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The Everyday, Building, and Architecture

Reflections on the Ethos and Beauty
of Our Built Surroundings

Abstract

In this paper, I want look from an aesthetic point of view at the different roles that different kinds of buildings have in our everyday environment. I will start with some of Karsten Harries's poignant observations regarding building and architecture, and the tensions in our encounters with architecture: "like all building, architecture too should make us comfortable, while, like all art, it should make us uncomfortable, fill us with dreams of a better world, of genuine community."¹ More than Harries, I will emphasize the importance of the everyday and its routines, taking a lead from Heidegger's notion of *Alltäglichkeit*, everydayness. Heidegger writes: "Das Dasein soll im Ausgang der Analyse gerade nicht in der Differenz eines bestimmten Existierens interpretiert, sondern in seinem indifferenten Zunächst und Zumeist aufgedeckt werden. Diese Indifferenz der Alltäglichkeit des Daseins ist *nicht nichts*, sondern ein positive phänomenaler Character dieses Seienden. Aus dieser Seinsart heraus und in sie zurück ist alles Existieren, wie es ist. Wir nennen diese alltägliche Indifferenz des Daseins *Durchschnittlichkeit*."²

Great works of architecture often "let us take a leave from the everyday,"³ but most of the time we encounter them in the "Indifferenz der Alltäglichkeit." Even in their everydayness architectural constructions have an important role in creating stability, reliability, and structure in our environment. The *Verlässlichkeit* of our world depends to a large extent on the existence of culturally significant objects, of which works of architecture are prime examples. I will argue that even when architecture serves mainly as a factor creating stability, it has an aesthetic role, too. Not in the sense of taking us somewhere else from our everyday, but exactly by being a stabilizing factor and, in this way, making possible the rhythms of the everyday.

Keywords

Everydayness, Reliability, Indifferenz der Alltäglichkeit, Everyday Environment

¹ *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, p. 282.

² *Sein und Zeit*, p. 43.

³ Harries.