

الفن والزمن

ART AND TIME

ART ET TEMPS

وقائع الكونغرس المتوسطي الرابع للجماليات

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Between Deleuze and Gadamer: Investigating the notion of time in contemporary architecture

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'Jericho' by Anselm Kiefer at the Royal Academy, 2001

1. Introduction

The constitutive relation of contemporary architecture with time is the result of a long and strenuous procedure, which drove the way out of metaphysics. Its roots can be traced in Renaissance, or, according to Heidegger, further back in ancient Greece, in the beginnings of philosophy. Plato conceived of being as an absolute in time and space – that is to say eternal and universal – entity, in terms of imitation. In the twentieth century,

Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* opened up being in the world, in a reciprocal relationship, founded on time and language. The implied new ontological condition has exerted a strong influence on art and architecture, since the seventies in particular. On the other hand, the infinitesimal structure of being inside our consciousness, suggested by Leibniz in his *Monadology*, three centuries ago, combined with contemporary cosmological models of complexity, chaos and emergence, have as a result totally new, provocative works, as far as art and architecture is concerned.

The philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer on the one hand and Gilles Deleuze on the other, represent these two strong and opposing poles of thought. Gadamer and Deleuze alike, both share a temporal conception of things. For Gadamer, temporality implies an ontological continuum within which the works of art and architecture emerge as autonomous entities, while for Deleuze the work *per se* consists of the fusion of disparate, continuously variegated elements into a continuous whole.

2. Gadamer, time and architecture



Aldo Rossi, "Il teatro del mondo", Venice, 1980

Gadamer considers the development of the notion of *historical consciousness* as the most important revolution in modernity. The concept of

historical consciousness suggests a radically different way of approaching history, in comparison to the past. "To be historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete."¹ According to Gadamer, modern consciousness as historical is *reflective* against anything that comes forth from tradition. The *reflective* attitude of modern consciousness against tradition is called by Gadamer *interpretation*, and constitutes the core of his Philosophical Hermeneutics.²

The general validity which the notion of interpretation acquires in the modern era draws its origin in Nietzsche's critique of consciousness. According to Nietzsche, every utterance in the limits of reason is subject to interpretation, because its true meaning reaches us always disguised and distorted by ideologies.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger moves away from the traditional theory of time, which since Aristotle can be roughly described as a series of nows.³ The temporality of *Dasein* in *Being and Time* underlies the ontological meaning of self-awareness. Self-awareness is acquired only through the openness of human existence in the world (*In-der-Welt-Sein*). Man acquires self-awareness during his life-time. This is an event and not a static reality. For Heidegger, the awareness of *Being* in the sense of revelation has the meaning of an event. Man as *Dasein* is the place of the revelation of the meaning of the *Being* of beings. The occurrence or event, which in *Being and Time* concerns the temporality of *Dasein*, in late Heidegger concerns the temporality of *Being* itself. Driving his way out of metaphysics, in *Time and Being* Heidegger substitutes the activity of Appropriation for the realm of *Being*.⁴ Time is the way in which Appropriation appropriates. This way is a reciprocal relationship between future as the withholding of presence and past as the refusal of presence.

The continuity between past and present as a never-ending mutual relationship between human existence as *Dasein* and the world, constitutes the basis of Hans-Georg Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics, as it is developed in his major work, *Truth and Method*. Gadamer moves from Heidegger's *Being* to *Language*. Time as "the ground of becoming" operates within the linguistic medium, within *Language*. *Language* for Gadamer, far from being a closed system of self-referred points, is activated as *Logos*.

Within *Language*, the process of understanding takes place. Understanding is an ontological activity of *Dasein* which constitutes the ground of Hermeneutics.⁵ Its structure is dialogical and open, as far as it

resides in our dialogical encounter with the past as a whole, that is to say tradition. Creation comes forth only as an application of the process of understanding upon tradition: "Aesthetics has to be absorbed into hermeneutics."⁶ "...art is never simply past but is able to overcome temporal distance by virtue of its own meaningful presence. (...) Even though it is no mere object of historical consciousness, understanding art always includes historical mediation."⁷

The Aristotelian notion of *phronesis* (φρόνησις) as moral – political knowledge underlies Gadamer's connection between understanding and application: theoretical knowledge is always a matter of practical application within a particular situation. Instead of being a secondary operation, externally added to the outcome of understanding, application re-defines from the beginning and as a whole the specific content of hermeneutical understanding. "Application" does not "consist in relating some pregiven universal to a particular situation. (...) The interpreter ... first understands it (the text) per se, and then afterward uses it for particular applications."⁸ Thus, creation of a new work of art or architecture is the outcome of a constant circular movement from understanding to interpretation and then to application, within the temporal structure of the linguistic medium. Every individual work comes out from the dialogical process of a particular interpreter with tradition.

The dialogue between past and present as a never ending activity, results to a real *fusion of historical horizons*: the horizon of the interpreter with that of tradition. This does not imply that historical consciousness is alienated by a past consciousness. The fusing of horizons is the outcome of the projection of the historical horizon of tradition to the present.⁹ Thus works of art and architecture of the past have to be understood in the context of the values of the present.

In opposition to the Cartesian claim to truth as an objective knowledge susceptible of proof, Gadamer seeks for truth through the dialogue between tradition and the present on the ground of *prejudice*. Prejudice for Gadamer is a condition for understanding, directly related to the finite nature of *Dasein*. On the other hand, *prejudice* indicates a reaction against the authority of tradition, and motivates the dialogue between past and present in this sense.¹⁰

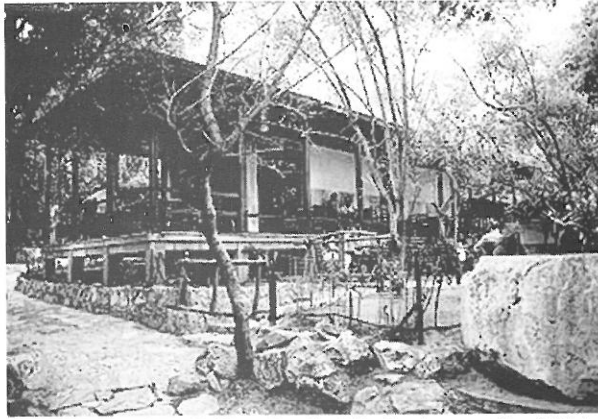
For Gadamer, understanding precedes interpretation as far as it is rooted on Heidegger's notion of *preunderstanding*. For Heidegger, understanding

always presupposes a *fore-having*, a *fore-sight* and a *fore-conception* by its content.¹¹ *Preunderstanding* is for Heidegger the forstructure of knowledge, the appointment place between the Platonic ideas and the Nietzschean merging of the self into a primordial wholeness.

Considered within the scope of Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics, architecture acquires meaning and existence through a continuous dialogue with tradition. Every new building has to be the outcome of an interpretative process of the past, activated within the particular socio-cultural milieu of the interpreter. Aesthetics in Gadamer's theory constitutes a matter of truth and morality on the basis of the understanding of the past. Deeply influenced by Plato's metaphysics, Gadamer attempts to restore the autonomy of the self within the unity provided by tradition. The openness in understanding, which motivates the continuity of the dialogue, results to a multiplicity of different expressions of the same tradition, as far as architecture is concerned. Major trends of the so-called Postmodern architecture could be related to Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics. The work of architects as Dimitris Pikionis, Aldo Rossi, Leon and Rob Krier, Dimitri Porphyrios, Paolo Zermani, constitute interpretations of the past on this basis.



Rob Krier, urban continuity



Dimitris Pikionis, Café at Louvardiaris, Acropolis, 1954-57.

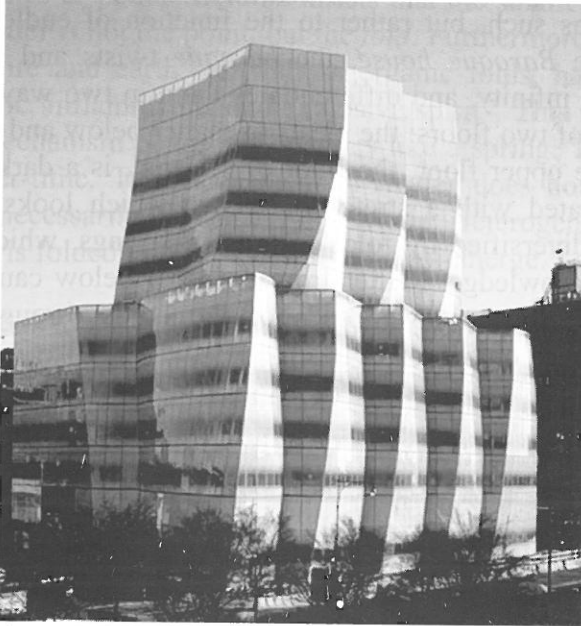


Pavilions at Highgate, London (1981)
By Demetri Porphyrios



Paolo Zermani, San Giovanni a Ponte d'Oddi

1. Deleuze, time and architecture

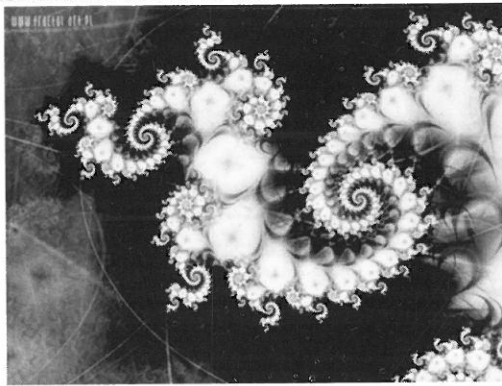


The IAC Building at New York, by Frank Gehry (2006).

Gilles Deleuze shares with Hans-Georg Gadamer the attempt to interpret things as been temporally constituted, on a different basis, though. The conception by Heidegger of the human subject as *Dasein*, consists an inversion of the Leibnizian *monad*. Instead of being-in-the-world, *monad* indicates being-for-the-world. The openness of *Dasein* stands against the *monad*'s closeness. According to Deleuze, the *monad* is an allegory of all possible worlds. It presents the infinity finitely. Within the *monad*, the ontogenesis of ideas takes place. They are hallucinations produced and animated by the resonance of innumerable tiny perceptions. The object becomes an event. In this way, ideas are entirely without an object, composed of folds within folds, infinitely. They do not bear any universal meaning, but depend on the individual subject.¹² With a strange alliance between Leibniz and Nietzsche suggested by Deleuze, art and architecture are united with life and the world. Works of architecture can come forth in this way, as allegories of the *monad*.

On the basis of Leibniz's *Monadology*, Deleuze in his work *The fold: Leibniz and the baroque*, introduces the term *fold* in order to indicate the structure of things as a temporal heterogeneous continuum, within our

consciousness. The *Baroque house* is an allegory used by Leibniz, for the relation between the human soul and the world as “the material universe of bodies”. The term *baroque*, explains, Deleuze, refers not to a particular historical style as such, but rather to the function of endlessly producing folds. Inside the *Baroque house*, the *baroque* twists and turns the folds pushing them to infinity, and differentiates them in two ways, as if infinity were composed of two floors: the pleats of matter below and the folds in the soul, above. The upper floor, the floor of the soul, is a dark room with no windows, decorated with a stretched canvas, which looks like a “living dermis”. It is “diversified by folds”, cords or springs, which represent an innate form of knowledge. Matter from the floor below causes “vibrations and oscillations” to the lower ends of the cords through “some little openings”, that exist on the lower level.¹³



Complex dynamic systems

Deleuze compares Wolfflin’s analysis of *Baroque* architecture to Leibniz’s mathematical conception of the universe. Baroque architecture is characterized by certain mathematical traits, as: matter handled in masses or aggregates, rounding of angles, spongy, cavernous shapes, vortical forms put in motion by new turbulences endlessly.¹⁴

Leibniz’s *baroque* mathematical physics, contributes three fundamental notions to the curvilinearity of the universe: “the fluidity of matter, the elasticity of bodies and the motivating spirit of a mechanism”. There must be an active power that forces matter to follow curvilinear or spinning movement. Otherwise, it would follow the tangent. Following curvilinearity, matter is divided infinitely. This division causes an endless series of progressively smaller vortices. “No matter how small, each body contains a world pierced with irregular passages, surrounded and penetrated by an increasingly vaporous fluid, the totality of the universe resembling a pond of matter in which there exist different flows and waves”.¹⁵

In opposition to the Cartesian hypothesis of separable *minima* either in the form of bodies or points, Leibniz insists that the smallest element of the labyrinth of matter is not the point, but the *fold*. Furthermore, “folds of wind, of waters, of fire and earth” as well as organic folds, have a motivating force, “an elastic, inflammable, and explosive spirit”. This motivating force which is the mechanism of matter, operates like a spring. Thus, the matter-fold is a matter-time. The mechanism of matter does not imply that the smaller unit is necessarily the same as the whole. Heterogeneous forms “just as the butterfly is folded into the caterpillar” may emerge.¹⁶

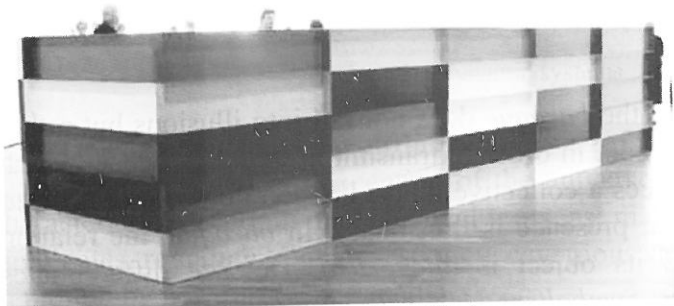
All this refers to the first floor of Leibniz’s *Baroque house*, which deals with matter or bodies. The upper floor, that of the soul, contains the “law of curvilinearity”. This is the law of folds or changes of direction. The internal, individuating unity of the curvilinear course followed by a body, is provided by the soul. In this floor, as Deleuze remarks “the theater of matter gives way to that of spirits of God. In the *baroque*, the soul entertains a complex relation with the body. Forever indissociable from the body, it discovers a vertiginous animality that gets it tangled in the pleats of matter, but also an organic or cerebral humanity (...) and that will make it ascend over all other folds”. Accordingly, “... any localization of the soul in an area of the body (...) amounts rather to a *projection* of the soul focalizing on a point of the body ...”.¹⁷

As Deleuze suggests, the *baroque* does not fall into illusions but rather creates something by illusion, in order to transmit a virtual presence, which can give its parts and pieces a collective unity. Illusion does not pretend to be presence. It seems that presence is illusionary. In *baroque*, the relation between a concept and its object is *allegorical*. Deleuze differentiates *allegory* from *symbolism*: *Symbolism* deals with an object isolated from the material universe and related to an Idea, which develops its meaning aesthetically and morally. In *allegory*, the object per se overflows its frame, in a process of endlessly becoming more enclosed, more internalized and even more personalized. In contrast to the static character of time in *symbolism*, *allegory* according to Deleuze “uncovers nature and history according to the order of time. It produces a history from nature and transforms history into nature in a world that no longer has a center”.¹⁸

The object of *allegory* is never an essence or an essential feature, as it is the case with the *symbol*, but an *event*, related to a history, a description or a process, which tends to destroy its frame. Moreover, the concept has no

general value, as far as it is related to a particular subject. In this way, *baroque* introduces a new type of narration: description takes the position of the object; the concept becomes narrative and the subject “a projection of the soul”, “a point of view or subject of expression”. The subject as *monad*, as a being-for-the world, includes the whole world within it, as infinite tiny perceptions or tiny springs developing inwardly. Thus, the *monad* constitutes the “absolute interiority” and treats the outside as the exact reversion of the inside.¹⁹

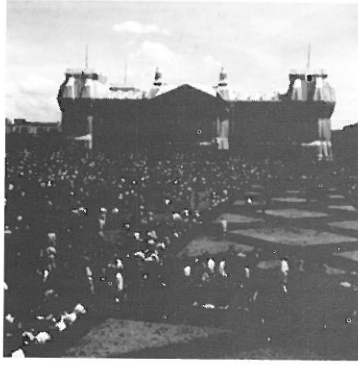
On this ground, the extensiveness of the arts beyond their individual frames, leads to a unity among them while it activates a universal theater where natural or public space alike can take part in a constant folding and unfolding within the *monad*. The art of performance as well as minimal sculpture by artists as Carl Andre, Tony Smith, Donald Judd, Le Witt, Christo are mentioned by Deleuze as examples of this extensive unity of the arts.²⁰



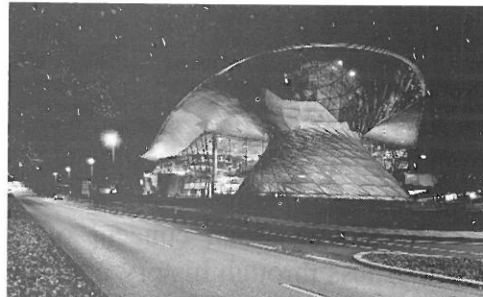
Donald Judd, MOMA museum, New York.
well



Carl Andre, Chain



Deleuze makes a provocative distinction between the *realization of the possible* and the *actualization of the virtual*. He claims that the realization or representation of the possible entails no creativity. There is no creativity in the generation of an architectural form from a philosophical issue, as it is the case with Deconstructivist architecture, for instance. Probably architecture related to Gadamer's Hermeneutics would have been on top of the list. On the contrary, the *actualization of the virtual* does not operate by resemblance or representation. It appeals to creativity through differentiation. The notion of *difference*, implied in the relation between *the virtual from which we begin and the actual at which we arrive*, activates a "new" situation, where the actual does not resemble the virtuality it embodies.²¹ On this basis, Bernard Cache redefines architecture in two ways: First, as a folded practice of interior and exterior relations, and second, as the art of the frame.²² Works by architects as Frank Gehry, Peter Eisenman, Zaha Hadid, and the Coop Himmelblau express this situation.²³



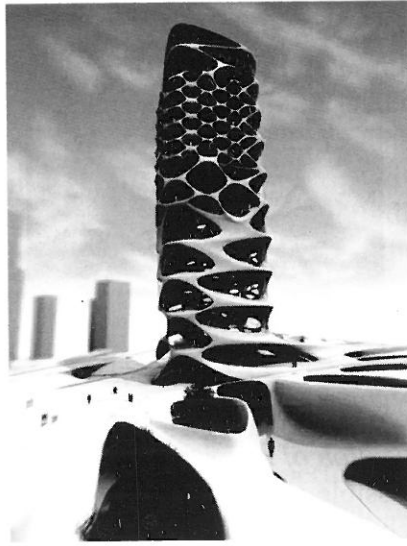
City of Culture of Galicia in Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Coop Himmelblau, the BMW

Headquarters in Munich, 2006.

by Peter Eisenman.

The wranned Reichstag hv Christo. Berlin 1995



Project for Istanbul, 2005/06: Compressed
Complexity
Title: Vertical Shopping
Students: Mitterer Peter, Moroder Matthias
Studio Zaha M. Hadid, University of Applied Arts,
Vienna

4. Conclusions

In Gadamer's *Philosophical Hermeneutics* emphasis is given to the linguistic medium as the factor that secures unity and continuity in human creativity. Through the interpretative circle, works of art and architecture can come out as distinct entities, as "concretions of knowledge at a particular moment", separate points within a constantly changing linguistic medium. Their coherency of form in terms of perception in fact indicates multiplicity and openness in terms of conception, as far as they are open to an endless number of individual interpretations.

The Heideggerian concept of *Dasein* as a temporal opening up of consciousness through history underlies the ontology of the work within the scope of Gadamer's *Hermeneutics*. The implied temporality of the works of art and architecture is an expression of the temporality of interpretation. The prejudices of the presence constitute a condition for truth in the understanding of the past. The work gains its ontological autonomy expressed as coherency and unity of form within the dialogical operation of understanding.

Instead of the conception of artistic creation as an interpretation of the past within the unity and continuity provided by language, Gilles Deleuze favors spatial and mathematical artistic models. The introduction of the calculus combined with mathematical and scientific theories of complexity has given a real thrust to the application of the *fold* in architecture. Folding architecture implements conceptual designs that lead perception to follow patterns which create linkages between complexity and singularity, homogeneity and heterogeneity, incoherence and wholeness.

Deleuze's *The Fold*, based on Leibniz's *Monadology*, is an allegory for the infinitesimal structure of our consciousness. In architecture, the *module* retreats in favor of the *infinitesimal component*. Synthesis and unity concern the fusion of simple, heterogeneous components into continuities, while they retain their status. On the other hand, detail is not any more the reduction of the design into a discrete moment; it folds and unfolds everywhere participating intensively in the construction of a new kind of whole. The fragmentary collage has been displaced by an intensive whole. Thus, the work becomes an event.



Anselm Kiefer, *The Secret Life of Plants*, 2001.

Notes and references

1. Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* (trans. J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall). London: Continuum Publishing Group, 2004 (c/1975 &1989); see discussion in 157-158; see also 301.
2. Ibid.; see discussion in 336-338, in particular.
3. Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* (trans. J. Stambaugh). N. Y.: Harper & Row Publishers, 1996.

4. Heidegger, Martin. *On Time and Being* (trans. J. Stambaugh). N. Y.: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972. The lecture "Time and Being" that is included in the book was given by Heidegger in 1962, at the University of Freiburg. It could be considered as the development of the theme of the third section of *Being and Time*, entitled "Time and Being".
5. The third part of *Truth and Method* deals with language as "the universal medium in which understanding occurs"; op. cit. Gadamer, 390.
6. Op. cit. Gadamer, 157.
7. Ibid. 158.
8. Ibid. 317-321; see 321 for the quotation. For an analytical discussion of *phronesis*, see in: Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *The Idea of the Good in the Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* (trans. & introduction P. Christopher Smith). New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1986.
9. Ibid. *Truth and Method*, 305.
10. Ibid. 272ff.
11. Ibid. 269; op. cit. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 153.
12. Deleuze, Gilles. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (trans. & introduction Tom Conley). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. For the relation between *Dasein* and *monad* see 26, in particular.
13. Ibid. 3-4.
14. Ibid. 4.
15. Ibid. 4-5.
16. Ibid. 6.
17. Ibid. 12.
18. Ibid. 125; Deleuze refers to Walter Benjamin's "Allegory und Trauerspiel", incl. in: *The Origins of the German Baroque Drama* (trans. John Osborne). London: Verso, 1985.
19. Ibid. Deleuze, 126-127.
20. Ibid. 123-124.
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23. Lynn, Greg. *Folding in Architecture, Architectural Design*. Great Britain: Wiley-Academy, 2004.