> *Settling on a solution, or to put it more precisely, filtering out a solution from the pool of ideas, takes place very late; the alternatives are developed in parallel over a long period. The decision is postponed as long as possible, because it always implies the loss of other possibilities, limitation. […]*

> *When you are involved in this process, you can sometimes despair over the inefficiency and the absence of conventional professionalism. But in the end, you are obliged to concede that the non-linearity of the design process, the lack of routine or an established canon of methods or solutions are the basis for the quality of the office's work. […] It is characteristic that Rem assesses a project sceptically precisely when it has developed continuously without conflicts, crises and interruptions. […] It is the ambition of the office to structure the design process in such a way that the maximum number of influences, criteria and ideas are included. […]*

> *It is indicative that innumerable alternatives will also be investigated when an obviously brilliant idea has already been come up with: although Rem had already had the basic idea at the beginning of the IIT project [the McCormick Tribune Campus Center of 1997-2003], all the same he kept the team investigating and developing completely different ideas for weeks. As none of the newly developed options was any more convincing, though, the idea that was there from the start was taken up again.*

> *This Sisyphus-like way of proceeding may appear totally inefficient, but it proves to be extremely fruitful.*[36]

RATIONALISATION

Sisyphean indeed; yet as Yaneva's interviewees demonstrate, OMA's young staff nonetheless rationalise their intense and difficult working conditions. In the OMA publication *Content* (cited by Yaneva as one of her guides to the office's practice),[37] staff chosen to collaborate with Herzog and de Meuron at their Basel office comment ironically but disparagingly

on the more civilised and relaxed conditions they see there: "We don't have time for long weekends, lunches, coffee breaks, and short workdays. We want to work hard, do things fast, have no free time, learn, and move on. In Basel, people do not move on; they have good lives."[38] Contrary to the Studio Culture studies' alarm at inadequate rest and poor eating habits, the OMA staff writing in *Content* "dread the hour lunch break, during which we have to roam the boring streets of Basel in search of expensive, tasteless food. Thank God for globalism, Mr Wong and McDonald's."[39]

Angela McRobbie, in her studies of the individualization of precarious labour in the culture industries, observes that:

> *One of the most perplexing issues facing social scientists and policy-makers is the sheer enthusiasm on the part of young people for 'creative' jobs they know in advance will require long stints of working, often through the night, for relatively low pay. Such enthusiasm is unabated even for those who are well-versed in the politics of precaritie, and this opens up important questions for the future of work. In particular, does this ethos confirm Michel Foucault's oft-quoted insight that power works most effectively when it is tied to the promise of pleasure and self-reward, in this case through 'creative enterprise' or 'passionate work'?*[40]

In the example from *Content*, there is an identification of the working conditions as a kind of rite of passage, indicative of the seriousness and substance of the endeavour. Some might suggest that there is an internalization of abuse as a badge of courage, as a confirmation of the most serious commitment to the field; but also that this internalization constitutes an essential mechanism of social reproduction, a process by which a prized identity is handed down from one generation to another.

William Wiles, reporting in 2011, assembles a further set of telling rationalisations by the firm's managers themselves:

> *OMA's breakneck internal pace comes at a cost – the company has an extremely high turnover of staff, as implied by the number of independent practices that spin out of it; high numbers of burnouts are also rumoured. Incredibly, this high turnover is company policy. 'We want to refresh and renew our organisation on a permanent basis,' says [Victor] Van der Chijs [managing partner]. 'We really want every year at least 25 percent of our people to be new. And we want them to be young, bright people. The idea [is] [...] that we really need those people to feed in new ideas, make sure that OMA stays relevant and really understands what is going on.'*

> *Many companies would balk at this kind of turnover. A high churn rate of staff is very costly–time is tied up training, knowledge and experience is continually leaking away, good practices can be hard to maintain. […] 'Most people know that when they join OMA, that they work on average for three years here and after that, they leave,' says Van der Chijs. 'It's already in their minds.' […]*

> *Looked at with these expectations in mind–people join OMA knowing they are in for an intensive but short and valuable experience that will leave them ready to start up on their own–and the office starts to look more like an elite college than an architecture and research firm. 'The environment that is generated from the projects here is an incredibly strong learning experience, a fast-track learning experience,' says [project architect Mark] Veldman. 'You learn much more here in a year than you would learn in a university.'* [41]

In these passages, the upper echelons of OMA invoke familiar neoliberal shibboleths as justifications of the office's work practices: the casualisation of labour;[42] employment as a springboard to personal entrepreneurship (every short-term employee is, regardless of their prior socio-economic status, potentially the next Bjarke Ingels, Jeanne Gang, or Joshua Prince-Ramus); and the value of experience in the firm as a form of education (implicitly justifying low compensation). The nature of OMA's design method, in which many non-linear directions are explored and physical-model options generated—almost as if a process of emergence were being set in motion out of multiplicity—is evidently inextricably tied to high demands on low-cost labour (of which there has been a reliable supply, given the practice's ties to academies). Thus an *understanding* of OMA's approach to design would seem to necessitate attention to this relationship to labour. Such a situation might even have been considered from the Actor Network Theory (ANT) perspective as worthy of study

as a controversy in itself: "Design," after all, "has a proactive power to incite public controversies over thorny issues and generate social effects."[43] But in the case of OMA's labour practices, these opportunities appear not to have been taken up.

Why might this ethnographic study have overlooked or de-emphasised these aspects of human relations at OMA? What are the constraints on this project of philosophical anthropology? Is the Latourian approach inherently unable to tackle such a topic, or are there affordances that could adjust its scope? Variations in interpretations of that method's assumptions suggest that it has versions that are more or less circumscribed. Greater circumscription does not appear to result from an inherent limitation of pragmatist ethics per se, which after all seeks to adapt its practices on the basis of experience, unless one equates pragmatism in this instance with a cynical realism, in the Sloterdijkian sense,[44] on Koolhaas' part (a valid concern, given Latour's enthusiasm for Sloterdijk as a philosopher of design).[45] Latour's ethics, construed by Gabriel Hankins in the context of literature, occurs in the "nonmodern" condition, where nature, society and culture no longer exhibit the categorical distinctions presumed in the Modern. "Action," observes Hankins, "becomes distributed between actants [human and non-human] that coproduce the action rather than figured as a subject acting on its object."[46] He quotes Latour: "An 'actor' in the hyphenated expression
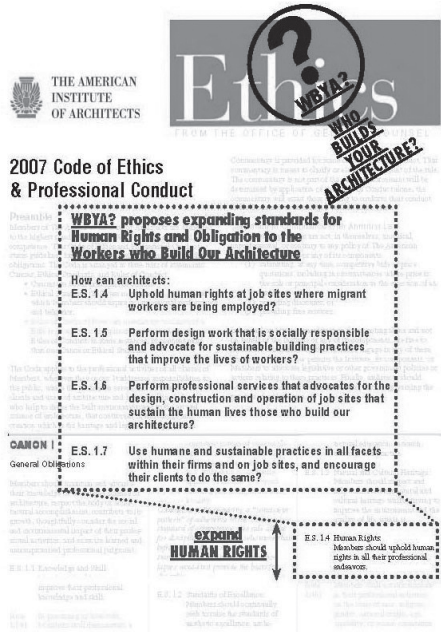

FIGURE 4: WBYA PROPOSED REVISIONS TO AIA CODE OF ETHICS P.1

actor-network is not the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming towards it."[47] "A Latourian account," continues Hankins, "remains uncertain as to location of agency."[48]

Such a situation, and the emphasis on description over explanation, has led to the charge for ANT of descriptivism. Whittle and Spicer assert that:

> *by producing descriptions of existing networks of actors in an apparently neutral, apolitical manner, ANT actually reinforces the state of affairs that it describes. Indeed, Law (2003) recognizes the possibility that ANT simply reproduces rather than challenges the hegemony of the networks they describe. […] ANT remains indifferent about the specific means through which power is established (Amsterdamska, 1990). For instance, coercion, corruption and intimidation are not distinguished on any normative basis from persuasion, negotiation and reward. […] ANT brings with it a tendency to legitimize hegemonic power relations, ignore relations of oppression, and sidestep any normative assessment of existing organizational forms.*[49]

In an essay published in 2004, Latour famously asked, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?"[50] His purpose was to distinguish the methods he was propounding from those of critical theory, which he felt had fallen prey to popularization and misapplication. Extending this position in a debate of 2011 with Neil Brenner and others over the methods of urban studies, Ignacio Farías emphasizes inquiry as ANT's "style of cognitive engagement," as distinct from critique. He acknowledges Brenner et al.'s charge that assemblage-based urban studies risk a "naïve positivism" and ideological affirmation of current conditions, but seeks to argue against that charge. "Three methodological principles," observes Farías, "summarize [ANT's] commitment to the empirical: 'follow the actors, forget the contexts', 'describe, don't explain' and 'do not switch conceptual repertoires when you describe'."[51]

> *The world is not all in, […] it is in the making. […] The most obvious consequence of this ontology is that it involves accounting for all actual entities involved in such processes of construction, whether human or nonhuman, their interactions and transformations. The most important consequence […] is that the notion of assemblage involves no outside, no exteriority. […] Assemblages are self-contained processes of heterogeneous associations calling for a positive description of their becoming, not external explanations.*[52]

Here, journalist Sander Pleij's interviews in his 2014 article "Who is Rem Koolhaas" affirm the connections. Koolhaas remarks: "But being critical is the basis of it all, I think that in the last 25 years the critical from outside

is no longer existent. Just like Žižek, Latour and all those other ones are declaring. You can't look at it from the outside."[53]

Farías, however, continues: "Precisely because asymmetry is not presumed and explained structurally or contextually, the study of urban assemblages involves unveiling the actual practices, processes, sociomaterial orderings, reproducing asymmetries in the distribution of resources, of power and of agency capacities, opening up black-boxed arrangements."[54]

By contrast with Farías' qualification, Yaneva asserts that her "intentions were humble: I did not try to explain the OMA practice or Koolhaas's approach […] [I had] the pure purpose of generating infra-reflexive descriptions of invention which would keep the freshness of design experiences […] far from the reach of the prevailing meta-reflexive theories of design. […] I simply described various design practices without sticking to references outside architecture."[55]

“ "WHY HAS CRITIQUE RUN OUT OF STEAM?" ”

ARCHITECTURAL 'LABOUR IN THE MAKING': CONCLUSIONS AND OPENINGS

In her "Introduction" to *The Making of a Building*, Yaneva notes that "I have deliberately chosen not to discuss Koolhaas's early works and his theoretical and philosophical thinking […] as this can bias my description of the design process at OMA."[56] This is in keeping with Yaneva's interpretation of the descriptive approach, but carries certain risks. In its 1978 project for the extension of the Dutch Parliament in the Hague, OMA had proposed a generously equipped chamber for what they saw as the characteristic "orgies of speech" of Dutch politics, but down the hall had also provided a "smoke-filled room"—Miesian in its aesthetic—where the actual decisions would be made. The ironic tone of this contrast occurs innumerable times in OMA's work, suggestive of Koolhaas's

cynical realism about transparency and democracy and, later, of his equivocal embrace of authoritarian clients (for example, China's CCTV). In the context of this paper, metaphorically the Hague Parliament's debating chamber embodies the public presentation of OMA's intentions and values; the smoke-filled room, its actual internal practices. In the latter we find the "black-boxed arrangements" of Farías's analysis. In this instance, has the smoke prevented the black box of labour ethics from being opened up? "Give Me a Gun and I will Make All Buildings Move," wrote Latour and Yaneva in 2008; for all the benefits of this idea, one would not want to think that the gun was adding to the smoke in the metaphorical room. OMA, after all, in its daily practices had been able to implement, by the early 2000s, the neoliberal corporation's wildest dreams: an unending supply of short-term contract labour, entirely flexible, eager to work up to 24 hours a day, seven days a week for minimal fixed salary, self-unorganised and self-policing, readily pitched into predatory competition, abnegating any expectations of structured career advancement, enthusiastic about unrelenting stress as the normal state of affairs, with work-life balance a non-issue, and conveniently departing when burnt out, before the right to an unlimited contract would kick in. Are not the staff's acceptance of this situation—its relationship to their sense of disciplinary belonging and "chops"—and its fundamental role in OMA's disciplinary reputation and success also vital circulating components of the actor network in play?

There may be at least four reasons that these studies of OMA do not tackle the issues of architectural "labour in the making." First, in the ethnographic project, the studies may have encountered a twin hazard for anthropologists: becoming too close to their subjects and yet, in other respects, not close enough. There is a sense of identification with the practice, and not only through the daily intimacy with their studio activities and thoughts: the design of the book *Made by OMA* (presumably the work of an actor network of which the author was a part) also pays a conspicuous homage, in its use of a sequence of quasi-cinematic images on its opening pages, to those of *SMLXL*, the 1995 bible of OMA's practice to that date. Latour was a contributor to the 2006 *Domus d'Autore* volume on "AMO Post-Occupancy," edited by Koolhaas and AMO, the research arm of OMA.[57] OMA was a participant in the 2005 exhibition "Making Things Public," curated by Latour (with Peter Weibel) at the ZKM Karlsruhe, and Latour has been an apologist, enthusiast, and kindred intellectual spirit for Koolhaas in interviews.[58]

Farías and Wilkie, in their Introduction to *Studio Studies*, make a series of observations relevant to the larger implications of this first reason and

those that follow. The intimacy of studio life, they assert, means that ethnographers "almost inevitably cannot restrain themselves from becoming 'native' members of studio collectives and thus actively involved in creation processes."[59] We may observe that the countervailing need to "come home" periodically is thus made more difficult, in spite of—or perhaps also because of—the fact that the researcher's grant, academic contract, or salary enables them to maintain a certain immunity to the coercions of studio employment. If we may propose here a possible extension of the OMA study, what might be needed is a periodic process of more sustained auto-ethnographic reflection on the researcher's own enthusiasm for the culture of the studio.

Second, in the methodological project, there is the resistance to "external" perspectives and values, in which labour ethics may have been implicitly and *a priori* defined as outside. Yaneva takes pains, particularly in *The Making of a Building*, to distinguish her pragmatist approach from that of critical sociology and theory, which would be "to mobilize and evoke ideas from *outside* architecture to interpret design and reveal a myriad of hidden meanings and mechanisms of architectural practices."[60]

Here, Farías and Wilkie's remarks indicate that this resistance is indeed characteristic of the larger Latourian and ANT projects. In their literature review, Farías and Wilkie touch on the issue of labour, but appear to distance their research program from it, both as a concern of "critical" scholars and as a condition (they imply) not manifested in the day-to-day practices of the studio itself:

> In examining the political economy of creative labour, critical scholars (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010) have pointed to the market and institutional arrangements that allow firms in the media and cultural sector to extract the surplus value of creative work, such as exploiting unpaid labour time. [...]

As such, the social and cultural sciences overlook the very settings where the products of the creative industries are brought into being by focusing on the … inter-institutional conditions in which creativity is achieved.[61]

Earlier sociologists such as Richard Petersons, Pierre Bourdieu and Howard Becker dwelt, Farías and Wilkie note, on the "broader' social, industrial and institutional contexts" of cultural production. Against this approach, they invoke Antoine Hennion's charge that it "only attempted the study of milieu, professions, institutions, markets, policies–that is, everything 'around' the object itself."[62] This categorical exclusion of "institutional contexts" from studio studies[63] seems, however, at odds with Farías' own earlier confidence (cited above) that ANT-derived methods do enable foregrounding of "the asymmetries of distribution […] of power and of agency capacities [and] opening up black-boxed arrangements," which seem entirely worthy goals.[64]

Third, in the epistemological project, there is an evident parallel exclusion of the context of the socialization of architects into generationally reproductive labour practices. Yet as Yaneva herself observes, "For me, the 'apprentice' in architecture […] [t]he rhythm of the office tamed me at the end to the extent that I became 'trained by the field' and began, up to a certain point, to think and act *like* an architect."[65] But "[t]he protagonists of my story were always quicker than me […] and always spent more time working overnight."[66] Even so, "[my] routine of interview and observations followed by transcription was loading my fieldwork weeks in such an intensive way that I was literally living in the office."[67] Thus in her own "apprenticeship," Yaneva herself reproduces, albeit initially by choice, the labour practices of her subjects. Her overall approach is "inspired by William James's project of radical empiricism. […] Empirical would mean to be faithful to what is given to experience and the numerous connections that are revealed in it. […] Such an approach to architecture consists in investigating the architectural culture and the practices of designers rather than their theories and their ideologies."[68] However, reflexive analysis of that experienced process of reproduction does not appear to figure in this empirical investigation of OMA's culture of "voluntary prisoners of architecture" and the connections potentially revealed within. Could we then imagine the project being extended such that the researcher arranges to "follow the actors" further, to accompany the staff home (when they do go home); when they quit, are terminated or their contracts expire; or when they attempt to deal with the rest of life? Farías and Wilkie acknowledge, after all, that in the laboratory studies that they take as initial inspiration for studio ethnography, "equal attention

is paid to all the activities undertaken by scientists and lab technicians, whether routine informal talk, strategic career decisions, or fact-making efforts. All such practices are considered part of knowledge-making processes."[69]

Fourth, in the ontological project,[70] the drive to ascribe agency to non-human actors (in this case, the blue foam models) may diminish perception of the agency of human actors. The junior staff, though identified in the "Acknowledgements" of *The Making of a Building*, appear by first name only in the "short stories" that form the chapters of *Made by OMA* (an exemplification of Latour's early advocacy of story-telling as an alternative to explanation); some of the female architectural staff are there described as "girls"; and design is presented as a form of play that generates its own rewards. This can have the unfortunate effect of a kind of infantilisation of those most affected by the firm's working conditions. Again, the broad ambition to describe "distributed creation processes" in the studio ensemble is shared by others coming from a similar intellectual formation: Farías and Wilkie assert that "the notion of studio life […] designates a vitality: a generative capacity that inheres in the human-material arrangements and circulations taking place in studios and converging in the creation of new cultural artefacts."[71] Such a vitalist narrative of creativity can sometimes obscure, though, the possibility that the studio organism is self-devouring.

" "A KIND OF INFANTILISATION OF THOSE MOST AFFECTED BY THE FIRM'S WORKING CONDITIONS" "

ENDNOTES

[1] Observations by the author.

[2] "OMA*AMO ARCHITECTURE Reviews," *Glassdoor*, https://www.glassdoor.com/Reviews/OMA-AMO-ARCHITECTURE-Reviews-E429120.htm, accessed January 31, 2016. From an informal survey of employee reviews published on Glassdoor of practices such as Zaha Hadid Architects, ShoP, Foster + Partners, Bjarke Ingels Group, Heatherwick, DS+A, Mecanoo, MVRDV, Asymptote, Steven Holl, Gehry Partners, Morphosis, Jean Nouvel, etc. Recurring complaints include long hours, chronic understaffing of projects, poor pay, unpaid overtime, poor work-life balance, inadequate professional development or advancement opportunities, junior staff treated as replaceable, limited technical depth among the long-term staff, predatory internal competition promoted by the firm's culture, unskilled and bullying but inequitably rewarded management.

[3] See, for example, "Migrant Workers' Rights on Saadiyat Island in the United Arab Emirates," *Human Rights Watch*, published 2015, accessed February 18, 2015, hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/uae0215_ForUploadR.pdf. See also "What can architects do about workers' rights in the Gulf?," *Icon*, published March 26, 2015, accessed May 21, 2015, iconeye.com/architecture/features/item/11715-what.

[4] See, for example, Bruno Latour, "A Cautious Prometheus? A Few Steps Toward a Philosophy of Design (with Special Attention to Peter Sloterdijk)," keynote lecture for the *Networks of Design* meeting of the Design History Society, Falmouth, Cornwall, September 3, 2008, http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/112-DESIGN-CORNWALL-GB.pdf.

[5] Ariane Lourie Harrison, "Latour and Yaneva: an ANT's view of Architecture," in *Architectural Theories of the Environment: Posthuman Territories*, ed. Harrison (New York: Routledge, 2013), 107-8.

[6] Bruno Latour and Albena Yaneva, "'Give Me A Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move': An ANT's View of Architecture," in *Explorations in Architecture: Teaching, Design, Research*, ed. Reto Geiser (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2008), 86.

[7] Latour, "A Cautious Prometheus?," 13.

[8] Latour and Yaneva, "'Give Me A Gun,'" 80.

[9] Ibid., 86-88.

[10] Albena Yaneva, *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture: An Ethnography of Design* (Rotterdam: 010, 2009), 104. Indeed, Latour comments disparagingly on architectural theory in general in Rania Ghosn, El Hadi Jazairy, and Stephen Ramos, "The Space of Controversies: An Interview with Bruno Latour," *New Geographies* 0 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard GSD, 2008), 122–135.

[11] Olga Amsterdamska, "Surely You Are Joking, Monsieur Latour!," *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 15, 4 (Autumn 1990), 495-504; Sal Restivo, "Politics of Latour," review essay, *Organization and Environment* 8, 1 (March 2005), 111-115.

[12] Yaneva, *Made by OMA*, 72.

[13] Yaneva, *Made by OMA*, 43.

[14] Albena Yaneva, *The Making of a Building: A Pragmatist Approach to Architecture* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 38.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Yaneva, *Made by OMA*, 89.

[17] Yaneva, *Made by OMA*, 58.

[18] Yaneva, *Made by OMA*, 84-85.

[19] Thomas Fisher, "Patterns of Exploitation," *Progressive Architecture* (May 1991), 9.

[20] Patrick Monaghan, "The 'Insane Little Bubble of Nonreality' That Is Life for Architecture Students," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 2001); and Jody Temkin, "For would-be architects, grad school like boot camp," *The Chicago Tribune*, January 6, 2002.

[21] Aaron Koch et al., *The Redesign of Studio Culture: A Report of the AIAS Studio Culture Task Force* (Washington, DC: American Institute of Architecture Students, 2002).

[22] See, for example, "Mental Health Reports 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16,"

Graduate Architecture Landscape and Design Student Union, University of Toronto, http://www.galdsu.ca/Mental-Health-Report-2013-2014. See also, Richard Waite and Ella Braidwood, "Mental health problems exposed by AJ Student Survey 2016," *Architects' Journal* 243, 16 (July 28, 2016), n.p. See also, Leah Sottile, "The AEC Industry's Deadly Problem," *Architecture*, August 31, 2016.

[23] Philipp Oswalt and Matthias Hollwich, "OMA at work," trans. Fiona Greenwood, *Archis* 7 (1998), n.p. Also available at Philipp Oswalt and Matthias Hollwich, "OMA at work," trans. Fiona Greenwood, *Volume Project*, http://volumeproject.org/oma-at-work/. Also available at Philipp Oswalt and Matthias Hollwich, "OMA at work," trans. Fiona Greenwood, *Cloud-Cuckoo-Land*, http://www.cloud-cuckoo.net/openarchive/wolke/eng/Subjects/991/Oswalt/oswalt.html.

[24] And perhaps, given the hindsight now available, Koolhaas's reported semi-retirement to Switzerland; which would tend to confirm that the strictures of inadequate fees have not been evenly distributed across the hierarchy of the office.

[25] The phrase is Koolhaas's, from his widely published Architectural Association student thesis project Exodus. See Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis, "Exodus: or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture," *The White Slave*, 1972, https://thewhiteslave.wordpress.com/2013/07/04/exodus-or-the-voluntary-prisoners-of-architecture/#jp-carousel-333.

[26] Oswalt and Hollwich, "OMA at work," n.p.

[27] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 24.

[28] Peggy Deamer, ed., *The Architect as Worker: Immaterial Labor, the Creative Class and the Politics of Design* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

[29] Andrew Ross, ed. [for Gulf Labor], *The Gulf: High Culture/Hard Labor* (New York: OR Books, 2015).

[30] *Who Builds Your Architecture?*, http://whobuilds.org/.

[31] Joan Ockman, "Foreword", in *The Architect as Worker: Immaterial Labor, the Creative Class and the Politics of Design*, ed. Deamer (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), xxi-xxii.

[32] Albena Yaneva, "Abstract," for *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture: An Ethnography of Design* (Rotterdam: 010, 2009), the University of Manchester Library, available at https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/uk-ac-man-scw:87450.

[33] Manuel Schvartzberg, "Foucault's 'Environmental' Power: Architecture

and Neoliberal Subjectivization," in *The Architect as Worker: Immaterial Labor, the Creative Class and the Politics of Design*, ed. Deamer (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 189-90.

[34] Dariel Cobb, "Dispatches from MIT: Becoming Political," in *Asymmetric Labors: The Economy of Architecture in Theory and Practice,* eds. Aaron Cayer, Peggy Deamer et al. (Brooklyn, NY: The Architecture Lobby, 2016), 147.

[35] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 198 n. 4, from Bruno Latour, "When *186* Things Strike Back: a Possible Contribution of Science Studies to the Social Sciences," *British Journal of Sociology* 51, 105-23.

[36] Oswalt and Hollwich, "OMA at work," n.p.

[37] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 32 n. 34.

[38] Fenna Haakma Wagenaar, "Astorology: Protect us from what we want," in *Content*, ed. Rem Koolhaas et al. (Köln: Taschen, 2004), 204.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Angela McRobbie, "Is Passionate Work a Neoliberal Delusion?," *Transformation*, published April 22, 2015, accessed July 19, 2016, https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/angela-mcrobbie/is-passionate-work-neoliberal-delusion. See also Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (London: Polity Press, 2015).

[41] William Wiles, "Inside OMA," *Icon*, published September 30, 2011, https://www.iconeye.com/architecture/features/item/9554-inside-oma.

[42] In Dutch employment law, three years has been the maximum total duration of fixed-term employment contracts, beyond which further employment would automatically be for an unlimited term. See *Expat Survival Guide 2014* (Haarlem: Expatica, 2013), 60.

[43] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 199. But see also Albena Yaneva, *Mapping Controversies in Architecture* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012).

[44] See Kazys Varnelis, "'We Cannot Not Know History': Philip Johnson's Politics and Cynical Survival," *Journal of Architectural Education* 49:2 (November 1995), 92-104. As Varnelis observes, "The modern cynic understands what false consciousness is, Sloterdijk explains, but uses that knowledge to pull a fast one. Acting fundamentally in their own self-interest, cynics 'see to it that they are not taken for suckers.'" Quotation from Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 5, quoted in Varnelis, "'We Cannot Not Know History,'" 101.

[45] See Latour, "A Cautious Prometheus?" See also Bruno Latour, "Spheres

and Networks: Two Ways to Interpret Globalization," *Harvard Design Magazine* 30 (Spring/Summer 2009), 138-44.

[46] Gabriel Hankins, "The Objects of Ethics: Rilke and Woolf with Latour," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 61:3 (September 2015), 333.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid. Latour, ever the agile guru in his "On Recalling ANT" essay of 1999, acknowledged concerns about moral issues, while not appearing to respond fully to them. See Bruno Latour, "On Recalling ANT," in *Actor-Network Theory and After*, eds. J. Law and J. Hassard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 15-25.

[49] Andrea Whittle and André Spicer, "Is Actor Network Theory Critique?," *Organization Studies* 29:04 (2008), 622-623.

[50] Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Winter 2004), 225-248.

[51] Ignacio Farías, "The politics of urban assemblages," *CITY* 15:3-4 (June-August 2011), 367.

[52] Farías, "The politics of urban assemblages," 369-70.

[53] Sander Pleij, "I hate being an architect," *Medium*, published June 8, 2014, accessed December 1, 2015, https://medium.com/@pleij/i-hate-being-an-architect-7c42abbcd6d#.b7v4rvms2.

[54] Farías, "The Politics of Urban Assemblages," 369-370.

[55] Yaneva, *Made by OMA*, 100-101.

[56] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 26 n. 29.

[57] Rem Koolhaas and AMO, "AMO Post-Occupancy," *Domus d'Autore series*, 2006.

[58] María J. Prieto and Elise S. Youn, "Interview with Bruno Latour: Decoding the Collective Experiment," *agglutinations*, published July 5, 2004, accessed October 30, 2016, http://agglutinations.com/archives/000040.html.

[59] Ignacio Farías and Alex Wilkie, "Studio Studies: Notes for a Research Program," *Studio Studies: Operations, Topologies, Displacements* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 9.

[60] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 25-26.

[61] Farías and Wilkie, "Studio Studies," 3. The internal reference is to David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker, *Creative labour: Media Work in three*

Cultural Industries (Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge, 2010).

[62] Antoine Hennion, "An Intermediary Between Production and Consumption: The Producer of Popular Music," *Science, Technology and Human Values* 14:4 (1989), 401, cited in Farías and Wilkie, "Studio Studies."

[63] As a further example, the ethnographic studies by Sophie Houdart of image production in the architectural studio of Kengo Kuma also appear to eschew the topic of labour conditions. See Sophie Houdart, "Copying, *188* Cutting and Pasting Social Spheres: Computer Designers' Participation in Architectural Projects," *Science Studies* 21:1 (2008), 47-63.

[64] Sophie Houdart, "Multiple Ways of Being Real: The Representations in Perspective in the Architectural Project," *Land* 46 (2006), 107-122.

[65] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 34-35.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., 196-197.

[69] Farías and Wilkie, "Studio Studies," 4. As a further possibility for future research, one might also propose a comparative ethnographic study of at least Herzog & de Meuron's practice, whose design techniques have resembled OMA's (including blue foam models), but whose working environment is seen—at least by their OMA collaborators in *Content*—as quite different.

[70] Here I refer to the Latourian concern, in propounding the notion of the complex and contested Thing, to move beyond distinctions between objective and subjective agencies in order to acknowledge the active role of inanimate entities in actor networks. See also, for a more extended discussion of the topic, Pauline Lefebvre, "From Autonomy to Pragmatism: Objects Made Moral," *ArchitecturePhilosophy* 2:1 (2016), 23-37.

[71] Farías and Wilkie, "Studio Studies," 6.

UT ARCHITECTURA PHILOSOPHIA? QUESTIONING THE RELATIONSHIP OF ARCHITECTURE AND PHILOSOPHY

KARSTEN HARRIES

1

This conference has been organized by the *International Society for the Philosophy of Architecture*. Our topic is "The Human in Architecture and Philosophy." It raises the question: just what is the relationship between philosophy and architecture? What do they have to contribute to each other? What does architecture have to contribute to philosophy? And what does philosophy have to contribute to architecture? I shall return to both questions. That both are concerned with the human, with the ways human beings relate or should relate to each other and to the world that environs them seems obvious enough. In that sense both would seem to have an ethical significance. And both would seem to engage in work of construction, work that presupposes some sort of space, the space of everyday life in the case of architecture, a spiritual or logical space in the case of philosophy. Philosophers have thus frequently invoked architectural metaphors, have liked to speak of laying foundations, of raising conceptual edifices, of the architectonics of some philosophical system. Think of Descartes, who likened himself to an architect, his philosophy to a chapel raised on firm foundations. But what work do such metaphors really do? Are they not at bottom dispensable?

Yet especially in recent years it has once again become fashionable to think the philosopher in the image of the architect, if now often in a critical

> ❝ JUST WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND ARCHITECTURE? ❞

key, to think of him as a would-be builder, someone who seeks to edify. The very word "edify" should make us think: once it meant simply to raise a dwelling or structure, later it came to mean "to improve morally or spiritually" — Kierkegaard thus wrote edifying discourses — but today it tends to carry a negative connotation: philosophers should not attempt to be edifying.

That shift in meaning invites attention. The word "edify" thus invites us to think about recent attacks on both traditional architecture and system-building philosophy: What, for example are we to make of invocations of Georges Bataille's stance against architecture, where architecture, both material and spiritual, stands for an order that by assigning us our place threatens to imprison us and should be destroyed, even if such destruction threatens chaos? The kind of thinking that here makes the prison the paradigmatic work of architecture, a kind of lens through which to look at all architecture, is of the sort that lets Dostoevsky's Man from the Underground call twice-two-makes-four a piece of impudence and celebrate twice-two-makes-five as the ultimate refuge of a freedom that, resisting placement, dreams of labyrinth and chaos. Was Nietzsche perhaps right to claim that "If we willed and dared an architecture according to the kind of souls we possess (for that we are too cowardly!) the labyrinth would have to be our model"?[1] Consider, for example, the influential exhibition *Deconstructivist Architecture*, curated by Mark Wigley und Philip Johnson in 1988. The catalogue spoke of the emergence of a new sensibility, fascinated by possibilities of contaminating, disrupting, violating, subverting architecture. That sensibility led to an architecture that self-consciously calls traditional architecture into question, that is to say, an anti-architecture, which in today's architecture world, both in theory and practice, has played a significant role in the work of Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Peter Eisenman, Daniel Libeskind, Rem Kohlhaas, and Coop Himmelb(l)au, the architects celebrated by that exhibition. Although perhaps claiming something like an ethical significance, such attacks on architecture as traditionally understood are also attacks on ethics in its usual sense, which does seek to edify, i.e. to raise a spiritual architecture that would help human beings find their proper place. Freedom resists such placement. But should every spiritual architecture that would thus place us be challenged?

What, for example, are we to make of the vogue enjoyed by the word "deconstruction" and all it stands for, the word itself an architectural metaphor of sorts, embraced not just by philosophers and literary critics, but also the name of an architectural practice that challenged what one had

come to expect from architecture, a practice that in extreme cases has led to attempts to blur what would seem to separate so obviously the philosopher from the architect: I am thinking especially, but not only, of Derrida's collaboration with Bernard Tschumi and Peter Eisenman, a collaboration that threatened to make of deconstructive discourse a strangely cerebral kind of architectural ornament.

But does architecture, taken in its usual sense, really belong with ethics in that it, too, has by its very nature an ethical function, seeking to help orient individuals by providing more than just physical shelter, by interpreting their place in the world, especially in the community, the polis? Or is just this understanding of architecture as having as a central task the representation of a community's shared values or divinities something that we moderns, who in so many ways have left behind the ancient polis, should resist as incompatible with the world we live in, with the values that inform it, first of all with the value placed on the individual and on freedom? That was the charge Mark Lilla directed against my *The Ethical Function of Architecture*: "It never seems to occur to Harries that modern society is not re-presented in modern architecture for the simple reason that it is un-representable. That, indeed, was the point, or at least the result of the revolution in modern politics."[2] This criticism claims that the ethical function of architecture, as I presented it in that book, lies behind those who are truly of this modern age. And if such an ethical, and this means inevitably also a political function, was indeed, as Hegel thought, once part of the very essence of architecture in what he took to be its highest sense, must we who are truly of today not resist all such architecture, which, when attempts are made to realize it in this modern age, invites disaster: think of the architecture of totalitarian governments, say of the architecture of Ludwig Troost, who had been charged by Hitler to

transform Munich's Königsplatz into a worthy setting of a new national cult. The buildings that provided this cult with a stage were then widely celebrated as an enormous success, applauded by the party ideologue Alfred Rosenberg as "the first attempt to realize the ancient Greek ideal" and praised by the architectural critic Wilhelm Lotz for showing for the first time in the modern age that "a deeper meaning can dwell in a city-square" as long as it has its origin in a spiritual principle and not in a desire for aesthetic variety in the built-environment or in a merely decorative intention. We should note the rejection of an architecture that would be no more than an aesthetic dressing up of functional buildings. The transformation of the Königsplatz was supposed to have shown that it was still possible to create an architecture that emerges from inner principles of dedication and value instead of being derived from external contingencies of use.[3] Did architecture here not achieve that repetition of the Greek in the modern of which Nietzsche and also Heidegger in *The Origin of the World of Art* dreamed? It is more than an historical accident that Heidegger first gave this lecture on November 13, 1935, just four days before Hitler was to give in Munich a powerful demonstration of what such a repetition of the Greek in the modern might mean in the 20th century.[4] This unhappy conjunction needs to be confronted by anyone who, drawing on Heidegger, wants to claim, as I do, an ethical function for architecture. Has Walter Benjamin not taught us to associate such an aestheticized politics with fascism—and with kitsch and bad faith, with *The Myth of the Twentieth Century?*

Countering Mark Lilla's claim that modern society is not re-presented in modern architecture because it is un-representable, I want to insist that buildings cannot but re-present the ethos presiding over their construction. But that ethos all too often invites critique. Despite a stream of mostly positive, but sometimes also critical responses, I have not seen a need to change my position in any fundamental way. But circumstances have changed; the world has changed, demanding a reconsideration of aspects of some of the central issues that I neglected. More especially, the way we today relate to space has changed and continues to change. Two developments here seem to me to be particularly significant.

One is the way an ever developing technology, and today especially the digital revolution, have opened up our everyday existence in ways that will continue to change our lives in ways we cannot quite foresee. We are open today to the world, to the universe, and to imaginary, virtual spaces as never before. This revolution has transformed the way architects do their work, but, and even more importantly, it has changed our sense of

distance, place, and space, and inseparable from it, our way of life, our sense of freedom, and that is to say also our way of dwelling, which should have consequences for our way of building.

The other, in a sense opposite, but perhaps even more important way in which our world is changing has to do with the way the inevitably limited resources provided by this small planet have to collide with a still increasing humanity and its ever increasing demands for a higher standard of living. Not just air and water, even space is becoming an ever scarcer, and all too often contested resource. Much that gets built today wastes space in ways that I find irresponsible.

These developments call for a reconsideration of what I had worked out in *The Ethical Function of Architecture.*

> " BUILDINGS CANNOT BUT RE-PRESENT THE ETHOS PRESIDING OVER THEIR CONSTRUCTION. "

2

Let me return to the suggestion that the philosopher and the architect are both builders, to be sure, using very different media. Just how is the bond between architecture and philosophy to be understood? Hence the title of my lecture with its question mark: *Ut architectura philosophia?* The Latin obviously makes reference to the Horatian *Ut pictura poesis*, "as is painting so is poetry." Poetry here is said to be like painting in that it, too, represents reality. Painting, to be sure, addresses itself to the eye, relying on visible figures, poetry to the ear, relying on words. The Horatian dictum was thus famously called into question by Lessing in his *Laocoon*. Lessing insisted on the gulf that separates eye and ear, percept and concept, arts of space and arts of time. And should the kind of considerations advanced by Lessing not call into question even more decisively any attempt to obscure what so obviously would seem to separate

the architect who deals with matter from the philosopher who works with concepts, a distinction self-consciously blurred by some recent writing on architecture? Should they not call into question, to give just one example, a work such as Mark Wigley's *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt?* [5] To be sure, philosophers like Kant or Descartes have liked to invoke architectural metaphors, have liked to speak of laying foundations, of raising conceptual edifices, of the architectonics of some philosophical system. But, to repeat the question, are such metaphors not at bottom dispensable? Or is there indeed a deeper bond between the two that awaits adequate exploration?

The organizers of this symposium, we are told, were inspired, by two observations and two questions:

1) Many architects, contemporary and historical, claim to focus on the needs of human beings. The resulting architecture, however, often does not meet the needs and desires of the people who live there. For whom should architecture actually build?

2) Architecture, traditionally, has played a negligible role in our philosophical understanding of human beings (as also for our sociological, psychological, and other anthropological analyses). Although it has always been generally acknowledged that human beings need built dwelling places, more careful analysis of this need is surely necessary. What does it say about human beings that they depend upon the buildings they construct for their own habitation?

The first observation points out that architecture often fails to meet the needs of those whom it supposedly serves. It is impossible to disagree with that observation. But it raises the obvious question: just what are these needs and why should architecture so often have failed to meet them? A first, albeit all too reductive answer, is implied by an observation made by Adolf Loos, who, many years ago standing before an Alpine lake-side villa, thought that an architect who designs such a building ought to feel ashamed. Confronted by today's macmansions, I share his sentiment:

Everything breathes beauty and peace. What's this then? A false note disturbs this peace. Like an unnecessary screech: among the peasants' houses, which were not made by them but by god, there is a villa. The work of a good architect, or a bad one? I don't know. I only know that peace, rest, and beauty have fled.

Before god there are neither good nor bad architects. In towns, in the realms of Beelzebub, there may be fine distinctions, as there are even in kinds of crime. And I therefore ask: why is it that every architect, whether he is good or bad, harms the lake-side? [6]

Hyperbolically, invoking God and the devil, the atheist Loos here suggests that it is architecture itself that is the problem. His idealized peasant builder is thought as so in tune with his environment that his buildings have somewhat the same necessity as the shelters animals construct to protect themselves from an often hostile environment. This allows Loos to claim that his peasant houses were made, not by his peasants, but by God. They answer to and belong to their environment. Such houses do not strike us as the work of some particular builder. Satisfying the needs they were meant to serve as best they could, they do not mean to be works of art. Precisely that gives them their look of inevitability. With the work of the architect the city is said to invade the countryside, to destroy the harmony visible in the peasant houses, a harmony today equally visible, Loos thought, in the work of the engineer, who, understanding his task, the available means, and the forces of nature, is not concerned to create an aesthetic object.

Loos' remark suggests that we should draw a distinction between the kind of building that raised houses such as those built by his peasants and the work of the engineer, on the one hand, and the work of an architect, on the other. It is of course possible to use the word architecture, as I have done so far in this lecture, in so broad a sense that it names simply the craft of building, where building would cover a vast range of different structures and approaches. The title of this conference would seem to do so. But the distinction between mere building and architecture does seem to have an obvious sense. However we finally may want to draw it, we have no difficulty making sense of the distinction Loos makes in the quoted passage. His peasants, like his engineers, are attuned to the order of nature and thus in harmony with something that transcends them. Their buildings reflect this. With the work of the architect, be he good or

bad, other concerns enter. The city is said by Loos to invade nature, to violate it, where the city would seem to be understood by him here as a place of artificial, unnecessary needs. At issue is the way human beings relate to their environment. Architecture, Loos suggests hyperbolically, answers to unnatural needs. We are reminded of the way the Book of Genesis opposes the shepherd Abel to the city building Cain. A suspicion of architecture has indeed attended reflections about architecture from the very beginning, inevitably tied to thoughts of a mode of dwelling that had gone astray. Think of the Tower of Babel. Behind and buried in Loos's distinction between architecture and building lies the collision of a theocentric and an anthropocentric conception of proper human dwelling, which understood metaphorically, survives the death of God.

Related would seem to be the distinction that in that *Darmstädter Gespräch* in which Heidegger delivered his lecture "Building Dwelling Thinking" found expression in the collision of Heidegger's remarks, which bade the assembled architects learn from a Black Forest farmhouse of the 18th century what kind of building once allowed for an authentic dwelling, with those made by Ortega y Gasset. Were those who built Heidegger's farmhouse really at home in their world, content with themselves and their world? Was this what Heidegger wanted to say? Ortega, at any rate, speaking at the same symposium, did not want to hear of such contentment; and so he called our discontent "the highest thing the human being possesses, precisely because it is a discontent, because man wants to possess things that he never had."[7] And does this always wanting more, this striving for what is higher, not determine our essence? Is it not bound up with our reason, which has to assign to everything real a place in the logical space of the possible and thus lets us ever again compare what happens to be our life-world with other possible worlds, whose temptations and promises seem to render the world to which we have become accustomed sadly deficient? Again and again human beings have demanded more. Our technology has its origin in such discontent. Such discontent bids us create a new world "because, as it is, our world does not fit us, because it has made us sick. This new world of technology is like a gigantic orthopedic apparatus, that you [and here Ortega was addressing his audience, the architects present] want to create, and all this technology has this wonderful, but—as is the case with everything human — dramatic movement and quality, to be a fabulous, great orthopedic device"[8] Is this then how architecture should be understood, as a gigantic orthopedic device?

I called the distinction between building and architecture helpful and

obvious. But how architecture is to be understood here remains in question. Just what is the need that architecture, as opposed to mere building, addresses? Consider the way Nikolaus Pevsner begins his *An Outline of European Architecture* with this seemingly unproblematic observation: "A bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture." Pevsner interprets this distinction for us when he suggests that works of architecture differ from functional buildings in that they are "designed with a view to aesthetic appeal." Most works of architecture are of course also functional buildings. Accepting Pevsner's distinction we can say: Work of architecture = functional building + aesthetic component. On this view it would seem to be an aesthetic concern that raises the architect above the mere builder, that makes him an artist. Works of architecture, so understood, are buildings built to be not just useful, but to have an aesthetic appeal.

Loos suggests that it is precisely this aesthetic concern that gets in the way of good building. And since philosophers have tended to discuss architecture as one of the arts and the philosophy of art has evolved as aesthetics, philosophy would seem to have contributed to bad building. Consider the way the novelist and philosopher William Gass praises Peter Eisenman's House VI because it presents itself to us as a convincing aesthetic object that pays no heed to practicality: "Thank God, I thought. This house has no concern for me and mine, over which it has no rights, but displays in every aspect and angle and fall of light the concern for the nature and beauty of building that is the architect's trust and obligation."[9] Presupposed is that the architect's primary task is that of creating a beautiful object, as opposed to the mere builder who is concerned with more practical matters.

But this opposition of architecture to building raises a host of questions: what needs does building,

" LOOS SUGGESTS THAT IT IS PRECISELY THE AESTHETIC CONCERN THAT GETS IN THE WAY OF GOOD BUILDING. "

so understood, address? There are some obvious answers such as the need to provide protection from an often hostile development or a suitable frame for certain activities. But do these needs exclude the beauty of a building? What need does beauty address? And just how is beauty, and more especially the beauty of a building to be understood? In opposition to the requirements of everyday dwelling? The distinction between building and architecture begins to blur.

This returns us to the first question posed by the organizers of this symposium: for whom does the architect build? What need does or should he address?

3

Even a brief look at some familiar accounts of the origin of building, such as those of Vitruvius, Hegel or Corbusier, is sufficient to make us question those who would claim that the needs that our building serves are so obvious that there is as little need for philosophical reflection as there is in the case of the need for clothing.

One aspect of the Vitruvian account of the origin of architecture especially deserves our attention: when Vitruvius likens his first builders in their need for shelter to wild beasts, he also insists on what makes them different and he mentions first their "not being obliged to walk with faces to the ground, but upright and gazing upon the splendor of the starry firmament."[10] How are we to understand this remark, which links human verticality to the firmament? What does the sight of a splendor that the ancients thought essentially inaccessible, a permanent order open only to eye and spirit, beyond human reach, what does this vision of cosmic permanence have to do with the origin of building?

I want to underscore Vitruvius' emphasis on the verticality of human being. To be sure, in sleep or death we return to earth-bound horizontality. But unlike the other animals, he points out, we are not obliged by our bodies "to walk with faces to the ground." But if the human animal is thus free to look up to the firmament, such freedom is more than a gift of the upright body: "Nature had not only endowed the human race with senses like the rest of the animals, but had also equipped their minds with the powers of thought and understanding, thus putting all other animals under their sway."[11] The human body's verticality signifies spirit. And such verticality possesses a spatial and a temporal significance: Their upward

gaze lets human beings raise themselves beyond the here and now, allows them to look out of their horizontal temporal condition, that circumscribes the lives of the other animals, to the seemingly ageless order of the firmament.

Did the sublime spectacle of the starry sky, which the ancients thought to be a perfect sphere, awaken the spirit sleeping in Vitruvius's proto-humans, somewhat as the snake's promise, "you will be like God," opened the eyes of Adam and Eve? Did it awaken them at the same time to their own subjection to time, to their mortality, even as it allowed them to glimpse in the heaven's unchanging order possibilities of a more perfect, more spiritual dwelling? Is the task of human building to carry something of this promise into this death-shadowed world? Or did Vitruvius also associate "the splendor of the starry firmament" with the light- and life-granting sun, the hearth of the cosmos, being represented by the warmth-giving hearth of his primitive home? This much at any rate seems clear: by linking the origin of the first house to the awe-inspiring sight of the inaccessible unchanging order of the sky, Vitruvius places human building between animal shelter and the divinely ordered cosmos. The human being looks up to and measures himself here by a timeless logos, figured by the firmament. Building, too, should be informed by this logos; and so we find Vitruvius insisting on symmetry and harmony, prefigured both by the divinely ordered cosmos and the similarly ordered body of the well shaped human being.

Hegel's understanding of the origin of architecture points in what is essentially the same direction:

> It is architecture that pioneers the way for the adequate realization of the God, and in this its service bestows hard toil upon existing nature, in order to disentangle it from the jungle of finitude and the abortiveness of

chance. By this means it levels a space for the God, gives form to his external surroundings, and builds him his temple as a fit place for concentration of spirit, and for its direction to the mind's absolute objects. It raises an enclosure round the assembly of those gathered together, as a defense against the threatening of the storm, against rain, the hurricane, and wild beasts, and reveals the will to assemble, although externally, yet in conformance with the principles of art.[12]

Hegel' builders, too, impose a spiritual, and that means for Hegel a truly human order on a recalcitrant material; human beings assert and celebrate their humanity in the face of an initially indifferent environment, when they level the ground, break the stone, raise walls and columns. They defend themselves against nature, not only or even primarily against physical threats, but against its contingency. In this struggle they rely on and exhibit the power of the universal. That is why architecture for Hegel is in its very essence not the work of isolated individuals, but of the spirit, and that means of the community: the spirit breaks down the walls that separate individuals. Genuine architecture establishes community.

And not so very different is Corbusier's account of the origin of architecture:

Primitive man has brought his chariot to a stop: he decides that here shall be his native soil. He chooses a glade, he cuts down the trees which are too close; he levels the earth around; he opens up the road which will carry him to the river or to those of his tribe whom he has just left. [...] The road is as straight as he can manage with his implements, his arms and his time. The pegs of his tent describe a square, hexagon, or octagon. The palisade forms a rectangle whose four angles are equal. The door of this hut is on the axis of the enclosure—and the gate of the enclosure faces exactly the door of the hut. [...] You may see, in some archeological work, the representation of this hut, the representation of this sanctuary: it is the plan of a house, or the plan of a temple. It is the same spirit one finds again in the Pompeian house. It is the spirit indeed of the Temple of Luxor.

There is no such thing as primitive man; there are primitive resources. The idea is constant, in full sway from the beginning.[13]

A look at the history of architecture supports that impression. From the very beginning the requirements of human dwelling resist their reduction to the need for physical shelter or functional frames for certain activities. Not only the body, the spirit, too, needs shelter, shelter especially from the terror of time.

But let me turn to the second observation made by the organizers of this symposium and to the question it raises. Architecture, it asserts, has played no very significant part in our philosophical understanding of human beings. We can grant that. And yet the prevalence of architectural metaphors in philosophical discourse invites reflection: What is the bond that ties philosophy and architecture together and allows such metaphors to make some sense? An answer is suggested by Martin Heidegger's already mentioned essay "Building Dwelling Thinking", which calls our attention to the obvious fact that building serves dwelling, but then in characteristic fashion turns to etymology to unearth beneath the familiar everyday sense of "dwelling" a deeper meaning that is said to have been lost to us:

> *The real meaning of the verb, namely to dwell, has been lost to us. But a covert trace of it has been preserved in the German word Nachbar, neighbor. The neighbor is in Old English the neahgebur, neah near, and gebur, dweller. The Nachbar is the Nachgeebur, the Nachgebauer, the near-dweller, he who dwells nearby. The verbs, buri, büren, beuren, beuron, all signify dwelling, the abode, the place of dwelling.*[14]

In its origin, Heidegger claims, building means dwelling. To really dwell is to be at home in the world. Such dwelling presupposes that we experience the world not, as science would have us do, as the totality of mute facts that just happen to be as they are, but as a meaningful order. But is the transformation of mute alien material into a home not the essence of building? And is it perhaps also the essence of thinking?

To show how dwelling is to be thought in its original sense Heidegger adds:

> *Where the word bauen still speaks in its original*

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❝ TO REALLY DWELL IS TO BE AT HOME IN THE WORLD. ❞

sense, it also says how far the nature of dwelling reaches. That is, bauen, buan, bhu, beo are our word bin in the versions: ich bin, I am, du bist, you are, the imperative form bis, be. What then does ich bin mean? The word bauen, to which it belongs answers: ich bin, du bist mean: I dwell, you dwell.[15]

Heidegger sums up his discussion with three propositions:

1. Building is really dwelling.

2. Dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth.

3. Building as dwelling unfolds into the building that cultivates growing things [German Ackerbau] and the building that erects building.

If we accept Heidegger's claim that "Dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth" this suggests that we can add as a fourth proposition:

4. Building as dwelling unfolds also into the architectures that thought erects, more especially the thought of philosophers.

This then would yield a first answer to the question: What is the bond that ties philosophy and architecture together and allows such metaphors to make some sense? Both can be said unfold in their distinctive ways the essence of building. That brings to mind Kant's famous statement that our reason is by its very nature architectonic, seeking to assign to everything its proper place in some conceptual edifice.[16] Heidegger would seem to think this in more encompassing fashion, extending it to our being-in-the-world, which always already has assigned to all we encounter its place in a linguistic edifice. Heidegger thus calls language the house of Being.

These remarks hint at a deep connection between architecture and language. The French prehistorian André-Leroi Gourhan speaks to this connection:

the earliest surviving buildings are contemporary with the appearance of the first rhythmic marks. [...] [although] the foundation of moral and physical comfort in man is the altogether animal perception of the perimeter of security, the enclosed refuge, or of the socialization of rhythms: [so] that there is no point in seeking for a scission between animal and human to explain our attachment to social rhythms and inhabited space [...] [yet] the little that is known [of pre-Homo sapiens habitations] is enough to show that a profound change occurred about the time which corresponds to the development of the control sections of the brain in strains relating to Homo sapiens. [...] Such archeological evidence [as there is] would seem to justify the assumption, that from the higher paleolithic period onwards there was an attempt to control the whole spatio-temporal phenomenon

by symbolic means, of which language was the chief. They imply a real 'taking charge' of space and time through the mediation of symbols: a domestication of them in a strict sense, since it involves, within the house and about the house, a controllable space and time.[17]

This suggests that we might want to define building in its most fundamental sense as "a taking charge of space and time through the mediation of symbols." So understood building would include both, the raising of structures that provide both physical and psychological shelter and the use of language to control and feel at home in the world around us. That language and architecture are linked in their origin is hinted at by the story of the Tower of Babel.

5

Let me return to Heidegger's claim that human being is essentially a dwelling. If for us humans to be is to dwell, it would seem that to build anything we must already dwell in some fashion. But does all dwelling not presuppose in turn something like a building? We seem to be moving in a circle.

Something analogous would seem to hold of the creation of language—think of the story of Adam's naming of the animals. Paradise must have presented itself to Adam already as rather like a divinely created garden in which everything had its proper place. Dwelling, understood in this fundamental sense, would thus seem to imply something like an experience of the world as an order that assigns us as mortals our place on earth, beneath the sky, presided over, Heidegger suggests in "Building Dwelling Thinking," by what there he calls the divinities, where we must wonder whether our modern world still allows us to make sense of Heidegger's divinities.

Consider once more the meaning of "building." To build is to bound space. How is this space to be thought? *Genesis* begins by having God create the heavens and the earth by bounding the formless. Plato's *Timaeus* offers a similar account. To build is to wrest place from space. That seems uncontroversial. And to think such building is inevitably also to think space as in some sense pre-given and formless. But how are we to think that pre-given and formless space? When we attempt to do so, do we not inevitably give it some structure? Think of Euclidean space and its three dimensions. Is all such thinking not an attempt to domesticate what resists domestication? The meaning of space remains elusive. I want to claim that every human attempt to master space leads us into an antinomy, places us between some finite structure and the infinite. That antinomy, I want to suggest, also haunts our dwelling as it haunts our building and our thinking as the tension between a desire for freedom and a desire to be firmly placed.

My introduction of the term "antinomy" calls for comment. When a philosopher thinks of antinomies he is likely to think first of all of the four antinomies Kant stated and discussed in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. And I, too, am thinking here of Kant's antinomies, especially of the first, which concerns the difficulty we face when we attempt to represent our universe as a cosmos, as a well-constructed, bounded whole, as a building in that sense. Kant shows that we are unable to understand this cosmos as finite and as having a beginning, as our astronomers and physicists would once again have us do, only to get entangled once more in some version of Kant's antinomy. But Kant also showed that we cannot understand it as infinite. The infinite transcends our comprehension. And yet we are in some fashion in touch with the infinite whenever we are open to some thing in its finally incomprehensible materiality. Not only infinite space, but every particular thing in its ineffable particularity, transcends whatever our reason is able to construct. As mystics such as Meister Eckhart or Angelus Silesius knew, an infinity is buried in every thing. I want to confront Heidegger's metaphor of language as the house of Being with a question: is Being really at home in that house? Architecture raises an analogous question: are buildings without windows and doors that allow access to a reality beyond not prisons? This suggests: openings such as windows and doors provide a key to successful architecture.

In using the word "antinomy" I was also thinking of Kant's third antinomy, which concerns freedom. Like nature, freedom, too, familiar as it is to all of us, eludes comprehension: we are thus unable to think what we seem to be so familiar with and call "freedom" as either free

from or as governed by the laws of nature. In the attempt to think freedom our reason once again suffers shipwreck on the reef of the infinite. No more than space and time will freedom be mastered conceptually. Once again reason is forced to recognize its limits. But are these limits not also limits that building must respect if it is not to do violence to the demands of freedom and thus of human dwelling?

Kant's four antinomies were supposed to prove the necessity of understanding every thing in two very different senses: as an appearance dependent on our human understanding and the architecture it imposes and as a thing in itself, transcending that architecture. The antinomies thus tear open a depth dimension passed over in our everyday dealings with things, open windows and doors in the architecture raised by our architectonic understanding. But why is the opening of such windows and doors, if it can even be understood as such, of existential import?

6

With this let me turn to the question: What does architecture have to contribute to philosophy? At first blush the answer would seem to have to be, despite philosophy's reliance on architectural metaphors: very little, at least given common ideas of what philosophy is. Most philosophers don't feel a need to concern themselves with architecture.

I do feel such a need. So let me approach the question "what does architecture have to contribute to philosophy?" in a more personal way by speaking briefly of the way art and architecture has been important to my work in philosophy.

My interest in both art and architecture is far older than my interest in philosophy. As a child I liked to draw, paint, and build. A self-conscious

interest in architecture goes back to my first encounter with a rather modest rococo church: when I was seven my mother moved with us children from Berlin, which the constant air raids had made rather unpleasant, to the Franconian Königshofen, some 25 kilometers northeast of Bamberg. On the outskirts is a little known, but quite lovely pilgrimage church in the village of Ipthausen, consecrated to the Birth of Mary (1746-54). The landscape, the town, but especially this church spoke to me of a way of life very different from what I had been used to. Today I would say that mine was not so much an aesthetic response, but an ethical response, ethical in that broad sense in which Heidegger attributes to the Greek temple an ethical function when he claims that presenting the world, it establishes the earth, with that difference that I knew even then that the world opened up by this church was one from which I was excluded, that much as I loved it, this was not my world. But it seemed to beckon me to a better world. Four years later a teacher in Munich's Maxgymnasium took me to the Benedictine monastery church of Andechs. The visit to that church, too, had a crucial importance. I pay tribute to that teacher in the preface to my book *The Bavarian Rococo Church* (1983) and placed an image of that church on its back cover.

The very fact that I felt a need to write such a book, which has now also appeared in a German version,[18] suggests a certain impatience with academic philosophy. I personally do not see a break between this book and my more obviously philosophical work, much of which has centered on Heidegger. It touches on many, perhaps all the themes that matter to me as a philosopher, but it does so in a way that pleases me more, that seems to me much more concrete, more likely to get readers to really understand what concerns me, to touch them, than my more purely philosophical essays. Let me mention just a few of these themes:

1. As opposed to those who, like the art historian Michael Fried, oppose authenticity to theatricality, I wanted to exhibit what I experienced as the profundity of an architecture that ever since the Enlightenment has often been dismissed as theatrical and superficial, as not really authentic. The artistic culture of the Rococo taught me to question the presupposed notion of authenticity and with it the Enlightenment faith in reason and to appreciate the profundity of superficiality, of interest in the visible, sensible world, for which Nietzsche praised the Greeks: "to stop courageously at the surface, the fold, the skin, to adore appearance, to believe in forms, tones, words, the whole Olympus of appearance. Those Greeks were superficial — *out of profundity.*"[19]

My book on the Bavarian Rococo Church is also a reflection on

the threshold that joins and separates the Rococo from the Enlightenment, and that is to say from modernity. There is thus a sense in which this book is also a reflection on our own spiritual culture, on its legitimacy and its limits, a topic that continues to concern me.

2. A reviewer called that book a preamble after the fact of my *The Meaning of Modern Art* (1968). In a sense he was right. That earlier book called for a step beyond modern art, and not just modern art, but beyond what that modern art presupposed. I spoke there of the need for a new realism. In philosophy, too, there seems to me a need for such a realism. That drew me to phenomenology.

3. With this call for a new realism I meant to challenge the hold of the aesthetic approach to art and architecture that has presided over both theory and practice. As I show in *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, that approach invites an understanding of works of architecture as decorated sheds in the broadest sense, as functional buildings to which an aesthetic component has been added. But as I have suggested in this lecture: What distinguishes architecture from building is not adequately understood as the addition of an aesthetic component. That calls for further reflection on the requirements of dwelling, and more especially,

on what these requirements are in today's world, marked by the digital revolution and the threatening environmental crisis.

4. But inadequate as it is to the requirements of dwelling, the decorated shed nevertheless presents itself as a potent figure for the spiritual situation of this age, which tends to cover up the spiritual poverty that is the price of our objectification of reality, with an often borrowed aesthetic veneer. In that sense, to call ours the age of the decorated shed is to offer more than just an illuminating caricature.

5. As Heidegger points out, building serves dwelling, as it is born of dwelling. To understand the essence of architecture we have to enter that circle. But we cannot enter it successfully as long as we remain on the level of abstract speculation and mere words. Our words must have their ground in concrete experiences. We have to return to the things themselves, and that means here first of all to buildings. But the point should be generalized.

7

Let me conclude with the question: What does philosophy have to contribute to architecture? It is not the philosopher's task to tell architects what to do. But perhaps philosophy can help make architecture more responsible by questioning certain assumptions that stand in the way of such responsibility.

Wittgenstein claimed that philosophical problems have the form,

"I do not know my way about."[20] Of course, not all problems having this form are therefore already philosophical. To lose one's way in a strange city is not sufficient to make one a philosopher. Nor is failure to understand a new piece of equipment. Say my computer misbehaves and I don't know what to do; I don't know my way about. Such a loss of way does not present us with a philosophical problem. But why not? I would suggest that it fails to do so because in such cases our disorientation is only superficial. Thus in the first case I might study a map; in the second I might ask an expert for help. The problem here poses itself against a background of established and accepted ways of doing things to which we can turn to help us decide what is to be done. Genuinely philosophical problems have no such background. They are born of a more profound uncertainty. Philosophical reflection flourishes thus where traditions disintegrate and as a result human beings are forced to question the place assigned them by

nature, society, and history, and searching for firmer ground demand that this place be more securely established. In that sense all genuine philosophy is at bottom ethical reflection. That also holds for the philosophical reflection on architecture.

If this is accepted, philosophy comes to an end either when it believes to have gained firm ground and to have laid a secure foundation or when it despairs of responsibly addressing the questions that haunt it. There is thus a sense in which science and skepticism may be said to bound philosophy. Today science presents philosophy with a challenge that resembles the challenge that in the 19th century photography presented to representational painting.

But science itself presents itself today to us as anything but unquestionable. There is a sense in which everyone of us, I suspect, stands in an ambiguous relationship to science and its offspring, technology. On one hand we have to affirm science. Technological advances have shaped our life-world in ways that we have to affirm. On the other hand, science cannot know anything of persons or values. This is why the social sciences stand inevitably uneasily between science and what we can call folk wisdom or perhaps philosophy. A compelling account of both the legitimacy and the limits of scientific understanding and that means also of technological thinking seems to me one of the main requirements facing philosophy today. Architectural theory and practice, too, seem to me to be in need of such an account.

But such an account must be guided by some understanding of where we should be going, where today such an account must be informed by the digital revolution which cannot but shape our understanding of space and even more importantly it must be informed by the growing environmental crisis. Does philosophy offer much help here? I continue to be surprised, given all we know, that

not more is being done and I am afraid reason has not proven itself very effective in bringing about needed changes. Needed is a change of heart. But how do hearts change? Traditionally such change has been brought about not so much by philosophers, as by prophets and poets, artists, and also by architects. In his discussion of the Greek temple Heidegger recognizes thus something of the mythopoeic function of architecture.

Plato's *Republic* gives expression to the claim of the philosopher to be in a privileged position to tell human beings what their place should be. The ethical function that art and religion once possessed, comes to be claimed by reason. Unfortunately reason has proved unequal to the assumed task. We live today in the ruins of the inherited value system. To support this claim I could point to the history of the past two centuries. I could also show that, notwithstanding the efforts of philosophers from Plato to Kant and indeed right down to the present, unprejudiced pure reason has shown itself inadequate to this task. Such change requires the aid of those able to touch us more immediately. The need for architecture's ethical function remains. What kind of architecture? Temple and cathedral lie behind us. Not only has the kind of communal dwelling their building presupposed and reaffirmed been lost, but few of us would wish it to return, for it is incompatible with one of our own ruling myths: the myth of the value of personal freedom. That myth has freed art, too, from its former servitude to religion and state. But if art has thus gained a new freedom, the price of this privatization of art has been its peripheral placement in a world ruled increasingly by economic imperatives. Art and architecture have lost much of their former ethical significance.

What then is the role of philosophy? A healthy society needs places where it tests what has come to be established and taken for granted. There has to be an openness to the future. One task of philosophy is to open windows in the edifice raised by the ruling common sense. I also have a contrary sympathy. The conservatives, too, are needed in a healthy society, those who insist on the preservation of the inherited. There is inevitable tension between voices pointing in different directions, one forward — challenging, testing — the other backward — wanting to preserve. Neither should be so immediately associated with political power that it can translate its views into political reality without being mediated by an ongoing conversation. In this conversation, and more especially in the architectural conversation, the philosopher's words should be like yeast. Perhaps in this way they can contribute in some way towards bringing about that change of heart that just today is so desperately needed.

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Morgenröthe*, 169; *Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich, Berlin, and New York: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag and de Gruyter, 1980), vol. 3, 152.

[2] Mark Lilla, "Pseuds' Skyscraper," *London Review of Books*, 5 June 1997, 33.

[3] Robert Jan van Pelt, "Apocalyptic Abjection," in Robert Jan van Pelt and Carroll Willliam Westfall, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 328-329.

[4] See Karsten Harries, "Review: Robert Jan van Pelt and Carroll William Westfall, Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism," *American Historical Review,* December 1992, 1490.

[5] Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press,1993).

[6] Adolf Loos, "Architecture," cited in Joseph Rykwert, *On Adam's House in Paradise. The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1972), 27.

[7] José Ortega y Gasset, "Der Mythus des Menschen hinter der Technik" in Otto Bartning, ed.: *Mensch und Raum. 2. Darmstädter Gespräch 1951* (Darmstadt: Neue Darmstädter Verlags-Anstalt. 1952) 117. Translation by K. Harries.

[8] Ibid., 117.

[9] William Gass, "House VI," *Progressive Architecture*, 58, June 1977, p. 64.

[10] Vitruvius, *The Ten Books of Architecture*, trans. Morris Hickey Morgan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926), 38.

[11] Ibid., 40.

[12] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet, ed. and intro. Michael Inwood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 90-91.

[13] Le Corbusier, T*owards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Praeger, 1960), 65-66.

[14] Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 146-147. See also the original version: Martin Heidegger, "Bauen Wohnen Denken" in Otto Bartning (ed.): *Mensch und Raum. 2. Darmstädter Gespräch 1951*. (Darmstadt: Neue Darmstädter Verlags-Anstalt 1952) 72–84.

[15] Ibid., 147.

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[16] With his antinomies, to be sure, Kant showed that this striving can never be satisfied. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 474/B 502. See Paula Manchester, "Kant's Conception of Architectonic in Its Philosophical Context," *Kant Studien.* Volume 99, Issue 2, June, 2008 133–151.

[17] André Leroi -Gourhan, *Le geste et la parole* (Paris 1964), vol. 2., 139-140, as quoted in Joseph Rykwert, *On Adams's House in Paradise* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1972), 21

[18] Karsten Harries, *Die Bayerische Rokokokirche. Das Irrationale und das Sakrale* (Dorfen: Hawel Verlag, 2009),

[19] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science. With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs.* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 2001).

[20] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1959) par. 123.

AESTHETIC EDUCATION AND DESIGN

ROGER SCRUTON

In his celebrated letters on the *Aesthetic Education of Mankind*, Schiller argued that to achieve the sense of order and civic virtue our best recourse in the modern world is aesthetic education. Kant had marked out a central place for aesthetic pleasure in the life of the rational being, arguing that the judgment of beauty is both disinterested and universal in its scope. In aesthetic judgment, Kant wrote, we are 'suitors for agreement', and it is a small step from that idea to Schiller's view that the pursuit of beauty is a shared enterprise, with civic virtue as its goal. In aesthetic judgment we view our surroundings as ends in themselves, abstracting from the demands of utility and function. Hence aesthetic interest looks for permanent values, rather than transitory functions. It is the one sure guide to getting things right, not just for the here and now of our current interests, but permanently, and for the community as a whole. My aim in this paper is to outline a form of architectural education in which pattern, composition, and the idea of fit are given a proper place, and in which function and utility are regarded as the consequences of beauty and not prior requirements that must be independently fulfilled.

Schiller believed that education and high culture would release what is best in us, and bring about civic virtue without any particular person taking charge of the process. Subsequent history has dented any confidence that we might have had in such a vision. Indeed, the experience of the 20th century suggests that the greatest changes come about as a result of particular people and their

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influence, and that the most influential people–the ones who have done most to create the world in which we now live–have been mad.

This is certainly true in the realm of politics, which was irreversibly changed by Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mao Ze Dong, and a host of lesser lunatics. The interesting thing about those madmen is their astonishing ability to recruit a following, to march into the future like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, with an ever-growing crocodile of mesmerised imbeciles following them to destruction. The madness exemplified by the 'great leaders' exhibits their shared desire for a total solution, a transition to a new state in which everything has been solved and nothing is left for discussion. But this total solution is the answer to no coherent problem. Of course you can invent a problem: the Jews, the bourgeoisie, the 'enemy within' or (in the case of ISIS today) the apostate or the infidel. But it is clear to the most casual outside observer that the problem is dictated by the solution, and not the other way round. It is the desire for the total reorganisation of everything, the total destruction of all obstacles and the total transfer of power to me, the Leader, that requires the invention of a problem that can be solved in no other way. For this reason the most frequent tale told by modern politics is the tale of an enemy within, whose destruction will open the way to a new order of being. It was thus that the 'bourgeoisie' was invented, to play such a remarkable role in the theories of Marx, Sartre, Foucault and the Frankfurt school.

This feature of modern politics is replicated by modern architecture. Here too the most influential people have been mad, expressing their desire for total control in manifestoes and projects that involve destroying whole settlements and cities. Like the pioneers of totalitarian politics, Corbusier, Gropius, Lubetkin and their kind wanted a total solution, and they hunted the world for the problem that would justify their aim.

Thus Le Corbusier's total solution for the problem of Paris north of the Seine involved wiping away the great city of stone and replacing it with an array of concrete towers rimmed by grass verges. As comprehensive a solution as could be imagined. But what was the problem? Le Corbusier made a few fashionable noises about health, and the conditions of the working class. However, they were improvised around the solution, rather than discovered from the facts. The Council of Paris put a stop to this nonsense, causing Le Corbusier to turn his attention to the far more vulnerable city of Algiers, where his plans to wipe this excrescence from the map were stopped only by the collapse of the Vichy government, which he had persuaded to adopt him as its architectural advisor.

Unfortunately the City Council of Paris has no power to match that of a President, and when President Pompidou, whose wife prided herself on her advanced aesthetic taste, wished to create a monument to himself, a small-scale version of Le Corbusier's vandalism was carried out, resulting in the clearance of beautiful residential streets in the lovely Lutetian limestone, and their replacement by a vast fun palace of scaffolding in playground colours, designed by Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano. This, the Centre Beaubourg, is perhaps the greatest eyesore in Europe, if only because it is conceived entirely as an insult to its surroundings. It is expressly designed not to fit in, and this has been the pattern followed by Richard Rogers in all subsequent buildings: to create something that stands out from the urban fabric, as though dropped from another planet. But 'fitting in' is the primary goal of aesthetic judgment, and it is why Schiller connected aesthetic education to his ideal of civic order.

I will return to that point, since it seems to me that the art of fitting things together–both internally, within the work you are composing, and externally, within the fabric of a human settlement–is of the essence of aesthetic education in all its forms. And it points us in a certain direction–towards a kind of grammar, repeatability, and the relation of part to part. Before exploring that suggestion, however, I want to dwell for a moment on the question of madness.

We should make a distinction, I believe, between those conditions, like schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder, which stem from a dysfunction of the central nervous system, and those conditions in which perception, cognition and affective states are all normal and functional, but devoted entirely to some goal that cannot be moderated or renounced, and which is immune to rational argument–by which I mean argument that weighs with all of

us. It is this second condition that I have in mind, when describing the madness of Stalin, Mao or Le Corbusier: a kind of inability to give weight to any consideration that does not originate in the over-mastering Idea. The mad person is the one in the grip of a vision, who cannot recognize the legitimacy of opposition or adapt his projects to the needs of others. He recognizes no boundaries, and regards reality as a plastic material to be shaped according to his aims. His thought is uni-directional, and he cries ever 'Forward!' in the face of obstacles.

Aesthetic education, as I see it, is one part of the broader practice of humane education–the kind of education that transmits knowledge of the human world. Its purpose is to teach students how to renounce their obsessions, and to learn the ways of sympathy and compromise. It fosters cooperation with one's kind. Its goal is to transmit a culture that embodies shared conceptions of life and discovered solutions to life's problems, including the principal problem, which is how to live at peace with one's neighbours and competitors, even when you dislike them. Art, music and literature are all part of this culture, embodying pictures, stories and dramas that raise the human condition to a dignity that sets an example in our daily lives. To transmit such a culture involves teaching students to exercise taste, to compare and contrast, to distinguish refined from crude perceptions, and in general to understand the distinction between products that accommodate our shared humanity and products that are to be understood merely as whimsy or self-centred display. The goal is to enhance our dignity, our sympathy and our understanding for our kind. However difficult it might be to express this goal in words, it is straightforwardly manifested in the art, literature and music that we have inherited, and apparent to everyone who has learned how to enjoy those things. And it is manifest too in our everyday judgments about our surroundings and about the behaviour, manners and appearance of our fellows.

In everything human we distinguish the harmonious from the dissonant, the thing that fits from the thing that jars. And even if there is a place for the dissonant and the jarring in the scheme of things, we know that they make sense for us only because of the context in which they are resolved. Aesthetic education teaches us how to avoid or resolve them, as we teach children to avoid garish colours, rude language and slovenly gestures.

Any philosophical account of aesthetic judgment must explore its roots in the moral life, and in those aspects of the human condition that lead us to search not only for shared rules of behaviour, but for a shared

canon of taste. Errors of taste and self-advertising defiance of aesthetic norms can be just as offensive as rudeness or public belligerence, and we strive to avoid them not simply for our own pleasure's sake, but for the sake of the community. If this is evident in no other sphere, it is surely evident in the sphere of architecture. From Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* onwards the question of how our buildings and our cities should look has been treated as a moral question, and one on which much more depends than we are in the habit of supposing. Writers have been conscious that faulty aesthetic choices lead to destroyed communities, and this is often announced in the very titles of their books–for example Jane Jacobs's The *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), and Alexander Mitscherlich's *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte: Anstiftung zum Unfrieden* (1965). Both those writers saw themselves as fighting a war on behalf of common sense against madness–no longer, perhaps, the madness of a single person, like the madness of Gropius and Le Corbusier, but a madness that had become programmed into the planning system, dictating outcomes that would leave no room for negotiation. And if you look at the situation against which Jacobs and Mitscherlich were both in rebellion, you will see that it is one from which humane education–the only known antidote to madness of this kind–had been abolished.

A kind of depersonalised madness had possessed the schools of architecture and town planning in the wake of the Second World War, with Le Corbusier and Gropius constantly invoked as heroes, and the curriculum purified of all reference to aesthetic values other than those that emphasize originality, innovation, progress and the conquest of space. The ground plan was conceived in purely geometrical terms, as was the city plan of which it was a part. The total conception took precedence over the individual building, and each

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element was defined by its function. The city itself was disaggregated into zones, with living, shopping, studying and manufacturing each confined to its own separate area, and the resulting blocks of mono-functional buildings assembled side-by-side and without a heart. The result can be seen in new towns like Milton Keynes, in derelict American cities like Detroit, and in the post-war reconstruction of Germany. I think it is right, when witnessing these things, to speak of madness. For here were massive enterprises, producing unwanted and threatening products, but entirely unable to adapt to the desires and opinions of those destined to make use of them.

Consult the textbooks of architecture and town-planning then employed and you will see this immediately–for example in Siegfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941), in Pevsner's *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (1936), and the madness has been replicated in the many recent manuals devoted to curtain wall construction. (Take a look at the current textbooks: for example Keith Boswell's *Exterior Building Enclosures: Design Process and Composition for Innovative Facades,* or Alija Aksamija's *Sustainable Facades: Design Methods for High Performance Building Envelopes.*) Here once again are the total solutions without the problems, the comprehensive plans without the human beings who are supposed to require them. And for the most part the education advanced by the schools of architecture and planning either avoids discussion of aesthetic values, or subdues them with the all-justifying ideas of progress and innovation. The fact that the 'sustainable facades' and 'exterior building enclosures' are to be inserted into the fabric of a living city, in which the aesthetic of the street, the house and the façade has been followed for centuries, is not mentioned. For the madman the 'total solution' involves the destruction of all that is.

In the face of such madness it seems to me that our first duty is to reaffirm the fundamental principles of the moral life. These principles, I maintain, include the following three: that the other is more important than the self, that conflicts are to be resolved by negotiation, and that opposition must be treated with humility. Those principles are of universal application, since they make it possible for people to live at peace, regardless of their individual differences. Their relevance to architecture and planning can be seen at once, when we compare the traditional street with the modern housing estate. The high-rise estate, largely the invention of Gropius, came to dominate housing projects between the wars and subsequently, since it was a perfect expression of the comprehensive plan. It involved tearing down the streets over a large area, making way for large structures standing in open spaces, which could be designed geometrically

as ground-plans, and then raised up to the height desired by isometric drawings. No need to worry about fitting part to part, of finding the appropriate window surrounds and doorways, about creating an acceptable façade on a public street: all traditional aesthetic constraints had been abolished. There were to be no more streets, and windows would be distant apertures, many of them hundreds of feet in the air, which had no special relation to the observer outside the building, and with no special relation to the lines and forms of the doors below.

Furthermore, the high-rise estate was the expression in architecture of a new kind of politics– the politics of total control, in which large projects, initiated by the state and its favoured experts, were imposed on the rest of us without seeking our consent. Of course this was the outlook that gave such scope to madmen in politics too–and the near impossibility of mounting effective resistance was the same in both cases. History favoured the new, progressive and total solutions, over the random chaos of the old. So we were taught, and so it was believed.

In the end, of course, madmen lose their following, and this is beginning to be true in architecture too. The real question that we confront today is that of restoration: how to return to the genial traditions that endowed our cities with their hearts, and which made them into durable settlements where generations have been at home. Sometimes this has been achieved with the help of a comprehensive plan, as at Bath. But on the whole the fabric of a city, even if it adapts to a plan, has another source than planning. It is the result of cooperation over many years, between people whose goals may not be shared, but who recognize the boundary between public and private space.

The most important feature of the Gropius housing estate, one that is copied by all the modernist schemes from Corbusier to Koolhaas,

is the dissolution of the boundary. The street disappears, as does the façade that presses against it. Walls cease to be private faces onto a public realm, and become featureless curtains between undefined areas, hung on invisible frames. Buildings grow upwards indefinitely, with no boundary between the building and the sky. (For that is how we should think of the sky-line, the most precious and vulnerable of the city's many edges.) Doors and windows are no longer ceremonial thresholds, but simply functional apertures, cleaned of their liminal character. And around every building is a blank space, a no-man's land of discarded rubbish and stunted vegetation, from which the towers rise sheer and formless as though washed up by some primordial flood.

Among the factors lending themselves to this result–as Mitscherlich points out–are the forms of social ownership instituted by the German cities. But even where private property is supposedly sacrosanct, as in America and Britain, governments have made use of Eminent Domain (America) or 'compulsory purchase' (Britain) in order to embark on the large scale clearances that the housing estates require. Hand in hand with this kind of presumption has been the revised image of building, the image forced on us by Le Corbusier in *Vers une architecture*, and gleefully endorsed by Libeskind, Foster and Piano today. For such practitioners the architect has no need of aesthetic education since his comprehensive plan issues from an integral artistic idea. He is inspired and led by the same 'genius' that guides the poet, the composer and the painter. Thus is perpetuated the illusion of architecture as a 'fine art' rescued by the demands of genius from the obligations of daily life.

If we are to understand the role of aesthetic education we must recognize, however, that most buildings are the work of ordinary people who strive to accommodate what they do both to the purpose in hand and to the desires and tastes of their neighbours. Genius has no part to play in their decisions, and nothing is more disruptive than the illusion that they possess it. Many of the most agreeable parts of our cities, their centres in particular, depend on an urban fabric knitted from humble and unpretentious façades that show the mark of style only here and there and often in their pre-fabricated parts, such as doors and window frames. The ordinary vernacular street may have little to recommend it to those, like Libeskind and Koolhaas, who prefer to violate its outline rather than to conform to it, but there is no denying that the traditional street illustrates the first principle of aesthetic education, which is the principle of fittingness. The houses in a street must fit side by side along its edge, and in doing so define the boundary between the public and the

private. They may be of different heights, and using different materials and different pattern-books. But if each façade is internally coherent, and shares the overall posture of other houses in the street, then each house might fit to its neighbour, and play its own particular part in creating the shared boundary which is the edge of the public realm.

Two observations should be made concerning the relation of fit. The builder who is fitting a house into a street is not looking for the form that fits a particular function. He is fitting a form into its context, regardless of the function. His reasoning is not 'instrumental' reasoning, but an assessment of how things look. Ever since Louis Sullivan's well known adage that 'form follows function' architects have felt free to allow the use of a building to dictate its appearance, to build as though there were no aesthetic constraints, and that their task was simply to find the forms best suited to the end in view. Hence the emergence of the windowless warehouse as an architectural type. However, no ordinary builder, and certainly no person building or arranging something as part of his own habitat, thinks in that way. The aim is always to make things fit together as they should, with the function conceived as a result and not as a premise of the exercise.

In fact there are good utilitarian reasons for not thinking in a utilitarian way. A building that is construed purely as the means to a present purpose will not survive the extinction of that purpose: it will be an un-adaptable feature of the environment, destined for demolition as soon as its function expires. From such buildings no permanent townscape can be constructed, and their ugliness is a vivid symbol of their impracticality, of the fact that there is nothing to be done with them once their present function has gone. This is the principal cause of the dereliction of city centres – namely that they are not centres, but merely the casing

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around activities that have ceased. Detroit is an eloquent illustration of this. Much of the city of London is moving in the same direction, and you see, now, a vivid contrast between the functional blocks already marked out for destruction, and the noble buildings constructed according to aesthetic principles which have survived the loss of their original use–like the Royal Exchange building, now a meeting place and restaurant.

This utilitarian argument against utilitarian thinking goes to the heart of our topic, and tells us something about why aesthetic education matters. In a world dominated by instrumental thinking many people imagine that they have made advances in rationality, that they are no longer hampered by irrelevant goals which have no purpose but themselves, that the life of frills and ornaments has at last been left behind. But it is such people who are irrational, since they are denying the kind of reasoning that would enable them to envision the fruition of their projects.

Let me take a simple illustration of this: the electricity transformer station. When transformer stations were first introduced the instinct of our ancestors was to find an architectural casing for them that would fit in to the surroundings, whether urban or rural. This was not a denial of the great benefits brought to us by electricity, but a way of humanizing those benefits, of making them part of a life lived for its own sake and not just for the sake of consumption. Nowadays, under the impact of the instrumentalised worldview, transformer stations are left exposed, hostile, surrounded by barbed wire, outposts of the gulag, whose only meaning is their function. At the heart of Islington, London, stands one of the original transformer stations, built in 1905 and modelled on George Dance's design for Newgate Prison, which had just been demolished. Now, after several changes of use, it is a popular arcade of shops and restaurants. Here is a building designed for a use, but designed also as an end in itself, and therefore as something that can form the hub of social sentiments in the place where it stands. As a result it has survived the loss of its original use, and been incorporated into the enduring fabric of the city.

I don't say that the Islington Transformer Station is a masterpiece: on the contrary, its not being a masterpiece is one reason why it is so much liked. This is not a building designed to stand out, but one designed to fit in. No genius took charge of creating it, or conceived it as the expression of his individual soul. It is the work of the London County Council's design department, which at the time was composed of unassuming people who had received an aesthetic education of a broadly classical kind, based in drawing, proportion and the Orders–people who took delight in

the appearance of buildings, and in the way that buildings are composed from matching parts. And it has lasted, because it is more valuable than its original function.

One very obvious feature of the Islington transformer station is that it has firm boundaries – indeed, it consists of boundaries, carefully modulated and composed boundaries which define both the public space outside them and the reserved space within. The modern transformer station does not have

FIGURE 1: ISLINGTON TRANSFORMER STATION

boundaries in that sense–certainly not boundaries in which the transition from public to private is articulated or given ceremonial presence. It is surrounded by wire fences whose only message is 'keep out'–not 'look at me' or 'here I am' or 'come stand in my shadow' but 'go away!'

Reflecting on boundaries, I believe, is a very good way of grasping the significance of aesthetic education generally. In every sphere we depend upon boundaries. We are protected from domination by our rights, which in a civilised society create a sphere of sovereignty around every individual member. We are protected from prurient curiosity by our clothes, which we also use in order to signal the various degrees of approachability that seem appropriate. We are walled round by manners and conventions that bring safety and certainty in the otherwise intimidating life among strangers. Some of our boundaries are permeable and expressly designed to offer a welcome, when the welcome has

been earned: so it is with manners and courtesies. Other boundaries are firm rebuttals, such as those created by the law. These distinctions have their counterpart in the language of architecture. Walls can be forbidding, inviting, permeable or semi-permeable. Doorways may be ceremonious or perfunctory. Exteriors can be accommodating or severe. And the language here is integral to the way in which a building fits to its neighbours. In this way the art of the boundary, through which we learn to accommodate our desires and places to those of our neighbours, is replicated in the sphere of architecture, and illustrates the way in which aesthetic education and moral education are rooted in the same human need–the need to live in harmony with others, and to reconcile individual ambition with a shared sense of home.

Creating and managing boundaries is one part of it. Just as important is the art of fitting one thing to another so that it looks right. 'Looking right' does not mean 'looking right to me': in this judgment, as Kant made clear, we open ourselves to criticism. We are 'suitors for agreement', aware that what we do is of interest to others, and that we are creating something that is shared–whether or not with any specific person. Grasping this point has always seemed to me to be the most crucial step in understanding the place of the aesthetic in human life. It is a point that Wittgenstein, in his own idiom, makes central to his all-too-brief lectures on aesthetics, and it is a point that can be illustrated in a way of which Wittgenstein would surely have approved, by studying the 'natural expression' of aesthetic choice in the faces and gestures of children. Ask children to lay a table or to arrange a room, and at once they begin to attend to the way things look, and to the meaning of the way things look–the meaning for others. Is it right to put the napkin on the plate or should it be by the side of it? The emphasis on 'getting it right', rather than beauty, is easily understood from examples of this kind. So too is the connection between getting it right and fitting in.

The ability to match things to each other is hard to reduce to any more primitive capacity, but it seems to be fundamental to what we are, and to our ways of negotiating our way through social and visual complexities. And it has two aspects. We match one thing to another of the same broad category–for example knife to fork in a given pattern, or a certain style of porcelain to a certain kind of napkin. But we also match objects to moods, life-styles, ways of being and feeling, and in this way make the most far-reaching connections between aesthetic judgment and the moral life.

The 'matching' process can be educated. When a choice is exposed to judgment, the search for reasons begins. We can ask the child why she

put the spoon to the right of the bowl, and she might well have an answer: because that is what is done, because it looks right, because then you have a nice straight line and a circle. We can teach her to make comparisons–which style of spoon looks best, for example, and why. Inevitably the 'why?' question, even if it peters out in the declaration that there is nothing further to be said, commits us to comparative judgments, to finding meaning and emotion in the objects that we choose, and to developing a repertoire of forms that go easily and unquestionably together. Style is precipitated out from judgment, since it is what gives purchase to a reasoned answer to the question 'why this, given that?'

Style is not the same as syntax, and if we refer to the classical style in architecture we are not, literally, referring to a grammar,–that is, a system of rules for generating complex meanings from meaningful parts. All kinds of misleading analogies arise at this point, and the analogy with language is perhaps the most dangerous of them, since it seems to imply that the rules of style are arbitrary in the way that the grammatical rules of a language are arbitrary. Although styles are many and varied, they are rooted in features of the human condition that influence how we perceive and respond to shape, colour, form and mass. No stylistic convention can make a vast featureless hulk like the new Linked-In building in San Francisco look anything but oppressive and at odds with its surroundings. No stylistic convention can endow one of Libeskind's knife-like assaults on a traditional building with a humane meaning when we are ineluctably led to see the result as a species of architectural murder.

This does not mean that the idea of grammar, used as a metaphorical summary of something that we expect a building to exhibit, is entirely inappropriate. On the contrary. It reminds us of the fact that order and harmony, here as elsewhere

"NO STYLISTIC CONVENTION CAN ENDOW ONE OF LIBESKIND'S KNIFE-LIKE ASSAULTS ON A TRADITIONAL BUILDING WITH A HUMANE MEANING"

in our lives, come about through composition. It is because significant parts are matched to significant parts that we sense the emergence of order in architecture, and forms that elide all parts into a single molten flow as in so much post-modernist 'gadget' architecture offend against a primary need. The case is comparable to that of music, which has evolved as an art-form largely through quasi-syntactical conventions, governing key relations, voice-leading and harmonic progressions, and in which we have acquired the pronounced feeling for the 'wrong note' and the 'wrong chord'. If you compose while ignoring those conventions then you risk producing music in which nothing sounds wrong, because nothing sounds right.

The features of aesthetic education that I am trying to bring to mind are well illustrated by the Classical Orders, and especially by those aspects of the Orders that have rubbed off on vernacular architecture down the centuries. We should see the Orders as summaries of a long process of matching, through which the post and beam structure–the prima materia of functional building–has been embellished and humanised. The textbooks, from Vitruvius through the Renaissance manuals to Chambers, provide rules of proportion and detail, which have all the appearance of a grammar: if you do this, you must do that, and so on. But as with treatises of tonal harmony, the imperative mood is misleading. The real speech-act is not prescriptive but descriptive: these manuals tell us what has been done, with a vague exhortation to respect it.

The study of the Orders was a training in the matching of parts, and in understanding what constitutes a part rather than a chunk or a section. They taught proportion, by teaching the student how to perceive it. Proportion is not a purely geometrical idea. It arises from the relation between measures, and measures exist only where there are parts that begin and end, and the edges that close them. Hence proportion is perceivable only where there are boundaries, divisions, and significant details. A building like the Linked-In Building that I referred to earlier can never be seen as proportionate or harmonious, since it has no details. Nothing on the visible surface of this building, is 'between' one place and another. No line has closure, no surface detail stands out and nothing begins, ends or moves to a conclusion.

In the Tuscan Doric Order the column is wrapped by an astragal just below the capital: a semi-circular moulding which has the effect of tempering the upward thrust of the column, and also introducing a kind of ambiguity as to whether the section of column above the astragal is part of the capital or part of the column. This ambiguity endows the vertical

with a kind of elasticity, as though it were actively changing places with itself in its determination to push from below. Just focusing for a while on this moulding is an education in itself: it illustrates the point that proportion needs measure and measure needs the edge; it exemplifies the idea of a meaningful part, and also shows the way in which such a part is not stuck on like the metopes in the

frieze but grows from within the structure–it is an efflorescence of the stone. And it illustrates the way in which lines, edges, and boundaries in architecture are not made of hard materials, but of light and shade. A boundary is perceivable only if it casts a shadow, and there is shadow only where there is light. The study of the Orders was a study of the fall of light on a work of stone, and of the ways in which the life of the stone could be coaxed into the

FIGURE 2: LINKEDIN BUILDING

surface. Students of the Beaux-Arts school would be required to draw the shadows on a Corinthian Capital, as these were cast during the divisions of the day. This education is reflected in all successful forms of architecture, from the ordinary use of beading in window and door surrounds, to the supreme refinements of the Gothic mouldings, as lovingly set out in F.A. Paley's *Manual of Gothic*

Mouldings, 1841.

Among the many radical changes that divide modern from traditional architecture two in particular should be noted: the replacement of the vertical by the horizontal as the axis of emphasis, and the disappearance of mouldings. Traditional buildings were arranged in a vertical axis, and this is exactly what the Orders were used to teach–a vertical section that could be repeated again and again so as to create an upward vector uniting the whole façade. And the edges were folded over, wrapped around shadows and emphasized with parallels, so that vectors came steadily to closure rather than ceasing abruptly. Those two features shape the background expectations of building not only according to the Orders but in almost all traditional styles. Their loss is associated with the rise of the ground plan and isometric drawing, both made possible by curtain wall structures, steel frames and the replacement of the arch and the beam by continuous girders of steel or reinforced concrete. These innovations in engineering, however, were accompanied by no comparable developments in aesthetic education, so that architects entered a realm of aesthetic ignorance, exemplified by the Linked-In Building discussed above. For a while, it is true, the ordinary architect attempted to pin the vertical order and moulded edges to the façade of a steel frame buildings–as in the wonderful street assemblages of downtown Manhattan. Even Louis Sullivan worked in that way. But then came Mies van der Rohe, the multi-storey tower block in glass and alloy, and the final abolition of light, shade and significant detail. Many praised the result as the sign of a new aesthetic; but ordinary opinion has never been at ease with it, for all the reasons that are implied in my present discussion.

The kind of aesthetic education that I have been associating with the Orders is the property of all who seek to build for others. It is not addressed to the genius, still less to the madman. It is addressed to those humble civil servants who designed the Islington transformer station, to the builders of our pattern-book towns, and to those who produced the pattern books. But here we come up against a great difficulty, which is that contained in the concept of genius. The genius is to a great extent a creation of the Romantic Movement, which presented us with a new idea of the aesthetic endeavour. For Kant and Schopenhauer genius defined the distinctive condition of the artist, who was not conceived as a diligent craftsman whose endeavour is to find a place for his art in the existing culture. He was the one with a unique capacity to transcend the rules and conventions that govern lesser mortals, and to put before them his inner life in all its shining and redemptive perfection. He was the one

with the beautiful soul, to use Hegel's language: the soul distinguished by its sublime and unclassifiable apartness.

Appealing though that idea might be, when considering the great works of poetry, painting and music, it fits ill with the so-called 'useful' arts of architecture, clothing and decoration. There are two reasons for this. Frist, by the very fact that it is useful, architecture involves pursuing a non-aesthetic aim. Even if it is true, as I have argued, that the aim will expire before the building, so that we must make a building that is adaptable to the changes in human interest, and even if it is true that prioritising aesthetic values is the only reliable way to do this, nevertheless the surrender to a purely aesthetic approach, in which nothing matters save the expressive nature of the design, is a kind of denial of architecture.

But there is a second and more important reason for disallowing the Romantic idea of genius, which is that works of architecture are public, observable to, and imposed upon, all who move in their vicinity. You can escape from the poetic genius by not opening his book, and from the musical genius by keeping clear of concert halls. But you cannot escape from the architectural genius. Our cities are being everywhere littered with gadgets whose aggressive refusal to fit in is amplified by their un-composed character, so that they do not fit in even with themselves. Yet, we are assured, they are works of genius, innovative gestures that challenge our expectations, forge new paths into the future, break free from the stultifying constraints of etc. etc.

It is precisely the public nature of architecture that demands aesthetic education. And the goal of that education is not to open the way to the genius, but to civilize the manners of the ordinary builder, who is no more likely to be a genius than Rem Koolhaas, even if somewhat less likely to behave

> "IT IS PRECISELY THE PUBLIC NATURE OF ARCHITECTURE THAT DEMANDS AESTHETIC EDUCATION"

as one. This is not to say that there is not such a thing as architectural genius. But it is manifest most of all in the inspiration that finds new ways of fitting things together, and producing adaptable solutions to aesthetic problems. In this connection it is surely right to commend the genius of Vignola, Palladio, Borromini and more recently Lutyens, whose war memorials showed how to make plain stone arches stand to mournful attention above the dead. And the inspiration of those modest architects can be felt even in the most modern forms, such as Aldo Rossi's City Hall at Borgoricco, which as it were reaches back to the Palladian serenity, while eschewing the classical grammar.

I have outlined the way in which aesthetic education plays a part in architecture, teaching ordinary builders how to fit part to part and building to building. This process of fitting is what we mean, or ought to mean, by settlement. All durable cities bear witness to this–not just long-standing cities like Siena and Florence, but modern cities too. New York has the air of a durable settlement in part because the iron frame vernacular, with its street-friendly facades, and the early sky-scrapers which hovered above genial doorways on the street, created an adaptable city, one in which buildings have been preserved because their aesthetic qualities make them more valuable than their initial purposes. Compare Detroit, Tampa or Buffalo, in which aesthetic indifference, combined with gargantuan schemes executed by people without aesthetic education, have created 'built deserts', at vast expense, financially, aesthetically and ecologically. It is surely reasonable, in the wake of recent experience, to hope for a new kind of architectural education, which is not simply a matter of teaching how to hang panels onto frames, or to transfer computer-designed doodles onto the townscape, but which begins from inculcating an understanding of the true raw materials of architecture, which are light and shade.

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