Leonidas Koutsoumpos

The Ethical Function of Architecture on Education

> Meno: Can you tell me, Socrates, can virtue be taught? Or is it not teachable but the result of practice, or is it neither of these, but men posses it by nature or in some other way?
> Socrates: If then you want to ask one of us [the Athenians] that sort of question, everyone will laugh and say: "Good stranger, you must think me happy indeed if you think I know whether virtue can be taught or how it comes to be; I am so far from knowing whether virtue can be taught or not that I do not even have any knowledge what virtue itself is."[1]

1 Plato, Meno, 70a.

> 6.421—It is clear that ethics cannot be expressed.
> 7—Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.[2]

2 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*.

> Gothic builders have been tight-lipped about the symbolic significance of their projects. Nor did they need to say much: an understanding of the spiritual significance of things was so much part of the medieval worldview that it could be taken for granted.[3]

3 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, p. 107.

Architecture, Ethics and Education: an impasse

When I first came across Karsten Harrie's book the *Ethical Function of Architecture*, as a young student, I was in *aporia*. I had a question and I was looking for answers: can ethics be taught? Where could I learn it through my architectural education? This very question I tried to tackle later on through a PhD thesis.[4]

4 Leonidas Koutsoumpos, 'Inhabiting Ethics: Educational Praxis in the Design Studio, the Music Class and the Dojo' (PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, School of Arts, Culture and Environment, 2009), http://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/3294.

Having already read some philosophy I was aware that the question was as old as the history of the field. I knew that Plato, for example, was arguing that it is not possible to give a positive answer, since ethics (*virtue*, in his terms) cannot be defined. I was also aware that others, more recent philosophers, like Wittgenstein, insisted that ethics not only cannot be taught, but moreover it cannot be expressed through language and should be passed over to silence. Nevertheless, despite the fact that I knew that there exists an impasse in the initial question, I still had an urgent need to look for ethics in my architectural education.

Two things dragged me in *The Ethical Function of Architecture*: First, the fact that early in the introduction the book poses some fundamental questions about the role that architectural education can play in relation to ethics. Second, the fact that it builds an overall argument, that the ethical does not lay in the words of each individual who tries to express it, but rather on the worldview that is shared by a community in a certain era.

In this paper, I will discuss how the *Ethical Function of Architecture* contributed to my quest for a way out of the *aporia*. In doing this, I shall put the book in the context of the existing literature of the field, at the time that it was written. I shall point out the explicit and implicit references that the book makes in relation to architectural education. Finally, I will suggest that architectural education is an initiation in a practice, a fact that can mediate ethics between the individual and the community.

The Ethical Function of Architecture: the essay, the article, the book and the rest of the literature at that time.

The architectural scholarship that deals with issues of ethics is apparently enormous. Research that indicates engagement with issues of ethics includes themes like politics, domination and power, social, ethnic and gender exclusion, accessibility, sustainability, technology and professional codes of conduct.

Despite this plurality though, it is striking that the literature dealing with the meaning of *ethics as such*, in the context of architecture, is actually very infrequent, numbering less than a dozen monographs. Within this small group, those that discuss issues of Ethics in relation to architectural *education* are even more rare. The research that has been conducted so far on connecting Ethics and architecture has only marginally discussed the fundamental role that education plays in the formation of architectural Ethics. Most academics that discuss issues of ethics in architecture have focused mainly on the production (design processes, construction, sustainability) and the consumption (understanding, appreciation, conservation) of architecture.

Karsten Harries was one of the first voices that specifically pointed out the need to turn the attention to the education of the architects. In 1975 Harries published a two page essay at the *Journal of Architectural Education* with the very same title of the later well known book. In a very condensed page Karsten Harries laid the foundation of his later research. “From the very beginning architecture had an ethical function, helping to articulate and even to establish man’s ethos—our use of the word ‘edify’ still hints at the relationship between building and ethics.”[5] Moreover, he pointed out Norberg-Schulz’s suggestion that the training of the architects is unsatisfactory. In a second page two images were contrasted: an array of modernist blocks at the University of Stockholm, against the wooden porch of Mark Twain's house.

5 Karsten Harries, ‘The Ethical Function of Architecture’, *Journal of Architectural Education* 29, no. 1 (1975): 14–15.

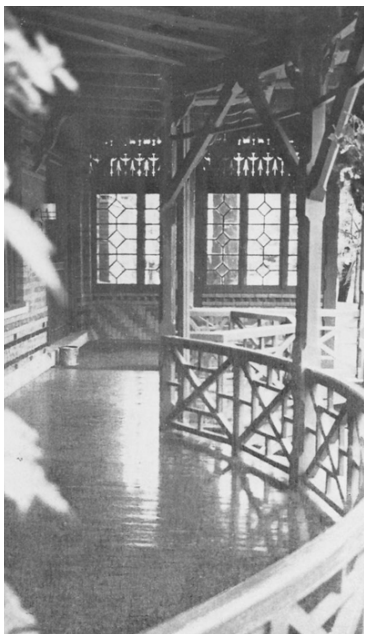

Fig. 1 and 2 The University of Stockholm VS Mark Twain's House

In 1985, Harries published a longer article with the same title where he expanded these initial ideas.[6] During these years he continued expanding and refining his research on the topic by teaching a course in the philosophy of architecture at Yale, which became also a popular class of the School of Architecture.[7] From the publication of the first short essay until the publication of the book itself that was released on 1997, some twenty-two years passed. In the meantime, two other publications appeared that marked the field.

The first was David Watkin's *Morality and Architecture* published in 1977 and it was the first book to bring together ethics and architecture in an explicitly close relationship. Watkin's book is an attempt to analyse, through the lens of Ethics, the architectural production and its historiography from the middle of nineteenth century until the late modern movement, by analysing the writings of some key architects and historians. Watkin, though, makes no explicit comment on architectural education.

The second book was *Architecture, Ethics and Technology*, which was an edited volume published in 1994 by Louise Pelletier and Alberto Pérez-Gómez. This book was an edited volume that included essays from a symposium with the same title that took place in 1990 at the Canadian Centre for Architecture. It has to be noted that the topic of ethics is a prevailing theme in the entire work of Pelletier and Pérez-Gómez. The later, in particular, has written extensively on ethics and his contribution dispersed in a wide number of publications, even when it is not stated explicitly in the title. Frequently underlying his work is the conviction that "[i]ssues arising from the relationship between architecture and the technological world are the crucial theoretical problems for an ethical practice…".[8] Through a thorough and innovative combination of the history of architecture with the history of the sciences and epistemology, Pérez-Gómez has identified the rapid development of modern science in the seventeenth century[9] as the fundamental root of the problems of Ethics in con-

6 Karsten Harries, 'The Ethical Function of Architecture', in: *Descriptions*, ed. Don Idhe and Hugh Silverman (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 129–40.

7 Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1997), xii.

8 Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Louis Pelletier, *Architecture, Ethics and Technology* (Montreal et. al.: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994), 6.

9 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge -Massachusetts & London: The MIT Press, 1983), 167 & 195.

temporary architecture. Pérez-Gómez has made a lot of connections between architectural education and ethics by pointing out the problematic mentality of globalised techno-capitalism, which he sees as a threat. To this end, he argues for the revaluation of the tacit values of architectural education and he suggests the need for radical alternatives.[10] "It is simply *impossible* to educate an architect for our "real" world through the instrumental theories that are now provided in schools around the world."[11] The work of Pérez-Gómez is in very close dialogue with the research that was undertaken by Harries while writing *The Ethical Function of Architecture*. It is not a chance that Harries in the opening lines of his book quotes Pérez-Gómez against the current rationalization and functionalization of architecture that has its origins in Galilean science.[12]

From the above it becomes apparent that the publication of the book came to fill in a considerable gap in the literature and it made a considerable impact in architectural scholarship, receiving welcoming reviews. It is well known that *The Ethical Function of Architecture* is based on the philosophical tradition of phenomenology and hermeneutics. It can be argued that the book triggered a wider production of treatises on ethics in the context of architecture, some of them coming from different philosophical backgrounds. Some of these contributions criticized the book for its commitment to the Heideggerian metaphysics and its emphasis on dwelling.[13] Nevertheless, a careful reading can discern that Harries does not hesitate to be critical of Heidegger's stance.[14] Later on, I will point out some connections that the book makes with philosophers that are not expected to be seen in this context, like Wittgenstein. Finally, it is noteworthy that the turn of the millennium was 'celebrated' with the Venice Biennale exhibition entitled 'Cities: Less Aesthetics, More Ethics', a fact that shows that the discourse of ethics gained some attention and became somehow fashionable, loosing at the same time some of its necessary depth.[15] Image 3 shows graphically a timeline of the most important monographs on the topic of ethics and architecture.

10 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, 'Architecture and Ethics beyond Globalization', in: *Architectural Research*, ed. Lucie Fontein and Herman Neuckermans, vol. 14 (Montreal: European Association for Architectural Education, 2002), 22.

11 Ibid., 20.

12 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 1997, 2.

13 For example see: Tom Spector, The Ethical Architect: *The Dilemma of Contemporary Practice* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 145. See also: Neil Leach, 'Less Aesthetics, More Ethics', in: *Architecture and Its Ethical Dilemmas*, ed. Nicholas Ray (London & New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 136.

14 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 1997, 165–68.

15 The instructions for Use advise you not to look for etymological or philological explanations for LA, ME; not to think that we are somewhere between the origin of the world and its future and not to spend months debating whether it is aesthetics that includes ethics or vice versa. I sincerely hope that no one has the bright idea of dusting off Kant's three theories." Massimiliano Fuksas and Doriana O. Madrelli, *Cittá: Less Aesthetics, More Ethics* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2000), 12.

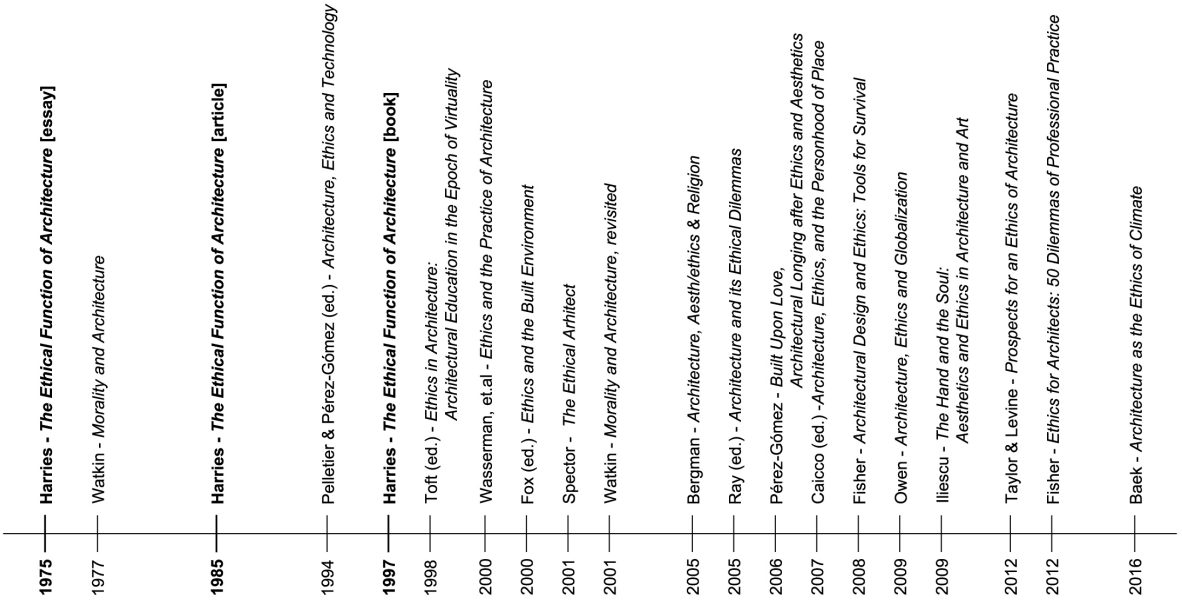

Fig. 3 Timeline of the main monographs on ethics and architecture.

Teaching Architecture and its Ethical Function

The role of education in relation to ethics is very important in the book *The Ethical Function of Architecture*. Straight from the introduction of the book, Harries points out the uncertainty that has spilled over architecture schools in relation to ethics. He brings forth again, as he did in his first essay, and discusses further Christian Norberg-Schulz's claim that "the schools have shown themselves *incapable* of bringing forth architects able to solve the *actual tasks*."[16] Harries goes on to ask: "Do we know what these tasks are? Is the prevailing uncertainty not at bottom uncertainty about *how this question is to be answered*?"[17] These 'tasks' for Harries are undoubtedly connected with ethics, or what he calls the 'ethical function' of architecture, which he defines as the "task to help articulate a common ethos"; while 'ethos' "names the way human beings exist in the world: their way of dwelling."[18]

Trying to find a way to answer these questions, Harries turns to philosophy and asks further: "What does philosophy have to do with what concerns the architect? Such questions inevitably lead to another: what is philosophy?" He then turns to Wittgenstein's observation, who in the *Philosophical Investigations* argues that philosophical problems have the form, "I do not know my way about."[19] Harries then goes on to suggest that "[i]n this broad sense all philosophy fundamentally is 'ethical reflection', reflection concerning the ethos."[20] This stance is actually very close to Wittgenstein's view of ethics as the 'actual task' required in order to fulfil human life, and that all philosophy is actually about ethics. From this viewpoint, the problem that architecture faces is a philosophical one; but at the same time, Harries argues that any suggestion to include 'philosophical reflection' as "part of any well constructed program of architectural education"[21], only confirms the uncertainty about how architects ought to build and live.[22] "Where do we find ground or measure in the infinite realms opened up by reflection? How can we justify the way we live? Reason alone has no answer."[23]

Harries points again (as he did in the 1975 essay) at the etymology of the word 'edify' that can have the meaning of 'moral instruction', but can also mean 'to construct' (from the Latin *aedificare—aedes* 'dwelling' & *fiacre* 'to make').[24] Harries, here, gets very close to Plato/Wittgenstein's view of the impossibility of teaching ethics, since he seems to be sceptical about the edifying role of philosophy. Nevertheless, he concludes that philosophy *can* play a role in showing a way:

> What then does philosophy have to contribute to architecture and to architectural education? In one sense very little: no clear direction; perhaps a few pointers; mostly questions, putting into question presupposition of our approach to architecture that are often taken for granted and thereby opening up new possibilities. But by putting into question maps on which architects and architectural theorists have long been relied and which have been the source of continuing confusion, philosophy can contribute to the drawing up—inevitably tentative—of new maps.[25]

16 Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Intentions in Architecture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1965), 219. Quoted in: Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 1997, 10. [emphasis added]

17 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 1997, 10. [emphasis added]

18 Ibid.

19 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, vol. 3rd (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 2001). proposition 123. Quoted in: Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 1997, 11.

20 Harries, The Ethical Function of Architecture, 1997, 11.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., 68.

24 Ibid., 11.

25 Ibid., 12–13.

The way that Harries conducts his research in the main body of book, is deeply rooted in the history of architecture. A key point to understand this relationship has been the shift of paradigms from the Medieval to Renaissance architecture. In relation to the initial aporia regarding the ineffability of ethics, as I have already mentioned, Harries makes an allusion to the ineffability of Ethics during historical times when the symbolic significance of things (e.g. the gothic ornamentation) in its relation to Ethics, was not discussed because there was not such need:

> "'Gothic builders have been tight-lipped about the symbolic significance of their projects.' Nor did they need to say much: an understanding of the spiritual significance of things was *so much part of the medieval worldview that it could be taken for granted*." [26]

Arguably, almost every historical movement that tried to challenge established orthodoxies has gone back to revisit the meaning of the shift between medieval architecture and the Renaissance. It is also characteristic that almost the entire discourse of Ethics in architecture was tied up with an eye looking back to medieval times or ancient Greece[27], either in terms of style (neo-gothic and neo-classicism), or in terms of creative processes (Arts and Crafts). Maybe the most obvious example being the way that Ruskin conceptualized romantically 'The Nature of the Gothic' both as outward form and as the character of the builders.[28] For example, one can also note the chain of influences that John Ruskin's thought caused to William Morris' challenging the industrial production and the division of labour and Lethaby's establishment of schools of 'practical architecture' like the Central School of Arts and Crafts.[29] One can also see the continuation of this influence, through Muthesious, to Gropius and the establishment of Bauhaus, the paradigmatic school of modern architecture that was initially based on the Gothic model of production.[30] Harries points out that "[i]It is not accidental that the pamphlet that Gropius published in 1919 to state its aim and program had for its fron-

26 Ibid., 107. [emphasis added]

27 "In the nineteenth century there was a fierce debate about architectural style, with outlandish claims made for the merits of classical or Gothic architecture. …the idea that the ethos of ancient Greece had a high cultural value, and drew together the artefacts and way of life in that society in an ideal way that should be emulated if at all possible." Andrew Ballantyne, '*Architectures in Plural*', in: Architectures, Modernism and After, ed. Andrew Ballantyne (Malden, Oxford & Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 10.

28 Mark Swenarton, *Artisans and Architects: The Ruskinian Tradition in Architectural Thought* (Basingstoke & London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1989), 30.

29 Ibid., 111.

30 Andrew Saint, *The Image of the Architect* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1983).

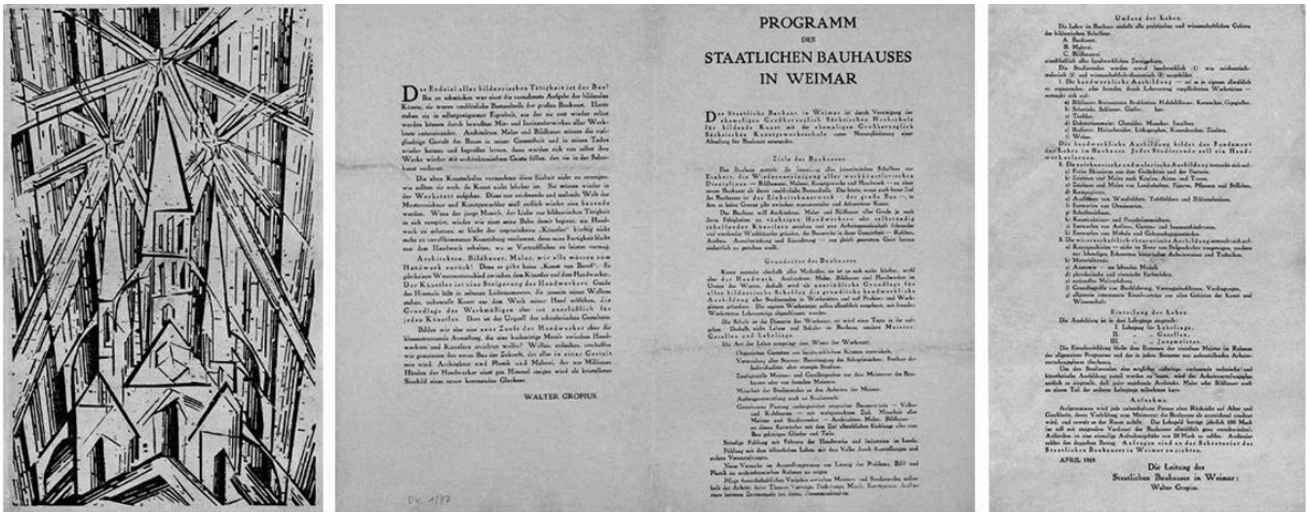

Fig. 4 Lyonel Feininger, Cathedral, woodcut for the cover of the Bauhaus program.

tispiece a woodcut by Lyonel Feininger which translates a Gothic cathedral into Cubist-inspired crystalline forms, creating thus an image of a reconciliation of modernity and medieval spirituality."[31]

A young student of late modernism recalled the debates and criticisms that occurred when the waves of modern architecture hit the protected harbour of their school:

> The school of Architecture was in tremendous ferment as the revolution of modern architecture had just hit it, secondhand and rather late. There was furious debate as to the validity of the modern movement, tempers were heated and discussion was intense. Some staff resigned and a few students went off to other schools; at any rate I was left with a deep conviction of the *moral rightness of the new architecture*.[32]

This young student was James Stirling, an architect who, despite his deep moral convictions, did actually cross the boundary between modernism and postmodernism. It is important to note that both modernism and postmodernism have accused each other on moral grounds. For example Giedion has early enough described postmodernism as "a kind of playboy-architecture...: an architecture treated as playboys treat life, jumping from one sensation to another and quickly bored with everything."[33] On the other hand the postmodern critique on modernism is summarised by Harries as "the hegemony that we have allowed scientific rationality and technological thinking —over our lives, our thinking, and our practices."[34] And he further uses Helmut Jahn's words "Architecture, along the principles of functionalism, programmatic determinism, and technological expressionism, produced buildings without connection to site, place, the human being, and history."[35]

Most of the views that wish to look back to history, as a considerable part of postmodernism did, usually romanticize certain periods, aiming to criticize the contemporary "compartmentalization of our life, *the splintering of the old value system, each splinter now claiming something of the dignity that once belonged to the whole*."[36] Architecture, according to Harries, is exemplary in the way that it represents this wholeness which inherently embodies Ethical values:

> the building [here a church] acquires quite specific connotations that tell us a great deal about those who built it, their *values*, and their *faith*. And it does so not incidentally, in the way any useful object connotes countless secondary functions, but *by asserting these connotations*. Representation is here used self-consciously to endow the church with a specific significance. A different model or a different form of representation *would communicate a different understanding of what a church should be*.[37]

31 Harries, T*he Ethical Function of Architecture*, 1997, 328.

32 John Jacobus, James Stirling: *Buildings and Projects 1950–1974*, 1st ed. (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2005), 14.

33 Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, vol. 5th (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), xxxii. Quoted in Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 1997, 6.

34 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 1997, 7.

35 Helmut Jahn, 'Postmodernism: Definition and Debate', *AIA Journal* 27, no. 5 (1983): 239. Quoted in Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 1997, 7.

36 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 1997, 102.

37 Ibid. [emphasis added]

Harries also suggests that understanding Ethics in architecture cannot be based only on a return to the past as it has been understood so far: "After the Enlightenment has done like a vacation from the serious business of life, unless for pedagogical reasons we find it useful to wrap independently established moral maxims in an artistic dress."[38] He also suggests that "such a subjection of art to some *preestablished morality* only underscores that 'the fair days of Greek art, as also the golden time of the later middle ages, are over', never to be recovered."[39]

38 Ibid., 354. [emphasis added]

39 Ibid.

Through the above discussions that rise from my reading of the book *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, and its explicit and implicit references to architectural education, I think that it is possible to suggest that the discourse of ethics can be divided in two parts. The first part is based on preconceptions and prejudices that have formed a preestablished system of ethical beliefs based on habitual learning through mimesis and repetition. The second part is based on evaluations that derive from deliberative contemplation and reflective evaluations. The two parts are quite separate and different and they have a different way of being acquired during architectural education. Moreover, as I am going to discuss at the end of the paper this distinction offers a possibility of an exit point against the impasse of teaching ethics. But before that I would like to stress the importance of seeing architectural education as an initiation in the practice of architecture.

Education as an Initiation in a Practice

The Ethical Function of Architecture, in various instances, emphasises the ethical importance of the relationships established amongst the members of architectural practice because it extends their individuality and reach the wider society. For Harries, members of a society need to share a common life that can be achieved by entering into a language game, a game understood with Wittgenstein as a "whole, consisting of language and actions into which it is woven"[40]. To enter into such a game is rather like learning to play a certain part: it presupposes opportunities to see others in the same role."[41] Education in this sense is something that extends the institutional roles of the schools of architecture and is embraced by the whole society.

40 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*.par. 7.

41 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 1997, 325.

Architectural education in the schools of architecture is, therefore, the first step of an initiation into the new world of a practice. Entering a practice is the constitution of a relationship, not only with the other members who share the same practice, but also with all those who previously practised it, and especially with those that formed the standards of the practice as we see them today. These relationships and interactions amongst the members of a practice form 'communities of practice'[42]. The concept of practice has also been central to the Virtue Ethics approach as it has been introduced by Alasdair MacIntyre. Virtue Ethics, in general, is a set of theories that put emphasis on character and virtue in the way that people act or take their decisions, in contrast to the notion of duty (deontology) or acting in relation to consequences (utilitarianism). MacIntyre suggests that virtues are not isolated

42 A term coined by Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave. Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation, Learning in Doing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See also: Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity, Learning in Doing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also an understanding of 'practice as learning' in Jane Collier, 'Moral Imagination and the Practice of Architecture', in: *Architecture and Its Ethical Dilemmas*, ed. Nicholas Ray (London & New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 310.

and individualistic, but rather are exercised within practices, that are coherent social forms that aim at achieving goods that are internal to that activity. Finally, practices, as defined by MacIntyre, are not ideal, isolated activities disconnected from 'real' life. On the contrary, they have history, they are interrelated and they form authoritative institutions: "To enter into a practice is to accept the authority of those standards and the inadequacy of my own performance as judged by them."[43] In terms of education this means that one cannot be 'initiated' into a practice without accepting the authority of the best standards achieved so far, which, being accepted as axioms through the history of this practice, actually define the practice itself. These standards, of course, are and should be criticized and changed, but for this reason should be at the same time acknowledged and accepted, not necessarily as valid, but as historically present.

It can be argued that most of the other arts raise ethical problems internal to their practice only through *narrative* (describing, lets say, human relationships or political situations). On the contrary, although architecture is an abstract art, it makes the ethical problems inherent to it, not because it suggests, describes or narrates ethical problems, but because it creates them. In other words, architecture continuously affects the life of each inhabitant or user by forming the way that people come together. According to Maurice Lagueux architecture raises ethical problems because it "*produces the obligatory framework for social life*."[44]

Architectural education is the very place where the greatest part of the formation of the view of ethics occurs. Education here is not a mere context that could be substituted with any other practice relating to architecture. Arguably, the formation of ethics in education is actually the study of formation of ethics itself. Formation understood as *edification* (as we already have seen that Harries suggests)[45], first used to mean the construction of a dwelling place, and later came to receive a 'negative' connotation of moral correction. Furthermore, by understanding education as *Bildung*[46] it reveals not only the deliberation of what it is to learn how to do architecture, but also gives a wider horizon of ethos to this action, in an inseparable link. Especially in the design studio, ethical education is being produced through a performative aspect. In this view, learning becomes both a preparation for a performance that will take place later on, in 'real' practice, as well as a performance in itself. Performance here can be seen in three ways. First of all "to carry out in action, execute or fulfil"[47] the actions that will be executed later on in the practice of the 'real' thing. Second, as the Old French (*per-furnir*) origin of the word implies, the furnishing with necessary provisions or supplies, useful or desirable material[48]. In a third sense, as the Anglo-Norman form of the word implies, to *form*, "to give form or shape; to fashion, mould"[49] to express by form, and mainly "to mould by discipline or education; to train, instruct"[50] an education in ethics.

43 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, vol. 2nd (Corrected, with Postcript) (London: Duckworth, 1981), 190.

44 Maurice Lagueux, 'Ethics Versus Aesthetics in Architecture', *The Philosophical Forum* XXXV, no. 2 (2004): 122. [emphasis added]

45 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 1997, 11.

46 "but when in our language we say Bildung, we mean something both higher and more inward, namely the disposition of mind which, from the knowledge and the feeling of the total intellectual and moral endeavour, flows harmoniously into sensibility and character" Hegel, *Philosophical Propaedeutic* 41-45 quoted in Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, vol. Second Revised Edition (London, New York: Continuum, 2004), 9. See also Shaun Gallagher, *Hermeneutics and Education*, ed. Dennis J. Schmidt, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (New York, Albany: State University of New York, 1992), 50–51.

47 'perform' v. *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* Online Draft Version 2007.

48 'perfurnish' v. *OED* Draft Version 2007.

49 'form' *OED* Second Edition 1989.

50 Ibid.

The way out of the aporia

In order to summarize, the book *The Ethical Function of Architecture* was of invaluable help for me, when I was doing my PhD thesis, because it provided explicit discussion of the place of ethics in architectural education and because it offered a concrete idea of ethics that extend the responsibility of the individual and connects it with the entire society. The concept of education as an initiation into a practice was also very important clue that was found to be present in the work of other philosophers, who were not necessarily based on phenomenological tradition. The above ideas, as I already mentioned, helped me articulate an argument about the dual nature of ethics, concerning the way that they are acquired through education. The one refers to systems of belief that are based on preexisting forms that usually have to do with one's cultural background and are adopted through the habitual living in the world. The other refers to the beliefs that one acquires through contemplation and is usually the outcome of a reflection that follows some sort of disruption of the preexisting understanding of the world. In terms of education, the first is a process of internalization, based on implicit notions of what is good and what is bad, that is formed by mimesis and repetition, while the second is a process of externalization and is often based on explicit rules.

The current trend that has made the field of ethics popular in architecture is largely based on the second strand. The scholarship has been dominated either by applied cases of eco- and green-architecture, that aim at humanitarian purposes, or by codes of ethics and professional conduct that aim to write in stone the commandments of ethical practice. This view of ethics is dressed with an appearance of rational logic, that by definition ethics do not have. For this reason, every attempt to teach moral values through a rationalised and systematic curriculum is doomed to fail. Ethics is not geometry or mathematics and so, any claim to moral teachings will always be questionable for being otherwise.

The Ethical Function of Architecture, being one of the first books on the topic, stands like a lighthouse pointing towards a different direction. The way that I read the book, ethics cannot be applied; they are inhabited in practice. For this reason, the ethical load is neither carried by a theory (any theory), nor by the shoulders of every single individual who acts and performs in the specific situations. Individuals are not alone. Communities play a very important role in the way that their members have come to form their ethical worldviews. In terms of education, these worldviews, having abandoned any claim to teach anything, since they are based on unconscious evaluations, can do exactly this: teach ethics. Customs, dispositions and prejudices, through habitual praxis come to find a home in the animal nature of the human and communicate ethical meanings.[51] Ethics are constantly acquired through the acquisition of habits. It is the background that is shared by all parties and for this reason it is unnoticed, similar to the common repertoire shared between the writer and the reader. This common background inaugurates, according to Paul Ricoeur, "between them a community of meaning preliminary to any

51 The call of this thesis to inhabit ethics, redefines architecture itself from drawing the attention from the pilar of fire to that of the nest as described by Ballantyne. "If what we want architects to do is to design mainly ordinary buildings, then an entirely different kind of history is needed involving revalutation of all values—an ethics which would be new to architecture—which would see modest repetition as praiseworthy, and extravagance as something to be condemned." Andrew Ballantyne, 'The Nest and the Pillar of Fire', in: *What Is Architecture?*, ed. Andrew Ballantyne (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2002), 48.

entering onto fiction. This repertory attests to the fact that the condition of action and suffering, far from being ineffable is always already understood."[52] So, it is not strange that education, especially in the design studio, very often takes place in silence, or in-between the words that are exchanged during the dialogical processes of education. Dialogue itself as an attitude towards education, and not so much as the content of the words exchanged, contains notions of ethics. The background of speech is not silence: "The background of speech becomes audible only in the silence of speech."[53] In this background of the educational activity, ethics is communicated.

But then again, a reasonable question may rise: What happens when these habits, customs, dispositions and prejudices lead to architectural actions that are ethically bad? What should be the response when bourgeois architects who have been habituated (through a 'Beaux Art' type of architectural schooling) into creating inequalities in the built environment? Is it not the reflective character of education in morality the proper response to such problems? Is it not though language and the dialectic of theses that can lead to an elevation towards a better and more just society? To express it as Adorno would: Is it not through an enlightenment, which is in possession of itself, that the bounds of enlightenment can break?[54]

Nevertheless, reflection alone, I argue, cannot liberate the human being from the constraints of all hegemonic power.[55] The problem actually is that the humanist promise for total emancipation and total enlightenment *is the very problem* that has caused so much inhumanitity on the built environment.[56] What is needed is a common ground. In this direction, the dialogue between Gadamer and Habermas is of invaluable importance to be pursued further. In brief, Habermas' criticism of Gadamer, is that any prejudice should be carefully examined and until then should be treated as suspect, which means that without critical reflection there is no way to achieve emancipation.[57] On the other hand, Gadamer criticises Habermas for retreating back to Cartesian ideals and normative discourses and that what is needed is an ethical spirit of solidarity and ethical customs that are shared amongst a community.[58]

In a similar context, Harries quotes Hegel referring to Descartes as the *ultimate teacher* (with whom thinking and education begins, since he shows the way out of the labyrinth of our world). But he also contrasts Descartes with Nietzsche who shows the way back into the labyrinth,[59] by pointing the inescapability and ultimately the silence of (architectural) form.[60] Harries also points out that this problem is not an epistemological problem, but indeed one of ethics.[61] In his latest book *Infinity and Perspective*, Harries also emphasises the temporal condition of humanity that is expressed as restless motion and the role of Ethics into satisfying it[62], a fact that is expressed in the tension between contemplation and creation.

Architectural education has focused too much on creating exemplar students that prefer to design peculiar 'pilars of fire,' rather than humble 'nests'. The exit point of the impasse of teaching ethics also asks us to redefine ar-

52 Paul Ricoeur, 'Mimesis and Representation', *Annals of Scholarship: Metastudies of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 3 (1981): 141.

53 David Appelbaum, *Disruption* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 12.

54 "Enlightenment which is in possession of itself and coming to power can break the bounds of enlightenment." Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Verso Classics (London, New York: Verso, 1997), 208.

55 "We must recognize that there cannot be any critique without some sort of affirmation, that we cannot avoid asking the question, 'critique in the name of what?'" Richard J. Bernstein, *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/ Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 318. In educational context see: Gallagher, *Hermeneutics and Education*, 262. Also Richard Coyne, 'Deconstructing the Curriculum, Radical Hermeneutics and Professional Education', *EAR* (Edinburgh Architecture Research) 23 (1996): 15.

56 "The essence of enlightenment is the alternative whose ineradicability is that of domination. Men have always had to choose between their subjection to nature or the subjection of nature to the Self." Adorno and Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, 32.

57 Jürgen Habermas, 'The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality', in: *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method*, ed. Joseph Bleicher (Boston: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1980). See also the criticism of the wider Heideggerian philosophical tradition from Critical Theory in Adam Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, ed. Adam Sharr, Thinkers for Architects (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2007), 111–12.

58 Hans Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science* (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: The MIT Press, 1981), 79.

59 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 1997, 343.

60 Ibid., 345. Harries here makes a reference to Tafuri's "The Wicked Architect" p. 40.

61 Ibid., 346.

62 Karsten Harries, *Infinity and Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 2001), 210.

chitecture itself from drawing the attention from extraordinary to the mundane. Andrew Ballantyne argues that "[i]f what we want architects to do is to design mainly ordinary buildings, then an entirely different kind of history is needed involving revaluation of all values—an ethics which would be new to architecture—which would see modest repetition as praiseworthy, and extravagance as something to be condemned."[63] I think that Karsten Harries works patiently and quietly on this direction.

63 Ballantyne, 'The Nest and the Pillar of Fire', 48.

Finally, the book *The Ethical Function of Architecture* is still valuable for me as a teacher because it apparently offers two distinct threads that lead out of the labyrinth. The first, and most obvious, is a theoretical one. This book has established a solid ground for the philosophical agenda of architecture in relation to ethics, based mainly on the phenomenological tradition. Most importantly, it did so, not by focusing on the codes of ethics and rules of conduct of the profession, but rather by focusing on architecture as such and the habitual aspects of ethics that form the common ethos of the community. The second thread is less obvious and it has to do with the architectural education in the design studio. Harries' argument that architecture *functions* in shaping ethics, because it affects people's way of life, is one that calls for practical action. Although it is a theoretical thesis, it is meaningful when it is given shape by doing architecture. Obviously, the book does not offer prescriptions to follow and, as I have argued thus far, it does so rightfully. What it offers is pointers that help others not to get lost in the process.

In my reading of the *Ethical Function of Architecture*, I find that that choosing only one of the two threads in order to get out of the *aporia* does not lead out of the labyrinth. The two long and isolated threads have to be intertwined into a new single one, which is thicker and stronger. The constant process of twisting these two threads into one, is what architectural education should be about. For this, the role that this book can still play today, by pointing towards thoughtful ways of doing, is invaluable. In other words, its point does not lay in the final answer of what to do, but rather in showing us how meaningful it is to keep on twisting the two threads of architecture into one, with a goal in mind; that of people's shared ways of life.

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Figures

Fig. 1–2 Photos by Douglas Ballon

Fig. 3 Timeline of the main monographs on ethics and architecture.

Fig. 4 Siebenbrodt, Michael and Schöbe, Lutz (2009). Bauhaus, 1919–1933. Parkstone International. p. 14–15

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