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At the opening of the nineteenth century there were a number of contending architectural styles, of which the main ones were the Classical and the Gothic. In Germany an intense discussion concerning architecture was taking place among art theorists and philosophers. Under the influence of Winckelmann, Greek antiquity was held up as an absolute model, while at the same time the Romantic movement was advocating the Gothic, which was increasingly seen as a national German style.¹ Those who tried to combine these two positions became pioneers of Eclecticism and Historicism. In this environment of lively intellectual debate, Schopenhauer formulated his bold architectural theory. He presented it in the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* (first published in 1818) and then in greater detail in the second volume (1844). In opposition to Hegel and other contemporaries who extolled Gothic architecture, Schopenhauer defended Classicism. But at the same time, through his emphasis on the role of the will and his ideas regarding structural functionalism, he anticipated modern architectural theories.

The Will and Modernity

As a philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer was the product of various influences. In his youth he had studied Greek and Latin. During his university studies he became deeply interested in Plato and Kant, the two thinkers who proved to be the most influential in the development of his own philosophical system. Through his mother, who was a novelist, he had the chance early in his life to meet prominent literary figures and intellectuals, such as Friedrich Schlegel and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who, after a journey to Italy (1786-88) distanced himself from his earlier Gothic preferences and became a Classicist.² There is no doubt that his classical upbringing was a powerful ingredient in Schopenhauer's intellectual background. Nevertheless, by in contrast to the philosophers and moralists who can be associated with the classical tradition that goes back to Plato and Aristotle, he rejected the

¹ Hanno-Walter Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory: From Vitruvius to the Present*, trans. Ronald Taylor, Elsie Callander, and Anthony Wood (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), p. 290.

² *Ibid.*, p. 192.

view that human actions could be subject to the direction of a controlling and dispassionate intellect, capable of molding our character.³ He regarded human beings as embodiments of will. For him, the will was “the substance of man, the intellect the accident.”⁴ Like Thomas Hobbes, he affirmed the priority of passions, of will, over reason. This makes him a modern philosopher, trying to overcome the classical tradition rather than building on it. Like many great philosophers of the past, he aspired to present a comprehensive vision of reality, a vision that he in fact regarded as final. However, he was at the same time deeply conscious of Kant’s critical approach and accepted his criticism of all traditional systems of metaphysics.⁵ Although systematic, Schopenhauer’s philosophical enterprise can thus be described as both modern and critical. Through his concept of will, he made an impact on later thinkers, particularly on Nietzsche and Heidegger.⁶

Modern philosophy is grounded, on the one hand, in the concept of subjectivity that can be traced to Descartes, and on the other hand, in the concept of will, that can be traced to Hobbes. With the development of modernity, emphasis was put to an increasing degree on the will. Seen from the modern perspective, as Schopenhauer notes, “whatever exists, exists only for the subject.”⁷ The human being ultimately becomes the frame of reference for everything—the subject who by his will arranges things according to himself. If, in the Cartesian vision of the world, the role of will remains minimized and the subject is regarded as a dispassionate theoretical observer, independent of the external world or reality, in the Hobbesian vision, which is also the vision of Schopenhauer, we do not know objects in a detached, neutral way, but rather in “relation to the will,” that is, in relation to our desires, inclinations, and interests, of which we, who tend to idealize the source of our actions, often remain ignorant. Whether we are dealing with ordinary or scientific knowledge, “knowledge is completely the servant of the will,” and this “subjection of knowledge to the will” can be eliminated only by way of “exception.”⁸ The Cartesian duality between subject and object, the contrast between inner subjective consciousness and external objective reality, is thus

³ Patrick Gardiner, *Schopenhauer* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1977), p. 26.

⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), vol. 2, p. 201. Cited hereafter as “WWR” followed by a volume number and a page number.

⁵ Gardiner, p. 30.

⁶ See Julian Young, “Schopenhauer, Heidegger, Art, and the Will,” *Schopenhauer, Philosophy, and the Arts*, ed. Dale Jacquette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 162-80.

⁷ WWR 1, 5.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 176-77. Whereas, according to Schopenhauer, human knowledge can be liberated from subjection to the will by way of exception, in Hobbes’s view, such a liberation is not possible. There is no disinterested, dispassionate knowledge. The human being is a “creature of interest.” Reason serves the passions rather than controlling or restraining them. See Andrzej Rapaczynski, *Nature and Politics: Liberalism in the Philosophies of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 64.

overcome in Schopenhauer. We cannot separate the way in which objects present themselves to us from our own modes of thought and perception. Subject and object are interdependent. The phenomenal world, the world we empirically experience as an object for a subject, is, then, our own idea or representation (“*Vorstellung*”). The world in reality, the thing-in-itself “of which all representation is the phenomenon, the visibility, the objectivity” is the will (“*Wille*”).⁹

With Nietzsche and later modern thinkers, the concept of will is radically reinterpreted and becomes of paramount importance. In Heidegger’s interpretation, as reflected in his discussion of the Nietzschean will to power, the will to control everything is the ultimate manifestation of the spirit of modernity, of the age that can be characterized by the dominance of expansive technology and the emergence of global political ideologies. Applied to architectural theory, the will to power finds its expression in the requirement that modern architecture should reflect the will of the age and reject the past. When such a requirement was made in actual practice, whether by the government or by members of the avant-garde, such as the left-wing Futurists or the right-wing Expressionists, it had strong political connotations. To quote David Capon: “Among the concepts central to politics are those of will and power, and those emerged in architecture at the beginning of the twentieth century as a general attitude of rebellion and radicalism”.¹⁰ However, although through his concept of will and, as will be discussed later, through his structural functionalism, Schopenhauer made a contribution to modern architectural theories, he cannot be blamed for these extreme developments. It is an exaggeration to say that his work “marks the boundary between the classical and modern paradigms of architectural knowledge”.¹¹ Far from annexing architecture “to the subjective will”,¹² he attempted to give it an objective foundation. Rather than being a radical, he was a traditionalist, a defender of Classicism, a modern thinker who, in a surprise classical twist, boldly attempted to freeze the will in the Platonic Ideas.

The Architectonic Idealism of Schopenhauer

The aesthetics of Schopenhauer is based on his three major philosophical concepts: the will, the Idea and the pure subject of knowledge. The will is the “innermost essence, the

⁹ WWR 1, 110. Schopenhauer accepted the Kantian distinction between phenomena and the thing-in-itself.

¹⁰ David Smith Capon, *Le Corbusier’s Legacy*, Vol. 1 of *Architectural Theory*, 2 vols. (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1999), p. 265.

¹¹ Mitchell Schwarzer, “Schopenhauer’s Philosophy of Architecture,” *Schopenhauer, Philosophy, and the Arts*, p. 277. Although Schwarzer makes a number of correct observations, his interpretation of Schopenhauer’s theory of architecture contains overstatements.

¹² Ibid.

kernel,” of whatever exists and is described by him through the use of such expressions as “incessant impulse,” “eternal becoming” or “endless striving.”¹³ It is manifested in every force of nature, as well as in human conduct, and can be discerned in our own inner experience. In all our wishing, fearing, loving, hating, hoping, desiring, or striving, we are essentially will, and our actions are acts of “will objectified, i.e., translated into perception.”¹⁴ In fact, all bodily movements, not only those following a deliberate choice, but also involuntary movements, are objective manifestations of the will. Moreover, the whole phenomenal world, all empirical reality, is the outcome of will’s objectification. The will objectifies itself in grades or distinct stages. Some phenomena manifest will more than others. There is, for example, a higher degree of objectification of will in a plant than in a stone, and still higher degrees of objectification in an animal and ultimately in a human being.¹⁵ The ideal patterns of these objectifications are Ideas (*Ideen*), or, as Schopenhauer often calls them, the Platonic Ideas.¹⁶ Each stage of objectification, as expressed in an Idea, which has an ideal being rather than a real one, is likewise expressed in innumerable individual phenomena corresponding to this particular ideal pattern and having a real existence. At higher stages of objectification—in animals and human beings—the will generates intellect, a knowing consciousness. According to Schopenhauer, the “necessity of consciousness is brought about by the fact that, in consequence of an organism’s enhanced complication and thus of its more manifold and varied needs, the acts of its will must be guided by *motives*, no longer by mere stimuli, as in the lower stages.”¹⁷ The purpose of intellect, then, is to serve the needs of a will-full individual being, to provide the basic knowledge needed for his survival, a knowledge of useful ends. At this stage, all knowledge, including scientific knowledge, remains subordinate to the will. Yet, Schopenhauer asserts, there finally occurs a certain transcending of the workings of will that allows us to rise into the state of pure-knowing, in which the will ceases to be willing and things are considered “without interest, without subjectivity, purely objectively.”¹⁸ The individual can rise above his will-full individuality, guided as it is by desires and useful purposes, and can become the pure subject of knowledge, one who is will-less.

¹³ WWR 1, 110.

¹⁴ WWR 1, 100.

¹⁵ The lowest grades of the will’s objectification are manifested by the universal forces of nature; the highest, in human individuality. See WWR 1, 130-31.

¹⁶ WWR 1, 195.

¹⁷ WWR 2, 250.

¹⁸ WWR 1, 196.

For Schopenhauer, the transition from the will-full individual to the pure subject of knowledge, which takes place when “knowledge tears itself free from the service of the will,”¹⁹ is an exception rather than a rule. The domain for this occurrence is neither everyday life nor science, but art.²⁰ When we are engaged in daily activities or scientific research, he suggests, and concentrate on possible uses and effects of things, we may learn to be rational, prudent and practical, but as we remain subjected to the will, we are at the same time committed to an unending, illusory, and often disappointing, and even unworthy quest, which causes us to suffer and offers only brief moments of fulfillment. “All will springs from lack, from deficiency, and thus from suffering.”²¹ It is only in art and philosophy, activities that in Schopenhauer’s view involve pure contemplation, that we are elevated out of the stream of willing and begin to comprehend things free from their relation to will, i.e., disinterestedly and objectively.²² We are emancipated from the exigencies and necessities of practical life, and gain a temporary release from suffering. Submerged in the aesthetic contemplation of a work of art, we become one with the object of our perception and lose all the individuality that differentiates us from others. Thus, we become the universal, will-less, pure subject of knowledge. Simultaneously and inseparably, we raise ourselves “from knowledge of particular things to knowledge of Ideas.”²³ Particular things that we perceive become representatives of their Ideas, and hence, timeless—they do “no longer stand in the stream of time and of all other relations.”²⁴ For Schopenhauer, art is a form of knowledge and its purpose is to reveal not what is merely relative and accidental, but what is truly universal, essential, and unchanging in the world, “and therefore, known with equal truth for all time,”²⁵ namely, the Ideas. Architecture, considered as fine art and apart from its application to practical ends, has for him “no purpose other than that of bringing to clearer perceptiveness some of those Ideas that are the lowest grades of the will’s objectivity.”²⁶ Such Ideas include

¹⁹ WWR 1, 178.

²⁰ WWR 1, 177. Schopenhauer, perhaps wrongly, represents science as guided by practical concerns, and thus denies any essential difference between ordinary and scientific knowledge.

²¹ WWR 1, 196.

²² According to Schopenhauer, what is common to art and philosophy is that they both emancipate us from the modes of thought that are related to everyday existence. Also, they both are forms of knowledge, providing us with an account of the world. However, art uses the language of perception; philosophy, the language of intellectual reflection.

²³ WWR 1, 176.

²⁴ WWR 1, 197.

²⁵ WWR 1, 184.

²⁶ WWR 1, 214.

the most universal qualities of stone, such as gravity, rigidity, cohesion, hardness—“those first, simplest and dullest visibilities of the will.”²⁷

Schopenhauer follows Kant in asserting that a detachment from interest, or, as he would say, a silencing of the will, is the indispensable condition for the artistic frame of mind. He admits that buildings may be erected to serve useful purposes. However, he argues that their aesthetic qualities must be judged independently of their utility and of any other outer arbitrary end.²⁸ Hence, he opposes the Functionalist and Romantic theories of those among his contemporaries who saw architecture’s main task as consisting in exhibiting a specific function of a building or in expressing some spiritual ideas or meanings. For him, the purpose of architecture is to reveal the Ideas that are the lowest stages of will’s objectification. For this reason, architecture occupies the lowest place in the order of the various individual arts—an order which, according to Schopenhauer, reflects the hierarchy of these stages. At the low stages, he adds, “we see its [the will’s] inner nature revealing itself in discord; for, properly speaking, the conflict between gravity and rigidity is the sole aesthetic material of architecture.”²⁹ The conflict between gravity and rigidity, as he describes it, does not end in victory for either side. The mass of the building has a continual tendency to collapse and adhere to the earth, pulled toward it by the force of gravity—one form in which the will here appears—while rigidity—also a form and objectification of the will—resists. The main problem for architecture is “to make this conflict appear with perfect distinctness in many different ways;” it solves the problem “by depriving these indestructible forces of the shortest path to their satisfaction, and keeping them in suspense through a circuitous path.”³⁰ The beauty of a building is to be found in its ability to display the forces of gravity and rigidity in the most distinct and yet varied manner—not in the degree of its conformity to the outward arbitrary human end or in its symmetry or proportion. Again, what architecture communicates to us is neither function nor meaning nor form, but rather the existence of those fundamental forces of nature, the first Ideas, the lowest stages of will’s objectivity.

In the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer revises somewhat his view of the conflict between gravity and rigidity presented in the first volume. Instead of depriving gravity and rigidity of the shortest paths to their satisfaction and allowing them to reach it only indirectly, architecture “avoids everything purposeless” and attains its

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ WWR I, 217.

²⁹ WWR I, 214.

³⁰ Ibid.

ends “always by the shortest and most natural path.”³¹ It is a tasteless style of architecture, Schopenhauer asserts, that “looks in everything for useless roundabout ways, and delights in arbitrary methods.”³² This change in his theory does not affect his view of the sole and constant theme of architecture, which he still sees as being the conflict between gravity and rigidity, but this conflict is now described as a relationship between “support and load.” Its fundamental law is that “no load may be without sufficient support and no support without a suitable load.”³³ Furthermore, this modification emphasizes what would become the leading motive of Schopenhauer’s later view of architecture, which may be termed “architectonic idealism.” Architecture aims at finding a visually ideal solution to the conflict between gravity and rigidity; it looks for the “exactly appropriate” relationship between load and support. Since only the shortest and most natural way should be used to represent it, the conflict between gravity and rigidity must necessarily become manifest in whichever architectonic style would present it in that particular way. For Schopenhauer, such a style is represented by Classical architecture, which, he believes, was essentially completed and perfected by the ancient Greeks and is no longer capable of being enriched to any significant degree. The modern architect, he says, cannot “depart from the rules and modes of the ancients without being on the path of degeneration.”³⁴

An Argument Against Hegel

Schopenhauer’s position can be elucidated by reference to the architectural debate in Germany, which at the beginning of nineteenth century was significantly animated by the question of whether medieval Gothic architecture was relevant as a model that could serve the needs of the present. The Classical ideal, which Johann Wickelmann attempted to set up as a norm against what he saw as the decline of art during its later developments, was challenged by the Romantics. The writings of Goethe, who in his earlier works took a stand against Classicism, and of Schlegel, who in a manner characteristic of that time started to use “Gothic” and “German” interchangeably, were particularly influential in the course of the debate and helped to formulate a new view of Gothic architecture, in which it was regarded as the national style of the Germans. However, the greatest impact on Schopenhauer’s contemporaries was perhaps made by Hegel, who saw in Gothic the style that was especially appropriate to the expression of Christian spirituality, and, as Krufft maintains, “dictated

³¹ WWR 2, 415.

³² WWR 2, 414-415.

³³ WWR 2, 411.

attitudes toward Gothic in Germany until well into the twentieth century.”³⁵ Although Schopenhauer does not mention Hegel by name in the context of his discussion of architecture, it was against him and other supporters of Gothic that he directed the argument presented in the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*.

Schopenhauer’s antipathy toward Hegel is quite well known. Even as early as his first, trial lecture at the University of Berlin, on March 23, 1820, Schopenhauer attacked Hegel’s views before the faculty, including Hegel himself. Later, his animosity led him to schedule his lectures at precisely the same time as Hegel was lecturing. In *The World as Will and Representation*, he frequently refers to “the shallowness, lack of culture, and of knowledge brought about by Hegel.”³⁶ The reasons for this hostility, however, do not seem to be personal but rather philosophical. Schopenhauer considered the Hegelian system of metaphysics a construction built out of abstract concepts, and the historicism expressed in it—namely, to “comprehend the history of the world as a planned whole,” ordered to progress in a dialectical pattern—a misconception.³⁷ His world as will and representation simply could not be reconciled with Hegel’s ever-changing world as spirit.

For Hegel, art, religion and philosophy are the three realms of the absolute spirit, in other words, the three ways of apprehending the Absolute. He uses the terms “the Absolute,” “the absolute spirit,” “the Divine,” and “the truth” interchangeably. “Art has no other mission,” he says “but to bring before sensuous contemplation the truth as it is in the spirit.”³⁸ Thus art is a way of bringing to our consciousness and expressing the absolute spirit: a way which is an immediate and therefore a *sensuous* knowing, “a knowing, in the form and shape of the sensuous and objective itself, in which the Absolute is presented to contemplation and feeling.”³⁹ In Hegel’s view, nature has no meaning in itself. It is the human mind, the medium for the existence and appearance of the Absolute, which gives a subjective inner life and spiritual meaning to nature.⁴⁰ Since the primary task of art is to reshape “the external environment of the spirit and so to build into what has no inner life of its own a meaning and a form which remain external to it,”⁴¹ it is architecture to which such a task clearly falls. By reshaping that which is objective in itself, the physical world of nature, architecture prepares the way for the actuality of the truth to be manifested. Therefore, conceptually if not

³⁴ WWR 2, 416.

³⁵ Kruft, p. 302.

³⁶ WWR 2, 303.

³⁷ WWR 2, 442.

³⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetic: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), p. 623.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 623.

historically, architecture is the first of the fine arts, their beginning and point of departure. It objectifies the sense of our being in the world, the sense in which we understand ourselves. Its main task consists in manipulating external, inorganic nature in such a way that it becomes, in its artistic treatment, cognate with the mind. Architecture is thus a meaning-granting activity. We build to provide enclosures for both ourselves and the images of our gods, as well as to affirm and to express in the sensuous the Absolute as it appears in the human mind in the form of our self-knowledge.

In accordance with his concept of history, based on the triadic dialectic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, Hegel traces the development of architecture through Symbolic, Classical and Romantic periods. Symbolic architecture, identified by him with the ancient architectonic structures of Babylonia, Egypt, and India, “which stand there independently in themselves, as it were like works of sculpture, and which carry their meanings in themselves and not in some external aim and need,”⁴² is self-sufficient with respect to its meaning. The end, the expression of the Absolute, and architecture as the means to that expression are not yet separate. The Symbolic building takes for its content that which is considered as the Absolute and the truth by the people, and presents this content symbolically in its construction. Gradually, however, architecture becomes subservient to purposes outside itself. It is no longer purely independent and self-sufficient with respect to meaning. In the Classical period, it abandons its symbolic form and leaves the expression of the Absolute to other arts, particularly to sculpture.⁴³ Thus, a separation between the end and the means occurs. The beauty of the Classical building, freed from the symbolic, consists solely in its appropriateness to its purpose, in its being serviceable; and this purpose becomes what dominates the whole work and determines its form. Lastly, in the third and final period, the Romantic, the two preceding periods are synthesized, and it is the Gothic cathedral that represents the full expression of Romantic architecture. Serving as a “house of God,” it provides an environment for autonomously shaped spiritual meaning. At the same time, by rising high into the sky, it manifests self-subsistence in meaning and a pure independence that transcends any specific purpose. Its interior expresses a kind of lifting upwards, an elevation above the finite, inspiring a desire for transcendence. Through its vast expanse, it symbolizes eternity, in which everything particular and temporal is lost.⁴⁴ Hence, in the Romantic period,

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 631.

⁴² Ibid., p. 632.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 653.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 686.

the end and the means are still distinguished, but the cathedral is again self-sufficient with respect to its meaning. Both its exterior and interior point toward the Absolute.

Certainly Schopenhauer's exposition of the arts, and particularly of architecture, differs from Hegel's. The different purposes which they set forth for architecture indicate that they not only express themselves differently but also express very different things, so that they cannot be easily reconciled.⁴⁵

According to Hegel, architecture narrates the journey the spirit makes in its search for self-knowledge. Throughout history, humankind reduplicates itself as spirit—it brings itself into its own consciousness by forming an idea of itself, and by reshaping external things. The interpenetration of beauty and utility, of the independent and serviceable in a building, is the achievement of Classical architecture.⁴⁶ That which is divine or absolute is considered to manifest itself in the idealized bodily forms of things and beings, the highest of which is the human being itself. Yet for Hegel the journey of spirit cannot stop there. The divine must find a place outside of the human in the transcendent, as exemplified in the Gothic cathedral. For Schopenhauer, on the other hand, architecture reaches its completeness in ancient Greece because the classical building is a perfect manifestation of the conflict between gravity and rigidity. It brings these forces into perfect equilibrium. Any further development in architecture would thus be for him both superfluous and inadequate. It would destroy the perfect equilibrium of gravity and rigidity already achieved by the Greeks, and would introduce elements that could not be considered purely aesthetic.

Schopenhauer criticizes Hegel's philosophy of history. He says that all those who like Hegel "set up such constructions of the course of the world, or, as they call it, of history, have not grasped the principal truth of all philosophy, that ... all becoming and arising are only apparent, that the Ideas alone are permanent."⁴⁷ In a Platonic fashion, he looks for the unchangeable and ever-permanent, the Ideas. True reality for him is not the human race, nations or any other abstract entities envisioned to be pursuing a historical course, but rather the life-course of each concrete individual; reality is not the mere changing historical abstractions that Hegel concerned himself with, but is in fact the will. This is why for Schopenhauer the purpose of art is to bring into clear perceptibility the Ideas, the ideal patterns of everything, the products of will's objectification. He is an "architectural idealist," and his theory of architecture is actually a theory of idealized nature. Yet, he is also an

⁴⁵ See my article entitled "A Point of Reconciliation between Schopenhauer and Hegel," *The Owl of Minerva*, 21.2 (Spring 1990), pp. 167-176.

⁴⁶ Hegel, p. 656.

“architectural conservative” who is unable to reconcile himself to the changing styles in architecture. Hegel, for whom the purpose of the science of aesthetics is to understand the phenomenon of art as an expression of human self-knowing in the world, can in fact (despite being accused of developing a dogmatic, abstract vision of history) provide us with a more adequate account of the phenomenon of architecture as it changes and develops than can Schopenhauer.

In Defense of Classicism

For Schopenhauer, every genuine work of art reveals what is really essential and unchangeable in the world, namely, the Ideas, and thus it gives an answer to the question “What is life?” Classical architecture provides such an answer in reference to gravity and rigidity, bringing these conflicting forces into perfect equilibrium. Therefore, as architecture *per se*, it is complete and perfect. In classical buildings, constructed on the principle of “column and entablature,” load and support are “completely separated,” and in this way “the reciprocal effect of the two and their relation to each other become apparent.”⁴⁸ “Entablature appears here as pure load, and the column as pure support.”⁴⁹ Without an appropriate separation of load and support, Schopenhauer contends, a confusion of the two comes about, so that the aesthetic effect produced by the Greek style of building is lacking. In other architectural styles, particularly in those which make use of the vault, load and support “pass over and merge into one another.”⁵⁰ There every stone is simultaneously load and support. A steeply pitched roof, characteristic of Gothic architecture, also exemplifies this confused state of affairs. It is neither load nor support, “for its two halves mutually support each other, but the whole has no weight corresponding to its extension.”⁵¹ Schopenhauer strongly disputes the idea that such a construction has any aesthetic quality. It “presents to an eye an extended mass; this is wholly foreign to the aesthetic end, serves a merely useful purpose, and consequently disturbs the aesthetics.”⁵² The proper theme of architecture, the conflict between gravity and rigidity, is in his view missing in this case, and the same can in general be asserted concerning all works of the Gothic. “Our pleasure in Gothic works certainly rests for the most part on the association of ideas and on historical reminiscences, and hence on

⁴⁷ WWR 2, 443.

⁴⁸ WWR 2, 411.

⁴⁹ WWR 2, 412.

⁵⁰ WWR 2, 411.

⁵¹ WWR 2, 412.

⁵² Ibid.

feelings that are foreign to art.”⁵³ Such considerations lead him to uphold Classical architecture as the highest, most perfect style of building, and, in opposition to the views of Hegel and others, to deny a similar status to the Gothic. To treat the latter as equal to the style of the ancient Greeks, he says, “is a barbarous presumption that must not for one moment be allowed.”⁵⁴

Since the ideal patterns of will’s objectification are the Ideas, and since the artist is one who can make these Ideas appear by means of the representation of particular things, art, which is regarded by Schopenhauer as a form of knowledge, can present things objectively, as they are in reality. But if art presumes to be “original,” and, instead of revealing the Ideas, is guided by some arbitrary principle, it immediately goes astray.⁵⁵ The same applies to architecture. Schopenhauer’s criticism of the Gothic style centers on the notion that it is subjected to “an arbitrary will,” guided by “extraneous concepts.”⁵⁶ The aesthetic aim of creating the ideal visual solution to the conflict between rigidity and gravity does not inform Gothic works. In such buildings, “the horizontal line, which is that of the load, has almost entirely vanished, and the action of gravity appears only indirectly, disguised in arches and vaults; whereas the vertical line, which is that of support, alone prevails, and renders palpable to the senses the victorious action of rigidity in excessively high buttresses, towers, turrets, and spires without number.”⁵⁷ Schopenhauer is ready to concede to Gothic architecture a certain beauty. He admits that although the exterior façade of a Classical building is preferable, the flat ceiling of its interior may seem depressive in comparison with the interior of a medieval cathedral. The effect of the latter’s groined vault impresses the mind and “promises eternal security.” Its vertical, soaring structure, representing “the entire subjugation of gravity to rigidity,” gives it the sublime character that is commonly attributed to it. But, on the whole, all this is “a mere pretense, a fiction testified by an illusion.”⁵⁸ In the illusory and unnatural architecture of the Gothic period, the arbitrary displaces the purely rational. Human subjectivity replaces pure will-less knowledge. Only Classical architecture, which so “openly and naively” displays the conflict between rigidity and gravity, can be apprehended in “a purely objective sense” and regarded as properly beautiful; the Gothic is merely subjective.⁵⁹ It expresses ideas that are not purely aesthetic.

⁵³ WWR 2, 417.

⁵⁴ WWR 2, 416-17.

⁵⁵ WWR 2, 421.

⁵⁶ WWR 2, 417.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ WWR 2, 417-18.

⁵⁹ WWR 2, 417.

Recognizing that a thing is beautiful has, in Schopenhauer's view, two implications. First, the sight of the thing makes us objective. While viewing the thing we regard ourselves no longer as the individuals that we are, but as pure, will-less subjects of knowing. Second, we recognize in the thing not an individual entity, but an Idea.⁶⁰ Thus, to contemplate a building artistically is to see in it a timeless Idea, and not just to perceive it as an individual building, constructed at a given time, occupying a specific space, and serving a particular purpose. Consequently, in-so-far as architecture reveals the Ideas, it is beautiful and has an objective dimension. It exhibits the conflict between rigidity and gravity, which is "an actual and true one established in nature."⁶¹ Schopenhauer denies the existence of this beauty and objectivity in Gothic architecture, whose value rests merely on subjective "association of ideas,"⁶² as well as in any more modern style of building that departs from that of the ancient Greeks. It is clear that, contrary to Schwarzer's interpretation of his architectural theory, he does not attempt to annex architecture to "the subjective Will," but to give it an objective foundation.⁶³ Properly speaking, there is no such thing as the "subjective" will for Schopenhauer. Although he acknowledges that we can indeed have an inner, subjective experience of the will in our desires and inclinations, the will as the metaphysical thing-in-itself stands beyond the categories of subjectivity and objectivity. It cannot be "absolutely and completely knowable."⁶⁴ It becomes objectified in the phenomena that can be known objectively as their Ideas only if we ourselves become objective as pure, will-less subjects of knowledge. Classical architecture is then objective for Schopenhauer because by exhibiting the conflict between rigidity and gravity, it presents things as they really are in nature. Any departure from its rules and modes is a step on the downward path of degeneration, of misrepresentation of what really is. In order to appreciate its beauty we must free ourselves from our will-full individuality and thereby become objective ourselves.

Unlike the traditional defenders of Classicism, Schopenhauer does not regard the beauty of architecture as a result of symmetry or proportion. In contrast to Kant and others for whom aesthetic effect is related mainly to form, he argues that beauty does not reside in "an apparent appropriateness without purpose," but rather arises "from the undisguised

⁶⁰ WWR 1, 209.

⁶¹ WWR 2, 417.

⁶² WWR 2, 418.

⁶³ As I try to show Schwarzer's thesis that Schopenhauer tried to undermine an objective basis of architecture and "did not believe in the artistic potential of objectively described real forces" (see p. 296) cannot be maintained.

⁶⁴ WWR 2, 197.

presentation of the [aesthetic] ends”⁶⁵ to present an ideal solution to the conflict between rigidity and gravity. Symmetry and proportion are for him “something purely geometrical, properties of space, and not Ideas” and as such, “they cannot be a theme for a fine art.”⁶⁶ However, if this is indeed the case that “beautiful architecture selects nothing but regular figures, made from straight lines or regular curves,”⁶⁷ and thus produces symmetry, it is because form follows structure. At the core of Schopenhauer’s Classicism lies his structural functionalism.

Structure, Function, and Form

Various architectural theories have been developed around the basic categories, concepts, and ideas describing the different aspects of a building.⁶⁸ Vitruvius, a Roman architect and theorist, author of *De architectura libri decem*, stated that buildings had to satisfy three requirements of equal significance: *firmitas*, *utilitas*, and *venustas*, which can be translated as strength, utility, and beauty.⁶⁹ The Vitruvian triad, in which *strength* referred to construction and materials, *utility* to the function and use of buildings, and *beauty* to aesthetic requirements, especially regular form and proportion, was very influential for many centuries and served as a foundation for Classicism.⁷⁰ Although it had never attained exclusive dominance in the area of architectural theory, it did prescribe its basic character from the time of the Renaissance to the eighteenth century.⁷¹ With its emphasis on the equal value of construction, function, and form, the Vitruvian system represented a unified, balanced view of architecture. In contrast, emphasis on just one category, be it form, function, meaning, or construction, has led to the fragmentation of traditional architectural theory into distinct modern doctrines, such as Formalism, Functionalism, Expressionism, Futurism, and Constructivism. What is notable about Schopenhauer’s project is that, although it defends Classical architecture, at the same time, like modern doctrines, it emphasizes only one category. The Vitruvian triad is in Schopenhauer reduced to one aspect, *firmitas*, interpreted as structure, from which another aspect, *venustas*, interpreted as form and symmetry, is derived. Although he acknowledges that buildings are usually erected to serve some practical

⁶⁵ WWR 2, 416.

⁶⁶ WWR 2, 414.

⁶⁷ WWR 2, 415.

⁶⁸ See David Smith Capon, *Architectural Theory*, vol. 1 and 2.

⁶⁹ Kruff, p. 24.

⁷⁰ Throughout the history of architectural theory, we find different interpretations of Vitruvian categories and their alternative translations. For example, they are also translated as *durability*, *convenience*, and *beauty*, and as *firminess*, *commodity*, and *delight*. See Capon, *The Vitruvian Fallacy*, Vol. 1 of *Architectural Theory*, pp. 19-34.

⁷¹ Kruff, p. 72.

ends, and thus recognizes the validity of *utilitas*, neither the function nor the use of a building is regarded by him as an aesthetic category. He would reject the Functionalist claim that whatever is not functional is not beautiful.

One influential concept that came from Vitruvius was the idea that architecture had its foundations in nature. Architecture, although not a literal imitation of nature, could find in it a measure of proportion. A well-shaped human body, the “Vitruvian man,” was regarded as an ideal of geometrical perfection, the model from which numerical proportions should be derived.⁷² The proportions of columns, in particular, were seen as analogous to those of the human body. Doric columns reflected the proportions of the male human figure; Ionic and Corinthian columns, those of the female figure.⁷³

Schopenhauer breaks radically with this Vitruvian tradition. He refutes the idea of deriving architectural proportions from models found in nature. He discusses the issues of form, symmetry and proportion solely in terms of the aspect of structure: load and support.

Now all the laws of columnar arrangements, and consequently the form and proportion of the column in all its parts and dimensions down to the smallest detail, follow from the conception of the adequately appropriate support to a given load, a conception well understood and consistently followed out; therefore to this extent they are determined *a priori*. It is then clear how absurd is the idea, so often repeated, that the trunks of trees or even the human form (as unfortunately stated even by Vitruvius, iv, 1) were prototype of the column. The form of the column would then be for architecture purely accidental one taken from outside...⁷⁴

An objection can be made that Schopenhauer’s discussion of the columnar arrangements in terms of load and support is brief and vague, and does not really distinguish between the major styles of Classical architecture, Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. Nevertheless, his underlying theory is clear. The column, like all other architectural elements, derives its form and proportion from structural considerations. “Everything in the column, the proportion of its height to its thickness, of both to the intervals between columns, and that of the whole row to the entablature and the load resting on it, all are the accurately calculated result from the ratio of the necessary support to the given load.”⁷⁵ Further, to the degree that forms in architecture are determined by structure, nothing is arbitrary. Every part of the building,

⁷² Ibid., pp. 27-8.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 178 and 211.

⁷⁴ WWR 2, 413-14.

“pillar, column, arch, entablature, or door, window, staircase, or balcony, attains its end in the simplest and most direct way.”⁷⁶ Although architecture does not imitate natural forms, it should nevertheless create in the spirit of nature and do nothing superfluous, nothing in vain.⁷⁷ As a result, we should expect from the beautiful architecture that it attains its end in the most simple and natural way, avoids everything purposeless, and, in accordance with structural requirements, obtains the greatest regularity of its constituent forms and a corresponding rationality in their proportions.

Schopenhauer goes on to attack the “tasteless style of architecture” that employs devices that are structurally unnecessary. “In this way it hits upon aimlessly broken entablatures running in and out, grouped columns, fragmentary cornices on door arches and gables, senseless volutes, spirals, and the like.”⁷⁸ The beauty of architecture arise from the undisguised presentation of its aesthetic end, which is to display the forces inherent in the building material in the most distinct and varied manner.⁷⁹ It is found in the suitability of all parts of the building to serve this end, and not in any arbitrary, subjective purpose that may be given to them. For this reason Schopenhauer, as theorists including Winckelmann had earlier done, considers ornament to be an inessential element of architecture. Ornamental work belongs, in his view, “to sculpture and not to architecture, and is merely tolerated as an additional embellishment, which might be dispensed with.”⁸⁰ His position resembles that of the eighteenth-century Italian architectural theorist, Carlo Lodoli, and can be best described as structural functionalism. As Kruft describes Lodoli’s position, “Everything that does not have a specific [structural] function in a building must be regarded as a non-integral component and excluded from architecture.”⁸¹ Form must be determined by structure and by the nature of the material. However, if for Lodoli “differences in materials dictate differences in form,”⁸² for Schopenhauer, there is no such a diversity. In his conservatism, he regards stone as the only appropriate building material for architecture.

Schopenhauer’s emphasis on structure, “of the necessary support to the given load” that depends on the building material, has anticipated modern thinking about construction and

⁷⁵ WWR 2, 413.

⁷⁶ WWR 2, 415.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ WWR 2, 416.

⁷⁹ WWR 1, 214.

⁸⁰ WWR 2, 215.

⁸¹ Kruft, p. 198. It is not fully clear whether Lodoli’s position can be described as structural functionalism or simply as functionalism. It all depends on whether the concept of function meant for him the use of the building or, as his exponent Francesco Algarotti (1712-64) maintained, it was reduced to mean only the properties of the building materials. To compare Lodoli to Schopenhauer, I choose the latter interpretation.

⁸² Ibid.

has certain points in common with the theory of Constructivism. In their manifestos, the twentieth-century constructivists emphasize construction and materials over form.⁸³ They consider building material and its expression to be the main issue in architecture. However, if for the constructivists the materials are “glass, iron, and concrete,” for Schopenhauer it is stone. Furthermore, the main task of architecture is for him the presentation not of building material, but of the forces of gravity and rigidity, those primary Ideas that are the lowest grades of will’s objectivity. Hence, whereas the constructivist thinking looks to produce designs that can, by incorporating suitable forms, give new building technologies and materials their finest expression, Schopenhauer takes us back to the idealized, stone-built architecture of ancient Greece. Since he asserts that architecture affects us not only mathematically (because of formal characteristics such as symmetry and proportion), but also dynamically (because of the properties of the various building materials), he explicitly denies the aesthetic value of works of architecture made of timber, brick or others materials.⁸⁴ Only a construction made of stone, he suggests, can properly present the forces of gravity and rigidity in their continuous interplay. These forces reveal themselves “much more feebly in a wooden building.”⁸⁵ Their presentation requires “large masses, in order to be visible, and indeed to be capable of being felt.”⁸⁶ In short, Schopenhauer sees architecture as a manifestation of the forces of gravity and rigidity, which can best be exhibited in stone buildings of substantial dimensions, in which form follows structure, and everything that does not have a specific structural function is avoided; that is, in the buildings of the ancient Greeks. These classical monuments move us out of what the constructivists describe as our “machine age” into a timeless dimension.

Architecture and Contemplation

Debate concerning architecture has a long history. The strictly architectural issue that Schopenhauer considers, the relation between structure and form, had also been discussed by his predecessors.⁸⁷ There is no reason to believe that his theory, in which he attempted to defend Classicism and provide architecture with an objective structural basis, has made a significant impact on modern architecture. As elaborated in innumerable architectural

⁸³ Capon, vol. 2, p. 145.

⁸⁴ WWR 1, 215

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ WWR 2, 414.

⁸⁷ A reflection on the relation between structure and form can already be found in Leone Battista Alberti (1404-72), and is continued in writings of such theorists as Claude Perrault (1613-88), Carlo Lodoli (1690-1761), Jean-Nicolaus-Louis Durand (1760-1834), Aloys Hirt (1759-1837), and of many others.

doctrines, including Formalism, Minimalism, Mannerism, Functionalism, Rationalism, Positivism, Expressionism, Futurism, Constructivism, Modernism, and Radicalism, modernity becomes synonymous with subjectivity, with self-expression, with the arbitrary. It becomes fully subjected to the will, to endless striving, from which it neither seeks nor even wants any escape. It remains fully submerged in time, in dynamism and change, and so can perhaps offer us momentary pleasure, but not lasting happiness. What is unique about Schopenhauer's theory of architecture is that it is a part of his solution to the problem of will's dominance. Recognizing that the traditional solutions, religious, philosophical, or whatever they may be, are no longer workable, he uses art to take us away from the temporal and arbitrary domain.

The human being is not for Schopenhauer simply a Hobbesian egoistic animal, an impetuous impulse of willing, or a mere embodiment of desire, but is also an "eternal, free, serene subject of pure knowing."⁸⁸ The transition to the state of pure knowing occurs when individual things become representatives of their Ideas, and it is precisely in this that their beauty consists.⁸⁹ Since all things reveal the Ideas through which the will objectifies itself, each has its own characteristic beauty. Beautiful works of architecture, like beautiful works of art in general, and also beautiful natural forms, take us away from the state of willing. We may wish to possess them, but we are then no longer engaged in their aesthetic contemplation. Upon seeing a beautiful building "the beholder is emancipated from the kind of knowledge possessed by the individual, which serves the will and follows the principle of sufficient reason, and is raised to that of the pure, will-free subject of knowing."⁹⁰ Further, the beautiful in architecture is greatly enhanced by light. In "full sunshine with the blue sky as a background" buildings "gain a twofold beauty; and by the moonlight they reveal quite a different effect."⁹¹ Bright illumination makes all structural parts clearly visible, which in turn can affect the way the light is reflected, reduced, intercepted, or admitted. Hence, Schopenhauer says, architecture reveals "not only gravity and rigidity, but at the same time the nature of light."⁹² As the condition for most perfect knowledge, "light is the largest diamond in the crown of beauty."⁹³ Contemplation of the beautiful effect of light on the masses of stone shaped by architecture moves us into the state of pure knowing, as all beauty

⁸⁸ WWR 1, 203.

⁸⁹ WWR 1, 200.

⁹⁰ WWR 1, 216.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ WWR 1, 203.

does. However, this effect on the beholder is achieved only to a slight degree by inferior buildings.⁹⁴

Schopenhauer regards the Greek style of building as the timeless model for all architecture. His defense of Classicism is based not on appreciation of beauty that results from symmetry and proportion, which is for him of secondary importance, but on consideration of structural forces. Consequently, he considers ornament as nonessential. One can, however, argue that the idealized Classical architecture he advocates has little to do with the actual buildings of the ancients, which are characterized not merely by proportions or by certain materials, but also by ornament (human and animal figures, and plant motives), and do not really follow his structural rules. The beauty of classical buildings is based on the architectural norms of the ancients which were the products of long experience and custom, not of abstract reason.⁹⁵ Schopenhauer wants to reduce a complex phenomenon—the diversity of architectural forms—to a simple principle: the conflict between gravity and rigidity. Subjected to rationalization as it is, his vision of Greece is thus completely modern. It is an expression of what can be described as “stylistic or ideological monism,” the dominance of one architectural style or one ideology, resulting “in a monotony that people hate.”⁹⁶ Such a vision denies stylistic pluralism and eclecticism. Hence, while advocating Classicism and seeking to escape the state of willing, Schopenhauer paradoxically falls prey to the modern logic of domination.

Schopenhauer attempts to escape willing and bring us to pure knowing. This is a completely admirable effort. What he does not seem to recognize, however, is that escape cannot be provided by external art forms, whose beauty can be objectively described; nor can any help come from exterior light. Release from the state of willing can come only from our own minds. No example of beautiful architecture can ever transform an individual who is subject to his or her desires; while, on the other hand, the one who knows how to control those desires can find beauty even in a little thing.

⁹⁴ WWR 1, 210.

⁹⁵ My contention is a restatement of an argument of Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-78). While supporting the claims of Didascalo and arguing against the authority of Vitruvius and his followers, Piranesi maintained that it was custom, not Vitruvius, that fixed the architectural norms, and that rules such as those propounded by the latter never existed. While encouraging stylistic eclecticism and artistic freedom, Piranesi rejected contemporary architectural theory, whether exemplified by the simplistic functionalism of Lodoli or the “old monotonous style,” which was for him rationalized Classicism. See Kruff, pp. 201-3.

⁹⁶ Saying of Didascalo cited in Kruff, p. 201.