IMAGINACIJA, ČUTNOST IN UMETNOST
IMAGINATION, SENSUALITY, ART
L'IMAGINATION, LA SENSUALITÉ, L'ART

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INTERPRETING NIETZSCHE:
MYTH AND SENSUALITY IN NEOCLASSICAL
ARCHITECTURE. THE GREEK CASE

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1. Introduction
This paper attempts an approach to Neoclassical architecture through the scope of Michel Foucault’s genealogy of history. Interpreting Nietzsche, Foucault proposes a genealogy of history fundamentally opposed to any attempt for a metaphysical foundation of man and the human knowledge.

With Nietzsche, the metaphysical basis upon which the totality of Western civilization has been built, is put under quest. The shaking of the ground is based on the assumption that knowledge derives from the instincts, without being one of them. Knowledge is acquired and not inherent in human nature. Existence can be understood and justified only in aesthetic terms. The origins of art and of all human creativity are to be found in the dual aspects of human nature, the Apollonian dream and the Dionysian intoxication. Art, science and philosophy are all forms of illusion. Through the illusion of art, man interprets and re-exports life experience, giving birth to a meaningful, ordered world.

2. Foucault interpreting Nietzsche
Michel Foucault, extending the application of the work of Nietzsche to the whole field of theory and practice within logos, stresses the principal role which interpretation occupies in contemporary philosophical thinking.

According to Nietzsche, Foucault argues, there are not archetypal signs; there are only interpretations. Every new interpretation does not interpret a sign but a previous interpretation. Every new interpretation appropriates and subjugates another, already existing interpretation. Words themselves are for Nietzsche interpretations. Interpretation is a violent act of subversion and inversion. Its motive powers are analogy and suspicion. They reside in the core of language and generate words. In this sense, Classical, Roman, Renaissance and Neoclassical architecture constitute a series of interpretations without the necessity of any metaphysical or other archetype.

The heteroclite, which resides in emotions, love, conscience, instincts, constitutes the historical – as opposed to the metaphysical – truth/illusion about things. It is to be found not in identity, agreement, harmony but in disagreement, separation, denial. A history of a series of interpretations of this kind, which mainly deals with relations of domination and denies any absolute archetype, constitutes for Nietzsche a genealogy.

Through the rejection of the precedence of a descendent and absolute subject of knowledge, Nietzsche makes possible a history of truth as genealogy. Foucault insists. According to Foucault, the genealogy of history functions in three ways, opposite to the Platonic conception of history: the first function of genealogy consists in parody and destruction of reality, the second in dissolution and destruction of identity, the third in destruction of truth or destruction of the subject.

Next, we will discuss these three functions of genealogy, with reference to Neoclassical architecture.

3. First function of genealogy
3. a. Parody and destruction of reality
This function opposes to history as recollection or recognition.

The historian offers to the European of the 19th c. – an anonymous and miscellaneous human type – alternative identities, more real than his own. The Greek archetype finds a principal position in the masquerade. The work of the genealogist is to put into motion the great carnival of time, where all masks return eternally. The non-reality of Neoclassicism recalls our non-reality.

Genealogy is a travesty of history, it exposes and parodies the identification of our weak individualities with mighty realities of the past, over and over again. Through genealogy, Nietzsche says, “we will discover the area where even we can be original, may be also parodists of the world history and clowns of God”.

3. b. The Dionysian origin of Classical
Architecture – Destruction of the archetype
“We hear nothing but the accents of an exuberant, triumphant life, in which all things, whether good or bad, are deified.
ad so the spectator may stand quite bewildered before this nastic superfluity of life, asking himself what magic potion ese mad glad men could have imbited to make life so enjoy- de that, wherever they turned, their eyes beheld the smile of elen the ideal picture of their own existence, floating in sweet sensuality 18.

This quotation from Nietzsche’s ”Birth of Tragedy” refers the statues of the Olympic gods standing on the gables the Doric temple. The Greeks created the Olympians cel- ating life through a sweet sensuality – Nietzsche argues – in ter to temper the dread, the horror of existence, which the neers never ceased to feel very close after their separa- t the Primal Unity. Sensuality is the result of the aesthetic acsency for beauty, inherent in the principium individuationis, e primordial desire for appearance, represented by Apollo. will, the term sensuality mentioned in the quotation, dicates the experience of beauty as an “exuberant”, “trium- ant”, “superfluous”, “joyful” expression of life. Existence can understood and justified only in aesthetic terms.

Art is the first implication of the principium individuationes. Nevertheless, individuation presupposes the delimiting of e boundaries of the individual, that is to say measure. Apollo, quires measure by his disciples. As far as measure bears a prin- tally moral sense, it can be built only on self-knowledge. 19. Apollonian Greek, Nietzsche suggests, had to recognize at underneath beauty and proportion, his existence lied on a ddium substratum of suffering and of knowledge, revealed by e Dionysian, “Titan-like state”. 19. Doric art in particular, constit- the permanent dwelling of the Apollonian 11.

George Hersey, in his book “The Lost Meaning of Clas- cal Architecture”, attempts to reveal the Dionysian “truth” rderlying the Apollonian “appearance” of Classical archi- tecture 12. He investigates the meaning of the names of the namental components of the temples, in relation to the way cifice was performed.

Greek sacrifice involves the transformation of an animal o a god and then the fusing of that animal – god with the rers. Hersey suggests that classical ornament represents e remains of sacrifice. After sacrifice the relics are arrayed 1 altars and shrines.

Greek sacrifice consists in the deconstruction and the construction of the victim. In myth, dismemberments e mainly connected with Dionysus. Dionysus himself was rcheted and cooked by the Titans. Walter Burkert refers that quently in myth the remnants were collected and brought c to life. 13. Many of these myths were foundation myths r religious rituals and so a precondition for the erection o temples, Hersey argues. 14. Hersey suggests that:

“We can see the temple as a grove of sacred trees decorat- with battle or hunting trophies, decorated or decked out like an altar, ith reconstructed sacrifices. Rows of teeth, garlands, horns, nes, weapons and other things taken from victims figure i ch displays, as do flowers, fruit, and the like”. 15.

Hersey applies sacrificial meaning to architectural termin- ology. Thus, the vertical fillets created by the fluting of a umma called ράβδος (rods), can refer to “the bunched shafts

used in constructing Dionysus images” 16; a triglyph can be a thighbone chopped into three, according to the sacrificial prac- tices γλυφω means something curved or chopped off; 17 the drops – στεγανά – beneath the triglyph can be drops draining from the thighbones 18. The whole temple is interpreted by Hersey in this way.

Taking this interpretation which deals with the “Dionysian” aspect of Classical Greek architecture into account, we could proceed further suggesting that it was sensuality on the one hand and measure on the other that gave Classical architecture its “Apollonian” aspect.

For instance, under the process of individuation, the strong tapering of both shaft and capital – which attached the column to the stylobate and the architrave rather than stressing its individual character – was progressively reduced and modified. This aimed to emancipate the column from the sty- lobate and the architrave in this sense, lead to maximum sensual pleasure deriving from the driving of the principium individuations to its limits. At the same time, the principle of measure gradually lead to lack of differentiations between the front and flank columns, while the axial spacings in most of the Doric temples are uniform in both sides 19.

From the end of the fifth century B.C., excesses of individuation on the form of the temple, express plurality at the expense of sensuality and moderation. Lifeless typification comes forth through typified mathematical relations, in order to cover up the Dionysian threat which undermined Classical architecture.

4. Second function of genealogy

4. a. Dissolution and Destruction of Identity

This function opposes to history as continuity or tradition. It aims to the methodical dissolution of our identity to innumerable heterogeneous systems, which forbid any identi- ty. According to Nietzsche, we struggle to articulate together and secure our weak identity under one mask. This identity is a parody as far as it is inhabited by a multiplicity of mortal – not metaphysical – souls, which are in a constant conflict among them, about which one is going to prevail. Genealogy is opposite to history as ”worship of the ancestors” which aims to identify the continuities that constitute the origin of our pres- ent and preserve them with great care for the future, Nietzsche insists. Genealogy puts into question the place where we were born, the language which we speak, the cities in which we live, in order to unveil the heterogeneous systems which – although covered up by the mask of tradition – forbid any identifica- tion.

Classical Greek architecture comes out as an illusion or metaphor, as a mask of the horror of existence, as far as it was born by that horror. It stemmed out of the Premonial World of the Titans in the same way in which a rose comes out of a thorny bush, insists Nietzsche. We could say that its origins were lost in myth. Neoclassical architecture does not have this origin. It borrows the Classical mask in order to cover up the uncanny feelings stemming from the totally new politi-
cal, social and economic conditions brought about by its age. Thus, Neoclassical architecture is not a direct derivative of the principium individuationis in Nietzsche's sense. In fact, under these circumstances, the function of the principium individuationis is cancelled.

Nevertheless, Neoclassical architecture sees Classical Greek architecture almost as a work of nature. In this sense, Neoclassical architecture is identified with truth and beauty.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, human desire to dominate nature was expressed through the Enlightenment's search for objectivity of a rational basis. In the pursuit of a sort of "natural ethics", the architects of the Enlightenment looked upon Greek architecture as the true style from which Roman and Renaissance architecture had drawn their origins. Greek architecture represented the most ancient period of human history; it was seen almost as a work of nature. Thus, architectural truth and consequently beauty could be derived directly from nature, without any metaphysical or other implication. In fact, the Neoclassical approach to architecture had to be closer to the Classical one than anyone before.

Within the eighteenth century, Laugier's position on the one hand and Winckelmann's on the other, gave rise to the two diametrically opposite poles around which Neoclassical architecture evolved in the nineteenth century: the Structural Classicism which emphasizes structure as the source of the truth and derive its ultimate principles through a rational appreciation of nature; and the Romantic Classicism which, on the basis of a secular aesthetics, stress forms as the essence of architecture. This duality was handed down to Modern architecture.

The Romantic Classicism in particular, was involved with a passionate attempt to reveal measure and proportion as carriers of the absolute truth which underlies Classical architecture as well as nature and had its origins in Neoplatonism and the Renaissance.

4. B. NEOCLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE IN GREECE. ITS RELATION TO TRADITIONAL AND POPULAR ARCHITECTURE

In the mid-nineteenth century, Classical revival in Europe offered an opportunity to the newly born Greek state to strengthen its national identity. Neoclassical architecture played a very important role in this attempt.

The architecture of the recovered nation was the so-called traditional Greek architecture on the one hand and popular architecture on the other. They both developed within the Byzantine world and their roots are lost in the Greek, Roman and Mesopotamian worlds. Neoclassical architecture came totally from the outside, disrupting the continuity of local architecture and becoming a symbol of unity, continuity, beauty, harmony, truth at its expense. Far from being a rebirth of the ancient Greek architecture, it constituted a totally heterogeneous system.

As soon as the new Greek nation was born, European and Greek architects, city-planners and archeologists undertook the duty to recreate the splendour of the ancient Greek city. Excavations started throughout Greece destroying all higher archaeological layers in order to reveal the Classical one. The German Romantic architect Schinkel proposed the erection of king Otto's palace on the Acropolis and designed the architectural plans for it. Nevertheless, this was considered "an unbelievable daring" solution which everybody refused. The Danish brothers Christian and Theophilus Hansen who were Schinkel's pupils created some of the most important Neoclassical buildings in Athens, as the Library, the Academy, the University, the National Museum.

Resemblance to the Parthenon seems to be the ultimate principle of architecture. Thus Ceanthes, another of Schinkel's pupils, criticizes Kautzschoglou with reference to the Arsakeion mansion, arguing that it does not express the idea of the Parthenon properly. It makes no honor to us to erect Parthenons in Athens imitating Tuscan architecture, when all the other nations in Europe are proud to imitate Greek architecture at all their buildings in general. Even the architecture of the Byzantine churches started to conform to the new principles.

The city-planning of the capital of the new-born nation almost ignored anything existing in the city between the Classical period and the nineteenth century. The point of departure for the planning was, of course, the Acropolis, but it took into account some other ancient monuments as the Stadium and the Library of the Roman emperor Hadrian. Some place was left free for excavations at the foot of the Acropolis. The palace was originally placed facing the Acropolis at the other end of the main axis.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, despite the reactions against anything following different morphological and compositional rules from the Parthenon, buildings using Byzantine, Gothic, Renaissance elements started to appear, following similar trends in Europe. They were made by architects as Ziller, Kautzschoglou, Zuzos and others. On the other hand, the builders and workers, who had come to Athens in order to work for its reconstruction, erected their own dwellings at the slope beneath the Acropolis rock. They were popular houses with Neoclassical elements.

Gradually, traditional as well as popular architecture adopted elements of Neoclassical architecture as symmetry of the composition in the plan and the elevations, architectural elements in relief as cornices around the openings, projected parts of columns and capitals, clay elements as acroteria and balustrades, cast-iron railings. As a result of this heterogeneous montage of elements, we often have an architecture much more alive than the official one, much closer to man, as well as to nature.

5. Third function of genealogy

5. A. DESTRUCTION OF TRUTH

This function opposes to history as knowledge. It aims to the sacrifice of the knowing subject. The mask of the historical conscience shows that it is stubbornly attached to truth purified of any passion. However, if historical conscience puts itself under examination, it will discover the plurality of forms and transformations of the will to knowledge: instinct, passion, searching mania, vulgar refinement, wickedness. Foucault maintains. It will discover that injustice in inherent in knowl-
edge and that knowledge, based on instincts, is not a carrier of love and happiness but of hatred and hostility. What motivates it, is not the desire to attribute the thing its true being, but to keep it at a distance and destroy it.27

5. b. The Invasion of the Unconscious and Neoclassical Architecture

We argue that Neoclassical architectural space is a theater where architecture as a series of masks embodies the role for which it was chosen. In fact, Neoclassical architecture is the mask which covers up the collision among the social and the political forces, the passions and the instincts, the rational and the irrational, the desires and the dreams of the man of the Enlightenment. Some time later, this collision gave birth to the new, Modern era.

It seems that in the dawn of the new era, man with his changing attitude toward nature, felt more secure to cover up the dramatic situation with a familiar face coming from the past. Classical architecture offered him this opportunity. It embodied truth - not metaphysical - which means absolute and eternal in the sense of Plato or Aristotle, universal though and atemporal within the limits of the Enlightenment. Under these circumstances, the only chance for sensuality to operate within the field of the premordial myth was to be restricted and isolated in the human subconscious and become an object of psychoanalysis and Sigmund Freud's approach to the dream, in particular.

In Nietzsche's "Birth of Tragedy", the Apollonian and the Dionysian spirit alike are instincts and both belong to the sphere of myth. Nevertheless, they are in opposition between them, similar to the opposition which exists between dream and intoxication. Dream is the expression of the principium individuationis while intoxication destroys individuality and leads to a complete "oblivion of the self".28

In an analogous way, Freud gives the definition of the dream through its relation to individuality: The dream, according to Freud, is a (disguised) fulfillment of a (repressed, forbidden) desire.29 The realm of the repressed desires is the unconscious. Its main characteristics are: lack of the contradiction, emotional condensation and transposition from one representation to another, atemporal presence of the external reality with the mental one, the principle of pleasure (enone).30

Freud in his paper Das Unheimliche, published in 1919 uses the German word Unheimliche which means "unnery", unhomely, to indicate the dread caused to the human subject when he suddenly experiences reality as non-reality. Freud conceives of the "unnery" not as something strange and unknown but as something very close and familiar which has been repressed in our minds and has to remain hidden.31 In the same way, classical forms used by Neoclassicism have to keep their true Dionysian origin hidden, although they have been called forth in order to express the fundamental relation of Neoclassicism with nature. Nevertheless, Neoclassicism's conception of nature bears a totally different meaning from that implicated in Nietzsche's Apollonian/Dionysian spirit or Freud's feeling of the Unheimliche.

Despite this, Neoclassical architecture can still cause aesthetic pleasure experienced as sensuality in the psychoanalytic sense. Architectural elements for instance, far from being related with any sacrificial practice could cause pleasure in the way in which a dream could do. That is to say as "a masqueraded fulfillment of repressed desires".

In the case of Greek architecture, it seems that pleasure is stronger when Classical elements "decorate" traditional or popular architecture resulting to an heterogeneous but peculiarly "harmonious" whole.

6. Conclusions

This paper constitutes an attempt to interpret Neoclassical architecture in Nietzsche's aesthetic terms. We tried to approach the aesthetic aspect of Neoclassical architecture within its historical dimension, by building up its genealogy. To this aim, following Foucault, we were engaged in a series of destructions.

The Europeans of the 18th and 19th centuries appealed to Classical architecture in search of an identity more real than their own. Nevertheless, Classical architecture had come out of totally different conditions of existence. As Nietzsche proposes, Classical architecture came to life out of the Titanic-barbaric world of the instincts through the principium individuationis, which gave it appearance and measure. In this spirit, Hersey proposes that the architectural elements of the Classical temple originated in sacrificial practices which performed the mythical dismemberment and reconstruction of Dionysus.

The dismembered Dionysus, occupying the entrance of the path to Neoclassical architecture, was certainly not what the Enlightenment would be satisfied to accept as an archetype. It seems that the Enlightenment's project to approach nature as a homogenous, quantified, measurable, objective whole, included Classical architecture. Not so much in order to pay respect to it, as in order to hide behind the Classical appearance its domination and power instincts. The new-born Greek state offered a challenge for a glorious return of Neoclassicism to its place of birth. This masquerade took place at the expense of traditional and popular architecture.

Nevertheless, the adoption of Neoclassical elements by traditional and popular architecture presents a particular aesthetic interest. We argue that under these circumstances, aesthetic pleasure experienced as sensuality can be approached through Freud's conception of dream and the unconscious. This seems to be the only way in which we can escape from and still remain deep in genealogy.

(Endnotes)

2 Friedrich Nietzsche, On the genealogy of morals, (Zur Genealogie der Moral, Leipzig, c.1887); see also: The birth of tragedy, transl. Clifton Fadiman, N. Y., 1927 (Die Geburt der Tragödie, Leipzig, c.1872).
5 See discussion in: ibid., IV, par. 7; Foucault’s discussion refers to Nietzsche’s works on the genealogy of morality, beyond good and evil, Human All Too Human, Untimely meditations.
6 Ibid., VII, par. 1.
7 See discussion in: ibid., VII, par. 2.
8 The quotation is taken from: op. cit., Nietzsche, The birth of tragedy, 3, par. 2.
9 Ibid., 4 paragraphs 1&2; see discussion in: Youl Rapti, "To phainomenon tov Ellinikou Politismou mesa apo ton Frederico Nietzsche" (The phenomenon of Greek Civilization through Friedrich Nietzsche), publ. in the volume: Philosophia, Antagonisticotta ke Agorath Vio (Philosophy, Competition and Good Life), Ionia eds, Athens, 2005.
10 Ibid., Nietzsche, 4 paragraphs 3, 4; Rapti, pp. 253-256.
11 Ibid., 4, par. 5.
14 Ibid., Hersey, p. 16.
15 Ibid., p. 21.
16 Ibid., p. 23.
17 Ibid., p. 31.
18 Ibid., p. 31.
20 Op. cit., Foucault, "Nietzsche, la genealogie, l’histoire", 7, par. 3; ref. to: Nietzsche, "The traveller and his shadow" cited in: Opinions and aphorisms mixed, par. 17; Untimely meditations, II, 3; Human All Too Human, par. 274.
25 See discussion in: ibid., Philippides, pp. 73-5.
28 Athena Miaraseye, E Aestheticke meta ton Nietzsche (Aesthetics after Nietzsche), eds EuriDike, Athens, 2004, pp. 6; Miraseye argues that with Nietzsche the contribution of philosophy to aesthetics has arrived to its limits; aesthetics becomes a matter of psychoanalysis.
29 Ibid., p. 65.