

Working Toward Truth

When Martin Heidegger was considering *techne*, architecture theory paid close attention, as the subject was no less than the second part of the compound word *archi-tékon*. *Techne*, being the root of the ancient Greek *tékon*, was used to talk about a practical knowledge, a skill, that can be acquired by learning. It comprised many of the now distinct disciplines such as the horsemanship, oxherding, farming, chariot-driving, political craft, prophecy, lyre-playing, flute-playing, painting, sculpture, housebuilding, carpentry, weaving, and the skills required for what we would now call science.¹

Considering Heidegger's influential thoughts on *techne*, we can use it to sketch a history of a specific idea in architectural theory. On the basis of Heidegger's argument, architects could justify a very special position within society, one up and above all others. Engaged in an endeavor that is essentially connected to the *truth within things*, architects found it important to work against the constraints that tied them to the public at large. The most important advocates that will be discussed in the present text are Kenneth Frampton and Alberto Pérez-Gómez. Both maintain that considering the public at large would not suffice as an inspiration. Instead, in its corrupted state, the public would need architects' help to overcome what historically emerged. Although, this idea is tied to a very specific argument, its impact is still tangible in various instances, especially at universities. Finally, writing in *Wolkenkuckucksheim*, I hope to make a contribution to a discussion two important essays published here, one by Alberto Pérez-Gómez and one by Kari Jormakka, engaged in.²

Heidegger, *techne*, truth

Heidegger promises that at the end of *techne* will be *aletheia*. He translates *aletheia* as "the unconcealed truth." Thus, he defines *techne* as "producing, in terms of letting appear" and also as being "entirely at home [zu Hause] in something."³ This understanding can be connected to the etymology of consciousness deriving from the Latin *conscius*, "knowing with others or in oneself", with reference to *conscire*, "be privy to."⁴ The deeper one immerses in an occupation, the further one will get toward *aletheia* and the essence derived from *within* things, shedding light on the context of

¹ Parry, Richard, "Episteme and Techne" in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2003 Edition; revised Winter 2007 Edition) (www.plato.stanford.edu).

² Pérez-Gómez, Alberto, "Dwelling on Heidegger: Architecture as Mimetic technopoesis," *Wolkenkuckucksheim* Vol. 3, No. 2, 1998; Jormakka, Kari, "Disguise and Delimit," *Wolkenkuckucksheim* Volume 13, No. 2, March 2009.

³ Heidegger, Martin, "The Question Concerning Technology," p. 294. As cited in Jormakka, Kari, "Disguise and Delimit"; Heidegger, Martin "Bauen, Wohnen, Denken" p. 154.

⁴ Oxford English Dictionary 12th edition 2011, Oxford University Press (Oxford).

encounter. The notion thus refers to an existing immanent potential within the objects and a hidden ability to illuminate even the world around them.

Heidegger's argument that *techne* is essentially connected to truth came handy for the branch of Modernists who rejected all the history of architecture, but still needed to secure architectural expertise, that is, to avoid that their design decisions may look arbitrary. Based on Heidegger, the artist or architect can act meaningfully even ignoring all of culture, all historical achievements, be it that of the discipline or the entity of humanity. And the prefix *archi-* will, as it did in ancient times, secure the outstanding position for the master-builder.

There are a number of famous instances Heidegger uses to illustrate his point. One is "a Greek temple standing alone in a rock-cleft valley." This structure, a product of *techne*, will lead the passerby toward the truth about itself and the place it is embedded in. It is part of a meaningful totality Heidegger calls *Geviert*. The presence of the manmade structure will—through the genuine craft, the *techne* that brought it to existence—reveal the roughness of the ground, the rockiness of the valley, the violence of the storm, and the space of air. The temple tells us about the sun, the darkness of the night, and it stands still against the rolling sea. All these things "come into relief as they are."⁵ This account, and the following cited below, evokes a similar atmosphere as Le Corbusier's impression of the "liner." Either quietly resting or in a rough sea, the ship, too, is revealing. It shows all architects that cladded the shoreline with holiday-homes, the *truth* about "maritime style."

Architects note: a seaside villa, conceived as are these liners, would be more appropriate than those we see with their heavy tiled roofs. But perhaps it might be claimed that this is not a "maritime" style!⁶

To Heidegger, a bridge is also an instance capable of making and revealing a place. As a building, it is *revealing* and making a place at the same time. These places allow human beings to *dwell* and find their place within a world. The bridge does not only connect the banks of the river, but the "banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream." Wandering in the meadow along the river, one will pass a number of spots occupied with something, but only the bridge will establish a place, or locale, because it collects all the qualities available in a special way and lets them appear. Another important notion is that of the boundary. It is not understood as a mere border, but "is that from which something *begins its essential unfolding*." Within a boundary, a locale or place can collect all the parts in a certain way, providing the *essential being* of the thing (the bridge, the temple) and the space around it.⁷ Kenneth Frampton, who formulated his Critical Regionalism based on the ideas of Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt, maintains that *space* — the German *Raum* — explicitly connotes a clearing "in which to be, a place in which to come into being."⁸

⁵ "Standing there, the building holds its stand against the storm raging away above it, and so first shows the storm itself in its violence. The radiance and glow of the stone, themselves shining only by grace of the sun, first bring the light of day, the expanse of the sky, and the darkness of night, to appear in relief. The secure towering-up of the temple makes visible the invisible space of air. The unshaken work stands against the rolling sea, and in resting lets appear the surge of the tide. Tree and grass, eagle and bull, snake and cricket first enter into their contrasting *Gestalt* and so come into relief as what they are." Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Basic Writings*, 1st Harper Perennial Modern Thought Edition., David Farrell (ed.) Krell HarperCollins (New York) 1993 p. 139–212; pp. 167–8.

⁶ Le Corbusier, *Toward a New Architecture*. Dover Publications (New York) 1986, pp. 90–103, 98.

⁷ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," pp. 343–64, p. 354.

⁸ Frampton, "On Reading Heidegger," *Oppositions* 4 Witteborn Art Books (New York) 1975 p. 2.

How complex this process can be is shown in another example provided by Heidegger. It shows the important precondition of *techne*. In order to achieve a clearing, mortals need to dwell. A farmhouse in the Black Forest shows what this means to Heidegger:

Here the self-sufficiency of the power to let earth and heaven, divinities and mortals enter in simple oneness into things, ordered the house. It placed the farm on the wind – sheltered mountain slope looking south, among the meadows close to the spring. It gave it the wide overhanging shingle roof whose proper slope bears up under the burden of snow, and which, reaching deep down, shields the chambers against the storms of the long winter nights. It did not forget the altar corner behind the community table; it made room in its chamber for the hallowed places of childbed and the “tree of the dead”—for that is what they call a coffin there: the Totenbaum — and in this way it designed for the different generations under one roof the character of their journey through time. A craft which, itself sprung from dwelling, still uses its tools and frames as things, built the farmhouse. Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build.⁹

Hence, dwelling is a special connection one needs to possess. In a final example, Heidegger is talking about a smaller thing, a painting, the *Pair of Shoes* by Van Gogh. In this example we hear about the acquired craft of the master. Through his skill and only by drawing a worn pair of shoes, Van Gogh is able to reveal the toil and suffering of rural life led by a peasant woman, the presumed wearer of the pair. “From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toil- some tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles stretches the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls.”¹⁰

Alberto Pérez-Gómez is, as mentioned above, among the advocates of such an idea, being even more skeptical than Heidegger of the way culture evolved. Talking about *techne*, Pérez-Gómez is very close to Kenneth Frampton in arguing that it is a skill referring to lost qualities of distant times. He admits that in the discipline of architecture, there is a certain necessity to employ technology in order to construct a building. But it should only be used with “critical mediation” to arrive at the “mysterious’ origins of technology in *techne* and its capacity to embody truth.” To arrive at *aletheia*, architects should overcome technology, destabilize established views, and reveal that technology and the connected interest of control is not the absolute truth. This will lead to “a self-transformation” resulting in a different stance, or mindset, toward the world.¹¹ In comparison and surprisingly, Heidegger is more humble. He merely insists that as times

⁹ Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” p. 362 “a building as dwelling must be construed through technology, using this critical meditation to disclose the ‘mysterious’ origins of technology in *techne* and its capacity to embody truth, in the mode of *‘aletheia’*. What is at stake is never an overcoming of technology that might ‘leave it behind,’ (*Überwindung*) but rather a twisting and healing (*Verwindung*), a destabilizing that may show that technology is not absolute truth, that there are other ways available to humanity for relating to the world, means that need also result in a self-transformation that is perhaps related to Heideggerian *Gelassenheit*, strategies other than power and domination.”

¹⁰ Heidegger, “On the Origin of the Work of Art,” p. 159.

¹¹ Pérez-Gómez, Alberto, “Dwelling on Heidegger: Architecture as Mimetic techno-poiesis,” *Wolkenkuckucksheim* Vol. 3, No. 2, 1998.

¹² Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking" p. 363.

change, and *dwelling* is no longer possible at the Black Forest farmhouse, we need to find new modes to establish the world around us. This, for Heidegger, is not owed to a singular event, but "mortals ever search anew for the essence of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell."¹²

¹³ Hughes, Robert, *The Shock of the New. Art and the Century of Change*. Alfred A. Knopf (New York) 1980 p. 162. For an example of a recent repetition of the claim that the prefabricated parts make Mies' architecture significant, see Aureli, Pier Vittorio, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*. The MIT Press (Cambridge, MA) 2011 pp. 36–40.

¹⁴ Leitner, Bernhard, *The Architecture of Ludwig Wittgenstein*. New York University Press (New York) 1976 p. 88.

¹⁵ Jormakka, Kari, "The Fifth Wittgenstein," *Datutop 24*. Department of Architecture Tampere University of Technology (Tampere) 2004 pp. 26–50 p. 40.

¹⁶ Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*. Macmillan (New York) 1953 § 88.

Two other accounts can help to highlight architectural implications. Both sources are interested in philosophy and architecture, although with exact antagonistic weight: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Both were obsessed with exactness in producing their designs. Although sometimes referred to as the architect of mass production, Mies famously required tolerances that were not available off the shelf. In fact, none of his designs could be successfully prefabricated.¹³ Wittgenstein, building the famous Palais in Vienna, was also dreaded by all involved in the building process. Most feared was the high level of craftsmanship he required for all parts of the house. The cast-iron radiators and other metal parts needed to be produced with a tolerance of half a millimeter. This requirement could finally be met after a full year's search by a manufacturer in Scotland.¹⁴ Mies thought of his profession as essentially a "profession of truth" and is known to have liked the definition of Thomas Aquinas, "veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus"— truth is the equation of things and intellect.¹⁵ As a result, imprecise things will, to a lesser degree, correspond to the idea of their essence. In the same manner, Wittgenstein states in the *Philosophical Investigations* that "inexact is really a reproach, and exact is praise. And that is to say that what is inexact attains its goal less perfectly than what is more exact."¹⁶

However, the connection both Wittgenstein and Mies van der Rohe were making is in many regards Heidegger's *aletheia* in reverse. The more effort is made to achieve the most exact representation of an idea, the more one will approach the truth about the thing. Thus the maker is becoming the tool of the designer, with *techne* already achieved by the latter.

Dwelling on Heidegger

Heidegger's thoughts on *techne* and *aletheia* provoked a momentous discussion among distinguished parties. Joseph Rykwert began by pointing out that there was no Greek temple with the properties Heidegger described. None can be found in any rocky valley, including the Doric temple of Poseidon in Paestum that was later mentioned in Heidegger's text. Calling our attention to a passage in a text by Gottfried Benn, published a year before Heidegger's essay, Rykwert concludes that both texts have little to do with historical Greece, but have in common a mix of Nazi admiration for "naked violence, arbitrary power, racial pride, and homoerotic antifeminism." Rykwert connects the mute temple to the absence of Mies's crystalline towers "appropriate [for] our alienated and technology-dominated time."¹⁷

¹⁷ Rykwert, Joseph, *The Dancing Column: On Order in Architecture*. Cambridge, The MIT Press (Cambridge, MA) 1996, pp. 379–381; Jormakka, Kari, "Disguse and Delimit."

Meyer Schapiro joined the debate and argued that Heidegger's account about *A Pair of Shoes*, similar to Rykwert's criticism, was, first of all, utterly wrong, because the depicted shoes were very likely those of the painter himself, and secondly, the philosopher's reading, if anything, provided a window into Heidegger's "own social outlook with its heavy pathos of the primordial and earthy."¹⁸

In the present text, we should try another approach, one that is not going back to the extremely difficult task of dealing with Heidegger's anti-Semitism and *ad hominem* accusations. Jacques Derrida's contribution provides a point to start from. Derrida presented a text that twists and turns, exerting itself on possible readings. This provokes the reader to look at the circularity that Heidegger engaged in: any search for *aletheia*, the unconcealed truth, brought forth by completely immersing in some thing, produced a perspective toward the world that—as historical rubble—will conceal and constitute the hidden truth.¹⁹ Van Gogh's shoes enabled the world of the woman to come to light; the Greek temple enabled the world of historical people to come to light, but this "clearing," the *raum* that is described by Heidegger, is one of disposition, perspective experience, and interpretation. This becomes eminent because things only show up if they are important to us for some reason. "[T]ruth does not beforehand lie at hand in herself somewhere among the stars, in order then afterwards to bring herself down somewhere else among beings."²⁰ Truth, thus is a quality dependent upon *being*. A hammer is not by itself a tool to be used with nails. Only in a certain perspectival world will a wooden stick and some heavier piece of metal exist and function as a hammer.

Aletheia

Earlier, but unnoticed by the discussion led in aesthetics, arts, and architecture, philologists have presented an important alternative to Heidegger's *techne/aletheia* association. We have seen that according to Heidegger, the possessor of practical knowledge will, by completely immersing in the work he is engaging, achieve *aletheia*, the unconcealed truth within the thing he is treating. The value and meaning of a work of architecture or art is that it opens a "clearing" that sheds light on the true character of the thing itself and the context it is encountered in. *Alethia* is the unconcealed truth of the object that is brought to light by the authentic labor invested. Considering *aletheia*, we are talking about the ancient Greek notion that, from the mid fifth century BC, is the most general and important word for "truth." Thus, it is difficult to imagine it merely in the specialized and restricted way that Heidegger used the term throughout his writing.²¹ He maintained that *to a-lêthes* has originally and essentially meant *mê lanthanon*, the "unhidden" or "unforgotten" and a quality within the things of the world.²² Significantly, the alternative accounts by Bruno Snell and Thomas Cole argue the opposite.

¹⁸ Schapiro, Meyer, "The Still Life as a Personal Object – A Note on Heidegger and van Gogh" in Simmel, M. L. (ed.) *The Reach of Mind: Essays in Memory of Kurt Goldstein*. Springer (New York) 1968 pp. 264–267 p. 265.

¹⁹ Derrida, Jaques, *The Truth In Painting*. University of Chicago Press (Chicago) 1987.

²⁰ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 272, 275.

²¹ Cole, Thomas, "Archaic Truth," *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, New Series, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1983), pp. 7–28 p. 8.

²² Cole, "Archaic Truth" pp. 8–10.

²³ Snell, Bruno, "ALÉTHEIA," in *Festschrift Ernst Siegmann*. Schöningh (Würzberg) 1975 pp. 9–17.

Bruno Snell insisted that instead of designating properties held by *objects*, *alethia* was used to talk about attributes of *subjects*. Hence, the first alternative provided by Snell makes the important point that in early texts, *alethia* is almost exclusively used in terms of *people* speaking the truth and not about *things* that contain it.²³

²⁴ Cole, "Archaic Truth" p. 8.

Thomas Cole took further Snell's line of argument and maintained that the term had less to do with perception and appreciation (of a statement without *lēthē*), but instead was used to refer to a process of communication. *Alethia* is involved in, or results from, a transmission of information that excludes *lēthē*, whether in the form of forgetfulness, failure to notice something of significance, or ignoring it.²⁴ The characteristics of *alethia* are care, precision, order, and coherence. In the *Iliad*, Homer is describing a horse cart race. Achilles is installing one of his father's followers as a judge at the turning point so "that he might mark the running and tell the truth [*alethia*] thereof." Cole argued that this means that the judge will report certain events just in case they happen. In this use, *alethia* has no conceivable antonym such as "falsehood."²⁵ Hence, the term can be understood as something like "discursive correctness." This alternative makes *alethia* neither a property within objects or subjects, but makes it a public good that exists between people, a quality of communication.

²⁵ Homer, *Iliad* 23.360; as cited in Cole, Thomas, "Archaic Truth" and Williams, Bernhard, *Truth and Truthfulness*. Princeton University Press (Princeton, NJ) 2002 p. 273.

²⁶ Frisk, Hjalmar, "'Wahrheit' und 'Lüge' in den indogermanischen Sprachen," *Kleine Schriften, Studia Gothoburgensia* 21, 1966 pp. 1–39; 17–18.

Cole continued that the early understanding of the notion and its subsequent development, becoming the predominant notion for truth, is not a particular characteristic of the Greek language, but is in "accord with a general principle of linguistic history."²⁶ The English "sooth", like the ancient Greek *etymos*, was used exclusively for isolated individuals. Later, "sooth" gave way to "truth" and hence was replaced by a word, which had originally referred, like *aléthēs*, to a specifically human quality, namely reliability and loyalty. A similar connection exists between the German *treu* (*faithful*) and Middle English *troth*. The latter is often related, but not confined to "discourse" and has only later come to designate the correctness of a statement (13th century) or reality of a thing (14th–15th centuries).

²⁷ Cole, "Archaic Truth" p. 27; Hes. *Theog.* 28; H. Herm. 561; Soph. *Phil.* 993; Eur. *Hel.* 1150.

There are significant changes caused by this alternative. Connecting *alethia* with "discursive correctness" or "unforgettingness," hence a quality of the public appearance of people, also points to its political significance. According to Cole, the meaning of this word was from the beginning "sober, methodological, rational truth – first in the possession of men alone, though later the Muses [...] oracles [...] and eventually even gods."²⁷ Hence, in the etymology of *alethia*, we find modes of exclusions similar to those we find in architecture. They form the basis for the arguments of Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Kenneth Frampton. The fact that *techne* was a skill that was acquired by *learning* points in the same direction. As any society is always free to choose what is thought—what is of importance and how it divides the world—teaching and learning are not autonomous instances. Two very popular ideas helped form a different perspective in architectural

theory. First, the idea that the dawn of modernity was not a liberation of people, as the readers of Immanuel Kant would have it, but, instead, a fall that resulted in the collapse of the public. Second, and as a result of the former, in order to work meaningfully, architects need to seek a position outside or above all of culture, they felt as a pile of historically accumulated debris. Both require a *critical* position toward or against the public at large.

Distance

The champion of this critical stance toward the public, in his case having straightforward contempt, was Martin Heidegger. “Distantiality, averageness, and leveling down, as ways of being of the *they*, constitute what we know as ‘publicness.’” It is publicness that “obscures everything, and then claims that what has been thus covered over is what is familiar and accessible to everybody.”²⁸ Accordingly, Heidegger finds a scaling *down*, caused by the modern public. His account is also that of a technology pessimist. He blames technology for public transportation and mass media for boosting the process of making “every other [...] like the next.” The *authentic self* is lost to the *they* and all individual beings are dissolving “completely into a kind of being the Others.”²⁹ Unlike Le Corbusier, we have seen that technological pessimism is part of the arguments of Pérez–Gómez and also Frampton.

We have seen that Pérez–Gómez warns architects only to make use of technology in a critical way, or better still to overcome it and reveal its vein to control. Earlier than Pérez–Gómez, Kenneth Frampton has formulated a very similar design methodology, turning against all cultural and architectural achievements. Making his point against the international desires of modernity, he argues for a site-specific architectural language based on “place–form.” This place–form should be detached from a global history of architecture.³⁰ Proposing a negative heuristic, architects should avoid synthetic light and cherish the quality of natural, local light. If they don’t, the building will be placeless and, in the case of a museum, all artifacts on display would lose their “aura.”³¹ The same applies to the climatic conditions of the site. A building should face them, instead of creating the generic and optimized situation of the universal civilization by the use of air–conditioning.³² Thus, this second taboo continues Frampton’s technological pessimism, adding artificial lighting and air conditioning to the list he started with radio, telephone, TV and car.³³

Culture

This popular stance in architecture can be related to Heidegger’s contempt of the public at large, but, as a historical argument, is connected to Han-

28 Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*. (translated by Joan Stambaugh) State University of New York Press (New York) 1996 p. 127
§27 “Abständigkeit, Durchschnittlichkeit, Ein-ebnung konstituieren als Seinsweisen des Man das, was wir als Öffentlichkeit kennen [...] Die Öffentlichkeit verdunkelt alles und gibt das so Verdeckte als das Bekannte und jedem Zugängliche aus.” Heidegger, Martin, *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen 1993 [1927] § 27.

29 Ibid. Heidegger later used the terms “planetary journalism” and “planetary technology.”

30 Frampton, “Critical Regionalism,” in *Modern Architecture. A Critical History*. 3rd edition: revised and enlarged. Thames and Hudson (London) 1992 p. 327

31 Frampton, “Toward a Critical Regionalism,” *Labour, Work and Architecture*. Phaidon Press (New York) 2002 p. 87; “Critical Regionalism,” p. 327.

32 Ibid.

33 Later, in the introduction to *Labour, work and architecture* Frampton recommends “double glazing, [...] recycling of warm air in winter, low-speed fans, servo-mechanisms for the control of louvers and vents; the use of solar walls and photovoltaic cells” for reasons of sustainability. “Introduction” p. 14.

34 Frampton, Kenneth, "Industrialization and the Crisis of Architecture," in Hays, Michael K. (ed.) *Oppositions Reader*. Princeton Architectural Press (New York) 1998 pp. 39–63; p. 40; Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*. The University of Chicago Press (Chicago, IL) 1958 p. 257.

35 Frampton, "Industrialization," p. 41; Arendt, *The Human Condition*. p. 280; Pérez-Gómez, Alberto, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*. The MIT Press (Cambridge, MA) 1983.

36 Frampton, "The Status of Man and the Status of Objects," *Labour, Work and architecture*. Phaidon Press (New York) 2002, p. 27.

37 Arendt, *The Human Condition*. p. 307; Frampton, "The Status of Man," p. 33.

38 Arendt, *The Human Condition*. pp. 248–256.

39 "Davoser Disputation zwischen Ernst Cassirer und Martin Heidegger" in Heidegger, Martin, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. Vittorio Klostermann (Frankfurt a. Main) 1991 [1929] pp. 274–296, p. 291; see also Großheim, Machael, *Von Georg Simmel zu Martin Heidegger. Philosophie zwischen Leben und Existenz*. Bouvier (Bonn/Berlin) 1991, pp. 102–110.

40 Arendt, Hannah, *Between Past and Future. Six Exercises in Political Thought*. The Viking Press (New York) 1961, p. 197, Shils, Edward, "Mass Society and Its Culture" in *Daedalus* Vol. 89, No. 2, Mass Culture and Mass Media (Spring, 1960), pp. 288–314.

41 I'm consciously replacing "the Greeks" and "them" with "us" and "our" as I think this is what Arendt is trying to say. This said, I need to add that "us" and "our" is referring to concerned "intellectuals". Arendt, *Between Past and Future* p. 214, 197.

42 Arendt, *Between Past and Future*. p. 215.

43 This is relates to the Ancient Greek idea of leadership by the view "hoi oligoi" (an oligarchy). The alternative was the leadership of the many "hoi homonoia" a radical democracy.

44 Frampton, "The Status of Man," p. 26; "Industrialization," pp. 41–43.

nah Arendt's reluctant modernism and a comparable aversion found in the Frankfurt School. Arendt thinks of modernity as a fall and not as a liberation of hitherto suppression of church and crown. She insists, and both Kenneth Frampton and Alberto Pérez-Gómez follow her assessment, that the dawn of modern science—with Descartes to be precise—the place once occupied by truth, was taken by doubt. Since then, and at accelerating speed, humans have distanced themselves from nature and from each other, through the transformation resulting from discovery and development.³⁴ This doubt was the "loss of confidence in appearances," as scientists (and architects, too) began to ask for the "how" in things and not the "what."³⁵ As the appearances lost their unifying power, so did architecture and the public realm, which used "not only to house the public realm, but also to represent its reality."³⁶ We stopped living in a world populated by things that were, *in essence*, meaningful to all. Now, those objects divide us: they have grown meaningless and ephemeral and associated with private interests.

Arendt elaborates that by turning from questions about the "what" of things to the "how"—the *telos*, the essential "whatness" of objects—has become inaccessible and was substituted by an infinite search, doomed to never reach anything meaningful to all.³⁷ Instead, private utilitarian ends, always inaccessible to other individuals or groups, have substituted *teleological truth*. This has led to a "loss of the world," the loss of a meaningful and uniting domain for all.³⁸

Heidegger, again, offers the most extreme remark. He called culture, "'den faulen' ['rotten' and 'lazy'] aspect of a human."³⁹ For Arendt, culture is lost due to the raise of "the mass," which she describes as being a "growing concern among intellectuals."⁴⁰ It was the mass the swallowed the arts, by connecting anything with an interest and not appreciating the pleasure. The problem for Arendt is a new "mode of intercourse with cultural things."⁴¹ Finally, Arendt adds that this is indicted to "lack of virility, the vice of effeminacy [...] too great love for beauty."⁴²

Educators

There is a very special position saved for architects and artists. They should guide the public; "the view will have to be a guide to "the many."⁴³ Frampton draws on the *Oxford English Dictionary* to make the same point. There, we find architecture defined as "the art or science of constructing edifices for human use" and "the action and process of building." Kenneth Frampton continues by looking at the etymology of "edifice." The verb "to edify" not only means "to build", but also "to educate", "to strengthen" and "to instruct."⁴⁴ Relying heavily on Hannah Arendt, Frampton cites her account on the *homo faber* and his special role within society at length:

The man-made world of things, the human artifice erected by homo faber, becomes a home for mortal men, whose stability will endure and outlast the ever-changing movement of their lives and actions, only insomuch as it transcends both the sheer functionalism of things produced for consumption and the sheer utility of objects produced for use. Life in its non-biological sense, the span of time each man has between birth and death, manifests itself in action and speech, both of which share with life its essential futility. The “doing of great deeds and the speaking of great words” will leave no trace, no product that might endure after the moment of action and the spoken word has passed. If the animal laborans needs the help of homo faber to ease his labor and remove his pain, and if mortals need his help to erect a home on earth, acting and speaking men need the help of homo faber in his highest capacity, that is, the help of the artist, of poets and historiographers, of monument-builders or writers, because without them the only product of their activity, the story they enact and tell, would not survive at all. In order to be what the world is always meant to be, a home for men during their life on earth, the human artifice must be a place fit for action and speech, for activities not only entirely useless for the necessities of life but of an entirely different nature from the manifold activities of fabrication by which the world itself and all things in it are produced.⁴⁵

For architects, this is obviously a rewarding passage: *Mortals* need *homo faber* to erect a home on earth. It will not only make a life possible that raises us from the animal kingdom, but the *monuments* will make selected actions last. But we are talking about things that have in common an “essential futility,” that is they do not satisfy needs or function.

Arendt’s *homo faber* resists the intemperance of the consumer society. In doing so, he enters a different cast, one that conveys the backbone of any public space. With Arendt’s dwelling on the origins of Western democracy in the Attic *polis*, we are reminded of the notion of “the beautiful and the good” which is the literal translation of *kalos kagathos* used by the Greek elite to refer to themselves.

Certainly every arrangement men make to provide shelter and put a roof over their heads—even tents of nomadic tribes—can serve as a home on earth for those who happen to be alive at the time; but this by no means implies that such arrangements beget a world, let alone a culture.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*. pp. 173–4; Frampton, Kenneth, “The Status of Man,” p. 30; see also Baird, George, *The Space of Appearance*. The MIT Press (Cambridge, MA) 1995 pp. 1–26, 21; pp. 304–47, 309.

⁴⁶ Arendt, Hannah, *Between Past and Future* pp. 209–10 (my italics).

Beyond good and evil

As we have seen, the discontent with our current cultural state made Heidegger's connection of *techne* and truth so appealing for architects. Once read by architects and architectural critics, Heidegger's thoughts on *techne* were transformed to formulate a design methodology. This reformulation was influential that in the architecture, the contempt against modern culture could prosper.

But, we can use Heidgger's own argument, or rather, the reservations philology had, to formulate an alternative to the still-prevailing understanding that architecture requires a certain mind-set that will be exclusive to some selected view. These claims are often repeated and predominantly formulated as salvation for the *crisis* in architecture. We can object those who have argued that architecture was exclusively reserved for those with a capacity to "accomplish this cultural task, [...] humble as an act, [...] an imagining self, ethical and responsible, rather than from the consensus of 'communicative action.'"⁴⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche acknowledged where such ideas end up and depart from. He pointed out that not only did the *kaloī kagathoi* call themselves the beautiful and good, but also claimed a special familiarity with truth. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he remarked that "it is a fundamental belief of all aristocrats that the common people are untruthful. The nobility in ancient Greece called themselves 'We truthful ones' [εοθλος]. It is obvious that everywhere the designations of moral value were at first applied to *men* and were only derivatively and at a later period applied to actions."⁴⁸ Seeking a position outside of culture as guides and educators, architects did the same thing. Taking from Heidegger's *techne/alethia* connection, architectural theory was able to construct an argument in an attempt to justify this position. The alternative philologists provided makes it impossible to claim any special status, apart from the public, while on its grounds. Instead, considering a skill that can be learned. It is something that is passed on by teaching, by communication and requiring a particular quality in that process. This makes the public, however one might think of it, of utmost importance to secure *techne*.

Author

Mathias Mitteregger studied architecture in Graz, Berlin and Vienna. Before getting affiliated with the Vienna Technical University he worked in various offices. He also gained professional experience at the MIT and at the University of Pennsylvania. Mathias Mitteregger's research focuses on political philosophy as basis for architectural theory, architectures role in the public, and architecture and technology.

⁴⁷ Pérez-Gómez, "Dwelling on Heidegger" (my emphasis).

⁴⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Oxford University Press (New Yorkshire) 1998 [1886] IX, 260.

Recommended Citation

Mitteregger, Mathias: Working Toward Truth. In: Wolkenkuckucksheim, Internationale Zeitschrift zur Theorie der Architektur. Vol. 19, Issue 33, 2014, [pages], cloud-cuckoo.net/fileadmin/issues_en/issue_33/article_mitteregger.pdf [inquiry date].