

*Rethinking Architecture*

A reader in cultural theory

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Edited by Neil Leach



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## CONTENTS

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<i>Preface</i>	vii	
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix	
Introduction	xiii	
<b>PART I MODERNISM</b>		
<i>Theodor W. Adorno</i> Functionalism Today	6	
<i>Georges Bataille</i> Architecture	21	
Slaughterhouse	22	
Museum	22	
<i>Walter Benjamin</i> On Some Motifs in Baudelaire Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century	25	
<i>Ernst Bloch</i> Formative Education, Engineering Form, Ornament	43	
<i>Siegfried Kracauer</i> The Hotel Lobby	53	
On Employment Agencies: The Construction of a Space	59	
<i>Georg Simmel</i> Bridge and Door	66	
The Metropolis and Mental Life	69	
<b>PART II PHENOMENOLOGY</b>		
<i>Gaston Bachelard</i> <i>Poetics of Space</i> (extract)	86	
<i>Martin Heidegger</i> Building, Dwelling, Thinking ... Poetically Man Dwells ... The Origin of the Work of Art (extracts)	100	
Art and Space	121	
<i>Hans-Georg Gadamer</i> The Ontological Foundation of the Occasional and the Decorative	126	
<i>Henri Lefebvre</i> <i>The Production of Space</i> (extracts)	139	
<i>Gianni Vattimo</i> The End of Modernity, The End of The Project? Ornament/Monument	148	
	155	
<b>PART III STRUCTURALISM</b>		
<i>Roland Barthes</i> Semiology and the Urban The Eiffel Tower	166	
	172	

Heidegger maps. Nor is poetry building in the sense of raising and fitting buildings. But poetry, as the authentic gauging of the dimension of dwelling, is the primal form of building. Poetry first of all admits man's dwelling into its very nature, its presencing being. Poetry is the original admission of dwelling.

The statement, *Man dwells in that he builds*, has now been given its proper sense. Man does not dwell in that he merely establishes his stay on the earth beneath the sky, by raising growing things and simultaneously raising buildings. Man is capable of such building only if he already builds in the sense of the poetic taking of measure. Authentic building occurs so far as there are poets, such poets as take the measure for architecture, the structure of dwelling.

On 12 March 1804 Hölderlin writes from Nürtingen to his friend Leo von Seckendorf: 'At present I am especially occupied with the fable, the poetic view of history, and the architectonics of the skies, especially of our nation's, so far as it differs from the Greek' (Hellingrath V2, p. 333).

'... poetically, man dwells ...'

Poetry builds up the very nature of dwelling. Poetry and dwelling not only do not exclude each other; on the contrary, poetry and dwelling belong together, each calling for the other. 'Poetically man dwells.' Do we dwell poetically? Presumably we dwell altogether unpoetically. If that is so, does it give the lie to the poet's words; are they untrue? No. The truth of his utterance is confirmed in the most unearthly way. For dwelling can be unpoetic only because it is in essence poetic. For a man to be blind, he must remain a being by nature endowed with sight. A piece of wood can never go blind. But when man goes blind, there always remains the question whether his blindness derives from some defect and loss or lies in an abundance and excess. In the same poem that meditates on the measure for all measuring, Hölderlin says (lines 75-76): 'King Oedipus has perhaps one eye too many.' Thus it might be that our unpoetic dwelling, its incapacity to take the measure, derives from a curious excess of frantic measuring and calculating.

That we dwell unpoetically, and in what way, we can in any case learn only if we know the poetic. Whether, and when, we may come to a turning point in our unpoetic dwelling is something we may expect to happen only if we remain heedful of the poetic. How and to what extent our doings can share in this turn we alone can prove, if we take the poetic seriously.

The poetic is the basic capacity for human dwelling. But man is capable of poetry at any time only to the degree to which his being is appropriate to that which itself has a liking for man and therefore needs his presence. Poetry is authentic or inauthentic according to the degree of this appropriation.

That is why authentic poetry does not come to light appropriately in every period. When and for how long does authentic poetry exist? Hölderlin gives the answer in verses 26-69, already cited. Their explication has been purposely deferred until now. The verses run:

... As long as Kindness,  
The Pure, still stays with his heart, man  
Not unhappily measures himself  
Against the Godhead. ...

'Kindness' - what is it? A harmless word, but described by Hölderlin with the

capitalized epithet 'the Pure'. 'Kindness' - this word, if we take it literally, is Hölderlin's magnificent translation for the Greek word *charis*. In his *Ajax*, Sophocles says of *charis* (verse 522):

*Charis charin gar estin he tiktous aei.*

For kindness it is, that ever calls forth kindness.

'As long as Kindness, the Pure, still stays with his heart ...' Hölderlin says in an idiom he liked to use: 'with his heart', not 'in his heart'. That is, it has come to the dwelling being of man, come as the claim and appeal of the measure to the heart in such a way that the heart turns to give heed to the measure.

As long as this arrival of kindness endures, so long does man succeed in measuring himself not unhappily against the godhead. When this measuring appropriately comes to light, man creates poetry from the very nature of the poetic. When the poetic appropriately comes to light, then man dwells humanly on this earth, and then - as Hölderlin says in his last poem - 'the life of man' is a 'dwelling life' (Stuttgart edition, 2, 1, p. 312).

*Vista*

When far the dwelling life of man into the distance goes,  
Where, in that far distance, the grapevine's season glows,  
There too are summer's fields, emptied of their growing,  
And forest looms, its image darkly showing.  
That Nature paints the seasons so complete,  
That she abides, but they glide by so fleet,  
Comes of perfection; then heaven's radiant height  
Crowns man, as blossoms crown the trees, with light.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE WORK OF ART (EXTRACTS)

### THE TEMPLE

A building, a Greek temple, portrays nothing. It simply stands there in the middle of the rock-cleft valley. The building encloses the figure of the god, and in this concealment lets it stand out into the holy precinct through the open portico. By means of the temple, the god is present in the temple. This presence of the god is in itself the extension and delimitation of the precinct as a holy precinct. The temple and its precinct, however, do not fade away into the indefinite. It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being. The all-governing expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people. Only from and in this expanse does the nation first return to itself for the fulfilment of its vocation.

Standing there, the building rests on the rocky ground. This resting of the work draws up out of the rock the mystery of that rock's clumsy yet spontaneous support. Standing there, the building holds its ground against the storm

Heidegger raging above it and so first makes the storm itself manifest in its violence. The lustre and gleam of the stone, though itself apparently glowing only by the grace of the sun, yet first brings to light the light of the day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night. The temple's firm towering makes visible the invisible space of air. The steadfastness of the work contrasts with the surge of the surf, and its own repose brings out the raging of the sea. Tree and grass, eagle and bull, snake and cricket first enter into their distinctive shapes and thus come to appear as what they are. The Greeks early called this emerging and rising in itself and in all things *phusis*. It clears and illuminates, also, that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this ground the *earth*. What this word says is not to be associated with the idea of a mass of matter deposited somewhere, or with the merely astronomical idea of a planet. Earth is that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises without violation. In the things that arise, earth is present as the sheltering agent.

The temple-work, standing there, opens up a world and at the same time sets this world back again on earth, which itself only thus emerges as native ground. But men and animals, plants and things, are never present and familiar as unchangeable objects, only to represent incidentally also a fitting environment for the temple, which one fine day is added to what is already there. We shall get closer to what *is*, rather, if we think of all this in reverse order, assuming of course that we have, to begin with, an eye for how differently everything then faces us. Mere reversing, done for its own sake, reveals nothing.

The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves. This view remains open as long as the work is a work, as long as the god has not fled from it. It is the same with the sculpture of the god, votive offering of the victor in the athletic games. It is not a portrait whose purpose is to make it easier to realize how the god looks; rather, it is a work that lets the god himself be present and thus *is* the god himself. . . .

### TECHNE

We think of creation as a bringing forth. But the making of equipment, too, is a bringing forth. Handicraft – a remarkable play of language – does not, to be sure, create works, not even when we contrast, as we must, the handmade with the factory product. But what is it that distinguishes bringing forth as creation from bringing forth in the mode of making? It is as difficult to track down the essential features of the creation of works and the making of equipment as it is easy to distinguish verbally between the two modes of bringing forth. Going along with first appearances we find the same procedure in the activity of potter and sculptor, of joiner and painter. The creation of a work requires craftsmanship. Great artists prize craftsmanship most highly. They are the first to call for its painstaking cultivation, based on complete mastery. They above all others constantly strive to educate themselves ever anew in thorough craftsmanship. It has often enough been pointed out that the Greeks, who knew quite a bit about works of art, use the same word *techne* for craft and art and call the craftsman and the artist by the same name: *technites*.

It thus seems advisable to define the nature of creative work in terms of its craft aspect. But reference to the linguistic usage of the Greeks, with their experience of the facts, must give us pause. However usual and convincing the

reference may be to the Greek practice of naming craft and art by the same name, *techne*, it nevertheless remains oblique and superficial; for *techne* signifies neither craft nor art, and not at all the technical in our present-day sense; it never means a kind of practical performance.

The word *techne* denotes rather a mode of knowing. To know means to have seen, in the widest sense of seeing, which means to apprehend what is present, as such. For Greek thought the nature of knowing consists in *aletheia*, that is, in the uncovering of beings. It supports and guides all comportment toward beings. *Techne*, as knowledge experienced in the Greek manner, is a bringing forth of beings in that it *brings forth* present beings as such beings *out of* concealedness and specifically *into* the unconcealedness of their appearance; *techne* never signifies the action of making.

### ART AND SPACE

If one thinks much, one finds much wisdom inscribed in language. Indeed, it is not probable that one brings everything into it by himself; rather, much wisdom lies therein, as in proverbs.

G. Chr. Lichtenberg

It appears, however, to be something overwhelming and hard to grasp, the *topos*.

Aristotle, *Physics*, Book IV

The remarks on art, space and their interplay remain questions, even if they are uttered in the form of assertions. These remarks are limited to the graphic arts, and within these to sculpture. Sculptured structures are bodies. Their matter, consisting of different materials, is variously formed. The forming of it happens by demarcation as setting up an inclosing and excluding border. Herewith, space comes into play. Becoming occupied by the sculptured structure, space receives its special character as closed, breached and empty volume. A familiar state of affairs, yet puzzling.

The sculptured body embodies something. Does it embody space? Is sculpture an occupying of space, a domination of space? Does sculpture match therewith the technical scientific conquest of space?

As art, of course, sculpture deals with artistic space. Art and scientific technology regard and work upon space toward diverse ends in diverse ways.

But space – does it remain the same? Is space itself not that space which received its first determination from Galileo and Newton? Space – is it that homogeneous expanse, not distinguished at any of its possible places, equivalent toward each direction, but not perceptible with the senses?

Space – is it that which, since that time (Newton), challenges modern man increasingly and ever more obstinately to its utter control? Does not modern graphic art also follow this challenge in so far as it understands itself as dealing with space? Does it not thereby find itself confirmed in its modern character?

Yet, can the physically-technologically projected space, however it may be determined henceforth, be held as the sole genuine space? Compared with it, are all other articulated spaces, artistic space, the space of everyday practice

Heidegger