

**On the Epistemological Significance of Aesthetic Values in  
Architectural Theory**

by

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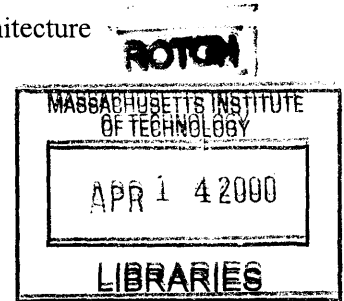
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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the epistemological significance of "truth," "rationality," and the "aesthetic" first in the nineteenth-century definitions of the nature of Gothic and, then in more recent twentieth-century debates about objectivity. My study links the Aristotelian notion of practical reasoning to aesthetic cognition, and brings to surface the scientific, moral, and ethical arguments, which have been ignored by contemporary architectural criticism. The theoretical foundation of my argument lies in the work of analytic philosophers and literary theorists such as Hilary Putnam, Nelson Goodman and Satya P. Mohanty.<sup>1</sup> These writers emphasize the rational and affective nature of our aesthetic experience and our aesthetic values and judgments, and propose a sophisticated account of objectivity by reexamining the actual nature of the "hard" sciences, interpreting them as complex, coordinated social practices. By drawing upon this understanding of objectivity, particularly as it relates to politics, I hope to bring to light a theoretical alternative to postmodernism in architecture that can enable us to explain the relationship of architecture to political power without abandoning the values of aesthetics, truth or rationality. My dissertation mediates between the disciplines of philosophy, literary theory, and architecture and tries to create space for inquiry wherein the epistemological, the theoretical, and the historical are interconnected.

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<sup>1</sup> See Nelson Goodman *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc, 1968); Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Satya P. Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).



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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, critics as diverse as Pierre Bourdieu, the philosophers of the Frankfurt school, the postmodernists, and the poststructuralists, have put the category of the aesthetic into question. This critique of the aesthetic is both political and epistemological.

Postmodernists argue that the aesthetic is not only complicit with oppressive ideology, but is itself an oppressive ideology; in so doing, they question its legitimacy as a political strategy and as a form of knowing (Foster, 1983; Bennett, 1996). Most significantly, postmodernists argue that aesthetic discourse fetishizes the object of value by assuming that aesthetic experience is universally recognizable. This universality, in turn, establishes the universality of aesthetic judgments and values, thus guarding the value of the object.

Postmodernist critics question the epistemological role of the experience of architecture. They ask: how are we to decide whose experience of architecture should be taken seriously given that one's experience reflects a construction specific to one's subjectivity? They point to the vicious inter-legitimation of power involved in what we believe to be our "real" experience of architecture. They question what is held as valuable in a given context, by whom, and in whose political interests and view any form of evaluation in aesthetics with radical skepticism.

With the advent of postmodernism, the emphasis on the object, which has characterized much of earlier architectural theory, has given way to an analysis of architecture as subject, revealing unintended political motivations in the constitution of knowledge. Postmodern criticism has focused on the complicity of Modern Architecture with

political agendas. Instead of following "visible" political symbols of power, postmodern theorists seek the invisible means by which buildings embody power relationships. They criticize modern architects' utopian thinking, and show how modernism's social objectives are complicit with the ideologies of capitalism and colonialism (Kahn, 1991; Colomina, 1992; Wigley, 1995).

One of the dominant tropes of postmodernism is that of space under constant surveillance. Postmodernists demand that we wean ourselves from the fiction of "pure" space and revel instead in the possibilities opened up by impure, scopic, and controlled regimes. In this dissertation, I argue that underlying this fear of surveillance is a skepticism of the fundamental concepts of truth, rationality, objectivity, and aesthetics. In attempting to uncover architecture's complicity with politics, Postmodern criticism accepts epistemological claims that make impossible any theorization of a socially responsible architecture. Such skepticism has created a split between the theory and the practice of architecture.

The theoretical foundation of this study lies in the work of analytic philosophers and literary theorists such as Hilary Putnam, Nelson Goodman, Catherine Elgin and Satya P. Mohanty who propose a broad and sophisticated account of objectivity and rationality. They reexamine the "hard" sciences, and interpret them as complex social practices; in so doing, they show the underlying parallels between scientific and humanistic inquiry.<sup>1</sup> Hilary Putnam in his book *Reason Truth and History* (1981), questions the equation of rational thinking with scientific thinking; in doing so, he challenges the idea that science alone provides the true

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<sup>1</sup> See Nelson Goodman *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc, 1968); Nelson Goodman and Catherine Z. Elgin, *Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988); Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Satya P.

descriptions of reality without undermining the importance of scientific methods. Putnam shows how scientific inquiry, much like the humanities, is holistic, relational and relies on a number of preexisting assumptions. He develops a broader understanding of a conception of rationality and objectivity and shows how these are not only central to studies in ethics and value theory, but are also crucial to understanding inquiry in the sciences.

On the other hand, Satya Mohanty, in his book *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, MultiCultural Politics* (1997) builds on Putnam's ideas; more directly, he addresses the skeptical strands of postmodern thought and shows how they are both theoretically and politically inhibiting. He points out that the postmodern rejection of objectivity is a critique of a particular conception of positivist objectivity and its related notions of science, fact, and value. By directing attention to the alternative accounts of objectivity developed by realist philosophers, Mohanty raises this question: If contemporary postmodern understanding of scientific norms and criteria is not accurate, how must we reorient our political critiques of them? In building a Realist account of cultural identity, Mohanty demonstrates the continuity between "theory" and subjective experience, and the larger relation between subjective experience and objective knowledge. On the other hand, Nelson Goodman in *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (1968) deals more directly with art and argues that aesthetics is a branch of epistemology. Goodman emphasizes that in this form of knowing--understanding a work of art is not a matter of appreciating it, or having an "aesthetic experience" of it, but is a matter of interpreting it correctly. According to Goodman, emotions function cognitively and play a central role in developing aesthetic awareness.

By drawing upon these writers, my dissertation reintroduces philosophical reflection about the cognitive and rational nature of our aesthetic experience and judgment in architectural theory. It thereby offers an alternative to the present impasse reached in the debate between modern essentialism and postmodern skepticism.

My major philosophical argument is that the Aristotelian notion of "practical reasoning" is central to understanding the cognitive role of the aesthetic. I argue that rationality is not opposed to passion, but that both emotions and imagination are essential to rational choice and to many acts of aesthetic cognition. Practical reasoning differs from deductive reasoning. In deductive reasoning a conclusion follows necessarily from the stated premises, whereas practical reasoning leads to action. Aristotle showed that in reasoning that leads to action one cannot proceed from stated premises to a conclusion as there is no general positive premise of the form "Always do X." Practical reasoning requires an imaginative construction of the whole from an indefinite number of particulars and this process of construction is active. Building on this Aristotelian conception, I argue that our experience of architecture involves a complex negotiation of aesthetic perception, evaluation, cognition and emotion, and that our aesthetic judgments and values are rational. Rationality herein is understood broadly, unlike its narrow conception in positivism. It is not opposed to passion; instead, it encompasses human feeling and emotion. Our attitudes and beliefs about architecture are intentional states of mind that we bear a responsibility to justify. We do not passively experience objects that inhabit a separate realm as the familiar object-subject split suggests. Instead, in experiencing objects, we are active; our experience includes rational deliberation.

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*Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Judgments like "Louis Kahn's Salk Institute is, metaphorically, a monastic cloister" can change experience through arguments grounded in particulars. By the time we come to perceive the Salk Institute in this way, we have already deliberated about it. The serenity of the Salk Institute, the repetitive vocabulary of the building, the courtyard with a central channel of water, the concrete frame and teak cubicles, and even, perhaps, the idea of a religious experience in a monastic complex--all contribute to our "reading" of the Institute. This interpretation of the Salk Institute highlights the fact that our judgments are not abstract statements. On the contrary, our judgments are grounded in particulars. Our ability to change our judgments and to alter others' by arguments grounded in particulars underscores the rational nature of judgments and their potential to resist politics. The relationship of architecture to politics thus cannot be theorized by "anti-aestheticizing," as the postmodernist texts, such as *The Anti-Aesthetic* (1983), *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990), and *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology* (1985) claim. Instead, understanding the broader role the aesthetic plays in our moral and political lives is crucial.

In this study, I have proposed a conception of knowledge according to which our everyday experience of buildings plays an important cognitive role in our lives. The intellectual training and rational reflection involved in learning to notice small details of buildings, in positing connections, in reading politics in spaces, and in seeing architectural forms as fantasies or as intelligible wholes, are all part of this cognitive experience. This philosophical concern pervades the three chapters, which comprise this dissertation.

The first chapter of my dissertation refutes the postmodern challenges posed to the concept of the aesthetic by underscoring affinities between Aristotelian practical reasoning

and aesthetic reasoning. In the first section, I focus on Pierre Bourdieu's critique of Kant's idea of "disinterestedness," and show how Bourdieu's arguments limit our understanding of the full cognitive potential of the aesthetic. In the second section, I draw upon the writings of Nelson Goodman, Catherine Elgin and Iris Murdoch of the Anglo-American school of analytic aesthetics and argue that our aesthetic experience and our conflicts about aesthetic judgments can be cognitive. Most importantly, in this chapter, I outline the major philosophical argument of this dissertation that Aristotelian practical reasoning is central to understanding aesthetic reasoning and cognition. In the final section, I draw my discussion together by discussing Hume's essay "Of the Standard of Taste." I argue that claiming that our aesthetic judgments are rational and objective, does not mean that we will be able to provide a rational explanation for every dispute.

The second chapter explores the relationships among John Ruskin's belief in the theological justification of science, his experiments on plant leaves and his theories of Gothic architecture. I argue that Ruskin's defense of Gothic architecture is not just sentimental moralizing, but a profoundly articulate theory of architecture, which emphasizes the rational and affective nature of building Gothic forms. Moreover, I argue that this process is similar to the Aristotelian emphasis on particulars and is based upon imaginative perception. In the first section, I review the scholarship on Ruskin. I point out how the modernist interpretations which emphasize the sentimental and moral nature of Ruskin's arguments and the postmodern interpretations which emphasize the skeptical and contingent nature of his arguments both ignore Ruskin's knowledge and acceptance of the methods of science. In the second section, I review the influence of William Buckland and Adam Sedgwick on John Ruskin's thoughts. More particularly, I review the nineteenth-century debates between the Catastrophists and Uniformitarians and show how, many scientists, at the time, were

unwilling to give up their belief in the theological justification of science. In the third section, I examine the relationship between Ruskin's experiments on plant leaves and his theories of Gothic architecture. Both Ruskin's *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1848) and *The Stones of Venice* (1853) were written around the time when Ruskin's desire to ground aesthetics in the science of natural theology was being shaken (See Cook, *The Life of John Ruskin*, 1912, p. 212). Through a close reading of the two texts, I show the similarities between Aristotelian practical reasoning and Ruskin's arguments about the rational nature of Gothic.

The third chapter examines the postmodern methodologies and epistemologies that question the traditional "essentialist" ideas of modernism. I focus on how architecture as a mechanism of representation is explored, on how, for example, the idea of a gendered space is analyzed, and on how the idea of a constructed subjectivity addresses the question of agency and intentionality in architecture in the writings of Mark Wigley, Beatrice Colomina, Andrea Kahn, Mary McLeod and others. I examine the following postmodern assumptions in contemporary architectural theory: the notion that aesthetics, truth, and rationality are constructed -- socially, culturally, and historically -- and that they do not play any epistemic role in a theory of architecture (See Colomina, 1992). I contest the postmodern claim that infers that architecture is necessarily an ideological construction complicit with politics; and because of this complicity any form of objective knowledge of architecture is unattainable (See Wigley, *Sexuality and Space*, 1992; Kahn, 1991; Kipnis, *Strategies in Architectural Thinking*, 1992).

In order to illustrate the relationship between objectivity and knowledge formation, I review how the Crystal Palace was initially accepted and categorized by critics and architectural historians and how changes in the theoretical perception of the definition of

architecture have informed its historiography. I show how theoretical justifications contribute to knowledge the same way as empirical hypotheses; most importantly, I argue that these justifications need to be grounded in particulars of the experience of the object--especially, its subjective and emotional aspects.



## Chapter One

### THE AESTHETIC IN AN ANTI-AESTHETIC POSTMODERN CULTURE

For, in truth, the fact whether and how an era is committed to an aesthetics, whether and how it adopts a stance toward art of an aesthetic character, is decisive for the way art shapes the history of that era—or remains irrelevant to it.

Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1

In recent years, critics as diverse as Pierre Bourdieu, the philosophers of the Frankfurt school, the postmodernists, and the poststructuralists, have put the category of aesthetic to question. This critique of aesthetic is both epistemological and political. Theorists argue that the aesthetic is not only complicit with oppressive ideology, but is an oppressive ideology in itself; in so doing, they question the legitimacy of the aesthetic as a political strategy and as a form of knowing.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, I review the fundamental critiques posed to the concept of the aesthetic. In the first section, I focus on Pierre Bourdieu's critique of Kant's idea of "disinterestedness," and show how Bourdieu's arguments limit our understanding of the full cognitive potential of the aesthetic. In the second section, I draw upon the writings of Nelson Goodman, Catherine Elgin and Iris Murdoch of the Anglo-American school of analytic aesthetics and argue that our aesthetic experience and our conflicts about aesthetic judgments can be cognitive. Most importantly, I outline the major philosophical argument of this dissertation that Aristotelian practical reasoning is central to understanding aesthetic reasoning and cognition. In the final section, I draw my discussion together by discussing

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<sup>1</sup> See, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* Hal Foster (ed.) Seattle: Bay Press, 1983; Tony Bennett, "Really useless 'knowledge': a political critique of aesthetics," in *Design and Aesthetics: A Reader*, Jerry Palmer and Mo Dodson, Routledge : London and New York, 1996, pp. 33-48; Bertolt Brecht "Shouldn't we abolish aesthetics?"(1927) *Brecht on theatre; the development of an aesthetic*, John Willett (ed.), 1978, p.20.

Hume's essay "Of the Standard of Taste." In this section, I argue that claiming that our aesthetic judgments are rational and objective, does not mean that we will be able to provide a rational explanation for every dispute.

Hal Foster has outlined the anti-aesthetic concerns of the postmodern project in an influential collection of essays entitled, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (1983). Foster claims that, "like postmodernism anti-aesthetic marks a cultural position; he questions if the categories afforded by the aesthetic are still valid? Here Foster is specifically referring to the last remains of the aesthetic, as a negative category, as it appears in the writings of Theodore Adorno--as a subversive critical interstice in an otherwise instrumental world." Foster claims that while, "this last moment is hard to relinquish...Now, however, we have to consider that this aesthetic space too is eclipsed – or rather, that its criticality is now largely illusory (and so instrumental)."<sup>2</sup>

Pierre Bourdieu, an influential sociologist and philosopher in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984) has also proposed a very powerful critique of aesthetic taste. In a comprehensive analysis of diverse French tastes, which include styles of dressing, dietary patterns and artistic tastes, Bourdieu shows how forces of exclusion and domination in society motivate tastes and aesthetic disposition. In addition to these specific studies, the problem of aesthetics is central to contemporary debates on poststructuralism, critical theory and cultural studies. Even though many of the polemicists of these debates such as Derrida and Lyotard, do not discuss aesthetics as an issue of central concern, they implicitly explore the place of aesthetics in contemporary society by questioning fundamental constructs of knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Postmodern theorists claim that notions of truth and rationality are

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<sup>2</sup> *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* Hal Foster (ed.) Seattle: Bay Press, 1983, p.xv.

<sup>3</sup> For a specific discussion on aesthetics by poststructuralist writers, see Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Ian Macleod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1987; Paul De Man's "Introduction." *Towards an Aesthetics on Reception*, by Hans Robert Jauss

constructed—socially, culturally and politically--and because of this they do not have any epistemological value.<sup>4</sup> In aesthetic theory, this questioning has centered on the following concepts: the modernist conception of an aesthetic autonomy; aesthetic as a distinct category of human experience; the ahistorical notion of an aesthetic experience that it exists without “purpose;” the claim that aesthetic judgments are inter-subjective and universally valid; the distinction drawn between high art and popular culture; and the claim that aesthetics can exist as a subversive critical interstice in an otherwise instrumental world.

While a critique of the aesthetic was very much a part of the modern project; what specifically represents the postmodern condition is the shattering of a belief in the political and cognitive potential of the aesthetic. Postmodern theorists argue that aesthetic discourse fetishizes the object of value and is produced by means of universalization of the valuing subject. It is assumed that aesthetic--a distinct category of human experience--is universally recognizable. This universality, in turn, establishes the universality of aesthetic judgments and values; thus guarding the value of the object. Pierre Bourdieu has characterized this as "the circular circulation of inter-legitimation," in which, judgments of value both consecrate and are consecrated by the "inherently valuable" properties of the objects approved.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, as Tony Bennett explains, “value, transfixed in the singular gaze of the universal subject, solidifies and takes form as a property of the object just as, once the universal valuing subject has been constructed, its active, value constitutive role becomes

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(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1982; and Paul De Man’s “Sign and Symbol in Hegel’s Aesthetics.” *Critical Inquiry*, 8 1982.

<sup>4</sup> According to Jean-Francois Lyotard, “In contemporary society and culture—postindustrial society, postmodern culture—the question of legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation.” See *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p.37. Also see, Jonathan Culler’s book on deconstruction in which he asserts, “Notions of realism, of rationality, of mastery, of explanation” all “belong to (a) “phallogocentric” view of the world.” See Culler, *On Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1982, p.62.

<sup>5</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu, “The Aristocracy of Culture,” *Distinction: A Social Critique of Judgment of Taste* London: Routledge, 1989, pp.11-96.

passive: all it can do is to recognize the value that was already there, secreted somewhere in the dense folds of the object.”<sup>6</sup> Because of this vicious inter-legitimation of what is held as valuable and by whom, and in whose interests, postmodern critics not only discard "universal truth" claims of aesthetic values but also view the very question of values and any form of evaluation in aesthetics with radical skepticism.<sup>7</sup>

### **KANT AND PIERRE BOURDIEU: CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT AND A SOCIAL CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT OF TASTE**

One of the most profound critiques of the judgment of taste has been proposed by Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of Judgment of Taste* (1984). Bourdieu differs from other poststructuralist writers such as Derrida in that instead of dismantling constructs of knowing his concern is to provide a sociological critique of aesthetic taste. In his book *Distinction*, he examines the role “culture,” “aesthetics” and “taste” play in reproducing unequal social structures. He argues that systems of domination find expression in virtually all areas of cultural practice and symbolic exchange which include tastes and preferences in dress, sports, food, music, literature, art and so forth. Bourdieu’s books, particularly his, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), *Distinction* (1984), and *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), provide a very sophisticated and elaborate theoretical framework to inquire into the issues of objective and subjective knowledge and of aesthetics of everyday life.

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<sup>6</sup> Tony Bennett, p. 37.

<sup>7</sup> This form of skepticism and nihilism is particularly associated with the advent of postmodernism and French poststructuralism, and its influence has been felt across disciplines.

According to Bourdieu, the logic of the cultural field creates, reproduces and legitimates a set of class relations. This logic is based on the definition of “culture” itself. “Culture,” constitutes all that is different from and distanced from what is “common,” “vulgar,” and “popular,” meaning all that constitutes the tastes and likes of those who are dominated. In opposition to this, the dominated classes construct a culture of populism. In “popular aesthetic,” Bourdieu writes, “everything takes place as if it is based on the affirmation of continuity between art and life.” The hostility of the working class and of the middle-class fractions is expressed most clearly in art forms that have lesser legitimacy. Bourdieu explains that, for example, such hostility is visible more in art forms such as photography and cinema than fine arts. The popular audience delights in plots that proceed logically and chronologically towards a happy end, and ‘identifies’ better with simply drawn situations and characters than with ambiguous and symbolic figures and actions. Bourdieu explains that, “their reluctance and refusal springs not just from lack of familiarity but for a deep-rooted demand for participation, which formal experiment systematically disappoints.”<sup>8</sup> The popular aesthetic relegates form at the expense of subject and function, and values immediate sensual gratification and participation instead of disinterested and distanced contemplation. In addition, this form of aesthetics also refuses to judge works of art or cultural practices on their own terms but judges them according to the social and ethical values of the class ethos. Bourdieu sees his work as part of an essentially political effort to legitimize this implicit aesthetic against all current formalisms.

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<sup>8</sup> See, Bourdieu, “The Aristocracy of Culture” *Media, Culture and Society*, 2 1980 b, p.237.

In Bourdieu's own words:

If circus or melodrama (which are recreated by some sporting spectacles such as wrestling and, to a lesser extent, boxing and all forms of team games, such as those which have been televised) are more 'popular' than entertainment like dancing or theatre, this is not merely because, being less formalized (as is seen, for example, by comparing acrobatics with dancing) and less euphemized, they offer more direct, more immediate satisfactions. It is also because, through the collective gatherings they give rise to and the array of spectacular delights they offer (I am thinking also of the music-hall, the operetta or the big feature film)—fabulous de'cors, glittering costumes, exciting music, lively action, enthusiastic actors—like all forms of the comic and especially those working through satire or parody of the 'great' (mimics, *chansonniers*, etc.), they satisfy the taste for and sense of revelry, the free speaking and hearty laughter which liberate by setting the social world head over heels, overturning conventions and proprieties.<sup>9</sup>

At the heart of Bourdieu's theory lies the notion of "misrecognition," or "me'connaissance."<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu argues that a collective "misrecognition" of the objective reality of social practices is necessary to maintain social order. In *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), he describes how the society must deny the fundamentally economic nature of certain institutions—marriage, gift-giving, the "disinterested" pursuit of science and the

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<sup>9</sup> See Bourdieu, "The Aristocracy of Culture," p.239.

<sup>10</sup> In *Distinction* Richard Nice explains the concept in the following way: "Misrecognition" (me'connaissance) combines subjective non-recognition (blindness) with objective recognition (legitimation); for example, a teacher who observes his pupils' 'gifts,' or lack of them, and who imagines he is indifferent to social class, objectively helps to legitimate the causes and effects of cultural inequality (translator). *Distinction*, p.566. Endnote 46.

arts—in order for those activities to function successfully in maintaining social hierarchies. Furthermore, in analyzing collective misrecognition, Bourdieu shows how the division of knowledge into mutually exclusive categories of the objective and the subjective is problematic. For instance, to an observer who is viewing the practice of the gift-exchange from outside, the practice is reversible, i.e., requiring a reciprocation of the gift received. On the other hand, the agent who is either giving or receiving the gift may not categorize his or her experience as reversible (this might be categorized as the subjective experience of the person). In fact, as Bourdieu shows it is important that the agent mask that the practice is reversible by following a sequence of actions and beliefs, which will make the practice, appear irreversible. Some of these include the practice of keeping a time-lapse between the gift and the counter-gift, not offering the same item as the counter-gift, and not linking the gifts in a mechanical fashion. For instance, if one receives a gift at the birth of one's baby, the gift need not be reciprocated for the same event. Furthermore, Bourdieu points out that the entire practice of the exchange of gifts, whether it be words, challenges, or women--must allow that each of these inaugural acts of gift-giving may misfire, and that the process will receive its meaning, from the responses it triggers off. And if the response is a failure to reply, in that case, its intended meaning will be removed retrospectively.

Bourdieu points out that the important point, however, is that even though the meaning the gift has for the donor is recognized only when the counter-gift has been made, it does not amount to restoring the structure of the cycle of reciprocity. It means that even if reversibility is the objective truth of the discrete acts as understood by the ordinary experience of an observer, it is not the whole truth of a practice. More importantly, this truth would not exist if it were consciously perceived in accordance with the model. According to Bourdieu, the temporal structure of the gift exchange, which objectivism ignores, is what

makes possible the coexistence of two opposing truths, which defines the full truth of the gift.<sup>11</sup> The full truth requires the (individual and collective) misrecognition or (me'connaissance) of the reality of the objective "mechanism" of the exchange and helps maintain the social order. It allows and authorizes the deliberate oversight, the collectively maintained and approved self-deception, of what Bourdieu calls, "the fake circulation of the fake coin."<sup>12</sup> Everything takes place as if the agent's practice, and in particular their manipulation of time, were organized exclusively with a view to concealing from themselves and from others the truth of their practice. However, the irony, as Bourdieu insightfully shows, is that the anthropologist is able to uncover this process from the outside by simply substituting a timeless and narrowly objective model for a scheme that works only in and through time.<sup>13</sup>

#### **DISINTERESTEDNESS IN THE AESTHETIC: A MISRECOGNITION**

This practice of misrecognition, Bourdieu argues, is also central to understanding the aesthetic. A disinterested engagement with the arts, according to which subjects need to distance themselves from the sensuous and material desires in order to contemplate on aesthetic and formal qualities, according to Bourdieu is a form of misrecognition. For Bourdieu, "disinterestedness" serves a specific purpose; the misrecognition of the arts as disinterested in capital is what enables its conversion into capital. In addition to this, Bourdieu claims that this misrecognition reinforces the existing power structures of exclusion and domination in society and claims that the "disinterested" pursuit of the arts is in fact deeply "interested." Bourdieu explains that disinterestedness is a form of economic power,

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<sup>11</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p.5.

<sup>12</sup> *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p.6.



“which is first and foremost a power to keep economic necessity at arm’s length.”<sup>14</sup> In explaining this, Bourdieu quotes Weber, who characterized bourgeois life as divided into two pursuits: industry and art -- the world of economic necessity and the world of artistic freedom that is snatched, by economic power, from that necessity. Bourdieu explains that the, “...consumption of works of art constitutes one of the supreme manifestations of *ease*, in the sense of both objective leisure and subjective facility.”<sup>15</sup> This access to ease legitimizes power and claims superiority over those who remain dominated by ordinary interests and urgencies. Through this misrecognition, both the agents practicing the arts and the society at large mask the material conditions, which allow for the existence of arts. In Bourdieu’s own words:

The aesthetic disposition which tends to bracket off the nature and function of the object represented and to exclude any ‘naïve’ reaction—horror at the horrible, desire for the desirable, pious reverence for the sacred—along with all purely ethical responses, in order to concentrate solely upon the mode of representation, the style, perceived and appreciated by comparison with other styles, is one dimension of a total relation to the world and to others, a life-style, in which the effects of particular conditions of existence are expressed in a ‘misrecognizable’ form. These conditions of existence, which are the precondition for all learning of legitimate culture, whether implicit and diffuse, as domestic cultural training generally is, or explicit and specific, as in scholastic training, are characterized by the suspension and removal of economic necessity and by objective and subjective distance from practical urgencies, which is the basis of objective and subjective distance from groups subjected to those determinisms.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p.6.

<sup>14</sup> *Distinction*, p.55

<sup>15</sup> *Distinction*, p.55.

<sup>16</sup> *Distinction*, p.54.

Furthermore, Bourdieu contends that, “this claim to aristocracy is less likely to be contested than any other, because of the relation of the “pure” and “disinterested” disposition to the conditions which make it possible, i.e., the material conditions of existence which are rarest because most freed from economic necessity, has every chance of passing unnoticed. The most “classifying” privilege has the privilege of appearing to be the most natural one.”<sup>17</sup> In critiquing judgment and taste, Bourdieu’s project is to undermine Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*. In the final chapter entitled, “Postscript: Towards a ‘Vulgar’ Critique of ‘Pure’ Critiques,” Bourdieu writes:

“‘Pure’ taste and the aesthetics which provides its theory are founded on a refusal of ‘impure’ taste and of *aisthesis* (sensation), the simple, primitive form of pleasure reduced to a pleasure of the senses, as in what Kant calls the taste of the tongue, the palate and the throat,’ a surrender to immediate sensation which in another order looks like imprudence. At the risk of seeming to indulge in the ‘facile effects’ which ‘pure taste’ stigmatizes, it could be shown that the whole language of aesthetics is contained in a fundamental refusal of the *facile*, in all the meanings which bourgeois ethics and aesthetics give to the word;<sup>2</sup> that ‘pure taste,’ purely negative in its essence, is based on the disgust that is often called ‘visceral’ (it ‘makes one sick’ or ‘makes one vomit’) for everything that is ‘facile’ – facile music, or a facile stylistic effect, but also ‘easy virtue’ or an ‘easy lay.’”<sup>18</sup>

In his defense of the popular aesthetic, Bourdieu claims that, “it is no accident that, when one sets about reconstructing its logic, the popular ‘aesthetic’ appears as the negative opposite of the Kantian aesthetic and that popular ethos implicitly answers each proposition of the *Analytic of the Beautiful* with a thesis contradicting it.”<sup>19</sup> He contends that unlike the pure taste’s disinterest in function, and in moral and implications of judgments, “working-

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<sup>17</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.56.

<sup>18</sup> *Distinction*, p.486.

<sup>19</sup> See Bourdieu, “The Aristocracy of Culture,” *Media, Culture and Society*, 2, 1980,b, p. 244.

class people, who expect every image to fulfill a *function*, if only that of a sign, refer, often explicitly, to norms of morality and agreeableness, in all their judgments.” For example, Bourdieu explains that “the photograph of dead soldier provokes judgments which, whether positive or negative, are always responses to the reality of the thing represented or to the functions the representations could serve, the horror of war or the denunciation of the horrors of war which the photograph is supposed to produce simply by showing that horror.” Similarly, Bourdieu argues that, “popular naturalism recognizes beauty in the image of a beautiful thing or, more rarely, in a beautiful image of a beautiful thing.... This (popular) ‘aesthetic’ which subordinates the form and the very existence of image to its function is necessarily pluralistic and conditional.”<sup>20</sup>

For Bourdieu, the fundamental questions to ask are these: What makes the work of art a work of art and not a mundane thing or a simple utensil? What makes an artist an artist and not a craftsman or a Sunday painter? What makes a urinal or a wine rack that is exhibited in a museum a work of art? Is it the fact that they are signed by Duchamp, a recognized artist (recognized first and foremost as an artist) and not by a wine merchant or a plumber? If the answer is yes, then, Bourdieu asks, isn’t this simply a matter of replacing the work-of-art-as-fetish with the ‘fetish of the name of the master’? Who, in other words, created the ‘creator’ as a recognized and known producer of fetishes?... That is, what constitutes the stakes in quarrels of attribution and the authority of the expert? Where is one to locate the ultimate principle of the effect of labelling (*sic*), or of naming, or of theory? Where does this ultimate principle, which produces the sacred by introducing difference, division and separation reside?<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.244.

These questions were central to the debate, which arose when Marcel Duchamp introduced readymades into the artworld. Readymades were commonplace prefabricated objects--such as a piece of plumbing, a tool or some other object--isolated from their functional contexts and elevated to the status of art by a mere act of declaration. The most notorious of these was the porcelain urinal, which Duchamp entitled *Fountain* (1917). In removing the urinal from the context in which one normally encounters it—a men’s room or plumbing shop—and placing it in a new “art context,” with a new title and a new identity, Duchamp initiated a debate about a fundamental issue: What is it that distinguishes art from non-art?

In response to this, Arthur C. Danto wrote, Why should this urinal “be an artwork when something else exactly ‘like’ this, namely ‘that’—referring now to the class of unredeemed urinals—are just pieces of industrial plumbing?”<sup>22</sup>

According to Danto:

1. To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld...

What in the end makes a difference between a Brillo Box and a work of art consisting of a Brillo Box is a certain theory of art. It is the theory that takes it up into the world

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<sup>21</sup> *Field of Cultural Production*, p.258

<sup>22</sup> Arthur C. Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 14.

of art and keeps it from collapsing into the real object which it is... It is the role of artistic theories these days, as always, to make the artworld, and art, possible.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, according to Danto, interpretation is essential to the existence of a work of art. For him, this question lay at the heart of all philosophical problems, that is, of cases where we have indiscernibles belonging to different philosophical kinds, in which there is a difference, but not a natural one. In fact, indiscernible objects become "quite different and distinct works of art by dint of distinct and different interpretations." By raising this philosophical question, Danto argued that Duchamp's work implies that "art already is philosophy in vivid form, and has now discharged its spiritual mission by revealing the philosophical essence at its heart."

Octavio Paz, Mexican poet, also advocated a similar view.

"The Readymades are not anti-art...but rather "an-artistic." Neither art nor anti-art, but something in between, indifferent, existing in a void... Their interest is not plastic but critical or philosophical. It would be senseless to argue about their beauty or their ugliness, and secondly because they are not creations but signs, questioning or negating the art of creation. The Readymade... is a jibe at what we call valuable. It is criticism in action."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld" *The Journal of Philosophy* 61, no.19 (October 15, 1964), pp. 580-581.

<sup>24</sup> Octavio Paz, *Marcel Duchamp, Appearance Stripped Bare*, trans. Rachel Phillips and Donald Gardner (New York: Seaver Books, 1978), p. 22.

In Bourdieu's argument, however, the role of theory and institutions in art is critiqued. Bourdieu argues that the power to justify one's taste is in itself an institution and points out that through their justifications, tastes operate purely negatively. Bourdieu writes that, "tastes are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference. It is no accident that, when they have to be justified, they are asserted purely negatively, by the refusal of other tastes." In matters of taste, more than anywhere else, Bourdieu contends, "that all determination is negation; and tastes are first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance ('sick-making') of the tastes of others."<sup>25</sup> For this reason, Bourdieu argues that the theoretical and institutional distinctions between "pure taste" and "facile and visceral taste" need to be dissolved. In so doing, Bourdieu contends that the difference between the subject and object dissolves and freedom from class distinctions is achieved. Bourdieu argues that, "in such experiences as those of horror and disgust in which there is "a sort of reduction to animality, corporeality, the belly and sex... removing any difference between those who resist with all their might and those who wallow in pleasure, who enjoy enjoyment," there is a possibility of the removal of the distance, in which freedom is asserted from interest in domination."<sup>26</sup>

But if we are to break the distance, between art and everyday, can we agree that there is no difference between a work of literature and our everyday conversations? Or more specifically, that there is no difference between Duchamp's urinal and another everyday urinal. The problem is that in analyzing taste as a principle for classification and domination, Bourdieu's definition of taste also remains singular. While it is important to analyze taste and its interest in classification and domination, it is equally important not to locate the reason for

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<sup>25</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.56.

<sup>26</sup> *Distinction*, p.489.

the “distancing” of art from everyday life too easily in interest in domination. What are the philosophical justifications offered for “disinterestedness” in aesthetic theory? Bourdieu’s rigorous empirical and theoretical analysis successfully demonstrates how taste classifies, and how it reinforces existing power structures; but it also lacks references to any tradition of philosophical and literary aesthetics. He avowedly states that “aesthetics” implies that “corpus of cultivated discourse on culture” from which a deliberate amnesia needs to be developed. It is impossible to review the entire discourse on aesthetics here, however, it is important to clarify Kantian claims about disinterestedness, since Bourdieu specifically critiques Kant in *Distinction*.

## DISINTERESTEDNESS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF FREEDOM

Bourdieu’s *Distinction: Social Critique of Judgment of Taste* represents a complete antithesis of Kant’s ideas expressed in his *Critique of Judgment*. In this section, I will deal with only those Kantian claims about the disinterested nature of aesthetic experience and its relationship to freedom, which Bourdieu criticizes. My aim here is not to propose Kantian ideas as representing a resolution to our contemporary postmodern predicament, but to clarify certain issues which will help us to understand the cognitive nature of the aesthetic. In Kant’s thinking, the capacity for disinterest and disengagement is intimately connected to freedom.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> According to Kant, when we think of acting “under the Idea of Freedom,” we cannot think of ourselves as being determined by “alien causes” that includes being determined by our own desires, as well as other contingent and variable forces of nature. As Kant says, “Never to choose except in such a way that in the same volition the maxims of your action are also present as universal Law (G, IV, 440).” The thought is roughly that if there are beings who can choose freely, in the sense that their

When we think of ourselves as free at all, we must think of ourselves as capable of "stepping back" from the desires we happen to have, and deciding whether to act on them or not. The power of choice must include a power of self-determination. This self-determination rejects both subordination to a person's own desires and to external contingencies.

In Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, disinterestedness in the arts points to this basic capacity of humans to distance themselves from contingent factors. In the case of the aesthetic, this contingency also includes the presence or absence of the art object. In other words, according to Kant, a "real" physical interaction with the art object is not a precondition for the enjoyment of aesthetic beauty. Kant explicitly states this:

If anyone asks me whether I consider that the palace I see before me is beautiful, I may perhaps reply that I do not care for things of that sort which are merely made to be gaped at. Or I may reply in the same strain as the Iroquois sachem who said that nothing in Paris pleased him better than the eating houses. I may even go a step further and inveigh with the vigour of a Rousseau against the vanity of the great who spend the sweat of the people on such superfluous things....All this may be admitted and approved, only it is not the point now at issue. All one wants to know is whether the mere representation of the object is to my liking. It is quite plain in order to say that the object is beautiful, and to show that I have taste, every thing turns on the

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choosing can be lawlike yet not determined by alien causes, they must be capable of imposing lawlikeness on their actions, that is, of acting on universalizable maxims." To review Kant's ideas on freedom see, "Transition from a Metaphysics of Morals to a Critique of Pure Practical Reason," *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals in Ethical Philosophy*, translated by James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.), 1994 (second edition), pp. 49-62. For a clear analysis of Kant's concepts of freedom and autonomy, see, Onara O'Neill, "Reason and autonomy in Grundlegung III," and "Action, anthropology and autonomy," in *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's practical philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 5--66.



meaning which I can give to this representation, and not on any factor which makes me dependent on the real existence of the object.<sup>28</sup>

A number of postmodern theorists have drawn upon this passage from Kant's third critique and have described this as emblematic of the "virtual" postmodern condition. This does not, however, mean that Kant denies causal interaction between the subject and the object; it only implies that causal relationship between the subject and object is not a necessary condition for an aesthetic judgment to form. The capacity for a disinterested engagement allows the subject to distance herself from the physical presence of the art object and develop perceptual possibilities that do not necessarily depend on any physical attributes. Pure aesthetic judgment, according to Kant, is a manifestation of the individual's free choice in terms of how he or she adapts to and develops the different perceptual possibilities presented by a formal configuration.<sup>29</sup> Kant emphasizes that in making aesthetic judgments, we act independently of the causal framework of nature, but at the same time our relation to nature is enriched.

### **AESTHETIC JUDGMENT: SUBJECTIVE AND UNIVERSAL?**

A central concern of Kant's is to explore the role of "aesthetic" as a mode of communication between individuals. Kant's discussion in the *Critique of Judgment* hinges on the following question: In view of the evident subjectivity of aesthetic judgments, how is their implicit claim to universal validity legitimized?

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<sup>28</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Press, MacMillan, 1951), (Sec. 2), p.38.

<sup>29</sup> For a detailed argument, see, Paul Crowther, 'The significance of Kant's pure aesthetic judgement,' *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 36, April 1996, pp. 109--121.

In Kant's own words:

"Its [aesthetic judgment's] peculiarity consists in the fact that, although it has merely subjective validity, it claims its assent of *all* subjects, exactly as it would do if it were an objective judgment resting on grounds of knowledge that could be established by proof."<sup>30</sup>

Kant argues that it is the "disinterested" nature of aesthetic satisfaction that allows it to be universally shared. The claim to universality here refers to the basic capacity for "disengagement" that all humans possess.<sup>31</sup> This capacity enables the subjects to "distance" themselves from their own viewpoint and develop a different viewpoint. Disengagement is an experience of freedom from interest and prejudice. This process of "stepping back" and exercising the power to choose a viewpoint; thus self-determining one's judgment after rational deliberation is also consistent with Kantian ideas of freedom. In this exercise of freedom, Kant sees a potential for universality. For he writes:

For since it does not rest on any inclination of the subject (nor upon any premeditated interest), but since the person who judges feels himself quite *free* as regards the satisfaction which he attaches to the object, he cannot find ground of this satisfaction in any private conditions connected with his own subject, and hence it must be regarded as grounded on what he can presuppose in every other person.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Kant, Sec. 34, p.127.

<sup>31</sup> Kant explains that "if cognitions are to admit of communicability, so must also the state of mind -- i.e. the accordance of the cognitive powers with a cognition generally and that proportion of them which is suitable for a representation (by which an object is given to us) in order that a cognition may be made out of it -- admit of universal communicability" (Sec. 20, p.75).

<sup>32</sup> Sec. 6, p.46.

Kant's claim to universality here does not deny that aesthetic judgments are "subject" specific, but it argues that despite their subjective specificity, they are universally communicable.<sup>33</sup>

In order to understand this, let us consider the following dialogue between A and B.

A : The Bilbao Museum by Frank Gehry is the most beautiful building built in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

B : How can you say that? That shining titanium surface is so alienating. There is no relationship between the way titanium undulates and the way the building's underlying structure works. All that building's form is -- is sensation. And, not to mention that it is an outrageously expensive building!

A (1) : Well, I just like it.

Or

A (2) : All beautiful buildings do not have to have surfaces that reflect their underlying structural frame. The originality of Bilbao lies in that it creates a new aesthetic – of a glistening shining form – that looks as if it is from outer space.

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<sup>33</sup> In his defense of Kantian universalism, Satya P. Mohanty argues that the Kantian argument about human worth or dignity as a universal phenomenon does not and should not depend on knowledge of any particularity, since the argument defends a radical principle. In this, abstraction from social and historical context is in fact necessary. Contextual specification (such as the subject's response and the presence of art objects), Mohanty argues, is precisely what is demanded by this claim to universalize. Although Mohanty clarifies that it does not depend upon such specification for support of its basic claim to universal communicability. See Satya P. Mohanty, "Colonial Legacies, Multicultural Futures: Relativism, Objectivity, and the Challenge of Otherness." *PMLA*, 1995, p. 117, End note 10.

B (1) in response to A (2) : All right, I agree that all good buildings do not have to respect and reflect their underlying structure. I also agree that perhaps Bilbao does represent a different aesthetic and yet I can't help but feel alienated by this whole phenomenon of Bilbao. Perhaps it is the media attention that makes me feel that way.

Now, in the above conversation, it is quite all right for A to reply as in 1, "Well I just like it," but since B's reasons are so obviously arguable such a reply can be seen as a retreat to personal taste.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, if A chooses to reply as in 2, the reply would still be a response justifying subjective feelings, but it would not be a personal retreat. In 2 A's judgments are argumentative and open to counter arguments. In distinguishing "aesthetic" judgment from the merely subjective and personal tastes, Kant claims that:

The case is quite different with the beautiful. It would (on the contrary) be laughable if a man who imagined anything to his own taste thought to justify himself by saying: "This object (the house we see, the coat that person wears, the concert we hear, the poem submitted to our judgment) is beautiful for *me*." For he must not call it beautiful if it merely pleases him. Many things may have for him charm and pleasantness—no one troubles himself at that—but if he gives out anything as beautiful, he supposes in others the same satisfaction; he judges not merely for himself, but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as it were a property of things.<sup>35</sup>

It is true that one is more likely to claim that "this is a good work of art," rather than saying "this is a good work of art for me." What does it mean to say that, "this is a good work of art." Does it mean that this claim is universal – true for everyone? And then, on the other hand, what happens if one relativizes one's judgment and claims that, "this is a good work of

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<sup>34</sup> See Stanley Cavell, "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," in his *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 91-92.

<sup>35</sup> Sec. 7, p. 47.

art for me”? M.W. Rowe in an article, “The objectivity of aesthetic judgments,” argues that if we use the relativized form of judgment, then no critical dispute would be invited; it would be tantamount to saying, “I have my way of looking at it, you have yours, so let’s leave it like that.”<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, when one makes a judgment of the form, “this is a good work of art,” then the possibility of argumentation remains. In fact, F.R. Leavis explains it most clearly:

A judgment is personal and spontaneous or it is nothing. But to say that it is ‘spontaneous’ is not to say that it may not be prompted from another; and to say that it is ‘personal’ is not to say it merely means that. The form of the judgment is ‘This is so, isn’t it?’ the question asking for confirmation that the thing is so, but prepared for an answer of the form, ‘Yes, but –,’ the but standing for corrections, refinements, precisions(sic), amplifications. The judgments...may be ‘value-judgments’ but they are in intention universal.<sup>37</sup>

That judgments of taste are personal and spontaneous, but at the same time in their intention they are universal is central to Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*. This claim to universality, which distinguishes aesthetic tastes from other mere personal, likes and dislikes, needs to be examined more clearly. It appears from the above discussion that, the aesthetic judgment’s implicit claim to universality in fact allows for a possibility of restructuring a subject’s perceptions.

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<sup>36</sup> “The objectivity of aesthetic judgments,” by M.W. Rowe in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol 39, No.1, January 1999, pp.40–52., p.51.

Here one is reminded of the gift-exchange example discussed by Bourdieu in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977).<sup>38</sup> In that example, Bourdieu shows that even though understanding the practice of gift-exchange as reversible, is the objective truth for an ordinary observer; it is not the whole truth of the practice. Comprehending the full truth requires the (individual and collective) misrecognition or (*me'connaissance*) and a deliberate oversight of the reality of the objective "mechanism" of the exchange; which Bourdieu argues helps maintain the social order. In the above analysis also the experience of a subject is described in a language that makes it appear universally valid; and this is what allows it to be confronted and questioned by other subjects. Therefore, a statement such as "X is beautiful" which to an ordinary observer may appear to be implying that X is beautiful for everyone is in fact, not the full truth of this statement. On the contrary, this form, "X is beautiful" allows it to be rationally deliberated, and objectively contested.

Bourdieu also points out that such "misunderstanding" is inherent in the knowledge gained when one argues about taste.

If one can always argue about taste (and everyone knows that confrontations regarding preferences play an important role in daily conversation) then it is certain that communication in these matters takes place only with a high degree of misunderstanding. That is so precisely because the commonplaces which make communication possible are the same ones that make it practically ineffective.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See F.R. Leavis, "Thought, Language and Objectivity," in *The Living Principle* (London 1975), p.35.

<sup>38</sup> The idea of misrecognition pervades Bourdieu's critique of taste in *Distinction*. However, he does not elaborate on the concept as extensively as he does in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) and *The Logic of Practice* (1990). For instance, Bourdieu contends that taste is a form of distaste. But unlike his discussion in the gift exchange example, in which he discusses cognitive possibilities of a broad understanding of objectivity, he does not elaborate upon how aesthetic experience can be a source of objective or subjective knowledge.

<sup>39</sup> Bourdieu, "The historical genesis of a pure aesthetic," in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Randal Johnson (ed.), (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p.262.

In order to understand “misunderstanding” as a form of knowing, we need to examine the role of aesthetic in knowledge formation more clearly.

## **ANALYTIC AESTHETICS AND COGNITION**

The writings of Nelson Goodman, Catherine Elgin, and Iris Murdoch, of the Anglo-American school of analytic aesthetics, provide a theory of knowledge which rejects both absolutism and nihilism, both unique truth and indistinguishability of truth from falsity.<sup>40</sup> These writers point to the ways in which our aesthetic experience and our conflicts about aesthetic judgments can be cognitive. More importantly, while accepting the postmodern claims about the notions of truth, rationality and the aesthetic are constructed – that is, they transform with increased knowledge as well as political or social context -- they argue that constructedness does not ipso facto make them arbitrary or unstable. In doing so, they provide an alternative to both modern essentialism and postmodern skepticism.

Nelson Goodman’s central concern, in his books *Languages of Art* (1976), *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978), and *Reconceptions* (co-authored with Catherine Elgin, 1988), is to

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<sup>40</sup> The work of philosophers such as Nelson Goodman and Catherine Elgin distinguishes itself from an earlier analytic tradition, represented by William Elton, Arnold Isenberg, Paul Ziff and Frank Sibley whose work was restricted to a systematic and sometimes even a scientific study of the different arts. On aesthetic experientialism in architecture, see Mark Jarzombek, "De-scribing the language of Looking: Wolfflin and the history of Aesthetic Experientialism" *Assemblage* no.23 Cambridge: MIT Press, April 1994, pp.28-69 and "Ready-made traces in the sand: the sphinx, the chimera and other discontents in the practice of theory" *Assemblage* no.19, Cambridge: MIT Press, December 1992, pp.72-95.

show how the seemingly impassable barriers between the arts and the sciences, the verbal and the non verbal, the affective and the cognitive are passable. Aesthetics, according to Goodman, is a branch of epistemology. Goodman explains that by tradition, the only statements that constitute knowledge are those deductively or inductively derivable from literal basic sentences; so the understanding and insight gained from metaphorical statements or other figurative symbols is likewise excluded. Central to Goodman's work is an understanding that art performs a variety of referential functions. In *Languages of Art*, Goodman describes these qualities of the aesthetic:<sup>41</sup>

- 1) **Syntactic density:** a work of art contains an undefined number of symbols. The symbol system that a work belongs to has indefinitely many symbols, so that between any two there is a third. There is no claim that all of these symbols occur within a single work. Rather the point is, that if there are infinitely fine differences between symbols of the system, it is not clear exactly which symbol belongs to the work.
  
- 2) **Syntactic repleteness:** symbols function along relatively many dimensions. That is, relatively many of their features or aspects perform symbolic functions. We cannot say that only ten, or a thousand, symbols are significant in an artwork, and the rest are superfluous. There is no feasible way to quantify the number of aspects a symbol has.

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<sup>41</sup> *Languages of Art*, p.251.



- 3) **Semantic density:** The field of reference of a symbol system is such that between any two reference classes there is a third. All language is semantically dense and therefore paraphrase is impossible; the problem of paraphrase stems from repleteness.

The main thrust of Goodman's argument is this: multiple references in art are metaphorical; metaphors resist literal paraphrase, but they are cognitive and can be evaluated. According to Goodman, "a building may express feelings it does not feel, ideas it cannot think or state, activities it cannot perform. That the ascription of certain properties to a building in such cases is metaphorical does not amount merely to its being literally false, for metaphorical truth is as distinct from metaphorical falsity as is literal truth from literal falsity. A Gothic cathedral that soars and sings does not equally droop and grumble. Although both statements are literally false, the former, but not the latter is metaphorically true."<sup>42</sup>

In fact, Goodman contends that understanding a work of art is not a matter of appreciating it, or finding beauty in it, or having an "aesthetic experience" of it. On the contrary, it is much like understanding an utterance or inscription. Understanding a work of art consists of interpreting it "correctly." For Goodman, this question is formidable; for a work may be right or wrong in many different ways, and rightness reaches far beyond truth which pertains to verbal statements alone. But that multiple statements may be right despite conflicting with each other implies no policy of laissez-faire. Goodman cautions that this makes standards distinguishing right from wrong versions become more rather than less important.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Reconceptions*, Goodman and Elgin, p.40.

Goodman shows how categories may be right or wrong even though, not being sentences, they are neither true nor false. He cites this example to illustrate this. Having been ordered to shoot anyone who moved, the guard shot all his prisoners, contending that they were all moving rapidly around the sun. Although true, his contention was plainly wrong, for it involved an inappropriate category of motion. A true sentence can thus be wrong through using inappropriate categories and a false one partially right through using appropriate ones.<sup>44</sup>

Goodman clarifies that to construe works of art as symbols and the aesthetic attitude as a quest for understanding might seem to anaestheticize art. But it does not. The feelings that a work of art evokes are sources of understanding. In the arts, Goodman maintains emotions function cognitively. The crucial question, Goodman stresses is not, "What is art?" but, "When is art? The status of a line as an electrocardiogram or a drawing depends on its function. It counts as a work so long as it functions as an aesthetic symbol. And it may function aesthetically at some time and not at others.

Iris Murdoch in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992) emphasizes the role imagination plays in rational choice. Murdoch defines imagination as "a spontaneous intuitive capacity to put together what is presented to us so as to form a coherent spatio-temporal experience which is intellectually ordered and sensuously based. She stresses that "perception itself is a mode of evaluation," and the role of emotion is central to aesthetic and ethical perception. This definition of imagination differs substantially from the typical lay

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<sup>43</sup> Nelson Goodman, "Fact from Fiction," *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company) 1978, p.107

<sup>44</sup> *Reconceptions*, Goodman, p.52.

conception that imagination paints an unreal world. Murdoch argues that we need imagination to perceive the truth. Instead of truth being a matter of deductive reason, of predicate calculus, where, in justifiable steps, we proceed from already known to the soon-to-be known (major premises to minor premises); Murdoch's argument emphasizes that these "justifiable steps" are not givens, that perceived is very different from the received, and that perception is a complex matter.

Murdoch emphasizes that the concepts of particularity and construction are very essential to both aesthetical and ethical perception and much like Goodman's symptoms of the aesthetic suggest, any kind of abstraction or paraphrase of an artwork will fail because aesthetic as well as ethical perception depend on an imaginative construction of the whole from an indefinite number of particulars.

Similarly, Martha Nussbaum in *Love's Knowledge* points out that while Kantian theory finds imagination something like frivolous flights of fancy that can conflict with duty, Aristotle's view of it placed emphasis upon:

"its selective and discriminatory character rather than upon its capability for free fantasy. Its job is more to focus on reality than to create unreality... whereas the mathematician can safely disregard the imagined features of his or her imagined triangle when she is proving a theorem about triangles, the person of practical wisdom will not neglect the concrete deliverances of the imagination when thinking about virtue and goodness. Instead of ascending from particular to general, deliberative imagination links particulars without dispensing their particularity."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See Martha Nussbaum, "The Discernment of Perception: An Aristotelian Conception of Private and Public Rationality," *Love's Knowledge: Essays on*

According to Murdoch, imagination plays a central role in rational thought and, “when we settle down to be “thoroughly rational” about a situation, we have already reflectively or unreflectively, imagined it in a certain way. Our deepest imaginings which structure the world in which ‘moral judgments’ occur are already evaluations. Perception itself is a mode of evaluation.”<sup>46</sup>

### **ARISTOTLE’S IDEA OF PRACTICAL REASON**

The major philosophical argument underlying Goodman, Elgin and Murdoch’s argument is that the Aristotelian notion of “practical reasoning” is central to our understanding the cognitive role of aesthetic experience. Drawing upon this understanding, I argue that our aesthetic experience involves a combination of aesthetic perception, evaluation and cognition. It relies on the discernment of a dense particularity of human feeling not adequately theorized by the “rational” thought of positivism. Rationality herein is understood broadly; it is not opposed to passion. This broader understanding of rationality is central to the Aristotelian idea of practical reasoning in which both emotions and imagination are essential to rational choice. The distinction between practical reasoning and deductive reasoning is as follows: In contrast to deductive reasoning in which a conclusion follows necessarily from the stated premises, practical reasoning leads to action. In practical reasoning, one cannot proceed from stated premises to a conclusion, as there is no general positive premise of the form “Always do X.”

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*Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 77-78.

In order to understand this distinction, and how practical reasoning leads to action, let us review, G.E.M. Anscombe's imitation of a classroom example of Aristotle, published in *Intention* (1966). For instance, let us imagine that a person is reasoning along these lines<sup>47</sup>:

Vitamin X is good for all men over 60.

Pigs' tripes are full of Vitamin X.

I am a man over 60.

Here are some pigs' tripes.

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***Conclusion***

I should have some pigs' tripes. (X)

What's here is good for me. (✓)

Now we are likely to believe that this individual will conclude from the above premises that "I should have some pigs' tripes." Anscombe points out that if we look at this example carefully, we will see that the only logical conclusion that this person can draw is "What's here is good for me." But "What's here is good for me," is far from meaning, "I should have some." Furthermore, the reason why we cannot draw "I should have some" from the above premises is because we cannot construct sane premises that yield this conclusion.

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<sup>46</sup> Murdoch, p. 314

<sup>47</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press 1966), pp. 57-62.

Suppose we alter the universal premise slightly.

"It is necessary for all men over 60 to eat all the food containing Vitamin X that they ever come across."

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**Conclusion**

I should have some (√)

In this case, the individual can conclude, "I should have some." The only problem is that the above universal premise is an insane one. In this Aristotelian counter example, Anscombe shows that in reasoning that leads to action one cannot proceed from stated premises to a conclusion as there is no general positive premise of the form "Always do X."

<sup>48</sup>Another example illustrating this point is this: a statement such as "Always park your car in space no. 10," cannot be taken as a starting point for reasoning what to do, unless this statement is hemmed in by particular clauses such as "if it is available" or "if it is a weekend or a holiday." Aristotle points out that such modifying clauses can be infinite. Practical reasoning requires an imaginative construction of the whole from an indefinite number of particulars and this process of construction is active.

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<sup>48</sup> For more on Aristotle's notions of practical reason, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1985) 1147a, 27-28; G.E.M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966) Sec 33, 57-63; and Martha C. Nussbaum "The Discernment of Perception: An Aristotelian Conception of Private and Public Rationality" *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 54 - 105.

I use this understanding to argue that practical reasoning is inherent to our aesthetic experience. Although aesthetic experiences do not necessarily eventuate in an action, they are forms of reasoning that involves deliberation. In claiming this, I want to stress that we have the capacity to justify and describe what our experience is about and this involves an informal process of deliberation. We are not passive. We do not merely “experience” objects, which inhabit a separate realm (as explained by the familiar object-subject split). We are active. Our aesthetic experience involves "taking responsibility" for a rational justification of the acts, feelings, perceptions experienced. Thus, they are open to transformation by rational criticism. Thus in contrast to sensations such as the beating of one's heart, our attitudes toward and our beliefs about architecture are intentional states of mind. Intentional states of mind have a direction; the inclination to do something is one sub-category of these states. Our aesthetic experience is intentional because it includes a conception of the object, which it focuses upon, and because of this we have the capacity to justify our experience of that particular object rationally.

A judgment like "The Bilbao Museum is metaphorically an alien organism" distinguishes itself from mere explanation in that it has an ability to change experience through arguments grounded in particulars. By the time we come to perceive the Bilbao Museum in this way, we have already deliberated about it. The gleaming effervescence of its exterior, the emerging forms of metal, an understanding that these forms were all generated by using sophisticated computer software and therefore the building metaphorically defies human capacities – all these particulars contribute to our "reading" of the Bilbao.

Such an interpretation of the Bilbao Museum highlights the fact that our judgments are not abstract statements directly complicit with politics, as argued by the postmodernists.

Our judgments, on the contrary, are grounded in particulars. It is the judgments' ability to change through, and be changed by, arguments grounded in particulars that provides a cue to understanding their rational character and their resistance to politics.

Let us once again examine the exchange that took place between A and B. When A chooses not to retreat to “I just like it,” she is able to justify her experience of the Bilbao (which according to her is the most beautiful building of the twentieth-century) through particulars which have the ability to influence B’s judgment. Similarly, although B agrees with one of A’s claims that it is not necessary for the titanium-clad surface to reflect the underlying structural frame, B can still choose to argue (with rational justification) that Bilbao’s spectacle alienates her. In this form of reasoning (practical reasoning in Aristotelean terms), both A and B, are able to rationally justify their subjective experiences and engage in a dialogue which is an active (they are not passive subjects) source of knowledge.

I use this scenario to illustrate the larger argument of this chapter that such personal conflicts and arguments bring to the surface the rational character of our experience of architecture. The more important point is that such metaphorical readings of an art object or architecture can be infinite. To perceive architecture in its full context, in its replete particularity, one requires imagination to construct the whole. As Murdoch has emphasized, “imagination, herein, plays a central role in the acts of cognition and rational choice and contrasts with the concept of imagination as a flight of fancy. In fact, imagination focuses more on reality than on fancy. Our experiences of this reality are evaluations; they reflect what we hold important, worthy, or fulfilling.” Therefore, in all acts of imaginative reconstruction which are mediated by our social, theoretical, and political knowledge, we make an art object and art accessible and/or inaccessible in new ways. As a result, our



experiences can be susceptible to varying degrees of social constructions, can be more or less correct, and can be subject to normative claims.

## **DAVID HUME: OF THE STANDARD OF TASTE**

In this section, I elaborate upon how our aesthetic experiences can be subjected to normative evaluation. I argue that there can be standards of taste that are objective; but this does not necessarily imply that these evaluations are sufficient to decide every dispute. In order to illustrate this, I analyze David Hume's famous essay, "Of the Standard of Taste," which has been subjected to scrutiny by the postmodernists. They argue that despite Hume's proposed argument for a "standard of taste, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled," the skeptic's view that each has one's own taste is unavoidable in certain cases.<sup>49</sup>

But notwithstanding all our endeavors to fix a standard of taste, . . . there still remain two sources of variation, which . . . will often serve to produce a difference in the degrees of our approbation or blame. The one is the different humors of particular men; the other, the particular manners and opinions of our age and country. . . . But where there is such a diversity in the internal frame or external situation as is entirely blameless on both sides, and leaves no room to give one the preference above the other; in that case a certain degree of diversity of judgement is unavoidable, and we seek in vain for a standard, by which we can reconcile the contrary sentiments.<sup>50</sup>

Hume acknowledges that aesthetic disagreements can be irreconcilable, but this is true only in certain cases. The key phrase in this paragraph is "diversity in the internal frame

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<sup>49</sup> Barbara Hernstein Smith, "Axiologic Logic," *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p.62.

<sup>50</sup> David Hume, *Of the Standard of Taste and Other Essays* John W. Lenz ed. (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965), pp.19-20.

or external situation as is entirely blameless on both sides." But what does Hume mean here by a situation that is entirely blameless on both sides? And is this blameless situation in which there are diverse and irreconcilable aesthetic judgments a case of relativism? Let us first consider a disagreement in which either side can blame the other as having some form of cognitive deficiency. According to Hume, lack of practice, failure of comparisons, personal prejudice and so forth, could well be forms of cognitive deficiencies to which one could attribute a lack of aesthetic understanding and the cause of disagreement. However, in another context, wherein two persons with comparable cognitive capabilities value different properties, Hume acknowledges that aesthetic judgments can be irreconcilable and blameless.<sup>51</sup> The fact that this disagreement is not resolvable does not imply that no standards are involved; on the contrary it reinforces the centrality and plurality of aesthetic values which underlie diverse tastes.

The more important point, however, is that while recognizing the common proposition that beauty "exists merely in the mind that contemplates" Hume also recognizes "common sense which opposes it."<sup>52</sup> This common sense emphasizes that established critical consensus, shared practices of critical discernment, comparative knowledge of different artistic traditions, and the suppression of overt personal or cultural prejudice, all serve the attainment of a "standard of taste by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> In such contexts, Hume writes, "The ear of this man is entirely turned toward conciseness and energy; that man is delighted with a copious, rich, and harmonious expression. Simplicity is affected by one; ornament by another. . . . Such preferences are innocent and unavoidable, and can never reasonably be the object of dispute, because there is no standard by which they can be decided. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Hume also combats relativism by discussing qualification for judges.<sup>54</sup> He cites a story from Don Quixote: In pretending to possess a hereditary ability to distinguish the finer qualities of wine, Sancho relates that, two of his kinsmen pronounced a certain hogshead excellent. One qualified his claim by noting a light taste of leather, while the other disagreed, arguing for a slight taste of iron. When the hogshead was emptied there was found in it an old iron key attached to a leather thong. Hume's description does not help the ordinary person in the arts identify judges in such a practical way that the discovery of the key on the leather thong helped identify Sancho's kinsmen as wine experts. He does, however, suggest that judges are individuals who, "when left to themselves, have but a faint and dubious perception of beauty, who yet are capable of relishing any fine stroke, which is pointed out to them."<sup>55</sup> Such judges may or may not exemplify all of Hume's abstract criteria, but the fact that they can point to a feature of artwork which can help enlarge one's understanding of the art object is the best evidence of their qualifications. Moreover, it is certain that, from Hume's point of view all judges will be flawed in some respect or other.<sup>56</sup> In any case, it is evident from the above discussion that judgments legitimated by Hume's methods have neither the binding force of *a priori* reasoning nor can they be practically applied. Nevertheless, he recognizes that exchange of knowledge through experience can be rational, and that collective consensus

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 5-7.

<sup>54</sup> According to Hume, "Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, cleared of all prejudice, can only entitle critics to this valuable character; and the joint verdict of such, whenever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty." Ibid., 17.

<sup>55</sup> This is related to two points discussed earlier in this paper: that criticism is not a matter of demonstration but of perceptual proof, bringing someone to see something; And that aesthetic judgments distinguish themselves from mere explanations in that they can provide a justification for changing one's experience.

<sup>56</sup> As George Dickie has noted in Hume's parable, Sancho's kinsmen are not fully qualified wine tasters; the one who noticed the iron taste missed the leather taste and the one who noticed the leather taste missed the iron taste. Furthermore, the ability to detect the tastes of iron and leather are not normally associated with expertise in tasting wine. George Dickie, 'Relativism: Hume,' *Evaluating Art* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press) 129-155.

and sustained experience nurture our aesthetic judgments and deepen our capacity to appreciate art.

## AFTERWORD: ON AESTHETIC VALUES

Ever since postmodernism made us aware of how our aesthetic judgments are complicit with class-domination, we have become extremely skeptical of any discussion of values, evaluations and judgments. Such an attitude overlooks the basic evaluations inherent in our capacity to notice things, to make comparisons, to posit connections, and to see architectural forms as intelligible wholes. If we do not recognize how disinterest and disengagement are necessary for exercising aesthetic judgments, and if we continue to embrace popular culture uncritically in the name of freedom from class distinction, we are likely to face a problem similar to the one expressed by Bourdieu in *Distinction*.

These critics will have no answer to Virginia Woolf when she criticizes the novels of Wells, Galsworthy and Bennett because 'they leave one with a strange sense of incompleteness and dissatisfaction' and the feeling that it is 'necessary to do something – to join a society, or, more desperately, to write a cheque,' in contrast to works like *Tristram Shandy* or *Pride and Prejudice*, which, being perfectly self-contained, 'leave one with no desire to do anything, except indeed to read the book again, and to understand it better.'<sup>57</sup>

In order to understand the overlaps and distinctions between "popular" aesthetic and a "disinterested" interest in aesthetic, we need to take our judgments seriously. As Nelson Goodman stresses, "rather than seeking to understand a work in order to evaluate it, we need

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<sup>57</sup> Bourdieu quotes Virginia Woolf in, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown." *Collected Essays* (London, Hogarth Press, 1966), I, 326-327.

to use our evaluations as a source of understanding.” In this we also need to recognize that, we are capable of not just evaluating, but reflecting upon our larger values, say about our moral or political world.<sup>58</sup> Our aesthetic values are forms of practical reasoning and our responses, when we are called upon to justify them, can be deeply emotional and rational.<sup>59</sup> And it is not just that our values are arguable. What is more important is that what we perceive as the "real world" depends upon our values. Our values are characterized by their depth and by the extent to which they bring order to our experience. This capacity for a self-conscious reflection and evaluation of our actions and desires--underlies basic human rationality, crucial to understanding the relationship of aesthetic to politics and ideology. It is important to recognize that the relationship of the aesthetic to the political cannot be theorized by "anti-aestheticizing," as the postmodernists suggest. Instead it is crucial to attain an understanding of the broader role the "aesthetic" plays in our social, moral, and political lives.

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<sup>58</sup> See Charles Taylor, "Responsibility for Self," in *The Identities of Persons* 281-299; Harry Frankfurt, in *The Importance of What We Care About: Philosophical Essays* 80-94; Satya P. Mohanty in *Literary Theory and the Claims of History* 139-142.

<sup>59</sup> On the relationship between deeply emotional experience and rationality, and states of freedom, see Harry Frankfurt, *op cit.*, 89-90.

## Chapter Two

### THE RATIONAL NATURE OF GOTHIC IN JOHN RUSKIN'S WRITINGS

In this chapter, I explore the relationships among John Ruskin's belief in the theological justification of science, his experiments on plant leaves and his theories of Gothic architecture. In the first section, I review the extensive scholarship on Ruskin, the modernist readings, which emphasize the sentimental and moral nature of Ruskin's arguments and the postmodern interpretations, which emphasize the skeptical and contingent nature of his arguments. In the second section, I review the influence of William Buckland and Adam Sedgwick on John Ruskin's thoughts. I examine the nineteenth-century debates in geological science between the Catastrophists and Uniformitarians and how they influenced Ruskin's theories of architecture. In the third section, I examine the relationship between Ruskin's experiments on plant leaves and his theories of Gothic architecture. Both Ruskin's *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1853) were written around the time when Ruskin's desire to ground aesthetics in the science of natural theology was being shaken (See Cook, *The Life of John Ruskin*, 1912, p. 212). I argue that Ruskin's defense of Gothic architecture is not just sentimental moralizing, but is a profoundly articulate theory of architecture, which emphasizes the rational and affective nature of building Gothic forms -- similar to Aristotelian practical reasoning.

The sheer quantity of Ruskin's published and unpublished references to architecture is extremely large. Ruskin's writings that specifically deal with architecture are: *The Poetry of Architecture* (1837-38), *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), *The Stones of Venice* (3 Vols, 1851-53), *St. Mark's Rest* (1877-84), *The Bible of Amiens* (1880-85) and *Lectures on Architecture and Painting* (1854). While *The Seven Lamps* and *The Stones of Venice* are the

main texts on architecture, they contain less than half of his published writing on the subject. In addition to these, there are numerous references to architecture in Ruskin's thirty-nine volumes of the Library Edition. The majority of these references appear as digressions from other subjects. Even the specific texts, which focus on architecture, contain digressive passages in which architecture's relation to morality, social conditions, education, religion, the nature of civilization, and so forth are discussed. The variety of these references confirms the interdisciplinary nature of Ruskin's work and his broad perception of architecture as an art.

*The Poetry of Architecture* Ruskin's first writing was published in *Loudon's Architectural Magazine* in 1837-38. Between 1848 and 1854 Ruskin produced his most ambitious works on architecture, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (3 Vols, 1851-53).<sup>1</sup> In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* Ruskin defined the seven basic principles of architecture as the Seven Lamps. These are the Lamps of Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory and Obedience. In *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin conducted exhaustive research and measurement and related the architectural history of Venice and its moral decline to that of Victorian Britain. Ruskin argued that his countrymen like their contemporaries in Venice who lie "basking in sun like lizards" in the recesses of the porches of St. Mark's were not looking up to read the great missal that lies open above them (10.84).

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<sup>1</sup> Having published the first two volumes of *Modern Painters* in 1843 and 1846, Ruskin apologized to his readers in the preface to the first edition of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) for the delay in the appearance of the third volume. He wrote that it had happened because of his urgent need to obtain "as many memoranda as possible of medieval buildings in Italy and Normandy, now in process of destruction, before that destruction should be consummated by the Restorer, or Revolutionist (8.3)." He traveled to Normandy in 1848 in preparation for *The Seven Lamps* and to Venice during the winters of 1849-50 and 1851-52 for *The Stones of Venice* (3 Vols, 1851-53). Because of Ruskin's focus on his architectural writings, the third volume of *Modern Painters* was not published until 1856. Within this period, Ruskin also published his *Lectures on Architecture and Painting* (1854), as well as his pamphlet on *The Opening of the Crystal Palace* (1854).

According to Ruskin, this neglect of the building, and the lessons of the past, presaged a ruin, which could be as catastrophic as that of Venice or of Tyre (9.17).<sup>2</sup>

## SCHOLARSHIP ON JOHN RUSKIN

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth-century, John Ruskin was accepted as an important literary figure, but by the early twentieth-century, there was a major decline in his reputation. Kenneth Clark has written that, “Ironically, but not exceptionally, the decline in his (Ruskin’s) fame seems to have coincided with the publication of a superb library edition of his works, one of the most thorough and devoted pieces of editing ever undertaken.”<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock admitted that, “Only those writers who, like myself, are concerned with mid-nineteenth-century architectural developments pay much attention to him as a critic of architecture, and, in our writings, the references are quite likely to be no more than recurrent use of the vague term “Ruskinian.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of my research, I have concentrated primarily on Ruskin’s architectural theories in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), *The Stones of Venice* (3 Vols, 1851-53). In addition to these, I have reviewed Ruskin’s biographies (Cook, *The Life of John Ruskin*, 1912) and (W. G. Collingwood, *The Life of John Ruskin*, 1900) and *The Ruskin Family Letters* (Volumes I and II), 1973). I have also occasionally consulted the Library Edition of *The Works of John Ruskin* (39 Volumes), edited by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, published between 1903 and 1912.

For research related to the Oxford Scientists and the nineteenth-century debates between Catastrophists and Uniformitarians, I have reviewed the following primary texts along with the secondary scholarship on these writers. The primary texts, which I have reviewed, are: Robert Chambers’ *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844), William Buckland’s *Geology and Mineralogy Considered with Reference to Natural Theology* (1836), and Adam Sedgwick’s *A Discourse on the Study of the University* (1833).

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Clark, “Introduction” in *Ruskin Today* (London: John Murray), 1964, p. xiv. The famous Library Edition of *The Works of John Ruskin*, edited by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn was published between 1903 and 1912.

<sup>4</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock, “Ruskin and American Architecture,” in *Concerning Architecture* John Summerson ed., (London, 1968), p.168.



There are many reasons for a lack of interest in Ruskin's writings during the early twentieth-century. One of the major reasons for a lack of interest in Ruskin was that most modernist writers considered Ruskin's conceptions, such as his ideas about the truth and the rational and moral nature of Gothic too sentimental and therefore irrelevant. For example, Nikolaus Pevsner wrote that Ruskin's ideas about architecture were, "negative and reactionary," while Herbert Read described them as "the grossest illusions and prejudices."<sup>5</sup> The unflinching moralistic and reactionary tone of Ruskin's writings also detracted his readers.

In the early histories of Gothic revival, Ruskin's writings were most often compared with Anglo-Catholic theorist A. W. N. Pugin's work and it was claimed that Ruskin was following Pugin's line of argument. In his *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste* (first published in 1928, republished 1962) Kenneth Clark writes: "Ruskin's way of looking at architecture was not a new way, but one which had been common for at least ten years before the Seven Lamps appeared."<sup>6</sup> Clark claimed that, Ruskin "in longer sentences, but with no more force, makes points which Pugin had already made."<sup>7</sup> In fact, Clark dissociates Ruskin from Pugin on the grounds that Pugin was a "trained architect and Ruskin

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<sup>5</sup> See Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, Harmondsworth, 1968 edition, p.133 and Herbert Read, *Art and Industry*, London 1934.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste* (London: John Murray){first published 1928}, 1962, p.193.

<sup>7</sup> Clark, *The Gothic Revival*, p.193. Ruskin, on the other hand, claimed to have glanced at *Contrasts* "once... during an idle forenoon," and to have seen Pugin's "Remarks on Articles in the *Rambler*," "brought under my notice by some of the reviews. I never read a word of any other of his works, not feeling from the style of his architecture, the smallest interest in his opinions." Ruskin, *Modern Painters III* (Library Edition: 5, 429).

an art critic.” “Ruskin stressed the importance of ornament and Pugin of construction... There is no doubt that Pugin’s theory inspired a far sounder school of architects.”<sup>8</sup>

The perception that Ruskin did not know how a building was actually constructed and therefore his ideas were not valid was reinforced and promoted by many of Clark’s contemporaries.<sup>9</sup> Till as late as the 1960s, prominent critics questioned the relevance of Ruskin’s writings to architecture. In *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, 1750-1950*, Peter Collins argues that Ruskin’s sensitivity to the beauty of the façade hides his ignorance of architectural structure. He singles out Ruskin from other major Gothic Revivalists from the period—such as Augustus Welby Pugin, Viollet-le-Duc, G. E. Street, and Gilbert Scott—because Ruskin had practically no experience of building methods. *The Stones of Venice*, Collins writes, shows “how (Ruskin’s) deeply felt emotion could transmute architecture into literature without contributing anything at all to the public’s understanding of the problems of architectural design, or of the nature of buildings as such.”<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, within the historical and ideological frame of modernist architectural theory, Ruskin’s focus on the “ornament” represented a superficial interest. In *The Gothic* Paul Frankl wrote, “he (Ruskin) is not properly aware of the three dimensional interior: his

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<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Clark *The Gothic Revival*, p. 200.

<sup>9</sup> In fact, many of Ruskin’s contemporaries who were architects frequently charged him with a lack of technical knowledge. For instance, Nikolaus Pevsner cites William Whewell’s review of Ruskin’s *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) in *Fraser’s Magazine*, as a “perspicacious” assessment of Ruskin’s relevance to his contemporaries: “Whewell recognizes Ruskin’s “glowing and picturesque eloquence,” but says that the Lamps give “not so much light as splendour”; for they do not represent as one would expect, “exactly coordinated principles.” *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth-Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p.152.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, 1750-1950* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1965), p.259.

interest always remains fixed on the two-dimensional surfaces.”<sup>11</sup> Frankl’s criticism arises from the modernist belief that the primary material for the critical appreciation of architecture should be three dimensional spaces and structure as opposed to surface.<sup>12</sup>

Ruskin’s anti-modernism was also emphasized through a direct comparison with another proponent of Gothic architecture, the French architectural theorist Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879), who is acknowledged as the founder of rational theories of Modern Architecture. The most direct comparison is made by Nikolaus Pevsner in his book entitled, *Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc: Englishness and Frenchness in the Appreciation of Gothic Architecture* (1969). Pevsner’s comparisons are very stark. For instance, he writes, “...Viollet’s topical significance is for new, Ruskin’s for old buildings. Moreover, Viollet’s approach to the Gothic style is rational, Ruskin’s emotional. That is where their Frenchness and Englishness lie.”<sup>13</sup> At another place he distinguished Ruskin by emphasizing the emotional aspect of his theories, “You can see how marvellously(sic) Ruskin can express subtle qualities and how justly he felt about the Gothic style. But it is all feeling, not reasoning.”<sup>14</sup> Because of such comparisons Ruskin’s ideas were considered too sentimental and moralizing to be taken seriously and much of the scholarship on the rational theories of

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Frankl *The Gothic: Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* (Princeton, 1960), p. 561.

<sup>12</sup> It is around this time, in 1932, Philip Johnson stated that “volume” is the first principle of architecture. According to Johnson, “the great majority of buildings are in reality, as well as in effect, the planes surrounding a volume.” Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York, 1932) revised edition, 1966, p.41. Similarly, Modernist historian Nikolaus Pevsner argued that what distinguishes architecture from other forms of art “is the spatial quality” and thus “the history of architecture is primarily a history of man shaping space.” Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* seventh edition (Harmondsworth, 1963), p.15.

<sup>13</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc: Englishness and Frenchness in the Appreciation of Gothic Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson), 1969. p. 42.

<sup>14</sup> Pevsner, p.24.

modern architecture in the nineteenth-century concentrates on the theories of the French rationalist Viollet-le-Duc.

However, more recently, since the 1970s, there has been a resurgence of interest in Ruskin. In spite of the extensive amount of secondary literature available on John Ruskin, studies focusing on his writing on architecture are rare. George Landow's influential book *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (1971) pays limited attention to *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1848). In dealing with *The Stones of Venice* (1853) it focuses only on notions of beauty elaborated in the later volumes of *Modern Painters* {5 vols., 1846-1859}.<sup>15</sup> Other writers have explored the influence of Ruskin's writings on the architectural production. For example, Eve M. Blau in *Ruskinian Gothic; the architecture of Deane and Woodward, 1845-1861* (1982) explores Ruskin's influence on the Irish firm of Deane and Woodward. Blau analyzes the ways in which Woodward shaped a style that was distinct both in form and theoretical basis from the concurrently evolving High Victorian Gothic.

John Unrau's *Looking at Architecture with Ruskin* (1978), on the other hand, focuses on Ruskin as an observer of architectural composition.<sup>16</sup> Unrau argues that the attention given to Ruskin's dogmatic ethical and historical pronouncements has obscured his originality as a visual analyst and his grasp of the functions of the subliminal perception, shifting viewpoint, color, light and shade. Another important publication is Kristine Garrigan's *Ruskin on Architecture: His Thought and Influence* (1973). Garrigan, in contrast to Unrau, proposes to read Ruskin as a whole without divorcing the ethical content of his writings. Garrigan argues

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<sup>15</sup> George P. Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1971.

<sup>16</sup> John Unrau's *Looking at Architecture with Ruskin* (1978). Other important publications that deal with Ruskin's architectural writings are: Unrau's *Ruskin and St. Mark's* (1984), Kristine Garrigan's

that Ruskin “sees” a building in its entirety: not as a structural enclosure of space but as a symbolic shelter for mankind’s noblest adventures.

However, modernist architectural historians have continued to have difficulty in assimilating Ruskin’s doctrines into their thinking. Peter Fuller expresses it most cogently:

Thus ensconced in the top floor at Fen Court, I confidently derided Ruskin’s architectural “conservatism.” The problem, I believed, was his “refusal to consider structural engineering as a genuine art form in its own right;” I criticized his separation of building (and engineering) from architecture, and his attempt to justify the use of “carved stone” rather than iron by reference to the scriptures. But I continued to write as if there was no difficulty in separating a Ruskinian kernel from the husk of his archaic religious thought, and assimilating the former to modernism while quietly flushing away the latter.<sup>17</sup>

This belief that Ruskin’s thoughts can be detached from the idealistic and religious fervor and preserved intact for the modern world has continued to influence scholarship on Ruskin including the recent postmodern reinterpretations of his work. In a recent issue of *Assemblage* entitled, “Ruskin Redux,” Jennifer Bloomer notes that Ruskin has become interesting for the same reasons for which he was neglected by modernist architectural historians.<sup>18</sup> Bloomer writes that, “Ruskin’s marked distrust of the notion of progress (in society, in culture, in architecture) positions him as a thinker as much at home in the

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*Ruskin on Architecture: His Thought and Influence* (1973), Michael Brooks’s *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (1987) and Mark Swenarton’s *Artisans and Architects* (1989).

<sup>17</sup> Peter Fuller, “Two Paths in the Political Economy of Art.” *Theoria: Art and the Absence of Grace* (London: Chatto & Windus), 1988, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> *Assemblage*, no.32, April 1997. *Ruskin Redux* implies Ruskin’s return to home, after being in exile for awhile. This issue of *Assemblage* contains essays by influential theorists who have commented upon the renewed interest in Ruskin’s work.

discourse of the close of the twentieth century, when the silvery sheen of Progress has become smeared and tarnished, as the fogeyish curmudgeon who died its dawning. ...His tendency to see connections across disciplines and build arguments that are interdisciplinary is more familiar, and less the evidence of 'madness,' to us. Perhaps most importantly, we can see the self-contradiction that characterizes Ruskin's writing as a skillfully implemented heuristic tool and can recognize this as a good reason to attend his work with some care."<sup>19</sup>

Many other postmodern writers have also shown interest in Ruskin's problematization of truth, his emphasis on detail, his belief in reading a building as a text and his rejection of classicism.<sup>20</sup> While the contemporary readings quite rightly highlight Ruskin's romantic and anti-modernist interpretation of Gothic, in doing so, some of them implicitly reinforce the belief that Ruskin rejected rational thinking and methods of science. Moreover, these interpretations, with their exclusive emphasis on Ruskin's provisional and contingent versions of truth, on reading building as text, on the difficulty in locating a pure self, combined with their complete lack of interest in Ruskin's knowledge of science and his arguments about the rational nature of building Gothic forms--further postmodern claims against the existence of an epistemology of architecture.

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<sup>19</sup> Bloomer, *Assemblage* 32, 1997, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> *Lamp of Memory: Ruskin, tradition and architecture* (1992) edited by Michael Wheeler and Nigel Whiteley, 1992 is a collection of essays that examines the concept of tradition in Ruskin's work on architecture, as represented in his drawings, photography, collections and exhibitions. It investigates Ruskin's significance for architects in the 1990s who believe that they are working "in tradition."

## SCIENTIFIC THEOLOGY: THE INFLUENCE OF WILLIAM BUCKLAND AND ADAM SEDGWICK ON JOHN RUSKIN

It is important to recognize, however, that Ruskin's theories of aesthetics and architecture depended upon a version of natural theology, which was antithetical to mainstream Evangelical opinion. Ruskin, in fact, believed that natural theology could root itself firmly in modern science.<sup>21</sup> The science that Ruskin knew best was geology. At Oxford natural and revealed religion were intimately interwoven with the inquiry of geological science. Scientists were making great contributions to science and to applications of science to medicine and industry; in doing so, their discoveries were also lending support to religion through natural theology. The science being pursued combined methods of classification and close description; its ambition was to read the object in all its detail and comprehend the character of each thing united with religious emotion. As they showed more clearly how nature worked, they showed how great the creator's wisdom had been.

The debate about the relationship between religion and various branches of science that preoccupied leading scientists and theologians throughout the nineteenth-century was also alive at Oxford. Ruskin's understanding of science can be best understood by placing him in the context of these debates. During his stay at Oxford, Ruskin was most influenced by the English School of geologists, most particularly by Rev. William Buckland and Adam Sedgwick.

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<sup>21</sup> Peter Fuller has explored the relationship between Ruskin's architectural theories and natural theology. See Fuller, "Nature and the Gothic," *Theoria: Art and the Absence of Grace* (London: Chatto and Windus), pp. 52-65.

Ruskin received a copy of the 1830 edition of H.B. de Saussure's *Voyages dans les Alpes* for his fourteenth birthday. Saussure's book recorded his scientific observations with his aesthetic responses alongside sketches of minerals, glaciers and geological formations, had a strong influence on Ruskin.<sup>22</sup> In 1836 Ruskin's father, John James Ruskin visited Oxford and met the well-known geologist Rev. William Buckland (1784-1856), Reader of Geology. Soon after the meeting, he is known to have bought a copy of Buckland's *Bridgewater Treatises on Geology* (1836) for his son.<sup>23</sup> Ruskin went to his first meeting of the Geological Society early in 1837. He joined Oxford the following month and began the formal study of geology with William Buckland.

In contrast to continental geology, Dr Buckland's school of thought, which was known as the English School, had remained shielded from the secular philosophies of history propagated by Kant, Hegel, and others. Dr. Buckland practiced a science that asked, for example, what an atom is, rather than asking under what conditions does an atom radiate light.

In the coming years, Ruskin grew very close to Dr. Buckland. A letter to his father shows how Ruskin came to know many other geologists and scientists through Dr. Buckland.

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<sup>22</sup> Saussure's principle was that geology "must be cultivated only with the aid of observation, and systems must never be but the results or consequence of facts." See H.B. de Saussure, *Voyages dans les Alpes*, vol. 1, 1830, p. i. This emphasis on accurate observation helped to discipline Ruskin's response to nature.

<sup>23</sup> In the 1830s the cooperation of science and religion had reached its zenith. The eighth Earl of Bridgewater provided funds for the publication of a series of treatises designed to show the goodness of God in the relations of man and nature, as seen in astronomy, physics, geology, and animal, vegetable and human physiology. The Bridgewater treatise on geology and minerology was written by Reverend William Buckland.



“... I found a note on my table from Dr. Buckland requesting the pleasure of my company to dinner, at 6, to meet two celebrated Geologists,— Lord Cole, and Sir Philip Egerton... Alone, for five minutes in Dr. B’s drawing room, who soon afterwards came in with Lord Cole, introduced me, and said that as we were both geologists, he did not hesitate to leave us together ... Lord Cole and I were talking about some fossils newly arrived from India. He remarked in the course of the conversation that his friend Dr B’s room was cleaner and in better order than he remembered ever to have seen it. There was not a chair fit to sit down upon—all covered with dust—broken alabaster candlesticks--withered flower leaves--frogs cut out of serpentine—broken models of fallen temples...stuffed reptiles...and a considerable variety to other articles... While we were sitting over our wine , after Dinner, in came Dr Daubney—one of the most celebrated geologists of the day—a curious looking animal, looking through its spectacles with an air—very distingue’, and Mr. Darwin, whom I had heard read a paper at the Geological society. He and I got together, and talked all evening ... (By the by, Dr B’s dining room is his study—ten times worse than the drawing room—full of stuffed hyena’s, crocodiles and cats).”<sup>24</sup>

Buckland belonged to the so-called Catastrophist school of Geology, which defined itself in contrast to the school of “Uniformitarianism.” Uniformitarians proposed an explanation of the past as essentially bearing witness to forces that were similar to the present. James Hutton proposed this idea that laws governing geologic processes have not changed during the history of the earth in his two volumes of *Theory of the Earth* (1795). Hutton demonstrated that the Earth had a long history and that this history could be interpreted in terms of processes observed at the present. For example, he showed how the weathering of rocks formed soils, and how layers of sediment accumulated. He stated that there was no need of any supernatural cause to explain the geologic record and thus his explanations challenged the concept of a biblical Earth. Because Hutton’s view proposed a

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uniform explanation between the past and the present this view came to be known as “Uniformitarianism.”<sup>25</sup>

However, many scholars for scientific as well as religious reasons, failed to fully accept this view. They believed that a clear division between geological eras suggested an intervention of periods of sudden cataclysmic changes or upheavals. For example, they believed that sudden cataclysmic changes had raised the Alps and such shocks and stresses needed to be explained. For this reason, this school of geologists was named as “Catastrophists.” Their most famous advocate in England was William Buckland. For Buckland, the catastrophic theory could reconcile geology with Genesis, even if that meant an interpretation of the days of Biblical creation in figurative rather than literal terms. He claimed that his examination of the diluvial deposits provided him with convincing evidence of the Noachian Flood.<sup>26</sup> Such thinking earned him the description of “the last British Geologist of note to relate the discovery of modern geology to the Mosaic writings.” The Catastrophists brought important modifications to Uniformitarian theory so that by the later nineteenth century, geological theory represented more of a blend between the two.

Adam Sedgwick, of the English School of geologists also had a strong influence on Ruskin. His lectures entitled, *A Discourse on the Studies of the University* (1833) contributed

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<sup>24</sup> Letter from John Ruskin to his father, *The Ruskin Family Letters*, pp. 462-3.

<sup>25</sup> The Cambridge philosopher of science William Whewell (1794-1866) introduced the term “uniformitarianism” in 1832. This principle is fundamental to geologic thinking and underlies the whole development of the science of geology. The expression uniformitarianism, however, has passed into history, for the controversy between catastrophists and uniformitarians has largely died. As geologic phenomena became more explicable in terms of advancing physics, chemistry, and biology, the reality of the principle of uniformity as a major philosophical tenet of geology became established and the controversy ended. The publication in 1859 of the conclusions of Darwin and Alfred Wallace on the origin of species extended the principle of uniformity to the plant and animal kingdoms.

significantly to the definition of English geology at the time. Sedgwick was able to combine mathematical training with the skill of a field geologist to explain reality. Sedgwick's exploratory geology depended on extensive empirical research.<sup>27</sup> One of his major contributions is that through extensive empirical research, he was able to reconcile new scientific evidence with a theory of secular "miracles."<sup>28</sup>

The common notion that modern geology originated with uniformitarianism masks the important contributions of Buckland and his colleagues such as Sedgwick to modern geology. Until recently, the historians of science have portrayed William Buckland and Adam Sedgwick of the English School as craven Biblicists, holding out against the "progressive" Scottish uniformitarians.<sup>29</sup> This is because the work of Buckland and his circle has invariably been reviewed in the context of pan-European intellectual debates engendered by the secular philosophy of the Enlightenment. In a recent book, *The Great Chain of History: William*

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<sup>26</sup> Buckland, and many other geologists of the Catastrophist school, attempted to explain the evidence that they unearthed with the Genesis account of the Creation. See William Buckland, *Geology and Mineralogy considered with Reference to Natural Theology* (1836), p.22.

<sup>28</sup> Sedgwick's critique of the prevalent ideas about "transmutation of species" showed his skills as an empiricist. He showed that its hypothesis was based on too little evidence and argued that for this reason the theory was "unscientific." Until the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 it was perfectly possible for an empirical scientist to reconcile the teachings of the Old Testament with the discoveries of geology. The *Origin* altered the whole metaphysical scenario. It removed the shaping hand of God and replaced it by a blind cruel law of power and adaptability. Since Adam Sedgwick was one of the most prominent advocates of natural theology in Victorian England, the danger was very real to him. Evolutionary theory, to him, was a "dish of rank materialism," which separated scientific reasoning from final causes that he had been used to support his belief in God. When Charles Darwin sent a copy of the first edition of his *Origin of Species* Sedgwick replied to him in this way: "read your book with more pain than pleasure. Parts of it I admired greatly, parts I laughed at till my sides were almost sore; other parts I read with absolute sorrow, because I think them utterly false and mischievous. You have *deserted* after a start in that tram-road of all solid physical truth—the true method of induction, and started off in machinery as wild, I think, as Bishop Wilkie's locomotive that was to sail with us to the moon (Clark and Hughes, 1890, vol II: 356-7)." Quoted by Colin Speakman in "Controversy II: The Darwinian Revolution," *Adam Sedgwick: Geologist and Dalesman 1785-1873* (BroadOak, Heathfield: The Broad Oak Press), 1982, p.106. More recently, critics have pointed out that Sedgwick's unflinching opposition to the "mutability of species" was not as naïve as is often imagined; it was based on strong theories of observation and empiricism and a different vision of science.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, *Forerunners of Darwin*, 1959 and Gillispie's *Genesis and Geology*, 1951.

*Buckland and the English School of Geology (1814-1849)* (1983) Nicholas A. Rupke argues that interest in the relationship of geology to questions of natural and revealed religion did not spring from a desire to defend religious orthodoxy, but rather arose from the need to gear the teaching of the new science to the requirements of Oxford and Cambridge as centers for the education of Anglican clergy.<sup>30</sup> Rupke emphasizes that the English School can only be adequately and accurately explained in the limited and specific setting of England itself, and more particularly of its ancient universities. According to Rupke, the value of geology was judged by its congruence with the existing tradition of learning and by its relevance to a clerical education. This institutional constraint was a more immediate determinant of geological theory than any pan-European controversies.

In a similar vein, Peter Fuller has emphasized that, “in terms of the state of knowledge in their own day, Buckland and Sedgwick were hardly conservatives. With Buckland, in particular, more than an element of pragmatism entered into his insistence that the truths revealed by geology were theological.”<sup>31</sup> Fuller points out that many of Buckland’s opponents at Oxford criticized him not because he seemed to be leaning over backwards to accommodate the facts to the scriptural text. On the contrary, they believed that science ought not to be taught at Oxford University at all. They believed that it was simply absurd to derive one’s ideas from old stones and fossils rather than from authority and tradition.<sup>32</sup>

In the midst of an Industrial Revolution, the benefits of geological science to a country hungry for raw materials were enormous. The facility to predict, with some reliability, the mineral wealth or properties of rocks had immense economic and utilitarian

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<sup>30</sup> Nicholas A. Rupke, “Geology at Oxford and the English School,” *The Great Chain of History, Oxford*, 1983, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Fuller, *Theoria*, p. 35.

value. In such a climate, a very influential book by Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844) was published. His main argument was that rocks had been subject to uniform laws of natural development—in the operation of which God did not directly intervene. The new thing about Chambers' theory was its emphasis on the secular, or natural development of the world—over which an apparently redundant God had only some ultimate and abstract control.<sup>33</sup> The book was very successful in provoking an intense public debate. Colin Speakman has argued that the reasons for the success of Chambers' book were not purely scientific. According to Speakman, *The Vestiges* touched a necessary chord of darkness, of pessimism and even despair in the Victorian imagination, the image of an empty, cruel universe that mocked conventional faith, far removed from the complacent optimism of Paley. Speakman says that the success of "*The Vestiges* lay in the fact that it reflected this mood of doubt and uncertainty, yet a need, too, for a dynamic, changing universe, darkly hostile yet capable of growth and change, something raw, exciting, barbaric and essentially romantic."<sup>34</sup>

The English School, especially Adam Sedgwick, reacted strongly to the ideas expressed in *The Vestiges*. Sedgwick wrote that the book was "a rank pill of asafoetida and arsenic covered with gold leaf." But the publication of Chambers' book also marked the disintegration of the English School. William Buckland became Dean of Westminster in 1847 and he no longer felt obliged to produce a theological "justification" for science, which would satisfy the university authorities (he had left Oxford two years before). He had lost interest in historical geology and turned increasingly to applications of science to public utility.

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Fuller, *Theoria*, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> See Robert Chambers *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, London, 1890.

<sup>34</sup> Colin Speakman, "Controversy II: The Darwinian Revolution," *Adam Sedgwick: Geologist and Dalesman 1785-1873* (Broad Oak, Heathfield: The Broad Oak Press), 1982, p. 105.

Sedgwick too, after his assault on Chambers, became increasingly involved in other technical controversies; however, he continued to remain uninterested in applications of geology to public utility.

Ruskin's ideas about aesthetics owed much to the Oxford Scientists and it was this aesthetics which he felt being threatened in the summer of 1847 when he acted as the secretary of the Geological Section of the British Association.<sup>35</sup> In a letter sent to his father, Ruskin expressed his feelings about this disintegration of his beliefs:

There is nothing for it but throwing one's self into the stream, and going down with one's arms under water, ready to be carried anywhere, or do anything. My friends are all busy and tired to death. All the members of my section, but especially Forbes, Sedgwick, Murchison, and Lord Northampton—and of course Buckland, are as kind to me as men can be; but I am tormented by the perpetual feeling of being in everybody's way.<sup>36</sup>

Ruskin added that he could neither bear the excitement of being in a society "where the play of mind is constant, and rolls *over* me like heavy wheels, nor the pain of being alone." And it was at this time that Ruskin turned his attention to water plantains and the Gothic Revival.<sup>37</sup> Ruskin was despatched, as he had been in 1841, for one month's cure under Dr Jephson at Leamington Spa. There, according to his biographer, E.T. Cook, he "occupied himself with miscellaneous reading; and with much study, by drawing and analysis, of

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<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Fuller, p. 59. Ruskin was a founder member of "The Oxford Society for promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture," which was established in 1839. The members of the society also believed in scientific theology and promoted the belief that Gothic architecture derived its inspiration from nature.

<sup>36</sup> Ruskin, *Library Edition VIII*, pp. xxv-xxvi. Also cited in Fuller, p. 59.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

botanical detail, and with inner questionings on the foundations of a religious faith now first becoming shaken.”<sup>38</sup> In a letter to George Richmond, Ruskin wrote, “I am indeed better at last...thanks to the perfect rest I have had here—and my thoughts and faith are returning to me. I have had great good from dissecting some water plants out of the canal.”<sup>39</sup> Ruskin apparently believed that in the proportions of the stem and the curvature of the leaves of *Alisma Plantago*, the common water plantain, he had placed his finger upon a type of God’s beauty in the world.

A few months after the dissection of the water plantain, Ruskin wrote *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. While Ruskin was completely disenchanted by the growing use of science for utilitarian concerns; his experiments on plant leaves and living plants and his analyses of Gothic forms only confirmed his belief in scientific theology; Ruskin was seeking the foundations of modern Gothic in the methods of scientific theology.<sup>40</sup>

## **RUSKIN AND RATIONAL NATURE OF GOTHIC**

The methods of scientific theology -- of exploration, accurate description and classification -- had a profound influence on Ruskin’s aesthetic and architectural theories. Most importantly, many of Ruskin’s writings reveal that he did not consider methods of science and aesthetic understanding as mutually exclusive; rather science provided a basis for aesthetic response. Ruskin claimed that it was, “the balanced unison of artistic sensibility

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<sup>38</sup> E.T. Cook, *The Life of John Ruskin*, Vol. I, second edition, London, 1912, p. 212.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>40</sup> Ruskin’s belief in science is confirmed by such claims. For instance, he wrote that, “Science invoking the law of the conservation of energy, tells us ...that all mortal strength is from the Sun,” and thus we have “arithmetical and measurable assurance that men vitally active are living sunshine.” (*Library Edition*, 28.541).

with scientific faculty, which enabled me at once to love Giotto, and learn from Galileo.”<sup>41</sup> According to Ruskin, “the reverent concern of the botanist and the geologist for natural forms must be emulated (both) by the artist, who would be truthful to nature, and by the critic, who would be truthful to art.” W.G. Collingwood has described Ruskin’s own approach as a combination of the two methods. According to Collingwood, “At Chamoni, he (Ruskin) studied plants and rocks and clouds, not as an artist to make pictures out of them, nor as a scientist to class them and analyze them; but to learn their aspects and to enter into the spirit of their growth and structure.”<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, Ruskin criticized the prevalent notions of “objective reality” in which the role of emotion was denied and argued that “there is a science of the aspects of things as well as of their nature; and it is as much a fact to be noted in their constitution, that they produce such and such effect upon the eye or heart... as that they are made up of certain atoms or vibrations of matter.”<sup>43</sup> According to Ruskin, “the painter who dilutes his honest vision of appearances because of some acquired notions about geology gives nothing useful to science.” In *The Eagle’s Nest*, Ruskin wrote, “If she *knew* anything of what she was representing, she would exhibit that partial knowledge with complacency; and miss the point beside it, and beyond it.”<sup>44</sup> The artist who would be truly scientific in spirit must remember that his own reaction to an object is as much a reality as the object itself, and that his task is to relate both without falsifying either. Art, Ruskin wrote, “does not represent things falsely, but truly as they appear to mankind.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, XXVIII, p. 647.

<sup>42</sup> W.G. Collingwood, *The Life of John Ruskin* (Boston and New York, 1900), pp. 83-84.

<sup>43</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters* V, p. 387.

<sup>44</sup> *The Eagle’s Nest*, XXII, 211.

<sup>45</sup> Ruskin’s primary aim in the ten lectures which comprise *The Eagle’s Nest* is to state “the literal modes in which the virtues of art are connected with the principles of exact science.” What Ruskin



However, it is difficult to make such claims about Ruskin's writings since it is rare to find a quote that Ruskin does not contradict later. Ruskin is known to have said that he only felt that truth was in sight when he had contradicted himself at least three times.<sup>46</sup> While it is true that Ruskin formulated no coherent body of architectural theory that can be abstracted neatly, an understanding of the debates between the proponents of scientific theology and the proponents of utilitarianism at Oxford, does clarify some of the contradictions in Ruskin's thoughts. In Ruskin's writings, there is a clear distinction between Ruskin's belief in the methods of scientific theology and his rejection of the idea of using "modern" science for utilitarian concerns. Moreover, the fact that Ruskin wrote the *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* a few months after the dissection of water plantains also points to a connection between his experiments on plant leaves, his understanding of scientific theology, and his theories of Gothic architecture.

Ruskin's experiments with leaves comprised close observation and analysis of their shapes and proportions. To explain the principles of proportion, Ruskin turned to the flower

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rejects is not science as such but what he calls "foolish science." "Wise art," he says "is only the reflex or shadow of wise science." Furthermore, he asserts that, "truth is made up of science and art together, and that the linkage of the two powers in which wise art" becomes "the reflex or shadow of wise science" is the sum of all art judgment and practice. See *The Eagle's Nest*, XXII, 162, 151. That Ruskin distinguished between a utilitarian science and another "wise science," is evident by another quote of Ruskin's in the *Modern Painters*. Natural Science, Ruskin wrote, "has hardened the faithlessness of the dull and proud," but "shown new grounds for reverence to hearts which were thoughtful and humble." Ruskin criticized "the chief narrowness of Wordsworth's mind," that he could "not understand that to break a rock with a hammer in search of crystal may sometimes be an act not disgraceful to human nature, and that to dissect a flower may sometimes be as proper as to dream over it." Ruskin wrote that, "All experience goes to teach that the most useful members of society are the dissectors, not dreamers." Library Edition V, *Ibid.*, p.359.

<sup>46</sup> In Ruskin's own words, "Perhaps some of my hearers this evening may occasionally have heard it stated of me that I am rather apt to contradict myself. I hope I am exceedingly apt to do so. I never met with a question yet, of any importance, which did not need, for the right solution of it, at least one positive and one negative answer...Mostly matters of any consequence are three-sided, or four-sided,

stem of *Alisma Plantago*. Ruskin illustrated a profile on one side of a specimen gathered at random. In his analysis he wrote:

“...I will take at present only one instance of vertical proportion, from the flower stem of the common water plantain, *Alisma Plantago*. Fig 5. Plate XII. is a reduced profile of one side of a plant gathered at random; it is seen to have five masts, of which, however, the uppermost is a mere shoot, and we can consider only their relations up to the fourth. Their lengths are measured on the line AB, which is the actual length of the lowest mast  $a b$ ,  $AC = b c$ ,  $AD = c d$ , and  $AE = d e$ . If the reader will take the trouble to measure these lengths and compare them he will find that, within half a line, the uppermost,  $AE=5/7$  of  $AD$ ,  $AD=6/8$  of  $AC$ , and  $AC=7/9$  of  $AB$ ; a most subtle diminishing proportion (Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, p. 129).

Ruskin believed that he had identified an instance of that “Apparent Proportion” which, in *Modern Painters* Volume Two he had declared to be “typical of that Unity which we attribute to God.” While making attempts at tracing proportions through measurement and analysis, Ruskin pointed to the impossibility of spelling out any ideal proportions. He claimed that, “Proportions are as infinite (and that in all kinds of things, as severally in colours, lines, shades, lights and forms) as possible airs in music: and it is just as rational an attempt to teach a young architect how to proportion truly and well by calculating for him the proportions of fine works, as it would be to teach him to compose melodies by calculating the mathematical relations of the notes in Beethoven’s “Adelaide” or Mozart’s “Requiem.” The man who has eye and intellect will invent beautiful proportions, and cannot help it; but he can no more tell us how to do it than Wordsworth could tell us how to plan a romance.” (Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps*, section XXV, p. 124).

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or polygonal ...For myself I am never satisfied that I have handled a subject properly till I have

Such an approach combining methods of experiment and analysis with aesthetic appreciation is evident in other chapters where Ruskin discusses epistemological concepts such as truth and rationality. Ruskin's definitions have similarities with Aristotelian practical reasoning and are broad and open to transformation in particular circumstances. Ruskin's definition of truth in the chapter entitled, "The Lamp of Truth," in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* has often been read as Ruskin's defense of honesty of construction and an attack upon sham. But it is important to note that, Ruskin emphasizes that "there arise, in the application of the strict rules of right, many exceptions and niceties of conscience." The chapter is therefore more concerned with defining which falsehoods were permissible. For imagination itself, which Ruskin argued, was essential to art, might be construed as falsehood or deception.<sup>47</sup>

In "The Lamp of Truth" Ruskin indicated three classes of deceit or falsehood in architecture: Structural deceits, in which the appearance of the building did not reflect its real construction; surface deceits, in which the facing materials disguised the real building materials; and operative deceits, wherein surfaces which appeared to be hand-made were in fact machine-made. In each instance, the exceptions to the rule were more important to Ruskin than the rule itself. For example, the very first point he made about the criterion of structural honesty was that it did not bind the architect "to exhibit structure." He, in fact, criticized, "the false theory that ornamentation should be merely decorated structure." Ruskin argued that the architect might conceal structure, as akin and clothing conceal skeleton

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contradicted myself at least three times." See, Ruskin, *Library Edition*, XVI, p.187.

<sup>47</sup> It might be thought that the whole kingdom of imagination was one of deception, but Ruskin explains that, "the action of the imagination is a voluntary summoning of the conceptions of things absent or impossible;" In the act of contemplating things that are absent or impossible, Ruskin reminds us that it is the task of the imagination to remind us of the "knowledge of their actual absence or impossibility at the moment of their apparent presence or reality." Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, p.33.

muscle, so that only a learned observer to penetrate his secrets.<sup>48</sup> Even in Gothic buildings, the architect might off-load the thrust of the roof of a church from the columns to concealed flying buttresses, so as to build columns which unassisted would be too slight for the weight, in order to create “the arborescent look of lofty Gothic aisles,” because that was a legitimate appeal to the imagination.<sup>49</sup>

This appeal to the constructive imagination in architecture, Ruskin emphasized, was no different from the pleasure we enjoy in contemplating clouds, which arises from our imagining them to have “massive, luminous, warm and mountain-like surfaces” when we know that they are really damp fog.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, not only did Ruskin deny that fitness, or apparent fitness was essential to beauty, but on the contrary, he argued that apparent unfitness could be highly pleasurable “as in the unnatural and seemingly impossible lightness of Gothic spires and roofs.”<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, according to Ruskin, as long as there was no real attempt to deceive and an observer could, like an anatomist, search out the truth of the structure; in such cases, the affecting of the mind with a contradictory impression was “no dishonesty, but on the contrary, a legitimate appeal to the imagination.” For instance, marbling wood or painting plaster to look like rustication was not acceptable, because it was an economy designed to

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<sup>48</sup> In Ruskin’s own words, “The architect is not *bound* to exhibit structure; nor are we to complain of him for concealing it, any more than we should regret that the outer surfaces of the human frame conceal much of its anatomy; nevertheless, that building will generally be the noblest, which to an intelligent eye discovers the great secrets of its structure, as an animal form does, although from a careless observer they may be concealed.” *The Seven Lamps*, p.35.

<sup>49</sup> Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, pp. 32-3, 52.

<sup>50</sup> According to Ruskin, “It (imagination) is a noble faculty so long as it confesses its own ideality; when it ceases to confess this, it is in sanity. All the difference lies in the fact of the confession, in there being *no* deception.” *The Seven Lamps*, p.33. In fact, Ruskin notes that, “a dream is as real a fact, as a vision of reality: deceptive only if we do not recognize it as a dream.” *Ibid.*, p. 33, footnote 12.

<sup>51</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters II*, p. 54.

deceive. Even here, however, Ruskin noted that degrees of culpability might be discerned, so that it was less justifiable to simulate marble on a shop front than in a grand public or religious building. Public buildings, however, might have their surface veneered with precious marbles or with gold mosaics, because no one would be under any illusion that the walls were built of solid marble or gold.<sup>52</sup> The chief criterion of architectural dishonesty for Ruskin was intention. When the honest intention was to create poetry of architecture, using the power of human imagination, then many inconsistencies and playfulness were acceptable. Ruskin explains in detail how and why the inconsistencies become acceptable when one understands art as an imaginative endeavor.

In Ruskin's own words the act of the imagination consisted of the following:

Again, it might be thought, and has been thought, that the whole art of painting is nothing else than an endeavour to deceive. Not so: it is, on the contrary, a statement of certain facts, in the clearest possible way. For instance: I desire to give an account of a mountain or of a rock; I begin by telling its shape. But words will not do this distinctly, and I draw its shape, and say, "This was its shape." Next: I would fain represent its colour; but words will not do this either, and I dye the paper and say, "This was its colour." Such a process may be carried on until the scene appears to exist, and high pleasure may be taken in its apparent existence. This is a

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<sup>52</sup> In a similar vein, Ruskin argued that, "Painting, however, is not the only mode in which material may be concealed, or rather simulated; for merely to conceal is, as we have seen, no wrong. Whitewash, for instance, though often (by no means always) to be regretted as a concealment, is not to be blamed as a falsity. It shows itself for what it is, and asserts nothing of what is beneath it. Gilding has become, from its frequent use, equally innocent. It is understood for what it is, a film merely, and is, therefore, allowable to any extent: I do say expedient: it is one of the most abused means of magnificence we possess, .p.49. If it be clearly understood that a marble facing does not pretend or imply a marble wall, there is no harm in it; pp. 50-51.

communicated act of imagination, but no lie. The lie can consist only in an assertion of its existence (which is never for one instant made, implied, or believed), or else in the false statements of forms and colours (which are, indeed, made and believed to our great loss, continually). Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps*, p.34.

In the *Stones of Venice* (3 vols, 1851-53) which Ruskin wrote after *The Seven Lamps* (1849) Ruskin's explanations of Gothic demonstrate how Ruskin's understanding of the process of architectural creation was rooted between the interstices of scientific and artistic inquiry. His arguments in his famous chapter entitled, "The Nature of Gothic," critique narrow rational definitions of architecture. Ruskin, in fact, proposes a broad idea of rationality that has a strong affinity with Aristotelian practical reasoning. In defining the true nature of Gothic, Ruskin writes that he faces the same difficulty in explaining as one would experience if asked to define the nature of redness, without any actual red thing to point to, but only orange and purple things. He notes that the difficulty is far greater when he tries to make the abstraction of Gothic architecture intelligible, because that character itself is made up of many mingled ideas, and can consist only in their union. In Ruskin's explanations, it is the constant sifting of particulars that is important. To Ruskin, pointed arches do not constitute Gothic, nor vaulted roofs, nor flying buttresses, nor grotesque sculptures; but all or some of these things, and many other things with them, when they come together so as to have life.<sup>53</sup> He likens his analysis of the nature of Gothic to that of a chemist analyzing a rough mineral, "entangled with many other foreign substances, itself perhaps in no place pure, or ever to be obtained or seen impurity for more than an instant,"<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> John Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic," in *The Stones of Venice* (1853), New York: Da Capo Paperback, 1985 (1960), pp.157-190; p.158.

<sup>54</sup> Ruskin, 159. He notes that the chemist defines his mineral by two separate kinds of character; one external, its crystalline form, hardness, lustre, etc.; the other internal, the propositions and nature of its constituent forms. Ruskin points out that Gothic architecture also consists of external forms and internal elements. Its elements are certain mental tendencies of the builders, legibly expressed in it; as fancifulness, love of variety, love of richness, and such others. Its external forms are pointed arches,

While noting that it was the union of its constituent parts that was the most important characteristic of both the composition of a mineral and Gothic architecture, Ruskin points out one difference that exists between the two processes. That is, “if we withdraw one of the elements from the mineral, its form is utterly changed, and its existence as such and such mineral is destroyed; but if we withdraw one of its mental elements from the Gothic style, it is only a little less Gothic than it was before, and the union of two or three of its elements is enough already to bestow a certain Gothicness of character, which gains in intensity as we add the others, and loses as we withdraw them.”<sup>55</sup>

Most importantly, while emphasizing the lack of definite explanations, Ruskin argues that such an understanding of architecture (as the sum of subjective particulars) is a “more” rather than a “less” rational explanation.

In Ruskin’s own words:

Nothing is a great work of art, for the production of which either rules or models can be given. Exactly so far as architecture works on known rules, and from given models, it is not an art, but a manufacture; and it is, of the two procedures, rather less rational (because more easy) to copy capitals or mouldings from Phidias, and call ourselves architects, than to copy heads and hands from Titian and call ourselves painters.<sup>56</sup>

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vaulted roofs etc. And unless both the elements and the forms are there, we have no right to call the style Gothic. Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, p.159.

<sup>55</sup> Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, p.160.

<sup>56</sup> Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, p.167.

This rationality, however, is not imposed from without but from within, as Ruskin explains, it emerges as a result of practical necessities. For this reason, it is also not repetitive or monotonous, but is multifarious and hence “more rational:”

The variety of the Gothic schools is the more healthy and beautiful, because in many cases it is entirely unstudied, and results, not from mere love of change, but from practical necessities. For in one point of view Gothic is not only the best, but the only rational architecture, as being that which can fit itself more easily to all services, vulgar or noble. Undefined in its slope of roof, height of shaft, breadth of arch, or disposition of ground plan, it can shrink into a turret, expand into a hall, coil into a staircase, or spring into a spire, with undegraded grace and unexhausted energy; and whenever it finds occasion for change in its form or purpose, it submits to it without the slightest sense of loss either to its unity or majesty, -- subtle and flexible like a fiery serpent, but ever attentive to the voice of the charmer.<sup>57</sup>

Emphasizing the flexible nature of building Gothic, Ruskin writes that:

If they (Gothic builders) wanted a window, they opened one; a room, they added one; a buttress, they built one; utterly regardless of any established conventionalities of external appearance, knowing (as indeed it always happened) that such daring interruptions of the formal plan would rather give additional interest to its symmetry than injure it. So that, in the best times of Gothic, a useless window would rather have been opened in an unexpected place for the sake of surprise, than a useful one forbidden for the sake of symmetry.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, p.168.

<sup>58</sup> Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, p.169.



But it was not just the process of experimenting through trial and error that was important to Ruskin. What was more important was that this process allowed its builders the individual expression of joy and freedom of carving and construction, without submitting to a pre-determined scheme of construction. Ruskin believed that it was this freedom of expression, which enabled Gothic artists to humbly imitate God's revelation by reproducing the non-functional beauties of natural proportions and natural forms. The process of creation of Gothic architecture for Ruskin was intertwined with moral values. But unlike the contemporary utilitarian philosophers who emphasized that morality was based upon reason, and argued that a rational architectural form will produce a healthy, moral subject, Ruskin's analysis of Gothic forms posed a relationship between architectural creation and morality based on particulars – particulars of individual expression, freedom, humility and joy. Furthermore, unlike the definition of rationality proposed by Jeremy Bentham's panopticon (1791) (a structure that exemplifies how rational and economic spatial organizations were used to achieve central surveillance), Ruskin's Gothic forms emphasized "perpetual novelty," and "changefulness" – qualities antithetical to predetermined schemes of rational construction.

Similarities between Aristotelian conceptions and Ruskin's ideas about aesthetics are also apparent in the distinction Ruskin drew between what he called *aesthesis* and *theoria* in *Modern Painters* (Volume Two).<sup>59</sup> Ruskin described *aesthesis* as "mere sensual perception of the outward qualities and necessary effects of bodies" and *theoria* as "the response to beauty of one's whole moral being." Ruskin argued that the term *aesthesis*, and its accompanying adjective "aesthetic," constituted a degradation of the response to beauty in nature and in art

to a mere operation of sense, or, worse still, of custom. In 1846, “aestheticism” was still unheard of as a cultural force, and Ruskin’s polemical sights were aimed largely at “Utilitarianism,” which proclaimed that the beauty of an object was a derivative of its fitness, or functional or practical aptness. For Ruskin, however, aesthetic and utilitarian positions had much in common: they reduced experience to the level of the sensual and the practical. Theoria, on the other hand, was the operation of the faculty by which ideas of beauty were morally perceived and appreciated.

This distinction Ruskin drew between *aesthesis* and *theoria* were constantly renegotiated, given the shifting movements of his religious beliefs.<sup>60</sup> By the time he came to write the third volume of *Modern Painters*, published in 1856, Ruskin became more concerned with polemicizing against idealist aesthetics rather than against the utilitarians. In the third volume, Ruskin rejected the distinction between “subjective” and “objective,” and tried to delimit a third area of human experiencing, epitomized by the “Pathetic Fallacy,” In 1858 while speaking at the Cambridge School of Art, he summed up his ideas noting that, “the greatest enigma in art history was that you must not follow Art without pleasure, nor must you follow it for the sake of pleasure.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> For an extended discussion see, Fuller, “Aesthesis versus Theoria,” pp. 45-51.

<sup>60</sup> Fuller, *Theoria*, p. 48.

## AFTERWORD: RUSKIN, PUGIN AND VIOLLET-LE-DUC

From the above analysis, it is clear that Ruskin drew upon the secular and “scientific” accounts of Gothic. His thinking derived its arguments from close observations of natural forms, and appealed to experiment and analysis, rather than tradition. But because of his belief in methods of scientific theology, he continued to insist that certain forms, which appeared to be beautiful in ways, which refused utilitarian explanation, had been traced “by the finger of God.” However, even within the Gothic Revival itself, Ruskin’s theories were perceived as contentious. For instance, Charles Eastlake in his *A History of the Gothic Revival in England* (1872), wrote: “We find our author dissecting the flower stem of a water plantain... and using arithmetical formulæ to show the subdivision of its branches, from which he implies that a lesson be learnt.”

Ruskin's theories are in contrast with the nineteenth-century moralism of the Anglo-Catholic theorist A. W. N. Pugin as well as with the moralism of contemporary utilitarian philosophers. For Pugin, the revival of pointed Gothic forms meant a revival of authority, tradition and faith in Catholic beliefs.<sup>62</sup> Utilitarian philosophers, on the other hand,

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<sup>61</sup> Ruskin, *Library Edition IV*, p. xi.

<sup>62</sup> In contrast to Pugin, who believed nature could only reveal God if man learned to read it in the light of authority and tradition, Ruskin believed that the forms of modern Gothic were to be sought in leaves and living plants. Ruskin was outlining a theory of Gothic architecture rooted in his elusive understanding of Divine revealed by Modern Science. Kenneth Clark in his book, *The Gothic Revival* (1928, 1962) notes that one of the incidental purposes of *The Seven Lamps* was to dissociate Gothic architecture from the practice of high rituals by fierce attacks on popery. To the first volume of *The Stones of Venice*, published three years later, Ruskin added an appendix on Romanist Modern Art specially aimed at the Gothic Revivalists, and in particular at Pugin. “But of all these fatuities,” he wrote, “the basest is the being lured into the Romanist Church by the glitter of it, like larks into a trap by broken glass; to be blown into a change of religion by the whine of an organ-pipe; stitched into a new creed by the gold threads on priests’ petticoats; jungled into a change of conscience by the chimes of a belfry.” According to Clark, “the dissociation of Gothic architecture and Rome was Ruskin’s most

emphasized that morality was based upon reason, with the implication for architecture being that a more rational architectural form will produce a healthy, moral subject. Jeremy Bentham's panopticon (1791), exemplifies how a rational and economic spatial organization was used to achieve central surveillance. A number of institutions, such as prisons, hospitals, asylums, mills and schools, followed similar utilitarian rationale in their building organizations in the nineteenth-century. In contrast to both Pugin's religious interpretation of the Gothic and to Utilitarianism's functional approach, Ruskin proposed a relationship between morality and architecture which is similar to the Aristotelian emphasis on particulars and is based upon imaginative perception.

Ruskin's moral defense of Gothic forms was based upon his understanding that the process of architectural creation is rooted in the interstices between scientific inquiry, aesthetic understanding and morality. Quite contrary to the belief of modernist architectural historians, Ruskin's defense of the nature of the Gothic is not just a sentimental and moralizing revival of medieval Gothic attitudes but is a profoundly articulate theory of architecture, which emphasizes the rational and affective nature of Gothic building forms. Such an interpretation problematizes the manner in which Viollet-le Duc and John Ruskin -- the most influential proponents of Gothic architecture in the nineteenth-century -- are categorized in the history of architecture as "rationalist" and "sentimentalist." While Viollet-le-Duc's theories of structural rationalism of Gothic were based on deductive reasoning and pure logic, Ruskin's theories of the rational nature of Gothic show a strong affinity with Aristotelian practical reasoning; thus, Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc defended Gothic architecture as rational, however, they used fundamentally different conceptions of truth and rationality. Ruskin, contrary to the perceptions of both the modernists and the postmodernists,

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complete success." See, Kenneth Clark, "Ruskin," *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of*

is neither a sentimentalist nor a skeptic of knowledge; he is a critic primarily interested in the epistemology of architecture – in defining and articulating its complex rational nature and claims to truth. Such a reasoned approach underlay Ruskin's political attempt to influence moral values of nineteenth-century English society.

## Chapter Three

### THE IMPORTANCE OF OBJECTIVE KNOWLEDGE IN POSTMODERN ARCHITECTURAL THEORY

Recent postmodern suspicion of truth, objectivity and rationality has radically transformed our understanding of architecture and its relationship to politics. In this chapter, I draw upon Hilary Putnam (1981) and Satya Mohanty (1997), who propose a sophisticated account of objectivity by reexamining the "hard" sciences, and by interpreting them as complex social practices. Building upon these writers, I argue that our subjective experiences of architecture are rational and our aesthetic values are cognitive. As an alternative to both modern essentialism and postmodern skepticism, I defend a theory of objectivity which explains the relationship of architecture to political power without abandoning rational thought. This theory of objectivity underscores that theoretical justifications contribute to knowledge the same way as empirical hypotheses do, and that these justifications must be grounded in particulars of the experience of its object—especially, its subjective and emotional aspects

Jeremy Bentham's panopticon and Foucault's notions of surveillance are familiar themes postmodern architectural theorists invoke when they deal with questions of space, power and subjectivity.<sup>1</sup> They do so to problematize architecture's relationship to politics. Postmodernists argue that modernism has concerned itself exclusively with the formal and visual aspects of architecture and has ignored architecture's role in furthering political

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<sup>1</sup> A number of contemporary theorists have invoked Bentham's panopticon in their writings. For an interesting analysis, see Andrea Kahn, "The Invisible Mask," Andrea Kahn ed., *Drawing Building Text* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991) 85-106. Also see Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990).

agendas. Thus, instead of following "visible" and explicitly political symbols of power, they seek the invisible means by which buildings embody power relationships.

This interest in invisible politics has coincided with the dissemination of postmodern "theory" through journals such as *Assemblage* and *ANY* as well as through numerous books and anthologies. Postmodernism in theory, however, has a different connotation from postmodernism in practice. In architectural practice, the term "postmodernism" has come to denote the pseudo-historical revival of the 1980s. Robert Venturi introduced this populist rhetoric in architectural practice through his publications, *Complexity and Contradiction* (1966) and *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972); later, the terms "postmodern" and "PoMo" entered common discourse when they were popularized by Charles Jencks in *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (1977). On the other hand, in architectural theory, postmodernism represents a critique of the pseudo revival of postmodern architecture. Postmodern theory emerged in art, aesthetics and architecture with the publication of Hal Foster's *The Anti-Aesthetic* (1983). This theory questions the categories of aesthetics, truth and rationality and aligns itself with structuralist and poststructuralist theories in philosophy and literary criticism.

In architectural history and theory, this shift in thinking coincided with the translation of Manfredo Tafuri's influential *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (1980). Tafuri criticized modernism for its complicity with capitalism, and for the operative role "theory" played in legitimizing the modern agendas of architects. His questioning of the

easy translation of modernist “theory” into practice undermined the credence of theory produced by practicing architects.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, since the 1980s, architectural theory has been produced more often by architectural theorists than by practicing architects.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Theory's relevance to practice has been questioned ever since Tafuri criticized the operative role theory played in legitimizing the "modern" agenda of architects. A number of other books such as *Architecture Criticism Ideology* (1985), *Architectureproduction* (1988), *Drawing Building Text* (1991), *Out of Site: A Social Criticism of Architecture* (1991), *Strategies in Architectural Thinking* (1992) and *Rethinking Architectural Theory* (1988) have contributed to the debate about theory's relationship to practice. For positions that criticize the current split between theory and practice in architecture, see Michael Hays, "On Turning Thirty," *Assemblage* 30 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996) 6-11; and Diane Ghirardo's review of "Space, Place and Gender" and "Architecture and Feminism" in *Harvard Design Magazine* (Cambridge: Graduate School of Design, 1997) 76-77.

<sup>3</sup> Tafuri's famous claim that "architects should do architecture and historians should do history" exemplifies how theory and practice in architecture have come to occupy separate realms. Before the translation of Tafuri's texts in the 1980s, the dominant critiques of modernism in architecture included a variety of theories about architectural design and practice. In Alan Cloquhoun's essay "Typology and Design Method," first published in British Journal *Arena* (1967), he criticized the "objective" and scientific design methodologies and proposed typology as a means of acknowledging the role of precedents in design. Typology was a successful design methodology most particularly in the works of Aldo Rossi and Leon Krier.

The phenomenological critique proposed by Christian Norberg-Schulz's *Intentions in Architecture* (1965), and *Existence Space and Architecture* (1971), where the concern with "concretization of existential space" through the making of places, renewed interest in the sensuous quality of materials, light, and color, and the tactile significance of the joint. Because of its embrace of site and tectonics, the phenomenological school of thought had a strong influence on designers and architects such as Tadao Ando, Steven Holl, and Peter Waldman.

Kenneth Frampton's "Prospects for a Critical Regionalism," which shares the phenomenological concern for the particularity of place, was first published in *Perspecta: The Yale Architectural Journal* (1983). While Norberg-Schulz's phenomenological critique promoted a poetic return to the specificity of place, Frampton proposed cross-fertilization between regional concerns and universal modernization. Despite its facile invocation of Frankfurt School critical theory, and its reinforcement of the modernist ideology of binary oppositions, "critical regionalism" found a number of protagonists in the architectural practice of, for example, Luis Barrag'an, Raimund Abraham, Tadao Ando and Mario Botta. This polemic is also pursued in the post-colonial debates about modernization, cultural rootedness, and politics of identity in the nonwestern world. For a comprehensive review of these issues see Sibel Bozdogan, "The Aga Khan Award for Architecture: A Philosophy of Reconciliation," *Journal of Architectural Education*, May 1992, 182-188. Also see, Bozdogan, "Architectural History in Professional Education: Reflections on Postcolonial Challenges to the Modern Survey," *Journal of Architectural Education*, May 1999, 207-215.



More recently, a number of books, most particularly those written by feminists and deconstructivist theorists, have introduced a rich and provocative debate by giving space to issues as diverse as sexuality, power, representation, gender, politics, and domesticity.<sup>4</sup> They argue that architecture constructs and is constructed by politics, pointing out how the metaphor of "fashion" is repressed in the construction of the modern movement, how the idea of a "pure" modern space conceals and fetishizes sexuality, and how ideas for a feminist architecture affect architectural practice. Perhaps it is unfair to generalize about such a diversity of essayists and theorists as the "postmodernists" because most of them argue from particular subject positions and hold differing viewpoints. Yet they share claims about the relevance of truth, rationality, and objectivity in their writings, and these call for a closer examination.

The advent of postmodernism has brought about a shift in emphasis from object to subject, revealing unintended political motivations in the constitution of knowledge. In rejecting an understanding of architecture as object, postmodern critics argue that, "architecture is not simply a platform that accommodates the viewing subject, but rather a viewing mechanism that produces the subject."<sup>5</sup> Beatrice Colomina, in her essay entitled, "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism," analyzes photographs and drawings of the interiors

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<sup>4</sup> Nana Ellin ed., *Architecture of Fear* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997); Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze, Carol Henderson eds., *Architecture and Feminism* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996); Christopher Reed ed., *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996); Diana Agrest, Patricia Conway, Leslie Kanes Weisman eds., *The Sex of Architecture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996); Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995); Beatrice Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994); Deborah Fausch, Paulette Shingley, Rudolphe el-Khoury, Zvi Efrat eds., *Architecture: In Fashion* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994); Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Beatrice Colomina ed., *Sexuality and Space* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism," Beatrice Colomina ed., *Sexuality and Space*, (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 83.

of houses designed by Le Corbusier and Adolf Loos. Colomina shows how the images of idealized, pure utopian spaces conceal and enable the domestication that occurs inside. She illustrates her claim that buildings participate in producing domesticated subjects by showing how they reinforce images of female subjects as vulnerable, mysterious and desirable sexual objects. Similarly, in another essay entitled, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender" Mark Wigley discusses the complicity of spatial order with the patriarchal authority described in Alberti's writings. Wigley argues that "place is not simply a mechanism for controlling sexuality. Rather, it is the control of sexuality by systems of representation that produces place."<sup>6</sup> According to Wigley, representation has specific ideological functions. He states that, "the effect of the mask is that space appears to precede representation and therefore assumes a specific ideological function."<sup>7</sup> He also questions the concept of "rationality" as a construct of knowing. In criticizing "rationality" and "order" he claims that, "...the building masquerades as order. Order itself becomes a mask. This mask of order uses figures of rationality to conceal the irrationality of both individuals and society." According to Wigley, "rationality is literally added to the building as the representation of an effacement of representation."<sup>8</sup> In a similar vein, Jeffrey Kipnis describes objectivity as a veil and argues that "all architectural theories and histories always also operate, beneath their veil of

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<sup>6</sup> "Untitled: The Housing of Gender," *Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>7</sup> "Untitled: The Housing of Gender," *Ibid.*, 387. In a similar vein, Catherine Ingraham critiques the epistemological and representational dependence of architecture on orthogonality. She argues that it is in the space of the line, the wall, that the architectural drama between sexuality and spatiality begins to play out. The wall, which always dreams of itself as the sexless geometric line, is where, Ingraham claims, "the differences of sexuality begin to be homologized as material differences, albeit in complex ways." See Catherine Ingraham, "Initial Proprieties: Architecture and the Space of the Line," in *Sexuality and Space*, 266.

<sup>8</sup> "Untitled: The Housing of Gender," *Ibid.*, 379.

objectivity and aside from their announced intent, in the service of a design agenda, despite their frequent protestations to the contrary."<sup>9</sup>

Such theoretical arguments have not only destabilized architecture; they have completely unsettled the way we experience buildings and urban spaces. While it is important that traditional "essentialist" ideas of architecture and space be problematized, it is equally crucial to examine the methodologies at play in the investigation. Herein, I examine postmodern methodologies and argue that recognition of the cognitive role of our experience of architecture and an understanding of objectivity is critical to the modern-postmodern debate.<sup>10</sup> My aim here is to contest the postmodern critiques leveled against objectivity and show how broader notions of rationality are fundamental to architectural theory.

## **EXPERIENCE OF ARCHITECTURE AND COGNITION**

Postmodernists criticize the modern theorization of the experience of architecture. They argue that positivist epistemology has reduced our experience of architecture to facts and properties, by discounting its emotional, moral, and ethical content. In the positivist object-subject split, the experience of architecture has been narrowly determined by

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<sup>9</sup> See Jeffrey Kipnis, "Forms of Irrationality," in John Whiteman, Jeffrey Kipnis, Richard Burdett eds., *Strategies in Architectural Thinking* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p.149.

<sup>10</sup> Here my use of the term modern-postmodern may appear to be simplistic. Clearly these classifications do not adequately represent the richness and complexity of the debate. I have used them only to make clear how discursive formations distinguish themselves through polemics. Moreover, my critique of postmodernism is directed at those theorists who take a position of extreme relativism.

functional coordinates and accepted as a source of "objective" knowledge.<sup>11</sup> This is because its objectivity and its truth can be logically deduced or empirically verified. On the other hand, our emotional responses to architecture, and our preference for certain aesthetic values have come to represent a purely subjective domain that cannot be grounded in reason. Subjective preferences, for this reason, have not been accepted as a legitimate source of knowledge.<sup>12</sup> In the modernist object-subject split, the full cognitive potential of our experience of architecture has remained unrecognized, and it has been perceived narrowly as pure, visual and abstract, devoid of any subjective dimension. Robert Venturi's famous observation that modernism has reduced the Vitruvian triad to "commodity plus fitness equals delight" clearly exemplifies the instrumental definitions of knowledge associated with modernism.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, the separation of experience from its moral and ethical content and the separation of architecture from its social, political and cultural context have created an autonomous space for architecture. Postmodernists contend that a visionary and autonomous image of modern architecture has been achieved by a complex maneuver. The object is first

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<sup>11</sup> Stanford Anderson in "The Fiction of Function" criticizes the postmodernists for equating modernism with functionalism. He argues that few modernist architects have endorsed the narrow functionalism--the "utility" focused design methodologies--that postmodernists criticize. Anderson focuses on the role of function in the modern movement since the 1932 exhibition on the International Style by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson. A review of architectural theory from roughly 1750 to 1932, however, reveals not only a richer notion of function but also a less instrumental relationship between theory and practice. See Stanford Anderson, "The Fiction of Function," *Assemblage no. 2* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 19-31.

<sup>12</sup> The fact-value distinction is bound up with the rise of science in the seventeenth century in Western thought. Facts came to be associated with objective knowledge that was absolute and unchanging, while values came to occupy a subjective realm. The dissociation of facts and values conjured up problems such as: How can a person function both as a knower of facts and a chooser of values? How can one be at home with reality that is supposed to be experienced neutrally, without emotion?

<sup>13</sup> Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1972), p. 90.

decontextualized from the specificity of its social, political, cultural, and physical context, and then recontextualized as a "visual representation" to be judged on specifically aesthetic and formalist terms.<sup>14</sup> The iconic image of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye as representing modern ideas of space is one such example of how an image of autonomous architectural form has been created and legitimized by a variety of mechanisms.

This reduction of architecture to an image has allowed such aesthetic properties as formal unity, truth, and emphasis on space, to be achieved through rational means which thereby have been perceived to have international application to effect social change. Such an easy conflation of the rationality of the autonomous architectural form with utopian social agendas, postmodernists contend, has helped mask the operation of ideological forces, such as those of capitalism and colonialism. For example, the manner in which the Crystal Palace conflated the values of technical rationality with the utopian ideals of a social and democratic space shows how autonomous architectural forms have been projected to embody social ideals. The fact that the Crystal Palace not only fostered commodification, but was also an artful player in the British colonial enterprise, also points to how such conflation has been used to mask ideological operations.<sup>15</sup>

While the postmodern criticism of modernism is justified to a degree, it could also be argued that postmodern epistemology also denies a legitimate role to the experience of

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<sup>14</sup> Miriam Gusevich, "The Architecture of Criticism: A Question of Autonomy," ed., Andrea Kahn *Drawing Building Text* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991), p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Built in 1851 in London to house the first International Great Exhibition, the Crystal Palace was moved from city to country in pieces and reconstructed at Sydenham where it remained until it burned down in 1937.

architecture. This is not because theorists consider it to be subjective or emotional, but because they argue that our aesthetic experience and aesthetic judgments are "disguised constructions" that reproduce asymmetries of power. More importantly, postmodern theorists ask: How are we to decide whose experience of architecture should be taken seriously, given that one's experience reflects a construction specific to one's subjectivity? For example, a public plaza could be perceived in many different ways. Is it a place for procession, celebration, or activism? Or is it an informal place for people to sit and enjoy the outdoors? Or is it a meeting place for mothers to socialize and for children to play? Or do these romantic ideas of openness and playing children in reality mask a space that is under constant surveillance? Postmodernists point to the diversity of such viewpoints. In emphasizing this diversity, they question the criteria by which we judge a particular reading to be more legitimate than another. They question what is held as valuable in a given context, by whom, and in whose political interests. Through such questioning, they have critiqued "aesthetic," and "beauty,"—qualities perceived to be inherent and thus universally valid. In his book, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984) Pierre Bourdieu has shown how aesthetic discourse universalizes the object of value by assuming that the aesthetic—a distinct category of human experience—is universally recognizable. This universality, in turn, establishes the universality of aesthetic judgments and values, thus guarding the value of that object. Bourdieu has characterized this vicious cycle as "the circular circulation of inter-legitimation."<sup>16</sup> He argues that patterns of taste are class specific and reinforce the political and economic domination of one class over another.

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<sup>16</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 11-96.

The problem, however, is not this uncovering of the complicity of class dominations and tastes, but that postmodernists take the political complicity of values as a given, and abandon discussion of aesthetic judgments and objective evaluations.<sup>17</sup> Such thinking is also central to architectural criticism. Postmodernists demand that we wean ourselves from the fiction of “pure” space and revel instead in the possibilities opened up by impure, scopical, and controlled regimes. But if we agree with the postmodern view and suspend our judgment, can we still talk about more or less gender-responsive space? Can we compare and legitimately discuss how the political and ideological complicity of one space is better than another? To me, these questions reveal the relativism inherent in postmodern claims. Furthermore, it is ironic that, even though we are uncomfortable in our awareness of architecture’s participation in politics, we continue to accept theoretical premises that do not allow a more responsive architecture.

More recently, critics have begun to question this easy acceptance of surveillance as a construct for understanding architectural space. Influenced by the notion of “everyday life” developed by French philosopher Henri Lefebvre and by cultural theorist Michel de Certeau, a number of theorists emphasize the role architecture plays in “real life,” in the “here and now,” and not in abstract truths. Lefebvre in *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (1984), and de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), depict the disciplinary power of technology in society; in doing so, they also reveal how society resists technology even in the most ordinary spaces. For example, they argue that consumption is not just a negative force, but that it is also as an arena of freedom, choice, creativity, and invention. Influenced by the

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<sup>17</sup> For a skeptical reading of value judgments and normative theories of evaluation see Barbara Herrnstein Smith, “Truth/Value,” *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 85-124.

ideas of Lefebvre and de Certeau, Mary McLeod has published an article entitled, "Everyday and 'Other' Spaces," in which she explores the freedoms, joys, and diversity of "the network of antidiscipline" in everyday spaces.<sup>18</sup> McLeod argues that the most influential critic to stress issues of the "everyday" in architecture was a non-architect, Jane Jacobs, whose book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961)* had a powerful impact on a whole generation of social and architectural critics.

McLeod writes:

"She [Jacobs] comes closest to realizing de Certeau's plea for an account of cities, not from the bird's-eye view, but from the experience of the pedestrian, the everyday user. And the terrain she describes is very different from that traversed by Baudelaire's *flâneurs*, from Foucault's prisons and brothels, or from Situationist bars and gypsy encampments. What is invoked in her description of New York City's West Village and Boston's North End is an informal public life: the world of the stoop, the neighborhood bakery, the dry cleaning establishment, and most importantly, the street; and with these come new subjects--mothers in the park, children, grocers, and newsstand attendants."<sup>19</sup>

Since the 1970s, a number of architects as well as architectural theorists have invoked the idea of "everyday" experience in order to critique modernism's functional determinism. Christian Norberg Schultz's phenomenological critique of modernism, Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi's polemic for a historicist populist architecture, Roger Scruton's argument for recognizing the cognitive role of the aesthetic, and the Independent

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<sup>18</sup> Mary McLeod, "Everyday and 'Other' Spaces," *Architecture and Feminism*, Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze and Carol Henderson (eds.) (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996, pp.1-37.

<sup>19</sup> McLeod points to the limitations of relying solely on empirical observation. She acknowledges that Jacob's focus on everyday life--on how space is actually used--does not offer satisfactory answers to questions related to the tacit operations of power. *Ibid.*, 23.



Group's appreciation of commercial life as an alternative to both modernist abstraction and deprivations of postwar Britain have all addressed the issue of the everyday experience of architecture. Indeed, these diverse attempts to embrace the small scale, the complex, the historical, the popular, the vernacular, the decorative and the ordinary have provided powerful theoretical alternatives to modernism. But how does the invocation of the "everyday" help us in resolving the current problem of architecture's complicity with politics? McLeod addresses this issue and points out that "the ordinary can easily become a rationalization of market forces and passive consumption."<sup>20</sup> She cites postmodern architecture as an example and shows how it reduced the "everyday" to populist revival. But, to me, this reading also brings to surface the epistemological dilemma inherent in our current thinking. If the "ordinary" is so easily subsumed by market forces, then should we completely abandon discussing everyday experience of architecture? In other words, can we take experience seriously while being aware of architecture's tenuous relationship with politics?

## **DAVID WATKIN AND ROGER SCRUTON: AESTHETICS, MORALITY AND ARCHITECTURE**

While a number of critics have brought up the issue of everyday experience and its complicity with politics, the cognitive role of our experience of architecture is rarely addressed. Part of the resistance to analyzing architecture as an art and its experience as aesthetic, stems from the neo-conservative agendas of some of the earlier attempts in which architecture's relationship to aesthetics was brought up. David Watkin's *Morality and Architecture* (1977) and Roger Scruton's *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (1979) were both

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 25.

written around the pseudo-historical revival in England. It is common in architectural criticism to yoke the books together as representing the so-called “New Right” position in England. However, there are significant differences between the two writers.

David Watkin in *Morality and Architecture* attacks a single theme, which he claims has persisted through the writings of Pugin’s *Contrasts (1836)* to Nikolaus Pevsner’s *Pioneers of the Modern Movement (1936)*. Watkin writes that “with a similar crusading tone each book argued for the adoption of a form of architecture not widely popular in England at the time of writing: Gothic in Pugin’s case, International Modern in Pevsner’s. Yet, despite the great difference between these two types of architecture, both critics use the same kind of argument to champion the cause of their chosen type: that it is not just a style but a rational way of building evolved inevitably in response to the needs of what society really is or ought to be, and to question its forms is certainly anti-social and probably immoral.”<sup>21</sup> Watkin’s main purpose is to criticize this “tradition in architectural writing of ignoring the mysterious origins and the importance of ‘style’ and of explaining architecture as a consequence or manifestation of something else.” He claims that the three most persistent factors that have been used to explain architecture outside of its aesthetics are: First, religion, sociology, or politics as argued by the English; Second, the spirit of the age emphasized by the Germans; Third, a rational or technological justification offered by the French.

Watkin argues that Pevsner’s justification of International Modernism shares the same moralistic tone as that of Pugin’s defense of Gothic architecture. He claims that “although the religious interpretation of architecture is not in fashion today, one consequence

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<sup>21</sup> David Watkin, *Morality and Architecture: The Development of a Theme in Architectural History and Theory from the Gothic Revival to the Modern Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1977, p.1.

of it is. And that is, that architecture is an embodiment of social moral or political conditions.”<sup>22</sup> Watkin analyzes theorists as diverse as Viollet-le-Duc, Lethaby, Le Corbusier and Giedion and argues that in their writings, they all undermine architecture’s role as an autonomous aesthetic practice. Pugin denies aesthetic motivation to seek guidance from “religious” and “natural” considerations, while Viollet le Duc locates architecture in functional and technical criteria (which, according to Watkin, are external to an internal aesthetic desire or will). Giedion, Watkin argues, locates contemporary architecture in a moral problem -- for he sees architecture as an instrument for attaining social policy, employed to achieve supposedly moral ends.

Watkin’s main argument is that morality has pervaded modernism through its belief in a truthful architecture. This belief is evident in the writings of the French rationalists, English Arts and Crafts, and a number of twentieth-century architects as diverse as Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright. Without examining the different ways in which these architects define truth in architecture, Watkin claims that their underlying belief is that an architecture that lies is immoral. Most importantly, he argues that this line of fallacious reasoning – that is looking for moral and political motivations in architecture – has obscured its true nature as an aesthetic enterprise, in which individual taste and cultural tradition are more legitimate guides. Watkin sees all these attempts to reduce architecture -- to a social end, or to a historical force, or to see it as a product of the zeitgeist or as a moral or political instrument -- as ways of denying to architecture its essential nature as a decorative art.

Watkin’s strongest attack is on Nikolaus Pevsner. Watkin argues that because of his “historicist” view of cultural history, Pevsner locates architecture outside of its autonomous

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<sup>22</sup> Watkin, *Morality and Architecture*, p.4

aesthetic realm -- in a moral, social and cultural problem. Pevsner's belief that the *Zeitgeist* should be expressed uniformly and totally throughout all the activities of an age is evident in his *An Outline of European Architecture* (1943). Implicit in this is Pevsner's belief that cultural history is a representation of the spirit of the age, and within this system of thinking, an architect or an age that does not represent a *zeitgeist* is considered an anomaly. For this reason, Pevsner labels nineteenth-century architectural production--which allowed itself to be influenced by past styles--as historicist. Watkin insightfully points out that not only labeling the nineteenth century work, as historicist is pejorative, but that Pevsner's approach is itself "historicist." Watkin cites Karl Popper's *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957) who argues that, in a historicist interpretation ideas of past periods are continuously rendered obsolete by new "essences" and for this reason nothing is of a greater moment than the emergence of a new period. In this respect, Pevsner reinforces a "historicist" outlook that Karl Popper has criticized.

In his book, Watkin insightfully shows that an art-historical belief in *Zeitgeist*, combined with a historicist belief in progress and superiority of novelty has undermined the role of the imaginative genius of individual architects.<sup>23</sup> Watkin's main argument in *Morality and Architecture* is that one cannot pass from moral maxim to clear aesthetic rules; however, his insistence that there is no connection between the two remains problematic because it offers a very narrow definition of the role of aesthetics in architecture.

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<sup>23</sup> Watkin points out how historians of architecture found it difficult to categorize the unique talent of Edwin Lutyens. For instance, Watkin cites Henry-Russell Hitchcock who wrote: "Lutyens, one feels, in a different time and place—a generation earlier in England, say, or a generation later—might have been a great architect." Pevsner, on the other hand, does not mention Lutyens at all in his *Outline of European Architecture*.

Roger Scruton in *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (1979), on the other hand, provides a different critique of modernism. Scruton argues for recognition of the rational character of our aesthetic judgments and experience. In his argument, there is a clear connection between aesthetic principles and moral codes. Scruton's emphasis on rationality and our experience of architecture shares some concerns with the phenomenological approach; but he argues that a method of phenomenology based on the essentialist notions of the self is impossible to conceive. In contrast to Norberg Schultz's work, which emphasized the Heideggerian ideas of "dwelling" and meaningful places, Scruton analyzed the history and theories of modernism and proposed a theory of objectivity, which emphasized the moral and cognitive role of aesthetic values and judgments. Therefore, Scruton's work is in complete contrast to Watkin's argument for an aesthetic autonomy (and his rejection of the moral role of aesthetics).

Despite the philosophical basis of the argument, Scruton's absolute dismissal of architectural works based on his own judgment and taste undermines his argument for aesthetic experience and judgments open to reevaluation. Furthermore, in Scruton's writing the question about the relationship of aesthetics to politics becomes central. Scruton is well known for his close ties with Mrs. Thatcher and his right wing opinions and publications. Scruton's recent book *The Classical Vernacular: Architectural Principles in an Age of Nihilism* (1994) promotes a narrow conservative view of architecture embodied by classical vocabulary. And, because of this, Scruton's critique of modernism, which argues for a richer notion of aesthetic, proposed at a time when the "anti-aesthetic" sentiments of postmodernism were dominant, remained marginal. Although Scruton's and Watkin's arguments are diametrically opposed to each other, they are yoked together as representing a neo-conservative critique of modernism. This has perhaps been encouraged by their habit of

cross-referencing each other. In their review of each other's books, they have publicly lauded each other, while recognizing this deep irreconcilable disparity. Scruton's *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (1979) represents an important work that analyzes architecture's relationship to aesthetics. However, because of the direct political complicity of his aesthetics with neo-conservative agendas of 1980s, his ideas have only contributed to undermining the role of aesthetics; they have further reinforced the postmodern belief that all discussions of aesthetic values and judgments are bound up with hidden political motivations.

In order to free ourselves from the present predicament and to better understand the relationship of aesthetics to politics, we need to rethink our theorizing of architecture. As discussed in chapter one, the principle objective of my dissertation is to show that aesthetic perception is not just socially or politically constructed experience, but is a mode of evaluation that is "rational." Herein I will explain the relationship between rationality of aesthetic experience, objective knowledge and architecture's complicity with politics. I have developed my arguments by drawing upon the Realist account of objective knowledge developed by analytic philosophers and literary theorists such as Hilary Putnam and Satya P. Mohanty.<sup>24</sup> In their writings, they propose a sophisticated account of objectivity by reexamining the actual nature of the "hard" sciences, and by interpreting them as complex, coordinated social practices. In so doing, they provide an alternative to postmodern skepticism.

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<sup>24</sup> See Nelson Goodman *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc, 1968); Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Satya P. Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Hilary Putnam, in *Reason Truth and History* (1981), questions the association of rational thinking with scientific thinking; in doing so, he challenges the idea that science alone provides the true descriptions of reality. Putnam shows how scientific inquiry, much like the humanities, is holistic and relational relying on a number of preexisting assumptions. He develops a broader understanding of rationality and objectivity and shows how these are not only central to studies in ethics and value theory, but are also crucial to understanding inquiry in the sciences.<sup>25</sup> In his book *Many Faces of Realism* (1987), Putnam claims, for instance, that the red sweater I see is "not red in the way I thought it was." I cannot really make the common-sense claim that "there is a red sweater." I can only say that there are certain sense data in my mind. What seem to be the "intrinsic properties" of the red sweater are really nothing more than "dispositions to affect us in certain ways...to produce certain sorts of "states" in our brains and nervous systems," which we in turn project onto the thing "in itself." Thus Putnam's realism, while emphasizing the constructed nature of our idea of the "real," does not reject the causal relation that exists between the object and the subject, that is, ways by which the object affects and "produces certain sorts of states" in the subject's brain.

On the other hand, Satya Mohanty, in his book *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, MultiCultural Politics* (1997) builds on Putnam's ideas; more directly, he addresses the skeptical strands of postmodern thought and shows how they are both theoretically and politically inhibiting. He points out that the older, positivist view of objectivity is fundamentally flawed because it establishes a false subject-object split in which subjectivity is diametrically opposed to objectivity. This reductive split does not recognize any cognitive value gained from subjective experiences. He points out that the postmodern

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<sup>25</sup> See Putnam, "Fact and Value," and "Two concepts of rationality," in *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 127-149.

rejection of objectivity is a critique of a particular conception of positivist objectivity and its related notions of science, fact, and value.

By directing attention to the alternative accounts of objectivity developed by realist philosophers, Mohanty raises this question: If contemporary postmodern understanding of scientific norms and criteria is not accurate, how must we reorient our political critiques of them? According to Mohanty, Realist accounts of objectivity are attentive to postmodernists' cautions about social and historical entanglements of knowledge and can explain distortions of ideology and power. In building a Realist account of cultural identity, Mohanty demonstrates the continuity between "theory" and subjective experience, and the larger relation between subjective experience and objective knowledge. In addition, Mohanty develops an idea of multiculturalism based on a cognitivist view of culture as a field of moral inquiry, involving practice, experimentation, and rational conjecture. Multiculturalism, he argues, should be defined as an epistemic cooperation across cultures. His realist account of cultural experience and identity, grants rational agency to all humans and shows how moral universalism and multiculturalism are compatible, indeed complementary ideals. In doing so, he provides an alternative to postmodern skepticism.<sup>26</sup>

Drawing upon the writings of Mohanty and Putnam, I argue that an understanding of the Realist account of objectivity is central to understanding architecture's relationship with politics. Most importantly, I argue that Aristotelian practical reasoning is inherent to understanding the rational nature of knowledge acquisition. In so doing, I show the underlying parallels between historical inquiry, theoretical critiques and processes of design.

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<sup>26</sup> See Mohanty, "Introduction: Criticism as Politics," "On Situating Objective Knowledge," and "Identity, MultiCulturalism, Justice," in *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 1-24, 149-197, and 198-252.



To explain these claims let us sketch a scenario in which we directly address the question of objective knowledge and architecture's relationship to politics. Let us assume two agents who claim very different experiences of the Crystal Palace. In this scenario, the agents' knowledge and experience of the building is derived solely from representations, drawings, and documents. For agent A, it represents a technologically advanced building for its time, with a rational and innovative use of materials and methods of production enabling the construction of a weightless and flowing form. Let us also suppose that A associates the physical qualities of the building such as transparency and blurring of the boundaries between the exterior and interior with ideals of being socially open and democratic. For agent B, on the other hand, the seemingly innocent and pure expression of the Crystal Palace is deceptive because the building fosters commodification with a remarkable mastery of capitalist ideals. For B to show A that there is another way to experience and form a judgment about the Crystal Palace would require that B draw A's attention to the particulars--the way in which transparency both empowers the viewer to see through the structure, and disempowers the viewer by not allowing escape from being viewed; the way in which the palace's alternating reflective and transparent state transform the viewer into a *voyeur*, whose eye has the power of appropriation without purchase. And the very idea of an experience limited to looking through a transparent surface conceals the fact that one can see but not touch, see but not hear, see but not speak, and so forth.<sup>27</sup>

In this process of deliberation (which is "practical reasoning" in Aristotelian terms), the end is not an abstract conclusion derived from deductive reasoning, but is a

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<sup>27</sup> For these observations, I am indebted to Andrea Kahn's critique of the Crystal Palace in "The Invisible Mask," *Drawing Building Text*, 85-106.

transformatory experience in which A comes to recognize and read the Crystal Palace differently; that is, it involves a reconstruction of the Crystal Palace in A's mind from an "infinite" number of particulars.<sup>28</sup> B's pointing out the particulars, such as the illusory operation of a transparent surface, does not necessarily imply that there is a logical connection between transparency and the judgment it supports. Rather it is a form of practical reasoning in which one can sift through particulars without committing oneself to abstract general concepts. Furthermore, the fact that A comes to agree with B's judgment does not in any way assume that B's judgment represents the truth that is deductively inferred. Rather B's judgment represents a truth that can only be imaginatively perceived, and thus the judgment remains open to modification through rational deliberation.

A's coming to read the Crystal Palace differently also suggests an enhancement in A's sensibility and imagination--a realization about the invisible tactics of capitalism, ways in which physical forms can be used for manipulative ends, and how a reading of an architectural form in purely aesthetic, formal, or technical terms does not adequately represent the full engagement of architecture in our social and political lives. Hence, one could argue that the process by which A has come to read the Crystal Palace as an artful player of capitalist ideals is rational. This does not imply that such experience is dispassionate, but that it occurs because of and through emotions and imagination. Furthermore, that the Crystal Palace no longer exists reinforces the point that what counts as "real" does not rest solely on the physical and experiential attributes of a real object, but upon

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<sup>28</sup> In an essay entitled, "Aesthetic and Non-Aesthetic," Frank Sibley argues that justification of aesthetic experience is not a matter of demonstration but of perceptual proof, bringing someone to see something. See Frank Sibley, "Aesthetic and Non-Aesthetic," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXXIV, (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1965), 135-159.

how our experience of reality is continuously informed and transformed by our theoretical, cultural, and political knowledge.

I use this scenario to illustrate the larger argument of this dissertation that such personal conflicts and arguments bring to the surface the rational character of our experience of architecture.<sup>29</sup> Our experiences of architecture do not simply describe a fully independent "real" object with a fixed degree of evidence, but attempt to articulate what is initially disordered or largely unintelligible. To perceive architecture in its full context, in its replete particularity, one requires imagination to construct the whole.<sup>30</sup> Imagination, herein, plays a central role in the acts of cognition and rational choice and contrasts with the concept of imagination as a flight of fancy. In fact, imagination focuses more on reality than on fancy. Our experiences of this reality are evaluations; they reflect what we hold important, worthy, or fulfilling. Therefore, in all acts of imaginative reconstruction which are mediated by our social, theoretical, and political knowledge, we make architecture accessible and/or inaccessible in new ways. As a result, our experiences can be more or less correct, and can be subject to normative claims. Furthermore, since our perceptions of architecture represent a form of practical reasoning, these perceptions are rational and evaluative in a manner that leaves room for re-evaluation. The Realist conception of knowledge proposed here, while taking into account postmodern claims about the constructed nature of our experience of

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<sup>29</sup> This example also illustrates that our experiences are not fully rational. It is not easy to distinguish between an illusion and cognition. The sifting of information and reinterpretation of the whole from the particular can happen suddenly, slowly, or in retrospect, and is mediated by the social and political theories. The most important consideration is on what epistemic foundation we base our judgments and evaluations and how do we distinguish between an illusion and cognition. For more on this, see Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics*, 202-216.

<sup>30</sup> Iris Murdoch defines imagination as "a spontaneous intuitive capacity to put together what is presented to us so as to form a coherent spatio-temporal experience which is intellectually ordered and sensuously based." On the role imagination plays in perceiving truth, see Iris Murdoch, "Imagination," *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 308-348.

architecture--that is, experiences change with increased knowledge as well as political or social context--argues that constructedness does not ipso facto make it arbitrary or unstable, and stresses the cognitive and evaluative nature of our experience of architecture.

## **OBJECTIVITY AND POLITICAL COMPLICITY**

The important question that follows from the above discussion is this: can we criticize the Crystal Palace (which has been seen as complicit with capitalist and colonial practices) without abandoning a claim to objective knowledge? Is the Crystal Palace's technique of management bad in itself, or because of the political ends it served? In the Realist view of knowledge proposed here, the analyses and observations that reveal the complicity of the Crystal Palace with the dominant political power (such as B's observations) in fact represent attempts at providing a more objective explanation of architecture's relationship with politics. For alternative strategies to resist power, we must often depend upon observations such as B's as well as the knowledge created by conflicts, such as the one between A and B. Such conflicts also help to highlight the dependence of our judgments and our experiences on our respective subjectivities. That is, how our subjectivities enable us to read the world by both facilitating and inhibiting knowledge in specific ways. For instance, a critique of the Crystal Palace which argues that subjects in the Palace were under constant surveillance because they could not escape the condition of being viewed will sound less abstract, and less inimical, when we acknowledge the historical accounts of the everyday lives of the subjects, and see how they resisted this surveillance. This knowledge--subjects' different experiences of the building, the possible resistance through the creation of sheltered

enclaves to the all-embracing transparency, and the patterns of movement that may have resisted the building's linear organization--could provide designing strategies to resist power.

But can we deduce objective knowledge uncritically from the "lived experience" of a subject? Is this emphasis on the "lived experience" a sentimental response? Mohanty, who has emphasized the continuity between subjective experience and objective knowledge, argues that the "lived experience" may be sincerely felt by a subject, but whether we consider it legitimate or illusory depends on the examination of the specifics of the context.<sup>31</sup> Let us, once again, consider A's reading of the Crystal Palace from the previous example. Given our current theoretical perspective about the complicity of the Crystal Palace with capitalism and colonialism, we may evaluate A's observations that the flowing transparent forms of the Crystal Palace represent morally correct ideals of open and democratic space as an illusion (despite our sympathy with A's social and political views). The illusory as well as the cognitive components are open to analysis and evaluation on the basis of empirical research and theoretical accounts of our current social and political arrangements.<sup>32</sup> Thus, acknowledging that we have the capacity to evaluate our aesthetic experiences (including emotions) is not a romantic or a sentimental response to the problem of architecture's relation to politics. Instead, it is a pragmatic recognition of the political significance of the experience of architecture.

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<sup>31</sup> Mohanty argues that experience, properly interpreted, can be as much a source of knowledge, as it can be of mystification. Experiences can be evaluated as justified or unjustified in relation to the subject and her world. See Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics*, 205.

<sup>32</sup> In fact, Mohanty argues that we should see our experiences as complex theories about (and explanations of) the social world. The only way to evaluate such theories is to look at how well they work as explanations. *Ibid.*, 238.

Another point is that, changes in theoretical language reflect knowledge acquisition.<sup>33</sup>

Let us once again, consider the rational exchange that has occurred between A and B. Assuming that A did come to agree with B's judgment, if A is asked to justify her experience of the Crystal Palace, A is likely to describe these particulars: technically advanced for its time; an innovative use of materials and methods of production; a weightless and flowing form; and a remarkable mastery of capitalist ideals. A's knowledge of the Crystal Palace has been enhanced and enlarged by this rational exchange, and this understanding of politics has enabled a more objective viewpoint. Moreover, this analysis underscores that B's justifications have not functioned merely as linguistic generalizations; they have contributed to knowledge much the same way as new empirical hypotheses and evidence do. Here one may also see the parallels in the exchange between A and B and the shift in our perceptions from "abstract" and "autonomous" to postmodern notions of "culturally constructed" and "politically complicit" buildings. When one sees this shift as a process of theory change through which particulars have been added, and a more objective viewpoint has been acquired, the postmodern interest in politics then does not appear to be as radical a revolution in thinking as its polemics make it out to be.

## **HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE CRYSTAL PALACE: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL ENTERPRISE**

In order to illustrate this, I will briefly review how the Crystal Palace was initially accepted and categorized by critics and architectural historians and how changes in the theoretical perception of the definition of architecture have informed its history. James Fergusson, in *History of the Modern Styles of Architecture (1873)* cites the Crystal Palace as

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<sup>33</sup> See Michael Hays, "Theory-Constitutive Conventions and Theory Change" *Assemblage no.1*

one of the sources of the “Modern Styles.” His entire discussion, however, revolves around the controversy it inspired: Was the Crystal Palace a work of Architecture or of Engineering? Fergusson claims that, “As first proposed, the Hyde Park Crystal Palace, though an admirable piece of Civil Engineering, had no claim to be considered as architectural design. Use, and use only, pervaded every arrangement, and it was not ornamented to such an extent as to elevate it into the class of Fine Arts. The subsequent introduction of the arched transept, with the consequent arrangements at each end and on each side, did much to bring it within that category....”<sup>34</sup> Thus, in Fergusson’s opinion, the re-erected building at Sydenham, “has a far greater claim to rank among the important architectural objects of the world.” Its huge scale, its truthful construction, and its ornamental arrangement qualify it to be architecture with a capital, “A.”

Fergusson writes:

In the first place, its dimensions are unsurpassed by those of any hall ever erected. Its internal area is four times that of St. Peter’s at Rome, and ten times that of our St. Paul’s. A second merit is, that its construction is absolutely truthful throughout. Nothing is concealed, and nothing added for effect. In this respect it surpasses any Classical or Gothic building ever erected. A third is, that it is ornamentally arranged. Nothing can well be better, or better subordinated, than the great and two minor transepts joined together by the circular roofs of the naves, and the whole

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(Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 117-128.

<sup>34</sup> James Fergusson, *History of the Modern Styles of Architecture* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1873), 556.

arrangement is such as to produce the most pleasing effects both internally and externally.<sup>35</sup>

He argues that while the Crystal Palace possesses these three “great elements of architectural design, it is deficient in two others.” One is an “insufficient amount of decoration” which does not allow the Palace to be altogether taken “out of the category of first-class engineering, and to make it entirely an object of Fine Art.” But its greatest defect, Fergusson maintains, is “that it wants solidity, and that appearance of permanence and durability indispensable to make it really architectural in the strict meaning of the word.”<sup>36</sup>

It is only much later in Nikolaus Pevsner’s *Pioneers of Modern Movement: From William Morris to Walter Gropius (1937)*, that the Crystal Palace is accepted as much as an “outstanding work of architecture” as a feat of engineering.<sup>37</sup> Pevsner recognizes that “the progress of engineering during the nineteenth century has passed unappreciated,” a progress, which he claims, is, “as consistent and grandiose as that of Romanesque and Gothic architecture.”<sup>38</sup> He cites nineteenth-century engineering as one of the sources of the Modern Movement, and considers it important to mention that it is “a source as patent and worthy of careful consideration as William Morris, the Arts and Crafts, and the Art Nouveau.”<sup>39</sup> Pevsner

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 556-557.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 557.

<sup>37</sup> Pevsner defines “Modern” as a historical category with distinct chronological limits. According to Pevsner, “The history of artistic theory between 1890 and the war proves the assertion on which the present work is based, namely that the phase between Morris and Gropius is a historical unit understandable as such. Morris laid the foundation of the modern style; with Gropius its character was ultimately determined.” Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company MCMXXXVII), 42.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 121. Pevsner’s main concern in writing the book is to trace the contribution of the English to the Modern movement. Pevsner writes, “England’s activity in the preparation of the Modern



includes a more extended description of the Crystal Palace only in the revised edition of *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*, published by Penguin books in 1964. This description is also carefully reasoned and justified. Pevsner points out that iron and glass have obvious advantages for two types of buildings--the market hall and railway stations. These buildings, according to Pevsner, have been brought to the fore by enormous increase in population(s) in the cities of the early nineteenth century and the fast-growing interchange of materials and products between factories and cities.<sup>40</sup> Pevsner clarifies "...all our testimonies on iron have been stimulated by structures which were not architecture with a capital A. When it comes to civic buildings or churches, the field of those ready to use iron frankly and with aesthetic conviction narrows at once considerably."<sup>41</sup>

Pevsner's discussion of the Crystal Palace is full of modifiers. For example, Paxton is described as an "outsider," and the Crystal Palace as a "temporary" structure. Furthermore, Pevsner considers it important to explain that an "outsider" would not have dared such an "unprecedented design" had it not been for the "temporary" nature of the building. Nevertheless, Pevsner acknowledges that the Crystal palace is an outstanding building. In Pevsner's own words:

What makes Paxton's building the outstanding example of mid-nineteenth-century iron and glass architecture was rather its enormous size – 1851 feet long, that is,

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movement came to an end during less than ten years after Morris's death. The initiative now passed to the Continent and the United States, and, after a short intermediate period, Germany became the centre of progress. English writers have not failed to acknowledge this fact; but hardly anybody has tried to explain it. According to Pevsner, one reason may be this, "so long as the new style had been a matter in practice concerned only the wealthier class, England could foot the bill. As soon as the problem began to embrace the people as a whole, other nations took the lead, nations that lived on longer, or had never lived, in the atmosphere of the *ancien re'gime*, nations that did not accept or did know England's educational and social contrasts between the privileged classes and those in the suburbs and slums." Ibid., Page 29.

<sup>40</sup> Pevsner, p.132, revised edition, 1964.

much longer than the palace of Versailles—the absence of any other materials, and the use of an ingenious system of prefabrication for the iron and glass parts, based on a twenty-four-foot grid adopted throughout. Only by means of prefabrication could a building of such size be erected in the miraculously short time of ten months. It is quite likely that even Paxton, the outsider, would not have dared such an unprecedented procedure and such an unprecedented design, if he had not worked for a temporary building. However, the fact that the Crystal Palace was re-erected in 1854 at Sydenham near London for a more permanent purpose proves that the new beauty of metal and glass had caught the fancy of progressive Victorians and of the public at large.<sup>42</sup>

While Pevsner recognizes the Crystal Palace as one of the many English contributions to the modern movement, it is Henry Russell Hitchcock, who, in his 1937 MoMA show “Modern Architecture in England,” describes Paxton’s project as “the most prophetic monument of the mid-nineteenth century, a monument often hailed with pardonable exaggeration as the first modern building.”<sup>43</sup> Hitchcock’s main concern is to mark the lineage of Modern design and he sees the Crystal Palace as a direct ancestor of modern architecture. He points out that, “in England, it (the Crystal Palace), represented not the beginning, but the end of a development.”<sup>44</sup> Distinguishing it from revivalist buildings that immediately followed its construction, Hitchcock writes “that some of these buildings with their strange amalgam of ancient forms and modern construction have real architectural virtues one cannot

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.135.

<sup>42</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1964), p.133.

<sup>43</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr. “The British Nineteenth Century And Modern Architecture,” *Modern Architecture in England* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art), 1937, 10.

<sup>44</sup> Hitchcock, p.11.

deny; but they are not direct ancestors of modern architecture in the same sense as the Crystal Palace,....”<sup>45</sup>

While it was obviously the prefabrication of interchangeable parts that would be recognized as the building’s biggest contribution to modernism, the Crystal Palace also represented a shift in attitudes in documenting the process of construction. The structural system of the Crystal Palace was meticulously documented. In 1852 very carefully lithographed copies of the entire set of Fox’s finished drawings were published in a book entitled, *The Building erected in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations*. In the introduction, it was stated that the publication is “so correct and complete” that it will, “enable an architect or engineer to erect a similar building if necessary.” As Ralph Lieberman points out, the construction process of the Crystal Palace symbolized a modernity in which we were “as far as we [sic] can be from the jealously guarded knowledge of medieval masons; the modern age was to replace secret techniques with building methods as publicly known as and as universally reproducible as a scientific experiment.”<sup>46</sup> Its method of construction thus became more important to architectural history than its design or its program or its relation to ideology and colonialism.

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<sup>45</sup> Hitchcock, p.12. Hitchcock’s main concern here is “to give once more an account of those rather isolated and still popularly neglected developments which were Great Britain’s important early contributions toward the type of architecture we call modern in the mid-twentieth century.” Hitchcock claims that, “this type of architecture crystallized internationally only in the decade after the War, and has been introduced into England in the last few years definitely as a new Continental development....The new Continental modern architecture which is replacing it has, however, extremely important English roots.” p.10.

<sup>46</sup> Ralph Lieberman, “The Crystal Palace,” *AA Files 12* (London: Architectural Association, 1976), p. 55.

During the second half of the twentieth-century, most historians continued to regard the Crystal Palace as one of the landmark projects of nineteenth-century modernism. Most histories of the building, written during this period, include a chronicle of its unique process of construction along with references to the euphoric tales associated with its building and to the public controversy that its construction provoked in England.<sup>47</sup>

In his discussion of the Crystal Palace in *Space Time and Architecture* (first published in 1941) Sigfried Giedion emphasizes that its unique contribution lies in that “it marks the first use on a grand scale of prefabricated parts, and it arrives at a new artistic expression through the use of the new material plate glass (248).” Giedion announces its conception by quoting what Prince Albert wrote in 1850 about the Crystal Palace.

“None will doubt that we are living in a most remarkable period of transition, laboring forcefully toward that great aim indicated everywhere by history: the union of the human race... Gentlemen, the exhibition of 1851 shall give a vivid picture of the stage at which industry has arrived in the solution of that great task.”<sup>48</sup>

In his discussion, Giedion also points to the metaphorical qualities that the Crystal Palace had come to symbolize--the symbiosis of art and technology and the effervescence in

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<sup>47</sup> One of the writers often quoted in the context of the public controversy is John Ruskin who criticized the Crystal Palace. Ruskin wrote that, the Crystal Palace was no more than “a greenhouse larger than ever greenhouse was built before” and all that it needed in addition was “some very ordinary algebra.” Ruskin, Lib. Ed. IX, 456.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Sir Henry Cole, *Fifty Years of Public Service* (London, 1884), I, 124-125. Sigfried Giedion quotes from *Henry Cole's Fifty Years of Public Service*, Sigfried Giedion, *Space Time and Architecture: the growth of a new tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Third Edition, enlarged, 1959), pp.247-248.

which, “all materiality blends into the atmosphere.”<sup>49</sup> An analysis of the Crystal Place as a metaphor, exemplifying modernity, is later taken up as a central theme in Marshall Berman’s *All that is Solid Melts into Air* (1988). For Berman the role of Crystal Palace as a metaphor for fancy, a metaphor for an “unreal” reality, and a metaphor for a dark and dismal modernity, is crucial. His analysis reveals the role the building has played--both literal and metaphorical--in literature, fiction and history. In Berman’s book, the tendency of solid material to decompose and melt is argued to be the basic fact of modern life and the Crystal Palace emerges as its quintessential representation.<sup>50</sup>

Berman’s discussion of Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground* reveals how the fantasy of the Crystal Palace was more dismal than its reality. Berman points out that, modernism takes on a fantastic character wherever the process of modernization has not come on its own. This is because it is forced to nourish itself not on social reality but on fantasies, mirages, and dreams. For Russians in the middle of the nineteenth-century, the Crystal Palace was one of the most haunting and compelling of modern dreams. Because of this, Berman points out, the “Crystal Palace plays a far more important role as a specter of modernization in Russian literature and thought than in the English because modernization haunts ever more convulsively in a nation struggling with the anguish of backwardness.” To illustrate this, Berman contrasts Russian dreams and nightmares of the Crystal Place with Western descriptions of its reality. In Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground*, the Hero describes the Crystal Palace in the following manner:

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<sup>49</sup> Giedion, pp. 252-3.

<sup>50</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 235-248.

It (the building) is mechanically conceived and realized: “all ready-made and computed with mathematical exactitude,” to the point where, when it is complete, “every possible question will vanish, simply because every possible answer will be provided.” The building’s tone is pompous and ponderous; the message it proclaims is not merely historic culmination but cosmic totality and immutability: “Must not one accept this as the ultimate truth, and become silent forever?”<sup>51</sup>

This description of the Crystal Palace as a building representing negation of all uncertainty and mystery and the defeat of adventure and romance by Dostoevsky is in complete contrast with the account of German political refugee, Lothar Bucher. Lothar Bucher’s account has been acknowledged by many historians as accurate and convincing. They turn to him, “for a sense of what it must have actually felt like to be inside the Crystal Palace.”<sup>52</sup> In contrast to Dostoevsky’s description, Bucher’s vision of the Crystal Palace is a world within which everything is spectral, mysterious and infinite.

We see a delicate network of lines, without any clue by means of which we might judge their distance from the eye or their real size. The side walls are too far apart to be embraced in a single glance. Instead of moving from the wall at one end to the wall at the other, the eye sweeps along an unending perspective that fades into the horizon. We cannot tell if this structure towers a hundred or a thousand feet above us, or whether the roof is a flat structure or built up from a succession of ridges, for there is no play of shadows to enable our optic nerves to gauge the measurements.

Bucher continues:

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<sup>51</sup> Dostoevsky quoted by Berman, p.236.

<sup>52</sup> Lothar Bucher’s account is acknowledged as an accurate description of the Crystal Palace by Sigfried Giedion (1959, pp.250-251), Leonardo Benevolo (1996, 101-102) and Marshall Berman (1988, pp. 239-40).

If we let our gaze travel downward it encounters the blue-painted lattice girders. At first these occur only at wide intervals; then they range closer and closer together until they are interrupted by a dazzling band of light – the transept—which dissolves into a distant background where all materiality is blended into the atmosphere.

Berman points out that Bucher’s description has become iconic because in his description he evokes Marx’s richest images and ideas: “All that is solid melts into air.”<sup>53</sup> In Berman’s book this tendency of solid material to decompose and melt is argued to be the basic fact of modern life; and in his analysis, the Crystal Palace emerges as the quintessential representation of the experience of modernity including its darkest aspects.

To explore the darker aspects of modernity as a routine, Berman turns to Chernyshevsky’s *What is to be Done?* He explains that it is Chernyshevsky’s Crystal Palace far more than Paxton’s—that is, Russian fantasies of modernization rather than Western realities—that Dostoevsky really fears. In “Vera Pavlovna’s Fourth Dream,” one finds a dismal vision of a future world that consists exclusively of crystal palaces. These “huge buildings stand two or three miles from each other, as if they were numerous chessmen on a chessboard... This chessboard configuration stretches as far as the eye can see.”<sup>54</sup> Such descriptions of “monotonous repetition” reveal how the fantasy of the Crystal Palace was more dismal than its reality. That is, how its fantasy of arid Western rationalism, materialism, the mechanical view of the world was more dismal than the creative ingenuity of its design and conception. The great gulf between these hopes and their realization seems to illustrate another of *Underground Man*’s points: that it can be a creative adventure for modern men to

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<sup>53</sup> Berman, p.240.

build a palace, and yet a nightmare to have to live in it. Berman likens this to Costa and Niemeyer's Brasilia, which left its citizens—and those of the country as a whole—"with nothing left to do."<sup>55</sup>

Another significant aspect of modernity – of undertaking such gigantic constructions – is that of an underlying fear. The "Underground Man" also fears the crystalline structure. The Underground Man's suspicion is expressed most clearly in the following passage:

You believe in the crystal edifice indestructible for all eternity, the kind that you could never stick your tongue out at on the sly or thumb your nose at secretly. Well, perhaps the reason I am afraid of that edifice is that it is crystal and indestructible for all eternity and one can't even stick one's tongue out at it on the sly.<sup>56</sup>

Written at a time when modernism was being radically questioned, Berman's discussion of Dostoevsky's Underground Man's fear is very relevant. In recent years, this "fear" has come to represent a dominant trope of postmodernity. In her article entitled, "The Invisible Mask," Andrea Kahn focuses not on the visible but the "invisible" ways by which the Crystal Palace controls and disciplines space. Kahn compares the Crystal Palace to Jeremy Bentham's panopticon and argues that both constitute "an apparatus of covert control based on the manipulation of lines of sight." Kahn points a number of ways by which the Crystal Palace manipulates and legitimizes control: how it allies the act of shopping with the act of observing nature, how its power derives from diffusion rather than constraint, how the opportunity to see and be seen provides the masses with a false sense of power that obscures

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<sup>54</sup> See Berman's discussion of Chernyshevsky's *What is to be Done?*

<sup>55</sup> Berman, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground* Serge Shishkoff trans. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1969), 34.



and legitimizes their economic powerlessness, and how it disempowers the viewer by not allowing escape from being viewed and so forth.<sup>57</sup>

From the above discussion, it is clear that changes in our knowledge of the Crystal Palace have been informed by theoretical shifts in the definition of architecture. For Fergusson, architecture belonged to the realm of Fine Arts and his most important task was to justify the building as architecture with a capital "A." For Pevsner and Hitchcock, the importance of the building lay in tracing its lineage within Modernism; their most important task was to show the contribution of English nineteenth-century engineering. In subsequent histories, written during the second half of twentieth-century, the building continued to be mentioned for its unique process of prefabrication. In fact, its method of construction became more important to architectural history than its design or its relation to ideology and colonialism. In Marshall Berman's writing, the Palace is transformed into the quintessential metaphor for modernity, including its darker aspects. But it is Andrea Kahn's interpretation of the Crystal Palace determined by her postmodern thesis that, "architecture is the disciplinization of space," enables us to read the building as an insidious player of capitalism.

In an article entitled, "Theory-Constitutive Conventions and Theory Change," Michael Hays has argued that, "the interpretive and explanatory theories of artifacts should be seen as empirical hypotheses about the causal, relational structure of things and events in the material world rather than as mere linguistic generalizations about observable features of the artifacts or mere arbitrary, inter-subjective agreements about the correct 'point of

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<sup>57</sup> See Andrea Kahn, "The Invisible Mask," pp. 85-106.

view.”<sup>58</sup> It is evident that in the above example, new theories of perceiving architecture have contributed to our understanding of the Crystal Palace the same way as new empirical evidence.

This brings us to the more fundamental divide and hierarchy that exists between architectural history and architectural theory. Postmodern theorists have rightly pointed to the constructed nature of knowledge, enabling us not to take historical facts at face value, but to understand them with respect to their theoretical interpretation. However, while pointing out that truth, rationality, aesthetics and objectivity are social and cultural constructions they also deny their role in knowledge acquisition. Such skepticism has given rise to an architectural theory in which any knowledge of the object is considered irrelevant or a “mere representation.” Because of its own skepticism, postmodern theory has ceased to play a cognitive role not only for architects, but also for theorists and historians. The problem today is not that history with a capital “H” is considered the only source of knowledge, but that theory with a capital “T” teaches us to be skeptical of all forms of knowing. It is important to recognize that new theoretical justifications and judgments inform knowledge; however, these judgments need to be grounded in particulars of its object--its experience, especially, its emotional and cognitive aspects.

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<sup>58</sup> See K. Michael Hays, “Theory-Constitutive Conventions and Theory Change,” *Assemblage 1*, p. 117.

## AFTERWORD: DESIGN AS A RATIONAL ENTERPRISE

Furthermore, it is evident from the analysis of the Crystal Palace that some evaluations, from vaguely felt aesthetic and ethical judgments to developed normative theories of right and wrong, will not only enable us to distinguish among the varying degrees to which architecture has been complicit with politics. They will also empower us to imagine and conceive of alternative strategies outside the regime of surveillance and control. The fact that objective explanations, in the Realist view of knowledge, are concomitant with struggles against political complicity underscores how and why objective knowledge should not be allowed to sunder the realm of "hard facts" from the realm of values. In a similar vein, aesthetic experience also should not be theorized by separating it from its role in moral cognition. In dealing with ways our values influence our experiences and are mediated by social and political constructions, we are dealing with subjective aspects of objectivity. The objectivity that we seek is not the familiar disinterested theoretical inquiry. It is a reasonable hope for objective knowledge that stems from particular kinds of social practices.<sup>59</sup> Once we ground our judgments in the "real" world of architecture (scale, proportions, and rhythms of buildings and urban spaces) as well as in historical and theoretical accounts, the political

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<sup>59</sup> Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History*, xii.

significance of architecture will have meaning not only for architectural theorists, but for architects as well.

Processes of design involve making subjective decisions and choices. Design intentions are either expressed as a singular vision (for example, Daniel Libeskind's metaphorical writing about the Jewish Museum in Berlin) or they are expressed as a process of collaboration and reconciliation (for example, in the film entitled, "Concert of Wills," which documents the design process of the Getty Center).<sup>60</sup> In both these cases, the justifications for design depend on subjective criteria. However, the more significant aspect of designing is that design decisions eventuate in an action – the construction of a real building. As explained in chapter one, Aristotelian practical reasoning eventuates in action. Aristotelian practical reasoning, therefore, has a much closer affinity to the processes of design than to architectural or aesthetic theory. Much like practical reasoning, designing includes a constant sifting of particulars; this process of sifting does not take away what is distinctive about a particular situation. Most importantly, choosing one particular over another is not a matter of personal idiosyncrasy or the act of a creative genius, but a process of rational choice. Such an argument dispels the myth of the creative genius associated with

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<sup>60</sup> The process of design of the Libeskind building is well articulated by the architect. He calls it "Between the Lines," referring to the two structural lines that define its plan—one is straight but broken into many fragments; the other is tortuous but continuous. Libeskind's main concern is to give form to the absence of Jews in Berlin, to give form to the broken relationship between the Jewish and German cultures, and to bring to the surface the mutual cultural ties that have proliferated underground. The building, a zigzag form intersected by voids, expresses these tensions between what is repressed and expressed. The creation of a void refers to the absence of Jews in Berlin, an absence that is decisive for the identity of the city. Libeskind's main concern is to give form to the invisible aspects of the city, and as a result his design intentions are metaphorical. Based on subjective particulars, they cannot be literally justified, but can only be metaphorically reasoned. In the Getty building the design intentions of Architect Richard Meier, and his collaborators, particularly, Thierry Despont and John Walsh, are presented in a very different manner. While its continuous vocabulary and spare modernist neutrality often make it appear to be born of a singular vision; in reality, the building is a product of a long-term collaboration and negotiation of divergent viewpoints. Stephen D. Rountree in "Concert of Wills" points out how Getty's programs were being developed at the same time the architects were negotiating solutions.

the design process. Thus, the arguments elaborated in this dissertation can help to bridge the gap between architectural theory and practice by demonstrating that Aristotelian practical reasoning is inherent to both aesthetics and design.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation demonstrates how inquiries in architecture -- both designing and appreciation are based on Aristotelian practical reasoning. My argument is based upon the Realist conception of knowledge which argues that inquiry in the arts and inquiry in the sciences are rational and objective, and are based on Aristotelian practical reasoning. The idea that Aristotelian practical reasoning is central to understanding aesthetic reasoning and cognition unites the three chapters of this dissertation. Most importantly, I argue that an understanding of aesthetics based on Aristotelian practical reasoning cannot be read singularly as directly complicit with politics. Nor can it be read in terms of high aesthetics and universal or absolute truths. Practical reasoning involves a constant sifting of particulars. Sifting of particulars involves both the practice of disinterest and the practice of collective participation. In both practices, emotions and imagination are cognitively employed. By reintroducing philosophical reflection about truth, rationality, and aesthetics in contemporary debates, my study hopes to reunite theory with its philosophical particulars and with architectural practice.

The main argument of this dissertation calling for recognition of the rational agency inherent architectural production will provide a theoretical foundation to explore a broad set of issues. These include the relationship between theorizing about architecture and the practice of designing and building; skepticism and nihilism in the cultural criticism of architecture; nineteenth century interpretations of rational architecture; the question of autonomy and agency of architecture; and the relationship between architectural education, aesthetic education and moral education. Finally, this study hopes to redirect the current skepticism in architectural thought to a more meaningful dialogue about how reflection about our aesthetic values informs our practice of designing and building better buildings.

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